

South Australia Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Issues Paper

yourtown's advocacy submission September 2024



What is it about?

The South Australia Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence is inquiring into how government, non-government organisations and communities can better integrate and coordinate efforts across all elements of the domestic, family and sexual violence systems in South Australia. The Commission will direct recommendations at designing a domestic, family and sexual violence system to better meet the needs of those who interact with it, and which is capable of delivering the generational change required to bring an end to domestic, family and sexual violence.

Why is it important?

The rate of domestic, family and sexual violence in South Australia and across the nation is unacceptable. Two in five children in Australia are exposed to domestic violence. On average, one woman is killed by an intimate partner every 11 days. Just over one in four women have experienced partner violence or abuse, and one in seven men have experienced partner violence or abuse.

Some of yourtown's key messages:

1. Strategies aimed at preventing domestic, family and sexual violence prevention should focus on universally delivered, school-based violence prevention programs

Evidence is promising on the efficacy of universally delivered, school-based violence prevention programs. These school-based programs seek to prevent violence through supporting children to become critical of gender norms and violence-supportive attitudes and equipping them with the skills to form healthy relationships in adulthood.

2. Children who have experienced or witnessed domestic, family and sexual violence should be supported in their own right and provided with tailored age-appropriate support

Children who have experienced or witnessed violence must be supported with specific interventions. Complex trauma can have a significant impact on children's brain development, behaviour and experience of relationships. This in turn can affect children's developmental progress and ability to regulate their emotions, adapt their behaviour, and pick up on social cues. Services and systems must: address the challenge for children to experience safety and engage in relational exchanges that support them; and be responsive to the impact of the trauma experiences on children's development and functioning.

3. Services should use a trauma-transformative approach to support victim-survivors in their recovery and healing

Trauma-transformative services, such as yourtown's refuge, work with the whole person who is part of a network of relationships, rather than focusing on symptoms of trauma in isolation to improve practice, healing and recovery. The work is grounded on the principles of being culturally appropriate and safe, risk responsive, rights-oriented, and strengths-based. We address the current needs of women and children in our refuge as well as the unmet needs from their past because of the trauma they have experienced.

4. Victim-survivors require social support over extended periods of time, tailored treatments and psychological therapies, and advocacy/case management in their recovery and healing

While there is no single intervention that works for all parents and children experiencing domestic and family violence, evidence-based initiatives that are most effective share many common features. The interventions follow the widely accepted approach of targeted therapeutic care that is implemented after immediate crisis interventions have ensured women and children who have experienced or witnessed violence are safe and their situation has stabilised. These features revolve around ongoing and tailored support delivered within a case management model. In addition, certain psychological therapies, such as cognitive behaviour therapy and cognitive trauma therapy, are effective in managing the psychological effects of domestic, family and sexual violence.

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