

February 2015

## **YWCA of Adelaide Submission to the South Australian Parliament's Social Development Committee Inquiry into Domestic and Family Violence**

### **YWCA of Adelaide**

YWCA of Adelaide is part of the World YWCA movement, the world's largest women-led membership movement with a global outreach of 25 million women and girls. This global network of women leads social and economic change in over 120 countries worldwide. Across Australia, the YWCA works with approximately 250,000 individuals and families each year, with an annual turnover over \$50 million.

YWCA of Adelaide is a not for profit young women's leadership organisation which has been providing a voice for young women and girls in South Australia for 135 years. The organisation is well respected for its work in advocating for greater gender equality and efforts to support women and girls during every step of their leadership journey. YWCA of Adelaide engages an early intervention and primary prevention approach to its policy and program priorities of advancing women's leadership, preventing and eliminating violence against women, and promoting positive self-image.

- Vision:** Stronger communities through the leadership of women & girls  
**Purpose:** To support young women during every step of their leadership journey  
**Values:**
- Gender Equality
  - Embrace Diversity
  - Women's Leadership
  - Accept Accountability

### **She Speaks Survey**

In 2014 YWCA's around Australia contracted the Institute of Social Science Research (ISSR) at the University of Queensland to conduct the national YWCA She Speaks Survey. The survey highlights the voices of girls and young women aged between 15 and 30, and covers a range of social and personal issues. It was the largest survey of its kind collecting information from 1 600 girls and young women from across all States and Territories about their attitudes, perceptions and experiences. While YWCA's She Speaks Survey has a focus on leadership, it also canvassed the views of respondents on a range of issues including respectful relationships.

More than one in three (34 per cent) respondents reported receiving uninvited or unwanted indecent or sexually explicit texts, and 30 per cent of respondents said they felt unable to seek help when experiencing violence in their relationship.

## **YWCA of Adelaide Policy Survey**

In order to inform YWCA of Adelaide's future policy direction, a state wide Policy Survey was conducted in November 2014. A total 148 respondents completed the survey, comprising YWCA of Adelaide members, stakeholders, and other members of the South Australian community. Of participants who responded to the survey questions regarding identity, 21% were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 38% were from a culturally or linguistically diverse background, 14% were living with disability and 34% were same sex attracted.

## **Priorities and Recommendations**

The recommendations contained in this Submission have been informed through research, community collaboration, evaluation of our programs, as well as consultation with young women through the She Speaks Survey and the Policy Survey. They are underpinned by our vision for stronger communities through the leadership of women and girls. As the State Government acknowledges in its Right to Safety Strategy, women's leadership is a tenet of preventing and eliminating violence against women.

## **Introduction:**

YWCA of Adelaide welcomes this important opportunity to contribute to the South Australian Parliament's Social Development Committee Inquiry into Domestic and Family Violence. YWCA of Adelaide commends Parliamentary Secretary to the Premier, MP Katrine Hildyard on moving this Inquiry as one of her first acts following election, as well as the South Australian Government's commitment to preventing and responding to violence against women. We look forward to the Committee's findings and recommendations and consequent resourcing and action as a result of the Inquiry.

Violence against women and girls is a pervasive violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms. As the Committee would be aware, the impact of violence against Australian women, their families and communities is devastating. As well as individual emotional and financial costs, the economic cost to Australia of domestic violence and sexual assault is forecast to rise to \$15.6 billion by 2021-2022 without the right preventative action<sup>1</sup>.

YWCA of Adelaide welcomes the increased community awareness around domestic and family violence evident in recent years. In our view, Australia is at a critical juncture where sustained attention to and significant, ongoing investments in preventing and responding to violence against women may bring about real change in our communities.

However, to end violence against women, significant and increased investments and initiatives are required at all levels of society, including addressing the root causes of violence against women and tackling inequitable attitudes towards gender. Now is a

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<sup>1</sup> DSS, 2009; [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05\\_2012/vawc\\_economic\\_report.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/vawc_economic_report.pdf)



critical time to build on this momentum, and increase investment into domestic violence services and primary prevention efforts.

**Prevention:**

YWCA of Adelaide recognises the critical need for continued and increased investment into current domestic violence response services, and notes with concern the recent cuts by the Federal Government to family violence services as well as homelessness and crisis accommodation services across Australia. There appears to be a potentially dangerous inconsistency between current message and action. At the same time as community awareness is increasing around domestic and family violence – which is likely to lead to more women seeking support to exit violent relationships – the resources available to those support services are being cut.

YWCA of Adelaide acknowledges these concerns in this submission, but notes our focus for this Inquiry will be on the need for increased investment into prevention work on domestic and family violence that is well resourced, long-term, and utilises best practice models. We will therefore respond to the following Terms of Reference:

**2. The effectiveness of current initiatives in supporting the prevention of domestic and family violence;**

**4. How workplaces and industry can further support the prevention of domestic and family violence; and**

**5. How current Federal Government legislation, initiatives and measures could affect the provision of domestic and family violence services and, women and children escaping domestic violence.**



## **The effectiveness of current initiatives in supporting the prevention of domestic and family violence:**

YWCA of Adelaide acknowledges the significant efforts made by the South Australian Government in the prevention of domestic and family violence, including changes to legislation and policy, targets within the State Strategic Plan and the Right to Safety Strategy, changes to domestic violence intervention orders, the establishment of a specific family and domestic violence death review position in the Coroner's Office, and improving domestic violence training for police officers.

We note there are some existing programs and campaigns that work within the prevention space to address gender stereotypes and respectful relationships, including programs delivered by SHine SA to high school students, and the YWCA's Rise Above the Pack social crime prevention campaign funded for twelve months by SA's Attorney General's Department that aims to create safer public spaces for women.

Most current respectful relationships programs target teenagers. YWCA advocates that programs targeting much younger age groups are also needed to bring about real change by addressing gender norms and attitudes before they become innate. Research shows that violence prevention programs aimed at children and young people are effective<sup>2</sup> as are school based violence prevention programs<sup>3</sup>.

Additionally, given four options of priority areas to focus on in YWCA's 2014 Policy Survey, almost half of the respondents (47 per cent) called for Respectful Relationships programs to be embedded in South Australia's primary school curriculum.

Using a gender analysis is also key to providing successful violence prevention programs. The 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS) found that those with high levels of support for equitable gender roles and relationships are less likely to endorse attitudes supportive of violence against women.<sup>4</sup>

The research on Primary Prevention programs with a gendered focus informs the basis of YWCA of Adelaide's respectful relationships program, *Respect, Communicate, Choose*.

### **Case study: Respect, Communicate, Choose program**

Developed by YWCA of Adelaide and YWCA of Canberra, *Respect, Communicate, Choose (RCC)* is a primary prevention program delivered in primary schools to children aged 9 to 12. RCC aims to give young people the tools and support to develop, promote,

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<sup>2</sup> Flood, Michael; Fergus, Lara & Heenan, Melanie, *Respectful Relationships Education: Violence prevention and respectful relationships education in Victorian secondary schools*, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2009, p.20.

<sup>3</sup> Flood et al, as above, pp.10-13.

<sup>4</sup> VicHealth 2014, *Australians' attitudes to violence against women. Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS)*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Australia.



and perpetuate equal, safe and respectful relationships with the ultimate goal of preventing violence against women and girls.

The program is aligned with standards of best practice for primary prevention programs<sup>5</sup> and national school and curriculum frameworks and has the potential to be delivered by YWCAs nationally. RCC aims to prevent violence by:

- Raising awareness of unequal gender and power relations and options for accessing help.
- Deconstructing attitudes that are based on inequality.
- Building skills to negotiate non-violent and respectful relationships.
- Supporting children to create a respectful school environment.

Our experience shows that children are not provided with space to discuss gender anywhere else, with students conveying that discussing gender is their favourite part of the program.

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<sup>5</sup> Carmody, Moira; Evans, Susan; Krogh, Chris; Flood, Michael; Heenan, Melanie & Ovenden, Georgia 2009, *Framing best practice: National Standards for the primary prevention of sexual assault through education*, National Sexual Assault Prevention Education Project for NASASV, University of Western Sydney, Australia, p.23; Flood, Michael; et al., 2009, op cit, p.20.

## How workplaces and industry can further support the prevention of domestic and family violence:

### Domestic Violence Leave

ABS figures show that two thirds of the 400,000 plus people who experience domestic violence each year are in paid employment.<sup>6</sup> The financial security that employment affords women can allow them to escape becoming trapped and isolated in violent and abusive relationships, and to maintain, as far as possible, their home and standard of living.<sup>7</sup>

Australia is leading the world in recognising domestic violence as an issue which can potentially impact on workers and workplaces, with well over 1 million Australian employees now covered by domestic violence clauses in their agreement or award conditions<sup>8</sup>.

Paid domestic violence leave recognises that employees experiencing domestic violence can least afford to take unpaid leave at a time when financial security is critical. It also recognises the importance of supportive and informed workplaces where workers feel safe to disclose and have access to support services.

There is an increasing call for workplaces to respond to domestic and family violence, and to take a proactive role in supporting victims/survivors of domestic violence in the workplace. In the National Domestic Violence and Workplace Survey, 78 per cent of respondents believed that such workplace entitlements could reduce the impact of domestic violence in the workplace<sup>9</sup>. Research has demonstrated that workers are prepared to disclose, but require and need a workplace that is supportive and informed on the issue of domestic violence.

Some major companies, universities and public sector organisations are implementing Domestic Violence Leave into their agreements. YWCA of Adelaide advocates that workers have the right to be safe at home and at work from domestic violence and strongly encourages the State Government to introduce 10 days of paid Domestic Violence leave for permanent staff and 10 days unpaid leave for casuals to be included in all Awards and Workplace Agreements.

It is noted that some institutions which have announced introducing Domestic Leave provisions have included reference in their Policies but not included the Leave in Workplace Agreements. YWCA of Adelaide advocates for Domestic Violence Leave to be included as a Workplace Agreement as well as within workplace Policies.

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<sup>6</sup> ABS via <http://www.actu.org.au/Media/Mediareleases/Unionspushfortherighttodomesticviolenceleave.aspx>

<sup>7</sup> National Domestic Violence and the Workplace Survey (2011), [http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/PDF%20files/Domestic\\_violence\\_and\\_work\\_survey\\_report\\_2011.pdf](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/PDF%20files/Domestic_violence_and_work_survey_report_2011.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Gendered Violence Research Network, <http://www.dvandwork.unsw.edu.au/>

<sup>9</sup> National Domestic Violence and the Workplace Survey (2011), op cit.



The State Government has an opportunity to role model to all South Australian workplaces through the introduction of Domestic Violence Leave and can play a crucial role in encouraging other workplaces to also adopt Domestic Violence Leave.



## **How current Federal Government legislation, initiatives and measures could affect the provision of domestic and family violence services and, women and children escaping domestic violence:**

YWCA of Adelaide notes with concern the recent cuts by the Federal Government to family violence services as well as homelessness and crisis accommodation services across Australia. These cuts will result in services being forced to close, specialist staff trained in assisting victims of domestic violence being displaced, and vulnerability and shortage of crisis accommodation. It is crucial that both response and prevention services are adequately and sustainably funded to ensure the safety and wellbeing of women across Australia. YWCA of Adelaide calls on the South Australian Government to advocate to the Federal Government to reverse these funding decisions.

Regarding investment in prevention services, YWCA of Adelaide urges the State Government to become a full partner to Our Watch, which aims to drive nation-wide change in the culture, behaviours and attitudes that lead to violence against women and children. South Australia has committed \$79,000 a year indexed over four years. State and Territory governments which are full partners have committed \$1million a year.

### **Australia's National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children**

#### **First Action Plan**

YWCA of Adelaide particularly welcomed the focus of the National Plan's First Action Plan 2010 - 2013 on preventing violence by raising awareness of violence against women and building respectful relationships in the next generation. We note that the initial Australian Government funding allocation for prevention programs (\$9 million over five years) has reached its conclusion, apart from a recent one-off grant.

#### **Second Action Plan**

Although domestic and family violence occurs across all social groups, specific groups experience higher rates of domestic and family violence and face challenges in getting access to information, services and support. YWCA of Adelaide notes that women and girls who face multiple forms of discrimination are exposed to increased risk of violence including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women and women with disabilities. YWCA welcomes the Second Action Plan's attention to understanding and addressing diverse experiences of violence.

However, we urge this Committee to recommend that the Australian Government ensures that violence prevention and early intervention, including respectful relationships education, remains a key focus of the National Plan; that they provide sustainable, long-term funding for this area of prevention; and they release specific funding details of its Second Action Plan.



### Key Recommendations:

- In line with the South Australian Office for Women's Right to Safety Strategy, in the key direction of Prevention, commit to '*delivering evidence based prevention programs*', such as the YWCA's Respect Communicate Choose (RCC) program.
- Invest in programs and community awareness initiatives that challenge gender-based stereotypes.
- Role model through State Government introduction and encourage business and community sectors to introduce 10 days of paid Domestic Violence leave for permanent staff and 10 days unpaid leave for casuals to be included in all Awards and workplace agreements, in addition to workplace policy.
- South Australia to become a full partner of Our Watch, the Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children.
- Ensure adequate and long-term funding arrangements for services to employ holistic solutions that are culturally appropriate and effective in responding to women's individual experiences of violence.
- Urge the Federal Government to commit to adequate and sustainable funding for responding to and preventing domestic and family violence.

### More information

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission.

YWCA of Adelaide would be pleased to provide you with further direct information about our programs and services.

### For further information please contact:

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