

MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Victim Support Service says Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence lays down a marker for others to follow

Today Victim Support Service (VSS) welcomed the release of the report by the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence.

VSS Chief Executive Julian Roffe said there is a clear public interest in addressing family violence in Australia by strengthening services for victims, particularly for women and children.

“This report elevates and reinforces many of the issues DV service providers have been raising for some time,” Mr Roffe said.

“It’s clear that not enough attention has been given to the effects of family and domestic abuse on children who witness or experience violence in the home. This report calls for more support for children to mitigate the potential long term effects of family violence.”

Since starting the Women’s DV Court Assistance Service (WDVCAS) in July, VSS lawyers have seen, firsthand, how fragmented court orders can put women and children at greater risk. The Royal Commission report calls for the Victorian government to pursue reforms to the Family Law Act through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG).

“We need to change the mindset of judges and the process of law so that State Intervention Orders, designed to protect victims, take precedent over Federal Family Court Orders,” Mr Roffe said. “Safety should always come before parental rights especially when there is evidence that a parent has been violent or abusive.”

Back in November 2015, VSS brought together 100 stakeholders to discuss how better to support children who have experienced crime and violence. Many of these South Australian stakeholders supported the introduction of a one-stop-shop model for children and young people affected by crime.

A similar model for victims of family and domestic abuse has been recommended by the Royal Commission into Family Violence. They are calling for the introduction of seventeen safety hubs throughout the State, which would operate as local entry points to specialist family violence support services for families and children.

“The one-stop-shop model should be assessed to see if it could work in all Australian states and territories,” Mr Roffe said.

The challenge facing the South Australian government is whether it has the means to respond to the recommendations of the Royal Commission in the face of an ever-growing demand for support.

“The findings of the Royal Commission into Family Violence report suggest that Victoria is moving toward a gold standard in terms of responding to the needs of women and children affected by family and domestic abuse.”

“VSS saw a 49% increase in DV referrals last year, a trend experienced by every other DV service provider.”

“If extra funding for specialised family and domestic abuse services in South Australia is not found, the State is likely to end up providing a second-rate response when compared to our Victorian neighbours.”

Victims of crime seeking information, therapeutic and practical support can call the Victim Helpline on 1800VICTIM (1800 842 846).

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Victoria Laughton

0419 668 437

media@victimsa.org

[@VictimSSsa](https://www.facebook.com/VictimSSsa)

Victim Support Service (VSS) is a statewide, community based not-for-profit organisation in South Australia that provides practical and therapeutic support to more than 40,000 victims and witnesses of crime each year in South Australia. Our services include:

- information and advocacy
- therapeutic intervention
- practical assistance
- support for victims of family/domestic violence.

For more information go to www.victimsa.org.