

ALRC Inquiry

The Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse is the national organisation funded by FAHCSIA to report on good practice in the reduction of violence against women and children both nationally and internationally. The primary goal of the Clearinghouse is to prevent domestic and family violence. We do this by providing high quality information about domestic and family violence issues and practice and facilitating discussion to specialist and generalist service providers, government agencies, researchers, advocates and activists.

The ADFVC was named as one of the consulting bodies in the terms of reference for the ALRC inquiry into specified family violence laws and legal frameworks to improve the safety of women and children. This was an inquiry into a complex and highly contested area of the law. The ADFVC was impressed by the capacity of the ALRC to consolidate and process the range of issues raised by the inquiry in the short time frame allocated.

During the inquiry the ALRC demonstrated an excellent capacity to involve and represent the positions of a wide range of stakeholders through respectful consultation. This was achieved under great duress, given the short turnaround time for consultation and submissions. It is a credit to the organisation that they were able to manage this process given the capacity of the stakeholders to tolerate yet another truncated consultation process.

The final report was an exhaustive resource providing clear evidence based advice for legal reform, though with greater time and resources to edit the final report, the ALRC may have produced a more practical document.

This process can be contrasted with the consolidation process of anti-discrimination legislation currently being undertaken by the Attorney General's Department. The government has come under much criticism for a process that has lacked terms of reference, time tables, or transparency. This clearly demonstrates the importance of maintaining an independent law reform body with the capacity to conduct important reviews of Australian legislation.

However, the Clearinghouse is concerned that the ALRC will struggle to maintain these high levels of excellence if the organisation continues to operate without the necessary Commissioners and with cuts to the staffing and resources.