

5th October 2017

Submission to

Senate Enquiry

**Delivery of National Outcome 4 of the National Plan to Reduce
Violence Against Women and Their Children**

The Red Rose Foundation Australia is a national organisation with a specific focus on addressing the issues surrounding domestic violence deaths including homicide, suicide and accidental deaths arising from incidents and or / histories of domestic violence. Research informs that the majority of domestic violence deaths are predictable and preventable. The focus of the foundation is to address systemic gaps in service systems through training, education and research. We are cognisant of the strong links between domestic violence, child abuse and sexual violence.

The board of the Red Rose Foundation comprises professionals drawn from senior policing, sector management, violence prevention consultancy and research all who have vast experience and expertise across both domestic violence and sexual assault. Board members are drawn from Queensland, New South Wales, ACT and Victoria. Further information on the Red Rose Foundation and its board members can be found at www.redrosefoundation.com.au

We believe that victims of domestic violence and sexual assault need services, which are provided in a timely ethical manner and which prioritises the safety and well being of their clients.

The Red Rose Foundation supports the new contractual arrangements for 1800 RESPECT and through this submission addresses the following terms of reference.

Terms of Reference

- a. the adequacy and quality of counselling provided, including:
 - i. the funding made available for counselling,
 - ii. the counselling model and associated counselling practices,
 - iii. the protection of privacy and confidentiality for those who use the service,
 - iv. the efficacy and appropriateness of the triage model adopted in relation to the service in 2016, and
 - v. the infrastructure required for the provision of the service;

Members of the Red Rose Foundation are aware of the KPMG review of 1800 RESPECT and the large number of unanswered calls prior to the introduction of the triage model in 2016. While it could be argued that quality comes before quantity, we are of the opinion that it is possible to achieve both. As the only national telephone service specifically established to support women who have been victims of domestic violence and / or sexual violence, we believe it is critical that a service response is provided at the time woman most need to speak to someone. We are especially concerned for women in remote and rural communities who may not have the availability and access to face to face counselling service. The same would apply to women with disabilities. If a call is unanswered, it is unknown if the woman rings again. Many of the unanswered calls could be considered an opportunity lost. The needs of women who do not get through to a counsellor are every bit as important as the women who do.

We assert that confidentiality is a paramount issue for callers to the national telephone service and any provider who has access to women's information whether that is government or non-government should prioritise this. Currently there are State agencies who also hold critical information on individuals and families i.e. child protection, police, hospitals and newly formed high risk domestic violence teams. Safe guards for the protection of client information should include limits on who can access the information, share such information as well as protocols and procedures for the storage of information and the response to subpoenas. Woman calling 1800 RESPECT should be provided with information on the recording and storage of information. Women should also be informed that it is not a requirement of receiving counselling that they disclose personal information. Many callers to current domestic violence and sexual assault service do not identify who they are especially in the first instance. Not providing personal identifying information should never be a barrier to women accessing a service.

- b. the engagement of staff and contractors, including:

- i. their qualifications and working conditions,
- ii. the professional standards and ethical obligations applicable to those providing the service, and
- iii. the oversight and quality assurance undertaken in relation to those providing the service;

The Red Rose Foundation supports the employment of highly qualified and experienced staff for the 1800 RESPECT service. Some of the board members of the Red Rose Foundation have provided external clinical supervision and training to staff at DV Connect and this will continue with the establishment of the newly contracted 1800 RESPECT service. As previously stated, board members of the Red Rose Foundation have extensive experience in both domestic violence and sexual assault and welcome the opportunity to work with the new service in Queensland.

We have been advised that all staff will be required to have relevant tertiary qualifications and a minimum of three years sector experience or experience in related counselling positions. We do not believe that only one service in one state are the only providers capable of bringing together a highly qualified team to deliver a national service. The model which sees a service delivered across three states services will provided enhanced opportunity to provide even great opportunities for the employment of highly professional people to deliver this service.

- c. evaluation arrangements for the service;

We have been advised that agreement to an evaluation has been included in the current contract. The Red Rose Foundation welcomes this as an opportunity to gain further insights into how the national telephone service is meeting the needs of women across Australia.

- d. best practice for domestic and sexual violence counselling; and
any other related matters.

Employment of counsellors with both experience and tertiary qualifications will bring a team of counsellors together who are able to provide a service which meets best practice in responding to both domestic violence and sexual assault.

Training and clinical supervision, which focuses on trauma informed practice, will be at the core of the new service. DV Connect already has staff who have been provided with best practice trauma counselling training.

All staff will be required to work within the:

- Best Practice Standards for working with women who have been victims of domestic violence.
- Best practice guidelines for working with survivors of sexual violence.
- Code of Practice and Ethical Standards of professional organisation relevant to specific disciplines.
 - ✓ Australian Association of Social Workers
 - ✓ Australian Psychological Society
 - ✓ Australian Counselling Association
- Code of conduct of the agency in which they are employed.

The Red Rose Foundation has every confidence that the 3 state services who have been awarded the contract to deliver the counselling services for 1800 RESPECT will do so in a highly professional manner, considerate of all of the safety, security and well being needs of the women who seek counselling and support.

Betty Taylor
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On behalf of Red Rose Foundation

www.redrosefoundation.com.au