

# Chapter 8

## Crisis intervention services

8.1 This chapter considers crisis intervention services provided to victims of domestic violence immediately following violent incidents. Crisis intervention can include a range of services, such as:

- crisis accommodation for victims and their children;
- health, mental health responses, including trauma counselling;
- criminal justice responses, including police services; and
- interventions targeting perpetrators, including providing men who have used or are at risk of using violence with men's behaviour change programs.

### The need for a more coordinated approach

8.2 A dominant theme of evidence received by the committee was that a more coordinated approach across government agencies, police forces and non-government service providers would substantially improve how victims are able to deal with the effects of domestic and family violence.

8.3 Mr John Hinchey, ACT Victims of Crime Commissioner noted:

If we continue to focus on the coordination of services we will get it right, because the systems are in place. We just need to coordinate them. We do not need to reinvent things. We just need to get it right. To get it right we need people who have a common understanding and a common commitment.<sup>1</sup>

8.4 Ms Emily Maguire, Acting Policy and Evaluation Director, Our Watch, agreed that national coordination of the sector was essential, not only for service provision, but also for information and data sharing across jurisdictions:

Where we would like to see not necessarily further investment but further effort is first of all in coordination nationally. At the moment, whether we are talking about Victoria or individual states, the programmatic work is quite ad hoc in nature, often as a result of funding that is a bit sporadic. So we would like to see a high level of coordination so that we can see those mutually reinforcing strategies across a range of settings nationally and also so that we can develop an evidence base so that, for example, Victoria can learn from what is happening in the Northern Territory, Western Australia can learn from South Australia and the work that is happening in settings from schools to workplaces to sports clubs can inform work that is happening elsewhere.<sup>2</sup>

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1 *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2014, p. 20.

2 *Committee Hansard*, 12 September 2014, p. 6.

8.5 Mr Rodney Vlasis, Acting Chief Executive Officer, No To Violence, agreed, and also highlighted the need to improve communication and information sharing between a wide range of stakeholders including:

...corrections ministers; heads of corrections, probation and parole departments; chief and assistant police commissioners and other senior police across states and territories; senior child protection practitioners; and policy makers...I guess it is having some more consistency across states and territories, but in particular to learn from each other. I think we might have one state and territory, for example, that might be ahead of others in perpetrator accountability and child protection practice, another in policing and another in corrections. I think there is a lot to learn from each other.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Funding for coordination***

8.6 Mr Hinchey emphasised that effective coordination of the sector depended on adequate resourcing:

I think this is at the core of the challenges that we face not only in this jurisdiction but you would hear, I would assume, generally across our nation that the coordination of services, data collection, and informed policy development on the back of that information lacks resourcing, a centralised process and an understood common interpretive framework.<sup>4</sup>

8.7 Mr Hinchey stated that existing coordination work, both specifically in the ACT region and across Australia more generally, often relied on the goodwill and commitment of workers in the sector:

The challenges are that there is no resourcing given to the coordination of services to manage family violence. We are relying on the motivation, commitment and drive of individuals, and many of those individuals come to the work through the community sector, which underpays its workers compared with government workers, but those people are drawn to that work because of their commitment.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Information sharing***

8.8 Ms Fiona McCormack, Chief Executive Officer, Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Victoria), drew the committee's attention to notable gaps in information sharing between government agencies:

There are many agencies that come into contact with men who are a risk to others that do not necessarily understand the significance of the risk they are witnessing. They often do not even understand that there are risks because the causes and the dynamics of violence against women are so little

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3 *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2014, p. 9.

4 *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2014, pp 16-17.

5 *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2014, pp 16-17. At the 11 June 2015 hearing, Ms Rosie Batty mentioned the effectiveness of the model in use in South Australia (Multi-Agency Protection Service - MAPS) where government services work together collaboratively in the same building. See *Proof Committee Hansard*, 11 June 2015, p. 1.

understood in our community. So a range of different agencies—think hospitals, corrective services, courts, child protection—come into contact with men who are a risk to others. Even if they did identify that someone was a high risk to others, they might not necessarily know where they could share that information. There are no mechanisms by which they can share that information or work with other agencies to do something about that.<sup>6</sup>

8.9 Ms McCormack particularly highlighted new models currently being trialled by the Victorian government, which allow relevant agencies to share information about individuals who may be at risk of committing acts of domestic and family violence.<sup>7</sup> The committee understands Victoria trialled a Risk Assessment Management Panel (RAMP) model between 2011 and 2014, which involves agencies meeting regularly to identify and discuss potentially risky situations.<sup>8</sup> Although the results of the RAMP program evaluation is not currently available publicly, the committee understands the trials have been considered successful.<sup>9</sup>

8.10 Women's Health in the North told the committee about a pilot project operating in the city of Hume:

The [Hume Strengthening Risk Management (SRM) pilot project] partnership model operating in the City of Hume has enabled a coordinated multi-agency systemic response for high risk family violence cases by bringing together family violence advocates, family services, police, child protection, drug and alcohol services, housing services, corrections and Centrelink. These high level agency representatives are able to information share about risk and strategies to enhance victim safety and perpetrator accountability. A preliminary evaluation report has indicated that the SRM model is effective in enhancing safety and could be rolled out nationally.<sup>10</sup>

#### *Shared risk frameworks*

8.11 Some states have implemented shared risk frameworks across agencies. For example, Victoria has been proactive in developing and implementing risk frameworks to identify individuals who may be in danger of suffering domestic and family violence:

These projects build on the platform established in 2007 through the Victorian Government's Family Violence Common Risk Assessment and

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6 *Committee Hansard*, 12 September 2014, p. 20.

7 *Committee Hansard*, 12 September 2014, p. 20.

8 The Victorian RAMP trials mirror the UK's 'Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference' (MARAC) model, which has substantially improved information sharing and service delivery to victims of domestic violence. Whereas the UK model compels agencies to share information about at-risk individuals by law, the Victorian trials do not. See Catherine Plunkett, 'Multi-agency responses improve safety' in *Domestic Violence Resource Centre Advocate*, No. 1 (Autumn/ Winter 2014), pp 1-6.

9 See Catherine Plunkett, 'Multi-agency responses improve safety' in *Domestic Violence Resource Centre Advocate*, No. 1 Autumn/ Winter 2014, pp 1-6.

10 *Submission 33*, p. 6.

Risk Management Framework (CRAF). More than 6,000 mainstream and family violence specialist workers have been trained in the CRAF, which provides a standardised, transparent approach and tools to identify family violence and manage risk to improve the safety of women and their children. The effectiveness of the CRAF as an early intervention platform will be further tested in a joint project between Our WATCH and a major metropolitan and regional hospital beginning in 2014-15.<sup>11</sup>

8.12 Ms Libby Eltringham, Community Legal Worker, Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, highlighted the difficulties of using different risk assessment models across sectors and states. She commented that the Commonwealth sometimes developed risk frameworks with insufficient consultation with the practitioners who would apply them:

We do not use the same risk frameworks [across systems]. We have a family law risk framework that was developed completely separately from the risk assessment and risk management framework that was developed, for example, in Victoria. That has been in place and DVRC has been working to train over about 6,000 to 7,000 people in Victoria over the last six years, but new frameworks keep coming down through the Commonwealth without necessarily even consultation with states about what they are doing and how they are working with that. The parallel systems are hugely problematic.<sup>12</sup>

## **Police**

8.13 The police are often the first point of contact a victim has with the domestic and family violence system. They are responsible for investigating incidents of domestic and family violence, giving protection to victims through protection orders, and for bringing perpetrators before courts.<sup>13</sup> Police also contribute to early intervention in potential cases of domestic and family violence, as they are sometimes able to identify at-risk individuals, potential perpetrators and repeat victims, and are able to refer them to relevant service providers in some cases.

### ***The scale of the problem***

8.14 Domestic and family violence cases make up a large and increasing part of the workload of police forces. For instance, Detective Superintendent Rod Jouning, Victoria Police, told the committee:

For 2013-14 Victoria Police responded to over 65,000 family violence incidents. That is an eight per cent increase from the previous year...[I]n the year before that there was a 21 per cent increase. So the increase this year is significant but not as much as it was the previous year. Over 29,000 family violence incidents attended by police resulted in charges being laid. This demonstrated a 14.2 per cent increase from the previous year. We sought intervention orders for over 17,000 incidents and nearly 6,000 of

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11 Second Action Plan, p. 33.

12 *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2014, p. 5.

13 Domestic violence orders are discussed in greater depth in chapter 9 of this report.

those were family violence safety notices, which are a subset of the intervention order process in the state. This was a 10.3 per cent increase from the previous year.<sup>14</sup>

8.15 Mr Peter Bravos, Acting Assistant Commissioner, Crime and Specialist Support Command, Northern Territory Police reported:

In the NT, 82 per cent of all domestic violence assault victims are women, and Indigenous women represent 72 per cent of all domestic violence assaults. Indigenous women are in fact 20 times more likely than non-Indigenous females to be victims of domestic violence assaults.

These are unacceptably high levels of violence in such a small population. Whilst the data and percentages give us the overall statistics, they cannot, in my view, adequately convey the level of extreme violence that is perpetrated on women by men. Our police officers deal with over 18,000 domestic violence incidents every year, and in so many instances our officers arrive to find women that have been repeatedly punched, kicked or smashed with rocks, sticks and star pickets. It is usually a scene that is comprised of blood, pained screams and brutality.

In 66 per cent of domestic violence assaults, alcohol is involved. In too many instances it is also a scene where there are scared and frightened children who have witnessed the violence.<sup>15</sup>

8.16 In addition, it should be noted that these statistics do not reflect all incidents of domestic and family violence as many victims do not report to police. Victoria Police submitted that many victims only come forward after a long period of suffering violence:

In Victoria, two in five people tell us that the violence has already been occurring for 2 years by the time they report to police and there are still a significant proportion of women who never report at all.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Improvements underway***

8.17 On 24 November 2014, the Police Commissioners of every Australian jurisdiction reaffirmed their commitment to addressing 'the scourge of domestic violence' in a joint statement delivered at Parliament House, Canberra, alongside the New Zealand Commissioner of Police.<sup>17</sup>

8.18 The Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, commented that this public statement, only the second time that all

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14 *Committee Hansard*, 12 September 2014, p. 25. Detective Superintendent Jouning later stated the actual number of domestic violence incidents attended by Victoria Police in this period was 65,393. *Committee Hansard*, 12 September 2014, p. 25.

15 *Committee Hansard*, 10 March 2015, p. 32.

16 *Submission 92*, p. 3.

17 'Statement from Police Commissioners of Australia and New Zealand, 24 November 2014' available at <http://mypolice.qld.gov.au/blog/2014/11/24/police-commissioners-take-stand-violence-women-children/> (accessed 11 August 2015).

Police Commissioners had formally united to take a stand on a social issue, demonstrated:

As both community leaders and men, Australian and New Zealand Police Commissioners will not tolerate violence against women and children and that they are committed to protecting all victims of violence.<sup>18</sup>

8.19 Over the course of the inquiry, the committee heard that police responses to the issue of domestic and family violence had changed for the better over recent years. For example, Detective Superintendent Jouning of the Victoria Police, described to the committee how he had seen an attitudinal shift in police responses over his career:

When you did attend [in the past], it was really a matter of another domestic: walk in the door, deal with it the best you can with the knowledge you had. But your main focus was: 'Let's just diffuse this and get out. It's a family issue. We shouldn't really be dealing in it.' If the perpetrator was drunk, they would often be taken away and locked up for four hours. This was done just to try and separate the parties. This does not mean to say that where there were serious offences no action was taken; it was about the focus.

8.20 Detective Superintendent Jouning spoke about the current police practice:

We have changed that quite dramatically over that 10-year period and it has been supported by legislative change. Members now probably have a zero tolerance in any sense. If any criminal offence has been committed, charges are laid. In every case where they attend a family violence incident, it is actually recorded, which it probably never was previously.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Areas for further improvement***

8.21 In a February 2015 newspaper article, Ms Rosie Batty suggested that although the police have improved their attitudes and responses to domestic and family violence, there was still work to be done:

Police have improved significantly – especially in the past decade. When you meet a compassionate police officer, it makes life very different. But they're an enormous organisation with a lot of entrenched attitudes, and those attitudes can be out of step with the rest of society. In some areas of policing, that might be fine. Police do an excellent job when it comes to bravery, when it comes to putting their lives on the line. But some of this can become desensitising, and the real trauma a victim of family violence faces may be overlooked.<sup>20</sup>

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18 The Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, 'Standing together to tackle violence against women and children', Media Release, 24 November 2014.

19 *Committee Hansard*, 12 September 2014, p. 25.

20 Rosie Batty, 'Rosie Batty on why passion must lead to change on family violence' in *The Saturday Paper*, 7 February 2015.

8.22 Some evidence received by the committee suggested ways in which the police could improve their responses to particular groups such as cultural awareness training and instituting liaison officers to assist potentially marginalised groups to report domestic and family violence.

8.23 Associate Professor Dea Delaney-Thiele told the committee many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims are often reluctant to seek help from police.<sup>21</sup>

8.24 Ms McCormack, DV Victoria also spoke of the barriers to reporting domestic and family violence faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women:

...they can be much less likely to report because they are worried about having their children removed. They can worry about death in custody. There is a range of barriers that they face to reporting and that, of course, means that they are far more vulnerable.<sup>22</sup>

8.25 Phoenix House, a non-government sexual violence prevention and intervention service, suggested many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians did not report for a number of reasons, including that the police lack cultural competency in dealing with their claims, language barriers, and that some officers have an attitude of 'victim-blaming'. Moreover, Phoenix House commented that some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders reported that many communities were not served by a relevant Police Liaison Officer who could work to facilitate communication and trust between the police and local people.<sup>23</sup>

8.26 The Victorian Police pointed out that women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds can be reluctant to seek police assistance about family violence as they sometimes do not trust law enforcement agencies:

...in some communities, police may be perceived as agents for persecution, corruption and/or that they do not possess the skills or sensitivities to handle family matters.<sup>24</sup>

8.27 Dr Casta Tungaraza, Member, New and Emerging Policy Advisory Committee, Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA), agreed some new and developing communities may be reluctant to report domestic and family violence:

There are also negative perceptions of police and their role in mitigating domestic violence. Communities have reported that information and education about when a domestic violence matter becomes a crown case is not provided. Lack of cultural competency in the handling of such cases also remains an issue.<sup>25</sup>

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21 *Committee Hansard*, 4 November 2014, p. 19.

22 *Committee Hansard*, 12 September 2014, p. 19.

23 *Submission 1*, pp 41-42.

24 *Submission 92*, p. 4.

25 *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2014, p. 34.

8.28 Moreover, Ms Pallavi Sinha, Women's Chair, FECCA, told the committee that CALD women who do report domestic and family violence to police face further cultural and linguistic barriers:

...we have been told of instances where there were not interpreters used when a person went to the police or they went to a doctor, so the [lack of] use of interpreters in the first instance and then [not] properly using them [when they are available].<sup>26</sup>

8.29 The submission made by the inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence (inTouch) outlined the barriers CALD women face in accessing the legal system:

Underreporting is influenced by a lack of information about their rights and how to access them, a fear of authorities and not knowing what constitutes family violence in Victoria. These impediments subsequently lead to CALD women being less likely to report violence. They are often quickly discouraged from progressing further with their complaints, they may disengage prematurely from support or the outcomes they achieve are less positive than they should have been. A tendency to under-report can result in CALD women waiting until a point of crisis before they seek help. Considerable external pressure from family and community is also a significant factor. CALD women also face obstacles throughout the legal process such as language difficulties, intimidating and bewildering court processes, prejudicial attitudes, and inadequate support from services.<sup>27</sup>

8.30 Dr John Chesterman, Office of the Public Advocate, indicated significant barriers for women with disabilities 'reporting violence to police and lack of support through the court process'.<sup>28</sup> Ms Keran Howe, Executive Director, Woman with Disabilities Victoria (WWDV) outlined some strategies that could potentially assist agencies to help people who are cognitively impaired who have been subject to domestic and family violence:

That might be through the use of, for example, a communication assistant or communication board. For people who are close to someone with a cognitive disability, it is not difficult for them to understand and to communicate effectively. The issue is more about the lack of training for people who work with someone with a cognitive disability in responding to a disclosure.<sup>29</sup>

8.31 Ms Shannon Wright, Director, Community Health and Regional Services, AIDS Council of New South Wales (ACON), told the committee that the NSW Police

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26 *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2014, pp 34-35.

27 *Submission 138*, p. 8.

28 *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2014, p. 30.

29 *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2014, p. 30. See also Ms Therese Sands, Co-Chief Executive Officer, People with Disability Australia, Australian Cross Disability Alliance (ACDA), and Dr Jessica Cadwallader, Advocacy Project Manager, Violence Prevention, ACDA, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 11 June 2015, pp 10-11.



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had already made significant changes to assist lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) individuals, but further:

...inclusivity training similar to what is happening currently in the aged care sector around LGBTI inclusivity would be very welcome in services at this point. In addition, I think the GLLO, the gay and lesbian liaison officers, are very important to our communities, particularly in rural and regional New South Wales. Often that is the one safe person in the police people can go to.<sup>30</sup>

8.32 While the NSW have appointed gay and lesbian liaison officers, Mr Daniel Stubbs, Director, Inner City Legal Centre, noted that police gay and lesbian liaison officers have not been instituted in other police forces:

There are other jurisdictions that do not put so much of an emphasis on the importance of domestic violence liaison officers and gay and lesbian liaison officers understanding this issue, and so we might not be so confident to send someone who is gay or transgender and in need of legal assistance to the police or to the court.<sup>31</sup>

### **Accessing appropriate crisis housing**

8.33 The committee heard that one of the greatest barriers for women trying to escape violent situations was the shortage of safe and affordable crisis housing. For example, Ms Eltringham, Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, outlined how the issue of housing was crucial for many women, as well as their children, who are trying to escape domestic and family violence:

There is always going to be a need for safe crisis housing and then post-crisis housing for women and children—in order to move on with their lives. Women end up living in poverty and trying to remake lives. The cost of getting safe is sometimes that struggle to find safe, affordable housing for themselves and their children.<sup>32</sup>

8.34 Ms Julie Oberin, Chairperson, Australian Women Against Violence Alliance, confirmed some victims and their children are being turned away from crisis accommodation due to capacity issues and argued:

...it is equally important in the short term to increase the response capacity of specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services so that women and children are not, as they currently are, turned away from appropriate supports and protection due to services working to capacity and refuges being full.<sup>33</sup>

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30 *Committee Hansard*, 4 November 2014, p. 36.

31 *Committee Hansard*, 4 November 2014, p. 38.

32 *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2014, p. 5.

33 *Committee Hansard*, 15 October 2014, p. 23.

8.35 The committee also heard that the shortage of emergency housing for particular groups meant some victims were not able to escape violent situations. For instance, Women with Disabilities Australia submitted:

...the lack of accessible refuges and other crisis services, and/or exclusionary policies and practices which deny people with disability access, is a significant factor contributing to people with disability, especially women, remaining in violent relationships and being subjected to violence for significantly longer periods of time than their peers.<sup>34</sup>

8.36 Ms Maya Avdibegovic, Chief Executive Officer, inTouch, gave the committee an example of the risks of not having crisis housing that was culturally appropriate. She told the committee about a woman in Australia on a spousal visa who was physically abused throughout her relationship, who could not speak English, and who only managed to speak to someone about her situation after she had been hospitalised:

She was taken away and provided with crisis accommodation—in a regional part of Victoria. That particular service had trouble communicating with her and addressing her needs. One day she was just dropped off in front of the general homelessness service here in Melbourne and the accommodation that was given to her was in the general homelessness accommodation with a lot of men who suffered from mental health issues, alcohol and drug abuse.<sup>35</sup>

8.37 Mr Alan Brotherton, Director, Policy, Strategy and Research, ACON, pointed to an acute shortage of appropriate and safe housing for LGBTI victims of domestic and family violence who were trying to escape, in particular:

It becomes more complex when it comes to men and accommodation options. Those are very limited and the ones that are available are often very dangerous. It needs a combination of case management and priority access to temporary housing, which is arguably the problem of state governments but the Commonwealth also has an interest in housing.<sup>36</sup>

8.38 Dr Mayet Costello, Research Manager, ANROWS, told the committee that housing was an issue that demanded a flexible approach able to meet the diverse needs of individual women escaping domestic and family violence, including making it possible for women to stay in the family home by rehousing the perpetrator:

The value of a diversity of program responses for women and recognising that each woman will have a different need—some women have secure housing and some women do not et cetera—is really important. Housing space is a good example. Historically, the women's movement has concentrated on refuges and keeping women safe outside their homes. One of our research programs is a 'safe at home' initiative. The opportunity of women being able to stay safe either in their home or in private rental or

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34 *Submission 50*, p. 27.

35 *Committee Hansard*, 5 November 2014, p. 23.

36 *Committee Hansard*, 4 November 2014, p. 35.

private accommodation that is not perhaps their family home but is also not a supported accommodation service, is also important.<sup>37</sup>

8.39 The availability of housing post crisis is discussed further in chapter 10.

### **Services for male victims**

8.40 Mr Greg Andresen, Senior Researcher, One in Three Campaign, told the committee that many male victims of domestic and family violence were unable to access crisis support services because most services catered primarily or exclusively for women.<sup>38</sup> Noting that crisis support services are primarily the responsibility of the states and territories, he suggested there needed to be at least:

...a modicum of services on the ground so that when those men do come forward, there are some services for them to go to. At the moment if we have a flood of men coming forward...there are a whole lot of closed doors, that revictimises those men. We are not saying we want the same amount of services that women have, but just a modicum so that there is something for those men.<sup>39</sup>

8.41 Mr Andresen also told the committee that there were no specialised services to support male victims from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds or from the LGTBI community:

It is my belief that specific services for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and the LGBTI community are necessary because there are specific needs that those communities have that are specific to them. The kinds of issues that a gay man being abused by his partner may face - around homophobia, around threats of being outed and all that sort of thing - are specific. I would say that those services are necessary, and underfunded if anything.<sup>40</sup>

## **Committee view**

### ***Coordination***

8.42 A key message during the inquiry has been the need for improved coordination of domestic and family violence policy and responses across agencies and levels of government, as well as between government and non-government stakeholders in the sector.

8.43 The committee notes the need for better coordination is recognised in the National Plan:

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37 *Committee Hansard*, 4 November 2014, p. 7.

38 *Committee Hansard*, 4 November 2014, pp 25-26. See also One in Three Campaign, *Submission 23*, pp 20-21.

39 *Committee Hansard*, 4 November 2014, p. 29.

40 *Committee Hansard*, 4 November 2014, p. 29.

While all governments have services and programs to respond to violence against women and their children and many of them are highly effective—these responses could be improved by a coordinated approach.<sup>41</sup>

8.44 The committee was told about models being trialled in some states and territories to improve coordination and information sharing of the sector. A clear message was for coordination to be appropriately resourced by jurisdictions.

8.45 The committee notes the need for further coordination of responses to domestic and family violence was recently highlighted by the Queensland Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence. The Special Taskforce recommended the Queensland Government pilot integrated response models to domestic and family violence, including specialist responses in urban and regional areas, and in a discrete Indigenous community.<sup>42</sup>

8.46 To assist the development of coordinated jurisdictional responses and information sharing, the committee believes that there needs to be a mechanism for the results of various trials to be made available, shared and discussed to further build the evidence base.

### **Recommendation 13**

**8.47 The committee recommends the Commonwealth Government, through COAG, establishes and resources a subcommittee of First Ministers to enable jurisdictions to share the results of trials and to coordinate the development of best practice policy and service responses to domestic and family violence.**

### **Recommendation 14**

**8.48 The committee recommends the Commonwealth Government, through COAG, take leadership in the facilitation of effective police responses to domestic and family violence, encouraging states to implement targeted training and programs.**

#### *Police*

8.49 The committee notes that police play a crucial role not only in dealing with cases of domestic and family violence that have already occurred, but also in identifying and preventing potential cases. The committee recognises the work that state and federal police forces have done to change their approaches to domestic and family violence cases over a number of years. The committee also recognises the work underway in jurisdictions to better coordinate responses and share information.

8.50 The committee heard of some areas where there could be improvements in the way police respond to particular communities such as Indigenous, CALD, those with a disability and LGBTI. The committee encourages police forces to further build on the

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41 National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022, p. 4.

42 Recommendation 74, *'Not Now, Not Ever' – Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland*. (March 2015), p. 31.

work to date by considering the suggestions provided to the committee about how they can better engage with particular communities.

### *Crisis housing*

8.51 The committee heard that there is a shortage of crisis housing for women escaping domestic and family violence. The committee was concerned to hear of instances where crisis housing did not seem to be appropriate for women traumatised from domestic and family violence, and particularly for women from vulnerable groups such as those from CALD or Indigenous backgrounds, women with a disability, or LGBTI individuals.

8.52 While the committee recognises the strain on available crisis accommodation, it would encourage jurisdictions to ensure a diversity of responses are provided to cater for specific needs, including programs to help women to stay at in their own home, where it is safe to do so.

### *Services for male victims*

8.53 The committee acknowledges the need for services to support male victims of domestic and family violence, as the committee heard that many services are focussed on women and may not be appropriate for male victims.

### **Recommendation 15**

**8.54 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government recognise the need to provide appropriate services to male victims of domestic and family violence.**

