

Let's build a community that makes a difference. End domestic and family violence.



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In late 2022, representatives from three service clubs, Rotary Club of Mawson Lakes, Soroptimist International Torrens and the Zonta Club of Para District Area met to discuss organising a Candelight Vigil for victim-survivors and others affected by domestic violence. We met because we shared a concern about domestic violence and the effect on our community and because we realised that working together would be more effective than acting individually and we could have a greater impact.

Although the numbers were less than we hoped at the vigil, this collaboration and the responses we had from those who attended, and our own clubs led to us meeting early in 2023 to explore ways we could continue the collaboration.

Why are we writing a submission? We are not service providers and do not support those affected by domestic violence directly. We realise the issues paper and the included questions were aimed at those more directly involved. However, we do support agencies and service providers with materials for victim survivors and at times give financial support.

We believe the role of the Commission is to provide recommendations which encompass the whole community and will have maximum spread and benefit. Critical to this process are awareness raising and skills development. Finding out what is happening outside of frontline services is important. We want to shine a light on community organisations and service groups. Although each may have small memberships, collectively there are many thousands of individuals interested and willing to help.

We have called our collaboration, RoZSI's Voice. The name was formed by using our club initials and Voice was to reflect that we want to help people have a voice and we want to share information amongst the broader community. Our collaboration has achieved a number of actions; developed and signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2023 and obtained a City of Salisbury Community Grant and used this to make a difference in the council area. Our funding covered the cost of publicity and marketing, so we now have a facebook presence and a recognisable logo. We were supported by Griffith University to run a bystander workshop in 2023 which included a webinar which was available Australia wide. A brochure on Coercive Control was developed and has proved very popular with requests, leading to a third printing. A Coercive Control workshop for 40 service providers was held in June 2024 and we also participated in community markets at Mawson Lakes, Ingle Farm and Tea Tree Gully where we had many conversations with people who directly experienced domestic violence or supported those who did. We have spoken to other service clubs and Council community meetings.

At the **community markets**, we provided information about coercive control and domestic abuse. We have been surprised at the number of people who initiated conversations and shared stories of their own or others' experiences. This has illustrated to us that they want to tell someone, and it is important to hear their stories. We have heard from victim survivors as well as relatives who have

supported them. In some cases, grandparents have expressed their frustration about their inability to help. Often, they have also talked about what they thought was not done properly and sometimes it was many years ago, but the frustration was still there. We used this concept of market conversations in our funding application to a local council with the aim of collecting information for the commission. We have wanted to record grass roots community views.

Common to all the conversations and questions after presentations has been the query about what individuals can do to help. We believe that community members can help but they need support and direction.

When the Royal Commission was announced, we formed **Northern Adelaide Community Collaboration (NACC)** by inviting people we knew held similar concerns about domestic abuse to join us. NACC was set up to encourage the collection of information in the northern Adelaide community and we approached 3 local councils to support our work.

The community working together with the support of volunteers can help eliminate domestic abuse. We need to help people develop skills and knowledge so they can become a volunteer army to fight abuse and violence. Australia has a clear record of valuing and effectively utilising volunteers, and the Sydney Olympics demonstrated this.

One implemented recommendation of the Victorian Royal commission led to Respectful Relationships being incorporated into school curriculum. If we want change, we need to promote **educative programmes** in schools, workplaces and the broader community.

It is our belief that many community members are interested in stopping this abuse but need support to recognise signs and to feel confident in offering information and help. If we can develop and grow community networks, we are on the right path. There are many service clubs and organisations which would work together if they saw the opportunities and we are hopeful that along with recommending actions which directly support victim survivors, there will be some which consider the **power of the community** and empower members to be part of the solution.

We have seen the effectiveness of **domestic violence networks** in southern and western Adelaide and are actively promoting one in northern Adelaide. Support for these networks will help make a difference so that activities can be shared and new initiatives planned and delivered.

We submit that collectively, volunteer organisations and members of the community have an interest in preventing domestic abuse and if this was recognised and they were supported they could make a difference. Recommendations which facilitate this should be considered and included.

Submitted on behalf of

- Rotary Club of Mawson Lakes
- Soroptimist International Torrens
- Zonta Club of Para District Area
[REDACTED], Zonta Club of Para District Area