

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

I believe the Australian Government to date has not responded in any practical way to the rising incidence of domestic violence against women and sexual assault in this country. Recent statistics released in the media have shown that one woman in Australia is murdered by her spouse/partner/boyfriend every four days, and according to the Internet, Australia is currently, the second to highest country in the world for violence against women (Internet, 2024).

Furthermore, according to the Internet in 2022, only 1.5% of women who had been sexually assaulted in Australia had won their cases in court. This means that women who had been sexually assaulted or raped realized that under Australian law, they were very unlikely to receive a fair hearing or receive justice against a sexual abuser in the current judicial system. Consequently, very few women did not report their sexual assault and the perpetrator remained free and not accountable for his actions. In this so called “Lucky Country”, **it is high time that the laws against domestic violence and sexual assault against women were changed to address this social injustice**, the deplorable statistics, and Australia’s reputation as a “civilized country” by the Albanese Government.

To conduct the current Royal Commission on domestic violence against women may be useful but the Commission must have the power to ensure radical changes are made to the law to address the needs of abused and threatened women.

I am truly horrified by the lack of practical and sensible support, and social justice that is clearly absent from the Australian legal system concerning the violence against women. The law **must** be changed to **support** the traumatized woman in court who has been violated instead of regarding her as the guilty one who is responsible for the assault and rape. Her evidence should be respectfully listened to, and the perpetrator of the violence held accountable for his actions. At this stage, the perpetrator of both domestic violence and sexual assault receives immunity from the law and the victim of the abuse does not receive justice from the law at all (Miller, 2019; Miller 2023). **This outcome is both unjust and wrong, and it must be addressed by the Albanese Government.**

It is the right time for the Albanese Government to take practical steps to put in place strategies that have been expressed in Australia by Hill (2024), Miller (2023; 2019) and practiced in other countries of the world, for example Argentina (Carrington et al 2020).

In her White Paper, Hill (2024) lists four preventative strategies that need to be put into practice by the Albanese Government.

1. **Accountability and Consequences are Prevention**

Laws need to be passed that will enable police to stop violent and controlling people from continuing to use violence and coercive control against their current partner(s) (Hill, 2024). Currently, this is not the situation, and the woman receives no support or justice, whilst the perpetrator remains free.

Laws need to be passed that will introduce accountability and consequences across the systems weaponised by perpetrators, from child support to Centrelink and the family courts. Abusers should be identified by these systems and required to face consequences, instead of being allowed to carry on with impunity (Hill, 2024).

Laws also need to be passed that will enable major banks to detect, suspend, cancel or deny persistent financially abusive behaviour by domestic perpetrators (Hill, 2024). Currently, this is not the case, and the woman receives very little or no support whilst the perpetrator remains free to continue his abusive behaviour.

2. Recovery is prevention

I agree that child abuse and neglect – including growing up with coercive control, being physically or sexually abused and being shamed or neglected by parents – are accelerants to adult victimisation and perpetration. The work done on preventing child abuse, preventing violence against women, and healing from trauma and abuse all needs to be linked. There is an obvious need to properly resource the frontline health professionals to work with child survivors so they can properly heal (Hill, 2024).

3. Regulating damaging industries (including porn, gambling, alcohol and social media) is prevention

I support the statement “that we all have a role to play in ending gendered violence, but those roles and responsibilities are not equal. For example, 14-year-old boys do not have the same responsibility for ending gendered violence as, say, the owners of TikTok or PornHub. We know young people feel that pornography is normalising sexual practices that girls and women describe as painful or unpleasant, and mainstreaming dangerous practices such as non-fatal strangulation (Hill, 2024).

I concur with Hill (2024) that “we as concerned Australians and The Federal Government need to get serious about the impact of certain industries – particularly gambling and alcohol, the social media, pornographic sites, radical grooming sites and **to hold these industries accountable for harmful behaviour and with consequences.**”

If China for example, can efficiently remove dangerous material behaviour from the internet and social media sites that is seen as unacceptable by the state, then why cannot the Australian Government do the same? It would no doubt mean that the Australian judicial system would need to carefully examine and amend the laws around freedom of speech, to outline what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on the social media, and to identify the consequences for breaking the law. For instance, I believe that internet and social media sites should be fined millions of dollars by the Australian Government each day if they fail to remove harmful material violence against women and children.

Gambling And Alcohol

In our current prevention approach, the private sector is predominantly engaged in terms of education and training to create safe and respectful workplaces. That’s important, but there is no mention of business models that are causing or exacerbating gendered violence. We need to get serious about the impact of certain industries – particularly gambling and alcohol – on the severity and impact of perpetration. Even if we don’t consider problem gambling or alcohol to be the *cause* of family violence or coercive control and simply see them as exacerbating factors, isn’t it incumbent on us to tackle exacerbating factors, especially those that lead to more severe physical injuries? Our leaders say they want men to step up. Let’s see them take on these vested interests and show the country what “stepping up” really looks like” (Hill, 2024).

4. Structural improvements to gender equality, such as the single parenting payment, is prevention

“About 60% of single mothers have escaped domestic abuse. Even after they leave a controlling partner, our systems make it almost impossible for them to be safe. We need to reform our systems – from family law to child support and child protection – to vouchsafe their freedom, safety and independence” (Hill, 2024).

One of the strategies to lower the incidence of violence against women in Argentina is reported by Carrington et al (2020) and it involved the setting up of police stations, managed by women police officers. The initiative has been very effective in lowering the rates of incidence against women in South America and could be introduced in Australia.

Personally, I would like to see:

1. The Australian laws changed as stated previously to support the abused woman and hold the perpetrator accountable for his actions.

2. The Government to seriously consider setting up police units who are managed by committed women police officers to assist abused women achieve justice as per the article by Carrington et al (2020).
3. Freedom of speech laws changed to allow Governments to 1). remove harmful and evil material from media sites, 2). Fine media sites millions of dollars each day their harmful and unacceptable material remains on site. 3). Communicate clearly to the Australian public the reason why the Government has taken that action.
4. The laws changed to protect and support a woman who is attempting to hold a rapist accountable for his actions. This will mean a major change of the current law to allow the judge to consider the evidence given by the woman as facts, to control the demeaning language used by the defence lawyer in the court to demonstrate that woman's account is not the truth (Miller 2023), to take into consideration the action taken by police when the crime was first reported, to also take into consideration the abuser's previous history of violence against women (Carrington et al. 2020), and for the judge to fully support the traumatised woman (Miller, 2019; Miller, 2023).

References

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How Women's Police Stations Empower Women, Widen Access to Justice and Prevent Gender Violence

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Abstract

Women's police stations are a distinctive innovation that emerged in postcolonial nations of the global south in the second half of the twentieth century to address violence against women. This article presents the results of a world-first study of the unique way that these stations, called *Comisaría de la Mujer*, prevent gender-based violence in the Province of Buenos Aires, Argentina.¹ One in five police stations in this Province was established with a mandate of preventing gender violence. Little is currently known about how this distinctive multidisciplinary model of policing (which includes social workers, lawyers, psychologists and police) widens access to justice to prevent gender violence. This article compares the model's virtues and limitations to traditional policing models. We conclude that specialised women's police stations in the postcolonial societies of the global south increase access to justice, empower women to liberate themselves from the subjection of domestic violence and prevent gender violence by challenging patriarchal norms that sustain it. As a by-product, these women's police stations also offer women in the global south a career in law enforcement—one that is based on a gender perspective. The study is framed by southern criminology, which reverses the notion that ideas, policies and theories can only travel from the anglophone world of the global north to the global south.