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Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

Re: Response to Issues Paper

My response to this Royal Commission's Issues paper and Terms of Reference is based on being a feminist activist for 40 years, with a long-term commitment to change social attitudes and practices that discriminate against women, and a desire to promote legislation and practices that will advance and benefit women of South Australia.

Given the active recent involvement of all other Australian States: Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, into aspects of domestic and sexual violence, I am relieved that the South Australian Government has now officially responded to the ongoing emergency crisis in this State by setting up a Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, and am very pleased that Commissioner Natasha Stott Despoja AO has accepted the appointment of leading it.

I applaud the Commissioner's publicly stated intention to conduct informal sessions with indigenous people in regional and remote areas of South Australia, and I sincerely hope this outreach and approach will encourage open discussion and direct sharing of their first-hand experiences. However, I am concerned that they may be deterred from participating through shame, embarrassment, self-blame, and guilt as well as an anxiety that any disclosures may result in a lack of support or possibly repercussions from their families and relatives.

I also have some concern that a lack of trust or confidence in the police, the courts, various agencies, and relevant Government Departments may be an impediment to broad community participation, as well as a fear of repercussions, and disillusionment at the failure of the current system of Government service provision.

I note the Commission's statement under clause 20, namely:

"The Commission will consider all requests for confidentiality and will notify you of its decision."

I question whether this may deter employees of agencies or Departments, who are at the interface with victims/survivors, from providing valuable firsthand evidence of current crisis service responses that require improvement, so I suggest a stronger reassurance of confidentiality would encourage more input to questions (8) (10) (11).

Yours sincerely,

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