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Natasha Stott Despoja
AO Royal
Commissioner

Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

Submitted via: https://agdroyal.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2hLHOn_hearojAbA

Dear Ms Stott Despoja

Second Part – Flinders Criminology Submission to the Royal Commission into Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence (the Royal Commission).

In 2023 there have been a number of FDV-related homicide involving women from multicultural background in SA. In South Australia, there are an estimated 19,300 women who have experienced such violence from 2021–2023 (ABS, 2023), yet little we know about FDV experiences in multicultural communities via data from ABS, SAPOL and other sources.

The intricacies of family and domestic violence (FDV) against women and girls, particularly within the frameworks of multicultural contexts, are frequently overlooked in research and government discussions concerning the comprehension and intervention strategies that are suitable for multicultural cohorts. This oversight may hinder the development of culturally sensitive approaches necessary for effectively addressing the unique experiences and challenges faced by diverse populations.

This submission proposes:

- Proactive Approach and Education for multicultural communities in SA, with recommendation 1:

Invest in DFV training leaders / gatekeepers (religious or otherwise, and especially women) for a better and healthier future within established and emerging multicultural communities in SA.

And

- A Blueprint for SA Government Accountability, with recommendation 2:

Prioritise a mechanism of SA Government’s accountability in primary prevention within multicultural communities through the building of “milestone checker”

This document is the second part of Flinders Criminology submission to the Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, with the first

part submitted on 16 August 2024.

This submission is divided into two parts:

1. **Presentation of context:** a literature review on the importance of primary prevention for multicultural communities
2. **Presentation of solutions:** a call to seriously invest in preventative measures for multicultural communities

Yours sincerely,

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FIRST PART - PRESENTATION OF CONTEXT

Understanding multiculturalism in the FDV conversation

There is not enough quantitative and qualitative research from the government breaking down the cultural and linguistic diversity of FDV victim-survivors, perpetrators and community experiences in Australia. This is across all instruments, from Australian Bureau of Statistics to Australian Institute of criminology, and across all States and territories Attorney Generals' and police data. The same issue exists for South Australia.

Yet, the prevalence of CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) populations nationally is non-negligible. In 2021, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported that nearly 30 percent of the federal population was born overseas in England, China, India, New Zealand, and the Philippines as the top five foreign countries of birth. Furthermore, 10 percent of Australian households speak a language other than English, including Mandarin, Arabic, Vietnamese, Cantonese, and Punjabi as the top five spoken. In South Australia, 24 percent of the population was born elsewhere (almost 430,000 people) and 18 percent spoke a second language (ABS, 2022). South Australians have declared over 300 ancestries, speak 248 languages, and practice 128 religions (Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2021). Suffice it to say, multicultural communities in SA have long integrated into the state with metropolitan areas such as the City of Adelaide (45 percent), Campbelltown (36 percent), and Port Adelaide Enfield (36 percent) and regional areas such as Alexandrina (22 percent), Adelaide Hills (21 percent), and Victor Harbor (19 percent) housing the largest overseas communities (Department of the Premier and Cabinet, 2021).

More recent research indicates that migrant and refugee communities are disproportionately vulnerable to family violence and face significant challenges in accessing the justice system. Several interrelated factors contribute to this heightened vulnerability. (Mitra-Kahn et al 2016; Ibrahim 2020a). This situation is no different in South Australia, where women and girls from multicultural communities similarly experience heightened vulnerability to FDV, and face significant obstacles in accessing the justice system. The challenges are compounded not just by individual but by structural and cultural constraints. (Esmaeili et al 2020; Ibrahim, 2020b; Esmaeili et al 2022; Zanettino et al 2023; Marmo et al 2024).

When seeking help, FDV victim-survivors of multicultural backgrounds encounter multitudes of specific barriers. The Health and Welfare Institute (2024) acknowledges that “cultures can differ in their attitudes towards gender roles, relationships, and family dynamics” (unpaginated) thus differentiating CALD communities' perception and action (or lack of)

towards FDV. As individuals from CALD backgrounds settle in Australia, they may undergo a process of acculturation that influences their cultural gender norms, which have been shaped by familial and upbringing contexts. Lu et al. (2020: 6) write that cultures may set “expectations and behavioural rules operating for men and women”, where men assume dominant roles within the family structure and experience freedoms from which women are systematically restricted. Meanwhile, according to Lu et al. (2020), women remain mostly subservient – which includes staying silent – to their spouses. This ‘clash of cultures’ in Australia can also exacerbate FDV on women and children. FDV in these spaces may have occurred by CALD men reacting to “a sudden liberalisation of women [...] CALD men are generally more resistant to women possessing different gender norms and higher societal status [...] CALD women generally were happy to embrace their new rights and freedoms” (Lu et al. 2020:6). This tension, combined with feelings of isolation and men's perceptions of losing control over their households, may result in explosive incidents of violence directed toward female family members and spouses. (p.6-7).

Following an incident of violence in the aforementioned context, victim-survivors may grapple with the complex balance between seeking support and resources for their recovery and safety—of which they may possess some knowledge—and the cultural upbringing to protect their family reputation, maintain the cohesion of their family unit. In this delicate balancing act, it is essential not to overlook the challenges that victim-survivors face when confronting stereotypes and racism within support systems and law enforcement agencies (Sawrikar, 2019). These conflicting emotions can significantly limit the support that victim-survivors are able to access.

A fundamental factor in this context is the perception of FDV as a private family matter, particularly within collectivist communities where the preservation of family reputation is paramount,

“In other words, the family name must be protected at all costs [...] individual needs for safety are seen as second to those of the familial or collective group” (Sawrikar, 2019: 7).

In such cases, the involvement of police or child protection services may pose a risk of damaging the community or family's reputation. The perceived or actual threats faced by victim-survivors can lead to increased isolation or even rejection from their community. Furthermore, reporting a perpetrator within the family may be perceived as a threat or betrayal to the family unit and its deeply held values, which are often regarded as sacred in collectivist multicultural contexts.

There are, however, **more pragmatic explanations** that are frequently obscured by discussions surrounding cultural norms. Here, we provide a brief summary of practical explanations, emphasising that this is merely a preliminary list for the Commission's consideration.

Logistically, victim-survivors may be legally, financially, physically, logistically and emotionally dependent as immigrants. They may be located “in outer suburbs or regionally, where access to transport is difficult” (Northern Integrated Family Violence Services, n.d. and unpaginated). They may hesitate to report violence due to their visa status in Australia and thus not eligible for social services through Centrelink, or dependent on the perpetrator’s visa (Northern Integrated Family Violence Services, n.d.). To this end, it is important to consider not just the situation lived through by the victim-survivor and her dependants (eg. children), but also how the broader family and community may react in cases where the visa or citizenship of a FDV perpetrator has been revoked. Visa revocation may even result in the potential removal of the individual, who, in many instances, serves as the primary financial supporter of the direct and wider family (Marmo, forthcoming). There have been cases where the very CALD women who have been the victim-survivors of FDV for years, had been labelled as perpetrator by police. This has also led to visa cancellation, after being punished to more than 12-month imprisonment (Marmo, forthcoming).

These constraints impose silence. Therefore, these constraints cannot be dismissed as ‘just cultural’, but they present very practical obstacles. FDV victim-survivors may feel compelled to remain silent, prioritising the preservation of household for the sake of their children and to minimise attracting wider law enforcement and other attention due to negative consequences either experienced personally or heard via informal networks. This is a harsh reality that is often underdiscussed in these contexts, despite its significant implications for the affected individuals and their immediate families.

To add to these constraints, explained above are not the only reasons why engagement and uptake for state social services are especially low for multicultural minority populations. In this delicate balancing act—navigating the pursuit of safety against the desire for stability for oneself and one’s family within both their own cultural community and the broader Australian context—victim-survivors face a further significant issue. It is indeed essential not to overlook the challenges that victim-survivors face when confronting stereotypes and racism within support systems and law enforcement agencies (Sawrikar, 2019; Ibrahim, 2020b).

Despite substantial improvements and training initiatives, these communities may still harbour fears of experiencing racism from police or other professionals (including GPs and health emergencies services) when reporting FDV.

In summary, the Australian Migrant Resource Centre (2022) reports that although, internationally, women from English-speaking backgrounds “reported higher levels of physical, sexual, and any violence over their lifetime” than non-English-speaking counterparts, this is likely due to the rarity of reports from CALD peoples. In Australia – and in South Australia - this translates to a real concern of a lack of data available to inform strategies that ‘works’ for these cohorts.

Preventing FDV: Primary Prevention

From reactive to proactive early intervention

“Proactive prevention” in combatting FDV aims to prevent violence from occurring at all (primary prevention) and take action against early signs of violence (early intervention). This differs from the more proliferated *reactive* measures applied after initial occurrences to prevent escalation and further violence (Birch and Veljanova, 2018).

Any contact with the criminal justice system and law enforcement is already reactive intervention. This is framed as particularly harmful for diverse populations.

In First Nations communities, Buxton-Namisnyk (2022) finds that “very few examples of police interventions did not produce some identifiable harm” (p.1329). These issues mainly arise from pre-existing “colonial” Western attitudes which feed into the police’s assumptions of how FDV victim-survivors should behave — juxtaposed by the stereotype that Aboriginal women are ill-fitting to the image of a victim, and thus mistaken as aggressors. As a result, trust in the police to deliver justice and safety is diminished. This submission recognises the value of primary prevention for First Nations communities but we do not expand on this, since we focus on CALD communities.

The issue of trust (and trust building) towards criminal justice system in victim-survivors of CALD background is central here. This is not an automatic process, and we need to build towards this, also via primary prevention.

Against women-led police stations

The burgeoning body of literature examining women-led police stations presents a

compelling intersection of swift reactive intervention and sustainable preventive strategies within law enforcement. This innovative model aims to address systemic issues related to gender-based violence and community safety through a framework that emphasizes both immediacy in response and long-term societal change.

Emerging studies indicate that women-led police stations not only foster an environment of trust and empathy but also promote community engagement and collaboration. These institutions often prioritise a trauma-informed approach, which is particularly vital in addressing the needs of survivors of violence. By integrating community voices into policing practices, these stations can facilitate more effective and culturally sensitive interventions.

The Australian policy debate regarding the implementation of specialist women's police stations has been ongoing and multifaceted, reflecting a critical engagement with strategies aimed at mitigating violence against women. Proponents of this model argue that dedicated police stations, staffed primarily by female officers and equipped to address the unique needs of women, could significantly enhance the reporting, investigation, and prevention of gender-based violence. These may also include non-police staff such as lawyers and psychologists, with playrooms for children as seen in the Global South, particularly in Argentina with Police Stations for Women and Families (CMFs) littered throughout the country (Carrington et al., 2023). Carrington et al. (2022) find that although there is no definitive evidence locally that CMFs prevent FDV, there is strong potential to push for transformative change. Similar stigmas such as victim-blaming or family shame are ever-present in Argentina and other Global South countries, and CMFs frequent education initiatives (leafleting, campaigns, etc) may work to better the lack of societal empathy for victim-survivors rooted in the “stubborn masculinist culture of policing” (p.1) in Global North societies.

Preliminary studies indicate a positive perception among both policy makers and ‘white feminist’ scholars regarding the potential benefits of women's police stations in the prevention and policing of family and domestic violence (FDV).

However, Carrington's research, often cited in discussions of this model, has faced criticism for its limited empirical grounding (Deslandes et al., 2022). Critics argue that while the qualitative insights are valuable, the absence of robust data weakens the case for widespread implementation of women-led police stations. Without comprehensive empirical evidence, it becomes challenging to ascertain the true impact of such initiatives on FDV rates, victim satisfaction, and overall community safety.

Furthermore—and most saliently for South Australia—the existing research frequently

neglects to account for the diversity of experiences among women from various cultural, socioeconomic, gender-fluid and geographically rural-remote backgrounds (Porter et al., 2021). Argentinian public opinion surveys legitimising the societal acceptance of women police stations rarely include victim statements and were centred around affluent metropolitan areas, including officers themselves. Furthermore, incidents involving women officers in La Plata, Argentina, who publicly searched ten transgender women while allegedly threatening them with gunshots, raise significant concerns regarding police conduct and the treatment of marginalized communities. This event, characterised by a lack of clear justification for the searches, underscores broader issues of discrimination and violence within law enforcement practices, which remains an issue even with women-led police stations. In Latin America, Indigenous and Afro-descendent women often face significant barriers to accessing women's police services, primarily due to a lack of personnel who are culturally competent and linguistically equipped to address their specific needs (Porter et al., 2021). This situation underscores a critical gap in the provision of equitable and effective law enforcement services for marginalised communities.

It is evident that current popular narratives surrounding diversity often fall short of the proactive and expansive frameworks necessary to adequately address the complexities within communities. These narratives frequently lack the depth required to explore the interplay between structural and cultural change, resulting in a superficial understanding of the issues at hand.

Primary Prevention funded on post-colonial feminist values

To effectively advance the conversation, a post-colonial feminist perspective is essential.

This approach transcends a purely gendered analysis by integrating considerations of race, class, and colonial histories, thereby fostering a more holistic understanding of the challenges faced by marginalised groups. By situating gender within the broader contexts of power dynamics and historical oppression, a post-colonial feminist lens can illuminate the ways in which intersecting identities influence individuals' experiences and access to resources.

Carrington's celebrated findings, widely disseminated through mainstream media outlets such as ABC and The Guardian, may reflect a broader issue within policy research that predominantly prioritizes white middle-class perspectives while inadvertently marginalising Indigenous and other underrepresented voices (Deslandes et al., 2022).

This phenomenon raises critical questions about the inclusivity and representativeness of research narratives that inform policy decisions.

Through this paper, we re-emphasise the need to spotlight post-colonial feminism in the context of ***any* reform proposed as outcome of the current Royal Commission.**

A post-colonial feminist approach examines the intersectionality of social factors such as class, gender, and race alongside the consideration of history, socio-economics, and spatial location in considering justice, incarceration, and protection of *non-white* bodies. It examines the legacies of colonialism against the backdrop of exclusion perpetuated by the white feminist tradition in contemporary feminist criminology. The aim is to amplify the voices and assert the agency of multicultural women and marginalised groups within the discourse of criminology and policy (Choak, 2020). By prioritising these perspectives, we seek to challenge dominant narratives that often overlook or silence their experiences.

This idea of intersectionality has previously been applied to prevent FDV in the US. As written by Sokoloff (2008), utilising the intersectional paradigm affirms that effective measures must be dynamic and not universally applicable — henceforth best reaching the most marginalised groups in society. She notes that it is insufficient to blame culture alone which normalises FDV, but we must also note the economic and structural backgrounds high-risk communities are placed in. For example, in invigorating statistics which generally state that black women are more likely than white women to become victim-survivors of FDV, further research reveals that “black women are less likely than white women to be battered when one controls for income and marital status” (p.157). Thus, the race factor is often falsely attributed when the neighbourhood (surrounding households with high unemployment and poverty rates) and collective efficacy (surrounding community’s willingness to benefit one another’s family through action) are more prevalent. Moreover, multicultural communities face more intense degrees of poverty and other economic and non-economic challenges than white communities.

Exclusively pinning culture is also harmful as it assumes women in CALD communities are “victim-survivors of their culture” (Sokoloff 2008:158). This approach often dismisses cultures outside the Western majority as less enlightened or backward by disproportionately emphasizing extreme practices that are rarely representative of those cultures. Such a narrow focus tends to overlook and automatically disregard the valuable, empowering principles inherent in these communities, such as collective care, communal support, and resilience. This normalcy also undervalues the positions of Indigenous and non-white scholars who advocate for culturally significant solutions such as **community-led prevention blueprints** (e.g. Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations as a primary culturally and trauma-informed

disclosure medium for First Nations women) (Deslandes et al., 2022). Recent work has also argued that hitherto institutionalised applications of culturally diverse populations, such as the term “CALD” itself, fail to encompass the tradition of radical grassroots organising and theorising in black-led intersectional feminism (Maturi and Munro, 2023).

As a result, government policies neglect to address the state's responsibility to develop aid and safety nets that champion multiculturalism and instead impose mainstream Western ideas of care and justice. This manifests in ways such as conflating all born-overseas, immigrant, and linguistically diverse populations under one presumed umbrella of “cultural” people and thus it is this inextricably linked facet that perpetuates violence.

“Under the logic of culture as a ‘barrier’ or ‘impediment’ [...], it is further assumed that Australia can provide, or maintains, freedoms, rights, and protections equally for everyone because Australia either doesn’t have culture, or its culture is egalitarian and white” (Maturi and Munro, 2023: 50).

Maturi and Munro claim that instead of pinpointing cultural legacy as the main blockage to CALD communities’ extrication from FDV behaviours, we must acknowledge that “culture is dynamic and contested” (p.155) — incompatible with a standardised approach rid of culture entirely in favour of the Western way and more effectively criticised through challenging “cultural structures that uphold racism, violence, and exclusion” (p.155).

PRESENTATION OF SOLUTIONS

Going Forward: Proactive Prevention Measures For multicultural Communities

So far, we can infer from the above review of prominent literature and compelling voices that:

- a) There is an ongoing trend in national policy that increasingly invests resources in proactive prevention measures for FDV, but further groundwork must be done to design best practice mechanisms for CALD communities.
 - i) Prevention is best employed through the shifting of systematic and community attitudes towards FDV.
 - ii) Often state approaches lean into policing in some way, which has extensively been proven to be incompatible with CALD communities due to histories of violence, racism, and oppression and cultural or linguistic barriers to communication prone to be overlooked.

- iii) Prevention measures require extensive organisation from all levels of government that integrates informed education efforts with the public and active dialogue with “high-risk” communities and families.
- b) CALD FDV victim-survivors may avoid reporting violence due to culturally-originated values of patriarchal roles in the family, cultural and community shame, alongside pragmatic / logistic barriers, such as legal, financial, and other types of dependency on perpetrators.
- c) Solely focusing on cultural barriers to eliminating FDV in CALD communities is harmful, as it overlooks overwhelming evidence of structural factors that marginalise minority populations such as economic and non-economic disadvantages. **This also substantially minimises government responsibility.**
 - i) This perpetuates the erasure of Indigenous and non-white scholarship that advocates for culturally relevant and community-led solutions.
 - ii) The existence of culture is perceived negatively in light of the “culture-less” Western and Australian processes; culture and subsequent approaches cannot be uniformised.

Linking community-led primary prevention to government responsibility

Zannettino, Marmo, Esmaeili & Richards (2023) propose that best-practice prevention requires the government and legal system to actively engage with cultural communities and their stringent pillars of value to co-design education which reduces FDV. Taking up an explicitly South Australian context, they investigate local Afghani religious and community leaders’ views on family violence and their role in bridging Australian societal expectations and internal practices (Shia Muslim/Islamic Sharia). It was found that they unanimously agreed on the overwhelming danger of FDV with further potential to harm their community — explicitly highlighting unique immigrant denominators such as intergenerational conflict, trauma as asylum-seekers, displacement, and logistical barriers such as non-fluency in English contributing to violence in the household. Zannettino et al. claim that, instead of stagnating on the detriments of culture on progress, there is “potential for religious leaders in [the Afghani] community to utilise a more progressive understanding of Islam which can bridge to the wider Australian community and the legal system” (p.12). The state and external social institutions can work to equip leaders (dubbed as potential “gatekeepers”) with knowledge of best-practice approaches to support victim-survivors, disclosure principles, and how to collaborate with Australian law to seek justice.

Marmo, Esmaeili, Ibrahim, & Lock-Weir (2023) point out that even multicultural leaders specialised in law (such as lawyers) do not know about crucial matter in the FDV context (eg. Forced marriage being criminalised since 2013) in SA. The information and support services currently available are not penetrating effectively within SA multicultural communities. This gap in outreach and engagement can result in significant barriers to accessing vital resources for individuals facing challenges such as violence, discrimination, and social isolation.

Investing in training for leaders and gatekeepers—whether they are religious figures or community leaders, particularly women—represents a significant opportunity for fostering a better future for both established and emerging multicultural communities in South Australia (Ibrahim 2018; 2019; 2022). This leads us to recommendation 1:

Invest in DFV training leaders / gatekeepers (religious or otherwise, and especially women) for a better and healthier future within established and emerging multicultural communities in SA.

Have we really built a “whole-of-population” approach yet?

Hill (2024) stresses that our current “whole-of-population” approach is not sustainable and has yielded minimal results thus far. “Prevention” needs to be redefined to underline a) accountability of perpetrators and the government, b) recovery of survivors, c) regulation of correlated industries such as porn and gambling, and d) improvement of social safety nets which push gender equality such as financial support for single parents. Foundation-building policies, such as age verification for online porn under the e-Safety Commissioner roadmap (Hill and Salter, 2024), are part of this approach, for example. This would set a path to address “strong evidence that children’s exposure to pornography is resulting in more severe sexual behaviour” (unpaginated). Indeed, unregulated pornography models violent sexual behaviour as ideal such as unprompted strangulation in sex, despite being criminalised (Sharman et al 2024). Additionally, everyday systems must be integrated to pose severe consequences such as working with major banks to suspend and deny DVF perpetrators access to their funds if exhibiting “persistent financially abusive behaviour” (unpaginated).

While what suggested above have got merit, we stress that the “whole-of-population” approach never truly included the “whole-of-population”.

The Australian Migrant Resource Centre released the 2022 “AMRC” model for working with emergent communities. They identify that FDV in immigrant populations may both be socio-ecologically and culturally induced and thus operate on a blueprint that invigorates multi-

level stakeholders such as Individuals (women, men, youth), Peer Networks (ethno-specific and community organisations), Community (immigrant networks and refugee communities), Organisation (up-skilling core staff), and Partnerships (dialogue with researchers and experts). This allows for specifically curating messages “through different community settings [...] that reflect the different ways in which migrant and refugee communities engage” (p.12). Other notable works include Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS)’s CALD Projects (2017-2020) through action research which directly engaged with local stakeholders and specific multicultural communities (e.g. collaborating with the Centre for Holistic Health in Victoria to dismantle stigmas fortifying FDV in Chinese communities). It is still critical to empower social service workers on the front line, but we must be firm in disengaging from the notion that the fight ends with them. Government accountability may also look into strengthening support for social workers to safely and sustainably continue their work. Research shows that Australian social workers are facing an unprecedented amount of stress and burnout in recent times (Carles et al., 2023).

Most recently, **a project has been initiated to "check in" with migrant women as they arrive in Australia, specifically regarding their FDV experiences** (Spangaro et al. 2024). This proactive approach aims to establish a supportive framework from the outset of migrants' journeys into Australia, rather than allowing their FDV experiences to remain undetected and unaddressed until incidents escalate. By addressing these issues early, the initiative seeks to educate and prevent the normalisation of violence while providing timely intervention before situations become more severe. Spangaro et al. (2024) published their research on best practices for detecting violence against migrant women who are often within CALD cohorts in Australia. They found that identification through universal screening, wherein women undergoing public and health services such as antenatal check-ups are asked “validated questions about current or recent experiences of being hit or hurt by their partner” (unpaginated), best-facilitated openness for conversation with women of high-risk communities. These interactions would most aptly be conducted during settlement services — programs aimed at settling immigrants in Australia such as those provided by SSI (Settlement Services International). The authors noted high disclosure rates (29 percent) which are higher than previous studies taking place in healthcare settings. Importantly, settlement services receive support and funding from the government which allows them to stand as strong pillars in CALD populations across generations. Through cooperation with relevant NGOs providing expertise, research from academics, groundwork by culturally informed staff, and preceding steady pillars of operation, the authors were able to thoroughly investigate their study.

We propose Government accountability mechanism: a blueprint for policy

Based on the above points and reflections, we propose the design of a “milestone checker” for:

- families (and in particular women and girls) entering the state from international migration (as per Spangaro et al. 2024) and for current families already living in the state (not to leave anyone behind)

and

- current and incoming policies surrounding FDV prevention in CALD communities.

This milestone checker tool aims to identify both individual needs and structural constraints early on in the implementation of current or emerging policies related to FDV prevention in CALD communities.

By focusing on individual needs, the tool will facilitate the early detection of specific challenges faced by individuals within these communities, allowing for tailored support and interventions. This personalised approach ensures that policies are not only reactive but also proactive in addressing the unique circumstances of each individual.

Simultaneously, the milestone checker will examine structural constraints that may hinder the effective implementation of FDV prevention policies. This includes identifying gaps in resources, training (including training of leaders, especially religious and women), and community engagement, as well as assessing the accessibility of services for diverse populations. By highlighting these constraints, the tool will provide insights into necessary improvements and systemic changes needed to create a more effective and inclusive support system.

This milestone checker tool aims evaluate and track the implementation of policies, ensuring they are effectively understood and implemented by addressing the unique needs of these communities.

This mechanism is here suggested with considerations of the Royal Commission’s key initial questions, while responding to the “gap” of ensuring government accountability in policy planning and action.

Accountability of milestone checker should rest with the SA government, while the

milestone checker's operationalisation is most effectively carried out by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and academic institutions. This collaborative approach enables a comprehensive evaluation of the success and viability of such individual and broader policies, building on existing internal procedures.

Take for example the latest SA policy on coercive control. We acknowledge that there has been consultation with multicultural communities regarding coercive control and its potential criminalisation. However, through our ongoing engagements with various stakeholders in South Australia's CALD communities—from community leaders to the general public—we can affirm that the understanding of what constitutes coercive control remains too vague. As the SA Government advances the coercive control bill into legislation, it raises critical questions about the resources available to inform and educate CALD community members about this issue, including the training of CALD leaders. It is essential to ensure that individuals are well-informed about the definitions, implications, and available support mechanisms related to coercive control. Moreover, it is crucial to identify who will ultimately bear responsibility for addressing this informational gap – this is where the “milestone checker” can be used. Effective communication and education are vital components of successful implementation – but how to track them properly? Simply imposing punitive measures, without a concerted effort to educate, will not resolve the underlying issues; in fact, it may exacerbate the individual circumstances of those affected.

- A “milestone checker” will help with identifying who is responsible for what and when / with what resources: this approach will not only enhance understanding but also foster a more supportive environment where individuals feel empowered to seek help and report coercive control without fear of misunderstanding or retribution.

Another example is the paid FDV leave entitlements. These entitlements have been operative at Federal level (*Fair Work Amendment (Paid Family and Domestic Violence Leave) Act 2022 (Cth)*) for private and public employees, and at SA level (*Fair Work (Domestic and Family Violence Leave) Amendment Act 2023*) for public employees for a short while now. The Flinders team can attest, having conducted a comprehensive review at national level and having consulted, among others, respondents from SA NGOs, unions and university sectors, that nearly all CALD leaders we engaged with were unaware of the existence of the Paid FDV Leave entitlement both at national and at state level (Seymour, Marmo, Cebulla, Ibrahim,

Esmaeili and Richards et al 2024¹). This lack of awareness among community leaders highlights a significant gap in communication and outreach regarding critical legislation that directly impacts their communities, including commercial enterprises.

Both examples underscore the necessity for improved dissemination of information. It is essential for community leaders to be well-informed so they can effectively advocate for and support their constituents. Without this knowledge, the potential benefits any legislation or policy or initiative may not reach those who need it most, resulting in a missed opportunity for meaningful impact.

In light of this, we strongly recommend that the SA Government and relevant stakeholders prioritise a mechanism of own accountability, and having a “milestone checker” can assist with it.

The importance of the role of SA Government within the realm of FDV prevention is critical. The government holds a unique position of authority and responsibility, making it essential for them to lead in setting clear priorities for action, allocating adequate resources, and then to be accountable that targets are met in timely manner.

It is crucial to “lighten the load” of responsibility currently placed on NGOs, social workers, and the whole cohort of first responders, who frequently operate underfunded and face issues of unequal permanency and stipend compared to government institutions. While acknowledging the invaluable work that these entities do, it is imperative to recognise that they cannot bear the full burden of addressing FDV under such dire conditions.

Shifting critical responsibility to government agencies not only enhances the sustainability of support systems but also ensures that services can be delivered consistently and effectively. By providing adequate funding and resources, the government can empower these frontline workers, enabling them to focus on their essential roles without the constant strain of financial insecurity.

We therefore put forward our recommendation 2:

¹ Report available after mid-October 2024 and currently under embargo.

To prioritise a mechanism of SA Government’s accountability in primary prevention within multicultural communities through the building of “milestone checker”

Example of Potential guiding questions to build a milestone checkers (the example here only related to assessing policy planning (but we would be happy to provide other examples)

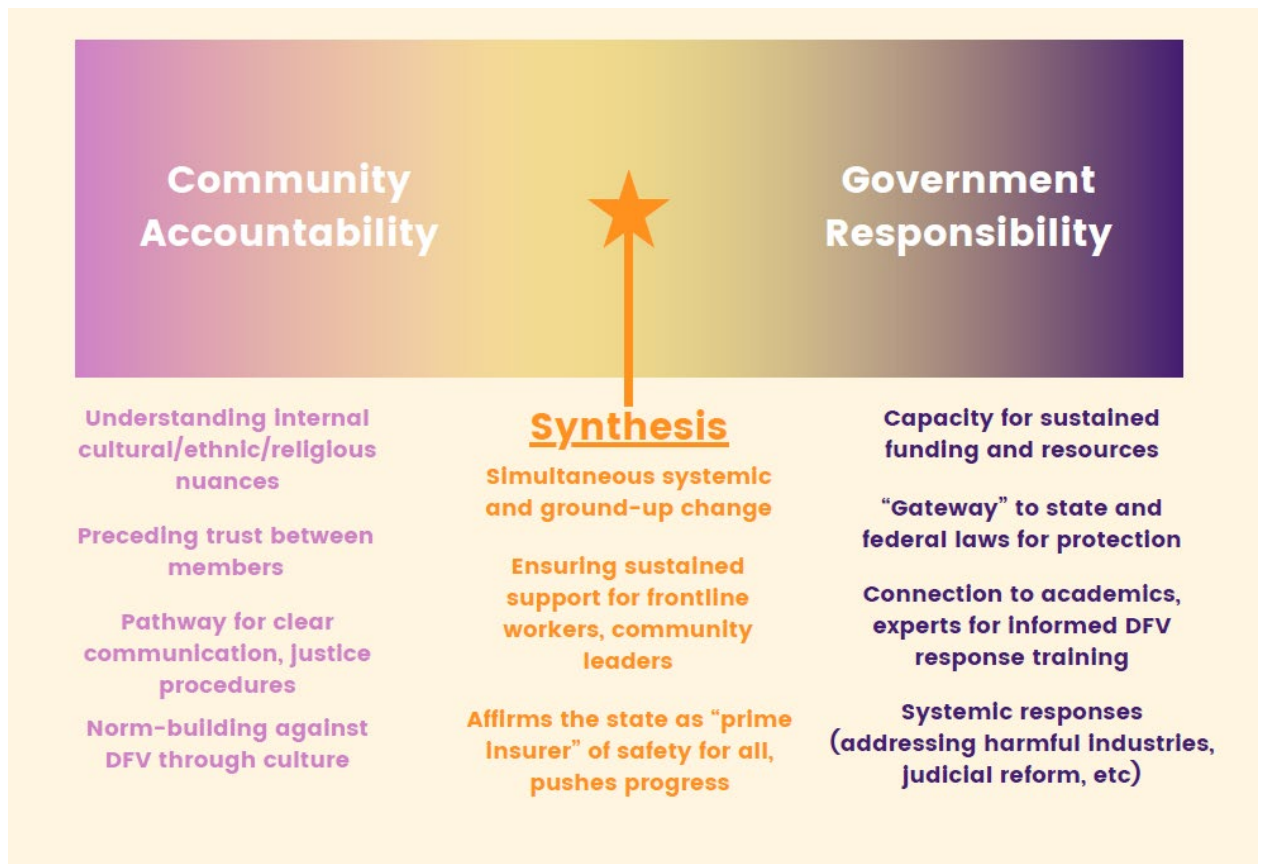
1. Does policy respond to the latest concerns of FDV in Australia within a two-year time frame?
 - a. Is policy aimed, to some degree, at preventing violence from happening?
2. Does policy explicitly include clauses/solutions directed to immigrant women?
 - a. Are these specifications directly speaking to cultural, multicultural, religious, and linguistic diversity?
 - b. Does policy make any underlying negative assumptions about non-Western traditions or practices (e.g. universalising CALD experiences/making assumptions, requiring target participants to exhibit certain “multicultural/cultural” attributes)?
 - c. Can policy be translated well for most, if not all, identifiable CALD backgrounds in the area (e.g. is practice feasible for women of Chinese, Indian, and Afghan descent? and so on)?
 - i. Has this been evidence-tested or exhibited a substantial probability of success in practice?
 - d. Does policy respond, naming the issue at hand, to systemic barriers preventing victim-survivors from seeking justice (i.e. visa clarity, judicial proceedings, first responder’s mechanism)?
 - e. Does policy directly disclose cooperation with CALD community leaders?
3. Have FDV and women-specialised organisations been consulted apropos to publishing policy? Alongside these entities:
 - a. Immigrant resource centres
 - b. Multicultural, religious, and cultural community leaders
 - c. Grassroots women’s rights/feminist organisations
 - d. Social workers

- e. Academics in the relevant field
 - f. Women of CALD backgrounds (as well as victim-survivors)
4. Does policy have clear foundations for sustainability and accessibility?
 - a. Directed and adequate funding from government (with time frame)
 - b. Directed communication procedures to facilitate progress with government entity
 - c. Facilitations for language and cultural translation
 - d. Physical and mental support, if including, for social workers, first responders, community organisers and leaders

Assessing Policy in Practice (after an elapsed amount of time coming into effect)

1. Has a policy-specified evaluation mechanism been created and subsequently published by the government?
 - a. Does the mechanism also consider the efficacy of government work?
 - b. Does the mechanism have clear pathways of change should needs be?
 - c. Does the mechanism allow consideration of NGO and civilian-led critique?
2. Has funding from government and policy-specific foundations been delivered continuously?
3. If involving CALD community leaders:
 - a. Has government instated accessible and steady training programs that are informed by academics and women-specialised NGOs?
 - b. Is there a mechanism in place to evaluate the viability of community members/leaders to maintain position/cooperation?
 - i. Is there clear communication of standards for norm-setting, such as affirming that victim-survivors/women may seek divorce without community persecution, assault is not the fault of the victim, and women are free to pursue financial freedom in Australia (among others)?
 - ii. Is there a clear understanding of Australian law and how victim-survivors may access government services for support/justice?

- iii. Is there a clear prerogative to centre victim-survivors when violence occurs, and streamline processes that prioritise their safety?
- c. Are directed participants (women, victim-survivors, children of community) engaged in dialogue for program design/evaluation?
- 4. If involving NGO-sourced workers/social workers:
 - a. Has support mechanisms for workers (mental health support, development workshops, etc) been developed and instated continuously?
 - b. Has government provided cultural/linguistic diversity and sensitivity training led by community members and leaders?
 - i. Does training avoid universalising CALD experiences and are designed according to the directed community?
 - ii. Are workers supported enough to undertake additional training on top of their initial occupations?
 - c. Have there been specialised communication checkpoints established with relevant government entities?



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