



23 September 2024

Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

Via online portal

Re: Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence in South Australia

On behalf of The Wyatt Trust (Wyatt) Board and Management, we write in response to the Royal Commission into domestic, family and sexual based violence.

Wyatt has almost 140 years' experience in grant making, and in recent decades this grant making has gone to support community service organisations, some of whom work directly in areas related to the Commission's focus. We are not a service provider, nor do we have a specific focus on domestic, family and sexual violence. With a vision for a South Australia free from poverty, we do work with many organisations at the intersection of poverty and other issues such as domestic, family and sexual violence.

We understand that the Commission is broadly consulting under the topics of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing.

Through our own practice of supporting the development, sustainability and growth of services, as well as spending the past two years co-designing a new service which we fund, we offer insight into considerations that should be prioritised when commissioning approaches that address prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing.

Wyatt's position

In recent years, Wyatt has worked closely with a team of people who have identified as having lived or living experience of financial hardship.

In one program of our work, we spoke in-depth to 32 women with 17 disclosing references to lived and living experience of domestic violence. These disclosures were made in relation to general conversation about their experiences regarding financial hardship and so there may have been other experiences not reported.

This submission is based on our work with these women and through other funding relationships with service providers, and **we implore the Commission to make recommendations on how services are designed and delivered**, including:

- Not siloing services to be only about domestic, family and sexual violence
- Power being recognised and distributed
- Service settings being intentionally designed and appropriate

- Funding and support at appropriate levels and not tied up in bureaucracy

Services should not have the sole focus of only domestic, family and sexual violence

An individual's pathway into financial hardship is not homogenous and the same is true for those experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence. Because of the multitude of issues that individuals and families face, commissioning services that focus on domestic, family and sexual violence as stand-alone services could result in people not receiving the assistance and support they need, regardless of whether this is preventative, early intervention, response or recovery and healing.

There is a multitude of research into the factors and experiences that lead people to perpetrate violence or experience it. While there is a place for specialist services, there also needs to be flexibility in service provision.

When working with people with lived and living experience of financial hardship Wyatt learnt that while over 50% identified as having experienced domestic violence, they also had additional needs regarding:

- Health (both physical and mental)
- Finding secure housing
- Creating a stable income/financial security
- Surviving on a limited income
- Being a parent/carer
- Isolation and loneliness
- Navigating Centrelink
- Navigating other services (.g. NDIS)
- Support with advocacy

Services require the flexibility to meet clients where they are at, and address needs in a holistic manner. This means having the ability to assist clients with related challenges or barriers that are often considered 'out of scope' in current government and philanthropic contracts.

While there is often the intention of specialist services connecting people into other supports as needed, anecdotally we have heard that this doesn't happen easily or effectively. The siloed approach of each service means that it is difficult to have any shared accountability for an individual or family's journey.

If service integration is to be improved across stand-alone services, organisations need to be resourced to share knowledge and develop shared accountability.

Power needs to be recognised and distributed

Power plays an inherent role in the perpetration of domestic, family and sexual violence. Likewise, the service system also has power that is exercised over people seeking support through the way it determines access, and levels of assistance and intervention. For people to receive adequate support, this power needs to be recognised and distributed – i.e. the individuals and families receiving support need to have this power back.

At Wyatt, people with lived and living experience of financial hardship identified what was most important to them when seeking support and developed practice principles based on these. It was desired that these principles inform all service delivery:

- Acknowledging and developing personal power
- Trauma-informed care
- Social Justice
- Creating cultural safety and security
- Non-judgemental and self-aware practice
- Holism in practice
- Importance of lived experience roles
- Human rights and rights of children and young people

For individuals and families experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence, the first time they enter the service system, should be the immediate start of them regaining power and control over their lives.

Service settings should be intentionally designed and appropriate

Wyatt learnt that while individuals had different barriers to accessing services and support there were three commonly shared:

1. Meeting service eligibility criteria
2. Wait lists
3. Receiving time limited services

There were also common ideas on what made a safe and welcoming space, including:

- Being available by phone, email or in person – being able to cover all methods
- Working with someone who really listens – this includes acknowledging efforts to be present, being made to feel important and that what has been said is significant, and being believed
- Being family friendly – meeting where children will be safe and in full view, asking people for their preferences
- Consideration of transport needs to and from appointments

For people with lived and living experience of financial hardship that also disclosed experience of domestic and family violence, they specifically voiced wanting services that:

- Consider individuals' needs (i.e. person centred)
- Manage expectations with communication and engagement
- Are flexible, responsive and have less barriers for meeting criteria (i.e. things currently must be drastic before one is 'eligible' for support)
- Recognise elements and behaviours of financial abuse
- Recognise housing is a huge factor in capacity to move forward
- Understand how perpetrators use and abuse systems

These barriers, common ideas and service principles are all elements directly in the control of those who design, deliver and commission services and should be addressed as minimum service requirements.

Funding and support at appropriate levels and not tied up in bureaucracy

The delivery of social services is primarily commissioned by government agencies via non-profits, with some comparatively minor commissioning by philanthropic organisations to these same organisations.

The Pay What It Takes movement in Australia has for the last two years been highlighting the disparity between what funders pay charities to deliver programs versus the actual cost. Their research found that for charities, there was on average a 33% indirect cost for delivering a service, that is 33% of the overall cost for delivering a program was spent on things like IT, finance, human resources, and monitoring and evaluation¹. And yet many government agencies and other funders do not allow for such a 'high' proportion of indirect costs.

Furthermore, ensuring payments increase each year by a minimum of CPI via mandatory indexation, that contracts are simplified, and longer-term contracts are provided for ongoing services are all areas identified by the sector as requiring improvement and this has been acknowledged by the South Australian government².

If services are going to adequately address the needs of individual and families in the areas of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing, they need to be appropriately funded.

¹ Social Ventures Australia and the Centre for Social Impact (2022) Paying what it takes: funding indirect cost to create long-term impact. Social Ventures Australia.

² <https://www.procurement.sa.gov.au/nfp-sector>

About Wyatt and how our work relates to people experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence

Since 1886, Wyatt has been providing financial support to South Australians experiencing financial hardship. In this time, we have distributed over \$70m to individuals and community organisations to meet specific needs of people on low or no income. These needs are often related to accessing housing or pathways to financial wellbeing.

Our theory of change includes that if an individual can be connected to multiple avenues of support, for deeper engagement and assistance, they will be more likely to have their needs met. Achieving this impact is only possible when services work together, along with philanthropy, government and other grant making bodies.

At Wyatt, we at times learn about the stories of people who are experiencing financial hardship and there are often inter-related contributing factors to their situation. As reported above, in one program over 50% of women made voluntary disclosures of lived and living experience of domestic violence when asked if they wanted to share more about their experience of financial hardship.

While Wyatt does not purport to be a funder seeking to impact specific domestic, family and sexual based violence outcomes, we understand that when working with people experiencing financial hardship there will be a significant proportion who have also experienced violence of this nature and require varied support.

We understand that by not only being aware of this fact, but cognisant of how it should inform our practice and grant making, we will deliver stronger outcomes for people requiring assistance.

A similar understanding should be applied by all government and commissioning organisations to ensure holistic and suitable services and responses are in place.

Conclusion

In preparing this submission Wyatt aims to add to the body of evidence relating to the design of services and interventions that positively impact those who have experienced domestic, family and sexual based outcomes.

We believe that **incorporating the principles outlined in this submission will lead to more effective services and better support individuals and families** across prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing.

This submission has drawn insight from two-years of working with people with lived and living experience of financial hardship with over 50% of these women also voluntarily disclosing references to lived and living experience of domestic violence. Our thanks go to these women who have bravely shared their stories and experiences to inform our work.

We would be pleased to speak to anything contained within this submission, including facilitating participation and dialogue with the women aforementioned. Enquiries can be directed via [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,



Stacey Thomas
Chief Executive Officer



Nicholas Costello
Acting Chair