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District Governor 2024-35

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Date 12 August 2024

Ms Natasha Stott Despoja AO

The Commissioner

SA Royal Commission into domestic, family and sexual violence,

PO Box 464,

Adelaide SA 5001

Dear Ms Stott Despoja

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Issues Paper prepared on behalf of the SA Royal Commission. We believe that the Royal Commission is an important development, both timely and vital to reshaping the South Australian response to domestic, family and sexual violence in our communities.

This response is made by the *Rotary Says No to Domestic Violence Committee* on behalf of Rotary District 9510. We are one of many Districts across Australia, New Zealand and Oceania (referred to as Zone 8) which have chosen to campaign to raise awareness and educate the community with the object of ending domestic and family violence. The Adelaide based Rotary Walk for Respect held in November 2023 is an example of a community awareness strategy adopted by Rotary across Zone 8. The Adelaide based Walk for Respect is on on Saturday 14 September 2024 leaving Victoria Square at 10am and gathering at Elder Park for post walk activities.

District 9510 covers most of South Australia and some of Victoria, New South Wales and the Northern Territory. We have a 100-year history of serving the community through our network of clubs. Our volunteer hours and programs of

practical and financial aid for the vulnerable, homeless and people in crisis, closely align with basic survival needs of victim/survivors and also of displaced perpetrators of domestic and family violence.

We appreciate that this phase of the Commission's work is focussed on gaining information and opinions from those with lived experience and those with expert knowledge. Whilst a community voluntary organisation like Rotary conventionally would not be seen as having specialist expertise on domestic, family and sexual violence, we are one of many voluntary organisations on which the community and government rely to provide a safety net of help, mostly funded through fund raising. Community voluntary organisations however are more than this and we hope that the Commission will make room for their views to be heard in due course.

We want volunteer organisations engaged in the community consultations.

Take the case of Rotary.

- *Clubs are located in local settings and are well connected to their local networks.* Our members live, work and interact in those local areas. This connection helps in delivery of tailored collaborative strategies.
- *Rotary clubs are connected at statewide, national and international levels*. These structures have the capacity to influence the activities of Rotary clubs and therefore also other groups with whom they are connected. e.g. This is a way to encourage participation in campaigns of importance to the community as a whole.
- *Rotary has experience in partnering with government and non-government bodies in statewide and national campaigns* Examples include disaster relief, mental health campaigns. (Rotary systems have managed the distribution of substantial funds and goods for the benefit of those in need -e.g. drought relief).
- *We can be engaged by government funding/requests for assistance*, we can be responsive and support partnerships to effect change.
- *We have fundraising capacity to support community projects.*
- *Clubs have substantial volunteer hours to apply to an issue.* Using volunteers to organise and deliver certain programs can be both economic and safe and it also models the community caring for itself.
- *Rotarians can also benefit from awareness campaigns-* as well as provide mechanisms for raising the awareness of others.
- *Rotary is committed to peace and conflict resolution in all its forms*. Violence, particularly domestic, family and sexual violence, is the most significant economic, social, health and mental health issue facing our wellbeing in South Australia and across the world.

We urge the Commission to make recommendations on how the resources of voluntary organisations might contribute to the reform process.

Can Rotary take some responsibility for changing culture/ values/ behaviours in the community?

Yes, it is our view that problems occurring within the context of the culture, values and behaviours of its community members are problems for all to address. Rotary does not subscribe to the view- "*if we are not to blame it is not our problem to solve*". Nor do we believe the government is responsible for all actions needed. However, the SA government is uniquely placed to lead change, to influence attitudes and behaviours, and to distribute resources through its funding mechanisms. It is also well placed to ensure what is done is informed by proper evaluation and benchmarked against national and international standards.

Volunteer resources are finite. We sometimes struggle to find the hours to deliver core programs and balance fundraising and project delivery. Rotary's recent decision to make the eradication of domestic and family violence its business is significant. It means that we are having the conversations, the discomfort and the enlightenment which goes with it. The Rotary ***Say No to Domestic Violence and Yes to Respectful Relationships Campaign*** could be far reaching. We are looking for other ways to help, and community awareness/ education seems an area for Rotary to use its organisational skills and volunteer workforce. However adequate resourcing is an issue.

The Commission is asked to consider how government and volunteer organisations might work together, combining government funding and volunteer workforces to deliver community focussed awareness programs.

Hear us. Consider our roles in the reform process. Consider how government funds and volunteer workforces combine to deliver vibrant but economic programs. We look forward to further opportunities to contribute to the work of the Royal Commission.

Yours sincerely

Marie-louise Lees

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