



Development of Tasmania's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan

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Our commitment to inclusion

The Salvation Army Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet and work and pay our respect to Elders, past, present and future.

We value people of all cultures, languages, capacities, sexual orientations, gender identities and/or expressions. We are committed to providing programs that are fully inclusive. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of people of all ages, particularly children.

Our values are:

- Integrity
- Compassion
- Respect
- Diversity
- Collaboration

Learn more about our commitment to inclusion:

salvationarmy.org.au/about-us

The Salvation Army is an international movement and our mission is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and to meet human needs in his name without discrimination.



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Introduction

The Salvation Army thanks the Tasmanian Government for the opportunity to share our feedback and service delivery experience to inform the development of Tasmania's third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan (Action Plan).

The Salvation Army provides a range of services and support to people across Australia as part of realising our vision and living our values. This submission has been informed by our extensive frontline experience working with victim-survivors of family and domestic violence in Tasmania.

Services offered by The Salvation Army in the Tasmania

Doorways provides emergency relief and case management for people in crisis and helps them meet immediate needs, from unexpected bills to food vouchers. Doorways also works closely with other Salvation Army programs to assist individuals to regain control of their finances. We provide early education and prevention strategies for people who may be at risk of financial hardship.

Family and Domestic Violence Services provide support around Australia to women impacted by family and domestic violence and their children. This support includes refuge, counselling, accommodation and outreach.

Homelessness services including crisis, transitional housing with outreach support.

It is our hope that the outcomes of this consultation will build on the progress made under the current Action Plan, *Safe Homes, Families and Communities: Tasmania's action plan for family and sexual violence 2019-2022*. Key issues and barriers we draw to the government's attention are:

- The shortfall of funding to meet the demand for services. It is important to ensure that the new Action Plan is accompanied by a significant increase in funding to ensure the aims of the Action Plan can be effectively delivered.
- The need to implement a Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework to ensure services are effectively identifying, assessing and managing family violence risk.
- The need to separate the operation of family violence services and homelessness services, as there is a significant distinction between the needs of a victim-survivor of family and domestic violence compared to a person who is sleeping rough.
- The need to ensure that women who do not report the crimes committed against them have access to the same services and resources and those that do engage with the police and judicial system.

Family and domestic violence is preventable. With this in mind, we are pleased to have the opportunity to contribute to a new Action Plan that captures the experiences of the victim-survivors we support, and to help ensure that government-led responses can deliver long term sustainable improvements to the family and domestic violence service system in Tasmania.





Feedback on previous action plans

What worked well

It has been The Salvation Army's experience that what has come out of Tasmania's previous two Action Plans is a growth in sector services to meet the needs of victim-survivors. Both plans have led to the development of programs and initiatives that have been crucial in ensuring victim-survivors are provided with the most appropriate support and services. In particular, the establishment of the Safe Choices program as part of the 2015-2020 Action Plan has been effective in providing practical support, advice and referral to support services for those experiencing family and domestic violence. The establishment of an Our Watch Primary Prevention Officer in Tasmania has also been crucial in promoting primary prevention.

What needs to be improved

Use of family and domestic violence statistics

The Tasmanian Government must utilise statistics regarding family and domestic violence from non-government organisations and services, in addition to judicial and police statistics, to inform the next Action Plan. The current Action Plan relies solely on police statistics. In doing so, the Plan does not account for victim-survivors who choose not to report the crimes committed against them. Our family and domestic violence services assist many women who, for varied reasons, choose not to go to the police. According to the 2016 Personal Safety Survey, 82% of women who had experienced violence by a current or former partner since the age of 15 had never contacted the police.¹

It is important to ensure that the experiences of these victim-survivors are also reflected in the new Action Plan and not just the experiences of those that contact the police. By collecting and utilising data from both the service sector and police, the Department of Communities would be able to see a broader picture of family and domestic violence in Tasmania. This would allow the Department to see not only the true extent of violence in the state, but also the presentation of victim-survivors who do not engage with the criminal justice system and the nature of their experiences.

Need for risk assessment framework

To ensure victim-survivors are met with an appropriate response on first disclosure, the Tasmanian Government must develop consistent approaches in all risk assessment and management frameworks. The current absence of a consistent risk assessment framework across all frontline services means that there is no way to determine that all services are effectively identifying, assessing and managing family and domestic violence risk.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016) *Personal Safety, Australia*. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release>



The previous action plan listed the introduction of a standardised risk assessment process across government and non-government family and sexual violence services as one of its key actions.² The Salvation Army understands that development is underway for a risk assessment framework, however we are frustrated that a Framework has yet to come to fruition despite being announced in 2019.

The Victorian Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) and the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) aim to change both the practice and culture around how professionals and organisations respond to family violence. These are both supported by a suite of policies, practice tools, training, legislation, and formal reviews, which are critical to their success.

An important feature of MARAM is that it applies an intersectional lens to support diversity and inclusion in family violence practice.³ We draw the MARAM to the Departments attention as an example of current best practice.

Funding

There is a significant funding shortfall for family and domestic violence services in Tasmania. The previous Action Plans have consisted of important aims and announcements, however many of these have not come to fruition because of a lack of funding.

Many programs that have been established under the previous Action Plans are delivering better outcomes for victim-survivors, yet their effectiveness would be significantly increased if the programs had greater funding. For example, the Keeping Women Safe in their Home program, which is delivered by Safe at Home, is currently only available to victim-survivors that engage with police. As discussed above, many victim-survivors choose not to go to the police. The Tasmanian Government should consider expanding the program so that it also includes those victim-survivors that come through shelters and other non-government programs.

The Rapid Rehousing program also delivers important outcomes for victim-survivors by allowing them to access safe and affordable rental homes. It is our experience that the number of victim-survivors who can access the program is limited because of a lack of funding. An injection of funding to make the Rapid Rehousing program available to a greater number of victim-survivors would be welcomed.

Training for police

Victim-survivors who seek help from frontline staff must be believed and receive help promptly and in the right way. The police form a crucial part of the frontline service system, with family and domestic violence taking up a large part of their day-to-day police work. An initial positive police

²Department of Communities. (2019). Safe Homes Families Communities Tasmania's action plan for family and sexual violence 2019-2022. https://dcom.clients.squiz.net/_data/assets/pdf_file/0030/133599/Safe_Homes_Families_Communities_Tasmanias_action_plan_for_family_and_sexual_violence_WCAG_27_June_V1.pdf

³ Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor. (2019). Report of the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor - As at 1 November 2019. <https://www.fvrim.vic.gov.au/report-family-violence-reform-implementation-monitor-1-november-2019>



response is recognised as having a significant impact not only on the safety of victim-survivors, but also on whether they decide to report further offences.⁴ When police respond to a family and domestic violence call out it is crucial that they are able to identify and appropriately respond to both non-physical and physical forms of violence. Our experience shows that police training and responses remains critical and that outside the specialist family violence sector, there is limited understanding of what coercive control is and how best to respond.

Our services continue to see victim-survivors who do not feel safe about reporting to police. The police response in Tasmania would benefit from developing and investing in co-responder models where family violence specialist or social workers are able to provide support for women and improve the process for victim-survivors. Embedded family violence specialists within police units would assist with recognition of gender-driven family and domestic violence. Specialists empower, advocate for, and refer victim-survivors to services.

We point the Tasmanian Government to the Alexis Program that The Salvation Army runs in Victoria and recommend that the Government consider making resources available to roll out a similar program in Tasmania. The Alexis Program is a family violence response model that embeds family violence specialists within the police force and has been shown to reduce recidivism by up to 85 per cent.⁵ It should be noted that whilst the Alexis Program is achieving good outcomes, the program would further benefit from additional investment in case management for the perpetrator as well as the victim-survivor and children.

Alexis Program – a family violence response model

The Alexis family violence response model is a targeted approach to violence in 'recidivist households', that is, families that have had three or more police attendances for family violence in the preceding 12 months or where police assessed a possible likelihood of further violence. It seeks to create a multi-disciplinary integrated response team by embedding a specialist key worker with family violence expert knowledge within a targeted police family violence unit.

Through the Alexis Program, the specialist key worker aims to:

- Strengthen integration between police and services
- Reduce the incidences of police attendance where there is a history of recidivism
- Prevent escalation of risk to women and children by intervening early
- Promote successful and ongoing engagement in mainstream services.

An evaluation of the Alexis model by RMIT University in 2017 found that it resulted in an 85 per cent reduction in police callouts in the 12 months following exit from the program. The success of the Alexis Program can be attributed in part to the program's role in providing case coordination support and service integration for families.

⁴ Australian Law Reform Commission. (2010). Family Violence – A National Legal Response (ALRC Report 114). https://www.alrc.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/ALRC114_WholeReport.pdf

⁵ 5 Harris, L., Powell, A. & Hamilton, G. (2017, August). Alexis – Family Violence Response Model. School of Global, Urban and Social Studies RMIT University. https://www.sarmy.org.au/Global/SArmy/Social/vsppu/Resources/SALV0006_Alexis%20Report_Online.pdf



Availability of psychologists at support services

Violence against women, including family and domestic violence, is associated with a range of short and long-term physical and mental health consequences. Studies show that violence against women may be associated with mental health consequences that often persist long after the violence has stopped.⁶ The complexity of the intersection of violence against women and mental health often requires collaboration between mental health, sexual violence, family and domestic violence and other sectors to provide effective care. Given the prevalence of mental health concerns in victim-survivors it would be hugely beneficial to have a psychologist co-located at family and domestic violence shelters in Tasmania to address the mental health concerns of the client base. Currently the availability of such services is dependent on the shelter's funding capacity to offer it. Such funding is simply not available for most providers.

What can be done differently

Separating family and domestic violence services and homelessness services

Currently in Tasmania, family and domestic violence services are grouped with homelessness services. The Salvation Army is uniquely placed in Tasmania as we operate our homelessness and family violence services on separate sites. We operate self-contained units for victim-survivors of family and domestic violence, and these come from a strengths-based approach. It is important that the Tasmanian Government acknowledges the distinction between a family and domestic violence scenario compared to another person who is rough sleeping. Victim-survivors of family and domestic violence not only need somewhere to sleep but also security. It is important that these differences are recognised in service delivery to ensure that victim-survivors receive a tailored response to their specific needs.

Services available for women who do not go to the police

The Salvation Army assists victim-survivors who report their crime to the Police and those who choose not to. It has been our experience that victim-survivors who do not report their crime to police cannot access to the same number of services as those who do report their crime. This is because access to many family violence services in Tasmania is often dependent the victim-survivor having a family violence order in place, meaning that those who do not are unable to receive the same response. The Tasmanian Government should consider developing a holistic response to family and domestic violence, whereby a victim-survivor's access to a service is not dependent on her involvement with the police.

⁶ Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2020) Violence against women and mental health. <https://20ian81kynqg38b3l3eh8bf-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/VAW-MH-Synthesis-ANROWS-Insights.pdf>



Recommendations:

We recommend that the Tasmanian Government:

- Increases funding for family and domestic violence services in Tasmania.
- Consider adopting a Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework to ensure services are effectively identifying, assessing and managing family violence risk.
- Develop a co-responder model for police responses to family and domestic violence where family violence specialists or social workers are able to provide support for women and improve the process for them.
- Fund a psychologist to be co-located at family and domestic violence shelters and services to address the mental health concerns of the client base.
- Work toward building the sector's capacity to separate the operation of family and domestic violence services and homelessness services.
- Ensure that women who do not report their crime to the police are able to access the same services and resources and those who do engage with the criminal justice system.

*Larissa's Story

Larissa* is a 51-year-old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who presented at The Salvation Army's family violence shelter in Tasmania. At the time of intake, the presenting issue was family and domestic violence, however after further assessment more complex issues were identified. This included, a 7-year period of homelessness, fragmented family and relationship breakdown, physical injuries, diagnosed medical and mental health issues, social isolation, loss of furniture and loss of her Aboriginal cultural identity.

The Salvation Army initiated a case/support plan and goals were set, these included securing permanent accommodation, engagement with transitional services, regular visits to a General Practitioner and counselling.

Larissa attended all of her appointments and continued working on her Case/Support Plan. As each goal was completed Larissa would work on a new goal. Through this process Larissa gained more confidence and self-esteem.

After a two month stay at the shelter Larissa was offered a Housing Tasmania Property, which she accepted. The Salvation Army assisted with furniture and household items for the property. Larissa is now settled in the property and going well.

Larissa's story is an example of the importance of the additional wrap around supports that our services are able to offer.

**Name has been changed*



Prevention of family and domestic violence

Prevention, early intervention and community education

Prevention, early intervention and community education remain the most effective ways to address the underlying problem of patterns of family and domestic violence. Our frontline experience is that many victim-survivors living with coercive behaviour do not realise that what they are experiencing is actually family and domestic violence. Many community members are confronted with this realisation for the first time after speaking to our Moneycare financial counsellors, Doorways case workers or when presenting at one of our Doorways emergency relief centres.

As a community, we need to continue to empower all victim-survivors to identify all forms of abuse and to address discrimination, disadvantage and entrenched gender bias and exploitation in the home, in relationships and in the workplace. We wholeheartedly support the Our Watch 'Change the Story' policy approach to prevention and education.⁷ We also advocate better awareness raising to ensure that every individual in Australia considers themselves active bystanders and greater support for community-based violence prevention.

Education on healthy relationships

Violence is preventable. We must continue to educate the community to recognise and call out violent and controlling behaviours as unacceptable. Importantly, the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) highlights that 'violence-supportive attitudes' such as excusing perpetrators, minimising violence against women and mistrusting women's reports of violence can influence social norms and expectations.⁸ The continuation of community attitude reports, such as NCAS, are critical in informing what funding and programs need to be implemented.

Education on healthy relationships, particularly in relation to respectful relationships within primary schools and healthy peer to peer and early intimate relationships in high schools, is critical. We call on the Tasmanian Government to educate children and youth in the dangers and use of technologically facilitated abuse and, in particular, the use of social media and its ability to 'blur' young people's ability to navigate online peer relationships and the appropriate use of technology. This is particularly important considering the exponential use of intimate photo and video sharing and GPS monitoring of women and children since 2015.⁹

⁷ Our Watch. (2015). Change the Story: A shared prevention for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. <https://d2bb010tdzqaq7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/21025429/Change-the-storyframework-preventviolence-women-children-AA-new.pdf>

⁸ Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2018). Are We There Yet? Australians' attitudes towards violence against women & gender equity (Summary findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey). https://d2rn9gno7zhxqg.cloudfront.net/wpcontent/uploads/2019/12/05051806/300419_NCAS_Summary_Report.pdf.

⁹ Woodlock, D., Bentley, K., Schulze, D., Mahoney, N., Chung, D., and Pracilio, A. (2020). Second National Survey of Technology Abuse and Domestic Violence in Australia. WESNET. <https://wesnet.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2020/11/Wesnet-2020-2nd-NationalSurvey-Report-72pp-A4-FINAL.pdf>.



Recommendations:

We recommend that the Tasmanian Government:

- Develop education campaigns that are tailored to specific communities in relation to active bystander interventions as a community preventative measure.
- Develop a comprehensive education and awareness campaign to ensure key institutions and the community more broadly obtain an understanding of family and domestic violence, particularly non-physical forms of violence, and its impact on women.



Diverse experiences of women and their children

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children

It is crucial that the Tasmanian Government considers the cultural and geographical needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It is well documented that in Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are the group at the highest risk of experiencing family and domestic violence and that the prevalence and severity of this violence increases with remoteness.¹⁰

Our experience from around Australia suggests that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women may not seek help or report violence because they fear isolation from community and family connections, racism or lack of understanding from support services in their region. As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women often live in tight-knit communities, there is potential for whole communities to be affected by family violence, and a shared sense of shame can reinforce the unspoken rule to keep silent. This is especially important within the historical context of white settlement and colonisation and the continuing impacts of loss of traditional roles and status within communities.

The Salvation Army reiterates the importance of consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led organisations within Tasmania. It is essential that grassroots Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have the ability to lead and develop projects and that other projects which are led by non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can demonstrate deep consultation and co-design processes that do not further marginalise or 'other' these voices.

¹⁰ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision. (2014). Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators 2014 Report. Productivity Commission. <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/overcoming-indigenous-disadvantage/2014/key-indicators2014-report.pdf>.



Women living in regional and rural areas

Smaller towns and less populated communities increase the difficulty and risk of disclosure for women and children. A lack of support and services also elevate the risk for women and children. There are currently few family and domestic violence services available in rural and regional areas. This means that victim-survivors often have to travel to access a women's shelter, financial service, or health or legal centre. For women in violent relationships this lack of available services has detrimental consequences.

Our services have reported cases where victim-survivors have had to relocate to access a service and escape a violent relationship. It is not uncommon for these victim-survivors to have to return because of the financial pressures and lack of social supports associated with moving to a new area. It is often the case that after a victim-survivor returns, her safety is at greater risk and the perpetrator's control only increases. In developing primary prevention and intervention initiatives outside of urban centres, the Tasmanian Government must prioritise the voices of lived experience and members of a particular community. The most effective way to reduce family and domestic violence in rural areas is to allow grassroots organisations to lead the response in a manner that is tailored to their community. Responses in rural and remote communities need to be different from those that are rolled out in urban communities.

Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Many women and children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds remain isolated within Australian communities due to a lack of community connection due to culture and language barriers. CALD victim-survivors are sometimes not even aware that they are in abusive relationships. Women on temporary visas can face added threats of deportation by the perpetrator and many are told they will not be able to take their children with them. Our services have also encountered cases where the victim-survivor is not aware that they have a working visa. The perpetrator keeps this information from the victim-survivor as a mechanism of obtaining further control. It is only when the victim-survivor engages with a service that they are made aware of their visa status.

The Salvation Army has worked intensively with women from CALD communities to facilitate access to services and support. Many do not know their legal rights in Australia and face significant barriers in engaging with support services, especially if they are not provided access to interpreting services. Our experience has identified that in some cases children are asked to translate advice to their respective parent, increasing trauma for both the child and the parent-child relationship. This issue is elevated in regional and remote areas where there are fewer services.



Women with disability

Our experience has shown that women with disability face specific challenges that are not always addressed in mainstream services. There is extensive evidence that women with disability are more vulnerable to family violence and face greater barriers to accessing justice. From a service perspective, there are additional needs that must be factored into the physical environment, community aspects and support offering to properly accommodate physical, sensory, psychosocial and intellectual disabilities. It is also critical to note that 'women with disability' are a broad group of women who must be afforded the dignity of appropriate individualised support. Additional tailored accommodation options are required to meet the immediate needs, and the broad issues around availability of accessible housing stock must be addressed to create exit pathways for women with disability.



Children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right

Current access to case management for children and adolescents who are victims of family and domestic violence, or who choose to use violence, is limited. There is a need for a specialist family and domestic violence response for children and adolescents that is developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, and cognisant of the long-term impacts of family violence. These services either do not exist or have very long waiting lists, sometimes of up to a year. We must ensure children and young people have timely access to case management and responses that address age-informed attitudes toward gender and violence.

There also needs to be greater focus on early intervention, which is critical in stopping the cycle of family and domestic violence. Our Watch has done significant research around young people's attitudes towards violence.¹¹

There is currently limited government investment in programs to address family functioning, family dynamics and the role of all family members, including those with disability, in families at high risk of violence. The Salvation Army would welcome opportunities for Functional Family Therapy (FFT) programs to be included within a therapeutic model of care as preventative measures in order to address conflict resolution and improve communication that engages and builds resilience within the family unit, not just with the individual.

Recommendations

We recommend that the Tasmanian Government:

- Increase funding for adolescent family violence services and family violence funding agreements, to support child and adolescents either exposed to family violence or who have perpetrated violence.
- Increase funding for prevention measures that focus on families at high risk of violence.

¹¹ Our Watch. (2019). Disturbing attitudes among youth towards violence against women.
<https://www.ourwatch.org.au/resource/disturbing-attitudes-among-youth-towards-violence-against-women/>



About The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army is an international Christian movement with a presence in more than 130 countries. Operating in Australia since 1880, The Salvation Army is one of the largest providers of social services and programs for people experiencing hardship, injustice and social exclusion.

The Salvation Army Australia provides more than 1,000 social programs and activities through networks of social support services, community centres and churches across the country.

Programs include:

- Financial counselling, financial literacy and microfinance
- Emergency relief and related services
- Homelessness services
- Youth services
- Family and domestic violence services
- Alcohol, drugs and other addictions
- Chaplaincy
- Emergency and disaster response
- Aged care
- Employment services

As a mission-driven organisation, The Salvation Army seeks to reduce social disadvantage and create a fair and harmonious society through holistic and person-centred approaches that reflect our mission to share the love of Jesus by:

- Caring for people
- Creating faith pathways
- Building healthy communities
- Working for justice

We commit ourselves in prayer and practice to this land of Australia and its people, seeking reconciliation, unity and equity.

Further Information

The Salvation Army would welcome the opportunity to discuss the content of this submission should any further information be of assistance. Further information can be sought from Major Paul Hateley, National Head of Government Relations, at government.relations@salvationarmy.org.au or on 0413 830 201.

