

PUBLIC SUBMISSION TO THIRD FAMILY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE ACTION PLAN

This submission is written on behalf of the Launceston White Ribbon Committee. White Ribbon is a primary prevention organisation and committed to stopping violence and abuse experienced by women and girls and to promoting societal change which will give equity in all areas for women and girls. As a grass roots group of volunteers, we work in our local community to raise awareness of the issue of violence and abuse, to educate the average person in the street about the causes of centuries old violence and abuse of women and girls and to inform the public of ways in which all individuals can stop this.

The LWRC works in cooperation with several other organisations working at all levels of intervention including Our Watch, Family Violence Counselling and Support Services, Relationships Australia, and Magnolia House to name a few. Our overarching focus is on public education about this issue.

THEREFORE, THESE COMMENTS ARE LARGELY DIRECTED AT THE PRIMARY PREVENTION SECTIONS OF THIS DOCUMENT.

As a group we are aware of the copious pages of documentation from numerous organisations, the multitude of words and the repetition of statements about primary prevention of violence/abuse of women and girls. But we ask, where is the evidence of this action in the community?

In view of this document being published in 2019, the implementation of some of these actions has been very slow even allowing for covid.

The title of this document should be ...Action plan **to prevent** family and sexual violence **and abuse**.

PAGE BY PAGE COMMENTS

(See P5 para 2)

Doesn't say how 'significantly strengthening prevention response to drive the long-term change'. Only refers to Our Watch consultant **(P17)** 'working with government and non-government services...and Our Watch ambassadors promote primary prevention activities etc.

There is no precise description of what primary prevention activities will be undertaken in the general community.

(See P6)

A commitment to 'strengthen our efforts change the attitudes, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence'.

Great sentiment but where is the evidence of action? **(See P17)** Under the heading Actions, there are only vague generalisations about what steps will be taken in government services and schools. No detail of how these actions will be implemented. The support for the national 'Stop it at the Start' campaign released in 2019 went almost undetected in the community other than on social media. Despite recorded numbers of 'hits' on Facebook, TikTok and Snapchat there is no data to show how many of these contacts were from members of the public as opposed to workers in the sector, survivors or individuals experiencing violence/abuse problems. Hits on -line do not demonstrate how effective this campaign was in changing societal attitudes of the person in the street.

The commitment to 'work with communities to drive generational change' lacks detail except to state **(P17)** that Respectful Relationship education would be embedded in all government schools. How many schools have actually taken this up? While this is a good strategy and acknowledging the disruption to education by Covid, there is no detail about how schools and teachers will be equipped/trained to present this program or how it will be monitored. Schools are already overloaded with responsibilities for social training of our youth. What extra staffing and funding will be provided for this specialised

teaching program? Teachers are members of the public, and many will need training to understand the complexities and subtleties of this issue and so be able to effectively teach this program.

LWRC believes at the least, there should be government funding to provide every school library with suitable books covering from early childhood picture books to teenage books discussing consent. Unfortunately, many schools no longer have teacher librarians who can research and find these specific types of resources.

(See page7)

The imbalance in funding between the primary and tertiary levels mean that cultural change is not being progressed quickly enough. This needs wide-spread public education about the long-term gendered drivers that have been established over hundreds of years and over many generations.

While the White Ribbon Campaign, Children's Abuse Inquiry and high-profile cases over the last 10 years has raised public awareness of family violence and abuse of women and children, the public does not yet understand why this behaviour occurs. and what they as individuals and community members can do to change the situation. This requires an intensive public education campaign much like the Life Be in It, the Quit smoking and the Drink Driving campaigns.

While the Stop it at the Start campaign is good, where has it been rolled out? How frequently aired, for what period of time and how accessible has it been to the public?

We also understand that Our Watch have had primary prevention materials on TV, in newspapers and magazines. I personally have very occasionally seen the 'Stop it at the Start' ads on free to air TV. The magazine and newspaper ads I have never observed, and I believe many people like myself would also have not seen them since viewing of free to air TV has been largely replaced by on demand alternatives.

The Our Watch website has a multitude of really good material, but this has to be consciously accessed and by and large the general public does not set out to look online for information about what causes abuse of women. This is excellent material for professionals working in this area but how easily accessed by the public to whose attitudes and understandings primary prevention is targeted.

Therefore, while excellent material, we believe the Our Watch campaigns are going unnoticed, so public education is falling short and the opportunity to change community attitudes are lost. This maybe a funding issue, but it is definitely due to under-funding of the primary prevention sector?

LWRC believes a well-funded campaign focussed totally in the public arena involving messaging on metro buses, shopping centre digital billboards and ordinary billboards in metropolitan areas would have a greater impact on public thinking.

The pie graph on P7 clearly indicates the financial imbalance between efforts in primary area as opposed to support in tertiary area. There is a need for equal efforts and funding at both ends of the intervention spectrum.

The snapshot of 'new activity and investment' stimulates more questions rather than explaining more details of actions.

Of the 9 points listed, only 1 (possibly 2) relate to primary prevention. Another imbalance? The first point is just another 'motherhood' statement. The promise to focus on sexual violence has been repeated ad infinitum.

(See P8)

Here is another statement of what primary prevention is but with no explanation of the gendered drivers of violence/abuse which indicates what changes are needed in the community. Without

understanding the historical cultural norms, the unconscious condoning of outdated stereotyping, prevailing ideas of toxic masculinity, gender-based humour, sexist language, misogynistic structures and procedures, media portrayal of women and more, the public cannot and will not make the attitudinal changes needed to minimise, reduce, or eliminate violence and abuse of women and girls.

Primary Prevention and Early Intervention.

(See P9)

Of the 13 points listed, 6 pertain to primary prevention although points 1 and 2 are the same. Membership of an organisation is not a preventative action. Nor is creating an Our Watch consultation. This only happened in 2021 and that officer lasted about 12 months.

Questions are raised: -

Has Respectful Relations been embedded in schools? Is the Respectful Relations program in every school? Obviously hindered by covid but how and where?

What is the new National Sexual Violence campaign? The word '**prevention**' should be in this title. Where has the Stop it at the Start campaign been rolled out? How frequently aired and how accessible to the public? **See comments on P7** This campaign has not been very visible and would appear was fairly brief. How effective is TV advertising now that many people do not access free to air programs? How was the effectiveness of this campaign measured?

How has gender equality been made central to Tas State Services workplaces?

Has the Problem Sexual Behaviours ...program actually happened? And is this primary prevention?

(See P16)

How have community-led actions to achieve attitudinal changes been supported?

Change the Story is excellent but it's mainly on-line. Who but those involved as survivors or workers in the area will go on-line to access this material? How accessible is this material to the average person in the street which is where attitudinal changes are needed?

More of the right words and sentiments but no indication of how this is going to be actioned. How is this plan going to 'make preventing violence everyone's responsibility'?

(See P17)

Same information as P7 but in more words

This officer was not appointed until about June 2021 and vacated early 2022. There has been very little **public** evidence of what has been achieved in the last 18 months. LWRC has been in contact with this officer and received lots of links to online documents, (over 500 pages) and videos which are excellent resources but minimally useful for public engagement.

(See P18)

How are workplaces other than government services being encouraged to promote and normalise gender equality and respect? Does there need to be some basic legislation?

GENERAL COMMENT

The tertiary area is well covered but primary prevention is under-funded and not connecting widely with the general public, especially adults 40+ where the most strongly embedded and influential attitudes to women are found.

Nothing is being actioned in the media arena where societal attitudes and values are reflected. What values are being displayed in magazines such as Women's Day, New Idea and TV programs such as Married at First Sight, Big Brother and the Bachelor/Bachelorette series?

The rest of this document does not pertain to Primary Prevention so has not been addressed in this submission.