



Midlas

Building Resilient Communities

10 YEAR STRATEGY FOR REDUCING FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

MIDLAS SUBMISSION

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STRUCTURAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONDITIONS THAT SUPPORT FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

"Not all disrespect towards women results in violence. But all violence against women starts with disrespect"

Midlas staff work with a large number of women who are experiencing family violence. Many feel forced to stay in violent relationships as they do not have the economic means to break free from the violence and start over independently. Initiatives such as the crisis payment for women fleeing violence are good short term solutions, but do not change the underlying social issue that women are generally less economically secure than their male counterparts. This is largely due to the rampant hegemonic masculinity in Australian culture, perpetuated and supported by issues such as the gender pay gap, the proportionately lower percentage of women in senior management roles, and the iconic and ingrained perception of what it takes to be an 'Aussie Bloke'.

There are a number of successful campaigns being coordinated currently to challenge gender stereotypes and perpetuate a more egalitarian view of gender, but this would be enhanced through early intervention measures in schools and a broad campaign around gender roles (rather than specific to domestic violence). The government's respect campaign is a great platform to start the conversations <https://www.respect.gov.au/>. There would also be inherent value to campaigning around respect more generally, as not all disrespect leads to violence, but all violence stems from disrespect. This could be in the form of media campaigns, social media campaigns, and targeted education programs for youth.

For greater reach and success, 'respect' and 'gender roles' needs to be incorporated into all programs in the community space as a 'way of operating' rather than service outcome, and all services (government, private and NGO) should have access to resources to support their staff and services to operate under this framework, and be encouraged and supported to support gender equity, foster a respectful culture, and challenge gender stereotypes.



PERPETRATORS

The legal system in Australia has a serious gap in the way in which perpetrators of family violence are identified, prosecuted and rehabilitated. Perpetrators of Family Violence are often served with orders they do not fully understand and expected to comply fully with all requirements. There is very little resource in the family courts to explain what the order means, how it needs to be followed and the ramifications for non-compliance. Northern Suburbs community Legal Centre runs a programs that puts a Duty Lawyer in their local Court house to facilitate this process. The result has been a dramatic reduction in the number of perpetrators breaching the restraining orders, which results in less trauma for the victim, better chances at rehabilitation for the perpetrator, and a serious reduction in court time and resources.

CASE STUDY: JOHN AND MARK

John is a perpetrator of Family Violence and has attended court as an interim order (Family Violence Restraining Order (FVRO)) has been made against him. John has no legal representation, has no understanding of what a FVRO is and what it means, and has had no contact with his wife or children since the order was made. John doesn't understand the process and is disruptive during the trial(rebutting statements and speaking out of turn). The Judge considers the evidence and an FVRO has been made protecting his wife and the children. John understands that he cannot go near the house his wife and children live in so he presents at the children's school a week later to see if he can talk to them at lunch time. John has breached the FVRO, and is now being charged with a criminal offence.

Mark is a perpetrator of Family Violence and has attended court for the hearing to make a FVRO. Mark speaks to the Community Legal Centre Duty Lawyer at Court and gets information about what to expect and how he needs to conduct himself. Mark conducts himself well in the court. The Judge considers the evidence and makes the FVRO order against Mark. Mark speaks to the Duty Lawyer who explains what the requirements are, what the terms of the FVRO are and what are Mark's responsibilities. Mark understands what he needs to do and does not breach the FVRO. Mark is later able to begin supervised visits with the children and begin a men's counselling program.

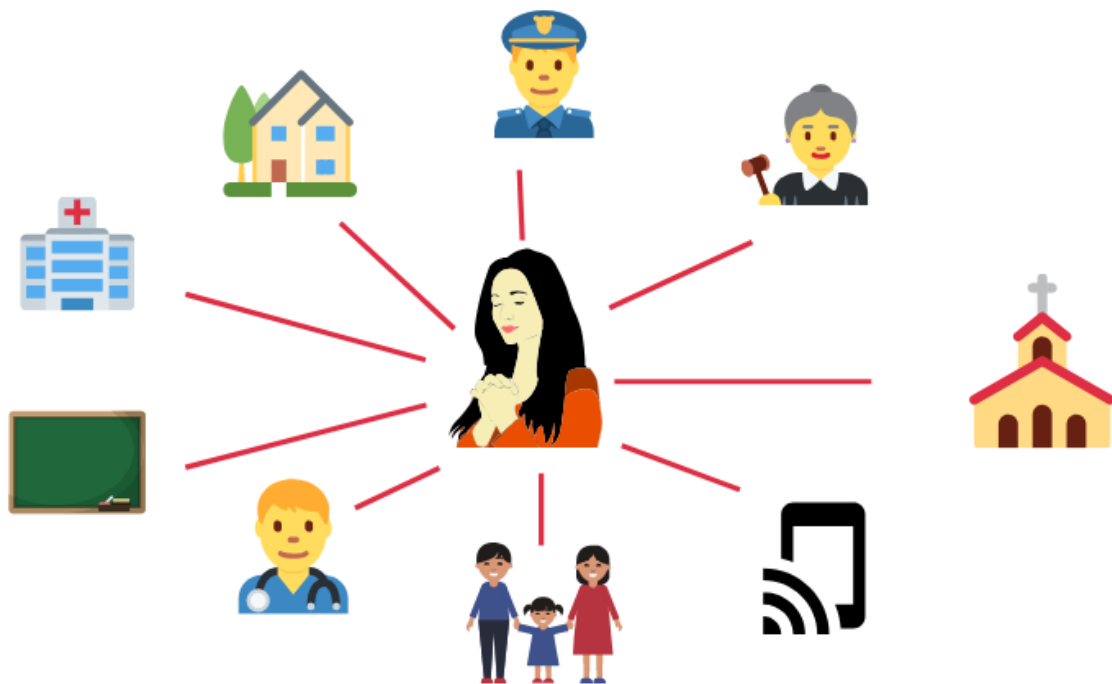
SOLUTION

Fund the implementation of a Duty Lawyer in every local court to explain the Family Court process and the resulting outcome to perpetrators of Family Violence; to ensure a reduction in FVRO breaches and continued trauma to the victim.



COLLABORATION

The not for profit, and government services in the domestic violence sphere offer a holistic service for people experiencing violence, however these services are often operating separately and do not have a consolidated or coordinated approach to supporting the individual. A person experiencing violence may present initially in a number of different areas, and they would benefit from each of the respective services, and have a better outcome if supported by all collectively, but this is not possible due to limited resources, lack of communication (perpetuated largely by competitive tendering and self-preservation) and a lack of coordination in the industry. What we need is a coordinated response, similar to the Family Support Networks, that mean there is no wrong door, and every door leads to more support and guidance..



SOLUTION

Implement a Coordinated group in each region that meets regularly to discuss complex cases and provide linkages, easy referral and the opportunity for people in trauma to only tell their story once. This could be based on the Family Support Network model in operation in some regions, and would include government, NGO and private sector services.

OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

The biggest group of service providers working in the Family Violence space are not for profit organisations who are under-resourced, under-funded, and required to consistently apply for competitive funding rounds to continue services. We know from research that services take years to be recognised and trusted by the community, and to then start to see the true long-term outcomes of their work. These outcomes are understood by the agencies in the space, but hard to quantify without resources for evaluation, outcome measurement and social return on investment initiatives.

Initiatives and innovations are consistently being implemented with short, medium and long term impacts on families. Quantifying these outcomes will give agencies and funders a clear sense on the return on investment.

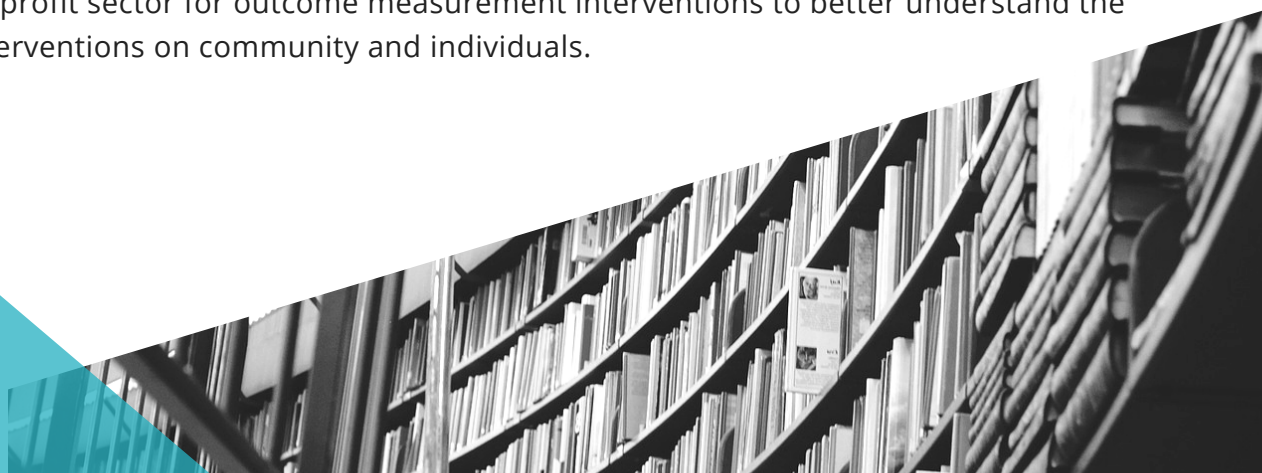
CASE STUDY: JANE

Jane attended the Community Legal Centre as she was experiencing family violence and wanted a Family Violence Restraining Order (FVRO). The Community Lawyer worked with her for 4 hours to prepare the application and get the FVRO, she also referred her to Financial Counselling to get assistance to manage her debts as she was now on sole income. The Financial Counsellor spent 2 hours with Jane to prepare the budget and negotiate her payments to stop her slipping into debt. These interventions cost the organisation \$550.

As a result of this support, the FVRO stopped the abuse and Jane and the children had no admissions to hospital (as compared to three last year). Jane was able to get the kids to school every day with lunch and the supplies they needed which will have a positive outcome on their education and future options; and Jane had 80% less sick days from work which has an impact on her employability and job security. These impacts are seen long-term and have a greater reach than simply stopping the immediate risk of violence.

SOLUTION

Fund the not for profit sector for outcome measurement interventions to better understand the impact of the interventions on community and individuals.



FUNDING

Community Legal Centres are the only option for many people experiencing family violence, as we offer a free service to those who cannot afford private legal support. These services are in high demand and the recent report conducted by the National Community Legal Centre Association - 'The Unmet Demand for Legal Services' (<http://www.nacalc.org.au/resources/>) showed that centres are having to turn away one in four requests for help due to a lack of funding and resources to meet the need.

The current funding system for state services often has no indexation. The result of this is a decline in serviceability each year. The government implemented the Equal Remuneration Order (ERO) (to bridge the gender pay gap, and address the under-payment of community service workers) so each year the service becomes more expensive to run, and without increased funding or indexation, services have no option but to reduce staff hours and in turn, reduce service hours. This negates the point of the ERO, as staff are given a better hourly rate and subsequently less hours of work. It also reduces our ability to help people which is a key driver for people working in this industry - we want to do good work for the community and help people who are in crisis.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Funding: \$200,000	Funding: \$200,000	Funding: \$200,000	Funding: \$200,000
Staff: 2 FTE	Staff: 1.9 FTE	Staff: 1.8 FTE	Staff: 1.7 FTE
Clients: 300	Clients: 285	Clients: 270	Clients: 255

SOLUTION

Move to 5 year funding contracts and implement preferred service provider status to offer security of funding, and allow long term investment into community outcomes.

Increase the funding to Community Legal Centres to increase our capacity to see people in need, and ensure that all people have access to justice.

Implement consistent indexation across all funding bodies to ensure agencies can remunerate their staff appropriately without compromising service delivery.

