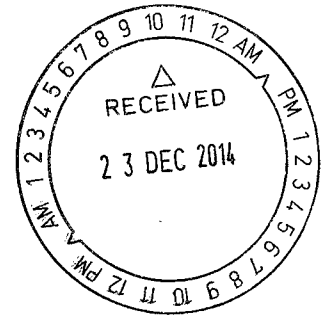




Our ref: 130.14
Your ref: Petition No 72

Hon Simon O'Brien MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000



Dear Mr ~~O'Brien~~ *Simon*

Petition No 72 – Domestic Violence Funding

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission regarding the issues raised in the above petition. I have not taken the issues raised to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations.

The petition raises two concerns relating to domestic and family violence services in Western Australia (WA): the future and sustainability of 'Safe At Home' program funding and the need for funding for new domestic violence refuges. I recommend the issues contained in the petition warrant further investigation regarding the adequacy of funding to domestic and family violence services in WA.

The *Safe At Home* program assists women and children experiencing domestic violence to stay at home, when it is safe to do so, rather than leave the family home and move into crisis accommodation. The program is based in six locations across WA and is operated as an outreach service through women's refuges. This program has been very successful especially in terms of ensuring safety for women and children and minimizing the risks of homelessness and financial insecurity. It is also considered to be a very cost effective program¹.

The Federal Government contributes a significant component of funding to this program. However, negotiations regarding future funding are extremely drawn out and the future of the program is unclear. Should the Federal Government not continue its contribution, it is unclear whether the State Government will cover the Federal Government's contribution. This jeopardises the future of this very successful and important program and warrants further investigation.

The *Women's Refuge Program* is also a very successful program and provides emergency accommodation and assistance to women and children escaping domestic violence. The State Government had previously committed to constructing two new 'cluster style' refuges in Perth metropolitan area. However, the 2014-15 Budget Statements indicate that funding will be only made available for one new refuge. Recent evidence suggests that there has been a significant increase in the number of reports to police of domestic

¹ see evidence by Department for Child Protection and Family Services to Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations - Agency Annual Report Hearings 10 December 2014

Alanna Clohesy
Member for **East Metropolitan Region**
62 Eighth Ave, Maylands WA 6051
Phone: (08) 9272 1718 | Fax: (08) 9272 1719
Email: clohesy.emetro@mp.wa.gov.au



assaults – a 77% increase over five years². Domestic violence is one of three 'drivers' of children coming into state care in WA³. Reports suggest that current refuges for women and children escaping domestic violence are full to over-flowing. Standard operating is "... there are no vacancies in the metro area for more than two or three hours before they are filled".⁴

Services are under pressure in relation to provision of services to women of particular population groups. In rural and remote regions of WA crisis and other domestic violence services are limited because of distance but also because of cultural, language and other related issues, especially for Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women experience domestic violence at a much higher rate than non-Aboriginal women: Twenty percent of indigenous women experienced physical violence in the last 12 months, compared to 7% of non-Indigenous women.⁵ Yet, anecdotal evidence suggests, they are much less likely to have services available or access those services. Women with disability are more likely to experience domestic violence than non-disabled women and experience significant barriers in accessing domestic violence support services.⁶

This information is only a small example of the current concerns and issues facing women experiencing domestic violence and the service providers seeking to provide support and assistance to them. This 'tip of the iceberg' glimpse suggests there are significant issues that the Committee may consider in investigating further the provision of crisis services to women and children escaping domestic violence.

Further, the government is currently considering the recommendations of an extensive examination of laws and legal services relating to domestic violence, *Enhancing laws concerning family and domestic violence*, Law Reform Commission, June 2014. It is not clear in what way any recommendations the government may accept will affect the demand for crisis services. However, the inter-relationships between these services and policy and program changes require investigation.

I trust this information is useful to the Committee in its deliberations. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can provide further information.

Yours sincerely



Alanna Clohesy MLC
Member for East Metropolitan Region

22 DEC 2014

² see evidence by WA Police to Standing Committee on Estimates and Financial Operations – Agency Annual Report Hearings 4 November 2014

³ Department for Child Protection, op. cit.

⁴ Angela Hartwig, WCFDVS in "Too much violence for silence", C Egan, The West Australian 22 November 2014, pg 57.

⁵ Mouzos, J & Makkai, T (2004), Women's experiences of male violence: findings from the Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS), Research and Public Policy Series 56, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

⁶ Fromhander, C & Salthouse, S (2004) 'Double the Odds' – Domestic Violence and Women with Disabilities, Available at: <http://wwda.org.au/issues/viol/viol2001/odds/>