

Media Release



Family violence crime stats highlight need for government action

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The release of Victorian crime statistics has highlighted family violence as a key driver of crime rates across a range of offences, yet the Victorian Government is still failing to respond to increased reporting of family violence, or to properly support the State's Family Violence Death Review aimed squarely at prevention.

The Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths has not received specific funding through the Coroners Court since July 2010, and a February 2012 letter to Attorney-General Robert Clark from 12 non-government members of the Review's reference group urging funding for the Review has met with no reply. At a PAEC hearing earlier this year, Mr Clark said the Review would continue, but failed to guarantee specific funding.

In releasing the police crime statistics, Chief Commissioner Ken Lay said that family violence "was significantly driving up the number of reported offences in several crime categories including assaults, property damage, rapes, abductions/kidnap, justice procedures and harassment".

"If we are to prevent a worsening of family violence, and the escalation of family violence offences to family violence murders, it is vital that the Family Violence Death Review is properly funded to make the greatest possible impact through understanding how deaths occur and preventing future deaths by focusing on the risks," said family violence prevention advocate, Dr Chris Atmore, today.

The release of crime statistics and Mr Lay's comments follow a resolution at last week's National Community Legal Centre Conference at which family violence prevention advocates from around Australia urged statutory protection and secure funding for family violence death reviews in each state and territory.

"If we're serious about preventing the toll of family violence, we need to properly support family violence death reviews that operate according to evidence-based best practice and consult with community experts in family violence.

"It is also essential that all states and territories follow through on death review recommendations, so that the necessary changes to better protect women and children from family violence can actually be achieved.

"What we have at the moment in Victoria is an acknowledgment of the problem expressed through the release of these worrying crime statistics, but far too little support for the action needed to address it. The increased reporting of family violence has put great pressure on legal and court services for victims of violence which hasn't been matched by adequate funding.

"We should also remember in Child Protection Week that many of the victims of family violence are children," Dr Atmore said.

Family violence is the most common issue community legal centres help Victorians with, providing around 18,000 services each year to help vulnerable women and children know their rights and obtain protection.

The Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths was introduced in 2009 to identify trends and patterns in family violence deaths, and to consider how services might respond more effectively. The Review assists Victorian coroners to develop recommendations aimed at prevention.

The full text of last week's conference resolution is available.

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