



September 27 2017

Inquiry into the delivery of National Outcome 4 of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children 2010-2022, 'Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence,' insofar as that Outcome is given effect by the 1800 RESPECT Domestic and Sexual Violence National Counselling Service.

To the Senate Inquiry

I am writing this submission in my capacity as the Manager of Penrith Women's Health Centre. I also need to disclose to you that I am the current Chair of Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia's (R&DVSA) Board.

One of our clients here at Penrith Women's Health Centre (PWHC) has given me permission to submit to the Enquiry on her behalf the support experience she has received over many years from R&DVSA.

Mary (not her real name) has a history of childhood sexual abuse and ritualistic trauma. This childhood experience also had an effect on her adulthood, mental health and emotional health. She was diagnosed as an adult with Dissociative Identity Disorder and suicidal thoughts and attempts due to the extreme violence she lived with.

Mary had years of therapy from professional however, she puts her recovery and the fact that she is still alive to the support received from the Trauma Specialist Counsellors at R&DVSA. During her darkest times where she did not feel like continuing to live, she knew help was just a phone call away. It was of no concern that she phoned the R&DVSA line numerous times the Counsellors were always available to provide the support she needed. Mary currently continues to use this Service as a support.

Her disappointment at the recent news is very real. Fortunately, for us here in NSW Mary will be able to continue her support by phoning the NSW Rape Crisis Centre for 24 hours Specialist Trauma Counselling.

My question to the Enquiry is:

What about our other Community Members in different States and Territories of Australia?

Regards

Jane Gold
Manager



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I felt compelled to provide an example of how R&DVSA trauma specialist Counsellors support Workers in the community including those here at Penrith Women's Health Centre (PWHC).

PWHC has a number of services within the Centre that provide support for Women and children who are or have been affected by Domestic and Family Violence. The Workers who provide this support hear traumatic stories day in and day out doing the best to keep Women and children safe from harm.

The risk to these Workers own emotional wellbeing is high as vicarious trauma is an ongoing effect that if not managed well causes harm to these dedicated Workers. Our most serious example is back in 2012 when a husband killed his wife, our client. The young caseworker who had supported this woman and her children understandably was very traumatised by this event. She was diagnosed with PTSD in the following weeks.

All our Workers receive Individual & Group Clinical Supervision, Debriefing and any support required to heal their emotional wellbeing after a critical incident such as this. One of the supports we relied on at this time was for this Worker and any others here that needed to talk to Specialist Trauma Counsellor, in particular after hours came from the R&DVSA. It often occurs late at night when a person is struggling with ruminating thoughts and sleeplessness that they need someone professional to speak about how they are feeling. Without the R&DVSA Counsellors at the other end of the phone to assist during this period this skilled, dedicated Worker may never have returned to good mental health and the role she so chose as her career.

We do not have access to EAP in our Workplace so this reliance to receive support is crucial.

Please consider the valuable professional role R&DVSA has provided for decades. This is has been available to Community Members who experience trauma but also to the workforce who support them to live a life free from violence.

Jane Gold Manager