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20 OCT 2009
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Submission No. 12
(Youth Violence)
A.O.C. Date: 20/10/09

Secretary of the Inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians,
House of Representatives,
P.O. Box 6021,
Parliament House,
Canberra, ACT, 2600

For submission to the Inquiry into the impact of violence on young
Australians:

Our Agency, Community Connections (Vic) Ltd through its programs and initiatives that address violence against young women is responding to the request for submissions to the 'Inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians' by the Federal Government. This submission is advocating for the inclusion of how gendered violence contributes to the impact of violence on young people in Australia within the inquiry.

Community Connections (Vic) Ltd is involved in the area of Violence against Women through the Barwon South West Integrated Family Violence Coordination. A priority focus for action was identified by the Barwon South West Integrated Family Violence Services to address prevention of violence in future generations through focusing on children and young people. In July this year the Regional Schools Family Violence Project commenced. This project is working towards promoting family violence primary prevention through the development of respectful relationship education programs in the Barwon South West schools in Victoria.

The addition of a focussed exploration of the impact of violence on young women within the proposed 'Inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians' would be a significant addition ensuring a comprehensive examination. The issues compounding the area of how violence impacts on young Australian girls and women are multiple and complex. Considering these complexities and the gendered links to violence within the inquiry would promote an equitable and accurate view of how violence impacts both young men and young women in Australia.

Issues relating to violence prevention and safety are paramount for public scrutiny and planned action. Stories of young men being attacked and injured for life leave the community in fear for young people's public safety. However, from another perspective it must be noted that for young women the streets, day and particularly night, have never been a guaranteed place of safety. Further violence against young women occurs in both the public and the private spheres of life. It is essential that the impact of violence on young women and an examination of the gendered nature of this violence are purposefully and comprehensively included within this inquiry.



Community Connections (Vic) Ltd

BN 23 083 100 118

Varrnambool
135 Kepler Street
PO Box 404
Varrnambool VIC 3280

1300 361 680
03 5560 3700

ccvl@comconnect.com.au
www.comconnect.com.au

Geelong
18 Myers Street
Geelong VIC 3220

Hamilton
12-94 Thompson Street
Hamilton VIC 3300

Portland
Portland District Health
13 Otway Street
Portland VIC 3305

Traralgon
Manifold Place
140 Manifold Street
Traralgon VIC 3260

Please consider the following key points:

Evidence identified by the Victorian Government confirms that women are overwhelmingly impacted by being the victims of intimate partner and sexual violence with an increased likelihood of injury, hospitalisation and fearing for their lives (State of Victoria, 'Fact Sheet No.1: State plan to Prevent Violence Against Women, 2009).

- The prevalence of violence against women is starkly outstanding with one in five Australian women identifying at least one incidence of physical or sexual violence by a current or known partner since the age of 18 (VicHealth, 'The health costs of violence', 2004)
- Violence against women is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in women aged 15-44 (VicHealth, 'The health costs of violence', 2004)
- The gendered nature of family violence impacts profoundly on young people. One quarter of young Australians have witnessed physical violence perpetrated against a mother or step-mother. Exposure to family violence has significant health and developmental consequences for children (State of Victoria, 'Practice guidelines: Women and Children's family violence and counselling programs, 2008).

To assure the careful consideration of violence against women within this inquiry into the impact of violence on young Australians it would be ideal to overtly refer to the relationship between gender and violence. The Australian Government's 'National plan to reduce Violence against Women' notes that young women are a population group that experience higher rates of violence (Commonwealth of Australia, 2009). Within the inquiry it would be beneficial to extensively involve and consult organisations and services working in the area of Violence against Women, particularly in areas relating to research, advocacy and service delivery. As well it would be illuminating to particularly consult young women who have experienced violence themselves. Working comprehensively in strong partnerships with organisations and young women would ensure addressing the issue of violence and young people equitably and effectively through the recognition and exploration of how gendered violence impacts on young Australians.

We look forward to the outcomes of this inquiry. Further contact regarding this submission can be directed to:

➤ Madeleine Kempster, Regional Schools Family Violence Project Officer who can be contacted on (03) 52 23 1660.

Yours Truly,

Bruce du Vergier
Chief Executive Officer
Community Connections (Vic) Ltd



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