

Legislation, Policy and Programs
Justice and Community Safety Directorate
ACT Government
GPO Box 158
Canberra ACT 2601

Via email: JACSLPP@act.gov.au

Dear Legislation, Policy and Programs,

Family Violence Death Review Draft Models – Submission

Thank you for inviting the ACT Council of Social Service (ACTCOSS) to respond to the consultation on the introduction of a family violence death review (FVDR) scheme for the ACT.

ACTCOSS supports a FVDR process as a mechanism for systemic learning in tragic cases of death as a result of family and domestic violence. We welcome this as a contribution to systems-change in addressing the burden of family and domestic violence on the community. ACTCOSS acknowledges the recommendation made by the Domestic Violence Prevention Council (DVPC) in 2017, that FVDRs are beneficial as they are “able to look at the behaviours and interactions of each of the individuals, organisations and agencies involved”¹.

The following letter outlines a few recommendations from ACTCOSS to contribute to a robust, useful and independent FVDR in the ACT.

Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network (ADFVDRN)

We agree with the DVPC that a FVDR process in the ACT is useful to contribute to national statistics and analysis of family and domestic violence. To assist this, the FVDR should contribute to the ADFVDRN. In 2018, the Network noted that it is currently “piloting a process by which to collate and monitor recommendations informed by domestic and family death review processes across jurisdictions”².

1 DVPC, *Review of Domestic and Family Violence Deaths in the ACT*, DVPC, Canberra, 2016, p.58, viewed 24 January 2019, <http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/864714/DVPC-Review-of-Domestic-and-Family-Violence-Deaths.pdf>.

2 ADFVDRN, *2018 Data Report*, ADFVDRN, Sydney, 2018, p.V, viewed 24 January 2019, <[http://www.coroners.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/ADFVDRN_Data_Report_2018%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.coroners.justice.nsw.gov.au/Documents/ADFVDRN_Data_Report_2018%20(2).pdf)>.

The ACT and Tasmania are currently the only jurisdictions without a death review process; we note that an ongoing FDVR process supports National Priority Five: Continuing to build the evidence base, from the Second Action Plan 2013-16 of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

Proposed FVDR model

ACTCOSS proposes the FVDR be in the Coroner's Court, as supported by the Women's Centre for Health Matters and the Youth Coalition of the ACT. This is preferable to locating the FVDR within the either the Community Services or Justice and Community Safety Directorates. ACTCOSS understands that the Child and Young People Death Review Senior Research Officer currently sits within Community Services Directorate (CSD), however, we maintain that the Coroner's Court will best allow the independence required for the FVDR to make substantive recommendations. The FVDR Senior Research Officer may make findings that challenge policy or processes designed or coordinated by CSD, and this process could be undermined by co-location. Locating the FVDR in the Coroner's Court will also be beneficial for timely and cost-effective access to sensitive information and shared expertise; in its Review, the DVPC identified ease and timeliness of data access as critical³. Once the FVDR is established, we would like to see a scoping of possible co-location with the Child and Youth People Death Review – both within the Coroner's Court.


We recommend that the DVPC be the Advisory Group. The DVPC has essential domestic and family violence expertise, and the important ability to advocate around the findings and recommendations of the reviews.

ACTCOSS believes reports should be ongoing. We also note the need for the FVDR reviews to include strong qualitative analysis, as quantitative analysis can be skewed and unrepresentative in the ACT due to small population samples.

Community sector resourcing

Finally, ACTCOSS stresses that appropriate resources will need to be provided for community sector analysis and implementation of any recommendations from the reviews. This is particularly important given significant service delivery responsibilities outside of ACT Government provided services.

Yours sincerely,



Susan Helyar
Director

Email: director@actcoss.org.au

31 January 2019

³ DVPC, *Review of Domestic and Family Violence Deaths in the ACT*, DVPC, Canberra, 2016, p.4, viewed 24 January 2019, <http://www.cmd.act.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0003/864714/DVPC-Review-of-Domestic-and-Family-Violence-Deaths.pdf>.