

Position Statement – February 2024

Terms of reference for the Royal Commission into domestic, family and sexual violence

Embolden is the peak body for domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) services in South Australia, representing 19 member organisations delivering specialist services across our State.

This position statement outlines Embolden's view on the scope and focus of the terms of reference for the Royal Commission, currently in development by the South Australian Government. The State Government has indicated that it will consult with the DFSV sector on draft terms of reference, once developed, and we welcome this.

South Australia needs a whole-of-government strategic and integrated approach to preventing and responding to DFSV. To this end, the Royal Commission must have a **strong focus on systems and services across State Government – including but not limited to health, housing, child and family services, child protection, policing, criminal justice and education – and the non-government sector, as well as the intersections between and across these systems.**

It is important that the terms of reference embed an **equal focus on sexual violence alongside domestic and family violence.**

The Commission's scope of inquiry and recommendations should align with the four domains of the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*:

- **Prevention** – how South Australia can better work to change the underlying social drivers of violence by addressing the attitudes and systems that drive violence against women and children, to stop it before it starts.
- **Early intervention** – how South Australia can more effectively identify and support individuals who are at higher risk of experiencing or perpetrating violence and prevent it from reoccurring.
- **Response** – how South Australia can make improvements to services and supports to address existing violence and support victim-survivors experiencing violence, such as crisis support and police intervention, and ensure a trauma-informed justice system that will hold those using violence to account.
- **Recovery and healing** – how South Australia can more effectively reduce the risk of re-traumatisation, and support victim-survivors to be safe and to recover from the physical, mental, emotional and economic impacts of violence.

The terms of reference must explicitly acknowledge the **disproportionate rates of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and children and the over-representation of Aboriginal people in our service systems**, in the context of the ongoing impacts of colonisation and inter-generational trauma on Aboriginal people, families and communities. The Commission must consider how to ensure that **Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations are funded and supported** to develop and deliver culturally responsive frameworks and services that prevent and respond to DFSV through family and community healing.

The terms of reference should also specify how the Commission will hear directly from **people with lived experience of DFSV, and those delivering frontline services**. To ensure that the Commission's recommendations are meaningfully grounded in lived experience, the Commission must have regard

to and report on the unique needs and perspectives of: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; children and young people; older South Australians; culturally and linguistically diverse communities; LGBTIQ+ people; people living with disability; and regional and remote communities.

Embolden also advocates that the Commissioner have regard to the following specific issues, to create a strong, effective and sustainable DFSV services sector in South Australia:

- **funding quantum and arrangements**, to ensure that service infrastructure and resources are commensurate with community need and that funding mechanisms support responsive, adaptive and sustainable service provision;
- **workforce supply, skills development and support**;
- **services' capacity to collect, share and report on data** to promote effective monitoring and evaluation and drive service improvements; and
- **any key inter/national research findings, frameworks, policies and/or service models** that could potentially be implemented in the South Australian context (across mainstream or specialist contexts).

Finally, Embolden suggests that the terms of reference provide for the **establishment of a committee to oversee implementation of recommendations** made by the Commissioner that are accepted by government. The terms of reference should also specify the inclusion of people with lived experience and key DFSV sector representatives on the oversight body – a representative from an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, a regional service, a specialist sexual violence service, a service working with men using violence, and Embolden as the sector peak.