



Embolden's Statement

State Government response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission

Embolden is the peak body for domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) services in South Australia and represents 30 organisations and discrete services delivering specialist services statewide. At the end of 2023, Embolden led the call for a Royal Commission into domestic, family and sexual violence, following a week in which four South Australian women were murdered. In August 2025, South Australia's Royal Commission into domestic, family and sexual violence, led by Natasha Stott Despoja AO, released its report [With Courage: South Australia's vision beyond violence](#), along with the [Voices](#) Report reflecting the input of people with lived and living experience. The State Government released its [response](#) to the Royal Commission on 12 December 2025. Of the 136 recommendations made, the State Government has accepted 129 - 84 either wholly or in part, 45 in principle and for future consideration. Four recommendations are noted and three not accepted.



Embolden welcomes the State Government's acceptance of 129 recommendations and commitment of \$674 million over 10 years. The Royal Commission provides our state with a blueprint for transformative change, and the accepted recommendations have the capacity to move the dial on how we prevent and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence. They include a dedicated **Aboriginal domestic, family and sexual violence strategy**, which must be Aboriginal-led, and will complement the critical work being progressed on Closing the Gap targets. The accepted recommendations will drive **whole-of-government action and accountability** and **centre the voices of people with lived experience** in the reform process. Embolden is privileged to be co-creating South Australia's first statewide network with adults with lived experience of domestic, family and/or sexual violence.



The specialist sector eagerly anticipates the opportunity to partner in the implementation of **key service reforms** announced by the Government, including two new services for children and young people, improved help-seeking pathways, a new risk assessment and management framework, and integrated response teams to better respond to victim-survivors at risk. It is of vital importance that reforms are co-designed with people with lived experience and the specialist sector, to ensure that they reflect on-the-ground realities and leverage specialist expertise.

While yet to see the detail through the mid-year budget review, Embolden welcomes the announced immediate **uplift in funding for crisis services**. This is in addition to embedding and expanding early intervention initiatives and additional interim investment in the Domestic Violence Crisis Line, while the new 24/7 accessible entry-point to services and supports is established. We strongly support the commitment of funding for **flexible safety packages**, designed to help victim-survivors access the supports they need, providing a more holistic, person-centred response. Effective risk management and delivery of flexible safety packages would

be supported by **progressing the recommended needs assessment as part of the new risk assessment framework.**

Embolden commends the State Government's commitment to an **audit of public housing with additional properties identified for people escaping violence**, as well as the investment in the **Safe At Home** program. However, **investment in accommodation for people using violence must also be prioritised**, including accommodation for, and co-designed with, Aboriginal people and communities. Instead of expecting victim-survivors to leave their homes to ensure their safety, a trauma-informed approach supports victim-survivors to remain in their home and community, providing stability for children and allowing pets to be kept, which we know provides significant support in crisis and for recovery and healing. We note the Government's decision not to disentangle domestic and family violence crisis support funding from homelessness funding. It is imperative that the focus on housing outcomes is supported by adequate funding to meet a range of other needs and responses for victim-survivors, including for those not experiencing homelessness.

The State Government's commitment of \$674 million over 10 years is significant in a context of ongoing under-investment in SA to address domestic, family and sexual violence. **Funding to address domestic, family and sexual violence must be commensurate with the scale and seriousness of the problem** and Embolden will be undertaking a comparative analysis of South Australia's investment on a per capita basis against that of other jurisdictions. We note the State Government's recent investment of \$715 million over 5 years in response to the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care. Embolden commends the Government's commitment to **longer-term funding for existing services** to support workforce stability for our specialist DFSV sector. It will also be **important that a DFSV workforce strategy is adequately funded**, to ensure that workforce growth and development is able to meet the increasing demand for services and complexity of client needs. It is important to recognise that those working with people using violence, in both mandated contexts and more broadly, are encompassed in the DFSV workforce. Progressing a funded Community of Practice for those working with people using violence would strengthen this vital workforce and prevent future violence, while complementing the accepted recommendation to establish minimum standards for this work if progressed concurrently.

Our sector commends the State Government's establishment of an **Aboriginal Partnership Committee**, following the lead of the Royal Commission, as well as the commitment to developing a mechanism for collaboration with the broader specialist sector. Embolden looks forward to continuing to work in close partnership with the State Government through the implementation process, including on the development of an outcomes framework. Embolden has consistently emphasised the importance of **independent monitoring of the outcomes and impacts of reforms**. In discussions with Embolden, the Premier and Minister Hildyard have committed to engaging with the sector on the establishment of an independent monitoring mechanism. Embolden is of the view that this is best achieved by the establishment of a South Australian Commissioner for domestic, family and sexual violence.

For effective monitoring of outcomes and impacts, our state's **ability to capture data on a range of measures** is critical. Embolden is pleased to see a commitment to developing a **data dashboard** for use by the Government Steward to capture available data on the incidence and prevalence of domestic, family and sexual violence. A **fit-for-purpose records management and information sharing system** will also be important to support the specialist DFSV sector to meaningfully contribute data and to enable our state to evaluate the impact of system reforms over time in a comprehensive and nuanced way.

The sector welcomes the emphasis on improving **health responses to sexual violence**, including waiving fees for health services for victim-survivors without Medicare, expanding access to forensic medical examinations, and ensuring relevant healthcare providers can screen for and respond to non-fatal strangulation. The commitment to

updating legal definitions of consent will also improve justice responses to victim-survivors of sexual violence. However, we take this opportunity to highlight the **lack of focus on supports for both child and adult victim-survivors of child sexual abuse**. Given the Australian Child Maltreatment Study found that this type of sexual violence was experienced by 1 in 3 women and 1 in 5 men, and the intersections with domestic and family violence, services for this cohort of victim-survivors must also be strengthened if South Australia is to effectively support all victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence.

With respect to **legislative reform**, Embolden is pleased to see acceptance of a suite of recommendations, including regulating alcohol sales and delivery, updating jury directions for DFSV-related offences, and improving the capacity of intervention orders to better protect children and to address breaches. Embolden also looks forward to the establishment of a working group to progress the implementation of coercive control offences. Additionally, we support the commitment to **training for judicial officers, court staff and SA Police and increased supports**, such as the Family Violence Court support service and the establishment of a witness suite, to **improve victim-survivors' access to and experience of justice systems**.

In **addressing the use of violence**, Embolden welcomes the commitment to scaling up the **Abuse Prevention Program** and the investment in interventions with young men. However, **interventions with people on remand** and the piloting of a **domestic and family violence diversionary scheme** also present critical opportunities to change behaviour, support families and prevent future harm. These initiatives, accepted in principle and for future consideration, should not be delayed. Embolden also notes the State Government's rejection of the recommendations to remove the reasonable chastisement defence. Embolden's position on this remains in support of the Royal Commission findings that, for children and young people, the acceptance of corporal punishment legitimises the use of physical violence. Regardless of legislation addressing the defence, Embolden strongly supports strengthening education and supports to promote positive and safe parenting approaches.

Given the scope and scale of the accepted recommendations, Embolden recognises that **implementation will require a staged and measured approach** to ensure sustainability. However, as **approximately one third of the accepted recommendations are accepted in principle and for future consideration, our sector is concerned about the potential for excessive delay of some of these actions**. We note that some of these recommendations would not require significant investment, such as removing the barrier that parental consent creates for children and young people seeking help. Crucially, while a substantial proportion of the recommendations accepted for immediate prioritisation rightly address the needs of people in crisis, many of those flagged for future consideration relate to earlier, holistic supports for individuals and families before they reach crisis point. In reality, this also means there are limited supports for victim-survivors experiencing primarily non-physical forms of violence. Put simply, if we let those recommendations accepted for future consideration drop off the radar, we risk maintaining the crisis-driven status quo and failing to capitalise on this generational opportunity to change the trajectory of domestic, family and sexual violence in our state. It is also important to note that **prevention and early intervention are key to capitalising on the investment in reform** by reducing the longer-term impacts of violence that may necessitate reliance on service systems long after the violence has ended. **Investment in recovery and healing is also vital for supporting victim-survivors post crisis to live free from violence**. This includes incorporating financial crisis services as a form of targeted prevention of future violence.

Additionally, **several recommendations for future consideration are designed to address barriers to service access for diverse South Australians**. These include alternative help-seeking pathways, anonymous reporting options, and community service hubs. All of these could promote greater access to culturally safe supports for a broad range of victim-survivors, including priority population groups. They also have the potential to improve the system's ability to respond effectively to family violence, which is currently limited and disproportionately

disadvantages Aboriginal and multicultural victim-survivors and communities. Further, the absence of alternative options and placed-based, community-led supports also compounds potential barriers to services that are solely phone-based or digital. It is also Embolden's view that **funding for Family Violence Disability Liaison Officers and LGBTIQ+ DFSV workers should not be delayed.**

While Embolden welcomes funding for the expansion of forensic medical services to regional areas, as well as the prioritisation of specialist Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation's delivery of specialist services and accommodation in regional and remote locations, there are a suite of recommendations marked for future consideration that **risk disproportionately disadvantaging victim-survivors and families living regionally and remotely.** Regional and remote South Australians also deserve access to vulnerable witness suites and court supports, in the absence of dedicated Family Violence Court, and additional investment in the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme would reduce risk for all South Australians with concerns about their relationships. Scaling up the Cross Borders program is vital to address risk, safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal communities in regional and remote areas, as is accommodation for people experiencing and using violence on the APY Lands.

Critically, **the potential risk of regional disadvantage is also the case for children and young people.** The statewide expansion of the Child and Family Support System, a regional pilot of the Corka Bubs program, and a review of the statewide accessibility of mental health services for children and young people experiencing DFSV are all vital for children's safety and wellbeing. Access to a health response through the Child Protective Services for regional children who have experienced physical, sexual or psychological abuse is critical. We know that the 28.5% of Australian children who experience child sexual abuse and the 40% of children who experience domestic and family violence are at greater risk of becoming victim-survivors and users of violence as adults. **All South Australian children and young people, regardless of where they live, should have access to services** that appropriately address their immediate safety and health risks and support their recovery and healing, to reduce their risk of future experiences of violence.

The Royal Commission presents South Australia with a **vital opportunity to change the way our services system and our communities prevent and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence.** Embolden welcomes the State Government's acceptance of 129 of 136 recommendations and significant investment of \$674 million over the next decade. While responding to crisis will always be important, we must strengthen and maintain our collective focus on intervening earlier and supporting victim-survivors' longer-term recovery and healing, regardless of who they are or where they live. This is critical to prevent violence and protect current and future generations from harm. Our sector looks forward to continuing to work with the State Government in close partnership, to create a service system that intervenes earlier, is more accessible, integrated and flexible, and that supports victim-survivors to recover and heal for a safer future.