



Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Ltd.

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QUESTION TIME

SESSION 1

Comments:

- Funding issues.
- Others areas of family violence that are outside the spousal woman/perpetrator dichotomy need to be addressed.
- There is concern in the area of counselling (ie: money poured into referral service rather than actual counselling).

SESSION 2

Question: What is the funding time span for the Partnership Forum?

Answer: There is \$300,000.00 for the first three years and it is likely to grow. The Government cannot fund the whole 10 years of the plan without an agreement. Programs will be funded as normal Government programs.

Question: Is there anything aimed just for children?

Answer: Within Local Action Groups there are targeted positions to ensure representation of youth/children, elders, men, women and same-sex couples, family healing and reunification.

Question: Is there an opportunity for child representation on the Partnership Forum?

Answer: The hope is that the Local Action Groups will ensure children will be catered for because we can not deal with children's issues on a state or regional level.

Comment: There is a need for a 'centre' vs a 'service'. The word 'service' implies it will just be yet another referral service. There is no 'healing' in referrals. Money will be absorbed by referral services rather than put into counsellors. This issue has been discussed previously. Regional Action Groups are consulting and must take action.

Question: Is there money allocated to the Family Violence Court and men's program at the Heidelberg Magistrates' Court?

Answer: Once the Family Violence Court opens there will be a huge demand for services. There is no specific funding set aside for men's programs. The funding is for Indigenous defendant and Applicant workers/liaisons.

SESSION 3

Question: What are the provisions for Koories with non-Indigenous Partners in relation to the Family Violence court?

Question: What about the brothers, sisters, nephew etc? Why focus only on male/female partnerships rather than family violence within other family relationships

Answer: The Family Violence Court is just the beginning, a pilot, and the Children's Court has raised those issues too.

Question: What if the men don't go to the Men's Behavior Change Programs?

Answer: There will be a fine.

Question: The men are mandated by postcode, but the postcodes are not yet selected is that right?

Answer: But this is just a pilot and has never been done before. This is the first time a program like this has been mandated.

Question What are the outcomes regarding community support for men in relation to the Family Violence Court? Will there be more men in jail because of these Courts?

Answer: The Applicant and Defendant workers should help the client to understand the process and reduce the number of people going on to the criminal system. Healing services also help to provide that support.

Question: Will the elders be involved in the Family Violence Courts?

Answer: No. This is mainstream and not set up like the Koori Courts.

Comment: Intervention Orders do not take into account Indigenous structures of family and Indigenous ways of living. There are no principles of involving respected Elders in decision-making. Intervention Orders do not recognise kinship systems adequately (eg: Framlingham families). The 'check-box' system results in people's rights being impinged when what they need is flexibility.

Comment: The term 'family' takes on a different meaning (i.e: beyond partner relationship). Perpetrator programs are only available for male and female partnerships. The application of Community Based Orders/Apprehended Violence Orders (Intervention Orders) typically results in incarceration. This does not recognize the difference in the

nature of family ties in the Indigenous community and is not an appropriate response for those who 'just want the violence to stop'.

SESSION 4

Question: Janine Wilson, please expose how people are treated when they go to the motel?

Answer: In Mildura there is a partnership between the Police and Domestic Violence Victoria. In Mildura when trying to accommodate families in crisis after hours difficulties are faced as there are no facilities available, and so motel services are utilized. The women's refuge will not take Indigenous Australian women. If Domestic Violence Victoria turns up with an Indigenous Australian women the comment by the motel manager is 'not you fuckin' mob again.' It is probably not happening only in our town, but everywhere. We must start to become pro-active, help find solutions for our mob and target organizations for partnership agreements. They think we're a sub-human species and that we don't have human rights. We can keep approaching them and making them feel guilty.

Question: How is the community responding to that?

Answer: Through the Local Action Groups and volunteers.

Comment: How do we address family violence as a whole? The current media campaign expresses a harmful division between men and women and promotes shame. Rather than a dividing and shaming process we should emphasize the community aspect. If men are seen as perpetrators, they will always be shamed.

Question: There is a need to address family violence as a family and community problem, rather than pointing the finger at men. Is there an opportunity to have dialogue to talk about how to spend the \$900,000.000 from Aboriginal Affairs Victoria? Is there an opportunity to have open dialogue with the people who have the \$900,000.00 over three years and make sure the money is re-directed? Who is going to follow up on this matter?

Answer: Nobody from Aboriginal Affairs Victoria is here to answer that question.

Question: Who is going to follow it up if Aboriginal Affairs Victoria is not here? There is also \$200,000 allocated to ATSIC for family violence funding, but it still hasn't been utilised, and is it accessible?

Answer: The Aboriginal Affairs Victoria member had left for the day and could not respond. VALS will let Aboriginal Affairs Victoria see the Indigenous Women's Justice Forum Report.

Question: Where has the \$100,000.00 left over from ATSIC gone? Indications are that it has gone toward the Family Violence Court. Yet this fact is disputed as it is suggested that the Family Violence Court was entirely mainstream funded.

Comment: The monitoring and accountability of the partnership agreement is only at face value, between Police and Domestic Violence Victoria.

Question: There is a question regarding the Family Violence Court because the Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce report indicates money has gone into the men's mandated programs.

Answer: The money available for the Family Violence Court project all came out of mainstream funding. The money for Men's Behavioral Change Programs and the Family Violence Court is from mainstream.

Comment 1: So part of the Taskforce recommendation was to put money into the FV court, yet the money has not been allocated.

Comment 2: The Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce Final Report is full of half truths. Additionally, the mainstream view is typically adopted. The worst thing about today has been half-truths. We are supposed to feel as though we know something and have learnt something. The Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce Report is full of half-truths. Only when look at the small print you find discrepancies. The Government took a whole year to respond to that Report. At times, I felt embarrassed my name was mentioned as part of that Taskforce. Mainstream providers are going to run the main things we have got. A partnership does not take away our responsibility to run our own blasted programs. Reconciliation never made me a whitefella, and it didn't make any whitefellas blackfellas. It is a system run by non-Aboriginal people. We have to make adjustments. Philanthropists will not give us money to fight the Government as you need to do it in your own way. It takes a direct question to find out about the \$300,000.00 we need about \$300,000 million. The Taskforce Report and the Government response are full of half-truths. The acceptance of this is appalling (eg: mainstream services to run Indigenous programs rather than real partnerships). I accept partnerships but only if Indigenous people can set the program.