**Royal Commission into Family Violence Report released 30 March 2016 – Impact on children and young people.**

We congratulate the Commission on their report. It is comprehensive, very practical and has the potential to significantly change the lives of children and young people in Victoria.

We also commend the Andrews government for agreeing to fund & implement all of the Commission recommendations.

In particular we support the recognition that young people using violence themselves including toward family members, require a different and specialist response . Many are victims of family violence themselves and have been exposed to dysfunctional & violent family members. They are also still developing and forming their attitudes and behaviours. Timely intervention with an emphasis on connecting them with therapeutic and other services to address’s their violence and that which underpins it, is welcomed.

**KEY RECOMMENDATIONS ARE:**

**For all victims of family violence:**

* Support & safety hubs in the 17 DHHS areas (by 1st July 2018) Rec 237
* Based on demand forecasting sufficient funds to FV services referred to by the Safety hubs (by July 2018) Rec 39
* Establishing specialist FV courts in all major courts (within 2 years) Rec 60
* Counselling for as long as needed for those affected by family violence (Within 12 months) Rec 104

**Children:**

* Counselling /expert advice for children in family crisis accommodation services (Within 12 months) –Rec 21
* Increased accommodation and ‘support packages’ for victims and their children to relocate and longer term ( Within 2 years) -Rec 17 &18
* Automatic inclusion ( rebuttable) of children on a parent’s intervention order (Within 12 months) Rec22
* Funding of therapeutic programs and counselling for children and young people who are victims of family violence (within 2 years) Rec 23.
* Greater police & child Protection follow up of perpetrators after initial intervention (within 12 months Rec 25
* Family violence reports that don’t meet the Child protection statutory risk threshold are still responded to through plans and safety hubs Rec 26
* Child Protection to undertake greater risk assessment and have increased responsibilities to act /refer information. Rec 27

**Youth:**

* Therapeutic programs and counselling for children and young people who are victims of family violence (within 2 years) Rec 23.
* Youth homelessness and other youth services providing supported accommodation for young people experiencing family violence (within 2 years) Rec 24.
* Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment services for all who need it, up to 17 years. (within 2 years) Rec 33
* Therapeutic treatment orders (diversionary practice in the Children’s Court) be extended to young people 15 to 17 years
* Subject to evaluation extend the Adolescent Family Violence Program (within 2 years) Rec 123
* Vic gov’t to fund crisis and longer term accommodation for adolescents who use violence in the home. This to be combined with therapeutic support provided to end the young person’s use of violence in the family (within 2 years) Rec 124.
* Melbourne Children’s Court establish a FV applicant and respondent worker positions to assist young people and families in situations where adolescents are using violence in the home (within 12 months) Rec 126
* Statutory youth diversion scheme in Victoria (subject to evaluation of current Youth Diversion Program Pilot) (within 2 years) Rec 126

**Legal :**

* Traffic fines – Family violence to be ‘a special circumstance’ so fines are withdrawn or revoked. Rec 113
* Victims of Crime program and law to be reviewed to ensure FV recognised. Rec 106
* Lobby Commonwealth to amend the National Credit Code to include family violence as a ground for financial hardship. Rec 108
* Work with Energy Services Commission to ensure FV is recognised as grounds for hardship in regard to energy and water bills. . Rec 109
* Youth Resource officers to provide support to young people and their families where police attend at an incident in which an adolescent has used violence in the home (within 12 months) Rec 125

The Commission recognises that children and young people experiencing family violence have been largely left to deal with it themselves and that the service response to their needs have been totally inadequate

The Commission highlights the long term impact of family violence on children and young people -for children their safety and development and for young people greater vulnerability to poor mental health, homelessness and unemployment.