



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry: Inquiry into Victoria's criminal justice system

Hearing Date: 21 September 2021

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Tricia Ciampa, Women and Mentoring

1. Ms MAXWELL Page no. 48

Question asked.

...my next question for Tricia. Thank you so much for the mentoring and the wonderful work that you do with women. I am wondering what percentage of women that you have worked with have experienced coercive control?

Response:

As documented in our written submission, the findings in our 2021 Evaluation Report reinforced the understanding that women in contact with the criminal justice system are disproportionately victims of family violence, sexual abuse, trauma, financial disadvantage, and insecure housing – amongst many other vulnerabilities. And it is often these same challenges that create barriers to engaging productively with the service system.

The data from women referred to our program indicates that 88% per cent of women had experienced current or historical family violence, however we don't usually press them on patterns of behaviour from partners. Often women are naturally quite sensitive about reliving a traumatic experience, particularly if it is past.

What I can share with you, however, are two examples of women referred to us in the past 12 months whose relationships with their respective partner demonstrated the indicators of coercive control (being cut off from family; their movements being monitored; bullying; financial control and other threatening behaviours that made them significantly isolated).

In both circumstances, these women were not well engaged with specialist family violence workers and our Intake Coordinator supported that referral and engagement on both occasions. For both women, their safety was the priority and as such changed their phone numbers and eventually were relocated to escape their partner. The tactics of coercive control prevent a woman from engaging with a service like ours – there are challenges and risks in meeting with a volunteer mentor in the community, or even taking a phone call to seek support. Due to their relocation and phone number change we lost contact with these two women, but our door is always open when their lives are more stable and they are ready to engage with a mentor.