PEEL SAYS
NO to
VIOLENCE

Living with holes in the walls

"I've still got holes in walls and doors and stuff so I'm trying to just go past it, but every now and then my head just won't."

Research report of the Peel Says No to Violence project

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Executive summary

Just getting the courage to actually take that step is really hard – people say, you're so strong but you're not. I don't think it's strong, I think it's just the fact that, my God, if I stay with this man any longer he's going to kill me.[1]

The Peel Says No to Violence project (PSNTV) is building an Alliance to encourage and support activities addressing family violence issues in the Peel region. As outlined in the state government's strategy,[2] family violence involves a range of behaviours including physical, sexual, psychological, economic and other forms of abuse to control someone in an intimate or familial relationship resulting in them living in fear. The PSNTV project is funded through the Department of Social Services' Building Safer Communities for Women grant. As such, its work around family violence is currently focusing on women's safety and the way communities and services can support them. To inform this work, the first key element of the project has been the research phase. This phase aims to:

- Document the experiences of local women escaping violence
- Map service provision in the region
- Compare these to national trends

Working in the Peel region poses a number of challenges related to geographical boundaries, with various jurisdictions of key government departments cutting across the region. This has an impact on both the capacity of a future Alliance to coordinate responses, and its access to reliable Peel-wide data. Data that has been made available through the Police Minister however, shows high prevalence of family violence in the region and increased reporting rates of 14% – 19% in the two year period made available. Data from the Family Domestic Violence Coordinated Response Team (FDVCRT) based at Mandurah Police station covering 4 of the 5 local government areas in Peel confirm the ongoing levels of family violence in the region. Data from Pat Thomas House, the key refuge/family violence service provider in the region shows 38% of those seeking services were turned away over the last three years.

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[1] Quotations at the start of each section are taken from interviews with women in the Peel region.
[2] Department of Child Protection and Family Services (2013), "Western Australia's Family and Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy to 2022", Government of Western Australia.

Interviews with women supplemented by additional focus groups with Aboriginal and young women provide a picture of family violence that is significantly varied in terms of types of violence, backgrounds of women experiencing it and length of time they stayed in family violence situations. A significant feature of women's descriptions is the contrast between how they often understood family violence on an objective level, but in the lived experience of actual relationships they did not always recognise what was happening to themselves or their friends. In some instances, it took an outsider like the Police, a service provider or a friend to name it as family violence before they identified it themselves. This dynamic was reflected further in the complexity women described around leaving, staying and returning to family violence. Their stories articulated a detailed interaction between fear of consequences, erosion of confidence through psychological abuse, physical restraint, judgement of others, threats to children and other family members, emotional entanglement, guilt, financial dependency and sometimes even external factors like lease agreements. These experiences and further insights from the literature underlined the need for the Alliance to work towards family violence literacy for women, service providers and community members to be able to both recognise family violence dynamics and the impact of the trauma inflicted. Literacy, as opposed to awareness, would equip both those experiencing violence and those in a position to assist them with a deeper understanding of the underpinning dynamics in family violence. As such it produces an informed response that is able to work with complexity.

An online survey of service providers in the region shows a concentration of services in based Mandurah with other local government areas primarily serviced by visiting or phone support. Services outside Mandurah tend to be smaller or volunteer led. While this service delivery pattern reflects the Police data which shows bulk of incidents occur in the high population area of Mandurah, it does leave those in other areas with significantly less options for support when they need it. There are only three family violence-only service providers identified through the survey, with most organisation offering none or only a few specific services related to family violence. This contrasts to the vast majority of services indicating that they see significant numbers of people affected by family violence. These factors combine to produce a sector where support to those affected by family violence is often provided by non-specialist services. When considering the formation of Alliance, this is a significant factor both in terms of membership and provision of resources to build confidence in these services to work in this space.

Women interviewed and in focus groups were fairly evenly split in terms of their awareness of services in the region. Significantly, while about half were aware of Pat Thomas House, few knew of the broad range of services offered before they sought help and this at times influenced their decisions to seek help. Police and friends/family were the most common starting point in their attempts to seek help, with the Police taking on a key role in encouraging women to take action and seek help (often through the FDVCRT unit). Positive factors identified in service delivery include:

- Knowledge: Developing an understanding of family violence and its impacts, particularly through an analysis of power and control as elements of violence was a key factor identified by women in their recovery.
- Accessibility: Services that proactively followed up, were available on an as-needed basis and were non-judgmental.
- Emotional openness: Opportunities to explore and process the emotional damage of their relationships through support groups and counselling.
- Practical assistance: Provided for a wide range of issues including legal advice, immigration, accommodation, childcare, home security, life skills and basic needs (eg. furniture, clothing, food).

A range of different measures were used in the online survey to explore capacity of services to meet demand. These identified that while about half the services surveyed indicated they took on a new client most days, when asked how long individual people had to wait before being able to access a service, 40% indicated it took at least a month. Accommodation was identified as the area with the most limited provision, with counselling experiencing the longer waiting lists (particularly for children and young people). In providing feedback about services, women interviewed also identified wait lists and finding appropriate services for young people as key areas of concern. The most significant area where women experienced barriers, however, is in interactions with the legal system.

In negotiating systems and seeking support the most common source of help, however, are family, friends and colleagues. This pattern is reflected in national literature surveying women's experiences of violence. For PSNTV this highlights a clear message it can build the Alliance around, which encourages membership and individual actions because of the known impact they have on women's lives. PSNTV is working on an active membership Alliance model which will be developed further in the next phase of the project. Insights, suggestions and recommendations from this research will be incorporated into this

work. Encouraged by the enthusiasm of the women interviewed, the project is also looking at mechanisms for sharing their stories which illustrate the themes identified and can inspire both other women dealing with family violence and organisations who are potential Alliance members.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are detailed at the end of the report and reflect the learning and observations of the research.

1. That PSNTV implement strategies to ensure it builds an Alliance that is effective and relevant across the whole region, including:

   - Ensuring all local offices of relevant government departments are involved where they have multiple offices responsible for different parts of the Peel region.
   - Ensuring information resources about services include those based outside the region which offer outreach services into Peel or are closer geographically to some towns eg. Boddington, Byford.
   - Ensuring all local government areas are active in the Alliance by identifying champions in each area to drive local action and act as a known source of referrals.
   - Encouraging local services to consider shared outreach or transport options to enable more isolated communities to access services.

2. That PSNTV requests Police data covering all 5 local government regions at least every two years. In the meantime, it can seek regular updates of information through the local FDVCRT which covers 4/5 areas and Pat Thomas House to provide an ongoing indication of family violence incident rates and service demand.

3. That PSNTV acts to improve family violence literacy, not just increase awareness, so individuals, services and the wider community are better able to identify family violence and understand the dynamics involved. Strategies can include:

   - Education involving the power and control element of family violence dynamics that differentiate them from other dysfunctional relationships.

- Materials that highlight the concept of resistance women demonstrate in family violence dynamics.
- Trauma-informed analysis and service models.
- Representations of a wide range of violence types and people included in Alliance materials and activities.

4. That PSNTV develops a story book based on interviews with the women to demonstrate themes identified in the research and specifically challenge misconceptions around women's choices to leave, stay and return to family violence.

5. That PSNTV seeks involvement of Aboriginal communities and leaders to ensure activities and strategies reflect the needs of their communities.

6. That in sharing information about services available in the region, PSNTV particularly focuses on key services that act as central referral points to available resources.

7. That PSNTV facilitates the building of an Alliance around a message that community members, a range of services and a broad cross-section of organisations all have a role in addressing family violence. Strategies can include:

- Utilising an active membership model and providing simple templates for Alliance members to take individual actions.
- Encouraging training opportunities to build capacity and family violence literacy of non-specialist service providers.
- Sharing women's stories of the impact friends, families, colleagues and service providers have on their lives.

8. That PSNTV supports and advocates for the development of new models and expansion of services in the region, particularly support groups and alternative approaches for young people.

9. That PSNTV makes this report widely available and encourage local Peel services to utilise information in the research about services availability, feedback and gaps.

Methodology

At the beginning, it was just overwhelming and hard to understand, but I just needed to talk to someone, I kept ringing them and then things happened.

This element of the PSNTV project has been overseen by a research working group and included contributions from the PSNTV project officers[3], individuals commissioned to undertake interviews and coding reports, students and volunteers based at Peel Community Legal Service and Anglicare. Particular thanks go to the women who shared their stories in interviews and those who participated in focus groups.

The key elements of the research are:

- Interviews: 20 interviews were undertaken with women who have left violent relationships. These women were identified through support services involved in the PSNTV project – Pat Thomas House, Allambee Counselling and Peel Community Legal Centre. The women ranged in age from 26-53. Two of the women identified as Aboriginal, three were born overseas and faced additional issues related to their immigration status. One has sensory and physical disabilities. All had children, though some were now adult children.

- Focus groups: To ensure a diverse range of experiences were considered in the research, additional women were consulted through focus groups. An informal discussion was help with Aboriginal women contacted through Koolbardies Talking. A focus group was also held with 10 young women at Peel Youth Service's Eyes Wide Open program for young mothers. These groups enabled more Aboriginal and young women's voices to be captured. They also provided insights from women who had not accessed services.

- Online survey: An online survey was circulated to 76 service providers in the Peel region. A total of 73 responses were submitted from 50 organisations (with 5 organisations taking the opportunity to circulate the survey and provide responses from a number of staff). The survey

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[3] This role changed hands part way through the project.

mapped details of services and referral processes, capacity of services and perceptions of gaps in the sector. It was also an opportunity to identify interest in the Alliance.

- Desk research: A basic literature survey and research to identify sources for regional data about the prevalence of family violence was undertaken. This research also investigated the key themes identified in the interviews and focus groups to see if the Peel experiences were similar to national trends.

Peel region

I guess you look at other people and they actually have loving relationships where they actually care about each other, then you have your relationship where you walk on eggshells and you try and keep him happy and not set him off.

What is the Peel region?

The Peel region experiences unique pressures from both fast population growth and high unemployment. The regional blueprint details an average rate of population growth almost double that of the rest of the state. In the 10 years to 2014 the population grew by 4.4% compared to the WA average of 2.6%.[4] Figures[5] from mid-2016 showed Mandurah had the highest undemployment rate in the state at 9.3%. This is over double the rate of inner Perth (4.3%) and higher than outback WA (7.4%). These pressures have an impact on service delivery in the region as providers face increasing demands without any corresponding increase in resources.

The Peel region also faces challenges related to geography and identity. Is made up of the five local government areas of Boddington, Mandurah, Murray, Serpentine/Jarrahdale and Waroona. Geographical boundaries for key government departments, however, do not use the same definition for Peel or even necessarily have a Peel region in their geographical breakdown. The table below indicates the different state/federal government department areas[6] against the Peel local governments.

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[4] Peel Development Commission (2015), "Peel Regional Investment Blueprint", PDC, Mandurah.
[5] See: http://www.perthnow.com.au/news/western-australia/fair-go-for-was-regions-jobs-in-mandurah-rarer-than-in-the-outback/news-story/b4a2becf12b647adfc4fddc4b5bc4822
[6] Departments selected were chosen because of potential involvement or cross over with family violence issues.

Table 1: Key government boundaries compared to Peel local government areas

	Boddington	Mandurah	Murray	Serpentine/ Jarrahdale	Waroona
CPFS	Peel	Peel	Peel	Armadale	Peel
Education	Wheatbelt	South Metro	South Metro	South Metro	South Metro
Primary Health (Federal)	Country WA	Perth South	Perth South	Perth South	Perth South
WA Health	Wheatbelt	South Metro	South Metro	South Metro	South Metro
WA Police	Great Southern	South Metro	South Metro	South East Metro	South West
Housing Authority	Wheatbelt	Peel	Peel	South East Metro	South West
Regional Development	Peel	Peel	Peel	Peel	Peel
Federal electorates	Canning	Canning	Canning	Canning	Canning
State electorates	Central Wheatbelt	Mandurah / Dawesville	Murray Wellington	Darling Range	Murray Wellington

In addition to these, the following relevant government services also have bases in Mandurah:

- Community Corrections Centre
- Centrelink Customer Service Centre
- Mandurah Courthouse
- Peel District Victim Support and Child Witness Services
- Peel Mental Health Services

Examining the intersection of different department geographical boundaries exposes a number of inconsistencies that influence service delivery in Peel:

- Metropolitan vs regional categorisation – There is a tendency for sections of Peel to be categorised or receive services as part of "metropolitan" regions. The proximity of Peel to the metropolitan area does have advantages in terms of easier access to the wider range of services delivered in Perth. This easier access to metropolitan services is, however, deceptive as the costs and availability of transport is limitied to those on lower incomes and in more rural settings. Being categorised as metropolitan and/or serviced from the metropolitan area denies the regional nature and experience of Peel. The mix of rural and town environments, transport/distance issues, lack of choice and other factors identified in regional areas are common to Peel. Being serviced as part of the metropolitan area and by urban office bases may result in these concerns not being fully considered.

- Common identity – The table also demonstrates various levels of commonality in service delivery between different local government areas, with Mandurah and Murray having the most in common. In comparison, Boddington is much more likely to be serviced and categorised away from the Peel region as a wheatbelt, agricultural or great southern identity. Serpentine/Jarrahdale is more likely to be associated with districts or regions centred around Armadale, particularly for critical services like policing, housing and child protection. Waroona has a mix of identities, sometime included in Peel and sometimes in the South West. This has an impact on the extent to which different locations identify with Peel, and are therefore likely to identify with the Peel Says No to Violence campaign or efforts to address service delivery in the Peel region. It also results in services delivering and having interests both inside and outside the Peel region.

- Data collection – Peel with its 5 local government areas is primarily used for regional development, economic and tourism purposes. Fields that are likely to be sources of data relating to family violence (eg. health, police, justice, child protection) do not have a Peel region that covers all 5 LGAs and therefore do not produce publicly available data that matches the Peel region.

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Implications for the Alliance

- Engaging government departments in the Alliance may include engaging more than one regional office to include all of Peel.
- The Alliance has a role in raising awareness of the impact of isolation, lack of transport and services experienced in Peel as a regional rather than metropolitan location, particularly in more rural areas of the region.
- When working with local government areas like Serpentine/Jarrahdale and Boddington, the Alliance needs to be aware that promotional material and initiatives should incorporate access to resources and services that are not always Mandurah focused, but may include Armadale and Narrogin.
- Collecting data that covers all 5 local government areas may prove challenging.

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What is the level of family violence in the Peel region?

There is so much on the TV and everywhere about domestic violence but the old you don't want to air your dirty laundry, even now I find it very hard to admit that it is what my relationship was.

As indicated above, collecting data that maps the levels of family violence in the Peel area is hindered by the lack of a coherent Peel region across the relevant government departments. It is also difficult to ascertain the level of family violence in any region because a significant proportion of family violence is unreported. The 2009 Violence Against Women survey found only 14% of women reported the most recent incident to the police.[7] While some of these women may have reported previous incidents, others will report no incidents at all. Likewise, some women will disclose or seek help for family violence

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[7] Jenny Mouzos and Toni Makkai (2009), "Women's Experiences of Male Violence – Findings from the Australian Component of the International Violence Against Women Survey", Australian Institute of Criminology.

while others will not. It is known that in a 10 year period there have been 5 women, 4 children and 3 men killed in family violence incidents in the Peel region. The 3 men were killed by a daughter, a wife and a boyfriend.[8]

Looking at wider family violence data and bearing these restrictions in mind, the key area that is used to identify levels of family violence is Police data. In its 2016 annual report, the WA Police cited the impact of family violence on women and children as one of the key areas of concern for the department.[9] Since the recent restructure of policing districts there has been no Peel region. To identify accurate data to inform the PSNTV project, specific data for the 5 local government areas was sourced through a question in parliament. As shown in the table below this found the Police attended 2,677 family violence incidents, made 1,745 Domestic Violence Incident Reports (DVIRs) and recorded 1,145 family violence assaults. It also shows a clear concentration of these in the higher population area of Mandurah. In the same year, the WA Police data shows 21,162 instances of family violence in the whole of WA – making the Peel region responsible for 12.7% of family violence incidents in the state.

Table 2: 2015-16 Police data by local government area



2015-16 Police data related to family violence

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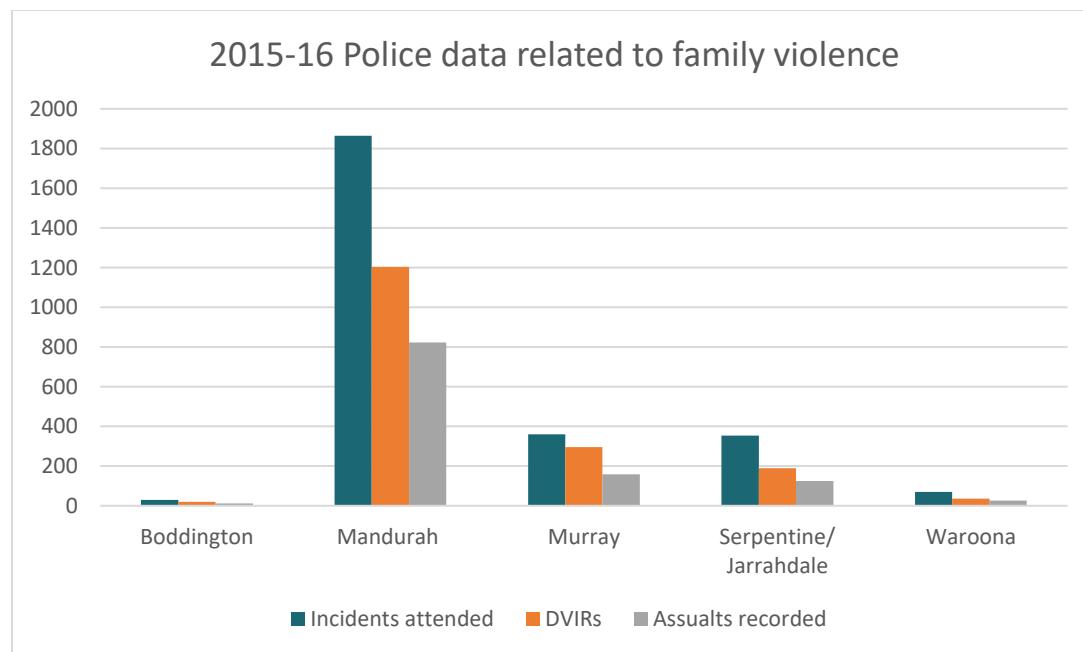
[8] Information taken from the Women's Council for Family and Domestic Violence silent marches for 2006-2016 (excluding 2011 where figures were unavailable).
[9] WA Police (2016), "Annual Report 2016", Western Australian Police Service, Perth.

The table below shows the increase in incidents and reports in the Peel region in the two-year period where data was supplied through the question in parliament. This shows a concerning trend with incidents attended up by 16%, DVIRs up by 14% and recorded assaults up by 19%.

Table 3: Comparison Police data by year

Peel Police data related to family violence - comparison
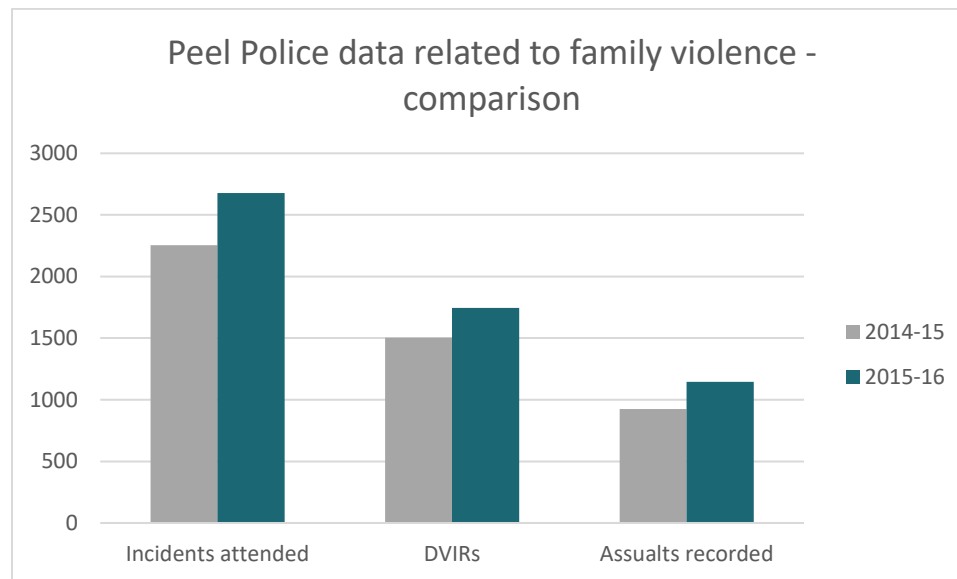
On an ongoing basis, data about family violence in the region is available from the Family and Domestic Violence Coordinated Response Team (FDVCRT) based at the Mandurah Police Station. The team combines Police, the Department of Child Protection and Family Services and the Lucy Saw Centre.[10] It triages family violence incidents reported to the Police from Mandurah, Murray, Boddington and Waroona (ie. 4/5 of the Peel local government areas). In 2016, the FDVCRT triaged 2,566 incidents. Police invite those involved in incidents to consent to have their details forwarded to support services for follow up (through the Womenzlink service run by Pat Thomas House or Breathing Space which works with male perpetrators). In 2016, 1,465 consented referrals were made. In a further 505 incidents, the FDVCRT overturned the lack of consent because of serious concerns about safety[11] and provided direct follow-up through phone, home visit or multi-agency meetings.

Another source of ongoing local data is Pat Thomas House. Pat Thomas is the specialist family violence service in the region offering refuge accommodation, outreach support, court support and a range of 1:1 and group options for women and children affected by family violence. As such, data from Pat Thomas

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[10] Rockingham based women's refuge
[11] Using the Common Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework assessment tool.

gives an insight into the numbers of women and children formally seeking specialist family violence help. The table below shows the number of individuals assisted or turned away over the last three years. It is worth noting, that the data is counted by individual with 58% of these individuals being children in the family. By far the most common reason identified for women and children not receiving support was that no accommodation available (31%) – indicating the lack of capacity and need for additional refuge places.

Table 4: Pat Thomas House numbers of people seeking assistance (includes children)
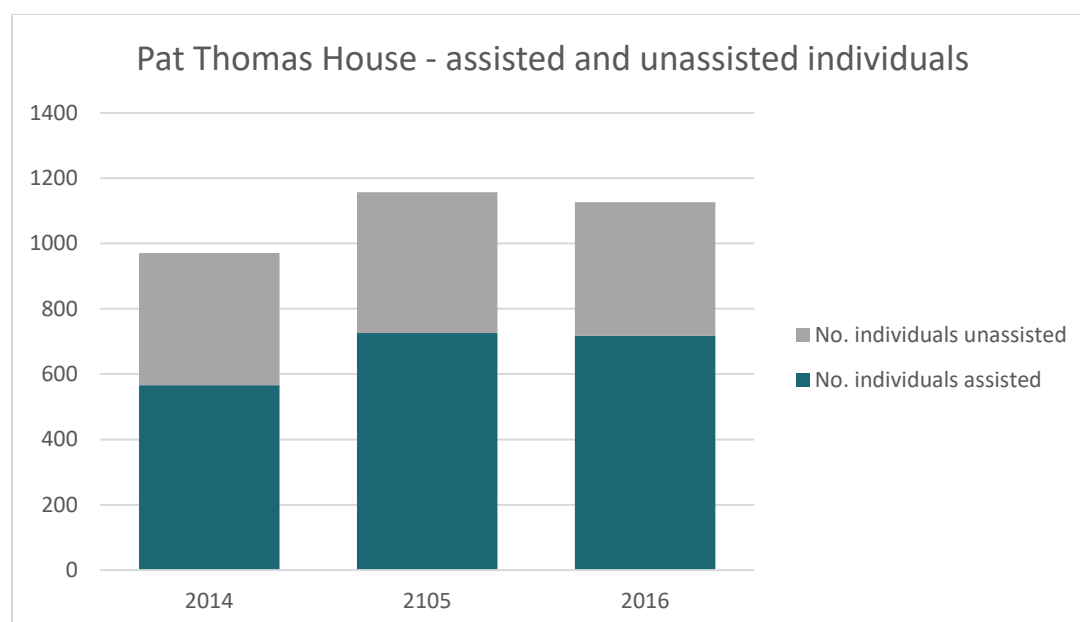
Appendix 1 includes details of the needs, support provided and referrals made for those families who were supported by Pat Thomas House. This indicates the breadth of work undertaken and the wide range of needs of the women and children assessing the service. It also can be read to show that Pat Thomas House usually provides support or referrals to meet the needs identified by women and children using the service. Indicating that the key issue around service delivery is a lack of capacity rather than a lack of service types available.

Implications for the Alliance
- The Alliance can use data collected to show the high incidence of family violence in the Peel region and the lack of capacity of Pat Thomas House (as the primary family violence service in the region) to meet the level of need (or not).

- To update data on an ongoing basis, the Alliance will either need to rely on specifically requesting whole of Peel data from the Police Minister, or can use FDVCRT data which encompasses most of Peel.

What services are available in the Peel region?

I did like safety planning, like getting all my important documents photocopied and left with a friend. I had a safe word so if I needed the police and all I could get out was that one word then they knew what to do.

Mapping of services in the area was undertaken through an online survey. The list of services included in the survey was compiled using a range of local information and online sources, but it is expected that there may be some groups and organisations that were not included. The Alliance has the capacity to continue to expand its mailing list as more services come to light. The full list of services surveyed is included in Appendix 2. Other details provided below are only compiled by those who responded to the survey.

Coverage

The chart below shows the coverage of the services who responded to the online survey. This clearly demonstrates the role of Mandurah as the central location of services for the Peel region. Other local government areas have only a small number of services based there and rely heavily on visiting or phone/online services. While Mandurah is the largest town in the region, if people want to travel to access services it is not the closest regional centre to Boddington or Serpentine/Jarrahdale. Appendix 3 contains a full list of services and their coverage. Other specialist family violence services/refuges based outside the Peel also provide services within the region, including Ruah Community Services which is Perth-based but does outreach and phone support into Serpentine/Jarrahdale, Djookanka House in Narrogin that will provide outreach visits and phone support to Boddington, and Rockingham-based Lucy Saw Centre which provides a worker based in the FDVCRT in Mandurah Police station.[12]

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[12] Starick House which is based in the SE metro area is also likely to attract women and families from the Serpentine/Jarrahdale area who want to access their services.

Table 5: Service coverage by local government area

Coverage of services

Chart showing "No. services" (y-axis, 0 to 70) by local government area, with three series: Based in area, Visit area, Phone/online.

| Area	Based in area	Visit area	Phone/online
Boddington	4	11	10
Mandurah	60	3	
Murray	9	32	3
Serpentine/Jarrahdale	4	11	12
Waroona	9	26	8
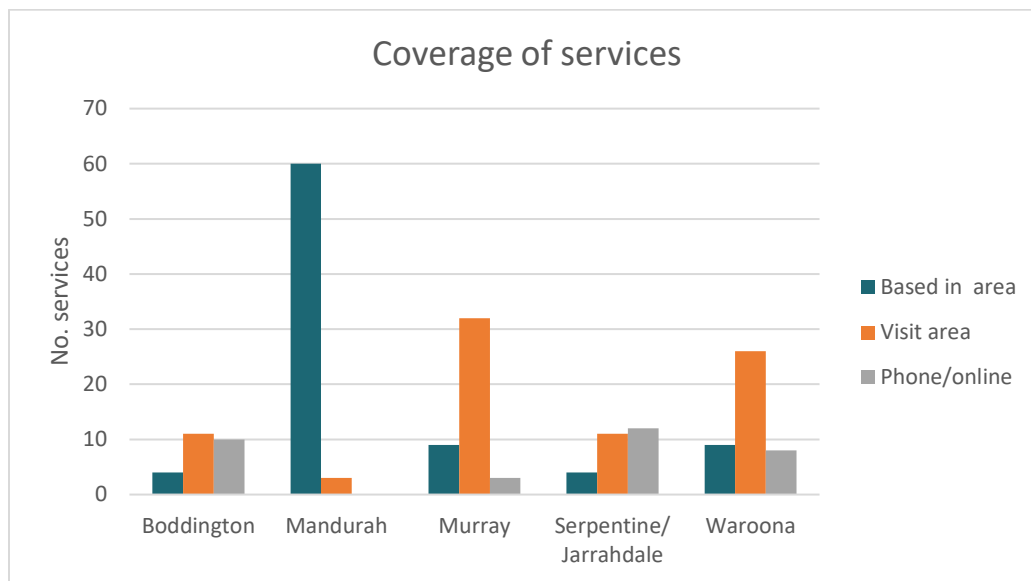
Implications for the Alliance

- Engaging services across all local government areas will be critical to building a region-wide Alliance. This may include identifying a champion service within each community that takes the lead in family violence issues.
- The rural and regional pattern of service delivery outside Mandurah shows communities rely on visiting services or receive only limited service delivery.

Service delivery

Given the small number of services in regional areas, people experiencing family violence often seek support from alternatives to specialist family violence services. The table below shows most services saw a significant number of people who experienced family violence. As the services were aware of this, it means they had in most cases disclosed or there were perceivable signs of family violence present. In contrast, the table also shows the extent to which family violence specific services were prioritised. There were only 3 services that were exclusively family violence services and a further 3 who mostly undertook work in this area. Others offer some or no specialist family violence work. This pattern demonstrates the need for a wide range of organisations to be family violence literate as women and families are likely to seek help from non-specialist services and groups.

Table 6: Serivce coverage by client and service type

Family violence coverage by services
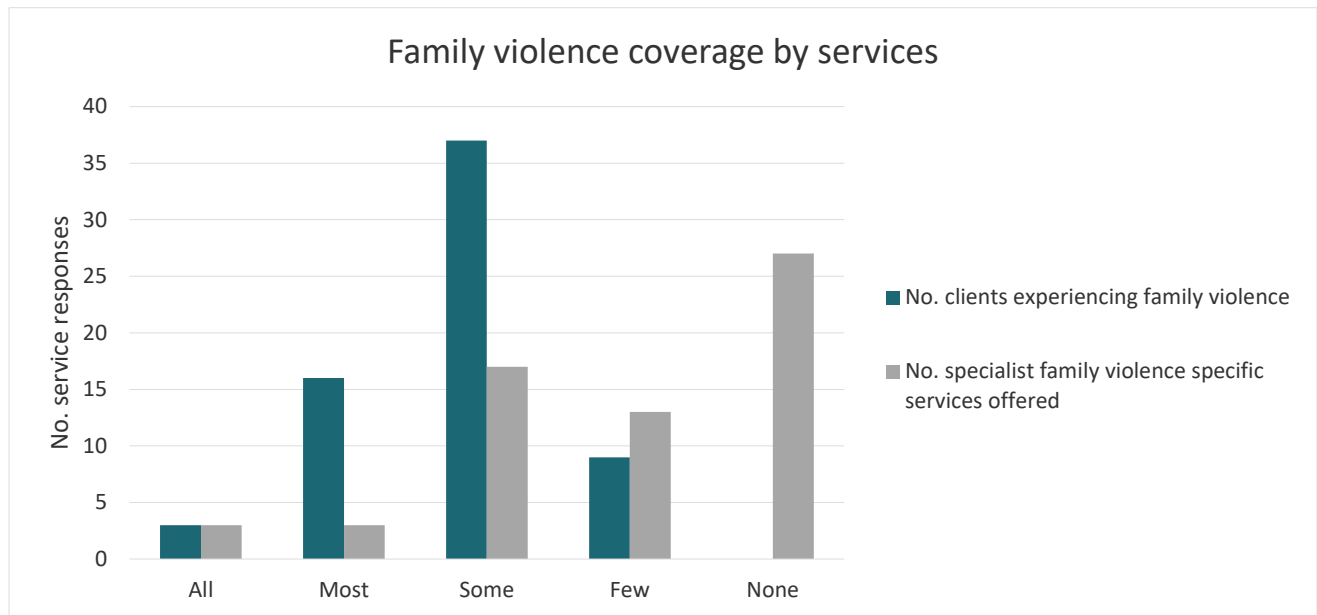
Further details about the specific types of services offered are detailed in the chart below. This shows the breadth of services available (for full details see Appendix 4 including indications of any cost or specialist target group).

Table 7: Types of services offered in Peel
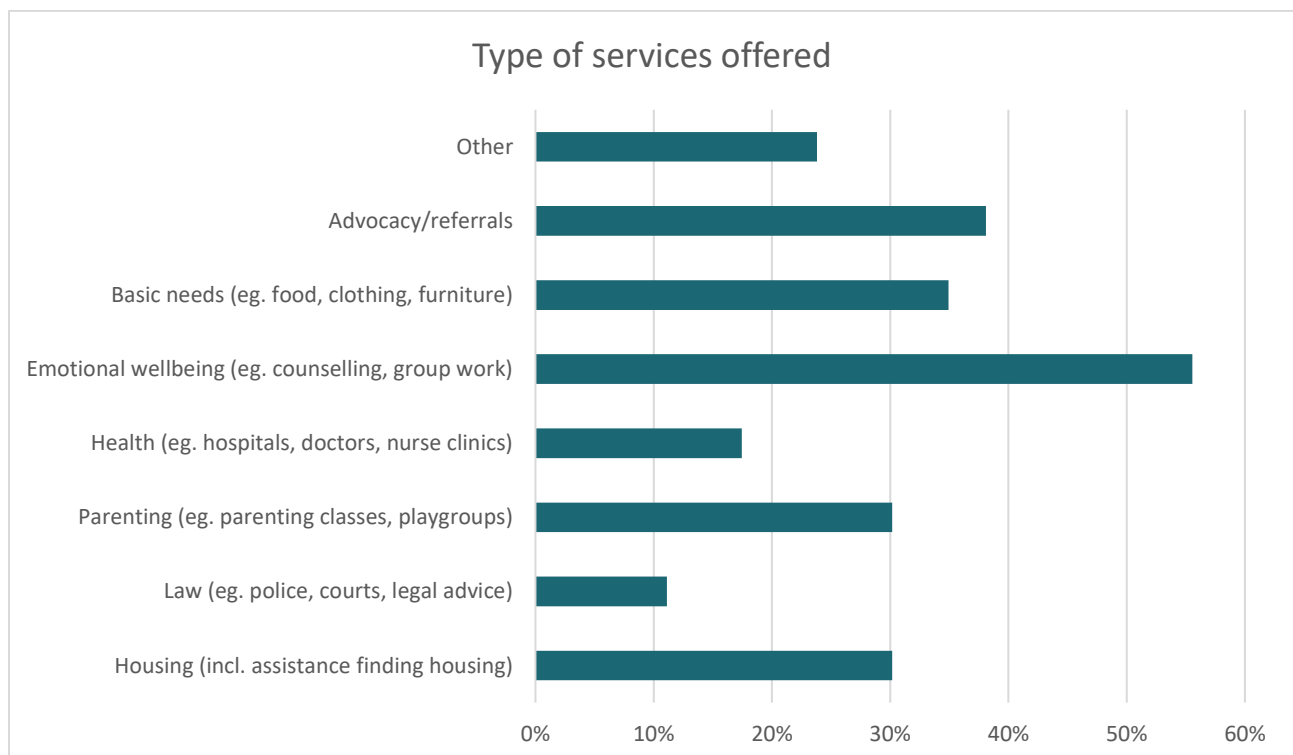
Type of services offered

Service capacity and gaps

To provide a guide of the capacity of services to support those affected by family violence, the survey asked about waiting lists, average wait times, reasons people might be unable to receive a service and perceptions about the levels of adequate service provision. Answers provided should be respected as estimates only intended to give a guide in assessing the extent to which the current service system is meeting needs and/or is overloaded. Basic indicators of service accessibility include:

▪ Referral source: Almost all services indicated they accepted self-referrals and/or referrals from any agency, with the occasional exceptions being for court-mandated services (eg. supervised visits).

▪ Initial contact: 70% of services indicated that people can access the service by just dropping in, with 65% offering an initial service over the phone. 47% need an appointment and 16% need a completed application form. (Note: some services chose multiple options as they can be accessed in a variety of ways).

Beyond the basic indicators, other measures also provide insight into how full/available services are. The diagram below shows the average frequency that services are able to take on new clients. Encouragingly, almost half of services can do this most days. This indicates services tend to have a good flow and turnover of clients. Though not universally applicable, those only able to take on new clients monthly or less often tend to be more specialist services that offer an ongoing rather than one-off form of service delivery (eg. a 10-week program).

Table 8: How often services are able to take on new clients

Average frequency of taking on new clients

- Most days
- Weekly
- Fortnightly
- Monthly
- Less often

48%
20%
14%
11%
7%
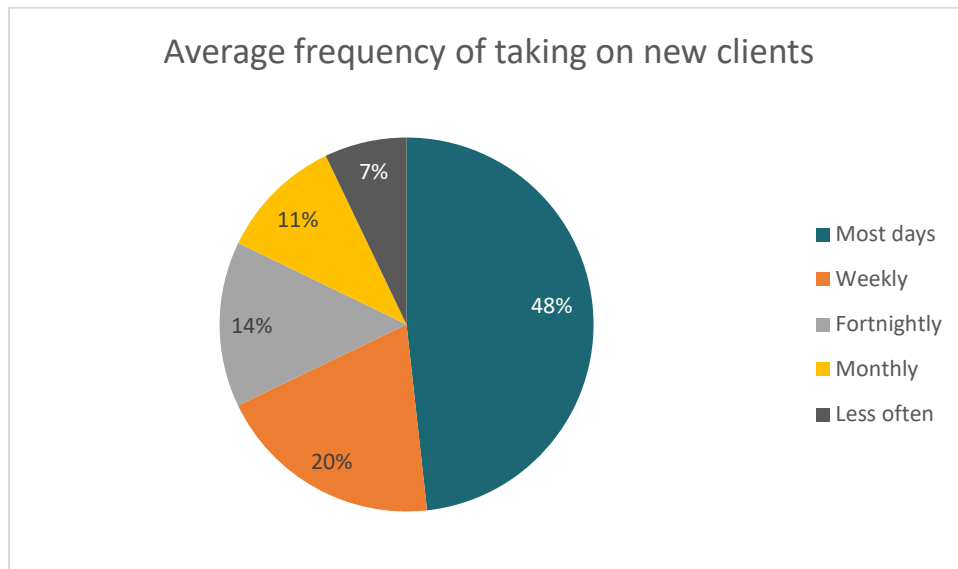
There is, however, a difference between a service that takes on new people each day/week and the length of time those individual people may have had to wait to access the service. The diagram below shows the average wait time. When looked at from this perspective, it can be seen that almost one in 5 services have at least a month-long wait to access them. Services with longer waiting periods tend to be those offering counselling. This is an indicator that these services are in high demand and there is insufficient capacity to meet the needs of the community.

Table 9: How long individuals have to wait for services

Average wait time to access service

- Same day
- Less than a week
- Less than a month
- Longer than a month

21%
39%
23%
17%
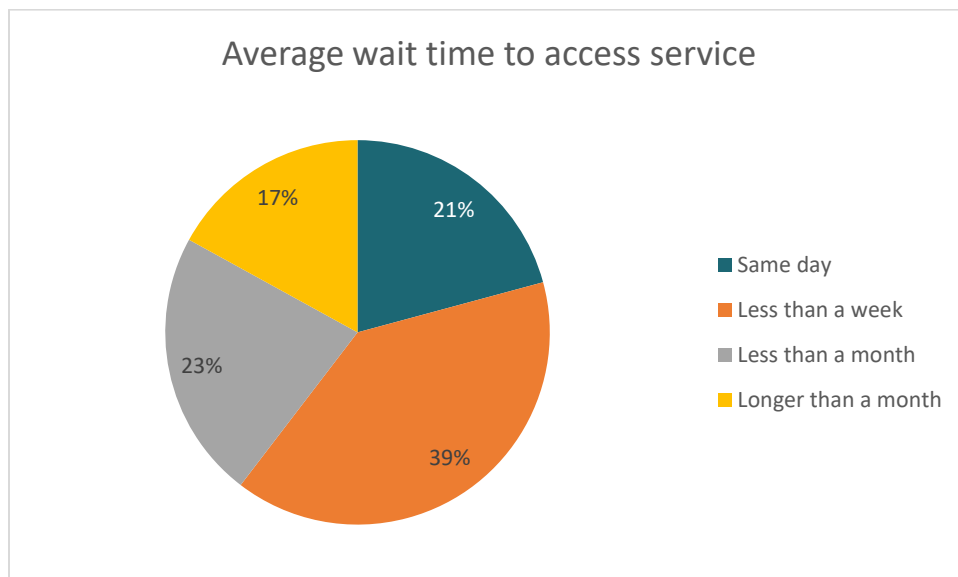
The chart below shows the reasons individual providers indicated they are unable to deliver a service (and frequency for those reasons). The more frequent reasons tend to be around lack of vacancies/places, lack of the specific service required, inability to provide it in that location, or inability to work with complex needs. These reasons all speak to a lack of capacity in the sector to meet all of the needs in the community. There is also a proportion of people that do not show for appointments (behaviour often associated with a chaotic life linked to complex needs, controlling relationships and/or poor transport infrastructure). Encouragingly, service bans, affordability and enforced waiting times do not appear to be reasons people are unable to get services.

Table 10: Reasons service may be declined
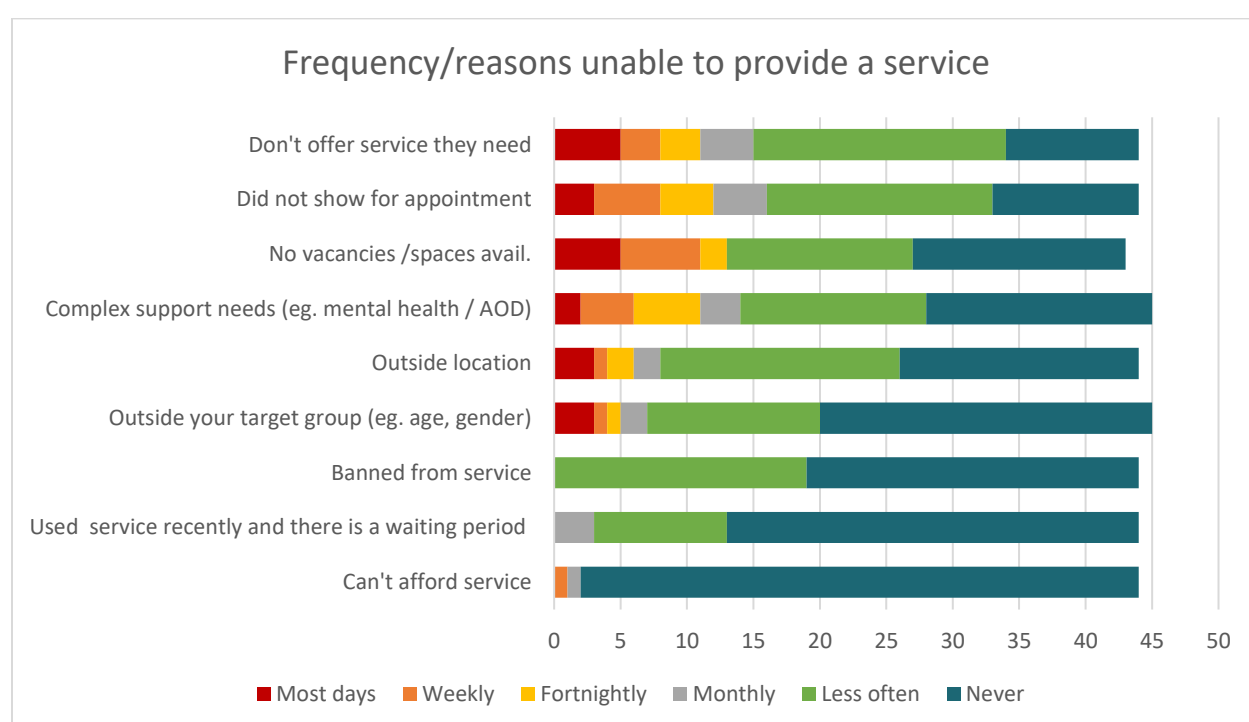
In contrast, the chart below identifies service providers' perceptions of the capacity of the wider sector as a whole (rather than their own individual service) to meet specific needs. Housing and refuge were by far the most inadequate provision in the region. This is concerning as these both impact women's capacity to find a place of safety both in the short term and to set up a new long-term home. Given counselling services tended to report longer waiting lists, it is interesting to see that the table shows the sector identifies there is less adequate provision of counselling and group work for children than there is for adults. It is also worth noting that service providers outside Mandurah were more likely to select "very limited" or "limited" provision options.

Table 11: Adequacy of service provision by type

Extent to which there is adequate service provision

Legend: ■ Very limited provision ■ Limited provision ■ Some provision ■ Good provision ■ Over provision
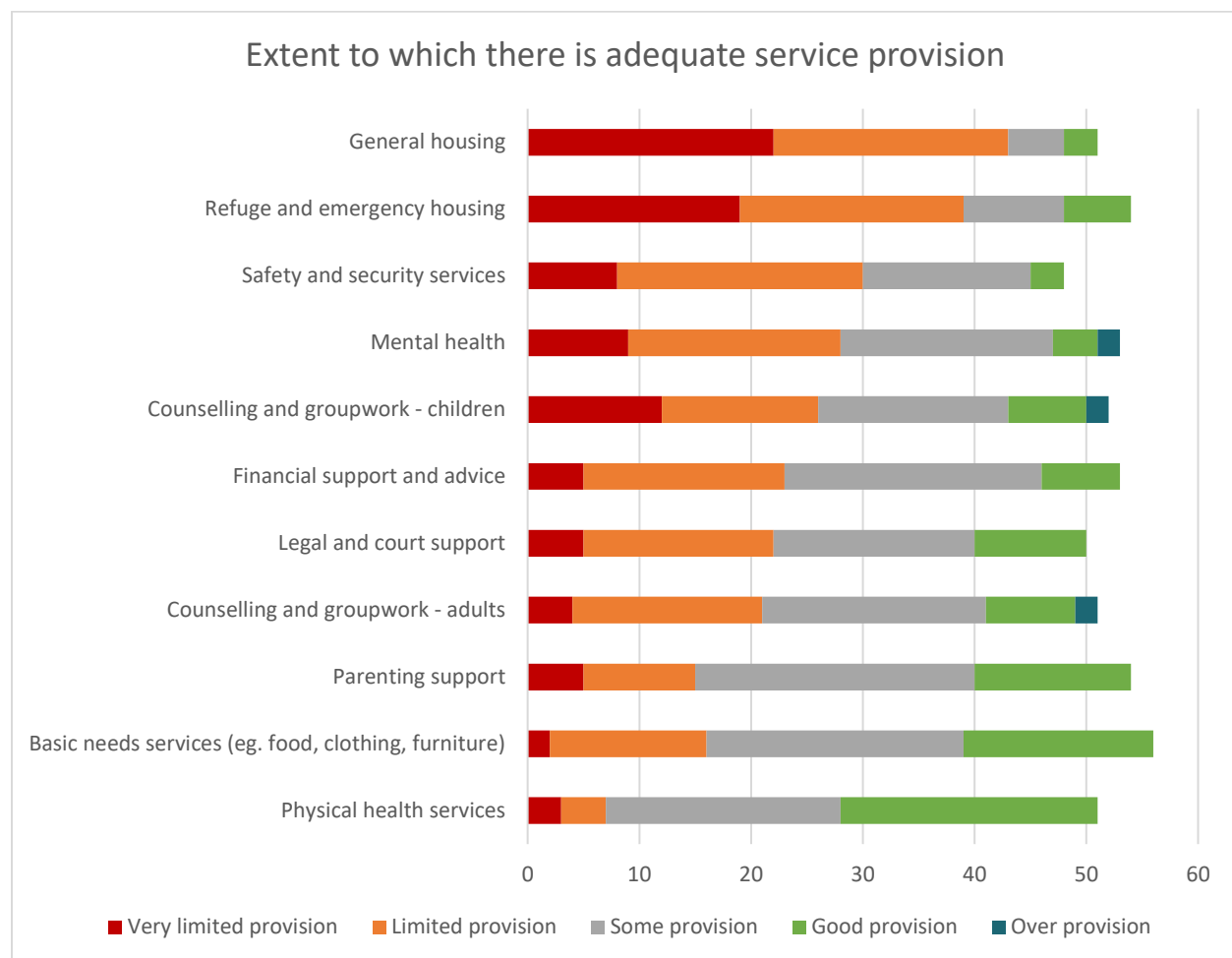
Services were also invited to nominate what initiative they felt would have the most impact on family violence in the region. The responses are varied, but do reflect some of the service gaps as indicated in the mapping above. Responses include (number of responses given in brackets):

- Education and information campaigns (18) – the type and target of these varied from schools, service user groups, to the community at large: Topic areas suggested include:
  - Information provision about where to get help
  - Education about the nature of family violence
  - Education about healthy relationships and gender equality
  - Preventative education with boys/men
  - Significance of animal abuse in family violence
- Affordable housing and tenancy support (7)

- Improved coordination and cooperation between services (7) – including a one-stop shop concept, collective impact approach and long-term case management to help women navigate service provision
- Trauma-informed counselling specific to family violence (3) – for both women and children
- More outreach sessions (3) – particularly enabling women to stay in their own homes
- Services for men and those who are violent in their families (3)
- Mentoring programs for young people, particularly young men (2)

When asked about which groups of people are hardest to find services for, young people were the most commonly identified followed by Aboriginal family, people from CaLD communities and children. Other groups identified as hard to find appropriate services for included single women, large/mixed ages families, rural/isolated women, women suffering from elder abuse and families where young people are violent.

Implications for the Alliance
- The research indicates clear gaps in service delivery which the Alliance can share with the sector and use to assist in advocating for service improvements.
- There is clear support for information and awareness raising work to address family violence in the region which has already been identified as a priority for the Alliance.

What do local services want from the Alliance?

He destroyed my life absolutely. I lost all my family, I lost all my kids, I lost all my friends, I lost everything.

The online survey also gave PSNTV the opportunity to seek feedback from service providers about what they might want from the Alliance. Of the 47 providers that answered the question, most expressed some interest in future involvement with the Alliance:

- 23% indicating interest in active involvement development and structure of the Alliance
- 32% indicating interest in in planning and developing Alliance activities
- 77% indicating interest in supporting the Alliance by promoting activities

- 60% indicating interest in participating in Alliance activities when they interest them/their organisation
- 77% indicating interest in receiving information about upcoming activities and events

There is a bias towards receiving and attending Alliance activities rather than actively planning and being involved, but it does indicate there is a core group of individuals and services who want to actively participate in the Alliance. Other suggestions people made pointed to activities they are already undertaking (eg. white ribbon events, youth alcohol strategy) or particular expertise they would be able to offer (sourcing volunteers).

The survey also asked about the type of Alliance activities people would support. The most popular was networking and information events (81%), followed by information and training for services (71%), education campaigns for the community (67%) and action-based working groups (50%). These interests are reflected in the suggestions put forward about what people most want from the Alliance (number of responses in brackets):

- Information on services and resources to help clients (11) – including details of referral processes
- Coordination (4) – including developing common goals, supporting collaborative actions, collective lobbying
- Produce material for raising awareness and kits for running events (4)
- Training events and information for staff (3)
- Networking events (2)
- Collate data/research (2)
- Raising debate and awareness about issues locally (2)

There were also a few suggestions for specific actions or service responses including ongoing debriefing sessions, increasing options to move on perpetrators, improving outreach services outside Mandurah and encouraging financial support of new services.

Implications for the Alliance
- The proposed active membership model being considered for the Alliance will have a core group of individuals/services wishing to engage, but will need to produce clear and simple templates to enable others to easily find ways they can participate.

- There is an appetite in services for both:
  - training to help increase their capacity to support those affected by family violence
  - information that will help services build their knowledge and referral pathways

Women's experiences

I'm red flagged with the police because he's so dangerous. He's poured petrol on me more than once with a lighter, I was fighting with a lighter and he's hit me with brooms and broken my arms and hit me with guns and held a loaded gun to my head.

Material in this section is compiled from interviews with 20 women in the Peel region who have left violent relationships, supplemented by focus group input from Aboriginal women and young women. Women were primarily invited to talk about what worked and did not work in their experience of accessing services, though they also spent some time talking about their experiences of violence and the impact on themselves and their children. Given the size of the sample, a thematic rather than quantitative analysis has been done of the responses. The key themes identified in the interviews and focus groups are outlined below.

Complexity of family violence

He didn't like me hanging out with friends so the netball and going out stopped because he never saw me. Then eventually I had to quit my job because he just got into my head.

Even within 20 interviews the variety and complexity of family violence was highlighted. The interviews included women who had experienced savage forms of physical abuse involving weapons, broken bones and permanent injury. They had experiences of being kidnapped, help against their will and extreme forms of social isolation where their access to phones, social media, other people and even how they were allowed to interact with their own children was highly controlled. There were also women who primarily experienced non-physical forms of abuse including bullying, financial control, humiliation, manipulation and other forms of emotional violence. The women interviewed also highlighted the variety of cultural backgrounds experiencing violence, ages of women, levels of disability and length of

relationships that were impacted by violence. The interviews also included instances where violence was both directed towards children and carried out by adult children against their parents.

> **Implications for the Alliance**
> - When discussing or presenting images of family violence it is important to ensure a range of violence types and people who both experience and commit violence are represented.

Understanding of family violence

The power and control one was a real eye opener because I see myself as a pretty clever person, then they showed me the power and control wheel and I thought, oh my God, he was actually doing a hell of a lot more stuff than I ever realised.

There was an interesting contrast between the understanding of family violence when observing it in others and as a lived experience. In the focus group with young women they were easily able to identify a wide range of forms of family violence including a variety of psychological manipulation, financial abuse, cyber abuse, social isolation, sexual abuse, etc. They were much less able, however, to differentiate between a family violence style relationship and simply a bad relationship where people argued. In their conversation, this lead them to start including a range of relationships that were not family violence and in turn diluting their sympathy and understanding of how family violence is perpetuated. They clearly understood the type of actions that might be present in a family violence relationship, but not the difference of a power and control dynamic that generated fear and compliance.

In interviews with the women, several also talked about not realising they were in a family violence style relationship and only started to identify this when it was directly named by the Police, friends or service providers. This was more common among women who primarily experienced non-physical forms of violence, but not exclusively with a few women who shared experiences of being physically attacked also talking about not identifying they were in a family violence situation until after they left. Some women talked about seeing their partner as being "nasty" rather than naming this as violence. They also spoke about the gradual way violence became a part of their relationship.

Following on from this theme a large number of women in the interviews highlighted the significance of learning about the power and control wheel,[13] and developing an understanding of how the pattern of family violence works. They saw this as critical in helping them understand what had happened to them. A number of women also directly identified this knowledge as being the primary driver behind them not returning to family violence.

Implications for the Alliance
- There is a clear need to not just increase awareness of family violence, but to improve family violence literacy so both those affected by it and the wider community are better able to identify it and understand the dynamics involved.

Complexity of leaving and staying in family violence

I can't ring it. I can't because he tracks my phone, my phone numbers, everything. I can't go to a phone box. because he'd meet me outside.

This deeper understanding of the power dynamics in family violence is essential to understanding the complexity of relationships and how they impact on women's experiences of leaving and staying. In conversations with service providers and individuals in the Peel region, there is a clear sense that people identify family violence as wrong, but think there is an immediate and simple solution of women just choosing to leave. This in turn produces blame and reduces sympathy when women have difficulty doing this or return to family violence. Interviews with the women highlighted the broad range of influences and factors that underpin why they don't leave and why they may return to violent relationships including (number of responses in brackets):

- Fear of the consequences as violence continues or worsens after leaving (9) eg. ongoing threats, escalated physical violence, stalking, harassment and intimidation which in some instances lead to women giving in and returning to relationships. A couple of women mentioned the criminal connections of their ex-partner which increased the risk of violent consequences.

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[13] See: http://www.cdvs.com.au/about-3/about-domestic-violence/power-and-control-wheel/

- Confidence eroded through violence, manipulation and psychological abuse (7) – Women talked about ongoing humiliation in the relationship which left them feeling incapable of leaving or achieving anything.

- Desire to keep the family together and give their children a stable family home (6) – One woman talked about the negative impact of divorce on her own childhood and how she had always promised to avoid this for her own children.

- Promises and sometimes actual changes to improve the relationship by the other person (6) – eg. starting counselling.

- Being physically prevented from seeking help (5) – This varied from taking away the phone when she tried to call the police, to completely controlling her interactions with others by monitoring her phone, computer, social media and day to day activities.

- Judgemental attitude of others (5) – eg. questioning her decisions to leave and stay, not believing the level and/or impact of violence.

- Love (4) – This is what some women called "love/hate" where they loved the person but hated what they did. One woman talked about how her partner would switch between extremely violent and extremely romantic behaviour.

- Threats to children and other family members (3) – In these instances women were clear that they were choosing to accept violence against themselves to prevent it being directed at their children, parents or other family members.

- Afraid of the financial implications (3) – eg. losing the house and income – particularly where women had experiences of being cut off financially or becoming homeless as a result of leaving.

- Guilt about leaving and being coerced into returning in response to a crisis (3) – eg. death in the family, threats of suicide by the person they were trying to leave.

In the young women's focus group there was some discussion about how they would help a friend who was experiencing family violence. This conversation moved between being supportive and impatient. At one point some of the young women expressed concerns about the person had to want help and experiences of being frustrated by friends who had "not seen the light" and would not accept their help. This conversation, however was turned around by talking more about women's experiences and the complex reasons why they stay and leave family violence.

- The reasons women leave and stay in family violence are varied and complex. Sharing stories about their experience is a way the Alliance can help increase understanding of why women make these choices. This in turn may help community members respond positively to women when they leave and stay.

Service responses

I'd be lost without my support worker, absolutely lost without her. I go and see her probably every two weeks. I was seeing her every week before and she's wonderful.

In their interviews the women were specifically asked about their experiences of services. There was a fairly even spilt in the group between those who were aware of services when they came to seek help, and those who were not familiar with any services in the region. However, those that were aware of services did not always know the full breadth of what they had to offer or the range of services available to them.

Given the women were identified through Pat Thomas House, Allambee Counselling and Peel Community Legal Service, it is understandable that they generally speak highly of the support they received. The women involved in the focus groups helped provide an outside perspective of these services. Details below are given about the experiences and feedback women shared about a range of services in the region.

Refuge and specialist family violence service

Contemporary women's refuges offer more than emergency accommodation. Pat Thomas House is the locally based family violence service and offers a suite of services designed to meet a range of support needs. These include high-support crisis accommodation (refuge), transitional accommodation, counselling, Womenzlink (follow up support calls to Police reports in the region), court support (with VROs etc), outreach support (1:1 and groups for women who do not want to come into the refuge or who have moved on from the refuge), child advocacy, provision of safety equipment (eg. security cameras) and community education. Both the women interviewed and those in focus groups were not

aware of the full range of services available through the refuge. A few women interviewed said they had not sought help from Pat Thomas initially because they did not want to go into crisis accommodation and did not know that outreach support was available. Many of those who received outreach support listed the flexibility and quality of this support as a key factor in them leaving violence and rebuilding their lives. Some also praised the court support as critical in helping them engage with the VRO process effectively.

Aboriginal women who contributed through the focus group talked about the importance of a refuge option for women in their community. They identified that while people's first instinct is to seek help from family, there can be situations when family is not the safest option for women leaving violent relationships. There are often strong connections between Aboriginal families so it may be easy for the woman to be found, and there are risks of incidents sparking family feuding. To avoid this, women may choose to access a refuge and even use the refuge network to move away from the region.

The young women in the focus group were aware of the refuge, but seemed to have a fixed idea of it as shared crisis accommodation. They felt they were unlikely to approach the refuge for help as they had an impression of it as a crowded space they would be sharing with others. They particularly had concerns about sharing with people who were traumatised by violence and how this would affect them. It appeared they did not have an understanding of the full range of options available from Pat Thomas House and the capacity to receive outreach and other support without going into refuge.

Implications for the Alliance

- It appears there is a need to raise awareness about the breadth of services offered through Pat Thomas House, particularly non-refuge options that are traditionally associated with such services.
- The Alliance can also play a role in celebrating the great work done by the refuge and the importance of this central family violence response in the region.

Counselling

Women talked about receiving counselling through Pat Thomas House, Allambee Counselling, Relationships Australia, and through other community-based and private options. Most talked about the transformative impact of counselling in terms of understanding their experiences and rebuilding their

strength. Several indicated they had received three emergency sessions through Allambee because they came from a family violence background. This enabled them to access short-term counselling quickly. Otherwise, women found they often had to wait for counselling appointments.

Women did raise concerns about the funding available for counselling and noticed that services that had previously been available were no longer there. They also spoke about having to negotiate the system of getting a mental health plan from a GP or being required to pay for counselling. A couple of women also talked about travelling to access counselling or not being able to access the counselling they wanted because of the distance involved.

> **Implications for the Alliance**
> - Access to counselling is an important part of recovery. The Alliance can raise awareness about the range of options available and work with services who want to lobby to expand resources – both in terms of availability and locations.

Police

The Police are the one service that all women were aware of, though a significant number choose not to call or involve the Police on most occasions (and sometimes all occasions) when a violent incident occurred. Some women identified the Police as pivotal in their decision to seek help. They had experiences of the Police encouraging them to see their situation as family violence, providing information about available services, responding to VROs and taking immediate action in situations where women and children's safety was threatened. The Police involvement in the FDVCRT was also identified as very supportive including the follow-up work this collaborative response provided. A few women had the experience of refusing help offered by the Police, but receiving a follow-up call anyway. This is done in situations assessed as serious safety risks. In one of these cases, these follow-up calls where she had not given consent became the pivotal incident that lead to her accepting help and leaving the violence.

Not all feedback about Police was positive. One of the key factors that influenced Police responses was difficulties around obtaining evidence. This hampered their capacity to act and charge individuals. For the women on the receiving end of psychological abuse and stalking behaviour, this left them feeling unsupported and vulnerable to attack. One woman described a particularly negative experience with

the Police where she was moved on from her home, despite being the badly hurt in an incident where her daughter assaulted her. This case not fitting the standard husband/wife model of "domestic" violence may have contributed to this response.

In the focus groups there was mixed feedback about the Police. In the young women's group feedback varied from generalised opinions about poor Police response times, contrasted with young women who had direct experience of Police responding to family violence who had good experiences including timely responses. The Aboriginal women who contributed spoke about distrust between their community and the Police. Their experiences with Police were affected by ongoing Police interventions in family members' lives for a broad range of issues, not just family violence. They indicated that policing worked better in their community where individual officers knew families and worked with respected elders to help intervene and address issues. There was, however, a regular turnover of staffing in the Police which impacted on their capacity to build good working relationships.

Implications for the Alliance

- As first responders, the Police are a key point of information and support in family violence situations. The FDVCRT based with the Police have high levels of expertise and passion in addressing family violence issues. They should be targeted as key members of the Alliance.
- There is the potential to do some work around providing information to community members about collecting evidence – to strengthen both women's position, and the knowledge of friends/family who wish to help them when seeking help from the Police.

Other services

Women interviewed also mentioned a wide range of other services. These included local charity groups who provided furniture, food and other emergency relief. It also included a range of mainstream services who provided initial support and then connected them to specialist family violence support. One woman talked about her involvement with Disability Services Commission which had been ongoing due to the needs of her child. When she decided to seek help with family violence she initially disclosed to her DSC worker who put her in contact with service providers and encouraged her to involve the Police. Other examples include women who first talked about family violence with their GP, Centrelink, child health nurse and drug counsellor.

Importance of helpful others

I literally just called the police then called my Mum. I actually stayed with my Mum for three weeks until I got my house. I had my Mum, so I was lucky to have that support there instead of having to go to the refuge.

In 13 of the 20 interviews, women highlighted the role of friends, family and colleagues as major sources of help and instigators of actions that lead to them leaving family violence. Some women talked about how it was family members or friends who helped them actually see their situation as family violence. Others talked about staying with family and friends as a place of safety. In talking about their friends and family, there were several women who indicated that their mother or friend also had previous experience of family violence and was able to shared their knowledge of services. One woman spoke about how her colleagues had stopped work and taken her to the Police when she came in with another in a series of obvious injuries. Her boss stayed with her at the police station for several hours until she was safely taken to a refuge. One young woman in the focus group talked about the importance of a friend in getting her away from a violent relationship. She said she needed someone to make the decision for her because she was too traumatised to be able to do it herself. In the focus groups both Aboriginal women and young women spoke about being more likely to go to family and friends for help than services.

The other people who were highlighted as significant sources of support were participants in groups and residents in the refuge. Women talked about how talking to others who were in the same situation and who understood what they were going through helped them both understand and manage their situation. One woman talked about the group work program she did through Pat Thomas House. The women in this group have continued to be her friends and a source of ongoing support. Another woman highlighted that the group work and hearing other women's stories was a lot more effective for her than 1:1 counselling sessions.

Impact on children

I try and sit with him and sometimes he'll cuddle up to me and other times he won't. He'll just go no, Mum, just leave me be, but I can hear him through the door because he shuts the door and you can hear that he's crying and all that.

In the interviews women were also particularly asked about the impact of family violence on their children. Some spoke about how their children had witnessed or sometimes experienced the violence directly. For a few women, this had a direct impact on their decision to leave. Other impacts on their children described by the women include:

- Patterns of violence or threatening behaviour from their children (8) – Women talked about the levels of anger their children felt as a result of the trauma they had experienced and how this erupted in family dynamics.
- Children being closed off and isolating themselves (6) – One woman talked about her child withdrawing from support offered and expressing themselves through self-harm.
- Children being fragile and hypervigilant (5) – One woman talked about how her child was very attached to her and did not want to go to school or leave her alone. Others described children that were defensive and scared of being hit, afraid of making noises, scared of making mistakes.
- Developing mental health problems (4) – A number of women identified that their children had been diagnosed with depression, anxiety or other mental health problems. One talked about their child being suicidal.
- Impact on schooling (3) – Either related to issues concentrating due to their emotional state or as a direct result of having to move around between refuges for safety.
- Damaged relationship with adult children (2) – following years of controlling actions from their violent partner to undermine their parenting.

- One woman disclosed that her child had developed a problem with drug use and had got involved in crime.

These descriptions show the extent to which family violence is a traumatising experience for children. A significant proportion of the women interviewed had sought counselling support for their children or were considering it. Those whose children received counselling and engaged in it, benefitted from the experience. Women talked about both the benefits for their children's individual wellbeing and their relationships with the rest of the family. Access to counselling was not, however available or suitable for all children. Women experienced long waiting lists, limited sessions and at times sought help through private options (the cost of which was prohibitive).

Young people were particularly difficult to engage in counselling. Some refused offers of counselling, while others disengaged after a few sessions. One woman related how her teenage daughter disliked counselling because she felt "treated like a baby". The contrast between women's mainly positive experience of counselling to their teenagers' quite mixed experience may indicate that the success of counselling is highly dependent on the choice of the individual to access it. This is a choice made by the women accessing it, while mothers were more likely to be the instigator of children and young people receiving counselling. Some teenagers responded better to youth services and more activity based groups.

Another area of concern several women raised about their children was the ongoing contact they had with their violent parent. In these instances women talked about their children being neglected while on access visits or being exposed to unsafe situations (eg. drug using behaviour). One woman talked about how her ex-partner used access visits to continue threatening and manipulating her, using the children as a means of exercising control. Women were also worried about the bad influence of the violent parent, with one woman talking about how he was teaching her child to be a bully.

Within all these conversations with women about their children, one common theme was very strong. Women were clear that they had made the right decision in leaving family violence because of the positive impact on their children. They talked about living in calmer homes, about improving relationships, about how they had made their children safe.

Help seeking patterns

Just a lot of numbers to contact and – yeah, just not really knowing the system and so it took me a few talks to them before I actually understood what all the different numbers meant.

These experiences of women accessing services were analysed to see if there were any common help seeking patterns that could provide additional insights. While women did not map out their entire history of accessing services in their interviews, some key themes were noted in the referral patterns that women described.

In telling their story each woman identified where they started seeking help when they left the relationship on the last time. While it is worth noting that several women indicated their multiple attempts to leave, the chart below shows who they identified as the starting point of seeking help on the most recent occasion. The most common first point in seeking help were the Police or friends/family/colleagues. Two people originally sought help for family violence through counselling which they were already receiving for other issues (eg. drug use, general relationship counselling). There was also a range of other services that initiated support for family violence including Disability Services Commission, Centrelink and Child Health nurse. Interestingly Pat Thomas House was only identified as the first contact for support by one woman. While most women interviewed did received support from Pat Thomas House at some point, it was other services and individuals that helped connect women to it.

Table 12: Initial source of help in women's stories

Starting point for accessing assistance

Category	Value
Counselling	2
Police	6
Friend/ family/ colleauge	6
Pat Thomas House	1
Other service	5
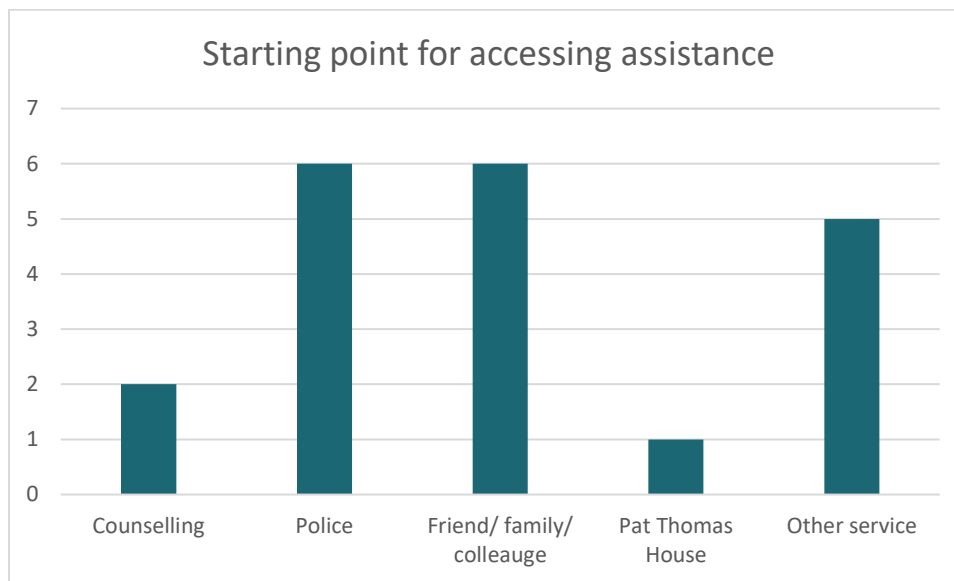
The key features in patterns of help seeking behaviour of those interviewed were:

- Chains of referrals – Where they were accessing one service who referred them to another to meet additional needs, who in turn referred them to another for something else. In some instances, these were described as positive patterns eg. where Police intervened in an incident then connected the person to the Pat Thomas House who provided outreach support, which connected the woman to WestAus Crisis who provided help sourcing accommodation and connected the women to St Vincent de Paul Society who provided furniture and basic needs. These chains work because at each step of the way, different needs are being met and identified. In other instances, women found these patterns frustrating because they represented needs not being met and being pushed between services. One woman described her attempts over several years to get appropriate support for her child. This chain involved referrals from Perth Psychological Services, to Child and Adolescent Health, to Allambee, back to Child and Adolescent Health, to a GP, back to Allambee and on to Peel Youth Service.

- Spray patterns – Most of the women's help seeking included a spray pattern when one single service linked them to a wide range of services. One woman described a friend supporting her to contact the Police, who then connected her with court support to get a VRO, the FDVCRT based at the station and Pat Thomas House. She then had a second spray pattern where Pat Thomas

House connected her to Allambee for counselling, Peel Community Legal Service, Centrelink and the Salvation Army for furniture for her new home that they also helped her find.

In looking at the various patterns of referrals and help seeking, three key services were most commonly mentioned – Pat Thomas House, the Police and counselling. Given the women were identified for interviews through Pat Thomas House and Allambee, in some ways this is unsurprising. However, the patterns of referrals onward also identify them as central services in family violence. The table below was developed to show what referrals the women mentioned in interviews that each of these made to meet the women's support needs. This shows:

- Pat Thomas House was the most commonly identified source of onward referrals (and featured centrally in many of the spray patterns).
- The Police as a key source of referrals, particularly to Pat Thomas House, but also to legal and other services.
- Counselling as a less common source of onward referrals, but significant in the role it played in initiating children receiving counselling.

Table 13: Referrals made by key services
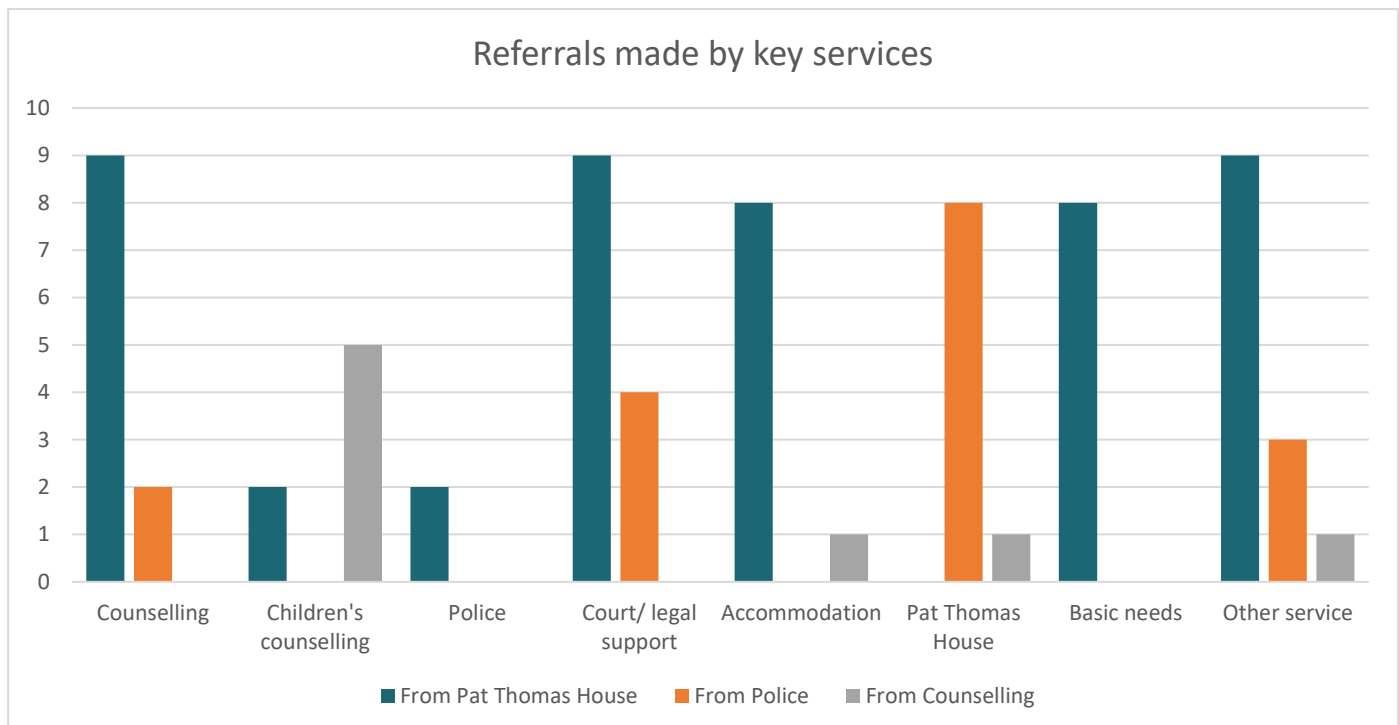
- Family, friends and colleagues are pivotal first steps in seeking help. The Alliance can promote activities that help them build their capacity to undertake this role.

- Pat Thomas House is the pivotal family violence service in the region and it is important for the Alliance to ensure information is widely available about the full range of services it offers.

- In circulating information about available services, it is difficult to provide a full list of everything available, but referral patterns indicate that ensuring information is available about key services will lead to women and children being connected to others.

Cultural dimensions

If people want help they go to their family first and we'll sort out who to go to from there. Sometimes you can't stay because everyone knows you're there and it can start a feud.

Through the interviews and focus groups a number of cultural dimensions to family violence were provided from both Aboriginal women and women from other cultural backgrounds. The Aboriginal women involved in the informal focus group were initially reluctant to talk directly about family violence. They took time to talk about violence they saw in the white community and in clubs/streets between young men. This expressed a weariness with seeing their community associated with family violence and the sense of blame they felt from mainstream Australia. They wanted to see consistency between how white violence and Aboriginal violence was treated and viewed by the community.

Both the focus group and the Aboriginal women interviewed identified how this fear of discrimination impacted their relationship with the Police. As discussed in an earlier section, Aboriginal communities and individuals needed to build trust with particular police officers before they would seek help. Aboriginal women talked about how their community likes to resolve issues within the family first. In instances of family violence people are most likely seek help from respected people within the community and family, who will then help sort out where to go for help from there. As indicated in an earlier section about refuge accommodation, this may involve accessing services if they provide a safer option and one less likely to cause ongoing conflict in the community.

The interviews also included women from traditional cultural backgrounds in Eastern and Southern Europe. Some of these women were born overseas so faced additional issues related to immigration status, while others were born in Australia to families who ascribed to traditional cultural values. The issues they highlighted that showed the impact of this on their experiences of family violence and seeking help include:

- Attitudes towards divorce which resulted in them staying in relationships longer to make the marriage work.
- Lack of knowledge of services and the types of things that might be available.
- Fear about immigration status and the risk of being returned to their home country without their children.
- Financial hardship due to lack of eligibility for benefits. This also applied to one woman who was originally from New Zealand.

Implications for the Alliance
- Involving Aboriginal women and groups in identifying solutions and awareness projects that suit their own community is essential.
- The Alliance needs to be alert to the messages about family violence in Aboriginal communities and how these can alienate Aboriginal women.
- The Alliance also needs to be aware of the additional barriers faced by women born overseas and/or from cultural backgrounds with more conservative values.

Key elements to positive service delivery

A couple of days ago I went downhill for about 10 days and I could feel myself just falling back in a heap. And I rang her - I can ring her any time – and she made me feel so much better instantly.

In the interviews women were asked about what worked well in their experiences of services and the key things that made a difference in their capacity to accept help and make changes in their lives. Fuller details about these are available in Appendix 5. The most common theme running through their responses revolves around building trust. The impact of trauma from family violence had both eroded

their confidence and capacity to trust, so services they engaged with well were able to rebuild this. This trust is rebuilt through:

- Knowledge: The other key area was knowledge. The most commonly cited strategy that had the most impact for women was developing an understanding of family violence and its impacts, particularly through the power and control wheel.

- Accessibility: In their replies, the women also highlighted particular features that relate to the accessibility of services. This includes being able to access support on an as needed basis (particularly through outreach), the proactive and persistent provision of support from FDVCRT and Pat Thomas House (including follow-up calls) and access to non-judgmental support services (including services that understood why she stayed or returned to the relationship).

- Emotional openness: Sharing stories with other women through support groups and rebuilding confidence through counselling provided opportunities for women to explore and process the emotional damage of their relationships.

- Practical assistance that solves problems: Specific support that helped women navigate legal and immigration processes, access accommodation, childcare, improve security in their home, build life skills and meet basic needs (eg. furniture, clothing, food).

> Implications for the Alliance
> - Feedback from the women about what works when they are dealing with family violence provides insights for the Alliance around both approaches to service delivery and particular types of practical support that have been instrumental in helping women and children.

Key barriers to service delivery

I have found that everything is a process and I just found it very overwhelming that you have to take it in order to get things sorted.

Women were also asked to identify what barriers and challenges they found in accessing help. Again, fuller details are provided in Appendix 5. A common experience of women was feeling overwhelmed by

the sheer number of services and supports they needed to access and their reduced capacity to do this stemming from the impact of family violence. Key areas of concern were:

- Legal matters: The most common area that women found frustrating related to legal issues. The legal system was complicated, at times inconsistent and women who are traumatised by violence found additional difficulty navigating their way through critical matters that affected the future safety for them and their children. In some instances, women identified that they did not act on or follow through legal matters as a result of difficulties negotiating the system.

- Other complex systems: Red tape was also experienced with Centrelink policies and processes, particularly around having to provide evidence related to the family's living situation. In the Housing Authority, transfer waiting lists affected women's capacity to move from homes where violence had occurred.

- Mental health: This was also identified as a barrier to services. Women also talked about specific mental health diagnoses and how depression, anxiety, and PTSD affected their capacity to engage with services. This also affected their children. One woman described being pushed between services because of differences of opinion about whether issues were mental health or behavioural issues. One woman spoke about concerns of how her mental health would impact her custody case.

- Particular support needs: A number of women highlighted the difficulty they had accessing services because they did not fit the "normal" pattern of family violence or because they had additional support needs that were not catered for in services. This included women who had language barriers, disability or experienced elder abuse.

- Cost: A number of issues revolved around the costly nature of accessing support and setting up a new life. Despite most services being free of charge, there are still considerable costs related to childcare, transport, moving house, breaking leases, storage and replacing documents.

- Accessibility: This includes lack of public transport, long wait lists and particular difficulties finding suitable services for those not based in Mandurah.

- Service delivery issues: Specific complaints about service delivery by individual women included referrals not followed through when women moved between services, lack of continuity in services with high staff turnover or poor holiday cover arrangements, and lack of clarity about complaints procedures.

Two women described situations in their interviews that may constitute grounds for serious complaints against services. These are not discussed in this report in detail, but relate to confidentiality breaches and culturally inappropriate responses.

Implications for the Alliance
- Feedback from the women about the barriers they face can assist the Alliance identify range of opportunities to affect positive change. These can be shared with Alliance members to generate ideas for individual actions and campaigns.

Suggestions for change

My house, there's no more arguing, there's no more yelling, there's no more abusing people. You can go outside if you want to do that. So I'm good now, I have my days.

Within the interviews and focus groups, women were invited to make suggestions for changes in the region which could improve services and reduce family violence. These have been broken down into the key areas outlined below.

Information

Women were keen for more information, particularly in simplified formats, designed for those affected by family violence. The legal system was the most common area where women felt they needed improved information which reflects the complexity of legal processes and the pressure women feel because of the potential consequences if their cases are unsuccessful. Suggestions included custody issues, parenting orders, how to fill out paperwork, providing evidence for VROs.

Support options

Women suggested a range of ideas that they felt could improve the existing service delivery options in the region. Many of the ideas revolved around ways that would make assessing support easier or offer something they did not see as currently available in the region. These include:

- Informal support groups – Building on positive experiences in group work, women suggested coffee mornings or other ongoing informal support that women could attend to support each other. (Note: this was the most common suggestion).
- Casework or systems navigators that stay with a family throughout the whole process.
- Coordination of services including establishing a central hub for accessing services, sharing case management plans and no wrong door approaches which enable women and children to avoid retelling their story.
- Counselling and other services for men to change their violence.
- Additional practical support options eg. access to removalists, assistance with daily living when traumatised, provision of "secret" mobile phones for women to use in emergencies.
- Follow-up at critical points when women can be identified as at risk eg. if someone withdraws a VRO or is in hospital.

Other suggestions by the women involved extending the capacity of existing services including counselling, legal support, healthy cooking and budgeting, financial support options and refuge spaces. In terms of the refuge, the young women's focus group spent some time discussing an alternative refuge model with independent units. They recommended a gated and secure complex for safety purposes, but with independent units so each woman and family could have their own privacy and facilities.

Children and young people

As indicated in previous sections, women interviewed were particularly concerned about the impact of family violence on their children. They were keen to see an extension in both the capacity and type of counselling offered including family counselling, trauma focused approaches and options for very young children. They also suggested alternatives to counselling, particularly for young people, such as activity based support groups and mentoring.

Legal reform

A few people made suggestions that tend towards a legal reform agenda. Whilst these may not be within the reach of a regional Alliance, they are options that can be fed into wider campaigns. These include:

- Challenging assumptions in family court which favour stability offered by a parent when considering custody cases, when this may contradict the needs of a parent to move her children around for safety reasons.
- Introducing a system of mandatory mental health assessments of those charged with family violence related offences.
- Introducing reforms to tenancy agreements to enable tenants to break leases for safety reasons without penalties if there is family violence in the home.

Community education

Other suggestions made by women interviewed and in focus groups were related to community education. These suggestions both target women in the community who may be affected, but also the community at large to raise awareness and address stigma related to family violence. Suggestions include:

- Education about early warning signs in relationship that indicate they may become controlling, particularly around emotional violence.
- Raising awareness of issues and challenging prejudices the community have around reasons women stay and return to family violence.
- Education in schools and general community about healthy relationships and the power and control.
- Considering the format of how messages can be circulated, including posters in places women are able to go (even when in a controlling relationship), and using non-written materials for a variety of audiences.
- The young women's focus group talked about different ways to get messages across including through Facebook and social media. In their discussion about what services were available, several of the young women indicated they became aware of some of the smaller, volunteer based services through Facebook groups.

- Aboriginal women from Koolbardies Talking were keen for messages to include raising awareness about emotional violence and encouraging women to seek support, including going into refuge, in these circumstances.

Some of the women interviewed were also keen to be involved in community education campaigns. They were willing to share their story from the interview to help other women understand they were not alone and that it was possible to rebuild a life after family violence. A few were also willing to speak at community education events to share their story.

Implications for the Alliance
- The suggestions made by the women in this section can be used to inspire Alliance members to take actions that directly respond to the experiences of women in the region.
- The Alliance should share the women's stories both to inspire other women who are experiencing family violence and to increase community understanding of the challenges they face.

Broader perspectives

And then when I went to my first counselling session that's when the penny dropped and I knew that we couldn't be in the relationship, things won't change.

The other element of the research is to compare the findings from the Peel region to the broader research literature. The aim of this is not to produce a comprehensive literature search, but to highlight how other research confirms or challenges the findings in the research above.

What is family violence?

She was waking up in the middle of the night screaming and I couldn't understand why and then I realised well the only savage thing she's ever been exposed is our arguments and his violence and it's not right.

As indicated above, women in Peel have experienced many varied forms of family violence. Over recent decades understanding of family violence has developed to become both more complex and more widespread. A 2015 research paper[14] outlines how the depth of understanding of violence in relationships has shifted from the 1970s image of the controlling husband who is increasingly violent and abusive to his wife over time. Family violence is now understood to incorporate a wide range of forms of violence, underlying causes, frequency/severity, relationship types, etc. The experiences of women in the region reflect this understanding of family violence as much broader than physical violence and husband/wife relationships.

Work has also been done that differentiates between violence in the family which is characterised by control and violence which is a response to a particular situation or stress.[15] In family violence situations someone is controlled and dominated and as a result subject to ongoing trauma and is restrained from leaving the relationship (either emotionally or physically). Situational violence occurs in bad relationships where couples (or others) argue and there is an element of equality to their capacity to leave and/or affect the relationship. The need to understand the difference between these is identified in both the young women's focus group where they struggled to articulate this difference and the experiences of women interviewed who didn't see themselves as in "domestic violence". PSNTV has chosen to use the term family violence to both reflect the breadth of situations where violence occurs and to differentiate it from both conflictual relationships and other forms of violence in our society. As identified by Our Watch, family violence is also the preferred term for Aboriginal communities because it recognises the extended family and kinship networks in their community.[16]

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[14] Hayley Boxall, Lisa Rosevear, Jason, Payne (2015), "Domestic Violence Typologies: What Value to Practice", Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.
[15] Michael Johnson (2000), "Conflict and control: Images of symmetry and asymmetry in domestic violence", in *Couples in conflict*. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum
[16] Our Watch (2014), "Key terms, definitions and statistics", Policy Brief 1.

What are the impacts of family violence?

I didn't want them having to deal with thinking about stuff that I had been through like getting held with a gun and beaten and stuff like that. I was trying to protect them but they were thinking that I was just taking off and staying at his.

The literature identifies a number of key impacts of family violence on the individual, their children and the wider community. The themes outlined below from the literature show a reasonable alignment with those identified by women locally. They do, however, take a longer-term view of the impact of family violence on women, while women interviewed for this research were more focused on the immediate challenges they are dealing with. As such, the literature helps the Alliance broaden its perspectives and messages. Significant themes identified in literature include:

- Safety: Safety is the primary concern in family violence. The 2012 Personal Safety Survey found one in six women had experienced physical or sexual violence from a partner at some time in their lives.[17] Between 2002 and 2012, 41% of all homicides in Australia were as a result of family violence.[18] The risks to women's safety increase when they leave a relationship, with research showing that 35% of women injured by their ex-partner felt their life was in danger compared to 15% of those injured by their current partner.[19] This is reinforced by international research that shows women are at higher risk of homicide or more severe assaults when they leave violent relationships.[20]

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[17] See: Our Watch (2014), "Key terms, definitions and statistics", Policy Brief 1.
[18] Tracy Cussen and Willow Bryant (2015), "Domestic/family homicide in Australia:, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.
[19] Ilsa Evans (2007), "Battle-scars: Long term effects of prior domestic violence", Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research, Monash University.
[20] Jacquelyn Campbell, Daniel Webster, Hane Koziol-McLain, Carolyn Block (2003), "Risk factors for femicide in abusive relationships: Results from a multisite case control study", American Public Health Association.

- Health: Studies show family violence has a significant impact on the health of Australian women and children including immediate injury, increased vulnerability to chronic disease, increased substance abuse, chronic pain, antenatal complications, increased infections (including STIs), and risk of death through homicide.[21] A parliamentary overview of issues related to family violence identified that 29% of women who sustained injuries from their partner required medical attention and 30% of those injured felt their life was in danger in the most recent incident.[22] Family violence also has an ongoing impact on women's health after the violence ceases with women who have experienced family violence making more frequent use of health services.[23]

- Mental health: Research shows that family violence increases the likelihood of mental health issues including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, self-harm and suicide.[24] A 2011 study of women experiencing gender-based violence found 77% with anxiety disorders, 52% mood disorder, 56% post-traumatic stress disorder and 35% had suicide attempts.[25] When taken across all women in Australia, research has shown that 18% of all depression and 17% of all anxiety experienced by women is related to family violence.[26]

- Housing: National data from Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)[27] indicates the number of people seeking help from specialist homeless services due to family violence has increased on average 7% per year between 2011-2016. By 2016, 38% of those seeking support from homeless services were doing so due to family violence.

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[21] Julie Ayre, Miriam Lum On, Kim Webster, Michelle Gourley, Lynelle Moon (2016), "Examination of the burden of disease of intimate partner violence against women", ANROS, Sydeny.

[22] Janet Phillips and Penny Vandenbroek, (2014), "Domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia: an overview of the issues", Department of Parliamentary Services, Australia.

[23] Ilsa Evans (2007), "Battle-scars: Long term effects of prior domestic violence", Centre for Women's Studies and Gender Research, Monash University.

[24] National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and Children (2009), "Background Paper to Time for Action", Department for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australia.

[25] S. Rees, D. Silove, T. Chey, L. Ivanic, Z. Steel, M. Creamer, M. Teesson, R. Bryant, AC. McFarlance, KL. Mills, T. Slade, N. Carragher, M.O'Donnell, and D. Forbes (2011), "Lifetime prevalence of gender-based violence in women and the relationship with mental disorders and psychosocial function", JAMA, vol. 306.

[26] Access Economics (2004), "The cost of domestic violence to the Australian economy: Part 1", Office for the Status of Women, Canberra.

[27] See: www.aihw.gov.au/homelessness/specialist-homelessness-services-2015-16/domestic-violence/

- Financial security: Research[28] shows that family violence has a two-way relationship with financial security. Not only is financial insecurity often a consequence of leaving a violent relationship, the fear of it may prevent women from making the decision to leave. There are considerable costs to leaving a relationship including replacing belongings, legal costs, travel costs, re-housing costs, etc. Women may face issues with debt, employment and child support. Their capacity to recover from the trauma related to the violence is also affected as financial security impacts their ability to access health and counselling services for themselves and their children.

- Impact on children: It is estimated that children are present for 44% of family violence and this impacts their physical, psychological, social and educational wellbeing.[29] This is reinforced by a 2015 study[30] that also identifies the impact of family violence on children's physical and mental wellbeing and its detrimental impact on their development and schooling. It also intersects with other issues for children with family violence identified as the leading cause of children's homelessness in Australia and often co-occurring with child neglect and child sexual abuse.

- Impact on the community: The cost of family violence on the wider community is significant. Various studies have measured the economic impact of family violence including 2009 research which predicted family violence could cost of up to $9.9 billion to the Australian economy.[31] Whilst usually measured in such economic terms, the community is also impacted by the secondary experience of violence through their friends, families, workmates and neighbours.

Implications for the Alliance
- There is a role for the Alliance in raising awareness about the wide range of broader impacts of family violence on individuals, children and the community at large as a way to inspire the community to take action.

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[28] Rochelle, Braaf and Isobelle Barrett Meyering (2011), "Seeking security: promoting women's economic wellbeing following domestic violence", Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Sydney.
[29] Lorana Bartels (2010), "Emerging issues in domestic/family violence research", Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.
[30] Monica Campo (2015), "Children's exposure to domestic and family violence – key issues and responses", Child and Family Community Australia, Paper No. 36.
[31] Cited in Janet Phillips and Penny Vandenbroek, (2014), "Domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia: an overview of the issues", Department of Parliamentary Services, Australia.

What affects women's capacity to seek help?

I think it was mainly just my anxiety more than anything. It was just very overwhelming. Everyone – when I look back, everyone was very supportive. It was just a very emotional time.

One of the key themes explored in the PSNTV interviews with local women focused on challenges around leaving and returning to family violence, and the extent to which they stayed in violent situations before seeking help. These experiences are in common with other women throughout Australia. The Violence Against Women Survey[32] found that only 16% of women who experienced family violence sought help from service providers following the most recent incident, and only 14% reported it to the police. According to the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre[33] women who do leave violent relationships, take an average of 5-7 attempts before they are successful. Other sources[34] identified the fear of family violence as significantly limiting women's capacity to identify and access services. Research from 2015[35] explores the way beliefs about relationships place women in a position where they are expected to save the relationship and commit to a concept that love can "overcome all obstacles". The same research goes on to underline the impact of psychological factors in violent relationships where controlling behaviour, bullying tactics, and fear of consequences act as a form of terrorism to prevent women from leaving.

Encouragingly, the Violence Against Women Survey also found that while 25% did not speak to anyone about their most recent experience of violence, 55% did speak to friends and neighbours, 42% spoke to immediate family members and 13% spoke to other relatives. There were even 8% who spoke to co-workers or their employer. [36] The significance of informal support in help-seeking patterns is identified in other research which underlines the importance of positive reactions from friends and family in

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[32] Jenny Mouzos and Toni Makkai (2009), "Women's Experiences of Male Violence – Findings from the Australian Component of the International Violence Against Women Survey", Australian Institute of Criminology.
[33] See: http://www.domesticviolence.com.au/files/pdf/Info-Book-Final.pdf
[34] National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and Children (2009), "Background Paper to Time for Action", Department for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australia.
[35] Sharon Hayes, (2015), "The Big Question: Why women stay in abusive relationships:, RPI Conference, Hobart.
[36] Jenny Mouzos and Toni Makkai (2009), " Women's Experiences of Male Violence – Findings from the Asutralian Componenet of the International Violence Against Women Survey", Australian Institute of Criminology.

encouraging women to seek further help.[37] This reflects the experiences of women in the Peel region who identified family, friends and colleagues as pivotal sources of support.

Of interest to the Peel region, it has been identified[38] that issues around seeking help are exacerbated in regional and remote areas where women can face challenges around finding local services, confidentiality in small communities, lack of transport and more traditional perceptions of relationships. Some of these issues were highlighted above as challenges by women interviewed in the PSNTV research. Work in the child protection area highlights the following issues that impact on family violence and seeking help in regional communities:[39]

- Lack of independent communication.
- Access to firearms.
- The violent partner holding a position of trust in a small, close-knit community.
- Ethics of self-sufficiency as part of rural culture.
- Social isolation with few neighbours in rural locations.
- Lack of transport options.
- Slower police response times due to larger geographical areas to cover.
- Familiarity of doctors, police and other support services with family both reducing their independent assessment of the situation and the woman's likelihood to seek help.

Another significant factor in understanding women's help seeking behaviour is the concept of resistance. Work in this area[40] is underpinned by an understanding that women always resist violence and abuse in some way, and that others probably do not notice the resistance and view them as "passive victims". Women resist by responding to violence in ways that undermine its impact eg. maintaining contact with particular friends, quietly disregarding instructions, physically resisting, taking actions to divert violence away from children, using knowledge of behaviour patterns to redirect

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[37] Silke Meye (2010), "Responding to intimate partner violence victimisation: Effective options for help-seeking", Australian Institute of Criminology, Trends and issues in crime and criminal justice, No. 389.
[38] Janet Phillips and Penny Vandenbroek, (2014), "Domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia: an overview of the issues", Department of Parliamentary Services, Australia.
[39] DCCSDS (2012), "Domestic and family violence and its relationship to child protecton", Practice Paper, Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.
[40] Jill Weaver, Nick Todd, Cindy Ogden, Laura Craik (2007), "Honouring Resistance: How Women Resist Abuse in Intimate Relationships" Calgary Women's Emergency Shelter and United Way, Canada.

violence or identify safer moments for resistance. Research[41] suggests that actions that may appear passive by others, are in fact active attempts to control the level of violence and are used by women to keep themselves and their children safer. While women interviewed in Peel did not directly name resistance, elements of their stories show the way they resisted violence and protected their children.

Implications for the Alliance

- There is a strong message the Alliance can share with the community about the important role family, friends, neighbours and colleagues can play.
- While not a remote region, the issues faced in more rural areas of Peel need to be considered for the added difficulty they place on women's capacity to access help.
- It is important that the Alliance celebrate women's resistance to violence and not perpetuate images of passive victims.

What are community attitudes to family violence?

They see the marks because I have had bloodshot eyes from being strangled and black eyes…

You are just fooling yourself if you think that they don't know.

The research phase of this project has not sought information about community attitudes, so it is only reflected in stories women shared about feeling judged and/or supported. As a result, evidence from broader Australian literature enables PSNTV to build on its anecdotal understanding of community attitudes. In terms of the literature, VicHealth has conducted three National Surveys on Community Attitudes to Violence against Women in 1995, 2009 and 2013, with the next one due this year. These are substantial pieces of research that have tracked changes over time in the way the Australian community perceives and responds to violence. The 2013 results show:[42]

- The community has a good understanding of how family violence is expressed through a range of behaviours with the proportion of the community who perceive non-physical behaviour as

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[41] Jan Seeley and Catherine Plunkett (2002), "Women and Domestic Violence: Standards for Counselling Practice", The Salvation Army Crisis Service.

[42] VicHealth (2014), "Australian attitudes to violence against women: Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS)", Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, Australia.

violence increasing since 1995. In 2013 97% perceived slap/push as an element of family violence and 85% perceived controlling someone's social life as a form of family violence.

- The vast majority (96%) understand family violence is against the law.
- There has, however, been a drop in the proportion of people who believe violence against women is common (from 74% in 2009 to 68% in 2013).

The report[43] also explores how attitudes excuse violence including perceptions that it can be excused if people get so angry they lose control (22%) or if the violent person regrets it (21%). The area of most concern, however, are attitudes that trivialise the impact of family violence and fail to understand the impact it has on women's capacity to leave violent relationships. While there has been a drop in the proportion of people who find it hard to understand why women stay in relationships, it is still high at 78%. Just over half (51%) believe most women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to.

The 2013 survey results were also analysed to specifically identify young people's attitudes toward family violence. These results showed:[44]

- Most young people understood the range of behaviours that could be identified as violence.
- 80% of young people find it hard to understand why women stay in violent relationships and 61% believe women could leave a violent relationship if they wanted.
- Young people are more likely to see family violence as a family matter to be handled within the family (22% compared to 12% of the adult population).
- Only 54% of young people would know where to get help for issues with family violence.

Implications for the Alliance
- While the community seems to perceive family violence as wrong and incorporating a range of behaviours, there is a clear need to increase understanding about the reasons women stay or find it difficult to leave relationships.
- There is also a need to increasing awareness of where people can find help.

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[43] VicHealth (2014), "Australian attitudes to violence against women: Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS)", Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, Australia.
[44] Anita Harris, Nikki Honey, Kim Webster, Kristen Diemer and Violeta Politff (2015), "Young Australian's attitudes to violence against women: Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey for respondents 16-24 years", Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, Australia.

What is best practice in supporting women who experience family violence?

My youngest daughter did the white ribbon march with me and she was just – she had tears, she said, "This is just great how men will come and stand up and say stuff." Because really my girls and I have only known one type of man all our life and he's been an abuser and violent.

In identifying best practice models, the intention is to provide a brief overview of approaches identified by women in the research and by service providers in contact with PSNTV. The key approaches highlighted are:

Support groups:

The most common suggestion made by women interviewed was for support groups where they could meet other women in similar situations. A US analysis[45] of evaluations of support group for women experiencing family violence identified a range of support group models including those led by clinicians, support workers or peers. In the majority of support groups studied, significant improvements were identified for the women. On a practical note, the research identified that groups with two facilitators were more effective. Other research[46] highlights the role of support groups in enabling women to reduce social isolation and develop friendships that offer trust and support.

Options for young people:

The interviews and young women's focus group identified the need for approaches that specifically targeted young people. A report to COAG (Coalition of Australian Governments) last year recommends the need for age-appropriate responses for young people. It recognises the central role youth services and youth homeless services play in supporting young people with family violence. These services are already skilled in working with young people, and the report recommends ensuring this is coupled with

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[45] Chris M. Sullivan (2012), "Support Groups for Women with Abusive Partners: A Review of the Empirical Evidence", National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, Harrisburg, PA.
[46] Lisa Young Larance, Maryann Lane Porter (2004), "Observations from practice: Support group membership as a process of social capital formation among female survivors of domestic violence", Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Vol 19, Issue 6.

skills to provide trauma-informed responses to those who have experienced family violence.[47] A report by the NSW government discusses the evaluation of mentor programs that were also suggested by those interviewed by PSNTV. It outlines that well-designed mentor programs can have positive impact on vulnerable young people including those affected by family violence. It does, however, underline that the quality of outcomes achieved is highly dependent on the structures and processes of the particular mentor program.[48]

It is also worth noting, that while this report has not touched on issues of family violence where young people are the source of violence in the home, Peel Youth Services is involved in a national project focusing on this issue and will bring these perspectives to the region.

Therapeutic responses for children:

A 2015 paper[49] summarising the key issues and responses to children's experiences of family violence highlights that while there has been limited evaluations of child specific work, there is growing evidence of the importance of therapeutic programs that work with both the mother and child. These programs work through play and counselling to strengthen the relationship between parent and child, and understand the effects of violence on their relationship. A review of family violence[50] service responses to children highlights the lack of funding and qualified staff to meet the demands for such services resulting in long wait lists. This reflects the experiences of women seeking support for their children in the Peel region who both want these services for their children and have difficulty accessing them.

Trauma informed care:

Trauma informed care approaches are based on an understanding of the impact of trauma on individuals and designing services that both respond to this and actively seek to avoid re-traumatisation.

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[47] NCOSS (2016), "Children and Young people: COAG Nation Summit on Reducing Violence against Women", NSW Council of Social Services
[48] Family and Community Services (2014), "Early Intervention and Placement Prevention program – Child Youth and Family Support Service Model", NSW Government.
[49] Monica Campo (2015), "Children's exposure to domestic and family violence – key issues and responses", Child and Family Community Australia, Paper No. 36.
[50] Monica Campo, Rae Kapiew, Sharnee Moore and Sarah Tayton (2014), "Children affected by domestic and family violence – A review of domestic and family violence prevention, early intervention and response services", Australian Institute of Family Studies, NSW.

This includes a thorough analysis of service practices and how they can replicate and trigger trauma.[51] It is a strengths-based approach that uses an understanding of the experiences and impact of trauma which has been identified as best practice in the mental health sector,[52] health sectors[53] and family violence.[54] As outlined in a discussion of work with children affected by family violence, trauma informed care is not only used in services that directly treat trauma, but in any setting where people accessing the service may have experienced trauma. It challenges services to see presenting issues/behaviours like homelessness, mental health, drug use, anger management issues as symptoms of trauma and to create services where people are emotionally safe.[55] While women in the PSNTV research did not directly use the term trauma-informed care, the way they discussed their experiences and those of their children identified trauma experiences. The features of services they identified which understood these experiences and responded in supportive and flexible ways reflect trauma-informed responses.

Indigenous led responses:

While data shows the extent of family violence experience by Aboriginal women,[56] Aboriginal women in the focus group were keen to reject the image of family violence entrenched in Aboriginal communities as it stigmatises their community rather than providing meaningful solutions. Work by Closing the Gap[57] reflect local women's call for Aboriginal people to be central to developing services and community-based responses. It also highlights that holistic responses that incorporate the authority and contributions of community elders are more effective. Likewise, work published through ANROWS[58] analysing current service models identified that the success of any program to address family violence in

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[51] Sonia Ferencik and Rachel Ramirez-Hammond (2010), "Trauma-informed care – best practice and protocols for Ohio's domestic violence programs", Ohio Department of Mental Health.
[52] Jenna Bateman, Corinne Henderson, Cathy Kezeleman (2013), "Trauma informed care and practice – Towards a cultural shift in policy reform across mental health and human services in Australia", Position Paper and Recommendations of the National Trauma-Informed Care and Practice Advisory Working Group, Mental Health Coordinating Council.
[53] Antonia Quadara (2015), "Implementing trauma-informed systems of care in health settings: The WITH study", State of knowledge paper, ANROWS, NSW.
[54] Monica Campo (2015), "Children's exposure to domestic and family violence – key issues and responses", Child and Family Community Australia, Paper No. 36.
[55] Monica Campo (2015), "Children's exposure to domestic and family violence – key issues and responses", Child and Family Community Australia, Paper No. 36.
[56] See: http://anrows.org.au/sites/default/files/Fast-Facts--Indigenous-family-violence_0.pdf
[57] Andrew Day, Ashlen Francisco and Robin Jones, "Programs to improve interpersonal safety in Indigenous communities: evidence and issues", Issues paper no> 4, Closing the Gap Clearinghouse.
[58] Harry Blagg, Nicole Bluett-Boyd and Emma Williams (2015), "Innovative models in addressing violence against Indigenous women", State of knowledge paper, ANROWS, NSW.

Aboriginal communities was highly dependent on how much it involved community members and leaders in its design and implementation.

Community education:

In the PSNTV interviews and focus groups, women recommended a range of community education approaches. An international study analysing the effectiveness of programs to address family violence prevention identified:[59]

- Simple awareness raising campaigns were effective in raising the profile of family violence, though were not able to shift underlying societal norms underpinning family violence.
- Strategies that pair awareness raising with a mechanism for encouraging local and individual acts to address violence were more likely to be effective (eg. Oxfam's "We Can" campaign).
- Peer training and community workshops had mixed effectiveness but were more able to sustain interest if linked to existing groups that the target group were involved in eg. sports clubs. The mixed results from such models were highly dependent on the quality of the presenter and ensuring follow-up was provided.

Implications for the Alliance
- Best practice models identified in the literature indicate local women's suggestions for support groups and alternative models for young people are worth exploring.
- The literature also reinforces the need for Aboriginal women and elders to be involved in strategies targeting their communities.
- There are interesting reflections on what makes community education approaches effective that should be explored in the next phase of the Alliance development.

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[59] Lori L. Heise (2011), "What works to prevent partner violence: an evidence overview", STRIVE Research Consortium, United Kingdom.

Conclusion and recommendations

I had my feet on the cupboard and my back against the door to stop him coming in. But then of course I heard him going into the other kid's room so then I had to come out and face him.

The Peel region faces a number of specific challenges related to family violence. Data suggests family violence is prevalent in the region and the complexity of issues women and children face as a result is reflected in the stories they shared in interviews and focus groups. Developing a collective response to this for PSNTV is, however, hampered by both the formal way Peel is split differently across multiple jurisdictions and the informal way the local communities within Peel identify. Service delivery in Peel shows coverage is focused on Mandurah with gaps in terms of capacity identified, particularly in relation to accommodation, counselling and children's/youth services. A review of broader perspectives from the literature reinforces the findings of PSNTV research with local women, but also provides a longer-term view of the impact of family violence. Potential roles for the Alliance around raising awareness, providing a focal point for regional responses and channelling information are identified by both service providers and women interviewed.

Throughout this report, implications for the Alliance are highlighted at the end of each section. Common threads appear in these as the evidence points toward similar recommendations. Listed below are recommendations built from these observations that can assist PSNTV build an Alliance to address issues of family violence in the region based.

Recommendations

1. That PSNTV implement strategies to ensure it builds an Alliance that is effective and relevant across the whole region, including:

   - Ensuring all local offices of relevant government departments are involved where they have multiple offices responsible for different parts of the Peel region.
   - Ensuring information resources about services include those based outside the region which offer outreach services into Peel or are closer geographically to some towns eg. Boddington, Byford.

- Ensuring all local government areas are active in the Alliance by identifying champions in each area to drive local action and act as a known source of referrals.
- Encouraging local services to consider shared outreach or transport options to enable more isolated communities to access services.

2. That PSNTV requests Police data covering all 5 local government regions at least every two years. In the meantime, it can seek regular updates of information through the local FDVCRT which covers 4/5 areas and Pat Thomas House to provide an ongoing indication of family violence incident rates and service demand.

3. That PSNTV act to improve family violence literacy, not just increase awareness, so individuals, services and the wider community are better able to identify family violence and understand the dynamics involved. Strategies can include:

   - Education involving the power and control element of family violence dynamics that differentiate them from other dysfunctional relationships.
   - Materials that highlight the concept of resistance women demonstrate in family violence dynamics.
   - Trauma-informed analysis and service models.
   - Ensuring that representations of a wide range of violence types and people are included in Alliance materials and activities.

4. That PSNTV develop a story book based on interviews with the women to demonstrate themes identified in the research and specifically challenge misconceptions around women's choices to leave, stay and return to family violence.

5. That in PSNTV seek involvement of Aboriginal communities and leaders to ensure activities and strategies reflect the needs of their communities.

6. That in sharing information about services available in the region, PSNTV particularly focus on key services that act as central referral points to available resources.

7. That PSNTV builds an Alliance around a message that community members, a range of services and a broad cross-section of organisations all have a role in addressing family violence. Strategies can include:

- Utilising an active membership model and providing simple templates for Alliance members to take individual actions.
- Encouraging training opportunities to build capacity and family violence literacy of non-specialist service providers.
- Sharing women's stories of the impact friends, families, colleagues and service providers have on their lives.

8. That PSNTV supports the development of new models and expansion of services in the region, particularly support groups and alternative approaches for young people.

9. That PSNTV make this report available and encourage local Peel services to utilise information in the research about services availability, feedback and gaps.

The following diagram maps the needs, services provided and referrals made for women and children assessing Pat Thomas House in 2016.

Pat Thomas House - areas of support (2016)
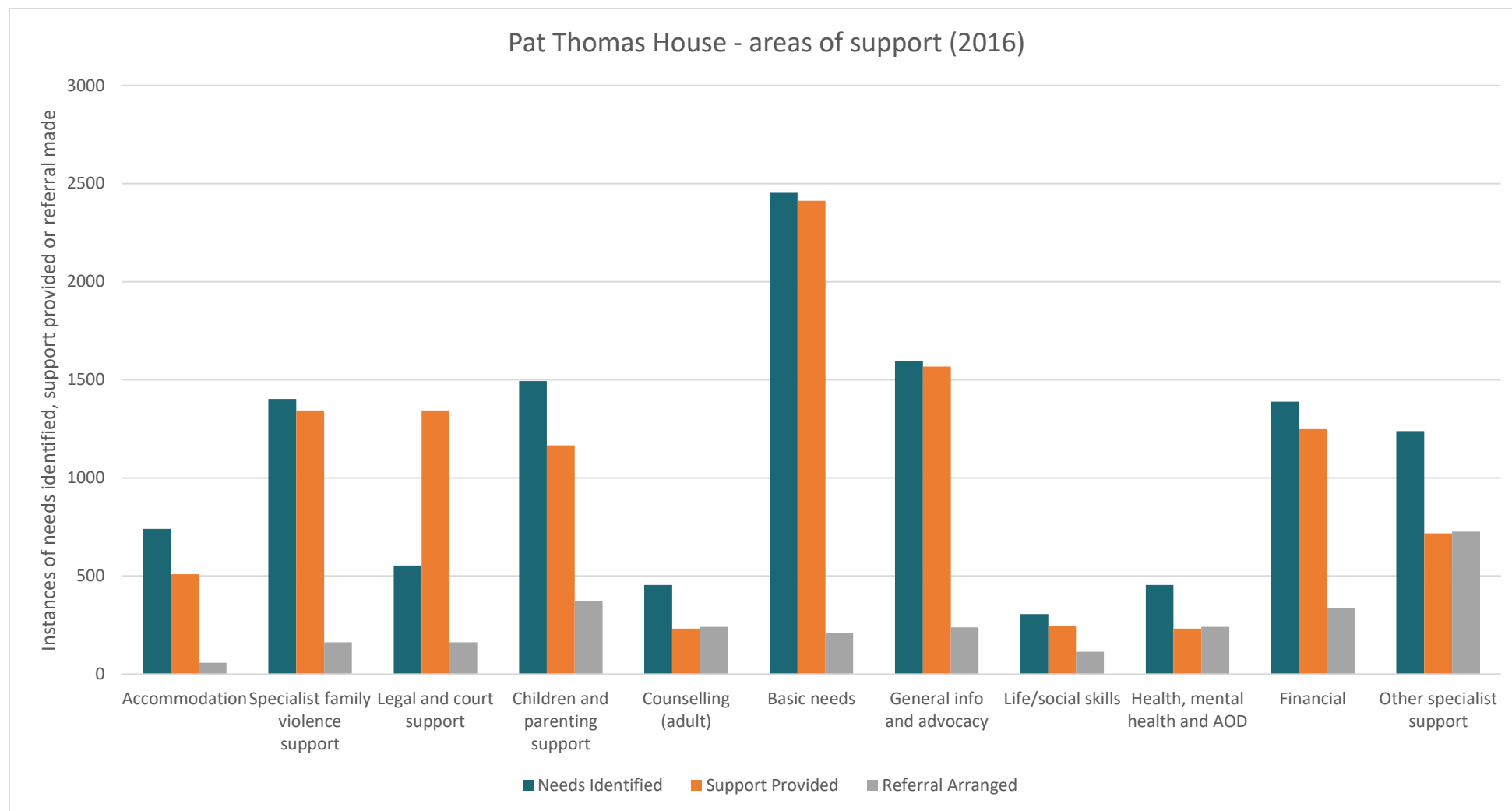
Appendix 2: Services contacted for online survey

Organisation	Surveys returned
360 Health and Community	1
Access Housing	
AccordWest - Mandurah	
Allambee Counselling	1
Allied Health Services	
Anglicare WA	2
Anglicare WA - Child and Parent Centre	2
Anglicare WA - Connect for Life	1
Anglicare WA - Family Relationship Centre	6
Anglicare WA - Housing Support	1
Billy Dower Youth Centre	
Boddington CRC	1
Calvary Youth	1
Child and Adolescent Health	4
Child Development Services	
Church of the Way	1
City of Mandurah	1
Clan WA	1
Combined Churches Community Kitchen (Pinjarra)	
Communicare	
Community First	2
Community Health - Child and Community Health	
Department of Human Services	1
Dept of Child Protection	1
Disability Services Commission	
Diversity South Inc.	
Fairbridge	1
Falcon Family Centre	1
Family Support Group - Boddington	1
Family Support Service	1
Finucare	1
Foodbank WA – Peel	1
GP Down South	1
HALO Team	1
Housing Authority	1
Interwork	
Koolbardies Talking	1

Organisation	Surveys returned
Mandurah CAB	1
Mandurah Migrant Centre	1
Mission Australia - Reconnect	1
Mission Providence	
Mum's Cottage	1
Nidjalla Waanjan Mia	1
Palmerston	1
Passages Resource Centre - Peel	1
Pat Thomas House	1
Peel Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service	1
Peel Community Legal Service	1
Peel Health Campus	
Peel Multicultrual Association	1
Peel Volunteer Resource Centre	1
Peel Youth Services	3
Pinjarra CRC	1
Pinjarra SVDPWA	
Relationships Australia WA - Counselling	1
Relationships Australia WA - Family Contact Centre	2
Relationships Australia WA - For Families/For Dads	1
Ruah Community Services	1
Salvation Army	1
Serpentine Jarrahdale YMCA	1
Serpentine PCYC	
Serpentine/Jarrahdale CRC	1
Shire of Murray	1
Shire of Waroona	1
SMYL Community Services	
South Metro Population Health Unit	1
South West Australian Homeless People	1
St Vincent de Paul WA - Peel	1
Street Net	1
Therapy Focus	2
Uniting Outreach Mandurah	
WA Police	1
Wanslea Family Centre	
Waroona CRC	1
Waroona SVDPWA	
WestAus Crisis & Welfare Services	1

Appendix 3: Service locations

Note: Where more than one answer was provided per organisation, the most common answer was included. Also, where services are listed that are part of a larger and it would be misleading to include just the answers for the local office, they have been removed from the list to avoid confusion (eg. Department of Health which answered for the Mandurah office only while there are Health Department services across the whole region).

Organisation	Boddington	Mandurah	Murray	Serpentine/ Jarrahdale	Waroona
360 Health + Community		Based in area			
Allambee Counselling	Phone/online	Based in area	Visit area	Phone/online	Visit area
Anglicare WA - Family R'ship Centre	Phone/online	Based in area	Based in area	Phone/online	Phone/online
Anglicare WA - Child and Parent Centre		Based in area			
Anglicare WA - Connect for Life		Based in area			
Anglicare WA - Housing		Based in area	Visit area		Phone/online
Boddington Community Resource Centre	Based in area				
Boddington Family Support Group	Based in area				
Child and Adolescent Health		Based in area	Based in area		Based in area
Calvary Youth		Based in area			
Church of the Way Community Care		Based in area			
City of Mandurah - Youth Development		Based in the area			
Clan WA		Visit area	Visit area	Visit area	Visit area
Community First International		Based in area	Visit area	Visit area	Visit area
Dept for Child Protection and Family Support (Mandurah office)	Visit area	Based in area	Visit area		Visit area
Department of Human Services	Phone/online	Based in area	Phone/online	Phone/online	Phone/online
Fairbridge		Based in area	Based in area		Based in area
Falcon Family Centre		Based in area			
Finucare	Visit area	Visit area	Visit area		Visit area
Foodbank WA	Visit area	Based in area	Visit area	Visit area	Visit area
GP Down South	Visit area	Based in area	Visit area	Visit area	Visit area
Halo Team	Visit area	Based in area	Visit area	Visit area	Visit area
Housing Authority	Visit area	Based in area	Visit area	Visit area	Visit area

Organisation	Boddington	Mandurah	Murray	Serpentine/ Jarrahdale	Waroona
Koolbardies Talking		Based in area			
Mandurah Citizens Advice Bureau		Based in area			
Mandurah Migrant Support Group		Based in area			
Mission Australia - Reconnect	Visit area	Based in area	Visit area	Visit area	Visit area
Murray House Resource Centre			Based in area		
Nidjalla Waangan Mia	Visit area	Based in area	Visit area	Visit area	Visit area
Palmerston		Based in area	Visit area		Visit area
Pat Thomas House Inc.	Phone/online	Based in area	Phone/online	Phone/online	Visit area
Peel CAMHS		Based in area	Visit area		Visit area
Peel Community Legal Services	Phone/online	Based in area	Visit area	Phone/online	Visit area
Peel Multicultural Association		Based in area			
Peel Volunteer Resource Centre	Phone/online	Based in area	Visit area	Phone/online	Visit area
Peel Youth Services	Phone/online	Based in area	Visit area	Phone/online	
Relationships Australia	Phone/online	Based in the area	Visit area	Phone/online	
Ruah Community Services		Based in area	Visit area		Visit area
Serpentine Jarrahdale Community Resource Centre				Based in area	
Shire of Murray			Based in area		
Shire of Waroona					Based in area
South West Australian Homeless People		Visit area			
Passages Resource Centre		Based in area	Visit area	Phone/online	Phone/online
St Vincent de Paul Society		Based in area	Based in area		Based in area
Street Net	Visit area	Based in area	Visit area	Visit area	Visit area
The Salvation Army	Based in area	Based in area	Based in area	Based in area	Based in area
Therapy Focus		Based in area	Visit area	Phone/online	Visit area
WA Mum's Cottage		Based in area			
WA Police - Victim Support Unit		Based in area			
Waroona Community Resource Centre					Based in area
Waroona Family Support Service					Based in area
WestAus Crisis and Welfare Services		Based in area	Visit area		Visit area
YMCA Serpentine Jarrahdale				Based in area	
Zonta Club of Peel		Based in area	Based in area		Based in area

: Only services that responded to this section of the online survey are listed

Name	Housing/find accom	Law/legal support	Parenting	Health	Counselling/ emotional well-being	Basic needs	Advocacy/ referral	Other	Fees	Specialist target group
360 Health + Community					✓				Some	
Allambee Counselling					✓					
Anglicare WA - Family Relationship Centre			✓		✓		✓		Some	Families
Anglicare WA - Child and Parent Centre			✓		✓	✓				Families
Anglicare WA - Connect for Life					✓					Mental health carers
Anglicare WA - Housing	✓									
Boddington Community Resource Centre						✓	✓			
Boddington Family Support Group			✓					Toy library	Some	Families
Child and Adolescent Health			✓	✓	✓					
Calvary Youth	✓						✓		Rent	Young people
Church of the Way Community Care						✓				
City of Mandurah - Youth Development										
Clan WA			✓							Families
Community First International					✓			Mental health		
Department for Child Protection and Family Support					✓		✓	Child protection		
Fairbridge					✓		✓			Young people
Falcon Family Centre										
Finucare	✓					✓	✓			
Foodbank WA			✓	✓		✓			Low cost	
GP Down South				✓						
Halo Team	✓					✓	✓		Rent	

Name	Housing/find accom	Law/legal support	Parenting	Health	Counselling/emotional well-being	Basic needs	Advocacy/referral	Other	Fees	Specialist target group
Housing Authority	✓								Rent	
Koolbardies Talking					✓					Aboriginal people
Mandurah Citizens Advice Bureau							✓			
Mandurah Migrant Support Group	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓			CaLD
Mission Australia - Reconnect			✓		✓	✓				Young people
Murray House Resource Centre							✓			
Nidjalla Waangan Mia					✓					Aboriginal people
Palmerston	✓							AOD support		AOD
Pat Thomas House Inc.	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		Rent	
Peel CAMHS					✓					Young people
Peel Community Legal Services Inc.	✓	✓					✓			
Peel Multicultural Association								Social activities		CaLD
Peel Volunteer Resource Centre										
Peel Youth Services	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			Young people/families
Relationships Australia			✓		✓			Supervised visits	Some	
Ruah Community Services	✓				✓			Mental health		
Serpentine Jarrahdale Community Resource Centre							✓			
South West Australian Homeless People							✓			Homeless people
Passages Resource Centre	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			Young homeless people
St Vincent de Paul Society	✓		✓			✓	✓			
Street Net	✓				✓		✓	Recreation		Young people
The Salvation Army - Mandurah			✓		✓	✓				
Therapy Focus				✓	✓					
WA Mum's Cottage					✓	✓	✓			
WA Police - Victim Support Unit	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Waroona Community Resource Centre							✓			

Name	Housing/find accom	Law/legal support	Parenting	Health	Counselling/ emotional well-being	Basic needs	Advocacy/ referral	Other	Fees	Specialist target group
Waroona Family Support Service	✓				✓	✓	✓			
WestAus Crisis and Welfare Services	✓					✓	✓			
YMCA Serpentine Jarrahdale		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Transport		Young people
Zonta Club of Peel							✓			

Appendix 5: Positive experiences and barriers to services

Positive experiences

Listed below are specific responses women interviewed gave about what helped them in their interactions with service providers (number of responses given in brackets):

- Learning about the dynamics of family violence (8) – This includes developing an understanding of controlling behaviour, emotional violence, particularly through the power and control wheel.

- Being able to access support on an as-needed basis (6) – This includes women who used domestic violence helplines and those who were able to call their outreach worker whenever they needed extra support.

- Support groups and sharing stories with other women in similar situations (6).

- Proactive and persistent provision of information and support from FDVCRT and Pat Thomas House to offer services (5) – including making follow-up calls in situations where women declined further support.

- Provision of basic needs and practical support (5) – eg. furniture, Christmas presents, clothing, food, financial counselling.

- Receiving help with legal issues (4) – including filling out paperwork for VROs and legal advice that clearly stepped through the family court process.

- Practical support with schooling, safety planning, building life skills (4) – This included encouragement from Pat Thomas House to do driving lessons and self-defence classes.

- Being directed to services by the Police (4).

- Access to non-judgmental support services (3) – including services who continued to offer support and understand reasons why she stayed or returned to the relationship.

- Rebuilding confidence over time through counselling and ongoing support (3)

- Offer of immediate accommodation by CPFS while waiting for refuge vacancy to become available (3)

- Access to safety equipment that enabled women to feel safe in their new home (3) – eg. security camera, phone app (that calls Police and records the situation).

- Help to find private rental or to liaise with estate agents (3) – including assistance to break a lease for safety reasons and one woman who spoke about a supportive real estate agent who understood her situation.
- Being able to move out of home area through the refuge network to a safer location (3)
- Access to child care to allow time to attend appointments and look for new accommodation (3).
- Assistance with immigration and residency issues (2).

Barriers and challenges

Listed below are the key areas women identified as barriers and challenges.

Issues related to legal matters:

- Lengthy timeframes for legal processes and mediation (7).
- Issues with providing acceptable evidence to get legal outcomes (6).
- The complicated and overwhelming nature of the family court process (4).
- Hidden or additional costs (4) – Despite most services being free of charge, there are still considerable costs related to childcare, transport, housing moving costs (eg. removalists and replacing furniture), breaking leases, storage, replacing documents (eg. ID and immunisation records).
- Not understanding their legal rights and concerns about rights of fathers to custody and access despite there being violence and neglect towards children (4)
- Not wanting to face their ex-partner in court and relive their experiences. (3) – One woman talked about the court facilities in Joondalup where private areas were set up for family violence cases so parties did not have to meet. She chose to travel there from Mandurah to access this service.
- Centrelink policies and processes, particularly around having to provide evidence related to the family's living situation (3) – One woman had particular difficulty accessing benefits because her situation did not follow the "normal" pattern with her leaving family violence without leaving the home.[60] Another woman faced issues with clashes between the way Centrelink and the Child Support Agency calculated entitlements leading to her receiving reduced income from both at

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[60] This case was particularly complicated with her ex-partner leaving the family home, rekindling the relationship and continuing the violence while not in the home, etc.

the same time. One woman also talked about the pressure to work from Centrelink given the age of her children, without consideration of the additional care they required to recover from the trauma of family violence.

- Difficulty managing mental health issues (3) – These included debilitating depression, anxiety, and PTSD. One woman spoke about concerns of how her mental health would impact her custody case.
- Ongoing trauma where women stayed in the same house where violence occurred (2) – Some women could not move for financial reasons, though one woman was on a long waitlist for a transfer through the Housing Authority. One woman talked about living in the house where there are still holes in the walls where they have been punched.
- Loopholes in the child support system which enabled ex-partners to avoid paying by not completing tax returns, working for cash in hand or quitting jobs. (2) – This results in significant financial pressure and uncertainty for women as they have fears around losing payments with little notice.
- Lack of services outside Mandurah (2)
- Lack of transport (2) – both in terms of public transport and driving licence.
- Language barriers – One woman talked about having English as a second language meant she had difficulty communicating and this affected her capacity to build trusting relationships with service providers.
- Elder abuse – One women who was assaulted by her daughter talked about how assumptions were made about who the victim/perpetrator is in a situation when they are in different types of family relationships.
- Disability – One woman with significant disabilities spoke about refuges being unable to take someone with a carer,[61]needing information in accessible format and legal complications related to power of attorney.
- Long wait lists for social housing.
- Referrals not followed through when women moved between services.
- Lack of vacancies in refuges and capacity issues in other key services (3).
- Lack of continuity in services with high staff turnover or poor holiday cover arrangements.
- Lack of clarity about complaints procedures.

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[61] who was not the source of violence