07. C Brown online form and comments

Name: C Brown

Proposal 2–1

Proposal 2–2

Diversion programmes should be developed in respect to family violence. At this point, there seems to be a reluctance on the part of law makers and governments to provide different options for family violence perpetrators. Under the guise of 'community safety' and 'protecting women and children', family violence offenders are typically swept off to jail for brief periods then subsequently released back into the community without any rehabilitation or support. Unfortunately, these brief stays in jail build resentment and once the offender re-joins their community and family, recidivism is likely. I believe the rates of recidivism for family violence offenders already prove this point.

Perhaps understandably, law makers don't want to be seen to be 'going soft' on violent offenders but in reality, this in ignorance of the causes of family violence and also the desires of the communities and families. In my experience working with survivors of family violence, women in particular rarely want their men sent to jail, and Indigenous communities emphasise keeping families together rather than splitting them apart. It must be remembered that in the vast majority of cases, women are the overwhelming victims of family violence, whilst the perpetrators are mostly men.

Other than the desires of the communities, there are also severe consequences for women if their men are sent to jail for family violence. The first is that jail does not solve the underlying problems - it may protect women for a brief period - but once their partner is released, the woman could now be in serious danger. The onus is then put on the woman to 'leave' but for Indigenous women this often means travelling long distances and can result in them being 'off country' without the support of the friends, family, land and culture. Moreover, women are in the most danger when they leave a relationship - this is when they are most likely to be murdered by their partners. In addition to this, women 'leaving' relationships is built upon western notions of relationships. Whilst western society may see relationships as temporary, they are considered permanent in many Indigenous communities and cultures. Therefore, it is often not feasible to ask an Indigenous woman to 'leave'.

Another reason why women and other victims can be reluctant to report violence and see their perpetrators put in jail is because they can be ostracised by their communities for reporting. Reporting therefore has very real consequences for Indigenous women - they can be rejected by their communities and isolated, but they could also be opening themselves up to yet more violence in the form of 'payback'. Violence against women is already underreported, and the prospect of sending their partners to jail could be contributing to the under-reporting of violence against Indigenous women. Alternative forms of justice could promote reporting and allow women experiencing family violence to access key support services.

For these reasons, projects and organisations which work with families to heal and support them in overcoming family violence should be supported. This is not to say that violent offenders shouldn't be monitored by law enforcement, but diversion programmes should be sought to prevent further harm against women and children. Moreover, if Indigenous men are incarcerated for family violence, the impetus must be placed on developing programmes to address the underlying factors associated with family violence such as grief, dispossession, hopelessness, stress, and substance abuse. This will also aid Indigenous female prisoners who are largely incarcerated due to family violence offences - the largely retaliatory  nature of this violence can be addressed by supporting Indigenous women and their families to overcome family violence by addressing its root causes.

Question 3–1

Question 3–2

Question 3–3

Question 3–4

Question 3–5

Question 4–1

Question 4–2

Question 4–3

Question 4–4

Proposal 4–1

Question 4–5

Proposal 5–1

Question 5–1

Proposal 5–2

Question 5–2

Proposal 5–3

Question 5–3

Proposal 5–4

Proposal 6–1

Question 6–1

Question 6–2

Question 6–3

Question 6–4

Question 6–5

Question 6–6

Proposal 6–2

Question 6–7

Question 6–8

Question 6–9

Question 6–10

Proposal 7–1

Question 8–1

Question 8–2

Question 9–1

Proposal 10–1

Question 10–1

Proposal 11–1

Question 11–1

Proposal 11–2

Question 11–2

Proposal 11–3

Question 12–1

Question 12–2

Question 12–3

Question 12–4

Question 12–5

Question 12–6

Question 13–1

Other comments?