**The Salvation Army** Terry Quinn Australia Southern Territory

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Good Morning

Thanks for the opportunity to provide some information in relation to the review.

As you will see I am the Team Coordinator of the Fairground Children's Contact Service in Bendigo Victoria.  I am currently Chairperson of our Victorian Children's Contact Services Network, the Victorian Representative of The Australian Children's Contact Services Association( ACCSA) Board and a member of the Family Law Pathways Steering Committee for Shepparton Bendigo. In addition I have been working in the Child and Family Welfare sector for 49 years and for the last eight of these years in my current role.

In all these forums we have discussed the importance of regulation and accreditation of all Children's Contact Services in Australia, most importantly those engaged in private businesses. As an ACCSA Board member I have been made aware of a number of short comings from those private businesses, that over all have the potential to further traumatise children, as a number of these services do not for instance conduct proper Intake and Assessments or child/ren familiarisation sessions, leaving parents, children and supervisors wondering who they are to meet in order to commence "supervised sessions."  All 65 Funded Children's Contact Services throughout Australia are bound by a funding agreement with the Attorney General's Department, which includes the possibility of site checks, service audits and complaint investigation. A significant number of these funded services are members of ACCSA and as such agree to meet the set standards as well as those set by ACCSA. Private services are accountable to no Government or other instrumentality.

There is no doubt that the biggest challenges confronting funded Children's Contact Services are waiting lists,  funding constraints and the lack of Children's Contact Services in Metropolitan  Regional and Rural areas of the country. In Victoria alone there are twelve funded services to cover the whole State. All of our Services struggle to accommodate families who reside distances from where Children's Contact Services are located. For example   in the west of the State there are two services located in Mildura and Warrnambool with no service in between so families residing in  communities such as Horsham,  Edenhope Hamilton Nihl, Warracknabeal Ararat   to mention a few need to travel to receive our services. Through our Network we will negotiate with each other to see who has capacity to provide service to these isolated families. We have a minuted agreement which states " the centre utilised is the one closest to where children live."
This was adopted where possible so that children are not travelling all day for a two hour contact with their coparent. however in adopting this arrangement we are fully aware that we do not breach our current funding agreements.

In terms of funding constraints a number of our Victorian Children's Contact Services are unable to afford to operate full time each week due to individual Organisation's budgets. This places further pressures on waiting lists as organisations are unable to afford to pay penalty rates for weekend work. Weekends  are usually the busiest times for the nature of our work, as children attending school only have weekends to visit with their coparent.

I am prepared to acknowledge that the Attorney General's Department have provided a number of "one off " funding grants to the 63 funded centres to assist in dealing with waiting lists, however I am aware that these funding grants are often absorbed in adjusting from one budget to another at the end of one financial year and the commencement of another.

Due to our geographic location I am often asked  by Solicitors and Barristers to accommodate parents who live at the opposite end of the State, the logic being that we are " a half way point." Often I have received Circuit Court Orders without consultation nominating us as the preferred  Centre. I have made every effort to accommodate these cases but unfortunately they turn out to be unsustainable due to distance,  finances- fuel costs and the effort in adjusting fortnightly rosters, to four weekly. In addition children arrive at our Centre tied and grumpy which can affect the quality of the visit.

In conclusion as reported Waiting Lists issues are experienced by most funded services I would like to recommend the following:

A review be undertaken to identify those services that require additional resources to better meet the demands upon their service.

Identification of locations requiring Children's Contact Services be made so that additional funded services can be established.

Regulation for the accreditation of all funded, fee paying and private Children's contact Services be made.

Thank you

Regards

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 **I acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of country throughout Victoria and pay my respect to them, their culture and their Elders past, present and future.

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