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Systemic Failures Devastate Lives of Family Violence Victims

Forum on Systems Abuse in Family and Sexual Violence

Hobart, TAS – The Southern Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee (DVCC) is hosting a crucial forum on systems abuse in family and sexual violence. This event will shed light on the way people who use abuse take advantage of systems and manipulate formal processes to continue their litany of abuse and intimidation.

The forum draws on victim-survivor informed case studies to illustrate the devastating effects of the abuse and discuss ways to improve the support and protection systems in Tasmania.

Systems abuse occurs when the very systems designed to protect and support survivors of family and sexual violence are used to perpetrate harm, often through misidentification, lack of coordination, and a gross misunderstanding on the presentation of family violence. “When our systems fail to understand what family violence actually is, we find people who use abusive behavior manipulate the systems creating a terrible and insidious problem that exacerbates the trauma experienced by victim-survivors. When the systems meant to protect victim-survivors fail, it not only undermines their wellbeing, safety and recovery but also erodes their trust in the justice system,” said Alina Thomas, CEO of Engender Equality.

The forum will bring together key stakeholders, including survivors, advocates, service providers, and policymakers, to address the critical issue of systems abuse. Featured speakers include Zoe Rathus AM, Senior Lecturer at Griffith University Law School, who has extensively published and presented on women and the law, with a focus on the family law system and the impact of domestic and family violence on women and children. Also joining is a representative from the Federal Family Violence Commissioner’s Office, along with Sara Stevens, developer of a comprehensive four-day Family Violence Screening and Assessment training program, now mandated for staff at the Safe Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line and Child Safety Service within the Department for Education, Children and Young People in Tasmania.

The day will cover several critical topics, including the impact of systemic failures on survivors of family and sexual violence, strategies for improving coordination and communication among support services, the role of policy and legislation in addressing systems abuse, and insights from frontline practitioners and researchers.

“Addressing systems abuse is crucial for ensuring that our response to family and sexual violence is effective and compassionate. We must listen to the experiences of victim-survivors as their expertise is essential to our understanding. Then, we must work together, with a whole-hearted commitment to closing the gaps in our support systems and providing a coordinated, survivor-centered approach,” added Ms. Thomas.

The event will take place on Monday, 21 October 2024, at 10:00AM at the Moonah Arts Centre.

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Photos and interview opportunities are available following the event, 21 October at 1pm - Moonah Arts Centre.