

Sexual and family violence survivors need services to assist them to recover from their traumatic experiences.

Federal Government officials, mental health and trauma experts have come together, calling for greater service integration so that all survivors are supported to recover from the trauma they have experienced.

As part of The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) conference 'Our society, our mental health – a 2022 perspective', Full Stop Australia chief executive officer Hayley Foster and Director, Counselling Services, Tara Hunter, joined mental health and trauma experts and government officials to discuss the vital need for better access to trauma recovery services for victim-survivors.

Full Stop Australia presented a proposal for a national integrated trauma prevention and recovery model of care for people of all ages and genders impacted by sexual, domestic and family violence. Similar to our national approach to suicide prevention and response, the proposed model would include a national 'hub' which would act as a 24/7 trauma counselling, referral and information gateway providing online resources, as well as workforce training, development and clinical consultation. At a local level access would be enhanced through the development of services or "spokes" which are co-located within existing community organisations.

Ms Foster said the weekend highlighted an appetite for greater integration between services that puts the clients needs at the centre of service delivery.

"There is now a real recognition that we need to integrate our national plan to end violence against women and children with our national mental health and suicide prevention plans," Ms Foster said.

"GPs and other health professionals should have clear referral options for their patients to access the violence and trauma-informed care they need, and this should wrap around the individual, so they don't have to go from service to service and retell their story."

"No matter your age or where you live, if you have been impacted by sexual, domestic or family violence, you should be able to easily access appropriate services that include a focus on recovery."

RANZCP Violence Psychiatry Network Chair Dr Manjula O'Connor, chief organiser of the Conference, noted the need to ensure all key health professionals working with survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence, including trauma-trained psychiatrists, are engaged in the further development and delivery of such a model at both the local level and central policy level.

“We need to make sure that women are not being failed yet again and do truly receive the expert help they need to recover in a way that meets their individual needs,” Dr O’Connor said.

“The proposed model would be recovery oriented, culturally responsive, individually tailored, and based on evidence-based trauma informed care.”

The draft National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children includes “recovery” as one its four pillars, however, no commitments have yet been made by either major party to invest in a model which affords survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence universal access to integrated trauma recovery services.

For more information and interviews, contact our Strategic Communications and Marketing Manager, Ash Witoslawski on 0431 615 228.