16 December 2016

Dear Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing,

Please accept this brief submission from Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Vic), the peak body for Victoria’s family violence services, to Victoria’s review of the Liquor Control Reform Act 1998.

Victoria’s Royal Commission into Family Violence determined that greater attention should be paid to the role of alcohol in family violence and noted the evidence that alcohol misuse increases the severity and frequency of family violence.

The “Change the Story” framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and children in Australia notes that - if undertaken alongside essential actions that address the gendered drivers of violence - improved regulation of alcohol can make a significant contribution to overall primary prevention efforts.

DV Vic is aware that Victoria, along with New South Wales, has the highest level of packaged liquor availability of all states and over the past 15 years, the number of packaged liquor outlets in Victoria has increased by nearly 50 per cent which far exceeds population growth. And this unfortunately keeps increasing each year. This growth in packaged liquor is of concern to us because of the association between alcohol availability and police call-outs to family violence incidents where alcohol is involved.

The way alcohol is currently regulated in Victoria is not adequately protecting women and children from alcohol-related family violence. Victoria’s current system of license applications and determinations is heavily weighted towards granting license applications, and is failing to properly consider the minimization of harm arising from the misuse or abuse of alcohol.

DV Vic urges better consideration of alcohol harm when deciding whether to grant liquor licenses particularly in locations where we know there are already high rates of family violence.

The Victorian Government, through its 10-year Family Violence Action Plan, has shown its commitment to address family violence. Improved regulation of packaged liquor is an important initiative as part of this comprehensive response.

Yours sincerely

Fiona McCormack
Chief Executive Officer