

# Changing the way the justice system views perpetrators of family violence



## Research to impact case study

Elena Campbell, Centre for Innovative Justice

### **Elena Campbell and RMIT's Centre for Innovative Justice have worked closely with government and the community sector to change the way perpetrators are managed across the justice system.**

Campbell came to RMIT with a background in justice policy, legal practice and reform. From this experience she had a strong understanding of the justice environment, the sensitivities of stakeholders and the challenges they confront in service delivery. She had been considering research on family violence and early intervention when the Rosie Batty tragedy drew public attention to this issue. Rosie Batty's son was killed by her estranged partner and it was widely recognised that the justice system had failed them by losing sight of the perpetrator.

The Centre for Innovative Justice adopts a 'people-centred' approach to its research. Campbell met with Rosie Batty and listened to her personal account of the ways in which the justice system had failed to intervene where needed. She then consulted with justice and service sector stakeholders, from which it became apparent there was a clear evidence and policy gap concerning family violence perpetrator interventions. Following an extensive literature review, Campbell conducted interviews and focus groups with justice and service sector practitioners. Her research posed the question "What would it look like if the justice and service system kept perpetrators of family violence within view?". This new way of approaching the problem opened up a different conversation, enabling stakeholders to explore new solutions.

As the research progressed, the Centre for Innovative

*Campbell provided support to the Magistrates' Court to help revise the standard conditions in these intervention orders.*

Justice convened a workshop in which practitioners discussed emerging themes and formative recommendations from Campbell's work. Participants observed that this was the first time they had been brought together to discuss early intervention for perpetrators of family violence. The forum enabled them to speak about a topic they might previously have been reluctant to address.

### **Translating research to influence policy community**

Campbell's research report 'Opportunities for Early Intervention: Bringing Perpetrators of Family Violence into View' was launched by Rosie Batty and attracted considerable media attention. The report highlighted the need to keep perpetrators on the radar across services and identified specific interventions that could reduce the risk that perpetrators pose, such as connecting perpetrators with crisis accommodation, drug and alcohol and mental health services. It also recommended using the Courts to greater effect, such as by bringing perpetrators of family violence back before the same judge.

The Centre for Innovative Justice produced a video and podcast to publicise the report's recommendations to a broader audience. Developments were also regularly communicated through the Centre's bimonthly newsletter, which reaches practitioner audiences across Australia and internationally.

## Achieving impact

Following release of her research, Campbell and the Centre for Innovative Justice have been engaged by government agencies as knowledge experts on perpetrator interventions and family violence. In 2015 Campbell was invited to speak at the Royal Commission into Family Violence roundtable and the systemic reforms for perpetrator interventions she advocated were included in the Royal Commission's final recommendations. Campbell's research report on bringing perpetrators into view has been cited by numerous government agencies and was drawn on heavily in the development of the National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions. The terms 'bringing perpetrators into view' and 'keeping perpetrators in view' are now commonly used within the justice sector.

The Centre for Innovative Justice has since been engaged by government agencies to inform implementation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence recommendations, including contributing to recommendations in the Victorian Premier's 10 Year Plan for the Elimination of Family Violence. The Centre has been asked to tender for a range of projects worth well over \$500,000.

The Magistrates' Court of Victoria has directly responded to Campbell's findings that perpetrators did not always understand the conditions of Family Violence Intervention Orders. Campbell provided pro bono support to the Magistrates' Court to help revise the standard conditions in these intervention orders. The Centre for Innovative Justice has subsequently been commissioned to investigate ways in which court processes can be improved for family violence victims and perpetrators. Campbell is continuing her work to inform perpetrator interventions as Chief Investigator in several Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) funded projects.