

Indigenous Women and Intimate Partner Homicide in Australia: Preventing Future Deaths through Law, Policy and Practice Change

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Abstract : In Australia, not dissimilar to other jurisdictions with indigenous populations, indigenous women are more likely to experience violence than any other section of society. In recent years in response to horrific examples of Indigenous women's deaths, Australian Coronial courts have investigated, wanting to know more about the circumstances that led to the deaths. This paper critically examined 12 Coronial Court investigations from around Australia, analyzing them thematically. The analysis highlighted the differential vulnerability of indigenous women to intimate partner homicides. In all the cases reviewed, it was evident that the women's deaths, in most instances were entirely preventable. Evidence was also presented demonstrating that services were aware of the women's heightened risks but were unable to sufficiently coordinate themselves to provide wrap around support to minimise the risk of violence and to maximise the women's safety. Consequently, putting the women in environments where their deaths were both predictable and inevitable. The profound system failings at the intersections of law, policy, and practice have ultimately cost indigenous women their lives. This paper firstly explores the nuances of the Coronial Court findings - demonstrating the similarities and differences present within the cases. Part two interrogates the reported system failings, and part three considers potential improvements in system integration to prevent future deaths. The paper concludes recognizing that Indigenous women play important valued roles in indigenous communities, their loss has profound costs and consequences, and to honor their memory, we must learn from their deaths and improve responses to intimate partner violence.

Keywords : homicide, intimate partner violence, indigenous women

Conference Title : ICCCF 2018 : International Conference on Criminology and Clinical Forensics

Conference Location : Montreal, Canada

Conference Dates : May 24-25, 2018