

Australian Domestic & Family Violence CLEARINGHOUSE

newsletter

RESEARCH FINDINGS/INITIATIVES

Jane Mulrone, Clearinghouse Senior Research Officer, reviews two new Australian research reports

Pathways: how women leave violent men

Written by Shirley Patton (2003) for Women Tasmania, with funding from the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence initiative



The study

A clear message is given from the very beginning of this report, that workers responding to domestic violence need to shift their focus from talking about what stops women leaving violent relationships, to exploring what enables women to leave violent and abusive relationships. This research was conducted with women living in Tasmania who had left a violent and abusive partner. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were undertaken with 53 women about their experience of violence, the impact of abuse on themselves and their children and the steps that they took to leave the relationship.

Demographic data about women participating in the research

Amongst the sample of 53 women, six identified as Aboriginal, eight came from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, 13 had a disability and a further 13 lived in rural or isolated areas. Women within the study were aged between 23 and 63 years of age with 63 per cent of women having lived with their partner for more than six years. Indeed, eight of these women had been with their partner for over 20 years. Women disclosed incidents of severe physical abuse, rapes, verbal abuse, financial control and social isolation. One woman stated that *'whereas the physical abuse...didn't last more than...five or so minutes... the verbal abuse used to stay with me'* (Melody, age 32, p. 32). Further still, 29 per cent of women reported physical assault of their children by their partner. They observed that the violence towards their children sometimes occurred at the

IN THIS ISSUE

Research findings/initiatives

Pathways: how women leave violent men	1
Domestic Violence & Child Protection: A research report	4

Practice notes

Change processes within a feminist organisation	6
Working with young people on non-violence	9
Stop DV: A seminar on the investigation and prosecution of domestic violence and stalking cases	10

Clearinghouse news

Research update: 'Staying home, leaving violence'	11
Conference papers now online	11
Stakeholder and Information Service Surveys	11
What is Good Practice?	11

Legislation and policies

Queensland update	12
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New publications/reviews

More Than Refuge: Changing responses to domestic violence	13
Family Violence and Homelessness: Removing the perpetrator from the home	14
Research into good practice models to facilitate access to the civil and criminal justice system by people experiencing domestic and family violence	14
Older Women Speak Up: Violence In The Home	15

Forthcoming conferences/seminars	16
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Partnerships Against Domestic Violence



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same time as the assault on themselves, but sometimes it was a separate act. The research identified that there were significant health consequences for women, the most common being depression. Women also discussed the psychological impact on their children, providing incidences where their children experienced night terrors or blamed them for the violence. A smaller percentage of women were concerned that their children had been sexually assaulted by their partner.

Acts of resistance

Apart from documenting the powerful stories of women's years of abuse, the study also articulates the formal and informal pathways women used to leave a violent partner and establish a violence-free life for themselves and their children. Varied acts of resistance to the violence were identified by women. Women stated that they initially responded by trying to locate a cause for the violence, attended couple counselling, adapted their behaviour to avoid confrontation, hid potential weapons, stayed with friends or in hotels for short periods or at some points fought back, either physically or verbally. Many developed leaving plans, secretly saved money, developed supportive relationships, gathered evidence, kept journals, or secretly gained information about their options on leaving. Some stated that they withdrew emotionally and/or sexually and some were able to establish external interests that sustained their sense of self.

Turning Points

Turning points identified in this study were those that enabled women to contemplate, plan and/or finally leave their partner. For some women, there was a significant turning point (articulated as 'the straw that broke the camel's back') that enabled them to take action and leave, while for others such turning points represented the building of foundations that would eventually enable them to leave. A key turning point for most of the women was the realisation that they were unable to stop the violence or manage the abuse. Other key turning points influencing the decision to leave included an incident of severe violence, the realisation that they could be killed or women's concerns about their children witnessing the violence. Importantly, a further process occurring at this point was a change in previously strongly held beliefs, to beliefs that:

- staying was not in the best interests of the children;
- the male partner was responsible for the violence;
- violence was not going to stop;
- the violence and abuse was not normal and/or acceptable; and

- certain religious views on marriage could be challenged.

Other turning points included their partner's infidelity, the death of their partner, involvement of child protection services, a new partner, commencing university or work and children growing older (p.xviii).

Pathways or 'enablers'

Patton describes pathways as those that played a significant role in the process of leaving and establishing a new life. These could be formal supports such as assistance from government or community based agencies or more informal supports such as family and friends. A further set of pathways, such as laws, access to resources and information, were identified as 'underpinning enablers'.

Phases of leaving

Regardless of the pathways chosen, Patton found patterns women underwent in the process of leaving. She believes the process of leaving is characterised by five phases:

1. Pre-contemplation – managing or resisting the violence but not contemplating leaving
2. Contemplation – beginning to think about leaving, discussing options
3. Deciding to leave – seeking information and making concrete plans
4. Actually leaving – leaving home either temporarily or permanently
5. Establishing a new, violence-free life – a particularly challenging phase, where women usually sought non-directive practical and emotional support, and where access to resources was crucial.

What were the significant pathways?

Patton found that women chose various pathways enabling them to leave but stressed that formal supports, especially domestic violence-specific services, were crucial in sustaining the change process at each of the phases of leaving. Other key pathways identified by women included:

- **enabling responses from formal supports**, primarily domestic violence-specific services and generic counsellors (mostly social workers); Centrelink; adult educational institutions; police; lawyers (mostly after leaving); and, to a lesser

degree, general practitioners; and informal supports, primarily female friends, but also family (mostly female) and new partners;

- **underpinning structural supports**, mostly access to resources, ie income security, employment, education, affordable housing and childcare; and to justice, through the criminal justice system;
- **access to information**, mainly through the media, books and domestic violence-specific services' information strategies;
- **enabling fears, beliefs and feelings**, primarily regarding safety, the children, a sense of self/agency and hope, ie the giving up of hope the violence would stop and regaining hope for a safer future.

Diversity and barriers

Women within the study experienced numerous barriers that hindered their attempts to leave and establish a new life. Such barriers fell into three broad categories which included:

- Constraining beliefs, eg fear of being killed, feelings for partner, fear of losing financial security;
- Structural barriers, eg lack of access to adequate income, information about supports, affordable, appropriate housing and childcare;
- Ineffective responses, eg received poor responses from informal supports, such as family, and formal supports, primarily the police but also general practitioners, the justice system, the clergy and counsellors;
- Unhelpful responses relayed by women's stories were often connected to judgmental and disrespectful attitudes that were dismissive or overly directive. There were occasions when appropriate action regarding women's safety was not taken, nor were women informed about available supports. Women experienced a variety of responses concerning their partner, which included denigration and failure to place responsibility for violence with the offending partner. Additional barriers were experienced by women from different contexts which resulted in minimised access to services.

Framework for good practice

Not surprisingly, clear themes emerged about practices that enhanced women's sense of agency and supported their attempts to leave. Patton carefully sets out a framework for good practice.

Elements recommended included interactions that were non-judgemental, believed the woman, were action-focused during a crisis, non-directive at other times, located responsibility for the violence with the partner while respecting her feelings about her partner, understood women's choices about returning to the relationship, acknowledged the process of grieving involved when realising there is no hope for change, provided relevant information and referrals and recognised that assault is a crime.

Patton also makes recommendations about optimal service delivery. Part of this includes developing models of service delivery that respond to safety issues, providing increased access to information and resources, and understanding the concepts of hope and change in enhancing women's agency. A whole-of-government mechanism to integrate and coordinate all domestic violence service delivery responses is recommended, incorporating the core activities identified in international models such as the Duluth Abuse Intervention Project and the ACT Family Violence Intervention Program.

Throughout the study, a key factor inhibiting choices for women and their children was the consequences for women who are forced to leave their home. For women from rural areas this often meant leaving their family and community to pursue safe accommodation. Whilst Patton acknowledges that there are current studies underway to identify and assess alternatives to this problem, urgent solutions are required.

Recommendations

Ensuring that improvements are made to the formal and informal supports available to women entails the implementation of strategies such as:

- those aimed at strengthening and supporting the responses of the informal supports with whom women first make contact;
- information strategies that are better targeted to women, about domestic violence and the availability of domestic violence-specific supports aimed at reaching women while they are still trying to 'manage the violence'. These would need to take into account the stigma some women perceive as being attached to using domestic violence-specific services;
- the provision of education and training about domestic violence (with a particular focus on attitudinal change), to non-domestic violence-specific professionals (particularly the medical profession) and the development and monitoring of guidelines to practice, in all formal support agencies;

- improvement in the criminal justice response with a particular focus on consistent and predictable police intervention, including domestic violence training (with a focus on attitudes), a pro-arrest approach, a 'no drop policy' and effective internal monitoring systems;
- a feminist analysis of domestic violence to inform effective responses;
- an integrated community response to domestic violence which has a local focus, using local networks, but informed by the broader context.

Conclusion

Pathways is an important addition to the research already undertaken in Australia about how we can assist women to escape domestic violence and establish new lives. This research challenges perceptions that women experiencing domestic violence are 'passive victims'. It emphasises that women, despite their fear and lack of options, are resourceful and courageous. With understanding of the key turning points in these women's lives, service providers can greatly alter outcomes and enhance women's safety. It requires service providers to engage with women and explore the significance of these turning points on an individual basis.

To obtain a copy

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Domestic Violence & Child Protection: A research report

Irwin, J., Waugh, F. & Wilkinson, M. (2002), A collaborative research project by Barnardos Australia and the University of Sydney.

This report summarises the results of research conducted over a 4-year period in NSW concerning the practice issues involved with child protection work occurring in the context of domestic violence. It represents a significant contribution to our understandings about the difficulties involved with this area of work. Most importantly, through this report, the voices of women and their children are heard, informing practitioners and policy makers about what makes a difference. Good practice guidelines are identified and implications for future practice discussed.

The initial chapter of the report provides a brief overview of the changing ground in New South

Wales concerning child protection and highlights issues impacting on responses to domestic violence such as inadequate funding levels within statutory services, competing priorities concerning notifications, increasing numbers of reports to the Department of Community Services, and changes to legislation and policy. In a review of the research to date, the authors identified within the literature concerns about 'ignoring the effects of children witnessing domestic violence; limited attention paid to the mother's well-being, the tendency of statutory child protection departments to focus on the mother's failure to protect the children rather than on the perpetrator of violence; and the minimal attention given to the particular experiences of women and children from diverse cultural backgrounds' (p. 23).

The research project

The research project combined four distinct but related research studies focusing on child protection responses to domestic violence. These studies involved reviewing data, interviewing both practitioners in the field and practice researchers, and speaking directly to women, children and young people experiencing domestic violence.

Aims of the research

- To examine practitioners' knowledge and understanding of domestic violence and child protection.
- To review the child protection strategies utilised by practitioners and identify effective strategies to be implemented when responding to women, children and young people who experience domestic violence.
- To develop a template of good practice for practitioners which would address the rights, needs and interests of women and their children who have lived with domestic violence.

Study 1

An analysis of NSW Department of Community Services responses to domestic violence. This involved observing 'intake' practices in five offices (two in Sydney metropolitan areas and three in rural areas), in-depth interviews with workers and assistant managers about these practices, as well as tracking a percentage of referrals at 6, 12 and 18 months.

Study 2

Focus group interviews were undertaken with practitioners in statutory and non-statutory organi-

sations, who worked with women experiencing domestic violence and their children. Workers were interviewed about their knowledge of domestic violence and child protection issues and practices in order to highlight effective practices and difficulties related to this work.

Study 3

Women were interviewed about their perceptions of the impact of domestic violence on their children, how they protected their children and the supports they required to enhance their children's capacity to deal with the violence.

Study 4

Children and young people were interviewed about their experiences of domestic violence, the supports available to them and those they considered to be useful in supporting themselves and their mothers.

Key findings

- Despite the fact that domestic violence constituted a large proportion of reports to the Department of Community Services (DoCS), many were categorised as 'intake only' and were unlikely to result in an investigative risk assessment being undertaken. Ongoing involvement in domestic violence matters was rare, with almost no follow-up of referrals to other agencies.
- Statutory child protection workers at 'intake' had varying levels of understanding about domestic violence and a significant proportion of DoCS staff felt ill-equipped to deal with these reports.
- Women who were non-abusive to their children were mostly the focus of statutory intervention. They implemented a diverse range of responses in trying to remain safe from the violence and often turned to family, friends and service providers for support. Women clearly stated the importance of being able to talk about their experiences to workers who conveyed a belief in them.
- Women acknowledged their compromised capacity to care for and support their children, especially when fleeing the violence.
- Maintaining a strong relationship with their children was an important factor in continuing to take protective actions in relation to their children.
- Both children and young people spoke of their respect for their mother and highlighted the significance of the actions she had taken to

protect them. Children and young people identified that the relationship with their mother was critical in helping them cope with the violence.

- Many commented on the importance of being included by their mother and practitioners in discussions concerning responses to the violence and abuse.
- Younger children were less likely than older siblings to talk about their experiences and saw domestic violence as part of normal family life.
- Young people stressed the importance of having a supportive person in their lives as a way to deal with their experiences.
- Both identified external interests such as sporting activities and a focus on academic achievements as survival strategies.
- Children and young people articulated the need for intervention by human services practitioners and organisations to support their family.
- Extremely limited resources are available to support children and young people experiencing domestic violence. This is exacerbated for families from rural and diverse cultural communities.
- A lack of resources greatly compromised women, children and young people's recovery, especially safe accommodation and access to counselling for children and young people.

Good Practice: Key themes

- > Children and young people need to have contact with practitioners that convey messages of belief and that actively work to support their mothers.
- > Access to information and services experienced in dealing with domestic violence is a vital component of women's safety plans.
- > More attention should be given to exploring practice strategies that hold perpetrators of domestic violence accountable.
- > More collaborative work conducted on an ongoing basis with women experiencing domestic violence is necessary to enhance protection of children and young people.
- > Further improvements are required regarding the family law and child protection systems to offer genuine safety to women and their children.
- > Identification of practice frameworks that name domestic violence and enhance interagency efforts, especially at the local level, is required.

- > Ongoing training of professionals working in this environment is necessary, to assist with the development of more sophisticated approaches that enhance the safety of both women and their children. This also includes access to supervision and clear policy directives concerning worker safety.

Report implications

This report contains extensive detail about practitioners' views about the complexities of working with domestic violence and child protection issues and is candid about the difficulties. The views expressed by women, children and young people are captured within the report, through direct quotes about the pain, anguish, confusion and fear they experienced. This report contains important information for practitioners as women, children and young people clearly express their ideas about their expectations of service providers and describe what would have helped them in their attempts to escape the violence and abuse.

To obtain a copy

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PRACTICE NOTES

In this section, two women with extensive experience in working with domestic violence, share their perspectives about the work they are undertaking.

Change processes within a feminist organisation

Dennise Simpson, Manager, ACT Domestic Violence Crisis Service

The Domestic Violence Crisis Service (DVCS) was established in the ACT in 1988 in line with a recommendation from the Australian Law Reform Commission. We were primarily set up to provide crisis services to the victims of domestic violence through direct crisis intervention at the scene of the incident and by providing crisis telephone lines 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We have protocols and procedures in place whereby we are notified of police call-outs to domestic violence incidents.

We currently have just on 11,000 clients on our database. However, that figure represents only the first contact person and does not reflect the thousands of children we work with, nor does it reflect the thousands of anonymous callers to our crisis telephone lines.

Following a major review of DVCS in 1997/98, the service has been through an extensive process of change. In this paper I am only addressing a very specific change in the language we use, that evolved as a result of the review. When we made the decision to implement this particular change we did not anticipate the extent of the impact it would have on all aspects of our service.

Post-review years have significantly changed forever how DVCS works and what we now consider 'best practice' when working with domestic violence issues. Whereas we were a service that had made little change in our first 8 or 9 years of operation, we are now a service that continually monitors, evaluates and implements change as required, to ensure we are always aiming to provide the best service we can to our clients and to the broader ACT community.

Our changes reflect changing ideas from the community and are guided by our experiences of working both with people subjected to domestic violence and with people who use violence in their relationships. Within this, we recognise that the vast majority of people who are subjected to domestic violence are women and children, and the vast majority of those using violence in their relationships are men.

Whereas we were seen as a service that only worked with women and their children, today we are a service that works respectfully with all people affected by domestic violence. This invitation has been extended to women, men and children, partners, families and friends.

The priority of the service was, and remains, safety. Changes to our service have significantly changed how we work and what we now offer to our clients around issues of safety, both immediate and long-term.

During and following the review process we met and dealt with many challenges. A driving force that enabled and encouraged staff to seek different solutions was not only what they were hearing from clients on a day to day basis but also some particular emerging themes from our 1997 client and service provider evaluations. These themes from clients were:

- that we were not really listening to them
- that we had set ideas about what their solutions should be
- that we tried to break up their families

- that they wanted us to also be there for their partners
- that they just wanted the violence to stop but they didn't want their relationship to end

The last two comments were something that workers had been hearing over and over for years. Service providers had a different way of expressing similar themes: that they would not refer to our service because we were perceived as 'man-hating'; that their clients felt that we would try, or had tried to break up their families; and that we did not work with men.

In 2001, out of a total of 443 at-crisis call-outs, 242 women with their children stayed at home following the domestic violence incident; 46 went to a refuge; 51 went to a motel because there was no refuge space; and 31 went to stay with a relative or friend. During the same period, 148 men who had subjected their partner and/or children to violence or abuse stayed at home following the incident; 101 were in police custody; 26 went to stay with a relative or friend; 9 went to a men's accommodation service or motel; and the whereabouts of 145 was unknown.

In order to respect, and really hear, what women were telling us they were wanting and, given the considerable numbers of women that stayed at home following the incident, often with their partner, it was crucial that we find ways of engaging respectfully with their partners with the initial aim of ensuring immediate safety for their families.

The language change that is now a fundamental part of DVCS assisted us in this endeavour. This change came as part of looking at the theoretical basis on which our service was founded, a radical feminist tradition that sees power as restrictive and constraining. This tradition sees that some people have power and some do not.

In the story of domestic violence we have two groups – the victims, without power, and the perpetrators, with power. We explored ideas around what invitations this story gave to the workers themselves in the ways they thought about domestic violence and the people within those stories and how these ideas then translated into ways of working. We did an exercise where we brainstormed words that we associated with *victim* and then words that we associated with *perpetrator*. The lists came up overwhelmingly as opposites. Associated with *victim* were 'powerless', 'weak', 'helpless', 'women', 'children', 'scared', 'small', 'no control' and associated with *perpetrator* were 'powerful', 'strong', 'violent', 'controlling', 'aggressive' and 'man'. The differences between the two shocked us. We reflected on whether it was useful to think about the story of domestic violence in this way.

The use of the word *victim* to describe women who had survived and managed their lives while living with violence didn't fit. We knew these women were not 'powerless' and 'weak' in their lives, because again and again we witnessed many examples of strength, determination and competencies. With the language of *victim* one could become a *survivor*. *Survivor* had some more positive connotations but always linked a woman's life to that of having once been a victim.

We wanted to join with women in their stories about themselves that reflected their strengths and capabilities and how it was that they were going to use these to continue to take the steps in their lives and their children's lives to keep safe. This may sometimes include making lives separate from their partners in order to achieve safety. We wanted to be able to talk about the violence in ways that did not assume we knew things about her as a person. We also wanted to move away from the role of being the expert in her life and support her to be the expert of her own life. So we started to use the language 'women who have been subjected to domestic violence'. We believe that this terminology speaks to the idea that living with domestic violence is only a part of her current life experience and does not speak to whom she is as a person.

With the use of *perpetrator* there was no language to describe a place that reflected that a man could take responsibility for his behaviour and change. Through my journey I believe that we need to be open to finding ways to talk about and with men with the possibility for making change even if they then choose to not take up that option.

As we are a service that is able to witness the movement of a man who uses violence from one woman to another, we see that we have duty of care responsibilities to attempt to make a difference, not only for the safety of current and future partners and children but also in the life of the man who has used violence. We have worked with many men who held hopes and dreams for their relationships and lives that are not fulfilled because of their use of violence and abuse; we also work to assist them to make change that may connect them back to those distant hopes and dreams. For these reasons, we now use the language of 'men who use violence in their relationships'. This names the problem, his use of violence, clearly and concisely. We see this term as respectful because it contains more of an invitation to change because it does not speak to his whole identity. Nor does it come from a position of blame.

The establishment of a pilot project named DVCS MensLine was a direct invitation to men and boys to use our service. MensLine proved a very successful strategy to encourage boys' and men's access to

DVCS, and in line with the original strategy, has now been fully integrated into the existing service range of DVCS.

A quote from one of our Crisis Workers was 'I work with men to reduce their violence, even if I cannot reduce their violence, because it increases the safety options for women and children.' By engaging respectfully with men who use violence we are able to negotiate safety in a way that was not possible when we worked from a position of blame. From that position we did not engage with men in ways that encouraged them to do anything differently in their lives, particularly in relation to their use of violence and abuse.

There are some men whom we would never attempt to engage with because their violence is extreme and their attitudes match their violence. We find that we can engage respectfully with many men who use violence and/or abuse in their relationships. In the short-term, this might lead to him making a decision to leave the house for the night or sleeping in another room and agreeing to not go near his partner. There are many examples where our changes demonstrate a direct and immediate impact on women's and children's safety.

Something that I sometimes used to hear workers say is that 'all the stories sound the same'. Stories sounded the same because we were placing ourselves as experts on women's lives, which included knowing what was best for them. This is not what we believed we were doing. We believed we were listening to women and working with them in empowering ways. Our more recent experiences demonstrate to us that, when we as a service were working from an 'expert' stance, we were not so open to really hearing what someone was saying, particularly if it was not in line with what we thought they needed.

Workers now strive to consistently work with every client as an individual and with recognition of their individual story. As a service we are more flexible to ensure individual needs are met, and day to day team discussion regarding clients are considered crucial to considering that we have thought of everything. Our duty of care policy has become our overarching policy: in every situation we consider our duty of care responsibilities to each individual.

Comments from both clients' and service providers' evaluation of our service have changed. We are now generally seen as a service working respectfully with all people affected by domestic violence. The women who did not feel the service was for them because of how we were perceived now have a service that will listen to **their** story and work with them from **their** starting point.

In the client evaluation 2001, responses to the question, 'What changes, if any, have you made to your relationship or intend to make as a result of having contact with DVCS?', included:

I separated from my partner

I got protection from the legal system

I've changed but others haven't

I don't have a relationship but I am independent and self-reliant

Other person has moved out

I built up the strength to cut off all contact

I know I can call DVCS when things go bad

I found out that the police and DVCS will support me

I've drawn the line, now focussing on the children and me

Thirty-four service providers responded to our evaluation in 2001. Answers in response to the question 'In your experience has DVCS offered a professional and consistent approach to your clients?', included:

Absolutely

Yes, we have every confidence in DVCS and the way in which it deals with the clients we refer

Consistently receive positive feedback from clients

Have always received helpful options

Practical, professional delivery of service

Confident workers

DVCS appears to have excellent relationships with key stakeholders and other players within the sector to best meet the needs of the client group

DVCS staff were very gentle with a particular, very frightened client and took endless time to update her and ensure she absorbed relevant information.

We have referred many clients from a variety of backgrounds, all have been treated with respect

Clients with specific needs recognised and worked with

DVCS seem to be in touch with issues of diverse client groups

In my role as an Indigenous worker, DVCS has been very good with Indigenous families

The common themes from the 1997 evaluations that I referred to earlier are gone. I will finish by saying that, although the journey was at times very difficult, I could never go back to where the journey started, and I know this is the same for our team of workers. I may be saying in five years that this or that didn't work so we made further change, but that will not include going back to working within the more restrictive and narrow focus from where we started in 1997.

Working with young people on non-violence

Ines Zuchowski

Ines is a social worker who has been working at the North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service since its inception in 1994. A major focus of her work at the service has been violence prevention, in particular, violence prevention with young people. Over the years Ines has developed a number of resources including an education kit on 'Embracing Peace' and two videos on 'Non-Violence' and 'Healthy Relationships'. Her work has attracted two Queensland Domestic Violence Prevention Awards (1997, 2001) and a Certificate of Merit in the Australian Violence Prevention Award 1999.

The North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service has recently launched its second video, 'Healthy Relationships: Making Them Work', produced with young people, for young people. Over a period of 18 months we worked with the young people who edited, scripted, performed and directed short video segments about the theme 'healthy relationships'. The final eight video segments were then edited and joined together in one 24-minute video.

In the discussions we had in preparation for this video, young people could list a wide range of positive qualities, attitudes and behaviours they wanted in their relationships. When young people are forming relationships or are considering what kind of relationship they would like to have, they are not expecting violence to be part of their relationship. Terror and fear are not on the top of their 'wish-list' for their ideal relationship. Nobody wants to be beaten.

Interestingly, while young people were clear on the positive things they wanted in their relationships and the negative things they didn't want, this didn't always mean that they thought non-violence and healthy relationships were achievable. While young people would reject violence as something they did not want in their relationships, when we looked at specific examples of resolving conflict situations or problems, violence seemed always one of the possible

solutions and often the one which came first to mind. To some young people, the idea of provocation justifying retaliation was very prominent. Sometimes it felt as if people were saying that in theory non-violence and healthy relationships is what we want, but that we cannot see it happening in reality.

It is not only young people who struggled with the concept of non-violence. People in general found it difficult to focus on non-violence rather than violence. It seemed that non-violence was a 'new' concept and that it was easier to portray violence and say: 'that's not what we want', then to show what we want instead. I wonder whether the community cannot imagine that non-violence is possible or whether it would seem 'uncool' to talk about the softer sides of life: i.e. to envision a caring, trusting and warm environment where we are accepted for our own self without fear of violence. Or are we afraid that we can't do it – be non-violent?

While working with young people, it often becomes apparent that talking, about or portraying, positive attitudes or relationships, or being nice to each other can be embarrassing – it's not the thing to do. It's as if you will lose face if you show your nice side, show a bit of caring and warmth. Thus swear words can take on many functions; they can tell somebody off, but they can also show you like them, as in 'that was f... deadly'.

Many of the young people I work with are prepared to take the risk and show that they are interested or that they care, that they will get involved and speak up or ask questions, even though it may make them stick out a bit. On the surface, one of the groups looked like a group you could never get to say anything nice to each other. Yet they produced a fabulous segment with great messages. I guess part of their willingness to really participate was facilitated through the camera and other equipment and, yes, that we were actually going to use it for the final production. I think it is important that young people have a say and are heard, and they need a venue and an opportunity to do so.

In the first video we made with young people I was tempted to cut a bit out, but didn't in the end. One of the young people made a statement: 'Violence is never justified' and then he added, after thinking for a second or so, 'unless you are provoked'. I really wanted to cut that afterthought out, because that is not how I want to see the world. 'Violence is never justified.' Full stop. But how can I edit the statement and omit how this young person saw the world, when this world is so full of violence and the big power brokers have so many excuses for their violence themselves? Take the war on terrorism. September 11 may or may not have made this world a more violent place, but for sure it has provided

justification for further violence in many people's minds.

Is it too idealistic to believe in a world that is violence-free and where people build healthy relationships that nurture and care for all members of the relationship? Can we make such a world reality? And where do you and I need to start or continue our work to help build a non-violent community?

In this project, young people came up with different examples to promote healthy relationships. They are everyday examples about working together, building friendships, making positive choices, feeling safe and having fun, speaking up about racism, supporting each other in crisis and communicating with each other instead of exploding. They are the small parts that build a whole. Building relationships is very much about wanting to make them work and having hope for the future. I hope that this video will contribute to building better relationships and encouraging people to believe that we can make relationships work.

I also believe that, although all this seems sometimes too much and too idealistic, it's important work. Because, if you and I do not keep talking about non-violence and building better/healthy relationships, the only sounds left are going to come from violent video games and movies, ever more implicit and sensationalised news coverage of a seemingly always catastrophic and violent world and people's violent use of language. As a community we have to work together to stop all forms of violence, so that we can all have the kind of relationships we wanted to have in the first place. We may also have to take a step back and work on our vision for a non-violent (peaceful and caring?) community so that we know what we are striving for.

To obtain the videos

NQ Domestic Violence Resource Service,
Ph: 07 4721 2888; Fax: 07 4721 1794

Stop DV: A seminar on the investigation and prosecution of domestic violence and stalking cases

Presented by Anne O'Dell, retired Detective Sergeant from the San Diego Police Department

This seminar, organised by the NSW Police Service, examined current policing practices and identified useful tools to respond effectively to women experiencing domestic violence. Whilst it was primarily

targeted to policing professionals, the seminar was also attended by practitioners within the broader community sector. Anne O'Dell is a dynamic and insightful presenter with solid knowledge arising from her 20 years' experience within the San Diego Police Department.

Anne stated that in order for policing initiatives to be effective, they needed to be located within a coordinated community response emphasising the responsibility of legal and policing systems to treat domestic violence as a crime. She also stressed that such systems have an important role in holding men who use violence accountable for their behaviour. Anne drew on the experiences within San Diego and Pitt County Domestic Violence Unit to emphasise her rationale. A focus on the abuser rather than the woman experiencing domestic violence during the investigation process, led to 'evidence based prosecutions' that were likely to be more successful and better able to provide safer outcomes for women and children.

Lethality assessments, a cornerstone of the policing response, were outlined. There is increased risk of lethality if three or more of the following components are present:

- Prior history of domestic violence
- Threats/ fantasies of homicide or suicide
- Depression
- Use of, or fascination with, weapons
- Obsessive/possessive beliefs
- Job/money threatening circumstances
- Previous hostage taking
- Any strangulation attempt
- Beating pregnant victim
- Repeated violations of restraining orders
- Abuse of animals
- Prior police calls to home
- Rage towards police/others
- Prior/additional criminal activity
- Increase in frequency/severity of domestic violence
- Violence towards children
- Increasing drug/alcohol abuse
- Separation or threatened separation

The time of leaving a violent relationship was identified as a dangerous time for women, with Anne citing the stories of a number of women who were killed at this point.

Importantly, Anne acknowledged that when police attend a domestic violence incident, the female partner often presents as abusive to police. Anne challenged participants to remove themselves from the image that women experiencing violence should be the 'perfect victim'. Indeed she highlighted that women may be angry and violent themselves, especially if they are trying to defend themselves and their children. Therefore, the importance of identifying the primary aggressor is an essential component of the police response through common self-defence injuries or 'red flags' that can be detected within the evidence gathering process. Proper interviewing techniques of the victim, the man who uses violence, children and others are essential to effective evidence based investigations. Evidence collection should also include photographs, confiscation of weapons, torn or bloodied clothing, tapes of calls to police, medical and paramedic records, prior police reports, and the existence of restraining orders.

Corporate Spokesperson for the NSW Police Service on domestic violence, Commander Chris Evans, commented that the seminar was well received by those attending, including senior police officers, as Anne had the capacity to hold participants' attention for the entire day. Anne inspired others by her enthusiasm and knowledge, and gave powerful and graphic examples to demonstrate the importance of effective police work in responding to domestic violence. The seminar built upon current thinking about policing practices, which are heading in this direction.

Further Information

Publications about Anne O'Dell's work can be viewed on her website: www.stopdv.com
Notes from the seminar can be obtained from the Clearinghouse.

CLEARINGHOUSE NEWS

Research Update: 'Staying home, leaving violence'

The Clearinghouse research project has got off to a good start, with eight 'in-depth' interviews already carried out with women who have left a relationship involving domestic violence. Not only have the interviews provided strong personal histories of how women left the violence, they have also provided insights into the research question of how women might be able to remain safely in their own home.

Leaving a domestic violence situation should not also mean having to leave your own home. Our thanks go to the family support services in South East Sydney, and women's services in the Bega Valley, for nominating women to participate in the research. The researcher, Robyn Edwards, will be approaching services in Blacktown and Mt Druitt regarding the next round of interviews. The research has been made possible with a grant from the NSW Department of Community Services through the SAAP program.

Conference papers now online

Papers from the Townsville International Women's Conference: 'Poverty, Violence and Women's Rights... Setting a Global Agenda', are now available on the Clearinghouse web site. Go to the publications page: <http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au/Publications.htm>

and follow the 'conference papers' link. (Please remember to 'refresh' the page if you visit it regularly, so that newly added items can be viewed.) Thanks are due to the conference organisers for allowing the Clearinghouse to make these papers available.

Stakeholder and Information Service Surveys

Thank you to all those who provided feedback on the Clearinghouse services. These are currently being collated and will inform our future directions.

What is Good Practice?

A number of research studies and reports featured in this edition of the Newsletter have presented their findings in a way which makes them useful for practitioners, by identifying indicators of 'good practice'. The next issue of the newsletter will take up this theme and will feature information on what constitutes 'good practice'. Feedback from the recent stakeholder surveys has indicated that many respondents would appreciate assistance in using the Clearinghouse's online, Good Practice database. Therefore, tips on searching the Good Practice database, and information on how to nominate programs for inclusion in this database, will be provided by the Clearinghouse Information officer, Dr Dale Gietzelt.

Deadline for contributions to the March 2003 Newsletter is February 25

Queensland update

Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989

Amendments to the *Domestic Violence (Family) Protection Act 1989* were passed by Queensland parliament on 8 March 2002. It is anticipated that the new *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989* will be proclaimed in March 2003. Amendments to the legislation include the extension of protection to people in non-spousal type relationships including informal care relationships, intimate personal relationships and family relationships. Currently, only people who are in spousal or spousal type relationships, including same sex couples, or who were the biological parents of a child, are able to seek protection from domestic violence under the Act.

The Department of Families is currently delivering training to service providers and other relevant stakeholders across Queensland. As the amendments cover people in a range of non-spousal relationships, a cross-sectoral approach to the training is being undertaken. This approach encourages service providers from different sectors to develop networks and share their knowledge and experiences of working with people affected by domestic and family violence.

New State-wide Services

Two new domestic and family violence prevention services have recently commenced service within Queensland. These services are *dvconnect* and the Queensland Centre for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence (QCPDFV).

dvconnect will provide State-wide information, referral and support services for people affected by domestic and family violence. In addition, it will deliver an innovative new service to isolated workers providing services to people affected by domestic and family violence.

To contact dvconnect:

Domestic Violence Line for Women, Children & Young People (24 hr): 1800 811 811
Men's line (9am to 5pm Mon – Fri): 1800 600 636
Service Line: 1300 30 8884
Website: www.dvconnect.org

The QCPDFV has been established to conduct research, education and evaluation on domestic and family violence prevention initiatives. This service is auspiced by the University of Central Queensland, Mackay Campus. Information on the Centre can be found at www.noviolence.com.au

Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Accommodation and Related Support Service System Development Strategy

The primary aim of the Strategy is to improve outcomes for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. The Strategy outlines a service improvement framework focusing on three key outcomes:

- Developing integrated service responses within, and across, sectors;
- Improving flexibility and diversity of service models; and
- Addressing access and equity issues.

The Strategy is being implemented through a regional approach where each Regional Office of the Department has developed a Regional Action Plan in partnership with local service providers and other key stakeholders. At a cross-government level, the Homelessness and Individual Support Unit (HISU) and Violence Prevention Unit (VPU) of the Department of Families are responsible for ensuring appropriate inter-departmental coordination to support actions at the local level. Currently the Department is meeting with the Departments of Health, Housing and Corrective Services around issues raised by service providers during the development of the Strategy and Regional Action Plans. The Strategy will be implemented by December 2003 but it is part of an ongoing process of service improvement that will continue well past this time.

Sustainable service responses to family violence in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in North Queensland

This is a 12-month action research project funded under the Commonwealth National Homelessness Strategy which focuses on safe house services in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in North Queensland. These services are located in Mornington Island, Doomadgee, Lockhart River, Bamaga, Thursday Island, Hopevale, Napranum, Pormpuraaw, Yarrabah, Palm Island, Aurukun and Kowanyama.

The primary objective is to improve responses to family violence in remote Indigenous communities through research in North Queensland, which will have applicability in other regions of Australia. The action research approach intends to ensure that this project is not experienced as yet another piece of extractive research which takes from communities without giving anything in return or encouraging learnings through the process of the research.

The issues the research project will consider include:

- Practical service delivery issues with existing safe house services in remote Indigenous communities in North Queensland, such as safety and security issues, the role of police, cultural issues, industrial issues, training issues, and the interface with non-Indigenous SAAP services;
- The community context each service operates within and its impact on the service model;
- Viability issues for existing services and building sustainable services for the longer term;
- Design issues for premises;
- Current and future trends and how services fit into that future.

For further information

on these Queensland initiatives:
Ms Claire McFerran, Senior Policy Officer,
Violence Prevention Unit
Ph: 07 3006 4611 or
Email: claire.mcferran@families.qld.gov.au

NEW PUBLICATIONS/REVIEWS

More Than Refuge: Changing responses to domestic violence

Suellen Murray, University of Western Australia Press, 2002, \$34.95

It is difficult today to imagine a time when domestic violence was not a prominent issue on the political agenda. Yet, prior to the establishment of the first feminist refuges to provide safety for abused women and their children, we are reminded by Suellen Murray in this new book that: 'Before the 1970s, *domestic violence* was not a term and barely a concept.' Through a case study of Nardine Women's Refuge, Western Australia's first feminist refuge, established in 1974, Murray traces the pivotal role of the feminist movement in shaping our understandings of, and responses to, domestic violence. As the

author notes, this important history has not to date been comprehensively documented or analysed.

The first chapter of the book locates the feminist movement of the 1970s against the context of the Western Australian women's movement from the late nineteenth century, drawing connections to these earlier activities, and identifying the changing social context which made possible the feminist activism of the 1970s. The following two chapters document the work of Perth feminists in establishing and operating Nardine. In contrast to earlier shelters for women, Nardine emphasised self-help, collectivity and empowerment, rather than protection. Murray documents the challenges, struggles and achievements in translating the tenets of radical feminist politics into the realities of providing accommodation for women and children. From the start, the emphasis on 'more than refuge' is apparent in the work which Nardine undertook, for example, to access secure housing and income security for women.

Chapter four of this book is required reading for all those involved with domestic violence service provision today. It documents the history of understandings about domestic violence prior to, and following, the activism of the women's refuge movement. In so doing, Murray highlights the magnitude of the social change which has occurred. Common community attitudes to domestic violence that prevailed in the 1970s are tellingly portrayed through the use of cartoons from the popular press of the time.

The later chapters trace the development of policies at both the Western Australian and national level over the 1980s and 1990s and into the early years of the twenty-first century – developments to which the women's refuge movement has made a major and continuing contribution.

This book charts the way in which the dominant discourse about domestic violence prior to the 1970s – a discourse which excused male violence, normalised violence and abuse as 'marital conflict' and silenced women - was challenged by a new discourse which privileged the experiences of women and children who have lived with violence in their homes and which acknowledged the role of gendered power in the perpetuation of domestic violence and in the failure of society to acknowledge its reality. When seen against the long historical context in which men's right to control and chastise their wives was enshrined in law, the magnitude of the change achieved is apparent, as is the distance yet to go in ensuring safety for women and children.

Pioneer domestic violence researchers Dobash and Dobash have pointed out the contribution of the women's refuge movement to our current understandings of domestic violence:

Perhaps the most important first step in the process of social change is the very act of creating new visions and thinking new thoughts. Once a new idea is established, it is difficult to imagine how it could ever be otherwise. But at the moment of launching a new idea, it is difficult to imagine how it could ever be. (Dobash & Dobash 2000, p. 187.)

The women whose efforts are documented in this book dared to imagine a different world for women and children and took action on many levels and in many arenas, to bring about social change. As the book's title makes clear, they recognised from the start that 'more than refuge' is required to eliminate domestic violence.

Reference:

Dobash, R.E. & Dobash, R.P. 2000, 'The politics and policies of responding to violence against women', in J. Hanmer & C. Itzin (eds.), *Home Truths About Domestic Violence: feminist influences on policy and practice*, Routledge, London

Family Violence and Homelessness: Removing the perpetrator from the home

DVIRC Discussion Paper No. 3

This Victorian report examines the issue of women remaining in their own homes on leaving a relationship involving domestic violence, and removal of the perpetrator from the home. Legal options for removing perpetrators are discussed, notably exclusion and sole occupancy orders made by local and Family Law Courts. The tendency of local courts to defer property and children's issues to the Family Law Court is identified as one barrier for women who wish to secure a sole occupancy order from the local court. Further, research indicates that some magistrates give greater priority to men's property interests, than to the needs of women and children for safety. Major obstacles to women remaining in the home are discussed, including women's inadequate sense of entitlement to the family home and the ineffective enforcement of intervention orders by police and the courts. The report identifies five strategies for the future: improving police responses to breaches of protection orders, court-based advocacy services, accommodating perpetrators, domestic violence courts and law reform.

Available from

DVIRC, 292 Wellington St, Collingwood.
Ph: 03 9486 9866; Fax: 03 9486 9744;
Email: dvirc@dvirc.org.au; Cost: \$12

Research into good practice models to facilitate access to the civil and criminal justice system by people experiencing domestic and family violence

urbis keys young, 2001

Reviewed by Dale Gietzelt, Clearinghouse Information Officer

This final report is the outcome of a consultancy undertaken under the auspices of the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* initiative, to research innovative good practice models for improving access to the justice system by people experiencing domestic and family violence. The intention was to document and promulgate information about innovative practices being implemented across the country, especially, but not only, in rural and remote locations.

Projects from all States and Territories – encompassing legal services, court support schemes, generic and specialist DV services, initiatives involving new technologies and communications, child-centred initiatives, and projects streamlining procedures within the justice system – were selected for inclusion in the study. Of these, nine have a primary component targeting rural/remote communities, five had a major focus on women and one on NESB women.

Proven or potential effectiveness in overcoming barriers experienced by people in rural and remote areas in gaining access to the justice system include:

- using new communications technologies,
- interagency cooperation and information,
- enhancing evidence-gathering techniques,
- providing outreach legal assistance and court support at rural and circuit courts,
- increasing the accessibility of mainstream legal services to the rural community, and to particular groups within that rural community,
- integrating government, community and private legal services within existing community organisations and supports,
- revising court-listing procedures,
- forging links between regional Family Court services, children's services and court support and legal services, and
- developing cross-border protocols and procedures.

General themes that emerged from the analysis of the projects include funding; evidence of successful partnerships; impetus for change; replicability; and sustainability.

Good practice principles

These principles of good practice featured prominently in all the projects under study:

- the safety of the client is paramount;
- the justice system should treat domestic and family violence as seriously as other incidents;
- perpetrators must be held accountable for their actions;
- consistency in policy and procedures across justice agencies is crucial to increase clients' access to the legal system and justice within that system;
- interagency collaboration and information-sharing are critical to ensure client safety and perpetrator accountability;
- people experiencing domestic and family violence need to be kept informed and be empowered to make their own decisions;
- service delivery must be tailored to meet individual needs; and
- service design and philosophy must be genuinely responsive to clients' expressed needs and be culturally appropriate to that target group.

Good practice operational features

The authors have assembled a list of what they consider good practice operational features:

- strong management and leadership;
- good planning;
- flexible service delivery responsive to changing needs and circumstances;
- clearly-defined focus and outcomes;
- the setting of achievable tasks, especially in pilot projects;
- attempting to achieve some tangible early results, particularly in large developmental projects;
- appointing a driver to oversee the implementation of major initiatives in the developmental phase;
- employing appropriately skilled and experienced staff – having the right people in the right jobs;
- consistency and continuity in personnel, especially in the establishment and consolidation of new services or initiatives; and
- conducting of process and outcome evaluations (ideally by an external evaluator) as an integral part of the planning, development and monitoring of services.

The report details 19 of the projects reviewed.

Available online

http://www.padv.dpmc.gov.au/oswpdf/Access_to_Justice.pdf

Older Women Speak Up: Violence In The Home

Margaret Sargent

Older Women Speak Up has recently published two new reports:

- > Sargent, M. and Mears, J., *More Than Survival: Project Report One for Older Women*, 2002 (48 pp) ISBN 0-9580446-1-9
- > Mears, J. and Sargent, M., *Survival Is Not Enough: Project Report Two for Professionals* 2002 (56 pp) ISBN 0-9580446-2-7

Both reports describe our work with older women who experience violence in the home. We examine this topic of violence against older women in the home in a different way through the voices and personal experience of older women. These writings are our way of reporting back to all those who have told us their stories or who have participated or helped in our work in various ways or who have a special interest in this area. This is an interactive project and we look forward to hearing your opinions on our work and ideas. Please ring or write to us, and perhaps we can together achieve greater understanding and action to reduce violence against older women. Also available is our earlier booklet, consisting of excerpts from older women's own stories of violence: Sargent, M. and Mears, J., *Older Women Speak Up: Violence in the Home*, 2000, ISBN 863418881.

To obtain

Contact: Older Women Speak Up, 1A Liverpool St, Bundeena, NSW 2230; Ph: Margaret (02) 9523 9558, Jane (02) 9772 6250; Fax: (02) 9660 5925; Email: msarge@zip.com.au; j.mears@uws.edu.au

There is no charge, but donations, large or small, are appreciated to continue our work. The publications can be also be downloaded from the 'research and resources' database of the Clearinghouse web site:

http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au/R&R_docs/SargentMears_Morethansurvival.pdf

http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au/R&R_docs/MearsSargent_Survivalisnotenough.pdf

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES/SEMINARS

Please note that further details of conferences listed, and of other forthcoming conferences, are listed on the 'news' page of the Clearinghouse web site:

Evaluation in Crime & Justice: Trends & Methods

Australian Institute of Criminology in collaboration with the Australian Bureau of Statistics

March 24-25, 2003, Canberra, ACT

Further information

Marie Segrave, Australian Institute of Criminology
Phone: +61 2 6260 9224; Fax: +61 2 6260 9201;
Email: marie.segrave@aic.gov.au; Web:
<http://www.aic.gov.au/conferences/evaluation/>

Beyond the Rhetoric In Early Intervention: Bridging the Gap Between Education, Health, and Crime Prevention

SA Crime Prevention Unit

March 26-28, 2003, Adelaide

More information

Beyond the Rhetoric in Early Intervention
Conference Coordinator, Crime Prevention Unit,
Attorney General's Department,
GPO Box 464, Adelaide, South Australia, 5000
Ph: (08) 8463 4098 or (08) 8204 2744;
Fax: (08) 8204 9883
Email: underdown.judy@agd.sa.gov.au;
westhorp.gill@agd.sa.gov.au

Second National Women's Conference

March 30-April 1, 2003, Canberra, ACT

More information

www.osw.dpmc.gov.au/resources/conference2003.html

Violence Against Women: Evidence of Difference?

Rethinking current paradigms and exploring innovative approaches to ending violence – 12th

International Conference of the Nursing Network on Violence Against Women

June 20-22, 2003, Stamford Grand, Glenelg, SA

Keynote speakers: Dr Jacquelyn C. Campbell and Dr. Judith McFarlane

More information

Conference Convenor: Dr Charmaine Power
Phone: [+61 8] 8201 3270; Fax: [+61 8] 8276 160;
Email: vawconf@flinders.edu.au;
Web: <http://www.nursing.sturt.flinders.edu.au/violence/>

Protecting Every Generation – Sharing Solutions that Prevent Child Abuse, Spouse/Partner Abuse (Domestic Violence), and Elder Abuse

Second World Congress on Family Violence

June 21-26, 2003, Prague, Czech Republic

More information

Web: <http://www.wcfv.org>; Email: WCFV@aol.com

Building a Global Alliance For Restorative Practices And Family Empowerment

Fourth International Conference on Conferencing, Circles and other Restorative Practices

August 28-30 2003 Veldhoven, Netherlands

More information

www.restorativepractices.org

The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Commonwealth of Australia, the University of New South Wales or the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* Taskforce.

Whilst all reasonable care has been taken in the preparation of this publication, no liability is assumed for any errors or omissions.

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