

Australian Domestic & Family Violence CLEARINGHOUSE

newsletter

New Year Greetings for 2004

All the staff at the Clearinghouse wish everyone good wishes for the coming year and much success in your continued efforts to combat domestic and family violence in 2004!

PRACTICE NOTES

2003 Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards

Karen Goes, Clearinghouse Good Practice Database Research Assistant highlights winners of the annual Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards.

The annual Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards are designed to reward the most outstanding projects for the prevention or reduction of violence in Australia, to encourage public initiatives and to assist governments in identifying and developing practical projects that will reduce violence in the community. The awards were announced on 14 October 2003 and a selection of programs which these winners developed to respond to domestic violence are highlighted below:

Lifeworks Violence Prevention Program (Victoria)

This was a National Winner receiving \$10 000 and a Certificate of Merit. Their program was selected in recognition of its whole-of-family approach and early intervention program for men who abuse their partners, and women and children who experience domestic and family violence. According to demand and resource capacity, the program operates through a suite of therapeutic and educative interventions including individual counselling, men's behaviour change programs, and a variety of support group programs targeted to women, children and young people.

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Partnerships Against
Domestic Violence



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Violence Clearinghouse UNSW Sydney NSW 2052

Ph: (02) 9385 2990 • TTY: 02 9385 2995

Fax: (02) 9385 2993

Email: clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au

Website: www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au

The Perpetrator Education Program (ACT)

The program fulfils an important role in addressing accountability with men who use violence within the ACT Family Violence Intervention Program. It has several components, the first of which is the Learning to Relate Without Violence & Abuse Program (LTRWVA). This is a group-work program for medium to high-risk adult men who have been convicted of an offence towards their partner or ex-partner. It is conducted two hours per week for 24 weeks. The second component is the Counselling Program for Offenders of Family Violence. Consisting of individual counselling that targets offenders not eligible to attend LTRWVA, the counselling addresses issues relating to persons who are convicted of sibling violence, same sex partner violence and men or women who use violence towards other family members, including extended family.

Child Support Worker Project (NSW)

Since August 1999 the Southern Sydney Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme has employed a part-time child support worker. The worker provides childcare, observation, support and referral for children of domestic violence victims attending court on Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) matters. A further objective is the promotion and evaluation of this project with a view to implementation within Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Schemes on a statewide basis.

Sutherland Shire Family Support Service (SSFSS) Four Individual Projects (NSW). The SSFSS operates four projects: a Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme, the Djanaba Occasional Child Care Service, Youth and Family Project, and a Family Support Service. The service operates through referral from other service providers or directly from clients. Family support workers are placed with families to offer group work, outreach home visits, court support, respite childcare, counselling, legal assistance; and referral and advocacy.

Domestic Violence Children's Counselling Service Outreach Project (WA)

The project provides an outreach domestic violence crisis counselling service to all children between 4 – 18 years old and their mothers in the ten refuges in the Perth metropolitan area. Counsellors visit each refuge, from one hour to a full day, to provide counselling, information and support. Mothers are also assisted with parenting information and receive support in relation to the effects of domestic violence.

Picture the Peace – Reject the Violence (Qld)

This is an initiative of the Gold Coast Sexual Assault Support Service to educate 12 –18 year olds about healthy violence-free relationships. It has also received a Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Award and is described in more detail below.

Doing Anger Differently (DAD) (NSW)

DAD is a community based project conducted in secondary schools. Groups of nine boys, who have been referred by schools, meet with two workers twice a week for one term. The workers lead the group through focus areas that examine the individual's response to anger, and assist the boys to find alternatives to aggression. An experiential group-work model provides a framework where boys are able to explore elements about themselves through interactions in the group and with assistance of the workers practice strategies that help them deal with situations in their lives.

Solving the Jigsaw (Victoria)

This school-based program seeks to change the 'culture of violence' and build a 'culture of wellbeing'. It is operated by EASE, a domestic violence agency based in Bendigo. Central to the project is an understanding of the connections between the 'culture of violence', the 'culture of bullying', and the 'culture of domestic violence'. A number of strategies are designed to be used in a variety of settings including: 20 – 40 week classroom programs at primary and secondary levels; 20 – 40 week targeted therapeutic groups for 'at risk' students; a comprehensive primary to secondary program; linked parenting programs; professional development for teachers; two-day experiential workshops; and a 12-month facilitator training course.

(Already listed in the Clearinghouse Good Practice Database)

Parents Accepting Responsibility Kids Are Safe (PARKAS) (Victoria)

A 6-8 week community-based child centred program running a two-tiered group for mothers and their children aged between 8-12 years who have experienced domestic violence. The program operates over two consecutive days for 10 weeks, with a feedback parent session three weeks after the group's conclusion and a final session two months after that. A second model developed in 1999 targeted men who had completed a men's behavioural change program.

It involved fathers and children undertaking a four-week joint workgroup with a seven-week program and reunion.

(Already listed in the Clearinghouse Good Practice Database)

Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Awards 2003

Four organisations have been recognised for their outstanding work in helping prevent domestic and family violence in Queensland:

- The North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service for the 'Relationships Making Them Work' initiative. This initiative involved the North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service working with young people from five different high schools to develop a video. Various groups of young people scripted, dramatised, filmed and directed eight short video segments on friendship, healthy relationships, and family, dating and workplace support.
- The Domestic Violence Regional Service (South West) for the 'Empowering Rural Women On Site' initiative. This initiative primarily targets isolated rural women in the south-west region of Queensland but can be accessed by any person who has an Internet connection. Specific information is provided for individuals who have experienced abuse and violence in their relationships.
- The Gold Coast Sexual Assault Support Service for the 'Picture The Peace – Reject The Violence' initiative. This initiative involved the production and dissemination of innovative education tools including an information brochure, poster, sticker and 90-minute education module focusing on healthy relationships as an alternative to dating violence.
- The Immigrant Women's Support Service for the 'Diversity Training Project'. This initiative involved the development of a training package and resources to assist workers to support women and children from non-English-speaking backgrounds affected by domestic and family violence. The resources consist of a resource manual, children's books and website.

For more information

Visit the following website:
<http://www.families.qld.gov.au/violenceprevention/resources/news/awards.html>

Men's role in building gender equality

Men have a vital role to play in ending violence against women, and there is growing international interest in how best to encourage this. Michael Flood reports on his attendance at the UN Expert Group Meeting in Brazil, which focused on the role of men and boys in building gender equality.

Why involve men in efforts to end domestic and family violence? The short answer is, because men are part of the problem *and* part of the solution. Violence against women will only cease when men join with women to put an end to it. Many men's attitudes and behaviours will need to change in order for non-violence and gender equality to be achieved. Men are overwhelmingly the majority of the perpetrators of violence against women, a substantial minority of males accept violence-supportive attitudes and beliefs, and cultural constructions of masculinity inform men's use of physical and sexual violence against women.

At the same time, some men are already living in non-violent ways. They respect and care for the women and girls in their lives, and they reject traditional, sexist norms of manhood. Small numbers of men are engaged in public efforts in support of equality and non-violence between women and men (Flood, 2001).

Profound changes in men's lives, gendered power relations and the social construction of masculinity are necessary if violence against women is to be eliminated. If gender-based violence is to be undermined, men themselves will need to take part in this project, by changing their own violent behaviour and by joining with women in challenging the cultural and institutional underpinnings of violence in their communities and countries.

The notion that it is desirable to involve men in the movements to stop violence against women and girls is rapidly becoming institutionalised in the philosophies and programs of international organizations. In the Beijing Declaration, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, governments expressed their determination to encourage men to participate fully in all actions towards gender equality. This was reaffirmed and extended in the follow-up meeting in 2000. In March 2001, the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) announced its new program, *Men's Roles and Responsibilities in Ending Gender Based Violence*. In the most recent international expression of this trend, 'the role of men and boys in achieving gender

equality' is one of the themes adopted for the forty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, to be held in 2004 in New York.

Part of the preparation for this undertaking by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) was an Expert Group Meeting, held in Brazil on 21-24 October. I attended the meeting, along with 13 other invited 'experts' from Brazil, Bulgaria, Fiji, India, Kenya, Peru, South Africa, Sweden, the US, the UK, and Yemen, as well as 24 observers largely from Brazil. The papers from the meeting are available at the website listed below.

Our goal in the Expert Group Meeting was to clarify the roles that men and boys could play in achieving gender equality. In both plenary sessions and smaller working groups, we assessed approaches which have been successful in engaging men and boys in gender equality, identified obstacles to their participation, and began to map out the roles of governments, the private sector, civil society, and communities in encouraging men's contributions. Over the final two days, at breakneck speed, we wrote an Expert Group Report, containing a summary of the discussion and recommendations addressed to different actors at different levels. This document will be widely distributed, and will provide the basis for a report of the Secretary-General on this theme to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 2004.

What were the key themes of the Expert Group Meeting in relation to men and domestic or family violence? While I cannot do justice to the breadth and depth of the discussion, I will highlight three. First, men show both resistance to, and support for, gender equality, and different strategies are required in responding to resistance while mobilising and building on support. Many men receive formal and informal benefits from gender inequalities, including material rewards and interpersonal power. At the same time, men also pay significant costs, particularly to their emotional and physical health. More widely, men can be and are motivated by interests other than those associated with gender privilege. There are important resources in men's lives for the construction of non-violent masculinities and forms of selfhood, such as men's concerns for children, intimacies with women, and ethical and political commitments. Thus, while men ought to change, it is also in men's interests to change. There is a moral imperative that men give up their unjust share of power, and men themselves will benefit from advancing towards gender equality and non-violence. Many men will gain from fairer, more trusting, honest, and pleasurable relations with women and children, as well as being less vulnerable to men's violence themselves.

A second theme is the need to address men in their multiple and diverse roles as bystanders to, perpetrators of, and survivors of violence. Many responses to domestic violence have addressed men primarily as perpetrators, and of course there are good reasons for doing so. Yet many men are also bystanders to violence: they are witnesses to violence by others, and in male-dominated groups and cultures they may condone, collude with, or privately object to violence by peers. I have argued elsewhere that efforts to engage men in violence prevention must include interventions into the male groups and cultures of male bonding which feed violence against women (Flood 2002-2003). Many men also live with the impact of other men's physical and sexual violence on the women and children they love. Boys and men themselves are subject to violence, and they are most at risk from other males.

Finally, if men are to be effective and responsible participants in action to achieve non-violence and gender equality, they will have to do so in partnership with women. Partnerships with women and women's groups enable men to learn from existing efforts and scholarship rather than 'reinventing the wheel'. They lessen the risk that men will collude in dominant and oppressive forms of masculinity. And they are a powerful and practical demonstration of men and women's shared interest in democratic and peaceful gender relations. Women and men are in this together, and the reconstruction of gender requires our shared commitment and involvement.

References

Flood, Michael (2001) Men Stopping Violence: Men's collective anti-violence activism and the struggle for gender justice. *Development* (Special Issue: Violence against Women and the Culture of Masculinity) 44.

Flood, Michael (2002-2003) Engaging Men: Strategies and dilemmas in violence prevention education among men. *Women Against Violence: A Feminist Journal* 13.

Website, UN Expert Group Meeting on 'The role of men and boys in achieving gender equality':

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/men-boys2003/index.html>

Michael Flood attended the meeting as a consequence of his work with The Australia Institute. He has recently published a paper 'Fatherhood and Fatherlessness'. An executive summary is located in the Clearinghouse Research and Resources database and can be downloaded by going to:

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

Community awareness campaign: same sex domestic violence

Brad Gray, Education Manager from the AIDS Council of NSW (ACON) and Chair of the Same Sex Domestic Violence (SSDV) Working Group highlights the upcoming campaign to raise community awareness about same sex domestic violence.

In February 2004 ACON will be releasing a major community awareness campaign focussing on domestic violence in same sex relationships. This campaign, funded through the NSW Attorney General's Innovative Grants Program, will be a first for NSW and probably for Australia.

A number of information resources, reports and forums on same sex domestic violence (SSDV) have been developed by various organisations throughout NSW and Australia since the 1970s. Most of these have been targeted at lesbians and gay men in abusive relationships or to service providers who may be working with them. The new ACON campaign is a little different in that it is targeted at the wider gay and lesbian community and aims to posit domestic violence as a gay and lesbian issue.

The extent of the issue

Research done in various locations around the world suggests that domestic violence occurs in same sex relationships at similar rates as in heterosexual relationships. Estimates vary from 13 – 20%. At Surry Hills Police Local Area Command more than 20% of domestic violence reports involve same sex couples while about 10% of calls to the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project's Report-Line involve domestic violence.

Similarities and differences

The vast majority of studies of domestic violence in same sex relationships clearly show that the motivations, patterns and personal effects are strikingly similar to those in heterosexual relationships. There are, however, a number of differences that show up in same sex domestic violence relationships including 'outing' being used as a form of control, the increased likelihood of HIV being a factor, gender and community myths that downplay the reality of abuse, difficulty identifying the perpetrator and lack of appropriate services.

Why a community awareness campaign

Anecdotal feedback collected by a wide range of organisations suggests that the gay and lesbian

communities have a very poor understanding of domestic violence. Some people don't believe it happens within their communities, others believe violence between same sex partners is just two equals having a fight while others still, have no understanding that domestic violence involves issues of power and control as well as physical violence.

Campaign aims and activities

The aim of the upcoming campaign is to increase community knowledge and understanding of domestic violence as a gay and lesbian issue. Most of the resources being developed for the campaign will speak to the entire gay and lesbian community about the issue of same sex domestic violence rather than to individuals in abusive relationships.

However, it stands to reason that with increased community discussion of domestic violence there is likely to be an increase in the number of people in abusive relationships seeking help. ACON and the SSDV Working Group is encouraging those services that are likely to see a rise in requests for services to prepare themselves for the release of the campaign.

Campaign resources

The campaign resources currently under development include an A2 and A4 poster, information flier, press ads for both the gay and lesbian and mainstream press, a website and a 32 page booklet (for people in abusive relationships). Additionally, there will be a series of service provider briefings, community forums and campaign launches as well as a media plan.

The campaign is being developed by ACON with the SSDV Working Group acting as an advisory group. The SSDV Working Group includes representatives of NSW Health, Attorney General's and Police Departments, Inner City Legal Centre and ACON and the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project.

Want to be kept updated?

Throughout the coming months ACON will be making contact with services that may be appropriate sites for distribution of the resource materials. Additionally we'll be keeping any services that are likely to experience an increased demand from gay men or lesbians in abusive relationships informed of progress of the campaign. For further information about the campaign call ACON on 9206 2082 or send an e-mail to ssdv@acon.org.au with the word 'subscribe' in the title and we'll add you to the Campaign Update List.

Forum: Family violence IS a workplace issue

Claire McNamara, Senior Policy Officer from the Victorian Community Council Against Violence reports on the Family Violence IS a workplace issue forum held in November.

The Victorian Community Council Against Violence (VCCAV) hosted a forum in the *Week Against Violence* during Victoria's Community Safety Month about family violence prevention through the workplace. The panel of speakers demonstrated emphatically that family violence is a workplace issue and explored its intersection with good business practice, occupational health and safety, workplace violence and bullying, equal opportunity and human rights.

Margot Scott from the Domestic Violence & Incest Resource Centre highlighted that 'often, an abused woman is a working woman. Women who have been abused take the violence with them to work and it shows.' Anthony Kelly from No to Violence observed that there are opportunities for educating men in the workplace and the need for 'clear and consistent messages from all individuals, institutions, unions and workplaces that all forms of violence are unacceptable and will not be tolerated'.

Jacqui Boughton from the Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce & Industry provided the business case for family violence prevention through the workplace, citing research that suggests that family violence costs the corporate sector \$1.5 billion annually. She also reminded employers of their duty of care to provide a safe workplace: 'for employers, it is not just a supportive action to assist an employee who is a victim of domestic violence, it also makes business sense. The business impact is going to be potentially particularly severe on small business compared to the large corporations. In a worst case scenario, any ongoing incident/s of domestic violence in a small business could cause the business to shut down.' What any individual workplace can do will depend on a number of factors, however, Ms Boughton emphasised that all organisations can raise awareness that family violence is a workplace issue. Michele O'Neil, President of the Victorian Trades Hall Council, encouraged unions to take the lead as advocates and educators for this issue on behalf of its members but also to examine how family violence affects its own employees.

Zana Bytheway from Job Watch drew a parallel between family violence and bullying as an issue of concern for employers, noting that family violence has a very similar impact upon the workplace as bullying and workplace violence. Recent develop-

ments that have put bullying firmly on the agenda provide encouragement for making family violence a workplace issue. Ms Bytheway stated that 'it was once considered that bullying was too controversial to address, too subtle to identify, too intrusive and required employers to have eyes in the back of their heads. Difficult issues such as bullying have been dealt with and are continuing to be dealt with, and the same can be done with family violence. The workplace is where many women facing family violence spend at least eight hours a day. It is therefore an ideal place for them to get help and support.'

Christy Fejer from WorkSafe drew a connection between employers' obligations under occupational health and safety legislation and family violence. Liana Buchanan from the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria explored the practical intersections between family violence and workplace violence and discrimination and the ways in which equal opportunity legislation may place a legal responsibility on employers and co-workers to respond appropriately to family violence issues when they arise in the workplace context. 'In the past thirty years there has been an enormous shift away from the view that family violence is a private issue to be dealt with between the parties alone, but there are still many sectors of our society that do not consider family violence to be their concern. From the Commission's perspective, family violence (along with sexual harassment and other forms of violence perpetrated predominantly against women) is a human rights issue. As a human rights issue, family violence is a phenomenon which the whole community has responsibility to address. It is an issue that is as much the responsibility of employers, unions and workers in the community as it is for the police, refuge workers and domestic violence counsellors.'

Fiona Sharkie from the Office of Women's Policy outlined the Victorian Government's Women's Safety Strategy which provides an overarching policy framework to guide the work of the government in addressing violence against women. The State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Violence Against Women in the Workplace has adopted this definition:

'Workplace violence against women may include physical assault, threatening behaviour, bullying, verbal abuse and various forms of harassment. Workplace violence is violence that usually occurs in a workplace setting, however, may occur outside of the work setting. Violence may be perpetrated by a colleague or supervisor, a client or customer, family member or member of the public.'

The Committee, therefore, includes family violence as part of its understanding of what is a workplace responsibility.

Once the speakers had convinced the audience of more than 80 people, representing the community sector, unions, government and private sector, that family violence is a workplace issue, the participants were invited to respond to some case scenarios. This provoked lively discussion and heightened awareness of how family violence touches working lives. Feedback indicates that participants welcomed the opportunity to apply the information from the panel presentation to some practical examples and to think about what they could do in their own workplaces. Participants indicated interest in finding out more about family violence, forming partnerships with other agencies and implementing initiatives in their workplaces.

All participants were provided with a kit of resource material, including the VCCAV's paper on workplace models on preventing family violence through the workplace.

Further initiatives proposed by the VCCAV as part of the project on preventing family violence through the workplace include conducting a follow up survey of forum participants to see whether and how workplaces have taken action in relation to this issue, continuing consultations to encourage sectors to become involved in promoting awareness of the issue and providing responses and developing and disseminating targeted resource materials.

Further information

If anyone is interested in receiving a copy of the paper on workplace models or finding out more about the project on family violence prevention through the workplace please contact the VCCAV on (03) 9603 8280. Information about domestic violence initiatives and resources can also be found by visiting their website at <http://www.vccav.vic.gov.au/>

The Partnerships Against Domestic Violence: A Business Approach initiative has held a number of similar forums to raise awareness in the business community of the impact of domestic violence on their employees and productivity. Two brochures specifically tailored for business, 'The facts: violence' and 'Domestic violence – whose business is it anyway' are available for ordering by downloading an order form from the publications page of the PADV website www.padv.dpmc.gov.au.

For more information on encouraging business to address domestic violence as a workplace issue, please contact Katharine Blackwell at the PADV secretariat on (02) 62715169 or katharine.blackwell@pmc.gov.au.

Same-sex domestic violence project – AIDS Council of NSW

This article is written by Evelyn Dwyer, social work student from the University of Sydney, on field placement at the AIDS Council of NSW (ACON).

Domestic violence in same-sex relationships has 'come out of the closet' as a significant issue for all health workers. As a major gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender health organisation, the AIDS Council of NSW (ACON) is taking a leading role in responding to same-sex domestic violence (SSDV). See the article by Brad Gray also in this publication for details on the latest ACON initiatives.

ACON has been seeing people affected by same-sex domestic violence for a number of years. ACON offers a generalist counselling service to people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS including those 'at risk'. Clients are largely members of the (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender) GLBT communities. Recently an audit of counselling files was carried out to determine the number of cases of SSDV seen at ACON Counselling during the period June 2001-July 2003.

There are several limitations with using counselling files as a source of data, as only information the client thought necessary to disclose and that the counsellor chose to record are included. Different findings may have emerged if routine screening or interviewing about SSDV had occurred. However the audit still provides some valuable information about same-sex domestic violence in NSW.

Any reference to physical, emotional, sexual, social, financial abuse and harassment/stalking in the context of a same-sex relationship was included as a case of SSDV. Cases where a client expressed that they feared their partner were also included. Complexities in assessment of same-sex domestic violence are a major issue in this field. In the absence of a gender-based model, identification of perpetrator and victim can be more difficult (see eg Goddard & Hardy 1999). Others have suggested that power dynamics in same-sex domestic violence may change over the course of the relationship (Ristock 2002). For this reason, a decision was made to include all cases of violence and abuse regardless of whether a clear victim-perpetrator dynamic was evident.

Using the above definition, there were 54 cases of SSDV from June 2001 to July 2003, which represents 11% of all counselling cases during this

period. This included 46 clients seen individually and 8 cases of couples counselling, a total of 62 clients. In 65% of cases, the clients experienced domestic violence during the time they were engaged with the counselling service. These clients may have had particular needs around safety. The remaining 35% of clients were disclosing past abuse.

Eighty-two percent of clients who had reported SSDV were male and 16% were female. The over-representation of men is indicative of the gender balance of ACON counselling generally, with 94% of clients being male. The majority of clients (94%) identified as gay or lesbian. 39% (24) were HIV positive. Children were involved in 2 cases.

Domestic violence was a presenting issue for 50% of SSDV cases, with violence or abuse disclosed in the first session. However clients did not necessarily use the term 'domestic violence' to describe their experience, instead many described the particular incident(s) of violence or abuse. Other common presenting issues for SSDV cases included relationship issues (48%), substance abuse (17%) and mental health issues (15%). Most clients had more than one presenting issue. The data on presenting issues confirms that many people will not present to health services specifically for domestic violence, and highlights an important role for health workers in identifying SSDV.

High levels of alcohol and other drug use were reported in ACON clients who had experienced SSDV – in 56% of cases, clients self-reported that at least one person in the relationship had drug or alcohol use of concern. In 50% of cases, mental health issues were also reported, commonly depression and anxiety. Housing and financial issues were reported in 24% of cases, highlighting the need for practical assistance to be available to victims of SSDV.

In 70% of the cases of SSDV, physical abuse was reported. This included punching, slapping, destruction of property and using weapons. Injuries reported as a result of physical violence included broken bones, burns, bruising and a burst eardrum. Emotional abuse was recorded in 59% of cases. Five cases of sexual abuse in the context of a same-sex relationship were reported. In many cases, more than one form of abuse was reported. It appears that physical abuse was more likely to be named and identified than other forms of domestic violence.

Police involvement was reported in 24% of cases – this ranged from police being called to attend an incident to six cases where AVOs had been taken out.

Of clients seen individually, 70% (32) presented as victims of domestic violence. Clients in this category presented with at least one of the following:

- (a) feeling like the other person was controlling them
- (b) identifying the other person as the sole/primary initiator of violence/abuse
- (c) expressing fear of their partner. One client identified as a perpetrator of domestic violence. In the remaining cases, the dynamics of abuse were unclear or there was not enough information.

In couples, assessment of domestic violence appeared more complex. In half of the cases, the client and/or the counsellor identified a perpetrator and a victim. The remaining cases were unclear. This raises issues for the future about how counsellors identify and name the dynamics of domestic violence and the safety issues to be addressed.

In 26% of cases, clients reported more than one relationship where there was domestic violence. Most commonly, this was a victim of same-sex domestic violence disclosing that they had been abused by a number of partners.

The audit of ACON Counselling shows that same-sex domestic violence is happening. Further research will be undertaken by ACON's Housing Project who are conducting a small qualitative study on housing needs and experience of services for victims of same sex domestic violence. Funded by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, this project will help inform service delivery and identify practice issues for SAAP providers in relation to gay and lesbian domestic violence. ACON Counselling expects to continue to see people who have experienced same sex domestic violence and is preparing for the impact of ACON's Community Awareness Campaign about same-sex domestic violence. Counsellors participated in specific training addressing same sex domestic violence in December 2003, prior to the launch of the campaign.

References:

- Goddard, A.B. & Hardy, T. (1999) 'Assessing the Lesbian Victim' in *Same-Sex Domestic Violence: Strategies for Change* ed. B. Leventhal & S.E. Lundy, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks pp.193-200
- Ristock, J. (2002) *No More Secrets: Violence in Lesbian Relationships* New York, Routledge Press

Planning events for 2004?

Are you holding an event such as a forum or seminar or launching a campaign or resource? Please remember to let us know by forwarding the details which can be publicised via the news page on our website.

Measuring the Tides of Violence in Melbourne's Western Metropolitan Region

Sarah Lowe, Communications Coordinator writes about an innovative report launched by Women's Health West (VIC)

'My bones will heal, but what he has done to my mind and my sexuality will always be with me.'

These are the words of Judith Arnott, 68, anti-violence activist and survivor of a lifetime of family violence. Judith recently spoke at the launch of a new report into family violence in Melbourne's Western metropolitan region. *Measuring the Tides of Violence* draws on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), police, courts, crisis and other services to paint a detailed picture of the extent and nature of family violence in the region.

'This report will be invaluable for community services, funding bodies, media and anyone concerned about family violence in the Western region,' said Women's Health West CEO Melissa Afentoulis. 'Comprehensive, up-to-date data is an essential tool for raising public awareness, improving services coordination and advocating for better services.'

Terry Sneddon, Acting Community Care Manager for the regional Department of Human Services, in launching the report, echoed the need for high-quality data. 'Family violence is a blight on the community,' he said. 'A body of evidence will go a long way to supporting advocacy.'

Measuring the Tides of Violence was produced by Women's Health West and the Western Region Network Against Family Violence in response to a major gap in the availability of statistical evidence of family violence in the region. There is much international and Australian research on the incidence of family violence, however many services are funded on a regional or sub-regional basis, requiring data on this level to apply for funding, as well as to plan, implement and evaluate services.

'I lived with my husband for 43 years. And I lived in fear every day.'

Judith Arnott's experiences of abuse began at age seven, when her brother began sexually assaulting her. She left the family home on her seventeenth birthday to live with future husband Laurie. For a little over 43 years, Laurie subjected Judith to horrific violence – physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and psychological. The abuse also extended to their two sons, who suffered broken bones amongst the many forms of violence done to them by their father.

Measuring the Tides of Violence draws on two key research methods. The first was the compilation of statistical data on a range of issues, including: the incidence and nature of family violence, how many women access services, the background of women accessing services, and the different types of services women commonly access after experiencing violence perpetrated by their intimate partner. The second method was the compilation of qualitative data presented by key practitioners and family violence researchers at a Western region forum in October 2002, along with the personal story of Judith Arnott. Although Judith's experience cannot represent all victims of family violence, the report draws out the links between the qualitative evidence from her experience, the practice wisdom of family violence workers, a theoretical analysis from family violence researchers and current statistics.

'By the time I was 20, I thought everybody lived the way we did. By the end, it was anything for peace.' – Judith Arnott

Judith Arnott finally found the support and courage to leave Laurie in her sixtieth year, when she attended a community forum on family violence, briefly visited a counsellor, and almost a year later found her way to a family violence support worker. 'I said to them, "please don't tell me I have to leave him. He'll kill me. He'll kill everyone."' The support worker said, "I won't tell you to leave him, but I will tell you that you are not responsible for his actions". This opened the floodgates. Judith began talking about her life to the support worker, and two months later she left her husband. When people ask why it took so long, Judith replies: 'You haven't walked in my shoes'.

Measuring the Tides of Violence highlights a number of emerging issues, including:

- Despite 30 years of work against family violence, rates of men assaulting their wives/partners and children have not decreased. According to police data, reports of family violence in the Western metropolitan region rose by 10.3 percent in 2000–2001.
- Women are at higher risk of increased levels of violence by their male partners during pregnancy.
- Children whose mothers are hurt by their male partner are also victims of violence, whether through direct assault or the trauma of witnessing assaults on their mother.
- There is anecdotal evidence from crisis workers

that men who use violence are increasingly using weapons such as knives.

- Anecdotal evidence also reveals that men's violence is becoming more severe, and is occurring more in public spaces, in front of witnesses other than the children.
- Women and children victims of family violence whose first language is not English are disadvantaged by: difficulty accessing services due to language and cultural barriers; not knowing their rights; unwillingness to report to the police because they are worried about what will happen to them, their children or the perpetrator; and sometimes the fear of being shamed in often small, close-knit communities.

Ironically, one of the most important aspects of *Measuring the Tides of Violence* is what it does not contain. Even such a wealth of detailed data can only be a partial account of the violence perpetrated by men against their partners and children. The 1996 ABS Women's Safety Survey showed that over 80 percent of violence experienced by women is not reported to police or revealed to other services. Thus the statistics and stories contained in *Measuring the Tides of Violence*, grim as they are, are just the tip of the iceberg.

'We were all trained to keep secrets and the secrets we kept poisoned us.' – Judith Arnott

In 1999, three years after leaving Laurie, Judith and her sons brought charges against him, for which he was convicted. Judith had witnessed many beatings Laurie gave their sons over the years, but abuses were revealed through the legal process that she didn't know about, going back to 1954. Laurie was sentenced to 35 months of imprisonment. He served 15 months and was released on parole. Judith has since sought out her brother, confronting him with her anger and the misery he caused her by his sexual abuse of her as a child.

The shocking statistics and stories in *Measuring the Tides of Violence* highlight our failure as a society to challenge the underlying causes of family violence: the still too common belief that men have the right to hurt their wives, partners or children. Overstretched services need more resources to deal with family violence, better data collection to help plan



and coordinate services, and more research into solutions to family violence. Most of all we need real leadership from state and federal governments, and for the community to change those attitudes that contribute to too many men continuing to use violence.



'I was silent for 43 years and five months. I will no longer be silenced. This is my journey and my mission. I will go on.' – Judith Arnott (pictured, above, at the launch of the report)

A pdf version of the report can be downloaded from the Clearinghouse Research and Resources Database.

Hard copies of **Measuring the Tides of Violence** by Nikki Marshall and Lee FitzRoy can be obtained from Women's Health West: phone (03) 9689 9588.

Surveying the statistics report

Anoop Johar, Regional Violence Prevention Specialist (Wentworth Region) from the NSW Attorney General's Department provides a summary of the 'Surveying the statistics on violence against women in the Wentworth region' report.

The *Surveying the Statistics* report represents the first profile of its kind on figures for domestic violence against women, conducted at a regional level in NSW. The report provides a breakdown of relevant statistical information currently available at a regional level and a guide to the sources of such information. It highlights the gaps in consistency, accuracy and detail of data collection by different agencies in the region and, therefore, areas for improvement.

The report specifically focuses on the Wentworth region¹ as a case study for a statistical profiling exercise. It is intended to provide key stakeholders with a picture of reported rates of domestic violence against women in the region and responses of key agencies.

The report aims to:

- provide information to service providers about the kinds of statistical information available concerning domestic violence at a regional level, to assist them in planning services;
- inform those bodies responsible for collection and dissemination of such information about gaps and inconsistencies in data gathered, as a first step towards resolving them;
- identify and document the nature and extent of domestic violence against women in a case study area, the Wentworth region; and
- compile a selected bibliography to assist workers to access information on issues relating to domestic violence against women.

The *Surveying the Statistics* report consists of statistics on violence against women in the Wentworth region from 1997 to 2001 (where available), a selected bibliography and a list of key issues for consideration at regional and state level.

Information was collected from Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Schemes (Blue Mountains/Lithgow, Penrith & Hawkesbury); Wentworth Area Health Service; NSW Department of Community Services (24-hour Domestic Violence

Line); NSW Criminal Court Statistics – Local Courts; Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research; and the NSW Police Service.

The information collected has been analysed to assist service providers in improving service planning and provision. In addition to that goal, the report seeks to show how statistical information has been collected, and by whom, and to identify opportunities to make that information more useful to service providers.

The report presents an important reference in commencing discussion around the inconsistencies of statistics. It provides a first-hand example of the usefulness of the statistical profile for planners of services in the region. Ongoing up-to-date profiles will assist service providers in identifying service gaps and targeting appropriate strategies.

A section of the report consists of discussion about the findings, key issues, and implications for agencies collecting statistical information and implications for service providers. It highlights that key agencies record domestic violence statistics in different ways. The statistics indicate gaps in data collection across-the-board and the report identifies a critical need to reassess and implement standardised data collection methods. A more uniform recording procedure would enable comparisons of statistics across agencies to be made and facilitate identification of gaps in service delivery. This would allow statistical data to be more easily compared and interpreted and ensure that informed conclusions and recommendations can be made.

The report also draws attention to the presentation of statistical data. The usefulness of statistical data may be hampered by its presentation. Failing to be clear about acronyms (abbreviations) or using different definitions for data fields used by various agencies can make understanding information difficult. Developing a consistent approach to collection, collation and presentation of data regarding domestic violence incidents is recommended.

Data collection that enables monitoring and analysis of service delivery trends will be extremely useful and have implications for service development in the future. The report suggests that it is essential to keep in close contact and receive feedback from workers who are in a position to identify not only changes in the general figures but also in the kinds of domestic violence crimes reported and amongst which populations.

Surveying the Statistics comments on monitoring the data collection process. It shows that the methodology of statistical data collection should be negotiated and monitored carefully by agencies involved. Agencies in the region expressed a concern that data

¹ There are three Local Government Areas (LGA) in the Wentworth Region: Blue Mountains LGA, Hawkesbury LGA and Penrith LGA.

is gathered from different places without co-ordination, which makes it difficult to track clients through the service system. The author asserts that inconsistent or sporadic data collection can also affect prevalence estimates and may even give the misleading impression of very low figures.

Finally, the report raises a number of issues specific to non-English speaking women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women that need to be considered in developing and providing services to these population groups. The information collected for this report in particular indicate a lack of recording of statistics about women with diverse needs (eg women with disabilities, mental health issues, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds, lesbian women and older women) by service providers.

Key issues from the findings of the report will be considered at a regional and state level.

For further information

Contact: Anoop Johar
Regional Violence Prevention Specialist
Ph: (02) 4732 1322

CLEARINGHOUSE NEWS

Innovations to the Clearinghouse website

Dale Gietzelt, Clearinghouse Information Officer, reports on recent innovations within our website.

Regular visitors may have noticed that, over 2003, the Clearinghouse's website (at www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au) has been undergoing some changes. First of all, we have added a **Topics** page (accessed by the 'Topics' button on the left of the home page). Eventually there will be a total of twenty topic papers (*only available as online documents*). As highlighted in our last newsletter there are 12 topics papers posted on the site in both rtf and pdf format. Alongside each topics paper there are hyperlinks to the relevant items in our *Research and Resources*, *Good Practice* and *Links* databases.

We have also transformed our over-long **News** page into an easily accessible

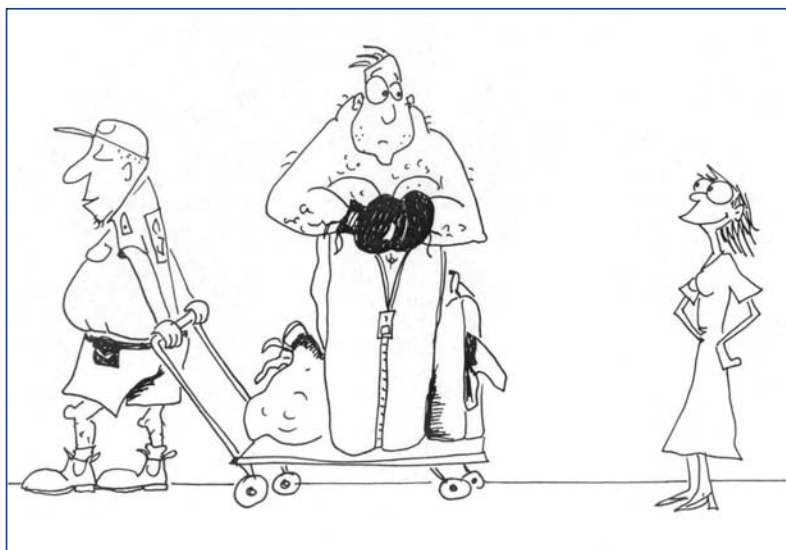
database, providing the option of looking at current news items according to location, type of news item or date (time of year), by merely clicking on the hyperlinks. Similarly, our **Links** page has been fine-tuned as a database so that organisations can be found according to location and type of organisation (whether specifically dealing with domestic violence or fulfilling a broader function).

To make access to materials found on the Clearinghouse website more readily available, we have brought them all together on the one site, **State Resources**. This also enables workers in each state to easily keep up-to-date with current research, resources and activities in their state or territory. Simply click on the 'State Resources' button to access the range of state-related items found on the *Research and Resources* and *Good Practice* databases, current news items, and organisation websites that the Clearinghouse links to. In the near future we will be adding a legislation database to this site.

Update on the Staying Home Leaving Violence research

Robyn Edwards provides an update about the final stages of her research project conducted at the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse

The Clearinghouse research project has been exploring over the last 12 months how women and their children may be able to remain safely in their own homes on leaving a domestic violence relationship, with the violent partner leaving the home. The research is now nearing a close, with a report on the findings being prepared. The report draws on the voices and stories of twenty-nine women who had left a domestic violence relationship and who agreed



to be interviewed, coming from South East Sydney, Western Sydney and the Far South Coast. The draft report will be posted on our Clearinghouse website and comments from any interested parties will be very welcome. The final report will contain recommendations relating to a service framework, pilot service model and safety package for women who choose to remain in their own home so that this is an option for women rather than leaving their homes when leaving a violent relationship.

The report is being illustrated with original cartoons kindly provided by Marta Ponti (*see opposite*), from the Deli Women and Children's Service, one of the 14 community organisations, which nominated women for interviews.

Clearinghouse Surveys

Stakeholder survey

In order to evaluate and continually improve the services we provide, the Clearinghouse is sending a survey to all stakeholders who have joined the mailing list. This is your opportunity to have your say and provide feedback to us. Please complete the survey from enclosed so that your views can be taken into consideration and used to inform future service development of the Clearinghouse.

Survey of Information Service Users

For those stakeholders who have used the Clearinghouse Information Service, either by phone or email, a separate survey will be sent to you to assess the effectiveness of this aspect of our service delivery.

**Return date
for both surveys
is 5 March 2004**

Next Issues Paper!

Look out for our next Issues Paper No. 9, which examines the research and current debate concerning domestic violence and restorative justice approaches.

**Make a note
in your diary!**
Deadline for contributions
to the next Newsletter
is 23 February

NEW PUBLICATIONS/REVIEWS

Book review

Zoe Craven, Clearinghouse Research Assistant, reviews the recently published book 'Child Custody and Domestic Violence – A Call for Safety and Accountability' by Peter G. Jaffe, Nancy K. Lemon & Samantha E. Poisson.

Traditionally, domestic violence has not been an issue considered explicitly by Family Courts in the context of child custody disputes. While the past few decades have brought about significant changes in our perceptions of divorce, its impact on children and the need for the involvement of both parents in a child's upbringing, it is only recently that the inadequacy of joint custody arrangements where allegations of domestic violence have been made has been recognised by academics and legal professionals. Research revealing the propensity for perpetrators to continue abuse long after separation and the capacity of the legal system to be exploited as a tool of control has provided the impetus for a number of legislative and service reforms. However, the authors recognise that a myriad of barriers to the safety of victims and children and the accountability of perpetrators remain. *Child Custody and Domestic Violence: A Call for Safety and Accountability* examines the experiences of a range of jurisdictions, including Australia, Canada and the US and identifies key challenges for lawyers, judges, legislators and mental health professionals in developing strategies which effectively respond to the needs of victims and children when domestic violence is a factor in separation.

In Chapter One, we are introduced to some of the key issues that are raised throughout the book and the research that has informed our understanding of the relationships between them. The prevalence of domestic violence and divorce, and the importance of recognising the role domestic violence can play in custody disputes, from both a clinical and legal perspective, is highlighted and it is noted that while important steps towards recognising these problems have been made, stereotypes and misconceptions remain a major hurdle to further research and policy development.

One of the major difficulties encountered by professionals in the family law field is how to identify cases in which domestic violence is an issue and assess the competing accounts that so often emerge in custody disputes. Developing appropriate ways of verifying abuse and responding when allegations are genuine, also present key challenges. In Chapter 2, some of the 'red flags' revealed through research and

practice are identified and model ways of meeting the challenges of verification and intervention are explored. Various myths and misconceptions regarding, inter alia, the incidence of false allegations and the nature of mutual abuse are dispelled and it is suggested that specific case management procedures be developed to address custody disputes involving a history of domestic violence.

A major impetus for legislative and policy reform to custody and visitation rights, in recent years, has been the recognition of the ways in which the legal system may be used as a tool for further abuse and control of the victim. The nature of such reforms is examined in Chapter 3, in relation to the domestic and international law governing Australia and other jurisdictions, such as Canada, the US and the UK and it is argued that equally important issues of relocation and adoption are yet to receive the same legislative recognition. It is also suggested that if safety and accountability is to be ensured, an appropriate way of balancing visitation rights with child and victim protection must be developed. A review of the case law relevant to the statutory provisions and conventions in each jurisdiction is conducted in Chapter 4, where it is noted that while the courts are becoming increasingly aware of the prevalence of domestic violence in custody disputes and the need to take allegations seriously, a reluctance to recognise the devastating impact and continuing nature of domestic violence after separation remains. The dynamics of abusive relationships are still poorly understood by the judicial system and the potential this raises for further victimization of the child is yet to be fully addressed by legislative reforms.

The final chapter sets out a 'framework for action for courts and communities', making recommendations for legislative amendments, the development of training protocols for legal and mental health professionals working in family law areas, the implementation of programs for monitoring the effectiveness of case management schemes and providing assistance to victims and children outside of court and improving coordination of currently available resources and services. While the framework for action identifies a range of specific strategies, such as the establishment of supervised visitation centres and enhancing access to legal aid, two key themes emerge. Firstly, in dealing with domestic violence in child

custody disputes, a contextual and client-specific analysis of the issues and potential solutions is crucial. Secondly, the documented relationship between domestic violence and family law proceedings demands a greater level of coordination between social and legal services and an increased awareness in the judiciary and the legal system generally of the nature, role and extent of domestic violence in child custody matters.

The past few decades have seen significant shifts in the nature of families and the roles of parents. A range of legislative and policy reforms aimed at adapting to these changing patterns, such as shared or co-parenting, have proven highly beneficial for separating families and for children in the post-divorce period. However, families involved in family court proceedings are not a homogenous group and treating them as such can, as this book demonstrates, threaten both the separating spouse and the children with exposure to violence, control and abuse. *Child Custody and Domestic Violence* aims to help victims of domestic violence, their children and the professionals who come into contact with them by providing us with an overview of the law in relation to domestic violence and custody disputes and a framework for developing new and innovative responses that enhance victim safety and perpetrator accountability.

NEW RESOURCES

Children Do Mind Family Violence – PARKAS poster

'Children Do Mind Family Violence' is a black and white A2 poster, which is straightforward in its message. The soulful faces (five in all) of a child from infancy to primary age – captures the deeper impact and consequences of being exposed to and/or a direct victim of family violence. Program Manager Wendy



Bunston comments 'this is a picture that speaks louder than words and has a profound impact on all who view it'.

Copies of the poster can be purchased for \$5 (per poster plus postage & handling) from Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital Mental Health Service by contacting Daniella Tarle on (03) 9345 6011 or daniella.tarle@rch.org.au. All monies raised from the proceeds of this poster go into the running of the Community Group Programs' – PARKAS (Parents Accepting Responsibility – Kids Are Safe) groups.

Queensland Centre for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence fact sheets

The Centre has recently produced a series of fact sheets providing information about the impact of domestic violence on children and young people according to the following developmental age groups:

- Babies
- Children 4-14 years
- Young People

These can be downloaded from:

<http://www.noviolence.com.au/factsheet.html#factsheet1>

By accessing this hyperlink you will also find other fact sheets that provide a summary of the amendments to the Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989. Significant changes were made to the Act in March 2003, which included the broadening of types of relationships now covered by this Act. These fact sheets are available in English and translated into seven community languages including Thai, Russian, Croatian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Tagalog and Spanish.

Please note that from January 5, 2004 the Centre formerly known as the Queensland Centre for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence officially adopted the name: Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research.

PADV Meta-evaluation reports

Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (PADV) has released a series of six Phase 1 Meta-evaluation Reports summarising what has been learnt from PADV funded research projects and initiatives about better ways to prevent and respond to domestic violence.

The series of six reports are:

- Working with Women affected by Domestic Violence
- Children, Young People and Domestic Violence
- Indigenous Family Violence
- Domestic Violence: Working with Men
- Information and Infrastructure: Improving Policy, Planning and Practice in Preventing and Responding to Domestic Violence
- Community Awareness and Education to Prevent, Reduce and Respond to Domestic Violence

The intention of this series of reports is to synthesise the data and key findings from PADV projects and bring them together so that a comprehensive body of knowledge exists which can inform future policy and practice.

Priorities for action are also highlighted.

Reports are available from www.padv.gov.au by clicking on the publications button on the left hand side of the PADV homepage.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES/SEMINARS

No Fear within our Families – The National Indigenous Family Violence Conference

*National Indigenous Domestic Violence Network and
Indigenous Conference Services Australia*

Brisbane 13-16 April 2004

The conference aims to:

- further the Indigenous community's capacity to educate about the issues surrounding domestic violence through the provision of training and the creation of educational resources;
- promote and enrich Indigenous family values
- Improve the exchange of information and new ideas to enhance community responses to domestic violence.

For further information

Indigenous Convention Specialists & Associates,
18 Redwood Ave, Marcus Beach, Qld 4573
Ph: (07) 5471 3161 or
Email: indigenousconventions@bigpond.com

Innovations in Understanding Violence Against Women: Wellesley Centres for Women 2004 International Research and Action Conference

Wellesley, Massachusetts, USA 25-28 April 2004

This conference is designed for researchers, activists, advocates and practitioners from the academic, non-government and government domains who incorporate research in their work toward ending violence against women.

The conference will include the presentation and discussion of findings and successful approaches to contextually relevant research in the understanding of violence against women in the northern and southern hemispheres. It will be designed around field-initiated paper presentation sessions and roundtable discussions. The programme will also include plenary talks by internationally renowned experts. The underlying goal is to foster participatory and collaborative interaction among participants from around the globe.

Don't forget to let us know about conferences and forums you may be holding in 2004!

For more information

For further conference details including examples of topics of interest, and the possibility of submitting an abstract online, visit the website listed below.

Email: WCW-InternationalResearch@wellesley.edu
Website: <http://www.wcwonline.org/conference/>

Home Truths: Stop Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence: A National Challenge

15th, 16th & 17th September 2004, Melbourne

The conference aims to provide a national and dynamic forum for service providers, policy makers, academics and victim/survivors to discuss, debate and highlight practice and policy issues relating to contemporary issues in sexual assault and domestic violence.

For more information

Deb Bryant (Co-Chair)
(03) 9687 8637
Email: westcasa@vicnet.net.au

INTERNET DOCUMENTS/SITES

Women in Cities International invite nominations for the inaugural International Women's Safety Awards

http://www.femmesetvilles.org/english/index_en.htm

Two Canadian and two international initiatives will be awarded in each of the following categories:

- Advocacy, networking and community mobilisation
- Capacity-building and training
- Educational programmes and public awareness
- Safety planning and design for public spaces
- Municipal gender-based policies in crime prevention and community

The closing date for nominations is 1 March 2004.

Family Court of Australia

Highlights the release of a national Family Violence Strategy in 2004.

www.familycourt.gov.au/html/family_violence.html

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.

The Clearinghouse is linked to the Centre for Gender-Related Violence Studies, based in the University of New South Wales School of Social Work.

Funded by *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence*, a Commonwealth Government initiative working with the States and Territories and the community to find better ways of preventing and responding to domestic violence.