

# CAUSTRALIAN DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE CLEARINGHOUSE

## NEWSLETTER



**Partnerships Against  
Domestic Violence**

A Commonwealth Government Initiative



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NEW SOUTH WALES

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## Introducing the Director

DR LESLEY LAING commenced as Director of the Clearinghouse in January 2000. Lesley brings to the position of Director over 15 years' experience in working to address violence against women and children as a counsellor, educator, policy analyst and researcher. She is co-editor, with Dr Jan Breckenridge, of the recently published book *Challenging Silence: Innovative Responses to Sexual and Domestic Violence*.

Lesley looks forward to the opportunity afforded by her new position to share ideas with colleagues around the country who are working to both prevent, and to overcome the effects of, domestic and family violence.

## About the Clearinghouse

The Clearinghouse is a national resource on issues of domestic and family violence. It will provide a central point for the collection and dissemination of Australian domestic and family violence policy, practice and research materials. The Clearinghouse will also provide information on international efforts to end these forms of violence.

To achieve this aim, the Clearinghouse is developing the following services:

- ❖ Newsletters to keep readers up to date with latest developments in policy, practice and research. Produced quarterly commencing December 1999.
- ❖ Issues papers which will explore aspects of domestic and family violence in some depth, including a review of relevant Australian and international literature and analysis of current trends and issues. Produced quarterly commencing March 2000.
- ❖ A web site that will include two searchable databases: research and good practice. The web site will be operational from May 2000 and the data bases from August 2000. Until

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May, information about the Clearinghouse can be found on the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* web site at <http://www.dpmc.gov.au/osw/padv/contents/clearinghouse.html>

- ❖ A library/information service. Information Officer Louise McLeod can be contacted by telephone, facsimile or email for assistance with locating information.

*Organisations and individuals working to prevent and eliminate domestic and family violence are invited to lodge a copy of all relevant publications with the Clearinghouse (e.g. training resources, policy manuals, information brochures). In this way, the Clearinghouse can provide information about these resources to service providers across Australia.*

### Survey

Included in this issue of the Newsletter is a brief survey to assist in identifying groups reached by the Clearinghouse. Your assistance in completing and returning this is appreciated.

Please direct correspondence and inquiries to:

The Director,  
Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse,  
University of New South Wales, Sydney, 2052.  
Telephone: (02) 9385 2990 Fax: (02) 9385 2993  
Email: [clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au](mailto:clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au)

## Legislation and Policies

### Legislative Developments in Queensland

A raft of amendments to Queensland's Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989 were passed in late 1999 and will be proclaimed following state-wide training on the new provisions.

The amendments aim to improve the effectiveness of the operation of the Act by clarifying existing provisions, reducing administrative burdens on the police and courts, and removing discrimination in the Act by broadening the definition of 'spouse' to include same sex relationships.

Concurrently, the Queensland government is undertaking extensive community consultation on the development of legal protection against family violence, abuse by informal carers and abuse in dating relationships.

*For further information, contact:*

*Heather Nancarrow,*

*Director, Office of Domestic Violence Prevention*

*Ph (07) 3224 4508*

*Email: [hnancarr@families.qld.gov.au](mailto:hnancarr@families.qld.gov.au)*

### Amendments To AVO Law (N.S.W.)

Amendments to N.S.W.'s AVO law were passed at the end of 1999 and will commence on 26 April 2000. One of the main amendments is the introduction of a legislative distinction between Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (ADVOs - involving persons in a domestic relationship) and Apprehended Personal Violence Orders (APVOs - all other AVOs). Authorised justices will have a discretion to refuse to issue process (a summons or warrant) for an APVO matter that is frivolous, vexatious, without substance or has no reasonable prospect of success. Specified criteria will guide the exercise of this discretion. The definition of a domestic relationship will be extended to include carers and people living in group homes. Other amendments include a broader definition of a stalking/intimidation offence and a statutory obligation for police to provide reasons for not responding to reports that an AVO has been breached. The amendments also introduce an "objects statement" in relation to ADVOs and special provisions for the non disclosure of a protected person's address.

The amendments can be found in the Crimes Amendment (Apprehended Violence) Act 1999, available at <http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/clrd> under "recent NSW criminal laws".

### Women and Safety - A New Advisory/Consultation Structure (Tasmania)

Women Tasmania is steadily working towards establishing a new sexual assault and domestic violence advisory/consultation structure that fosters joint responsibility for coordinated policy development and integrated service delivery across the government and non-government sectors.

The new structures will be headed by a Ministerial Forum comprised of the Premier and the Ministers responsible for: Police and Public Safety; Justice and Industrial Relations; and Health and Human Services.

Two Reference Groups are being established under the auspices of the Ministerial Forum, to implement sexual

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assault and domestic violence policy initiatives. The Reference Groups will comprise key stakeholders across the government and non-government sectors. Their membership will be announced and they will commence work shortly.

The initial task of the Ministerial Forum Reference Group on Sexual Assault is to oversee and monitor the implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on Sexual Assault and Rape in Tasmania.

The Reference Group on Domestic Violence Policy and Projects will:

- ❖ promote integrated and coordinated service delivery across the key government and non-government service providers;
- ❖ identify and cost a model for the establishment of a statewide court support service with the capacity to provide regional service delivery to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence in consultation with relevant stakeholders;
- ❖ develop a whole of government policy on the possible establishment and operation of perpetrator programs;
- ❖ oversight the development and management of Tasmanian projects funded under the Commonwealth *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Program*.

In addition, Women Tasmania will chair the Working Party on National Approaches to Sexual Assault and report back to the Commonwealth-State Conference of Ministers on the Status of Women in the Year 2000.

For more information about women and safety issues, please contact:

*Sandi Mackintosh:*  
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*Postal: Women Tasmania, GPO Box 1854,*  
*Hobart, Tasmania, 7001.*  
*Email: OSW.admin@dpac.tas.gov.au*  
*Internet: www.women.tas.gov.au*

## News from the U.S.A.

### National College of District Attorneys

*Report by Melinda Tynan, A.C.T.*

On 24 October 1999, the U.S. National College of District Attorneys welcomed nearly 1500 police, prosecutors, advocates and judges to their 9th Annual Domestic Violence Conference. The overwhelming message from the conference

was that the future of domestic violence interventions by the criminal justice system is in evidence-based prosecutions, where the case is prepared by police and prosecutions occur on the assumption that the victim will not be in a position to testify in court, for whatever reason. One of the strongest advocates for this stance was the San Diego District Attorney. He argued that relying on the victim's evidence alone in court, when it is known that the dynamics of domestic violence mean that the victim is in the greatest danger immediately after separating from the offender, is tantamount to negligence and often qualifies as further abuse of the victim.

It was also observed that it is helpful to have either separate charges or enhancements to charges where children witness domestic violence. These measures already exist in some jurisdictions. The development of safety plans for victims and children was also emphasised. One authority recommended developing strategic partnerships with locksmiths, telephone and transport companies in providing necessary services for women attempting to escape violence. A Vermont project called "Have Justice Will Travel", which takes resources including the advocate, prosecutor, legal aid, computer, relevant forms and information, by van to domestic violence victims in rural areas, was described at the conference.

For more information contact:

*Melinda Tynan: Ph. (02) 4823 2545*  
*Email: tyna1mel@police.nsw.gov.au*

### N.S.W. Ombudsman's Report on Policing of Domestic Violence

In a special report to the N.S.W. Parliament (December, 1999), the Ombudsman notes that in 1998-99 more resources were utilised by police in responding to domestic violence incidents - 77,000 in the previous year - than any other single reported crime. The purpose of the Ombudsman's report is to canvass possible ways in which the Police Service may be able to better utilise its limited resources and continue to improve its service delivery in the domestic violence area.

The report identifies a number of 'main themes' and issues 25 recommendations. In the first category, problems are identified with training, the role of domestic violence liaison officers, and failure by police officers to adhere to the Service's own policies and procedures for responding to domestic violence incidents. A theme throughout the report is the need for the Police Service to adequately monitor service delivery.

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Some of the main recommendations are as follows :

- ❖ each local area command should systematically refer victims of domestic violence to other agencies in the local area to assist with victim support and other services;
- ❖ the Police Service should actively identify and circulate information regarding innovative victim support techniques and programs;
- ❖ the Service should monitor the complaints system in order to identify systemic problems in relation to victim support;
- ❖ the Service should review the reasons given for taking no action in relation to domestic violence incidents, including a review of the adequacy of the reasons given;
- ❖ relevant statistics on domestic violence incidents should be given to other service providers to promote a more fully informed community response to domestic violence;
- ❖ revised policies and procedures should provide guidelines for liaising with and providing victim support to, victims at court;
- ❖ guidelines and training should emphasise the need for careful risk assessment of the level of threat to victims of domestic violence;
- ❖ complaints about officers' handling of domestic violence incidents should be centrally monitored to identify systemic problems and innovative responses to complaints;
- ❖ there should be clear accountability mechanisms for local area commanders in relation to responding to domestic violence.

The reasoning behind the recommendations is set out in the report which concludes on the following note : *"The main finding to come from this Office's involvement in this issue was the need for the Police Service to better monitor its response to domestic violence."*

For more information, contact:

*N.S.W. Ombudsman:  
Level 3, 580 George Street,  
Sydney, NSW 2000  
Ph (02) 9286 1000  
Toll Free: 1800 451 524  
Fax: (02) 9283 2911  
TTY: (02) 9264 8050*

## Practice Notes

### Queensland Health's Domestic Violence Initiative

In November 1989, Queensland Health began its first specific, system-wide strategy to minimise the health impact of domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Initiative, which developed from evidence synthesised in the draft Queensland Women's Health Outcome Plan, is funded through the State Crime Prevention Strategy. It is based on universal routine screening for domestic violence when women present to public sector antenatal and emergency clinics in order to enhance the capacity of mainstream services to provide accurate diagnosis and appropriate responses for women who have experienced violence.

The first year of the Initiative was devoted to developing a short, simple questionnaire and trialing it as part of routine medical history taking in hospitals in Mt Isa, Cairns, Townsville and Brisbane. Evaluation began eight weeks into the trial. The evaluation looked at four aspects of the Initiative - the screening questionnaire itself, staff compliance with the new process, service provider attitudes to the screening and, most importantly, client attitudes to it.

The results were extremely positive: the questionnaire proved a robust and acceptable means of acquiring information highly relevant to the current and future health and health care of the women who disclosed violence; the system generally worked well; service providers acknowledged some unresolved issues but were virtually unanimous that the screening was valuable and should continue. Most importantly, over 90% of the 1900 screened women who were surveyed in the evaluation, thought it was a good idea to screen for domestic violence. About the same proportion "felt okay" with the screening.

With this mandate from women, the Initiative is continuing and expanding. It is anticipated that the system will be running Statewide by the end of 2004.

For more information, to receive the monthly Newsheet or to participate in a forum to be held in Brisbane in March, contact:

*Project Coordinator:  
Lynelle Wagner Fax: (07) 3636 1479.  
Email: wagnerl@health.qld.gov.au*

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## Hume Region Antenatal Psychosocial Risk Assessment Project

Wodonga Regional Health Service is developing an Antenatal Psychosocial Risk Assessment Tool to improve the identification and management of mothers and babies in high risk family environments, including those in situations of domestic violence. This tool will be introduced in all hospitals in the Hume Region of North East Victoria as well as selected interstate hospitals including Ipswich Hospital, Geraldton Health Service and Blue Mountains District Memorial Hospital.

During their antenatal booking women attending without their partners will be asked four standard domestic violence questions from the Queensland Domestic Violence Initiative Screening System. If their partner is present these questions will be asked later during their postpartum hospital admission. All women disclosing domestic violence will be offered professional support.

For further information about this three year Maternity Services Enhancement Strategy funded project please contact:

*Lizette Willinck,*  
*Antenatal Risk Assessment Project Coordinator,*  
*Ph: (02) 60 51 7258.*

## New Publications/Reviews

Each issue of the *Newsletter* will contain a review of a significant recent publication. Sometimes the review will be prepared by someone associated with the Clearinghouse, at other times we will publish contributed work. The object of these reviews is to generate public debate and we welcome contributions by readers.

### Battered Women Who Stay

*Peled,E; Eisikovits, Z; Enosh,G; Winstok,Z; (2000) Choice and Empowerment for Battered Women Who Stay: Towards a Constructivist Model, Social Work, V.45, 1, 9-25*

Although there is no doubt that public and professional awareness of violence against women has increased over the past two decades, the problem is far from being eradicated. The tactics that proved useful in promoting awareness of the problem also have created new myths and injustices. Peled et al., say that one such myth is the stigmatization of battered women who stay in relationships with their abusers as a

deviant group: “battered women who stay”. Such women often are characterised as incompetent, weak, and lacking coping skills, which further engulf them in the victim role and contribute to their powerlessness.

The review article examines the individual and social construction of empowerment for battered women who choose to stay with their abusers through a critical examination of the images of battered women, as constructed in the professional literature. Common to most explanations of women remaining with abusers is the assumption that they are trapped in the relationship against their best judgement or against their will. They may fear an escalation of the violence if they attempt to leave. Much of the literature also suggests that women’s psychological make-up, relationship skills, and personal and situational factors all contribute to their entrapment. Depression, low self-esteem, fear, loneliness, guilt and shame, combined with violence, isolation, exhaustion, and some positive attributes of the batterer, help to prolong “traumatic attachment”. A third line of explanation emphasises ‘environmental’ obstacles facing women who try to end a violent relationship. This approach encompasses a wide range of factors including social values, policies, service provision, non-supportive networks, economic dependency on the male partner, and lack of alternative housing.

A different set of explanations conceptualises battered women’s staying as a choice. Some writers portray staying as the result of a rational decision-making process based on weighing the perceived costs and benefits. Such explanations acknowledge not only the constraints preventing battered women from leaving but also the positive feelings and perceptions they may hold regarding their partners and the relationship. While there is much talk in the professional literature about empowering the victims of intimate violence, the means by which such women can become empowered are in scarce supply. Often the discussion is presented in either/or terms, that is, the person is either empowered or not empowered.

Peled et al., say that it is likely that empowerment of women experiencing ‘regular violence’ requires a frame of reference and a set of competencies different from those needed by women at risk of severe violence and abuse. In such cases staying can be viewed as a choice made by women who are consciously negotiating their reality. A tension can result between battered women who choose to stay and service providers who often practise intervention aimed at facilitating the termination of the abusive relationship. Because of the lack of coordinated support for women who

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choose to stay, the latter may develop a 'culture of resistance', asserting control and making choices relevant to their needs and interests. Facilitating women's freedom of choice as a means of empowerment implies accepting and respecting their choice to stay with their abuser as a viable alternative. Only a few intervention models have been designed to support women who wish to end the violence while staying with their abusive partner.

A model put forward by Peled et al., includes socio-cultural considerations, institutions and organisations, and significant figures in the lives of battered women, as well as the women themselves. Suggestions are made to promote and operationalise empowerment on each level. Flexible and culturally sensitive attitudes are needed to accommodate and legitimate a variety of choices made by battered women. The authors suggest that the dramatisation of woman battering through the emphasis on incidents of women experiencing severe abuse has overshadowed the lives of women less severely abused. "Because the notion of victimisation resonates with traditional gender stereotypes, it may have further fostered the image of the passive battered woman, along with the belief that overcoming such passivity necessarily involves leaving the abuser".

The method of operation of social agencies dealing with woman battering is guided more often by meaning systems stemming from professional and political values than by those of their clients. The authors call for increased skill in empowering women who live with their abusers to assess and act on the degree of lethality in their situation, thus enhancing women's ability to protect themselves and their children. The 'homogenisation' of intimate violence, which may have been functional in transforming it into a social problem, is of little help in clinical intervention. Men often perceive their partners as locked into the relationship while in an alternative empowerment model, battering men come to see women's staying as a choice, reflecting their wish to stop violence from within the relationship. Subsequent meanings of the violence are likely to change accordingly. As long as a man's view of his abused partner is that she is trapped in the relationship then he is likely to think that violence does not threaten it. The introduction of an element of choice into a man's perception of the woman's behaviour may result in a new understanding that if violence continues she may decide to leave him, just as she decided to stay.

At the individual level, women's ability to choose to stay (or to leave) would be further enhanced by being "morally, emotionally, and practically supported in their decision,

rather than being left alone and isolated. In addition, women who choose to stay will have to overcome a sense of social stigma by believing that their decision is a legitimate and socially sanctioned possibility".

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence (Qld.)**

This comprehensive report has recently been released. Through extensive consultation, the Task Force sought 'a greater understanding of violence; its various forms and expressions; its nature and extent; causes and consequences. Most importantly, the Task Force wanted to listen to ideas about Community development processes for transformation and change'. The next Clearinghouse newsletter will include a review of the Task Force Report. It is available on the web site of the Queensland Office of Women's Policy <http://www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au/>.

## **Research Findings/Initiatives**

### **Freedom From Fear (W.A.)**

The first issue of the Newsletter contained information about the Best Practice Model developed in Western Australia for the provision of programs for victims of domestic violence. A noteworthy strand of that State's domestic violence strategy is the *Freedom From Fear* campaign. The primary target group for the campaign comprises reachable male perpetrators of domestic violence who are currently not in treatment, and non-perpetrators (men) who are at risk of perpetrating domestic violence. The initial emphasis is on men aged 20 to 40 years, including but not targeting specifically, Aboriginal and non-English speaking people who fall into these groups. The initial specific objectives are:

- ❖ to increase knowledge within the community, and specifically amongst the primary target group, about the state-wide and local resources available and the methods of accessing assistance;
- ❖ to promote understanding and acceptance in the community, and amongst men in particular, that:
  - ❖ the perpetrator is responsible for the violence, not the victim
  - ❖ there are no circumstances in which domestic violence is justified;

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- ❖ to increase the number of perpetrators and men 'at risk' who seek assistance and advice from appropriate services.

The campaign strategies include state-wide mass media advertising, media and public relations activities, such as targeted radio and newspaper interviews, and promotional strategies at male social activities such as sports clubs, pubs, and the like. Other strategies include a 24 hour telephone information, counselling and active referral service for men, the funding of existing and new counselling and behaviour change programs for perpetrators and 'at risk' men, funding of counselling, education and support programs for victims and children and collaboration with police training and services. Information resources such as a self-help booklet for men, and other promotional aids, have been produced.

Are these measures having an impact? Overall campaign recall (awareness of one or more elements of the campaign) is 91%. Evaluators state that the primary perceived message is the effect of domestic violence on children. More recently, the communication of the help-related message has improved significantly to be the clear secondary message. The campaign has been associated with significant increases in awareness of support services in general and the Men's Domestic Violence Helpline specifically. The proportion of men aware of a telephone counselling line for men who are or could be violent has increased from 20% at the outset to 69%.

Two significant changes have been noted in the realm of men's attitudes and beliefs. Agreement with the view - "The campaign has changed the way that I think about men being violent towards a female partner" - increased from 14% in October 1998 to 21% in April 1999. Over the same period, agreement with the statement - "Domestic Violence affects the whole family" - increased from 34% to 58%. Encouraging trends have been noted in terms of (i) a significant increase in the proportion of men who feel that women never deliberately provoke being slapped, and (ii) a reduction in the frequency with which men admit to yelling loudly and 'putting down' or belittling their female partner.

In terms of longer-term attitudes and behaviours, there were no significant shifts on most measures. The evaluators note that only the early stages of a planned 10 year campaign have been reached and this is not long enough to effect changes to well-established attitudes and behaviours. The Domestic Violence Prevention Unit, Women's Policy Development Office, was awarded the 1999 WA Premier's Award for excellence in public sector management. *The Freedom From Fear* campaign was also awarded the William Novelli Prize

for Excellence and Innovation in Social Marketing at the annual Innovations in Social Marketing Conference in Montreal, Canada in July, 1999.

For more information, contact:

*Domestic Violence Prevention Unit,  
Women's Policy Development Office,  
1st Floor, Westralia Square, 141 St. George's Terrace,  
Perth, Western Australia 6000.  
Ph: (08) 9264 1922 Fax: (08) 9264 1924  
<http://www.freedomfromfear.wa.gov.au>*

## **Kids & DV Project (Qld.)**

This project was funded under year 1 of the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* initiative and coordinated by the Office of Domestic Violence Prevention in the Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care. The aim of the project was to research and document effective practice for working with children and young people who have lived with domestic violence. Leslie Gevers Community Management Services was contracted by the Department to undertake this research.

The project recognised that a wide range of service providers including youth workers, teachers, health workers and psychologists or social workers in private practice, come into contact with children and young people affected by domestic violence. However, there are few resources available to assist service providers in this work. The Kids & DV project identified that whilst there is a great deal of information available on the impact of domestic violence on children, there is relatively little information about interventions that are effective in working with this client group.

Extensive consultation with a broad range of service providers who work with children and young people affected by domestic violence was a key component of the research. Consultation sessions were held in every State and specific focus groups were conducted with service providers working with Aboriginal children, Torres Strait Islander children, children of non-English speaking backgrounds and youth workers.

Resources were produced through the Kids & DV project, these being: a *Models of Service* book - providing information on different interventions that can be used in working with children and young people and describing the practice of 11 services which work in this area from across Australia; *Practice Standards for Working With Children and Young People Who Have Lived With Domestic Violence*; and

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*Evaluating Service Delivery* - designed to assist service providers to assess the effectiveness of their work with children and young people.

A Kids & DV web site was also produced through the project. Each of the three written resources as well as a database of services working in this field, are included on the site.

Further information about the Kids & DV project can be obtained from the Office of Domestic Violence Prevention, by telephoning (07) 3224 4477 or visit the web site on <http://www.lgcms.com.au>

Copies of the publications are available free of charge from DAS Distribution on (02) 6202 5736

## **New Resources for Aboriginal Communities**

### **"Our Dream ... Stopping The Violence"**

"Our Dream ... Stopping the Violence" is a resource booklet for Aboriginal women that has been produced by the NSW Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (DVAS), as part of a recently completed twelve month Rural Education & Aboriginal Women's Access Project, funded by the Casino Community Benefit Trust Fund.

The project was a partnership venture between the DVAS and the Indigenous Women's Program (IWP) at the Women's Legal Resources Centre (WLRC). The project's main objectives were to improve understandings of domestic violence and the legal processes involved, to facilitate cooperation among services, to assist service providers to better advocate for their clients and to improve access to the legal system for marginalised groups of women in the country, in particular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

The first phase of the project involved a team of three trainers visiting four regional centres in NSW and conducting a series of workshops over a number of days. The first day was designated as an Aboriginal women's access forum and was intended to provide a safe space for Aboriginal women to discuss the issues as they saw them affecting their own communities. Barriers to justice were discussed and possible local strategies to address the problems canvassed. Days two and three were designed as sessions aimed at local service providers and had a focus on appropriate responses and interventions, with an emphasis on legal remedies and providing effective court support for women seeking Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs) through their local

court. The final workshop was a half day Crosscultural Awareness training session, in which the history and processes of colonisation were examined and participants encouraged to explore the legacy of these processes in terms of their effect on service delivery to indigenous clients.

Phase two of the project involved the development of a resource specifically for Aboriginal women, as it had become apparent early on in the project that participants felt there was a lack of culturally appropriate and accessible material in this area. A Steering Committee worked in consultation with an Aboriginal writer and an Aboriginal illustrator to develop a first draft of the booklet. This was then distributed among workshop participants for comment and a focus group was conducted to assess cultural relevance and general readability. A high degree of commitment to the project was demonstrated by the respondents, whose valuable feedback included suggestions for the cover design and the title of the booklet.

"Our Dream ..." was launched on 7 December 1999 by the Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council (AJAC), Marcia Ella-Duncan, in conjunction with the opening of the new WLRC premises. The response to date has been extremely positive. Copies of the booklet and the final report on the project are available from the DVAS.

#### *Contact:*

*Sarah Stewart, Coordinator, DVAS*

*PO Box H154, Harris Park, N.S.W. 2150*

*Ph. (02) 9637 5020 Ext. 212 Fax: (02) 9682 3844*

*Email: Sarah\_Stewart@fcl.fl.asn.au*

### **Who's the loser? - a video about family violence**

This is a new training video developed in response to the lack of culturally appropriate materials about child protection and family violence for Aboriginal communities. Inspired by educator Melva Kennedy in consultation with many Aboriginal community members, it provides a springboard for discussion about the serious impact of family violence on women, children, families and communities.

At a card game Janet talks to her friend Gwen about what's happening at home. Janet recalls the good times with her partner Mike and the children. She also remembers the times that Mike is violent. Janet begins to talk about the dilemmas she is facing and how she feels trapped by Mike's abuse. We witness her fear and growing concern about what Mike's violence is doing to the children. As Janet's friends come to understand more about her situation they respond

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supportively and we see Aboriginal men and women working together to keep Janet and the children safe.

The video is accompanied by a booklet of information and ideas about how to use the video.

Copies of this video are available from:

*Education Centre Against Violence*  
*Locked Bag 7118 Parramatta BC N.S.W. 2150*  
*Ph. (02) 9840 3737 Fax: (02) 9840 3754*  
*Email: ecav@wsahs.nsw.gov.au*

## **Women's Fear of Violence in the Community**

In the first issue of the Newsletter, brief reference was made to Women's Fear of Violence in the Community, report No. 135 in the 'Trends and Issues' series published by the Australian Institute of Criminology (November 1999). The authors Carlos Carcach and Satyanshu Mukherjee, state that a consistent finding from crime surveys is that women acknowledge more fear of crime than other population groups. Women's sense of vulnerability is increased by factors such as being of an advanced age and having a lack of access to networks of social support. In America it has been found that immigrant women, especially illegal and non-English speaking migrants, express a particular sense of social vulnerability and helplessness.

There exists in the literature, however, something known as the 'fear-victimisation paradox'. Women are less likely to be victimised than men are; yet, they express greater fear of crime than men do. Carcach and Mukherjee identify two approaches to this paradox. One argues that crime surveys and official statistics fail to capture the full extent of victimisation against women. Once the full extent of women's victimisation is taken into account their level of fear is not inappropriate. For example, Junger (1987) found there was a stronger relationship between women's fear of crime and sexual harassment experiences within the family than outside the family. The other approach links women's greater levels of fear to heightened perceptions of personal vulnerability.

The Institute Of Criminology researchers have examined the foregoing issues by utilising the results of the Women's Safety Survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics during February-April, 1996. The survey was completed by 6,333 women (78% response rate). The concept of fear of crime was measured from answers relating to how

safe the respondent felt when walking alone in her local area after dark. The concept of physical vulnerability was measured from the age of the respondent. The concept of social vulnerability was measured from labour force statistics, presence of children at home, partnership arrangements, and country of birth. Women who are in lower income groups, live alone, are sole parents of young children, are separated or divorced, and those from non-English speaking backgrounds, were hypothesised to be more fearful of crime.

Using sophisticated statistical methods, which control for the effect of all the other variables included in the analysis, the researchers found that not being in the labour force is a significant contributing factor to women's fear of violence in the community. This factor, however, acts through other characteristics such as the presence of young children, presence of a partner, and women aged 55 years and over. In general, the researchers conclude that women who are not in the labour force are almost twice as likely to feel unsafe in the community than women who are either working or unemployed and looking for work. The odds of fear for women in the 55 years and over age group and not in the labour force are 70% higher than younger women who are not in the labour force. Among women with no partner, those aged 45-54 are more likely to experience fear of violence in the community than younger women are. Women with a non-English speaking background are 1.2 times more fearful of violence than other women, irrespective of whether they have a partner or not. Women living with their children only are 1.4 times more likely to feel unsafe walking alone in the local area after dark, than women in other types of living arrangements.

### **Experiences of Violence and Fear of Crime**

Women who experience physical violence, both by a male partner (former or current) and another male, are over twice as likely to acknowledge fear than those who experience physical violence by either perpetrator or those who have not experience physical violence at all. The researchers interpret their results as supporting the view that women who face violence at home have an increased level of fear of crime in the community.

For further information, contact:

*Australian Institute of Criminology*  
*GPO Box 2944*  
*Canberra A.C.T. 2601*  
*Ph. (02) 6260 9200 Fax: (02) 6260 9201*  
*<http://www.aic.gov.au>*

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## Tactics Of The Anti-Feminist Backlash Against Canadian National Woman Abuse Surveys

Walter DeKeseredy, Carleton University

*In response to Kerrie James' discussion of the article 'Domestic Violence in Australia: Are Women and Men Equally Violent?' in the last newsletter, a reader has drawn attention to the following article.*

Canada is witnessing a major anti-feminist backlash against the results of the Canadian National Survey (CNS) on woman abuse in university/college dating relationships and the Canadian Violence Against Women Survey (VAWS). The main objective of DeKeseredy's article is to provide examples of the backlash tactics used by some prominent critics of these studies.

One of the key tactics used by Canadian anti-feminists to challenge the overwhelming evidence of women's experience of male physical, psychological, and sexual violence is to say, 'But women do it too', or 'Women are just as bad as men'. 'Backlash critics' often provide anecdotal stories of sensational and statistically infrequent violent crimes committed by a few Canadian women. The absence of research or statistical evidence does not seem to matter in a general atmosphere of mistrust and what is claimed to be a well-organised backlash against feminism.

DeKeseredy also believes the misleading interpretation of Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS) data has supported the anti-feminist backlash. When used to measure violence in marital/cohabiting and dating relationships, the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS) ask both men and women to report which of a series of reported tactics were used during a conflict situation. These tactics could range from pushing and shoving to shooting. DeKeseredy says it is rare for a study to combine the CTS with any question of meaning, motive, or outcome (for example, injury). Thus, shoving someone down a flight of stairs or shoving someone out of the way who is blocking your escape might be counted as equally violent acts. Being kicked with an open-toed sandal might count equally with having your kneecap shattered by a steel-toed work boot.

Moreover, using the CTS alone almost always results in eliciting rates of female-to-male violence that are slightly higher than those for male-to-female violence. The results of many such studies supposedly undermine the feminist theory of domestic violence. DeKeseredy says that the use of the

CTS alone cannot accurately determine gender variations in intimate violence because of the following:

- ❖ males are more likely to under-report their violence,
- ❖ the CTS measures only conflict-instigated violence and thus ignores male violence that stems from attempts to control women or violence that does not stem from any single identifiable cause,
- ❖ the CTS excludes acts of sexual violence (for example, marital rape) and other highly injurious assaults on women such as scratches, burning, and suffocation,
- ❖ the CTS does not measure the contexts, meanings, and motives of violence.

In sum, CTS data alone do not reflect the reality of dating, post-separation, and marital/cohabiting violence. More comprehensive research by DeKeseredy and associates, taking account of the context of violence, including motives, shows that a substantial amount of violence reported by women is in self-defence. In addition:

- ❖ the women who report higher levels of self-defensive violence also report higher levels of violence committed against them,
- ❖ women who used self-defensive violence experienced much higher rates of sexual abuse in dating since leaving high school than other women surveyed,
- ❖ women who experienced psychological abuse, threats, and physical abuse in combination since leaving high school were much more likely to respond with self-defensive violence.

Walter S. DeKeseredy (1999) *Tactics of the Antifeminist Backlash Against Canadian National Woman Abuse Surveys, Violence Against Women, Vol 5 No 11, 1258-1276.*

## PhDs In Progress

*Anyone with an interest in the research being undertaken is welcome to contact the investigators.*

## Judicial Treatment Of Serious Domestic Offenders

Domestic violence at its extreme - when women kill their male partners and men kill their female partners - is the primary focus of this research. The project involves an evaluation of the substantive law of homicide, and in

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particular, the defences to murder that are frequently relied upon in the domestic context, namely provocation, self-defence and diminished responsibility. Issues concerning the reception of expert evidence in cases of domestic homicide will be addressed. Finally, the research will identify and evaluate the factors that courts take into account in sentencing male and female offenders convicted of an offence involving serious domestic violence (murder, manslaughter, attempted murder, causing grievous bodily harm, wounding and rape) in respect of their partner.

Contact details:

*Ms Rebecca Bradfield,*  
*Associate Lecturer, University of Tasmania,*  
*Law School, GPO Box 252-89, Hobart, Tas., 7001.*  
*Ph. (03) 62 267562*  
*Email: Rebecca.Bradfield@utas.edu.au*

### **The Relevance of Domestic Violence in Financial Disputes Arising out of Marriage Breakdown**

This thesis examines the relevance of domestic violence to the making of orders for property alteration and spousal maintenance pursuant to the provisions of the Family Law Act. As well as an historical analysis of the Family Court's approach to allegations of violence in the reported case law, the research includes an examination of recent unreported decisions to obtain an insight into the Court's current treatment of violence. In light of this analysis, the question is explored as to whether any amendment to the provisions of the Family Law Act is warranted to give express recognition to the relevance of domestic violence in relation to the parties' contributions to the welfare of the family (s 79(4)) and their present and future financial circumstances (s 75(2)) and, in particular, whether the Act should be amended to provide for a statutory matrimonial tort. Although the project focuses predominantly on married couples, similar issues arise in relation to de facto relationships and some coverage is accordingly given to this aspect.

Contact details:

*Ms Sarah Middleton,*  
*University of Tasmania, Law School,*  
*GPO Box 252-89, Hobart, Tas., 7001.*  
*Ph. (03) 62 267566*  
*Email: Sarah.Middleton@utas.edu.au*

## **Forthcoming Seminars, Conferences**

### **Domestic Violence and Pregnancy**

**29 March, 2000 Brisbane**

A one day workshop for midwives (but all interested people welcome) to be held at Queensland Health, 147 Charlotte Street, Brisbane. The workshop will look at the impact of violence on obstetric outcomes and use case studies from hospitals which are screening for violence as part of routine antenatal care as a basis for facilitated group discussions. Cost: \$50; midwifery students \$25.

Information and registration:

*Lynelle Wagner*  
*Fax. (07) 3636 1479*  
*Email: wagnerl@health.qld.gov.au*

### **The Queensland Domestic Violence Initiative**

**30-31 March, 2000 Brisbane**

A two day forum to be held at Queensland Health, 147 Charlotte Street, Brisbane. The forum, which will be opened by the Minister for Health, the Hon. Wendy Edmond, will showcase the achievements of Stage 1 of the Initiative and explore current and future issues in small facilitated groups. Themes will include the health impact of violence against women, screening in emergency and reproductive health services, training, and inter-service linkages. Cost: \$100.

Information and registration:

*Lynelle Wagner*  
*Fax. (07) 3636 1479;*  
*Email: wagnerl@health.qld.gov.au*

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## The National Conference on Health Care and Domestic Violence

13-14 October, 2000

### San Francisco

The National Conference on Health Care and Domestic Violence will further the field of health care's response to domestic violence by;

- ❖ providing information on cutting-edge research and practice on identification and response to domestic violence;
- ❖ highlighting innovative practices, programs and partnerships between health systems, providers, government and domestic violence experts;
- ❖ emphasizing culturally and linguistically relevant intervention strategies; and
- ❖ broadening the discussion to include health issues and responses related to victims, children, perpetrators and communities affected by domestic violence at local, state and national levels.

Conference registration materials will be available mid April, 2000. To receive these materials email [health@fvpf.org](mailto:health@fvpf.org)

## Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Showcases

29 March 2000 Perth, W.A.

30 March 2000 Albany, W.A.

26 May 2000 Sydney, N.S.W.

Showcasing of *Partnerships* projects are being held in capital cities and regional centres over the next two years.

Information for W.A.: Carole Kagi on (08) 9264 1918

Information for N.S.W.: Karen Heller on (02) 9228 8081

## Internet Sites

The following are some web-sites of relevance to the field of domestic and family violence. We look forward to including your suggestions in future issues.

### Violence Against Women: Mediated List of Internet Resources (U.S.A.)

[http://www.feminist.org/gateway/vs\\_exec2.html](http://www.feminist.org/gateway/vs_exec2.html)

### Violence Against Women Online Resources (U.S.A.)

<http://www.vaw.umn.edu/>

### Minnesota Centre Against Violence and Abuse (U.S.A.)

<http://www.mincava.umn.edu/>

### Domestic Violence Resource Centre (Brisbane)

<http://www.dvrc.org.au/>

### Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre (Melbourne)

<http://home.vicnet.net.au/~dvirc/>

### National Crime Prevention (Aus.)

<http://www.ncp.gov.au/ncp/>

### Family Violence Prevention Fund (U.S.A.)

<http://www.fvpf.org/index.html>

### National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies

<http://www.aifs.org.au/external/nch/>

### Partnerships Against Domestic Violence

<http://www.dpmc.gov.au/osw/padv/index.html>



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

## CONTRIBUTIONS

### Planned dates of publication of Newsletters in 2000 are:

Date of Publication	Material for inclusion needed by:
28th June, 2000	5th June, 2000
25th September, 2000	4th September, 2000
11th December, 2000	13th November, 2000

*We look forward to receiving material for inclusion in forthcoming Newsletters.*

### Planned dates of publication of Issue Papers in 2000 are:

Date of Publication
March, 2000
June, 2000
September, 2000
December, 2000

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

*The views expressed in this Newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Commonwealth of Australia 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.*

*Funded by Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, a Commonwealth Government Initiative*

# CLEARINGHOUSE CLIENT SURVEY

1. Title ..... Surname ..... First Name(s) .....  
Position .....  
Organisation .....  
Address .....  
Phone ..... Fax .....  
Email .....

2. Were your contact details correct  Yes  No

3. I would prefer to receive Clearinghouse Newsletters and issues papers via:

mail OR  the internet with email reminder of new issues

4. Please tick the category which most closely fits your work in relation to domestic and family violence (tick ONE only)

- Generalist service provider (health/welfare/legal) *circle appropriate field*
- Specialist domestic/family violence service provider (e.g women's refuge)
- Government policy
- Police
- Education/Research
- Information/referral
- Student
- Community Member
- Other

5. Please tick areas which you would like Clearinghouse publications to address:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| a. community education ..... <input type="checkbox"/>                      | i. lesbian and gay relationships ..... <input type="checkbox"/>                   |
| b. health issues ..... <input type="checkbox"/>                            | j. training ..... <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| c. criminal justice responses ..... <input type="checkbox"/>               | k. perpetrator programs ..... <input type="checkbox"/>                            |
| d. family law issues ..... <input type="checkbox"/>                        | l. prevention ..... <input type="checkbox"/>                                      |
| e. indigenous issues ..... <input type="checkbox"/>                        | m. advocacy ..... <input type="checkbox"/>  |
| f. children and young people ..... <input type="checkbox"/>                | n. issues for rural and remote communities ..... <input type="checkbox"/>         |
| g. issues for migrant & refugee communities ..... <input type="checkbox"/> | o. violence as an international human rights issue ..... <input type="checkbox"/> |
| h. elder abuse ..... <input type="checkbox"/>                              | p. disability issues ..... <input type="checkbox"/>                               |

Other suggestions: (if you need more space please use the back of this form)

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Thank you for your time. Please return this survey to:

**Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse,  
University of NSW, Sydney N.S.W. 2052 Fax: 02 9385 2993**