

### LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

## Cops and communities: A PACT to tackle domestic violence

THE Police and Community Training (PACT) program is a joint initiative of the New South Wales Police Service and the Ethnic Affairs Commission of New South Wales. It aims to promote locally based, two-way, police-community training, awareness and ongoing dialogue. There are currently seven PACT projects across Sydney addressing critical local issues.

The Penrith/St. Marys PACT Project is focussed on addressing the impact of domestic violence on families of culturally and linguistically diverse communities. In line with the two-way training philosophy of the PACT program, a critical element of this project includes training and education for police on responding to domestic violence victims in a culturally sensitive manner.

The first public event of this project was an information/consultation day held in June. It was attended by close to a hundred local community members, service-providers and police officers. A range of speakers addressed the group on domestic violence and its impact on families. A significant focus of this day was to hear the concerns of members of the four communities that will be targeted by the project. The success of the day was evident by the active participation of members in voicing their concerns and sharing information on working together to tackle domestic violence.

An interesting feature of the day was the way in which local police mingled with the group – some of the police were in full uniform, and others in civilian clothes. Halfway through the day, the police in uniform changed into civilian clothes, while those whom the community had seen in civilian clothes, changed into full uniform. The committee at the start of the project had noted that one of the barriers to communication with the police, for ethnic communities, is a fear and mistrust of the police uniform. The use of this strategy had very positive results on the day.

This project emphasises community development principles which are reflected in its process and structure. It is steered at the local level by a

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Partnerships Against  
Domestic Violence



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committee comprising police and community representatives from the Penrith and St. Marys areas. The local steering committee has responsibility for the direction of the project and will also initiate promotional activities throughout the project duration. This is a challenging and exciting project for the police, involving grass-roots awareness-raising and collaborative work with local ethnic communities.

The steering committee identified four existing and emerging communities in the area: Filipino, Arabic-speaking, Indian, and Pacific Islander. Four working groups have been formed in the target communities. These working groups will be proactive within their communities in raising awareness and discussion about the impact of domestic violence on families. They will also produce culturally appropriate resources to facilitate their community education activities. Some examples of ideas for resources to be produced are posters, fridge magnets, and radio-skits in community languages. Police participation is an element of these community education activities, thus breaking down traditional barriers between police and ethnic communities in the area, and encouraging the reporting of domestic violence.

The steering committee is undertaking innovative promotional campaigns. A fully enclosed trailer has been purchased. Art competitions are being held in the Arabic-speaking, Indian, Pacific Islander and Filipino communities for visual images conveying messages about the impact of domestic violence on families. The trailer will then be painted with these images, and stocked with multilingual resources for community use. This trailer will be a travelling billboard and information centre for wide usage. It will be available for any groups wishing to promote awareness in their area.

The final stage of the project will be training for the police in the Penrith and St. Marys Commands in responding to domestic violence in culturally appropriate ways. The community will provide input into this training, creating further avenues for police-community dialogue. It is anticipated that the project will be completed by June 2001. However, the local committee sees this as the start of an ongoing process of communication.

### Further information

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## Screening for domestic violence in NSW health services

DOMESTIC violence is a widespread problem for women, with profound implications for their health status. Routine screening for domestic violence provides a critical opportunity for disclosure of domestic violence and early identification and intervention.

NSW Health Department has secured Commonwealth funding from *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* to pilot the introduction of routine screening for domestic violence in selected Emergency Departments, Antenatal, Drug and Alcohol, and Mental Health Services. The 12 week pilot will commence in September 2000 in two Area Health Services, South East Sydney (metropolitan) and Macquarie (rural and remote). The pilot will include an evaluation to be conducted by a team from the University of Sydney. Implementation of screening across other Health Areas will occur in 2001. An Interagency Advisory Group has been convened to support the project with representation from key government departments and non-government organisations.

The practice of routinely screening for domestic violence has become more widespread internationally and within Australia. When women living with domestic violence or those at risk of domestic violence are identified early, health workers are able to intervene to help women understand their options and prioritise their safety. Australian research supports direct questioning of women by health workers in relation to experiences of violence. Women report that the main reason for not disclosing experiences of violence is that they are not asked.

Screening provides women with the opportunity to talk to a health professional about their experiences of abuse and to be provided with written resources. The screening process itself gives a clear message that domestic violence is wrong, that it has adverse health outcomes for women and that health professionals can offer some assistance.

### Further information

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## Let's Face It

THIS project, based in Southern Tasmania, is focusing on early intervention with families experiencing domestic violence. The rationale for *Let's Face It* is based on Australian research (Keys Young "Against the Odds: How Women Survive Domestic Violence"; ABS "Women's Safety Australia") and similar overseas information which found that women who are being abused turn first to families, friends, neighbours or general service providers. The overall objective of the project is "to develop an innovative early intervention model for working with families experiencing domestic violence, and to work with the community to provide education about domestic violence".

Community development principles are being used to increase community awareness and networks about domestic violence, early intervention and the role of first contact people. Unique features of the project include:

- Partnership between five agencies: Anglicare as the lead agency with Centacare, S.H.E. (Support Help & Empowerment Inc), The Salvation Army and the Family Support Service of Lady Gowrie
- Raising awareness about the role of "first contact people" and providing information sessions/skills building for service providers and first contact people
- Early intervention with families
- Brokerage of services for families

Challenges to date have included raising awareness about both the early stages of domestic violence and about early intervention in families experiencing partner abuse; using language about domestic violence which is helpful and not alienating to individuals and communities; and reaching out to first contact people.

The project is one of four national early intervention pilot projects funded by the Commonwealth Government under the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* initiative and is due for completion by 30 June 2001. The project welcomes any suggestions, information or discussions with readers of this newsletter.

### Further information

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## Living Without Violence 2000

*Living Without Violence 2000* was the second art exhibition by women of Western Sydney. The idea for the exhibition was conceived in 1999 by members of the Regional Violence Reference Group in partnership with community organisations, local councils and health services. In 2000, *Living Without Violence* was a project of the Immigrant Women's Speakout Association, Information and Cultural Exchange and Parramatta City Council in partnership with the Parramatta Heritage Centre, Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, Holroyd City Council, and Merrylands Central Library.

Coinciding with International Women's Day, the purpose of the exhibition was to encourage women's participation in challenging issues of violence against women. It provided the platform for women to raise community awareness and understanding of women's right to 'live without violence'.

The exhibition recognised the need to create greater access to art spaces for migrant, refugee and Indigenous women artists and audiences in Western Sydney. It provided the opportunity for women artists in Western Sydney to develop their artistic practice and to exhibit their works in a professional environment.

*Living Without Violence 2000* is an excellent example of a community partnership with women using innovative and creative strategies to raise community awareness, while simultaneously increasing women's participation in challenging violence, and promoting women's strengths. Over 40 artists submitted art works in a range of mediums including painting, installations, video art, photography, mixed media and 3D works. Over 150 people attended the launch, with much media coverage.

A video documenting the exhibition has been produced by Actively Radically TV.

The video documents the exhibition and the launch, including interviews with some of the artists and project co-ordinators. This video can be used to facilitate discussion in groups and in training about issues of violence against women. It can also be used to illustrate the role of community cultural development in challenging community attitudes.

### Further information

and to purchase the video: April Pham  
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## Developing and maintaining a specialised domestic violence program: the Relationships Australia (WA) experience

*Christine Smith, Manager, Community Services and Development, and Ros Adam, Domestic Violence Consultant, outline the development of their agency's specialist domestic violence services.*

RELATIONSHIPS Australia (WA) – RAWA – is a non-profit community service organisation which provides innovative relationship support services. RAWA is currently a leading provider of specialist family violence services. It adopts a holistic approach when responding to domestic violence, providing individual and group programs for men, women and children. Over the last eleven years, the agency has initiated and contributed extensively to the development of family violence counselling services in Western Australia. During this process, it has developed comprehensive knowledge and understanding of domestic violence, contributed significantly to the development of best practice standards and contributed to the training of professionals working in the area of violence.

### *RAWA's history in working with violence*

RAWA (then Marriage Guidance Council) was the first non-government relationship support agency to receive funding to provide counselling for perpetrators of domestic violence. The funding was received in 1989 from the WA Department of Community Services (now Family and Children's Services) for a two year pilot program. The initial experience of the program was that perpetrators were accessing the service with their partners. However, at a local level, there were few services available to meet the need of the 'survivors' of domestic violence. Hence the program was extended to include a component for survivors.

During the early years of the domestic violence program, RAWA staff recognised that the counselling program could not succeed without the involvement of the community. A community development and awareness strategy was needed to better inform and educate the community about domestic violence and its effects. After extensive national and international research, the Duluth Model from Minnesota was chosen as the community and inter-agency approach to domestic violence intervention. The implementation of such a program had an effect on the whole agency and required a thorough educative process for all employees.

RAWA staff were instrumental in introducing the Duluth Model to country and metropolitan communities, as well as training workers from other agencies on how to use this model. Targeted professionals included police, hospitals, refuges, social workers, general practitioners and nurses. Public lectures were held for anyone interested in issues around domestic violence.

1990 saw the establishment of women's support services. These services provided an opportunity to raise awareness of the impact of violence on women and to provide information and education about women's position in domestic violence. Through the groups, women were provided with information on power and control and with support, validation and advocacy. Training was conducted for community groups working with survivors of domestic violence so that the women's group support service could continue in local areas.

An outcome of the vital work RAWA developed for women is the Annual Domestic Violence March (WA). This is a silent, memorial march for those who have died as a result of domestic violence. The original concept of this march came through women who accessed the support group. This year saw the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this event. Participants in the march include survivors, police, violence workers, family and friends and interested public.

An impressive achievement for RAWA was the development of the Domestic Violence Action Groups of WA (DVAGWA). This group plays an important role in lobbying for change in government policies relating to family violence. Regional domestic violence committees have since been developed from this DVAGWA, of which RAWA staff are members.

In 1993, RAWA established a service to meet the needs of children who had witnessed domestic violence (funded by WA Family and Children's Services). This was the first of its kind in Australia. This program assists children in overcoming the trauma resulting from the experience of witnessing violence in their home. The incorporation of a children's service provides access for caregivers to other adult violence programs, thus allowing for integrated case management.

RAWA's involvement in the three-year Family Violence Research and Intervention Project (then funded by Legal Aid and Family Services – 1996-1999), provided an opportunity to focus on the development of a national model consistent with Best Practice Principles. RAWA's participation was integral in the development of elements of the model such as safety issues, responding to

**REMEMBER to contact the Clearinghouse for information on how to register your program on the Good Practice Database**

perpetrators and the client approach. A report on the project titled 'A Study in Hope' was released in 1999 by the Department of Family and Community Services. The findings of this study have initiated the development of a group work pilot for adolescents. It is hoped that a more comprehensive service for adolescent survivors and perpetrators will be provided.

The most recent achievement has been a successful tender to provide counselling and groups to men referred through the WA State 'Helpline' campaign. RAWA provided training to crisis counselling staff in how to respond effectively with the 'Helpline' calls.

### **The commitment of RAWA**

RAWA continues to be highly committed to the development of practices and models when working in violence that recognise that the safety of the 'survivors' is of primary importance and recognise the perpetrator's responsibility for the violence in a way that maintains the safest intervention model for the survivor. The appointment of a Domestic Violence Consultant to ensure that best practice models are being practised when working with violence is one example of RAWA's commitment to the area of violence. The Domestic Violence Consultant is available and accessible to any program or service being offered through RAWA, as the issue of violence has the potential to arise anywhere. The Consultant provides supervision and support to services and/or cases where violence is an issue.

The commitment to the development of Best Practice extends to the sharing of RAWA knowledge and expertise on what has been learnt about responding to violence. This is particularly evident through the extensive training provided to various government and non-government groups in working with perpetrators, survivors and children and through representation on local committees. The most recent example is training provided to Ministry of Justice staff on assessment and intervention with domestic violence perpetrators. This training is being conducted in various metropolitan and country regions throughout Western Australia.

Working with violence is an expensive exercise for a non-profit organisation. A high commitment is essential from all involved at the funding, agency and individual level.

#### **Further information**

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## **Building safer communities – a pilot project on early intervention in primary schools**

*Building Safer Communities* is an early intervention project which aims to complement the child protection initiatives and curriculum of NSW government schools. Based on the premise that a community which is safe for women and children is safe for all, this project was designed to be a proactive strategy in working with young children to empower them with knowledge and awareness about their rights to safety, to build their self image and to provide information about help-seeking strategies. It was implemented as a pilot project on a small scale to test its effectiveness on the participating children.

The project was jointly developed and implemented under the NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women by the Western Sydney Regional Violence Prevention Specialist, the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET), The Hills Family Centre, Castle Hill, and Cumberland Women's Health Centre, Parramatta, with input from Ethnic Child Care and Family Development Services, Marrickville, during the early stages of the project.

The main objective of the project is to raise awareness of child protection issues, particularly those related to domestic violence, amongst primary school students.

There are a number of components to the project. Firstly a proposal was developed by the Working Group on what the project would entail and how it would be implemented. Once the proposal was approved by DET, a primary school in the Baulkham Hills LGA was selected with advice from DET. The selected school is one of the largest in Western Sydney and had successfully implemented an anti-bullying program a year earlier.

The project proposal included a story telling session for year four students. The proposed stories were popular children's stories such as Jack and the Bean Stalk, with elements of bullying, power and control, abuse and neglect being built into them. The objectives of the story telling session were to raise awareness about the following:

- that children have a right to feel safe,
- that violence is not an acceptable behaviour,
- that adults have a responsibility to protect children
- that children can express what they feel, to someone they trust, if they find themselves in an unsafe situation.

The stories were also intended to provide information about help-seeking strategies. The story telling session was planned to be an interactive one so that the participating students could express their thoughts, ideas and feelings during the narration process. Accredited story tellers were identified and interviewed, and selection was made based on the individual's level of sensitivity to the issue and level of experience working with children in school settings.

The next stage was the planning of lessons leading to and following from the story telling session. The story teller was invited to join this planning day so that the teachers could have some firsthand knowledge about how the stories would be developed and presented to their students. With the teachers' input, the story teller was given adequate information to develop the outlines for the stories. The rest of the planning day was spent with the teachers to develop at least three lessons leading to the story telling session. These lessons were already built into the existing curriculum and it was a matter of how they could be presented to provide some context to the story telling session. A further two lessons were worked out for a follow-up to the story telling session, for debriefing and assessing what the students had learnt from the story telling session. The purpose behind this exercise was to ensure that minimal pressure was put on the teachers by avoiding creating additional work.

A meeting of the Working Group with parents at the Parent-Teacher meeting served the purpose of explaining the project to them and getting their approval to let their children attend the story telling session. The project was presented in a very sensitive manner with emphasis on the child protection curriculum. It was well received by the parents who were also given samples of resources on domestic violence and child protection matters.

A separate meeting was held with teachers to discuss the impact on children. The Working Group and the teachers discussed the effects of domestic violence on children and appropriate responses if children disclosed. The teachers were also provided with referral resources and information and support in their role.

Two story telling sessions were held, one for each group of 30 students. Each story telling session lasted for about 55 minutes. The entire session was videoed for review by the Working Group. After evaluating the feedback from the students and teachers involved in the project, a demonstration package will be developed for presentation at other schools about this project. The package will include resources for teachers, the planned lessons leading to and from the story telling session, some video clippings of the story telling session and the project proposal.

## *Learning from this project*

Initially, the schools approached were reluctant to participate in this project as they feared backlash from the parent community. Their response to the proposal was that if a student discloses child protection matters they would refer the matter to the Department of Community Services, and would not be willing to play any other role. The Student Welfare and Equity Services within DET was very responsive to the proposal and became a partner in the project. With their advice the proposal was further refined and the school selected. The Working Group realised that it was critical to identify the right contacts within DET if it proposed to work within schools.

Teachers' bans were in place during most of last year and hence there was considerable delay before work with any school could commence. Choosing the right time during the school term was very important: either at the beginning or toward the end of the term was found to be suitable for this particular project. It was important to ensure that the project did not impose extra work for the teachers. DET provided teaching relief to enable the teachers to be involved in the planning day.

The initial review of the feedback from students revealed that they remembered and related to those stories which involved role play and were presented in a more interactive style. However, a couple of short stories had not made any impact at all, mainly because they were very short and interposed with some of the longer stories which had grasped the interest and attention of the students. Further feedback from the teachers involved will enable the Working Group to finalise their report and the demonstration package.

It was not possible to measure any long term effect of this project because it involved a 'one-off' session. The process of empowerment was expected to happen during the session as the students responded to the different moods of the stories and also answered questions in relation to what they would do in a particular situation or what the particular character in the story ought to have done. It was envisaged to be a learning experience for them in a safe and friendly environment. A paper based on this project was presented at the Children First Conference, Sydney, August, 2000.

### **Further information**

and conference paper available from  
Rugmini Venkatraman: Phone: (02) 9633 0717

## Pilbara Regional Domestic Violence Council Coordinator

*The Clearinghouse invited Valerie Ryan to describe her role as regional violence coordinator in the Pilbara, Western Australia. We welcome similar contributions from others about their role.*

THE Pilbara Regional Domestic Violence Council is one of sixteen domestic violence committees set up throughout Western Australia. My position as the Coordinator involves providing executive support and project management for the committee in a region of 500,000 kilometres with a diversity of communities unique to this area. Mining towns and remote Aboriginal communities have similar and widely different problems when it comes to dealing with family and domestic violence. The limited resources available for my position, which include the lack of a vehicle for the coordination role, restrict my travel but I have been able to consult with representatives from both the coastal towns and Aboriginal communities. One strategy for increasing consultation with people from remote areas has been through the cooperation of the Regional Prison.

The Roebourne Regional Prison has many inmates from remote areas who voluntarily attended Family Violence three day workshops over a period of eight weeks. This was an opportunity to share information about family violence issues, problems, services available and ideas for how to deal with the problem. As a white female there were some concerns with the 'appropriateness' of this approach. This was not expressed as problem when openly discussed at the workshops and an outcome of the workshops has been my regular participation in the pre-release programs.

Promoting supportive networks amongst agencies providing domestic violence services and increasing interagency collaboration is an important role of the Pilbara Regional Domestic Violence Council. This had been achieved with the support of the local domestic violence action groups in Port Hedland and South Hedland. These groups have had an active role in increasing community awareness by organising projects such as information panels made up of service providers in their area, developing and distributing printed information, holding shopping centre displays and creating media interest. It is an important and rewarding part of my role to support these groups, which receive no funding and rely on the voluntary commitment of their members. Anyone visiting the Pilbara region is welcome to contact me to arrange to meet the service providers in our region.

**Contact:** Valerie Ryan  
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## Women driving the agenda – a World March of Women 2000 event

WORLD March of Women 2000 is a worldwide series of coordinated women's rights demonstrations to:

- Demand an end to women's poverty
- Demand an end to violence against women
- Demand equality between women and men

World March of Women 2000 grew out of the 1995 Women's March against Poverty in Quebec, Canada. Three contingents of 850 women marched for 10 days to win nine demands related to economic justice. Fifteen thousand people greeted them at the end of the 10-day march. To date some 4500 groups from over 155 countries have signed up to organise activities in conjunction with this global event. Globally, the events culminate on October 17 in New York, where the organising committee hopes to deliver to the United Nations millions of signed petitions demanding economic and social justice for women.

The Queensland Domestic Violence Services Network has embarked on an event that will take the form of a **virtual bus trip** beginning in Far North Queensland on 15th September and ending in Brisbane on the 15 October 2000. During this month-long journey, it is hoped that thousands of women and children will 'virtually' jump aboard the bus to be part of the global 'march'. There are two ways to get on the Bus:

- Simply visit the DVRC website at **[www.dvrc.org.au](http://www.dvrc.org.au)** as of 15 September, find your way to the bus terminal and follow the instructions to be placed on the passenger list.
- If you don't have ready computer access, simply ring the DVRC and ask the information officer to book you on.

A small fee will be charged to get on the bus, with all proceeds channelled into an emergency assistance fund to help women and children escaping domestic violence. A list of all bus passengers will be sent to the Queensland Premier, Peter Beattie, on 17th October 2000. Imagine a thousand women and children in a convoy of virtual buses driving and demanding an agenda which is just for women!

### Further information

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## Mirrung Ngu Wanjarri (Aboriginal women making changes)

Vicky Bardon and Nancy Walk describe an exciting project in Northern NSW

FAMILY violence is recognised as a significant issue in Aboriginal communities. "Our women are suffering injuries and fleeing to refuges and shelters in order to get away from the violence" (Through Black Eyes). We recognise that to make any significant contribution to addressing the problem, family violence must be looked at from the root causes and the importance of community members themselves recognising and acknowledging the harm it causes to us all. It is important that Aboriginal communities take ownership of the problem. The results of this project will be one small link to the healing process.

Mabourah Dubay and the Lismore Domestic Violence Court Support Program have launched a new project. The project, funded for 12 months, is auspiced by the Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre in Lismore. Our brief is to develop an appropriate model upon which an Aboriginal Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme can be based. The main objectives include:

- To look at ways that will make it easier for Aboriginal women in the area to apply for an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO)
- To increase Aboriginal women's understanding of the process and the consequences of an AVO
- To establish structures which ensure that Aboriginal women can bring an AVO process to completion.

A number of reports have been prepared which highlight the urgent need to develop strategies that will increase access to existing services for Aboriginal women. These include: *Mabourah Dubay (Many Women) – North Coast Aboriginal Women's Access to Law Report*, December 1998; and *How do I prove I saw his shadow?*, Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre, January 2000 (see page 10 of this issue)

Given our time limitations, we envisage a draft of the project will be presented at focus groups by the end of November. Focus groups will be held in TAFE colleges and in community settings. One of our venues will be a cruise on the river for three hours!

In response to the education aspect of our project we have been looking at different ways that information can be given. As well as the usual posters etc, we have arranged for time on a local radio station on a fortnightly basis. This will be ongoing and will cover

more than the AVO process. We have also gained permission to visit high schools to talk with students about family violence. We are planning to produce a play for these sessions. There are many more ideas running around in our heads that have yet to be harnessed and developed.

### Further information

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## NEW PUBLICATIONS/REVIEWS

### Domestic violence in the child protection system: seeing double

Ann Fleck-Henderson (2000) *Children and Youth Services Review*, Vol.22, No. 5, pp. 333-354

THIS article is part of a two volume special issue on 'Woman Abuse and Child Protection: A Tumultuous Marriage' in the journal *Children and Youth Services Review*. It addresses the difficult issue of how child protection services can incorporate the growing awareness of the overlap of child abuse and domestic violence into their practice. Fleck-Henderson argues that training alone is necessary but insufficient to respond to the child protection implications of domestic violence, since training alone 'does not erase the contradictions and tensions between the perspectives of child protection and women's advocacy'. She asserts that the different traditions and perspectives of domestic violence and child protection systems cannot be combined, necessitating ongoing collaboration and consultations between the two systems to achieve what she terms "seeing double". Rather than seeing the different histories and traditions of the child protection and domestic violence service systems as purely problematic, she argues that: 'The tension between their priorities is a useful tension. There are advantages to seeing double'.

While training can address attitudes and myths about battered women and perpetrators, the complexity of the issues raised and the newness of the collaboration make ongoing support for child protection workers critical as they are called on to apply their heightened awareness about domestic violence to child protection practice. Further, the experience of domestic violence workers does not

include dealing with many of the women who come to the attention of the child protection system. For example, women in contact with refuges have usually identified themselves as victims of abuse and have been through a complex process involving 'balancing hopes and fears, weighing feelings of loyalty and danger, assessing losses and gains'. Women who come into contact with child protection services may not have been through a process such as this.

The Massachusetts model of employing domestic violence specialists within the child protection agency is proposed as a useful model. From the experience of this program, Fleck-Henderson outlines some of the complex and challenging issues which have been raised by child protection workers through the Domestic Violence Project consultations. These include judging whether to keep cases open or not; assessing risk if people "deny" or minimise; knowing when pushing for safety increases the risk of violence, and knowing what to do when this is the case; knowing responsibilities in dealing with abusive men; and considering cultural differences in domestic violence cases. She concludes that, since the issues are so complex and so little is known at this stage, active collaboration between the child protection and domestic violence services is essential on a case by case basis in order to combine the knowledge and experience of each system. This is one of the most useful articles to date on this challenging topic.

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Taskforce on Violence Report, 2000**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence

*Reviewed by Susan Green BSW (Hons), Wiradjuri. Aboriginal Research and Resource Centre, University of New South Wales*

THE Report of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence should be essential reading for every person who works in a health, welfare, education, legal or related field or is researching or studying within these areas. As a reviewer, I think that politicians and public figures should not only know the information contained within this report, but should be actively addressing its concerns and recommendations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people cannot wait a moment longer for these issues to be addressed and it is the responsibility of the whole of Australian society to ensure immediate action.

The report is comprehensive in its examination and critique of violence within Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander communities both in a historical and contemporary context. It starts by defining violence and the different forms it takes. These forms have included (and still do) colonisation, cultural and spiritual violence, domestic violence, violence against children, violence against individuals and communities as well as self-harm. It goes on to discuss 'dysfunctional community syndrome' which has resulted within many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities due to the nature and extent of the violence within communities. The report then moves on to discuss a number of causes and contributing factors that result in violence and reinforce its continuation, as well as the effects upon the victim, the perpetrator, the community and the broader society. When examining the causes and contributing effects, this report uses a variety of theoretical perspectives to critique the violence and its causes.

However, in the examination of the historical and structural causes of violence within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, this report does not let the individual perpetrator off lightly, or indeed any of us. For we are all implicated, either through our actions or in our silence. Fortunately, unlike many previous reports, this report does not stop there. The women who compiled this report have provided a number of realistic and practical recommendations to bring about change. These recommendations cover a number of areas: government's role; economic sustainability; alcohol and other drugs; education; health and well-being; families and security; justice; land; spirit; culture; and identity. What needs to happen now is for all sectors within government, human service organisations and communities to take this report seriously and to implement its recommendations without delay.

No one who reads this report can escape, nor should they, its horrendous message. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are dying at alarming rates from violence and the structures that have caused and are still causing the violence are continuing to be reinforced. Although this report is based in Queensland, sadly however, the horrific reality that it presents is duplicated in every state of Australia. This report calls for all to take responsibility for what has and still is happening and to do something about it.

The report is available on-line:

<http://www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au/publications/main.html>

The Queensland Government response to the Task Force Report is also available at this site.

## Domestic Violence Action and Resources (DVAR)

THE forthcoming edition of *Domestic Violence Action and Resources* (DVAR), the magazine of the Domestic Violence Resource Centre in Queensland is entitled "Pushing the Margins". Articles in this issue consider a variety of extremely interesting and thought provoking topics, including: the challenge of feminist law reform; the role of formal education to promote justice and non-violence; the issues for children and women when families are affected by the imprisonment of a parent; claims about husband battering; and the re-normalisation of wife battering.

### Further information

Domestic Violence Resource Centre  
PO Box 3278 SOUTH BRISBANE QLD BC 4101  
Phone: (07) 3217 2544; Fax: (07) 3217 2679  
Email: [itsupport@dvrc.org.au](mailto:itsupport@dvrc.org.au)  
Website: [www.dvrc.org.au](http://www.dvrc.org.au).

## RESEARCH FINDINGS/INITIATIVES

### 'How do I prove I saw his shadow?'

#### *Responses to breaches of Apprehended Violence Orders: a consultation with women and police in the Richmond Local Area Command of NSW*

Hayley Katzen, in conjunction with Loretta Kelly, Indigenous researcher, for Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre, 2000

'How do I prove I saw his shadow?' reports on a systematic examination of police practices in a rural/regional area in Northern NSW. The study aimed to determine:

- The nature of the police responses to alleged breaches of Apprehended Violence Orders
- The factors which affect the police response
- The effect of this response on protected persons

The study examined the police response from two angles: the 'law enforcement response' which considers whether officers complied with legal and policy directions in relation to law enforcement and the 'customer service response' which considers whether protected persons were satisfied with the

response, even when it did not comply with legal and policy direction. The study is grounded in a comprehensive review of the Australian and overseas literature. The legal and policy context of Apprehended Violence Orders is clearly established before the study's findings are presented. The methodology involved the use of a variety of data sources – interviews with thirty seven Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, examination of police records, and focus groups and questionnaires to elicit the opinions of police officers. The interviews with the women provide a rich and detailed picture of the experiences of women seeking protection through the use of AVOs and the complexities with which they are grappling. The placement of the women's narratives alongside the official police records is effective in providing insights which could not have been gained from reliance on only one source of data.

The report finds examples of cases in which women received appropriate customer service and were satisfied with the police response. However, it was more often the case that women were not treated with 'compassion and courtesy' and officers did not assume responsibility for intervention. The report explores some of the factors which influenced the police response, such as whether there have been previous domestic violence complaints and the protected person's expressed wish. The study found that distance and the isolation of rural women appeared to affect police action. For example, the majority of breaches occurred after hours when rural stations are not staffed. Based on its findings, the report provides a comprehensive list of recommendations for the Police Service, Attorney-General's Department and the Departments of Health and Community Services. This report contains a wealth of information about the process of policing domestic violence and is valuable because it addresses this issue in a rural/regional context.

### Further information

Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre  
Phone: (02) 6622 3386; Email: [nrclc@spot.com.au](mailto:nrclc@spot.com.au)  
*Please note this also the contact for obtaining the video 'Sharon's Story' which was featured in the July edition of this newsletter.*

## Recovery from family violence research project

In February 2000, Chisholm Institute (TAFE), in partnership with Women's Health in the South East (WHISE) was awarded the tender for this new Victorian Statewide research project funded by the

Department of Human Services through the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* initiative. Two researchers from Chisholm (Lorraine and Louise) and one from WHISE (Karen) have been appointed to the project and have formed the Research Work Group. The project commenced in July this year and is due to be completed in October 2001.

The aim of the project is:

- to define the nature of women's recovery from family violence
- to identify the elements that maximise women's recovery.

The Research Work Group has a number of specific objectives:

- to define "recovery" as it relates to women's experiences of family violence
- to identify indicators of women's recovery
- to identify elements and strategies required to optimise women's recovery
- to identify barriers to women's recovery
- to develop a detailed "Framework for Recovery"
- to provide a set of principles for support services and Government agencies to address women's recovery from family violence

The project will be using Participatory Action Research methodology, applied within a feminist framework. The key elements of this approach are collaboration and participation. The researchers see this as an appropriate way to explore and better understand the lived experience of women. The team will be striving to ensure equitable representation of the experiences of Koori women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, lesbians, and women with disabilities, in metropolitan, regional and rural areas.

A literature review has been conducted to identify any previous related work. It appears that the term 'recovery' has not been commonly used in connection with women's experiences of family violence and there is surprisingly little published work that addresses the concept directly. The term 'recovery' seems to be more commonly associated with addiction to alcohol and other drugs, or with illness or injury. The Research Work Group has therefore been exploring other models of recovery, for example models of recovery from trauma, and other words some women use to describe the concept, for example 'healing'.

The Research Work Group has recently

**DEADLINE for contributions to the December newsletter: November 10, 2000**

commenced exploratory discussions with individual women, women's groups and women workers within community agencies. During August, interviews were conducted in the Hume region, assisted greatly by the participation and expertise of the Family Violence Networker in the region, several key local workers and the women themselves. The research team welcomes any ideas or information related to this project.

### Further information

Recovery from Family Violence Research Project  
Chisholm Institute  
488 South Road MOORABBIN VIC 3189  
Phone: (03) 9207 5758; Fax: (03) 9209 5914  
Email: l.wilson@chisholm.vic.edu.au  
Email: l.morphett@chisholm.vic.edu.au  
or WHISE  
2nd Floor, 54-58 Wells Street  
FRANKSTON VIC 3199  
Phone: (03) 9783 3211; Fax: (03) 9783 3212  
Email: whise@vicnet.net.au

## FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES/SEMINARS

### Stalking

**December 7-8, 2000 Sydney**  
Australian Institute of Criminology

#### Registration

Conference Co-ordinators  
Ph: (02) 6292 9000; Fax: (02) 6292 9002  
Email: conference@netinfo.com.au  
Website:  
[www.aic.gov.au/conferences/stalking/index.html](http://www.aic.gov.au/conferences/stalking/index.html)

### 4th Australian Women's Health Conference: Politics, Action and Renewal

**19-21 February 2001 Adelaide**  
Australian Women's Health Network

Conference Secretariat  
Festival City Conventions Pty Ltd  
PO Box 949 KENT TOWN SA 5071  
Phone: (08) 8363 1307 Fax: (08) 8363 1604  
Email: info@fcconventions.com.au  
Website: <http://www.awhn.org.au/>

## INTERNET SITES

### Home Office domestic violence site

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/domesticviolence/>

UK site which contains a number of useful documents including, for example, 'Multi-Agency Guidance for addressing Domestic Violence' and 'Reducing Domestic Violence... What Works? Briefing Notes'.

### The Project for Research on Welfare, Work and Domestic Violence

<http://www.ssw.umich.edu/trapped/>

School of Social Work, University of Michigan

Provides national coordination of research and public education on the relationship of domestic violence to poverty and welfare use. Contains many publications and research reports.

### Women with disabilities Australia

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

Excellent site with many on-line articles, reports and papers on a wide range of topics, including violence and abuse. Reflects the commitment by WWDA to providing 'accessible, acceptable, and appropriate online information to women with disabilities' and to 'providing WWDA reports and documents to its membership and the broader community'.

### World wide web resources for social workers

<http://www.nyu.edu/socialwork/wwrsw/>

Please note the incorrect URL for this site appeared in Newsletter #1

### Muslims against family violence

[http://www.steps-together.org/projects\\_mafv.html](http://www.steps-together.org/projects_mafv.html)

CONTACT the Clearinghouse by phone, fax or email for assistance in locating information about domestic and family violence.

## ONLINE DOCUMENTS

### The Way Forward: Children, Young People and Domestic Violence – Conference Proceedings, Melbourne, April 2000

[http://www.padv.dpmc.gov.au/whatnew\\_forum.htm](http://www.padv.dpmc.gov.au/whatnew_forum.htm)

This forum was a showcase of *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* work in research and evaluation, relationship skills, indigenous family violence, peer education, practice standards, community education and development and identifying the links between domestic violence and child protection. It also highlighted good practice in allied fields.

### A handbook for health and social service professionals responding to abuse during pregnancy

Family Violence Prevention Unit, Health Canada, 1999 (available on the Canadian National Clearinghouse on Family Violence site)

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/familyviolence/wifeabus.htm>

Comprehensive Canadian resource which aims to help health and social service professionals to identify and respond appropriately to the needs of women who are abused during pregnancy. Defines abuse and describes its dynamics, with particular detail about the dynamics of abuse during a women's child bearing years. Covers identifying abuse, screening for abuse, handling difficult situations, assessment/ history taking, assessing risk and documenting abuse. Contains sample protocols and flow charts.

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.

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**Partnerships Against Domestic Violence**

*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.