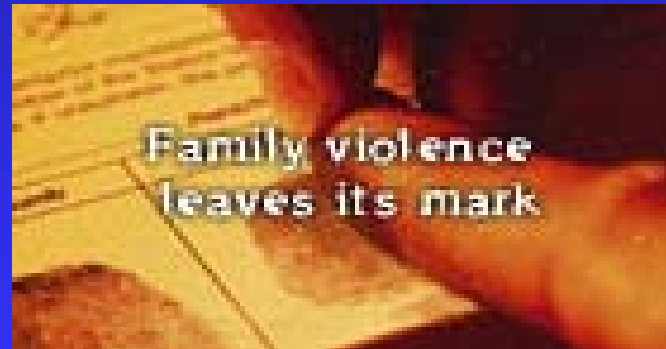


Safe at Home:

Presentation for the Australian Domestic and Family Violence
Clearinghouse

**Better Policing, Better Outcomes:
Changing Police culture to prevent domestic violence
and homicide.**



December 2008

Commander Colin Little

Tasmania Police

Safe at Home:

- A whole of government, integrated response to family violence in Tasmania.
- A criminal justice response and intervention system designed to bring about a reduction in the incidence of family violence in the medium to long term.

Policy Consideration:

- Founded on the principle of 'primacy of the safety of the victim.'
 - ◆ 'In the administration of this Act the safety, psychological well-being and interests of people affected by family violence are the paramount considerations' (S3 *Family Violence Act 2004*)

- Uses a:
 - ◆ pro-arrest,
 - ◆ pro-prosecution and
 - ◆ pro-intervention strategy.

- Involves management of victim risk and safety issues, through information sharing and case co-ordination.

Approach identified was one that:

- Recognised the criminal nature of family violence;
- Placed responsibility with perpetrators;
- Victims should not be placed in a position of determining the response of the justice system;
- Police are best placed to respond to incidents of family violence where immediate intervention is required;
- Recognised children as victims in their own right;
- Wherever possible victims should have the choice of remaining in, or returning quickly, to their own home;
- Included perpetrator programs;
- Was based on the 'what works' literature.

Historical Perspective:

- Historically, responses have focused upon assisting victims to leave violent relationships by providing them with emergency accommodation, practical assistance and counselling services.
- Police faced dilemmas when trying to balance victim ambivalence about proceeding with matters and the responsibility to protect vulnerable persons.
- This approach alone fails to reduce the incidence of family violence and protect those affected.

Historical Perspective:

- Limited appreciation of dynamics and nature of family violence;
- Often reticent to arrest and prosecute offenders – particularly where victim reluctant;
- Involvement would generally be separation of parties, provision of alternate accommodation for victim and resolution through advice/referral to counselling services;
- Restraint Orders applied for as last resort;
- Variable response;
- Relations with counselling services;
- Information guarded and not shared;
- Clients dealt with in isolation.

Impetus for Change:

- Incidents of Family Violence increasing;
- 2000 – 2003 saw seven women murdered by their partners or ex-partners in Tasmania
- Domestic violence was estimated to cost Tasmania \$18m per year. (KPMG 1994).

Opportunities:

- Tasmania Together Goal 2:
 - ◆ “To have a community where people feel safe and are safe in all aspects of their lives”
- Business Plan:
 - ◆ “Making our communities safer by: - reducing assaults (and) intervening more effectively in domestic violence issues”

Implementation Challenges:

- Implementation of a 24/7, 1800 Family Violence and Response and Referral line;
- Resourcing, training and implementation of specialist Victim Safety Response Teams;
- Recruiting of additional specialist family violence prosecutors;
- Development of a Risk Assessment Screening Tool;
- Residential safety audits and security upgrades, and safety planning for victims;
- Development of the *Family Violence Act 2004*;
- The development of the Family Violence Management System
- Development of protocols for a wide range of police responses and integrating them into the process of other agencies.

Tasmania Police

- Approximately 66800 sq kms
- Total population 500,000
- 1245 sworn officers
- 74 police stations
- Police to population ratio 1:500



Change - The Challenges:

- Overcoming resistance to change associated with implementation of significantly altered business process;
- Cultural and attitudinal changes required by key partners, including police and the general public toward family violence;
- Developing the necessary trust between stakeholders to support genuinely collaborative approaches.

Change - Leadership:

- High level support from Government;
- Opposition Parties supportive;
- Heads of agency support.

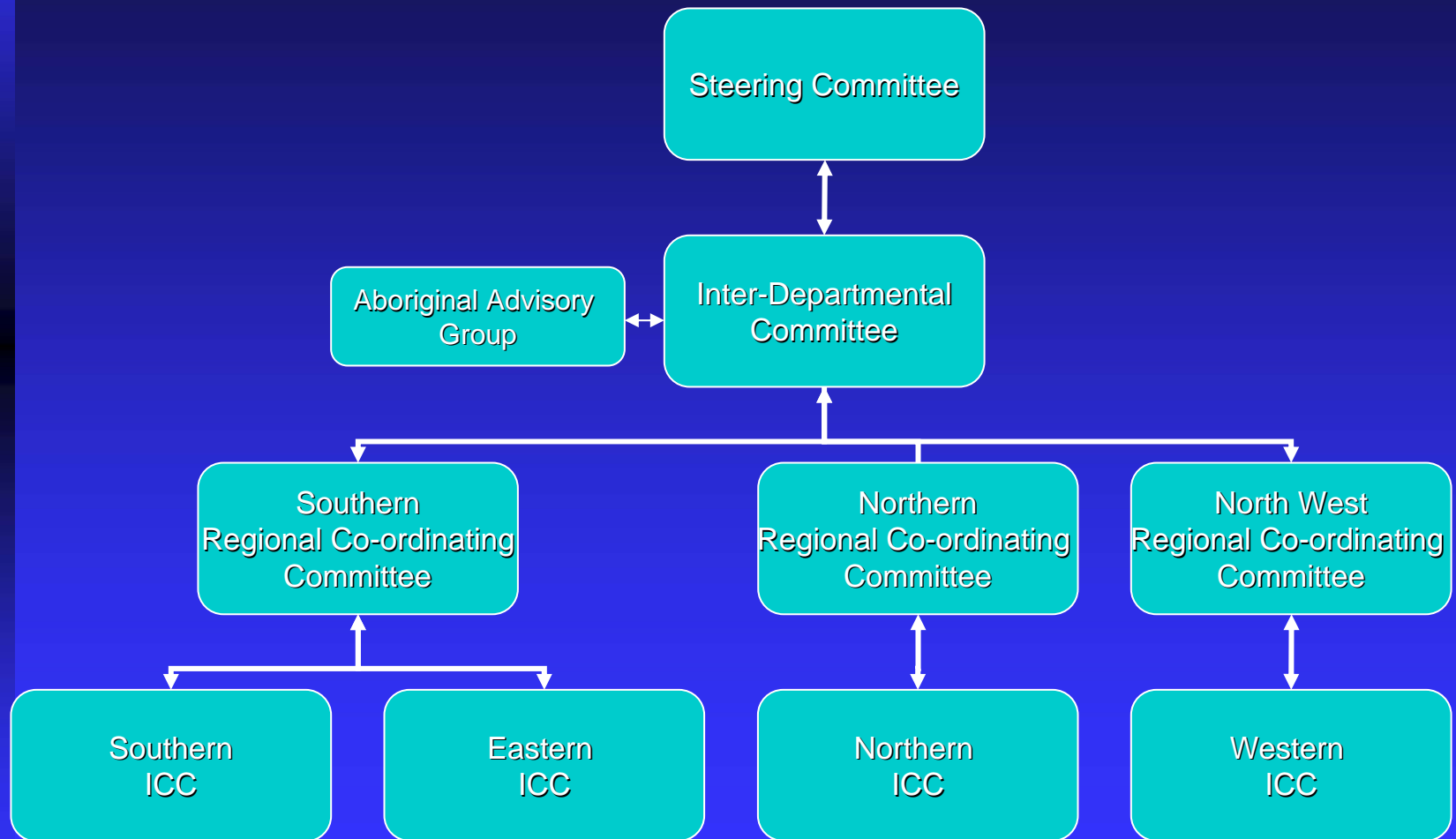
Change - Training/Education/Communication:

- Combined agency training delivered on a regional basis;
- Interagency workshops on significant issues such as case coordination and integration;
- Regional training sessions for non-government stakeholders and other special interest groups.
- Communications/Media strategy.

Change - Training Police:

- Acknowledgement of past failings;
- Specialist training for selected police developed and delivered by external consultant;
- External stakeholders also attended;
- Extensive generalist training.

Change - Management:



Change - Management:

- Leadership capabilities

Policy Change:

- **Previously:**

It is the policy of Tasmania Police to adopt a proactive arrest and prosecution approach to the handling and resolution of domestic violence incidents.

- **Safe at Home:**

Where, in a family violence situation, the exercise of a power of arrest arise as an option, the policy position is that *the power of arrest should be exercised unless there are compelling reasons for the exercise of some other option.*

In such cases members must be prepared to explain the reasons why the power of arrest was not exercised.

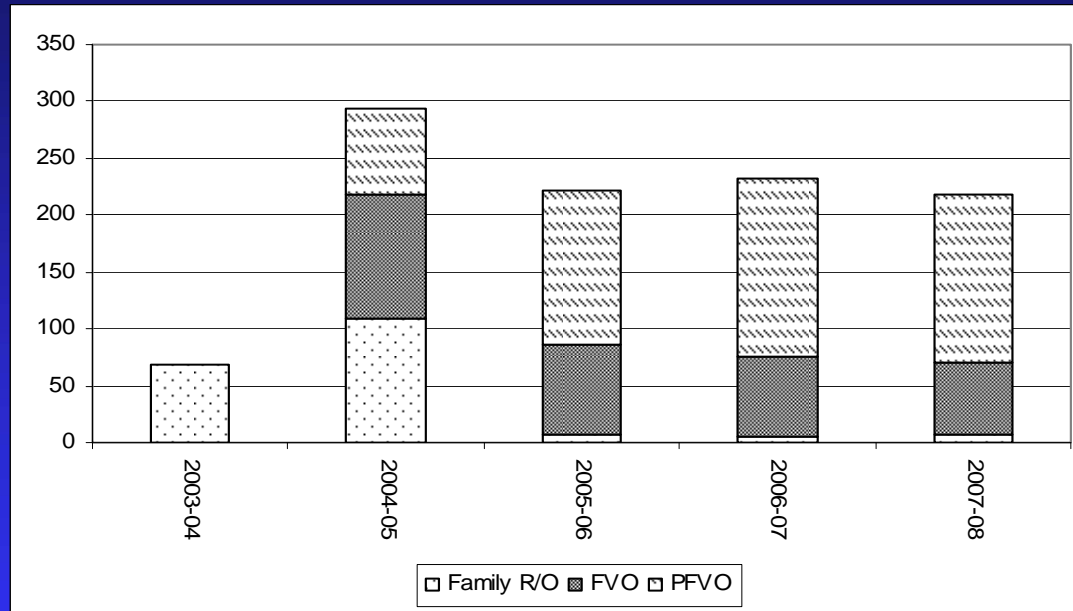
(Transitional Arrangements 2005)

The response – A snapshot:

- The number of family violence reports increased by 52% from 278 in January 2004 to 422 in January 2005;
- The number of arrests for family violence increased 136% from 91 in January 2004 to 215 January 2005;
- As a proportion of incidents attended, the arrest rate increased from 32.7% in January 2004 to 50.9% in January 2005;

The longer term trend:

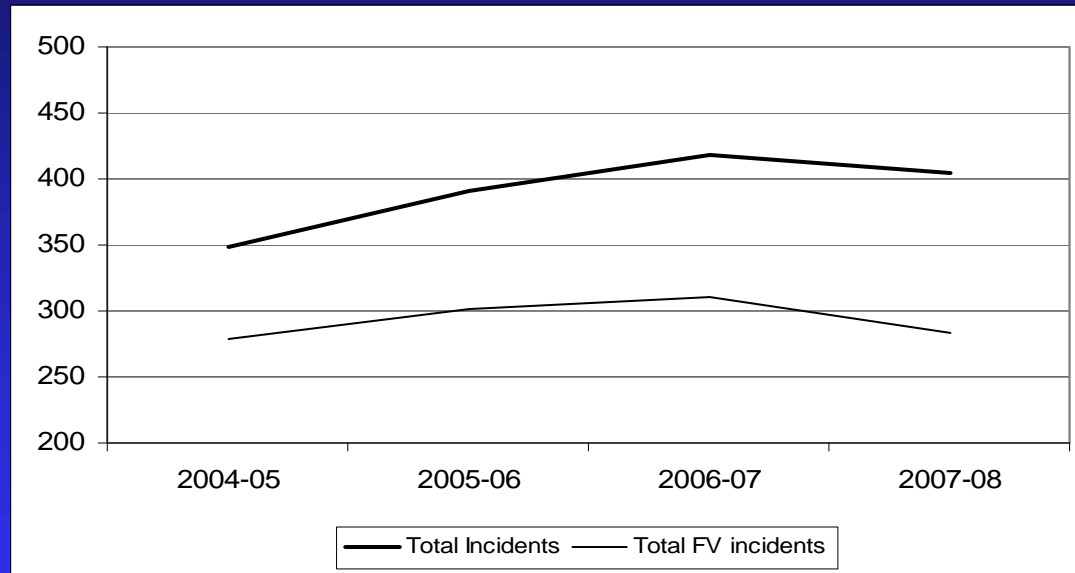
Court Activity



- This graph shows the average number of orders made per month for the last 5 years.
- Prior to the *Family Violence 2004* being proclaimed in March 2005, Restraint Orders were the available protective orders. The overall demand for new orders has changed with the majority now being issued by Tasmania Police rather than the Courts.

The longer term trend:

Police Activity



- The total number of incidents attended by Police during the first three years of *Safe at Home* increased annually however a decline is now starting to be seen.
- The second line shows those incidents where evidence of violence existed. These have followed a similar pattern but the decrease in 2007-08 has been greater.

Culture Change:

- The safety audit of adult victims of family violence has seen improvement, particularly at the first point of contact with police.
- The point of most significant change identified by stakeholders has been within the culture and response of Tasmanian Police, driven primarily by requirements placed on officers by the new legislation, and supported by highly regarded leadership within the police.

(Urbis: Review of the *Family Violence Act 2004* [Tas], March 2008)

Questions?

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