

# NEWSLETTER 42

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## EDITORIAL

**Welcome** to the Spring edition of the Clearinghouse *Newsletter*. This edition is full of good news and exciting developments. The announcement of the review of the impact of Commonwealth laws on family violence victims was greeted with great enthusiasm by all of us at the Clearinghouse. This review is really the missing piece in the puzzle and is needed to add a broad range of evidence to the already thorough work undertaken by the Australian Law Reform Commission this year.

The other fantastic development for the Clearinghouse was the funding by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations of our Domestic Violence Workplace Rights and Entitlements Project. This project involves working with unions and employers to raise domestic violence as a workplace issue and put in place provisions for leave, policy and support. These provisions will enable women experiencing domestic violence to remain employed and therefore avoid the downward spiral into poverty which so often comes with the decision to leave a violent relationship.

Other good news stories featured in this *Newsletter* include the long awaited announcement of the national telephone counselling service for victims of both domestic/family violence and sexual assault. This service should fill the gap for those people who for geographic or other reasons are unable to access counselling.

The further rollout of Safe at Home/Staying Home Leaving Violence Services in both Western Australia and New South Wales is also to be welcomed. The Clearinghouse has a keen interest in this model of service delivery. Having been instrumental in the initial research, the Clearinghouse has produced a paper and several articles, held a forum and generally championed the development of these policy initiatives.

Further good news is the confirmation of our funding for a further year – meaning we are now funded until the end of 2011. This continued



funding will also result in some changes in what we do, one of the first that you might notice being modifications to the *Newsletter*. From Summer 2011, our *Newsletter* will be changing. The growth in the subscriptions to e-news means we now provide you with updates on events, recent publications and grants in electronic form each month. Rather than repeating this material in the *Newsletter*, we will be working to provide you with some slightly longer articles and discussions. We hope you will find the new format more engaging and informative. As part of the new funding arrangements, the Clearinghouse will also be working in closer collaboration with the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault.

We have also decided, both for economic and environmental reasons, that from next year we will not be printing the Issues and Stakeholder Papers. We will be advising you of the publication of the papers by email and providing you with a download link and download format options. I know some people will not be happy with this decision but it was taken following much discussion and we hope you will support it by continuing to access and read the papers online.

Finally, we wish everyone well in their preparations for the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence, commencing on the 25 November, and also for White Ribbon Day activities. If you would like us to publicise your event or initiative, please contact us to have them included in our e-news (circulated on the first of every month) and on the Conference and Events page of our web site.

I hope you find this *Newsletter* interesting and we look forward to sending you our new look *Newsletter* next time.

**Gaby Marcus, Director**

## NEWS

**Federal election results**

Following the federal election on 21 August, Julia Gillard has become the first elected female Prime Minister of Australia. The Hon. Kate Ellis MP is the new Minister for the Status of Women, while the Hon. Jenny Macklin MP will continue as Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

[www.alp.org.au/federal-government/minister](http://www.alp.org.au/federal-government/minister)

**Government launches new national telephone counselling service**

1800 RESPECT, a new 24-hour telephone counselling service for Australians who have experienced or are at risk of physical or sexual violence, was launched by the Commonwealth Minister for the Status of Women, the Hon. Kate Ellis, on 5 October. The service will soon be expanded to include online counselling and coordination with existing state and territory domestic violence and sexual assault services. It will also provide professional support, such as debriefing and supervision, to staff from small and isolated services which deal with people affected by physical or sexual violence.

Medibank Health Solutions will manage 1800 RESPECT, with the New South Wales Rape Crisis Centre providing professional, specialist counselling services. The Australian Government has provided \$12.5 million over four years towards the service.

[www.kateellis.com.au/newsroom/380](http://www.kateellis.com.au/newsroom/380)

**Domestic violence leave clause approved – Australian first and world best practice**

The Australian Services Union (ASU) and Surf Coast Shire in Victoria have agreed to the country's first domestic violence paid leave clause. Shire employees will have access to up to twenty days paid leave annually if they are victims of domestic violence. The clause is being heralded as world's best practice.

[www.asuvic.asn.au/family\\_violence\\_release2.pdf](http://www.asuvic.asn.au/family_violence_release2.pdf)

**WA Government announces Safe at Home service providers**

On 2 August, the Western Australian Minister for Child Protection, the Hon. Robyn McSweeney, announced the successful service providers who will deliver support programs to keep women and children safe in their homes as part of the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. The eleven services will share in \$6.8 million funding over the next four years.

[www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/WACabinetMinistersSearch.aspx?ItemId=133833&minister=McSweeney&admin=Barnett](http://www.mediastatements.wa.gov.au/Pages/WACabinetMinistersSearch.aspx?ItemId=133833&minister=McSweeney&admin=Barnett)

**ALRC report to be tabled in Parliament**

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) delivered the final report on its 2010 Family Violence Inquiry to the Commonwealth Attorney-General on 10 October. The report, titled *Family violence — a national legal response*, should be tabled in Parliament within fifteen sitting days of that reporting date.

[www.alrc.gov.au/news-media/children/fvi-e-newsletter-october-2010-final-report-submitted-attorney-general](http://www.alrc.gov.au/news-media/children/fvi-e-newsletter-october-2010-final-report-submitted-attorney-general)

## GRANTS

**AIATSIS Research Grants**

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) funds research in a wide range of areas. Applications for the 2011 grant round will open in November 2010 (date TBA) and close on 10 January 2011.

[www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/grants/grants.html](http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/grants/grants.html)

**Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month 2011, Queensland**

The Queensland Department of Communities has a total of \$65 000 available to support community organisations to run an event or activities during Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month in May 2011. Applications are due by 4pm on 25 October 2010.

[www.communityservices.qld.gov.au/department/funding/funding-available](http://www.communityservices.qld.gov.au/department/funding/funding-available)

**James Cook University PhD Scholarship**

There is an opportunity for a well-qualified student to take up a PhD scholarship within the new multidisciplinary Cairns Institute at James Cook University. The scholarship broadly focuses on postcolonial perspectives and criminology. Stipend: \$22 500 per annum tax free plus \$7000 project support (one off).

[www.jcu.edu.au/grs/scholarships/JCUPRD1\\_063594.html](http://www.jcu.edu.au/grs/scholarships/JCUPRD1_063594.html)

**ALRC to investigate the impact of Commonwealth laws on family violence victims**

As the 2010 ALRC Family Violence Inquiry identified issues beyond its scope, the Commonwealth Attorney-General has announced a second inquiry into the impact of Commonwealth laws on those experiencing family violence, including the impact of child support and family assistance law, immigration law, employment law, social security law, superannuation law and privacy provisions. The ALRC is due to report to the Attorney-General no later than 30 November 2011.

[www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/www/ministers/mcclelland.nsf/Page/MediaReleases\\_2010\\_ThirdQuarter\\_16July2010-Governmentlaunchestwonewanti-domesticviolenceinitiatives](http://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/www/ministers/mcclelland.nsf/Page/MediaReleases_2010_ThirdQuarter_16July2010-Governmentlaunchestwonewanti-domesticviolenceinitiatives)

**New chair of Domestic and Family Violence Strategy Implementation Advisory Group, Queensland**

Heather Nancarrow has been appointed as chair of the newly-established Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Strategy Implementation Advisory Group. As leader of this new team of six from across Queensland, she will be reviewing the state's *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act* as well as advising on the government's strategic plan for domestic and family violence.

[www.campusreview.com.au/pages/section/article.php?s=Topics&ss=Appointments&idArticle=18324](http://www.campusreview.com.au/pages/section/article.php?s=Topics&ss=Appointments&idArticle=18324)

## CLEARINGHOUSE UPDATE

### Financial security project

The Clearinghouse has completed its project on financial security for women affected by domestic violence. A final report on the project was submitted to the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs in September and we are now in the process of developing articles and practice notes on key issues arising from the research.

### Reference group meeting

The Clearinghouse reference group convened on 26 July 2010. The reference group consists of highly regarded professionals from practice, academic and policy arenas related to the issues of domestic and family violence in Australia. The meeting focused on future directions and priorities for the Clearinghouse and the domestic and family violence sector. The Clearinghouse Senior Research Officer, Rochelle Braaf, also presented key findings from the financial security project and sought feedback from members of the reference group on the final report and its recommendations.

### Conference papers

Clearinghouse staff attended numerous conferences over the past three months and delivered the following papers:

- Barrett Meyering I 2010, 'Employment as a path to financial independence: why work matters to women experiencing domestic violence', *Our Work Our Lives*, Darwin, 12-13 August
- McFerran L 2010, 'Domestic violence: workplace rights and entitlements', *Our Work Our Lives*, Darwin, 12-13 August
- McFerran L 2010, 'Homeless older women: why Australia urgently needs a gendered homeless and housing policy', *6th National Homelessness Conference*, Brisbane, 1-3 September.

[www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/other\\_publications.htm](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/other_publications.htm)

### New special collection

The Clearinghouse has released a new special collection of resources on the intersection between domestic violence and child protection. Key themes explored in the collection include the co-occurrence of domestic violence and child protection matters, the impact of exposure to domestic violence on children, and best practice in addressing the intersection between domestic violence and child protection. Updates are also planned for some of the previous special collections.

[www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/specialcollections.htm](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/specialcollections.htm)

## CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

From 2011, the Clearinghouse *Newsletter* is moving to a new format, with more space for discussion and debate. We welcome submissions from service workers, researchers and individuals and encourage you to contact us with your ideas.

If you wish to submit an article or review, please email a one paragraph outline to the address below. We will provide you with feedback and discuss a deadline for submission.

For more information contact the Clearinghouse at [clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au](mailto:clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au) or on (02) 9385 2990.

## Domestic Violence Workplace Rights and Entitlements Project

The Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) has funded the Clearinghouse for eighteen months to promote the introduction of domestic violence clauses and entitlements in enterprise agreements nationally. Working with partner unions and employer bodies, the Clearinghouse will create tools and policies to support women in the workplace. These resources will include: safety assessment and planning for workplaces; targeted training for workplace personnel; and surveys of a number of sectors to establish the baseline data we need to monitor and evaluate successful outcomes for women.

The project has already had one major win, with the Australian Services Union (ASU) and Surf Coast Shire in Victoria recently endorsing an agreement providing up to twenty days paid domestic violence leave. The Clearinghouse congratulates everyone involved in this historic achievement.

A domestic violence clause was also included in the general staff agreement recently passed at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). The clause states that the university may, where appropriate, grant a worker experiencing domestic violence access to sick, carer's and compassionate leave. Unlike the Surf Coast agreement, the clause does not create a separate entitlement to domestic violence leave.

Other unions are also active on this issue. The Women's Committee at Unions NSW and the Victorian Trades Hall Council have convened working groups to promote further take-up of the clauses. In New South Wales, negotiations between the Public Services Association and the State Government are underway for an award variation so that public sector workers can be covered by domestic violence clauses.

Ludo McFerran is the Clearinghouse worker on this project. In August, she presented to the third national conference on women and industrial relations, *Our Work Our Lives*, in Darwin. Since then she has visited Victoria, Queensland and South Australia.

A second project officer based in Victoria, Robyn Dale, has been appointed to work on the project. Robyn is the director of URCOT, a Melbourne based applied research and development centre established in 1991 to assist managers, employees and their unions to maximise the benefits from organisational and technological change. She will take major responsibility for the project work in Victoria, developing resources with the ASU and Surf Coast Shire as a priority.

Further information is available on the Clearinghouse web site, where you can find the ASU clauses and a fact sheet on the project. More will follow as we develop the resources.

[www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/dv\\_workplace\\_rights\\_entitlements\\_project.htm](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/dv_workplace_rights_entitlements_project.htm)

[www.tanyaplibersek.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2010/Pages/anti\\_domestic\\_violence\\_initiatives\\_16july10.aspx](http://www.tanyaplibersek.fahcsia.gov.au/mediareleases/2010/Pages/anti_domestic_violence_initiatives_16july10.aspx)

### Recent publications

- Dimopoulos M 2010, *Implementing legal empowerment strategies to prevent family violence in new and emerging communities*, Issues Paper 20
- Breckenridge J & James K 2010, *Thinking about homicide risk: a practice framework for counselling*, Stakeholder Paper 9

[www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/publications.html](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/publications.html)

## FEATURE

### Domestic violence peaks: a profile

For several years, the Clearinghouse has argued in favour of Commonwealth funding towards the establishment of a broad based domestic and family violence peak in every Australian state and territory. Such bodies would not only play a role in advocating on behalf of the sector in state and national policy forums – they would also directly resource the sector to achieve better performance standards, through training, accreditation, information sharing and the development of protocols.

This article profiles two bodies which currently fulfil these roles: Domestic Violence Victoria (DV Vic) and the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA). We invited representatives from the two organisations to tell us about their history and current work.

Three common themes emerge from their responses: first, the changing nature of their membership base; second, their dual roles of advocacy and sector development; and finally, the critical role of peaks in promoting innovation.

[www.womenscouncil.com.au](http://www.womenscouncil.com.au)  
[www.dvvic.org.au](http://www.dvvic.org.au)

### Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA)

by Angela Hartwig, CEO

#### History

In 1977, nine services decided to coordinate their efforts and formed the Women's Refuge Group of WA Inc. The group sought to provide a unified voice for women's refuge services throughout the state and to advocate on behalf of women and children who were escaping violence in the home.

A restructure in 2004 saw us become the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA), building upon the existing solid foundation of the Women's Refuge Group while expanding the membership base criteria to represent a more diverse range of services, projects and initiatives, including domestic violence regional committees. We also committed to hosting quarterly forums and/or events, providing specialist training on current/emerging issues, and engaging in research.

The Women's Council now represents fifty-five women's refuges and domestic and family violence services across the state.



The Women's Council celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in October 2007.

### Current functions

The role of the Women's Council is to provide a voice on domestic and family violence issues that facilitates and promotes policy, legislative and program responses relevant to women and children who have experienced abuse. We operate from a feminist perspective, proactively advocating for social justice to further empowerment, access, equity and safety for all women and children.

Our four main functions are: sector development and capacity building; advocacy and policy development; innovative projects and research; and community education and training.

The Women's Council employs a CEO to perform the representative functions of the organisation. The Chairperson and Executive Committee members may also take on specific functions, such as attending meetings with the CEO, or be nominated by the Executive Committee to sit on an advisory group or working party, particularly if they have expertise, knowledge and interest in an area (e.g. the Domestic Violence Fatality Review Working Group).

In terms of sector development, we advocate that services adhere to the Service Standards and hold training workshops and forums to give workers the opportunity to gain knowledge and information that will assist their professional development. Whilst we do not have a formal role of mediating where services are experiencing problems or underperforming, we can assist services by discussing any difficulties they may be facing and offering them options for improving the situation.

With greater resources, the Women's Council would conduct more research, community awareness raising, training and education. We would also establish a women's refuge fund to assist women and children with small grants to buy essential items to make a fresh start.

### Advocating for women and services

The Women's Council sees itself as advocating on behalf of both services and victims. Refuge managers meet every two months at the Women's Council to discuss key issues and policies impacting on their organisations and the women and children they serve. They also share and exchange good practice and innovative programs that they may be running.

### Managing the relationship with government

The Women's Council has played a key role, together with the Department of Child Protection, in bringing together the domestic and family violence sector to discuss key state strategic directions and priorities relevant to women and children.

Building and maintaining networks and an open door policy between government and non-government organisations is critical to enable discussions about areas where there may be contention or conflict. Evidence-based research gathered by the Women's Council and the advocacy role of CEO and Chairperson are integral to ensuring that any difficult issues are negotiated and/or dealt with in a timely manner.

### Membership and consultation

There are two categories of membership of the Women's Council. Organisational members include women's refuges, women's domestic and family violence services, and domestic violence regional committees (now known as case management coordination services). Other organisations, including those providing perpetrator programs, and supportive individuals are eligible to become associated members.



Anne Moore, Women's Council Chairperson, speaking at the 19th Annual Silent Memorial March, Perth, 23 April 2009.

The increasingly diverse nature of our membership base mirrors developments within the sector itself – most refuges in Western Australia have themselves evolved to include a range of domestic and family violence services under their umbrella and those who stand alone must support the Women's Council vision, purpose and objectives.

Our organisational members are extensively involved in determining the policy position of the Women's Council. Typically, a draft paper goes out for feedback and comments; a second draft is then developed and goes out to members and then to the Executive Committee for endorsement. Decisions are made by a majority of votes but often consensus is reached in any case. Members are happy when they have had the opportunity to participate in policy debate and development.

### Key achievements

The focus of the Women's Council since its inception has been on the diverse experiences of women and child survivors of male violence. We have sought explanations, critically assessed service/state responses and advocated for a systemic approach through laws, policies and services that improve conditions for survivors and that challenge violence-supportive attitudes.

We have held regular forums and training events with keynote speakers that promote and showcase good practice models within Western Australia, as well as from interstate or overseas. We have also been able to secure funding for innovative projects, including safe at home programs.

Our greatest challenge remains to ensure that we have a long term strategy to reduce and prevent violence, based on cohesive interagency responses from police, courts, women's refuges, and domestic and family violence, health and community services.

### What makes a successful peak?

There are many qualities required for a successful peak but above all it needs to be able to:

- articulate a clear vision and purpose
- provide leadership
- build and maintain strong professional networks
- effectively represent the non-government domestic and family violence service sector
- provide valuable services to members, including policy advice, advocacy and public profile
- generate income through grants, donations and sponsorship.

Finally, a successful peak organisation is one which prioritises not only its own growth and sustainability, but also that of its membership.

## DV Victoria

by Alison Macdonald, Policy Officer

### History

DV Vic has grown from a coalition of refuges to realise its role as peak body for women's and children's family violence services in Victoria.

Its origins lie in the original Victorian Women's Refuge Group (later the Victorian Women's Refuge Services), established in 1976 as the advocacy arm of day-to-day service delivery to women and children living with violence. The group was not funded and member services took up this work as part of their core business.

With the advent of outreach services in the 1990s, the group was once again renamed the Victorian Women's Refuges and Associated Domestic Violence Services. The activities of the network were organised through the Coordinating Collective, loosely taking on the roles of a 'peak'.

In 2002, the Victorian Government formally acknowledged the work of the network over the previous twenty-five years and allocated funds for a twelve month project for a policy worker to support the group. Since then, there has been constant lobbying for project and recurrent funds for DV Vic workers, as the very active network and Coordinating Collective gradually handed over its advocacy and representative role.

DV Vic has now successfully transitioned from the Coordinating Collective into a full governance structure with a CEO and a board. While being a demanding period of change, it has been a positive opportunity to continue the sector's work in promoting women's safety and to role model good feminist governance.

### Current functions

DV Vic has two main roles. Our social reform role is to provide advocacy and leadership to change and enhance systems that prevent and respond to family violence. As a peak body, we facilitate communication between family violence services and other stakeholders to inform policy, protocol development and other requirements of systems integration and violence prevention.

Our other principal function is sector development. We work to enhance the family violence service system, facilitate systemic change and promote good practice in both violence prevention and service delivery for women and children currently experiencing family violence.

DV Vic does not have the authority to police underperforming services but we do play a role in supporting practice development and encouraging continuous quality improvement and accountability. We also advocate for better contract management by government departments to ensure women and children get comprehensive and professional responses.

Our advocacy and sector development roles are balanced by the two dedicated positions that take carriage of these functions, the Practice Development Manager and the Policy Officer. All staff undertake representative responsibilities, with the CEO taking on the higher level and higher profile tasks such as media interviews and meetings with ministers. On occasion we will ask a member or board member to represent DV Vic and we are currently writing up a protocol to guide member representation on these occasions.

Given adequate resources and increased capacity we would be able to establish policy positions which focus on particular portfolios (for example, law or children). We

would also be able to more fully engage with the work that sits within Victoria's plan for the prevention of violence against women; develop our fundraising, research and communications capacity; and expand our workforce development role.

### Advocating for women and services

As a peak body, DV Vic is a membership-based organisation; in this sense DV Vic exists to represent the interests of its constituency – specialist women and children's family violence agencies. However, there can be an inherent tension in this relationship, as the peak's constituency extends to, and is ultimately accountable to, women and children living with violence – the clients of the services that make up DV Vic's membership.

Until the review of our constitution two years ago, it was assumed that the interests of service providers and their clients were one and the same. However, there may be times when the interests of each group will diverge and possibly compete.

Our constitutional review resulted in a change to our role. The central focus of DV Vic's work is now to improve the safety and best interests of women and children by providing leadership to change and enhance systems that prevent and respond to family/domestic violence. This new focus is also enhanced by a new advocacy and policy development process which is not only informed by consultation with our members but also against current evidence which supports the safety and best interests of women and children. We are also planning to develop a mechanism whereby our advocacy development process can be complemented by input from women who have experienced family violence.

### Managing the relationship with government

Peak bodies are a critical component of active democracy. Good government recognises and values the role of advocacy in keeping government in touch with the experiences of marginalised groups within our community and formulating effective responses. In Victoria, the policy context of 'A Fairer Victoria' provides the basis of a form of compact between government and community that supports ongoing consultation. This doesn't mean we always agree but there are avenues for communication.

Sound advocacy development processes are also very useful in terms of maintaining a contrary position, as a position based in evidence is difficult to counter. A professional approach which does not personalise disagreement is also critical for peak bodies and government alike, each playing their role within what is, fundamentally, good democratic process.

### Membership and consultation

Membership eligibility was another aspect of our constitution review two years ago. Previously membership was open to services 'run by women, for women', however this was problematic given there were many services providing responses to women and children experiencing family violence who would not meet this criteria. DV Vic itself and many of our members also work collaboratively with men's services who operate from the same feminist paradigm in conceptualising the causes and dynamics of violence against women.

After a number of discussion papers and meetings with our membership, the board decided membership eligibility would be open to services who agreed with the understanding of the causes and dynamics of family violence as described in the DV Vic Code of Practice for Specialist Family Violence Services. DV Vic also supports

the ongoing political commitment to stand-alone women's services within the mix of a broad range of service types and responses required by women and children.

DV Vic is conscious of our responsibility to consult and work with all our members and the additional value which can be gained from a range of different perspectives. We ensure that there is proportional representation on our Board of Management, so that the diversity of the family violence sector is reflected in that group including outreach services. We will specifically seek out the perspectives of agencies representing special groups to ensure a diversity of voices is captured on particular issues.

### Key achievements

Since its inception, DV Vic has consolidated and established itself as a peak body. We have built up our role and strengthened our relationship with relevant stakeholders; and established better trust as a peak based on strong feminist, participatory and consultative processes with members, government, other relevant sectors (such as the homelessness and community legal sectors), media and philanthropic bodies.

One of DV Vic's early achievements was the development and subsequent implementation of our Code of Practice. The code, linked to our support for family violence agencies in developing reflective practice, realising continuous quality improvement and achieving accreditation – and doing so ourselves – has been a large part of DV Vic's focus over the past few years and has established our role in leading sector development.

DV Vic has also been a central player in the evolution of the integrated family violence system in Victoria to date. Victorian integration is still in its infancy and has a long way to go; the presence of a peak representative body in that process will continue to serve as an essential accountability measure to women and children experiencing family violence.

### What makes a successful peak?

Perhaps the most important element of working as a peak body is having an effective and robust mechanism for consultation and participation of the constituent body. In DV Vic's case this is our membership, however our ultimate accountability is to women and children experiencing family violence. One of the key tasks for our next strategic planning cycle (2010-2013) is to establish a consultation mechanism with women who have experienced family violence. This will establish not only a diversity of 'consumer' voices in the ongoing advocacy, policy and practice development of DV Vic, but will act as an evaluative resource for the whole Victorian family violence system.

Clear and accessible lines of communication with members and other stakeholders is very important, as is building relationships and trust. For the past three years, we have undertaken a brief survey of membership soliciting information on our performance over the past year, our consultation and communication with members and advocacy areas. This process has been very useful as a planning tool, as well as an ongoing accountability mechanism.

DV Vic is constantly required to balance the expectations and requests for peak body engagement with the capacity of our staff of only 3.5 EFT. This is extremely challenging. It goes without saying that a key element of a successful peak is being adequately resourced to participate fully in consultation and communication with members and other stakeholders. This is especially the case in the context of extensive family violence reforms in Victoria.

## REVIEW

## Exploring The Line

by Renee Imbesi, Emily Maguire and Emma Price,  
CASA House, Royal Women's Hospital, Melbourne

[www.theline.gov.au](http://www.theline.gov.au)

Following recommendations from *Time for action* (2009), the Commonwealth Government has developed *The Line*, a \$17 million, four-year social marketing campaign targeted at young people aged twelve to twenty, with a secondary audience of parents and teachers.

One element of *The Line* campaign is a web site which aims to increase young people's knowledge of respectful relationships, teach skills to communicate respectfully and honestly, and promote respectful relationships. Components of *The Line* web site include background information about the campaign; a comments/discussion page; fact sheets for parents and teachers; and 'drawing the line', an interactive component where young people create images of their 'line' and upload them to the picture gallery. Details for a relationships advice line are on each page and a specific page provides information about the support it offers.

Research demonstrates that stand-alone awareness raising campaigns have little impact on young people's decision-making and choices in relationships (Donovan & Vlasis 2005; VicHealth 2007). In contrast, *The Line* is both a primary prevention campaign (as it aims to stop violence before it occurs) and also a social norms campaign (because it aims to influence norms and beliefs about respectful and non-respectful behaviour). This dual focus is important, as research suggests that young people are an important target for primary prevention campaigns.

The exploration of concepts and opportunity to participate in a dialogue is critical for young people to build the skills and knowledge that prevent violence in their lives (Imbesi 2008). The greatest strength of *The Line* web site is its accessibility. As an online resource available at any time and linked to social networking sites, it allows young people to access the information as part of their everyday internet usage, rather than having to seek it out specifically or go outside their usual communication domain.

Our greatest concern with the *The Line* is the absence of clear messages or naming of violence. Although the campaign aims to prevent violence against women, the web site does not define any type of violence, nor does it give information about the spectrum of violent behaviours. Instead, the web site uses indirect language and fails to differentiate between gender-based violence and bullying. This lack of clarity has the potential to send confusing messages to young people. *The Line's* onsite polls show that users are not clear about what respectful behaviour is and what actions 'cross the line'.

The language and tone of the web site has strengths and weaknesses. The concept of the 'line' is a useful one, as it implies that there are limits to what is acceptable, and web site content usefully explores how this line can become blurry. Some sections of the site make a deliberate attempt



to use the language of young people such as 'sure' or 'txting', but the approach is not replicated across the site. Other sections use sophisticated language that may render the information inaccessible to some young people.

Offering material for adults alongside material for young people is a strong point of the site, as it is likely to enable open dialogue between young people and their parents and teachers. The language and information within the parent/teacher resources places issues of violence in the broader context of social relationships. The FAQ responses show a high regard for young people's views and experiences and encourage parents to be open to their child's perspective. However, the web site is not representative of young people's cultural, religious, social, economic, sexual or ethnic diversity, which may limit its accessibility and usefulness.

Evidence shows that young people are conversing and engaging with the campaign: by the beginning of September, 31 281 people 'liked' the Facebook page. The design and interactive component are likely to engage young people but there is a genuine lack of content. However, the campaign is still in its infancy, and we look forward to watching the web site develop over time as more content is added.

To meet its aims, *The Line* needs to be explicit about violence and have clear information available for young people about respectful relationships. Whilst it is important to note that this web site only forms one part of the overall social marketing campaign, it will be interesting to see an evaluation of how effective web sites can be in changing behaviours and attitudes and teaching young people skills to engage in respectful relationships.

## References

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National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009, *Time for action: The National Council's plan for Australia to reduce violence against women and their children*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra

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## PLANNING ACTIVITIES FOR 2010 OR 2011?

Are you holding an event, such as a forum or seminar, or launching a campaign or resource? Contact us to include it in our *Newsletter*, e-news and on the website!

## ISSUES IN GOOD PRACTICE

### Privacy, information sharing and coordinated practice – dilemmas for practice

by Karen Wilcox, *Clearinghouse Good Practice Officer*<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

One of the main advantages of an effective coordinated response to domestic and family violence is the process for sharing information across agencies working with victims of violence. This process enables all agencies to be informed of risk issues, to screen effectively and to minimise secondary victimisation. Without it, victims can be required to tell their stories repeatedly to agencies in the child protection, domestic violence, criminal justice, family law and welfare/economic support systems. Information sharing between agencies and the family courts also assists them to establish the truthfulness of allegations of violence or substance abuse, and to support quality decision making, which takes account of different factors that impact on the wellbeing and safety of children.

Unfortunately, across most jurisdictions, information sharing to assist management of risk and safety is ad hoc or patchy. One of the stumbling blocks to effective information sharing has been the limits on information exchange imposed by the contradictory but important principle of privacy. Relatedly, the confidentiality of discussions between service providers and those seeking assistance also impairs effective communications across agencies. This has created a dilemma in the development of good practice.

This discussion will examine the dilemma for practitioners attempting to address the need to respect laws and practices relating to client confidentiality and individual privacy, while supporting collaborative and safety focused case management. In doing this, privacy will be defined loosely, as it is the collective effect of legal, professional and practice obligations which currently constrains information exchange at the level of collaborative practice.

In addressing this particular practice issue, it is helpful to conceive of the range of understandings of privacy which impact on service provision for victims of violence. These include, but are not restricted to: professional and agency codes of practice; victim privacy; personal information privacy in the various privacy regimes of the states, territories and Commonwealth; and court privacy practices.

This discussion will, therefore, allude to the broad ambit of notions of privacy which potentially impact on collaborative practice focused on victim safety. Theoretical discussion of notions of privacy in contemporary Western legal culture will be left to other arenas of debate.

#### Privacy laws in Australia

Most states and territories have introduced laws to protect privacy. These vary in scope and focus, with some jurisdictions, such as New South Wales (NSW), Tasmania, Queensland and Victoria, adopting comprehensive privacy laws, and others including privacy provisions within their freedom of information laws. South Australia (SA) has a Cabinet agreement which incorporates privacy principles and applies to government agencies. In addition, there are

privacy principles in most jurisdictions, as well as specific regulations governing judicial, police and health sectors.

Commonwealth legislation also contains a number of relevant privacy provisions. Section 10 of the *Family Law Act 1975* directs family counsellors and family dispute resolution practitioners not to disclose their communications. In addition, the *Privacy Act 1988* sets out responsibilities for Commonwealth agencies and non-government organisations, as well as two sets of principles – the Information Privacy Principles (for government) and the National Privacy Principles (for non-government organisations). This Act was recently the subject of a review by the Australian Law Reform Commission (2008).

Various professions, for example the legal, health and counselling professions, are also subjected to their own privacy and confidentiality codes, which in some instances are the subject of legislation. This creates a complex, messy and often contradictory set of rules for practitioners, and makes the sharing of information across agencies very difficult in most jurisdictions.

#### The 'privacy v safety' dilemma

Privacy is an important issue which impacts on victims of violence in several ways. First, securing privacy around whereabouts has been a cornerstone of safety planning for victims of family and domestic violence, but has become increasingly difficult in the age of the internet. Second, privacy around proceedings dealing with domestic violence can be important in minimising shame and discrimination, which victims of violence experience, and in protecting the wellbeing of children living with violence.

To this end, the need for victim privacy has been partly addressed through protection order law in some states and territories. In the Victorian legislation, courts can be closed if victims experience 'undue embarrassment' (s68). Processes and practices in court are also important. For example, some courts require all protection order applicants to be present in court during the list, while others allow individual matters to be called one at a time, in order to respect victim privacy. The law in Victoria (s166(2)) and the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) (s111) also prohibits publication of any identifying details, as does the new South Australian legislation (s33).<sup>2</sup>

Many jurisdictions also prohibit the publication of details which might identify children, for example, the ACT (s111), Victoria (ss166-169), Northern Territory (NT) (s123) and Tasmania (s32). In the NT and Tasmania, courts may order prohibition of publication of victim's details but this does not pertain to the victim's need for privacy. The *Family Law Act 1975* (s121) also limits publication of information relating to proceedings.

On the other hand, victim safety needs can be better addressed where domestic violence laws enable sharing of information across agencies involved with the family. Victims may not present all the appropriate evidence to particular agencies, either because they are not aware of requirements, are fearful, or are exhausted or traumatised by both the abuse and the endless re-telling of their stories. This creates a need for agencies themselves to exchange relevant information so that decision making is of the

<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Salma Aly for assistance with legal research in the preparation of this article.

<sup>2</sup> The South Australian Parliament has passed new protection order legislation, the *Intervention Orders (Prevention of Abuse) Act 2009*, but this Act has not yet commenced.

highest standard and can focus on risk and safety and perpetrator accountability.

For example, if police hold information about a violent incident, exchange of this information can enable court support services to assist the victim to obtain the most effective protection order to meet their needs. Similarly, prosecutorial practice can be enhanced by knowledge of the history of violence held by child protection, counselling or court support agencies.

The recent release of several reports on the problems arising when the *Family Law Act 1975* (and the related systems) deal with domestic violence has further illuminated this issue. The reports by Professor Richard Chisholm (2009) and the Family Law Council (2009), in particular, note the difficulties which arise in relation to the provision of appropriate information to the family courts from child protection, health, police, family dispute resolution practitioners and family counsellors. In addition, the recent consultation paper released by the Australian and New South Wales Law Reform Commissions (2010) notes this problem as an important issue for consideration. The lack of effective pathways for such sharing of information has shifted the onus to victims to provide evidence, and has compromised the capacity of family law decision making to appropriately address issues of safety and wellbeing.

These issues point to the existence of a dilemma for practitioners attempting to coordinate responses to domestic and family violence while respecting victim autonomy.

### Laws which enable information exchange

Some states and territories have attempted to address this dilemma – and clarify practice obligations – through legal solutions. These solutions reflect a prioritising of the Duluth principles of risk, safety and perpetrator accountability.

In some cases, information exchange between child protection, courts and police is facilitated through protection order law. In Tasmania, court support, counselling services, prosecutors and Legal Aid have access to information (s37). These measures are vital in ensuring the successful practical operation of the integrated response to domestic violence, Safe at Home. Similarly, Western Australia's (WA's) protection order laws allow for information sharing (s70A), while SA's new protection order laws will require public agencies to disclose the whereabouts of defendants, thereby facilitating location of perpetrators by police (s38).<sup>3</sup>

Jurisdiction	Current domestic violence information sharing legislation
Australian Capital Territory	<i>Domestic Violence Agencies Act 1986</i>
South Australia	<i>Intervention Orders (Prevention of Abuse) Act 2009, s38</i>
Tasmania	<i>Family Violence Act 2004, s37</i>
Western Australia	<i>Restraining Orders Act 1997, s70A</i>

Other states and territories have followed different legal paths. The ACT has legislated for some cross-agency information sharing. In particular, ACT police are able to disclose information to crisis support organisations where this might aid the organisation in rendering assistance

(*Domestic Violence Agencies Act 1986* s18). The NT requires the reporting to police of information relating to risk of death or serious injury, under s124A of its *Domestic and Family Violence Act 1986*. This duty applies not just to agencies but to all adults.

It is also possible to address restrictions on information exchange through the exemptions to the laws which create those restrictions. For example, the *Victorian Health Records Act 2001* provides for the disclosure of information where this is necessary to 'lessen or prevent a serious and imminent threat to an individual's life, health, safety or welfare' (s2). Similarly, the *Family Law Act 1975* (s10) enables exchange of information by counsellors, mediators or report writers where there is risk of harm to a child and/or to prevent imminent death, threats to health or commission of a crime. In NSW, Queensland and Victoria, police are not required to comply with privacy principles in relation to their policing duties. In addition, in Victoria, an exemption to the exchange of information by health authorities arises where there is imminent threat to life, health safety or welfare. The Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988* contains a similar provision in relation to government agencies.

Often laws are cemented by memoranda of understanding, although where these are locally developed and/or lack cabinet direction and accountability structures, they are unlikely to be effective.

Information sharing can be achieved through several mechanisms. These include interagency practice protocols (e.g. ACT's Family Violence Intervention Program) and regular case meetings (e.g. SA's Family Safety Framework, Tasmania's Safe at Home).

Another useful mechanism is access to a shared database. For example, Tasmania has a sophisticated shared information system, accessed through a shared server, which enables government agencies to stay informed of police interactions with offenders, child protection matters, and court processes, among other things (see the Clearinghouse Good Practice database entry 137 at [www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/good\\_practice.html](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/good_practice.html)). Such a system to streamline information exchange is of immense value where the state or territory is the main provider of services.

In states such as NSW, where service provision for victims of violence is ad hoc, and varies enormously across localities – depending on the provision of NGO services, as there is not a statewide system of domestic violence services and children's post-trauma services – resourcing a state system of domestic violence outreach would be an essential first step before safety-focused information exchange between agencies could be of value.

### The way forward – national systems for information exchange

The National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (2009, p. 104) recommended that protocols to facilitate information sharing across the family law and family violence sectors be introduced. This reflects the council's focus on the importance of ensuring safety for victims of violence and their children.

In addition, adoption of the recommendations found in Section 9 of the Family Law Council's recent report would greatly assist in the resolution of some of these issues. Although they relate to family law, the inclusion of recommendations 9.8 and 9.9 – which refer to the production of reports and information by police and child

<sup>3</sup> For specific details of protection order legislation, see the Clearinghouse Topic Paper 19, available on our web site at [www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au).

protection authorities; and information sharing between police, the courts, Legal Aid and child protection agencies – would assist the family courts to arrive at a safety-focused assessment of children's interests.

Discussion questions contained in the Australian and New South Wales Law Reform Commissions' (2010, p. 481) report similarly identify the need for obligations on state and territory agencies to provide information to family courts. The report also outlines the importance of information exchange across service pathways in the family law system, and between this system and state and territory agencies, so that dispute resolution is equally informed by evidence of risk and the need for safety.

Further resolution of inconsistencies between privacy laws and information exchange might be achieved if the exemptions contained within existing privacy regimes, noted in the previous section, could be enhanced. Building on these exemptions, it may be possible to introduce more effective principles governing the exchange of information for safety reasons. This would require commitment across all levels of government to improving the coordination and seamlessness of responses to family and domestic violence.

In implementing changes to existing limitations on information exchange, governments do not necessarily need to compromise individual victim rights to privacy in court settings. Indeed, the introduction of a regime such as Tasmania's which enables information sharing, complemented by privacy provisions relating to non-publication of matters and court listing practices respecting privacy, suggests a way forward in enhancing victims' experience of systems designed to protect their rights and safety.

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### GOOD PRACTICE HOTLINE

The Clearinghouse Good Practice Hotline is available on Wednesdays 2-4pm (Eastern Standard Time). Call: (02) 9385 3843.

## PRACTICE NOTES

### Promising practice in family dispute resolution – Northern Beaches Family Relationship Centre, Sydney

*By Karen Wilcox, Clearinghouse Good Practice Officer*

Although the *Family Law Act 1975* allows for exemptions from family dispute resolution (FDR) for victims of domestic violence, this sector frequently works with abusers and victims. Developing appropriate strategies to address risk and safety within the context of a pro-contact legislative structure is one of the many challenges which this sector faces.



Staff at the Northern Beaches Family Relationship Centre, with counsellors and family lawyer

Northern Beaches Family Relationship Centre (NBFRC) is a FDR service located in the northern suburbs of Sydney. It is a federal government initiative managed by Relationships Australia NSW (RANSW) and models an approach to FDR which demonstrates promising practice in regard to working with victims of family and domestic violence on post-separation parenting arrangements. The philosophies, service management and pathways for clients of NBFRC support the development of safety-focused strategies for women and their children. Key features are outlined below.

#### Holistic and coordinated service provision

The NBFRC team includes first-point-of-contact staff, family advisors, FDR practitioners (mediators) and a child consultant. The centre draws upon the varied and complementary expertise co-located at the FRC including Relationships Australia counsellors (with experience in domestic violence) and a family lawyer (under the Community Legal Centre/FRC Partnership). Internal referral to other programs or services of RANSW offered in the region and collaboration with other RA staff ensures a holistic approach to family needs.

#### Management, team structure and professional development

The team structure and staffing are themselves crucial factors contributing to the service practice. Many of the staff have a background in domestic violence services and experience working with domestic violence is an important consideration during staff recruitment.

NBFRC workers are 'passionate about the safety of children and their mothers'. All staff have been trained in the recently developed core FRC competencies. Cases are discussed at confidential team meetings and input from the team

is sought. Agreements are reviewed and co-mediation is the standard mediation conducted at the centre. Clinical supervision is provided and staff feel that the open office space arrangement also encourages informal discussion and debriefing.

### Philosophies and models

The NBFRC views its mission as reaching beyond provision of family mediation. It sees itself as a 'family safety service', and assessment and referral in relation to client safety is considered as important as mediation outcomes. In addition, the centre examines children's needs by acknowledging how mothering has been compromised by the abuse, with a view to supporting women to strengthen attachments with their children, and placing responsibility for this with the abuser, not the victim. Opportunity is taken to refer people to appropriate services, including perpetrator programs and specialised groups for children who have experienced domestic violence.

The organisation works within a framework which acknowledges that gender power underpins much domestic violence. The centre presumes family violence is coercive controlling violence (CCV) unless it is otherwise demonstrated. Staff at NBFRC understand that what might otherwise be classed as a 'positional' stance by clients is in fact 'protective' of children's safety.

The FRC is also committed to continuous improvement and review of practices. The service has adopted a facilitative model of mediation practice, as has been recommended by commentators such as Rachael Field in Queensland. Child-inclusive mediation is used when assessed as appropriate.

### Interagency collaboration

NBFRC has established and nurtured important relationships with the local Women's Resource Centre, as well as private legal practitioners who are able to assist with urgent applications such as those involving airport watch or relocation. The NBFRC is a member of the local domestic violence committee.

### Risk assessment, screening and pathways

The processes adopted by the NBFRC are central to their practice in dealing with domestic violence. Risk assessment is conducted at all stages of engagement with the service and is not simply a one-off exercise. It involves trigger questions but relies on expertise of the staff at the centre. For example, red flags for staff might include client haste in getting an agreement signed off, as this has at times hidden a desire by perpetrators to get out of the system's scrutiny. On one occasion, further exploration of risk after an expressed desire for hasty sign-off revealed serious death threats to the victim.

All clients engaging with the service are first assessed for family violence through the intake/reception process (first point of contact). This is followed by a family assessment by a family advisor. This is an individual meeting of 1.5-2

The Clearinghouse is interested in developing stronger links with stakeholders from the FRC sector. We welcome any contact from FRC professionals, particularly in relation to practice issues where there is domestic violence.

hours, after which clients are referred to domestic violence counselling, legal assistance and mediation, as necessary. Each parent is assessed separately at two parts of the process prior to mediation: once at family advisor stage and once in pre-FDR, which occurs after each parent has attended (separately) Kids in Focus, a parent education seminar of 2-2.5 hours. During mediation, interim agreements are encouraged, as this provides an avenue for review of safety issues.

The Clearinghouse is very grateful for the opportunity to meet with the service and discuss 'hot topics' of importance to both the family relationships and domestic violence sectors. With the recent publication of reviews of family law pathways and family violence (see [www.adfvc.unse.edu.au/reports](http://www.adfvc.unse.edu.au/reports)), this is an important conversation which warrants our ongoing engagement.

Further information about the Northern Beaches Family Relationship Centre is available on the Clearinghouse Good Practice database ([www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/good\\_practice.html](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/good_practice.html)).

## NEW RESEARCH

### 'Best interests of the child' study

Professionals practicing in family and children's legal contexts are invited to participate in a national survey of opinions of issues relating to 'best interests of the child'. This Charles Sturt University study involves an online survey and results will be analysed in relation to Australian legislation. Responses are anonymous. [www.surveymonkey.com/s/bicstudy](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/bicstudy)

### From daughterhood to motherhood: the impact of childhood exposure to domestic violence on women's parenting

For over four decades, the theory of 'generational violence' has held considerable sway over public discourse around the causes of family violence. Central to this theory is the notion that violence is cyclical: that abused children go on to become abusive parents.

However, in her research on the impact of childhood exposure to domestic violence on subsequent mothering, undertaken for a Masters of Social Work at La Trobe University, Kathy Mendis was struck by the strong commitment of women to protect their own children from such experiences. Her study, while based on a small sample of nine regional Victorian women, points to the need for a more nuanced understanding of the generational impacts of childhood violence.

For more information on the study findings, contact: Kathy Mendis at [kathym3@tpg.com.au](mailto:kathym3@tpg.com.au).

## LOOKING FOR A RESEARCHER?

Find Australian researchers working in the field of domestic and family violence on the Clearinghouse Researchers Database. You can search for researchers by name, their research area, institution or by keywords. If you want to be listed on the Clearinghouse Researchers Database, please contact us: [clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au](mailto:clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au)

## FEATURE

## Victorian family violence reform: innovation in service delivery

*This is an edited extract from a case study on the family violence reforms, published by the Victorian Government at [www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/women/family-violence](http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/women/family-violence) and printed here with permission*

In 2009, the significance of the Victorian Family Violence Reform Strategy was acknowledged by the Institute of Public Administration Australia in the form of an Innovation in Service Delivery Award. These prestigious awards recognise new and creative services that respond to a recognised need in the community and are effective in meeting their goals and objectives.

The reforms, which commenced in 2005, represent a sustained effort to build an integrated response to family violence by a broad cross-section of partners inside and outside government. The process remains ongoing, with the agenda for reform over the next decade outlined in *A right to safety and justice: the strategic framework to guide continuing family violence reform in Victoria 2010-2020*.

Alongside the family violence reforms, Victoria has also undertaken significant sexual assault reform since 2004, led by the Victorian Department of Justice.

Long-term commitment to effecting culture change is critical to the success of these reforms. As Victoria moves to consolidate the reform process, this article reflects on the rationale behind the reforms and some key achievements to date.

Broader culture change, to prevent violence against women before it occurs, is the next frontier for policy and practice in Victoria. *A right to respect: Victoria's plan to prevent violence against women 2010-2020* is the first long term, cross-sectoral policy to build skills and values that reject violence.

### The need for a whole of government strategy

Prior to the reforms, no 'family violence service system' existed nor a unifying, cohesive policy framework. Research and experience showed fragmented and dispersed responses and little engagement from police and the courts.

Development of the integrated family violence reforms was based on a whole of government approach, whereby the different levels and agencies of government were brought together in new horizontal and vertical structures. Work was also undertaken to bring government and non-government agencies together at state and regional levels. A central feature of the new approach was to develop an integrated system that involves better coordination of its three main entry points: family violence services; police and the courts; and other legal and statutory bodies and mainstream services.

Integrated service delivery also involved a fundamental restructuring of organisational relationships, with the whole of government approach generating the high level political engagement required to support this restructuring. Key elements in this approach were the demonstrated commitment to reform by the government and ministers involved, the leadership provided by agency heads and senior managers, the involvement of community sector representatives, and the role of the Department of Planning and Community Development as the lead agency.

### Some key achievements: a brief snapshot

Within the Victorian family violence reforms, a number of initiatives have been of importance including:

- the new *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*, the ENOUGH communications campaign and specialist court based initiatives
- the Victoria Police *Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence*
- a Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework with substantial state-wide, cross-sector workforce development
- new investment and development in standards and codes of practice for family violence services, women's and children's counselling and men's behaviour change and case management programs
- formal referral protocols between police and family violence services.



Stronger relationships have also been established between the existing Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum and mainstream agencies and services, as part of a joint effort to improve responses to Indigenous women, children and men affected by family violence.

Key findings from 2004 have seen a 251% increase in intervention orders sought by Victoria Police and a 202% increase in charges laid. Reporting of family violence has also increased by 29% during this time.

Another critical element has been the focus on data collection and information sharing. The Family Violence Database (led by the Victorian Department of Justice) provides important trend analysis from nine years of Victorian data. Work with the Victorian Privacy Commissioner has led to clear guidance for sectors responding to family violence to effectively share information.

Priorities for further steps in the reform process include strengthening risk management, particularly for women and children assessed as being at higher levels of risk. At the request of the Victorian Government in 2008, the Coroners Court of Victoria is undertaking a systematic review of family violence related deaths.

A key component of the reforms is performance monitoring, research and evaluation, and ongoing review. An Australian Research Council Grant is supporting a five-year project by the University of Melbourne and Monash University to review key reform areas within the Victorian Family Violence Reform Strategy ([research.cwv.asn.au/AFRP/FamilyViolence/SAFER/default.aspx](http://research.cwv.asn.au/AFRP/FamilyViolence/SAFER/default.aspx)).

While the impact of the reforms continues to be reviewed, the Victorian experience highlights that a whole of government response, in partnership with the non-government sector and underpinned by political leadership, will increase the safety of women and children and reduce family violence.

For more information about the Victorian family violence reforms please contact the Family Violence Reform Coordination Unit on (03) 9208 3121 or go to the web site: [www.familyviolence.vic.gov.au](http://www.familyviolence.vic.gov.au).

### References

- Victorian Government 2010, *A right to safety and justice: the strategic framework to guide continuing family violence reform in Victoria 2010-2020*, Office of Women's Policy, Melbourne
- Victorian Government 2009, *A right to respect: Victoria's plan to prevent violence against women*, Office of Women's Policy, Melbourne

## NEW RESOURCES & INITIATIVES

### Office of Women's Policy, *A right to safety and justice: strategic framework to guide continuing family violence reform in Victoria 2010-2020, State of Victoria, Melbourne*

This strategic framework sets out how Victoria will continue to improve responses to victims of family violence over the coming decade. It complements A right to respect, Victoria's long-term plan to prevent violence against women before it occurs.

[www.women.vic.gov.au/web12/rwpgslib.nsf/GraphicFiles/A+Right+to+Safety+and+Justice/\\$file/A+Right+to+Safety+and+Justice.pdf](http://www.women.vic.gov.au/web12/rwpgslib.nsf/GraphicFiles/A+Right+to+Safety+and+Justice/$file/A+Right+to+Safety+and+Justice.pdf)

### The Bsafe project

Bsafe is a cost effective personal alarm system for women and children who have obtained an exclusion order. When activated, it alerts a 24 hour



Vital Call response centre. The centre contacts the police immediately, while monitoring and recording the call. A recent evaluation of the Bsafe trial in the Hume Region, Victoria, found that clients had experienced an overall decrease in breaches and improved feelings of safety.

[www.whealth.com.au/ourwork/bsafe.html](http://www.whealth.com.au/ourwork/bsafe.html)

### Women's Subscription Enterprise

The Women's Subscription Enterprise is helping homeless and disadvantaged women by selling subscriptions of the *Big Issue* to businesses and using the revenue to employ these women. For every 100 subscriptions sold, a disadvantaged or homeless woman will be employed with the magazine. The initiative was launched on 27 July.

[womens.thebigissue.org.au](http://womens.thebigissue.org.au)

### Queensland Global Data Collection Summary

The April to June 2010 Quarterly Global Data Collection Summary, produced by the Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research, is now available for download.

[www.noviolence.com.au/globalsummaries.html](http://www.noviolence.com.au/globalsummaries.html)

### Men lead 'Stop the Violence' campaign in Central Australia

On 3 September 2010, the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC) organised a march of over 100 men and boys through Alice Springs as part of its on-going campaign against family violence. The rally ended at the Alice Springs Town Council lawns, where the marchers joined women and other supporters. Earlier this year, the CAAC held a five-day workshop on family violence prevention at Inteyerrkwe (Ross River), which was attended by Indigenous men from 39 Central Australian communities.

[www.caac.org.au/stoptheviolence](http://www.caac.org.au/stoptheviolence)

### Sex Discrimination Commissioner launches Gender Equality Blueprint 2010

The Commonwealth Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, launched her *Gender Equality Blueprint 2010* at the National Press Club on 23 June 2010. It sets out 15 recommendations in five priority areas, identified from her 2007 national listening tour.

[www.humanrights.gov.au/sex\\_discrimination/publication/blueprint/index.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sex_discrimination/publication/blueprint/index.html)



### NSW Recorded Crime Statistics: June 2010

The NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research has released the June quarterly update on the state's reported crime rates.

[www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/bocsar/ll\\_bocsar.nsf/vwFiles/NSWRecordedCrimeStatisticsJun2010.pdf/\\$file/NSWRecordedCrimeStatisticsJun2010.pdf](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/bocsar/ll_bocsar.nsf/vwFiles/NSWRecordedCrimeStatisticsJun2010.pdf/$file/NSWRecordedCrimeStatisticsJun2010.pdf)

### Latest SAAP data released

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare has released two new reports on the Support Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP):

- *Demand for accommodation from government-funded specialist homelessness services 2008-09: a report from the Interim SAAP National Data Collection*
- *Government-funded specialist homelessness services: SAAP National Data Collection annual report 2008-09 Australia.*

These reports provide the latest figures on access to SAAP services across the country.

[www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm](http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm)

### Conference proceedings available online

Organisations are increasingly making presentations and recordings from conferences and events available to users online. The Clearinghouse keeps track of relevant resources on our 'Conference proceedings' web page, with recent additions including presentations from *Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care National Conference* (27-29 July 2010), the *11th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference* (7-9 July 2010) and video recordings from the Clearinghouse's *Mothers, Children and Change* forum (4 June 2010).

[www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/conference\\_proceedings.htm](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/conference_proceedings.htm)

## INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVES

### World Health Organization & London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine 2010, *Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: taking action and generating evidence, WHO, Geneva*

This manual describes interventions known to be effective in preventing intimate partner and sexual violence and is an important new tool for developing policies and programs.

[www.who.int/entity/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/publications/violence/9789241564007\\_eng.pdf](http://www.who.int/entity/violence_injury_prevention/publications/violence/9789241564007_eng.pdf)

### Financial empowerment curriculum and webinar series

This North American resource was prepared by the Allstate Foundation and the National Network to End Domestic Violence. It covers the fundamentals of income and assets, debts and liabilities, and teaches budgeting strategies.

[new.vawnet.org/category/Documents.php?docid=2491](http://new.vawnet.org/category/Documents.php?docid=2491)

### Campus safety guidebook

The Ohio Board of Regents' *A safer campus: a guidebook for prevention and response to sexual and intimate partner violence and stalking for Ohio campuses* recommends that colleges and universities implement strategies in four key areas: preparedness, prevention, response and recovery.

[new.vawnet.org/category/Documents.php?docid=2500](http://new.vawnet.org/category/Documents.php?docid=2500)



## RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE RESEARCH AND RESOURCES DATABASE

### ARTICLES

**Casey EA & Beadnell B 2010, 'The structure of male adolescent peer networks and risk for intimate partner violence perpetration: findings from a national sample', *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, vol. 39, no. 6, pp. 620-633**

This study used data from 3030 male respondents to the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health to investigate how peer network 'types' may be related to subsequent risk for intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetration. Men in the group type characterised by small, dense, mostly male peer networks with higher levels of delinquent behaviour reported higher rates of subsequent IPV perpetration. Implications for prevention programming and future research are addressed.

**Douglas H & Walsh T 2010, 'Mothers, domestic violence, and child protection', *Violence Against Women*, vol. 16, no. 5, pp. 489-508**

This article explores the relationship between understandings of domestic violence and the child protection response, drawing on material gathered in focus groups with workers who support mothers dealing with both issues. The article is the first in a special symposium on the intersection between domestic violence and child protection, which also features perspectives from Cathy Humphreys, Marianne Hester, Leigh Goodmark and David Mandel, representing the fields of social work and the law.

**Logan TK & Walker R 2010, 'Toward a deeper understanding of the harms caused by partner stalking', *Violence and Victims*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 440-455**

This US study examined stalking prevalence, patterns and harm among 210 women with civil protective orders against violent male partners or ex-partners. Results suggest that stalking is associated with protection order violations and almost every other type of partner violence but that many victim service and criminal justice professionals do not seem to understand the extent or gravity of the harms caused.

**St. Pierre M & Senn CY 2010, 'External barriers to help-seeking encountered by Canadian gay and lesbian victims of intimate partner abuse: an application of the Barriers Model', *Violence and Victims*, vol. 25, no. 4, pp. 536-552**

This study is based on a survey of 280 gay, lesbian and/or queer participants living in Canada. It found that victims encountered external barriers to help-seeking in the environment (Layer 1 of the Barriers Model), such as lack of availability of gay and lesbian specific services. Results also suggested that barriers due to family/socialisation/role expectations (Layer 2 of the model), such as concealment of sexual orientation, had an impact on help-seeking.

**Stover CS, Berkman M, Desai R & Marans S 2010, 'The efficacy of a police-advocacy intervention for victims of domestic violence: 12 month follow-up data', *Violence Against Women*, vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 410-425**

The Domestic Violence Home Visit Intervention (DVHVI) provides advocate/police officer team home visits following a domestic dispute. Women (52 DVHVI and 55 controls) were interviewed at one, six and twelve months following a police-reported domestic incident to assess repeat violence, service utilisation and symptoms. Women who received the DVHVI were more satisfied with the police and likely to call them to report a non-physical domestic dispute in the twelve months following the initial incident. They were also significantly more likely to use court-based services and seek mental health treatment for their children.

### REPORTS

**Council of Australian Governments 2009, *Protecting children is everyone's business: national framework for protecting Australia's children 2009-2020*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra**

This framework is a government response to the high rates of child abuse and neglect reported in Australia. It suggests that the discourse around 'protecting children' must focus more on promoting the wellbeing of children (rather than simply responding to violence) and proposes greater collaboration between state, territory and federal governments, child protection services and the legal system.

**Victorian Women's Housing Association 2010, *Victorian Women's Housing Association investment in affordable housing for women – the social and economic returns*, VWHA, Melbourne**

The Victorian Women's Housing Association was established in 1996 to provide innovative housing solutions for disadvantaged women and their children. Their recently released research report details how they and their partners have created \$30 million in value for tenants, funders, developers and Victorian communities from a \$7.45 million investment.

### PREFER TO GET THIS NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL?

If so, please let us have your email address and we will gladly email it to you:  
clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au

### NEXT NEWSLETTER

The closing date for contributions to the Summer issue of the Newsletter is 8 November 2010. Be sure to send in accompanying photos and images!

## NEW CLEARINGHOUSE PAPERS

### **Breckenridge J & James K 2010, *Thinking about homicide risk: a practice framework for counselling, Stakeholder Paper 9, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Sydney***

Research tells us that many women experiencing domestic violence do not disclose their experience when seeking counselling but instead raise other related problems such as relationship conflict, depression or parenting issues. These women may 'fall under the radar' if counsellors fail to identify domestic violence or do not know when and how to assess for potential lethality.

This paper provides a multi-systemic framework incorporating practice directions for counsellors and organisations who do not specialise in domestic violence but who may nevertheless encounter victims of domestic violence in their practice. It identifies four domains that counsellors may need to address when working with women: the client system; the therapeutic relationship; the organisational context; and the system of services. The paper builds on and is informed by an action research project undertaken in partnership with Relationships Australia, South Australia (RASA).

### **Dimopoulos M 2010, *Implementing legal empowerment strategies to prevent family violence in new and emerging communities, Issues Paper 20, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Sydney***

Newly arrived communities in Australia are likely to encounter a range of common legal problems in the first five years after arrival, including family and domestic violence. In an effort to address their increasing interactions with the legal system, a small number of community legal education and information strategies have been developed and implemented around the country.

This paper addresses the question of whether these 'legal empowerment strategies' can contribute to the prevention of family and domestic violence in new and emerging communities, focusing on three examples of strategies currently being implemented in Victoria. The author argues that legal empowerment strategies must progress beyond building legal literacy, and seek to integrate activities that promote and foster 'critical consciousness' and ultimately social change.

## RECENT EVENT

### ***Making the Invisible Visible: effective responses to women and homelessness, 3 August***

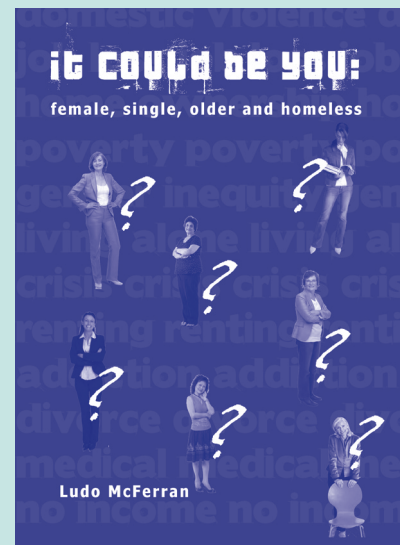
Bringing visibility to women who experience homelessness was the focus of Sydney Women's Homelessness Alliance's one-day forum at the Wesley Conference Centre in August this year. Speakers set the scene during the first half of the day, while strategy workshops in the afternoon provided participants with an opportunity to discuss key issues such as the location of homelessness services (metro versus regional and rural), service integration and partnership development, and cultural issues.

The highly anticipated report, *It could be you: female, single, older and homeless*, from the Older Women's Network NSW, Homelessness NSW and St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, was launched at the forum by the NSW Housing Minister, Frank Terenzini, to a packed audience.

Written by Clearinghouse Project Officer Ludo McFerran, the central message of the report is that divorce and separation, coupled with low wages, put women as they age at real housing risk. It finds that we have failed to predict the rising numbers of homeless older women because of a lack of gendered policies on housing, homelessness and ageing.

The qualitative research, based on interviews with thirty-one women, confirms that the new wave of older women at risk of homelessness requires an innovative policy response. McFerran recommends affordable and achievable solutions such as the division of three bedroom homes into separate living units and private housing communities (upmarket boarding houses) for older women.

The Australian Human Rights Commission says that women are ageing poorer than men. This new report warns that health crisis or age



discrimination can put many single older women out of work and onto the streets. This could be you.

[www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/RR\\_docs/It\\_could\\_be\\_you\\_McFerran.pdf](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/RR_docs/It_could_be_you_McFerran.pdf)

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## FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

### Global Domestic Violence Conference

1-3 November 2010 – Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

This conference will highlight and showcase successful programs with the aim of empowering people and workers in the field of domestic violence.

[www.domesticviolenceconference.net](http://www.domesticviolenceconference.net)



### FRSA 2010 Annual Conference

3-5 November 2010 – Melbourne, VIC

The Family Relationships Services Australia (FRSA) 2010 conference, titled 'Diversity: everyone benefits', builds on the work being done across the family support and family law sectors to respond appropriately to the diversity of Australian families.

[frsa.org.au/site/FRSAConference2010.php](http://frsa.org.au/site/FRSAConference2010.php)

### Supporting Changing Families Conference

18-19 November 2010 – Hobart, TAS

Hobart and Launceston Family Law Pathways Networks are hosting this state conference. Professor Alastair Nicholson (former Chief Justice of Family Court) and Judy Small (Legal Aid Victoria) are the keynote speakers.

[www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/cdd/women/events/supporting\\_changing\\_families\\_conference](http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/divisions/cdd/women/events/supporting_changing_families_conference)

### Child Inclusive Family Dispute Resolution

22-24 November 2010 – Sydney, NSW

Dr Jennifer McIntosh will conduct this three-day intensive workshop teaching core skills for working with children and their parents in child-informed family law dispute resolution.

[www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/pdf\\_files/Child\\_Inclusive\\_FDR\\_Training\\_2010.pdf](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/pdf_files/Child_Inclusive_FDR_Training_2010.pdf)

### Health Program Evaluation – scoping the evaluation

24-26 November 2010 – Melbourne, VIC

This three-day intensive short course is designed for those who are involved in developing evaluation plans/frameworks for programs or projects in the public health field.

[blogs.unimelb.edu.au/sph-shortcourses](http://blogs.unimelb.edu.au/sph-shortcourses)

### Nursing Network on Violence Against Women

16-18 February 2011 – Auckland, New Zealand

This conference is an international opportunity for nurses, social workers, mental health workers, physicians, community organisations, policy workers, police and justice workers to come together and share their knowledge, experience and work around violence against women.

[www.confer.co.nz/nnvawi](http://www.confer.co.nz/nnvawi)

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Australian Government

### Young People, Risk and Resilience: the challenges of alcohol drugs and violence

7-8 March 2011 – Melbourne, VIC

The Australian Institute of Criminology and the Victorian Safe Communities Network will hold this two-day conference to discuss the nature and extent of young people's involvement in alcohol, other drugs and violence.

[www.aic.gov.au/en/events/aic%20upcoming%20events/2011/vscn.aspx](http://www.aic.gov.au/en/events/aic%20upcoming%20events/2011/vscn.aspx)

### AIIA Child Protection Conference

5-7 May 2011 – Brisbane, QLD

This conference will explore how Australia and New Zealand are responding to the challenges for judicial administration posed by child protection.

[www.aija.org.au/Child%20Protection/Call%20for%20Papers.pdf](http://www.aija.org.au/Child%20Protection/Call%20for%20Papers.pdf)

### Violence Against Women – complex realities and new issues in a changing world

29 May - 1 June 2011 – Montreal, Canada

The Interdisciplinary Research Center on Family Violence and Violence Against Women and its Women, Violence and Vulnerable Situations research team are hosting the Second International Conference on Violence Against Women.

[www.conferenceviolence.com/english/home/introduction-word](http://www.conferenceviolence.com/english/home/introduction-word)

For a complete list of conferences and seminars see:  
[www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/events\\_calendar.html](http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/events_calendar.html)

### INTERNET SITES

#### Domestic Violence Resource Centre web site

Domestic Violence Resource Centre has a new logo, tagline and web site, with an integrated blog feature.

[www.dvrcv.org.au](http://www.dvrcv.org.au)

#### Love: the good, the bad and the ugly

This site, run by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, is designed to help young people work out where their relationship is at – whether it's good, bad, or ugly.

[lovegoodbadugly.com](http://lovegoodbadugly.com)

#### One in Three Women

One in Three Women is a global campaign to raise awareness about violence against women.

[www.oneinthreewomen.com](http://www.oneinthreewomen.com)

### PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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