

PRACTICE NOTES

Building an intervention system for men who abuse their partners

Conference report

Held in Brisbane in late November, this conference provided the opportunity for 60 participants to have an in-depth dialogue with a team comprising: Chief Court Judge Jack Simmons, responsible for the operation of the Magistrate Court/Domestic Violence system in Pittsburgh; Robert Foster, founder and director of the Domestic Abuse Counselling Centre; and Dr Edward Gondolf, principal investigator for the Centre of Disease Control's evaluation of intervention programs for men who abuse their partners.

The presenters described the response to domestic violence in Pittsburgh, USA. Developed through interagency dialogue over 10 years, this response is based on the principles of victim safety and offender accountability. Persons arrested for domestic violence (in a 'mandatory arrest' policy context) are processed quickly by the criminal justice system, with the initial hearing held within 7-10 days of arrest. First time offenders are not required to enter a plea, but are offered the opportunity to participate in a 16 week educational program, which, if successfully completed, offers the possibility of reduced or dropped criminal charges. The victim is consulted about her wishes in the situation. Those taking up this offer are required to enter the educational program within seven days, or a warrant for their arrest is issued. Those in the program are required to attend the domestic violence court for a 30 day and a 90 day court review of their participation. Key features of the system are *intensive court supervision* (somewhat like a drug court) and *quick response*. No assessment of referred participants is undertaken by the education program, as the crime is regarded as a choice, not as a mental health issue. Information about the Domestic Abuse Counselling Centre (DACC), including the curriculum, is available on their web site: <http://www.dacc.net>. Any re-assault or failure to comply with the (stringent) conditions of program participation results in the issuing of an arrest warrant and return to court. The overwhelming

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Partnerships Against
Domestic Violence



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theme of the three days can be summed up succinctly in the words of Gondolf, as *'the system matters'*.

Edward Gondolf presented findings from his multi-site evaluation of perpetrator programs in the US – the most comprehensive and extensive to date. Over 800 men participated in the study. The outcome measure was reports by partners (current, ex and new), who were interviewed every three months over a 4 year period. He located the findings within the context of a discussion about complex issues in the evaluation of perpetrator programs and stressed that evaluation must include the larger intervention system within which the program is located. By this he means that perpetrator programs are dependent on police practices which bring men before the court and which apprehend participants who re-offend; the courts who refer men to programs and who respond to those who re-offend or who do not comply with program requirements; and probation officers who monitor participants' compliance.

The findings of this research are contained in Gondolf's new book, *Batterer Intervention Systems – Issues, Outcomes and Recommendations* (2001, Sage Publications). Much of this material has previously been published in articles which can be found on the Clearinghouse 'Research and Resources' Database (<http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au>). Some findings cited in the book are, in brief:

- 'Over a third of the men re-assaulted their initial and new partners during the 15 months after the program intake, and nearly half re-assaulted a partner during the full 4 year follow up. (Cumulative results which include both program drop outs and completers)
- Two thirds of the men who re-assaulted their partners did so within nine months of program intake.
- The vast majority of men were eventually non-violent for a sustained period: At the 30 month follow-up, more than 80 per cent of the men had not re-assaulted a partner in the previous year. At the 48 month follow-up, more than 90 per cent had not re-assaulted.' (Gondolf, 2001)

Contrary to a common concern, the women in this study did not report that physical violence was replaced by other forms of abuse. Gondolf noted that there is a group of around 20 per cent of men who do not respond to intervention and who continue to offend and to offend at severe and dangerous levels. The common factor in these cases appears to be the failure of the system to respond appropriately. He concludes: 'The current interventions do not appear to be making some differences for the women most in need of relief. The main challenge appears to be

in making the existing systems work together more decisively and consistently. They need to hold men accountable for their behaviour. According to our multisite evaluation, the notion of *accountability*, so frequently urged in batterer counselling, warrants some reinforcement.'

Further Information

The book, Gondolf, E. 2001, *Batterer Intervention Systems – Issues, Outcomes and Recommendations*, Sage Publications, is based on "A Multi-site evaluation of batterer intervention systems" funded by the Centres For Disease Control, US Dept. of Health and Human Services. For a list of published articles and summary reports see the web site:
<http://www.iup.edu/maati/publications>

Women, violence and disability forum

This forum, organised by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre (DVRC), was held in Brisbane in November. The forum focused on issues around domestic violence and women with an intellectual, learning or cognitive disability. The aims of the forum were:

- To highlight the experiences, issues and directions of various service providers
- To provide opportunities to develop knowledge and understanding
- To increase perspectives and create partnerships.

Forum speakers were drawn from a range of sectors. Catherine Davis from *Disability Training Program – Victims of Crime*, explored the concept of family and identified the barriers limiting the capacity of women with intellectual, learning or cognitive disabilities to escape their abusers. Diane Fingleton, *Chief Magistrate*, addressed legal issues such as the current Queensland Domestic Violence Act and the upcoming amendments. She also talked about legal representation and the experiences of women with a disability going through the court system. Senior Sergeant Dale Murray, State Domestic Violence Coordinator at the *Queensland Police Service (QPS)* discussed QPS procedures and initiatives relating to women with a disability, including a sexual violence and disability training initiative. He also drew together aspects of other laws and procedures which related to assisting women with disability and crime issues.

Mythiley Iyer from the *Domestic Violence Resource Centre* spoke of the inter-relationship between

gender and disability, and the indivisibility of these two powerful elements in survival strategies and institutionalised responses. She invited service providers to come together to work on practice protocols. Carolyn Cox from *Women Working Alongside Women with Intellectual and Learning Disabilities - Sexual Violence Prevention Service* and Jessica Wilson from *Alina Families Program* presented two case studies to describe the complex issues which women with disabilities face in relation to violence. In addition they provided useful information on how to work with women with an intellectual or learning disability.

The guest speakers opened up a broad cross-section of issues for discussion and questions following the speakers' presentations proved the audience's interest and reflected the desire to improve service delivery. Discussion topics included:

- The accessibility of refuges to women with a disability,
- The adoption of a broader definition of 'family' to represent the reality for women with an intellectual disability
- Worker and family relationships interface issues
- Implications of the new amendments to the Queensland Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act 1989

Further Information

Forum CD and tape cassette recordings will be available shortly for purchase or loan by contacting the DVRC, phone: (07) 3217 2544;
Email: projects@dvrc.org.au

Is it aged abuse or domestic violence?

Robyn Sedger looks at the implications of the terminology which we use.

Abuse of older people can be categorised as physical, emotional, financial and sexual abuse, or neglect. It is important to remember that these types of abuse include criminal acts such as physical assault, sexual assault, theft and fraud. The question that needs to be asked is: Is it useful for at risk older people if we refer to acts which cause them harm as 'aged abuse'? Proponents of this term consider that service providers in the aged care field best manage any issues related to older people. The supportive argument for this is that service providers who understand the complexities of ageing are well

suited to deal with age related issues such as dementia and the requirements of a frail-aged person, including impaired mobility. They may well be suited then to manage issues of violence towards older people.

Labelling the harm caused to older people as 'aged abuse,' however, may detract from the criminality of such behaviours. The term may even encourage the perception that these acts 'should be understood as private behaviour within a relationship' (Kinnear & Graycar, 1999). Most of us would deny the existence of this type of thinking and fervently hope that we have moved on from this ideology. However, Jane Mears' 1997 discussion paper "Triple Jeopardy" alerts us to the continued existence of 'what happens in families is their business' ideology. In this discussion paper, Weeks and Sadler are cited as follows:

'...the Aged Care Assessment Teams pointed out that in the case of long term domestic violence, the choice to remain in the situation and compromise personal safety was made long ago and often must be respected.'

Older women have lived in a world which is far different to the one we live in today. In their younger years it was more likely that society's attitudes and perceptions of a woman's responsibilities towards marriage and family, the quality of relationships and male and female sex roles, combined with the stigma and reduced status of separation and divorce, were the cause of her 'decision' to remain in a violent relationship. If this was a younger woman today we may consider that she stayed in the situation through lack of choices, rather than an active decision to stay. Why then are we presuming, even in today's environment of increased choices, that older women are able to access the legal options available? Many older women remain unaware of choices related to legal interventions or believe they lack relevance to them. It is not so much choice as lack of choice that has created the situation where older women remain in a violent situation.

The Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (2000) cites amendments to the law regarding Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders, contained in Part 15A of the Crimes Act, 1900 (NSW) as stating that a domestic relationship exists when the perpetrator of the violence:

- Is a current or former spouse, or
- Is a defacto partner, or
- Is in an intimate relationship with the victim, or
- Cares for the victim, or
- Resides with the victim, or
- Is a relative of the victim

Given the above information, it would seem that most aged abuse, apart from that which is perpetrated by friends or neighbours, could be redefined as domestic violence. A possible, far more accurate label is family violence as the term domestic violence is often associated with a public perception of spousal violence. Older people are at risk of being harmed through violence by relatives such as adult children, adolescent grandchildren, siblings, nephews and nieces as well as partners.

The question of the usefulness or not of labelling aged abuse as domestic violence begs another question. Is it more beneficial to deal with abuse of older people within the criminal justice system or the health/welfare system? Kinnear and Graycar (1999) suggest that using the terms domestic or family violence may allow license to push the 'harm to older people' issue into the mainstream. All workers, apart from just those in the aged care sector, may then have an opportunity to access education about older people and violence. The issue may also be placed on agendas within the whole human services sector. As a mainstream issue, aged abuse may also be part of a broad reach community education program, including media campaigns, which may have the power to alert older people themselves to the fact that abuse perpetrated against them is unacceptable, harmful, and in many cases, illegal. Greater numbers of older people may then seek support and protection.

There are many unanswered questions regarding the issue of labelling the harm that is perpetrated against older people. Any consideration of this issue needs to take into account that the important criteria for a label is that it reflects the seriousness of the issue.

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Kinnear, P. & Graycar, A. 1999, *Abuse of older people: Crime or family dynamics?* Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice, No. 113, Australian Institute of Criminology

Mears, J. 1997, *Triple jeopardy: Gender and abuse of older people*, Discussion Paper 5, NSW Advisory Committee on Abuse of Older People

Further Information

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Email activism with WRANA – rights on line

Caroline Lambert

The Women's Rights Action Network Australia (WRANA) is committed to achieving change in Australia's domestic human rights agenda. It aims to create a critical mass of individuals who are passionate about taking action on human rights. You are invited to contribute to building the momentum for change by becoming a part of the WRANA rapid response advocacy email list. Each month, subscribers will receive a ten minute action on a current domestic human rights issue. It may ask members to phone, fax, email or write to politicians or other actors. This will be a moderated list, restricted to the monthly action, with the possibility of an extra action if warranted by current events.

Subscribe to rights-on-line at:

<http://www.nwjc.org.au/avcwl/lists/info/rights-on-line.html>

NEW PUBLICATIONS/REVIEWS

Less Than Equal: Women and the Australian Legal System

Written by Patricia Eastal. Published by Butterworths.

Zoe Craven, Research Assistant, Clearinghouse

This new Australian book explores the 'overt agenda' and the 'hidden gender' of the law through an examination of the relationship between patriarchy, legal systems and the 'kaleidoscope' of culturally constructed filters through which we perceive the world. Adopting a holistic approach, Eastal argues that through complex processes of enculturation, we construct reality and develop assumptions based on our experience and knowledge of the world and that it is through this medium that the law finds its expression. A three tiered model forms the basis for the exploration of four central topics – women as rule breakers within the legal system; women as 'victims' in both the public and private spheres; women whose experiences involve an intersection of different forms of oppression and disadvantage; and women as professionals within the legal system. Through incorporating the core beliefs of radical feminism into her holistic model of epistemological enculturation, the framework from which Eastal develops her analysis of the law and women's experiences of it,

recognises both the ethnocentrism and the masculinism of the Australian legal system and challenges professionals and advocates to engage in the development of micro answers, macro changes and a stronger voice for women within the legal system.

In Section One, the issue of women as 'rule breakers' is explored. Identifying the predominant theoretical approaches to female criminality as limited to perceptions of women as 'sad', women as 'bad' or women as 'mad', Easteal systematically deconstructs each of these representations, highlighting the ways in which these social constructions of female criminality have major implications for women's treatment within the criminal justice system, specifically in the areas of sentencing practices, women who kill violent partners and single parent payment fraud. It is here that Easteal introduces what she perceives to be a stark contrast between women's reality of domestic violence and the ways in which it is constructed within the legal system. According to Easteal, simply by terming violence in the home as 'domestic', we neutralise the role of the perpetrator and decriminalise his actions by associating them with the 'relationship' and problems attributable to both parties. Because the law has developed through male dominated processes of reasoning and standard setting, the result is a legal system that fails to recognise women's experiences. Although attempts to incorporate evidence of 'battered woman syndrome' represent a degree of acknowledgment of the power dynamics of abusive relationships and the gendered mode in which 'reasonableness' is constructed within the law, such attempts still rely on a perception of the woman as 'pathological' or 'dysfunctional'. Accordingly, they fail to recognise the many cultural, ethnic and socio-economic factors that contribute to the ways in which gender is constructed and they run the risk of perpetuating the typology of women as either 'sad', 'bad' or 'mad'. The prosecution of single parent payment fraud is also structured in such a way so as to disadvantage women in abusive relationships. Although sentencing practices vary across jurisdictions, there is little weight given to the role of violence either in the criminal act itself, or its effect on cohabitation relationships.

In Section Two, the book looks at women as 'victims' within the legal system, beginning with patterns of, and legal responses to, violence against women in the home. Returning to her holistic model within which the world is viewed through a kaleidoscope of cultural perceptions, Easteal examines police and magistrate responses to domestic violence, the consequences of breach of Apprehended Violence Orders, the development of Anti-Stalking legislation and its relationship to AVOs and the role the Family Court plays (or fails to play) in the identification and prevention of domestic violence. Through an

examination of existing programs and the frequent use of case studies, Easteal concludes that the legislative changes of the last two decades are only as effective as those who apply them allow them to be and that until new approaches are implemented, the generational cycle of spousal and family violence will continue. Following on from this topic, the book then examines the issue of sexual assault, also the subject of much law reform in recent years. Easteal begins however, by highlighting the 'plethora of cultural mythology' that surrounds and influences our perceptions of gender, sexuality and rape. She then examines the ways in which these constructions have affected the implementation of legal reforms intended to prevent the 'revictimisation', via the legal system, of victims of sexual assault. Section Two then goes on to explore two further examples of the difficulty in challenging traditional kaleidoscopic images of women within the legal system – discrimination in the workplace and sexual harassment.

In Section Three, a recognition of the intersection of variables that contribute to women's experiences of, and access to, the legal system, including race, ethnicity, sexuality and disability, is incorporated into the book's analysis. According to Easteal, our legal system is dominocentric in the sense that it is not only dominated by men, but also fails to account for and recognise diversity. Particular attention is paid to the position of Aboriginal women who are victims of family violence, disabled women who are victims of forced sterilisation, migrant women and women from non-English speaking backgrounds and homosexual women who are victims of violence and/or are mothers. Emphasis is placed on the special difficulties these diverse groups face in accessing, utilising and gaining protection through an ethnocentric, racist, heterosexist, able-ist and gendered legal system and the intersectionality of disadvantage that also exists within the various sub-groups identified. 'Snapshots' of recent attempts to shift the dominocentric lens through micro level solutions, such as alternative dispute resolution and restorative justice programs in Indigenous communities, are then provided.

The final section of the book looks at women's experiences as legal practitioners and the tendency, particularly in the arena of private practice, for women to encounter ongoing systemic discrimination resulting in a much smaller proportion of women reaching high wage earning and/or power and decision making positions. Easteal concludes by encouraging readers and practitioners to begin 'thinking outside of the boxes' into which their cognition and acculturated perceptions have been socialised. Through challenging legal representations of 'truth', 'reason', 'objectivity', 'universal rights' and 'justice', she argues that the lenses through which

we see issues like domestic violence may begin to shift, transforming the language, knowledge, experiences and processes of the legal system so that it is willing and able to break down, rather than perpetuate, the public/private dichotomy and embrace, rather than punish, difference and diversity.

Creating meaningful consent for young people – some thoughts on future directions

The Clearinghouse invites contributions which generate debate and discussion. In this opinion piece, Margot Rawsthorne (PhD, University of Sydney) critiques some approaches to community education and prevention.

This article seeks to critically assess some of the education campaigns being undertaken in relation to violence against women, drawing on the insights of post-modern thinking. It takes two promotional strategies as its focus - the Date Rape 'No Means No' rubric cube produced by the NSW Attorney General's Violence Against Women strategy and the Sex/Violence/Consent smart card produced by the National Crime Prevention campaign 'Towards a Safer Australia'. It draws on an understanding of the complexity of young people's experiences arising from ten years of doctoral study of young people's sexual negotiations and experiences of sexual violence (Rawsthorne 2000).

The target audience for the 'No Means No' rubric cube appears to be young people, both young men and young women. The primary message of the 'No Means No' cube is that consent is straight forward. It continues a long history of feminist politicisation of sexual consent and expands on the often used slogan 'No Means No' to make a number of statements about young people's sexual negotiations. Whilst a useful political strategy for placing consent in the public agenda, it is questionable whether this slogan was ever very successful in assisting people to safely negotiate sex. There is, in fact, an extensive research literature on the complexities of young people's sexual negotiations (e.g. Holloway 1984; Lees 1986; Warshaw 1988; McRobbie 1993; Wilson & Wyn 1993). Further, some research suggests that sexual negotiations for *adult* women is far more complex than slogans and campaigns such as this suggest (e.g. Gavey 1989). As a social researcher passionate about creating opportunities for safer sexuality among young people, I am dismayed at the lack of integration of research into educational campaigns. As feminists we need to be constantly critical of our approaches to important issues such as women's experiences of violence and to carefully consider the impact of strategies.

My own research undertaken with young people as part of doctoral study, reveals the complex discourses at play in shaping young people's sexual negotiations. Educational discourses, religious discourses, youth culture discourses and gender discourses create a very complex field of meaning for young people at a time of great uncertainty and confusion in relation to sexuality. These discourses are co-existing but at times contradictory (Holloway 1984).

Young women, for example, are required to negotiate a myriad of meaning in relation to their sexuality and sexual activity. Traditional gender discourses discourage young women from being sexually active or sexually assertive. For many young women shaped by traditional gender discourses, there is a complete absence of an autonomous female desire (Thomson & Scott 1992). At the same time, youth culture discourses encourage sexual activity, expecting young women to assert their sexual rights. In many educational discourses, female sexual pleasure remains unspoken, with the focus instead on 'sexual responsibility'. Religious discourses construct a particularly dichotomised understanding of female sexuality, that of Madonna or whore.

In this complexity, we have feminist education campaigns such as the 'No Means No' cube suggesting that negotiating consent is straight forward. When asked about how they negotiate sex, the vast majority of young women said they never say what they want, want the male to 'take the lead', are often confused about knowing what 'they really want' and want to be 'wooded'. No doesn't mean no for these young women - it could mean a whole range of things that they struggle to find the language for. Things like 'I'm scared', 'is this wrong?', 'what will people think', 'will people think I'm frigid?' In many ways, campaigns such as the 'No means No' cube further disempower young people from being able to negotiate meaningful consent.

A much more constructive approach to the issue has been taken by the National Crime Prevention campaign 'Towards a Safer Australia'. Their smart card Sex/Consent/Violence is a thoroughly researched, innovative and comprehensive tool for young people negotiating sex. Significantly, the language it uses allows the inclusion of a much greater range of feelings and experiences. It does not present the situation as 'cut and dried' but as possibilities. At the same time it contains very clear messages about the unacceptability of sexual violence and holds the perpetrator responsible. The most exciting aspect of this resource is that it seeks to provide young people with tools to protect themselves. It reminds young people to listen to and trust their bodies' responses to situations of danger. This is a key lesson for young women, who culturally

have been disconnected from their bodily instincts (Mikel-Brown & Gilligan 1992). It also suggests signals of potentially abusive behaviours to be aware of. My study found many young men struggling to find a legitimate place in rejecting violence. The Smart Card's suggestions about 'Support a Friend' and how 'We can all Help' provide excellent guidance for these young men and others in the community struggling against sexual violence.

In developing anti-violence campaigns, whether at the local community or national level, it is important that the knowledge and understandings gained from social research, particularly that undertaken by feminist researchers, be integrated. Post-modern thinking helps us to challenge the accepted, to 'deconstruct' orthodoxies and be aware of the complexities of people's experiences. Feminism, like all other areas on critical thinking and political strategy, has its own orthodoxies. These orthodoxies, such as that consent is straight forward, do little to bring about real change.

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Further Information

on resources mentioned in this article from the Clearinghouse: phone 02 9385 2990; email: clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au

RESEARCH FINDINGS/INITIATIVES

Freedom From Fear

Workplace research project

Monique Keel

Researchers from Edith Cowan University, the Domestic Violence Prevention Unit of the Western Australian Government and the Centre for Research for Women are undertaking a domestic violence workplace project. The aims of the project are:

- to identify ways to assist workplace stakeholders including employers, supervisors and managers to respond effectively to domestic violence issues in the workplace;
- to work with all stakeholders to develop resources for use in identifying and responding appropriately to domestic violence issues at two workplaces; and
- to develop a workplace response model to be adapted for use in a range of workplaces.

It is assumed that by running one or two pilot projects, the project team will be aware of some of the workplace issues that may arise when other workplaces show interest in taking on the issue of domestic violence. Running this pilot project will also provide the team with experiential information about what undertaking a research pilot project means for an organisation. It will also provide an example that can be used to promote the importance of the issue of domestic violence in the workplace, and some positive feedback from the workplaces about why other workplaces might want to take on the issue themselves.

The project began with surveys to 123 workplaces with more than 20 staff and an average number of 155 employees. Forty four surveys were returned. The surveys had three aims: to learn whether or not domestic violence is an issue for organisations in

Western Australia; to learn about approaches that organisations take regarding the impact that domestic violence has on the workplace; and to determine the needs organisations might have in developing effective responses to domestic violence.

Domestic violence did not emerge as an issue of great concern to the workplaces surveyed. Recent research by Henderson (2000) estimates that domestic violence costs the Australian economy \$4 billion annually and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1996) estimates that domestic violence affects approximately one in four women. These two statistics would appear to indicate that a number of employees in any organisation may be affected by domestic violence and that the violence impacts on the organisation financially. However, even though 41 per cent of respondents knew of a particular incident of domestic violence that had impacted on one or more of their employees' ability to carry out their work, this knowledge did not translate into a great awareness of the impact that domestic violence might have on the workplace, nor into strategic workplace responses to domestic violence.

Only 7 per cent of respondents thought that the impact of domestic violence on the workplace was great or moderately great. Further, 40 per cent of respondents indicated that the impact of domestic violence on their workplace was unknown, indicating perhaps that the workplaces had not considered how domestic violence was impacting on the workplace or that they did not know how to incorporate domestic violence into the language of the workplace. Few respondents (20 per cent) were able to cite policies, procedures or programs that specifically address the impact of domestic violence on the workplace and the ones that were cited were often general policies or programs that included domestic violence within them, such as counselling, human resource policies, a Worksafe code, and emergency procedures and referrals processes. Whilst few respondents were able to cite specific domestic violence policies, a larger percentage (76 per cent) of respondents were able to name general policies, procedures or programs within their workplace that could incorporate domestic violence. These included: Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)/Counselling; human resource and occupational health and safety (OHS) policies; and peer and management support.

When asked about the types of responses that had occurred to incidences of domestic violence in the workplace, the most common response concerned providing assistance to the employee, such as counselling. Other responses centred on: human resource issues, such as organising sick leave; collegial support; and safety. The survey indicated that when an incident of domestic violence did occur,

a number of different organisational responses were forthcoming and that these responses met a range of needs shared by women experiencing domestic violence. The most common response was to refer the employee to counselling or the EAP.

When asked about what might hinder an employee from seeking help from others in the workplace, responses included: a lack of privacy or confidentiality; a lack of knowledge or awareness about domestic violence; and fear. The conduits to an employee seeking help included the provision of assistance, such as an EAP and having a supportive workplace. For the respondents who were aware of the impact of domestic violence on the workplace, there was an understanding that domestic violence impacts on the personal lives of those experiencing violence as well as on those around them and their work.

A large number of benefits to addressing domestic violence in the workplace were identified. These can be summarised as: addressing emotional and attitudinal problems; increasing productivity and performance; providing support; raising awareness; and increasing safety. There was some understanding of the broader benefits of addressing domestic violence, i.e., that it would have a flow on effect to other people and that as a societal issue it needs addressing. A number of disadvantages to addressing domestic violence were also identified including: fear about a lack of privacy and confidentiality, safety and efficacy. About a third of respondents thought there would be no disadvantages.

Fear was a prevalent theme within these results and is tied in to the silence that surrounds domestic violence such as a fear of getting involved in a 'private' matter, a fear of embarrassing the victim and a fear of the perpetrator. These responses confirm what we know from existing research into domestic violence: that fear plays a big part in women's reluctance to seek help; and also that fear plays a big part in the community's reluctance to address domestic violence as anything other than a private issue. It seems likely that workplaces have not developed a way of talking about and addressing domestic violence in the same way that they are now becoming skilled at talking about issues such as bullying and sexual harassment.

The project is now in its second phase, which involves working with stakeholders in two workplaces to identify ways and develop resources for workplaces to address the impact of domestic violence in the workplace. The workplaces that we will be working with will be self-nominating on the basis that they are interested in addressing the issue of domestic violence.

References

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LEGISLATION AND POLICIES

Victorian Government's Women's Safety Strategy

The Victorian Government will release a document entitled 'Key Directions in Women's Safety' for public consultation in February 2002. The document outlines the Government's proposed policy directions to reduce the level, and fear, of violence against women in Victoria. Consultation on this document will inform the development of the whole-of-government Women's Safety Strategy which is expected to be completed by mid 2002. Written comments will be accepted until 28 March 2002.

Further Information

or copies of Key Directions in Women's Safety:
Office of Women's Policy, Department of Premier and Cabinet, phone (03) 9651 0530;
Email: owp@dpc.vic.gov.au. Copies of the document will also be available on the Office of Women's Policy website: www.women.vic.gov.au.

Victorian Law Reform Commission – Sexual Offences

The Victorian Law Reform Commission has released a discussion paper concerning both the substantive law of sexual offences in Victoria and the laws of procedure and evidence. The substantive law defines what are sexual offences and includes legislation and case law. Evidence and procedure laws govern the evidence which can be given in criminal trials and how trials are conducted. The full-text of the discussion paper is available at: <http://www.lawreform.vic.gov.au>.

Further Information

The Victorian Law Reform Commission,
GPO Box 4637, Melbourne, Vic 3001.
Email: law.reform@lawreform.vic.gov.au

CLEARINGHOUSE NEWS

Client Satisfaction Surveys

Thank you to all who took the time to respond to our two client satisfaction surveys. Here is a brief overview of some of the feedback received.

Stakeholder Survey

Distributed in July 2000, this survey sought feedback on the Clearinghouse print publications, web site and online databases. Respondents were asked to rate the helpfulness of each service on a five point scale from 1 ('unhelpful') to 5 ('extremely helpful'). Respondents were overwhelmingly positive in their evaluation of the newsletters, with 92.5 per cent of respondents rating the them as either 'extremely' (53.4 per cent) or 'very' (39.1 per cent) helpful. Less than one per cent rated the newsletters as either 'unhelpful' or 'very unhelpful'. The overriding theme of comments about the 'most useful aspect' of the newsletters was that these were important in keeping people up to date with the latest research, practice, legislation and resources.

Just under 92 per cent of respondents rated the issues papers as either 'extremely' (57.4 per cent) or 'very' (34.3 per cent) helpful. Less than one per cent rated them as either 'not very' or 'unhelpful'. A number of key themes emerged from respondents' comments about the particular features of the issues papers which they found helpful.

- The content being up to date – e.g. *'It is important to keep up to date with the theoretical and discursive underpinnings of certain issues. These papers offer that'*. (Generalist service provider)
- The depth of the analysis – e.g. *'They cover issues in depth but in an easy to read format – good overview and starting point for further research'* (specialist service provider)
- Usefulness linked to practice – e.g. *'Broadens knowledge/gives in depth perspectives to assist in formulating framework for assistance – i.e. what helps, what won't'* (generalist service provider)
- Encouragement of critical reflection on practice – e.g. *'Papers are thought provoking and promote*

stimulation and opportunity for reflection
(generalist service provider)

- Quality and accessibility of the writing – e.g. *‘Concise and focussed. Enables a holistic interpretation of complex issues’* (generalist service provider)

The Stakeholder Survey has highlighted that the resources of the Clearinghouse are accessed primarily through its print publications. While 81 per cent of respondents have access to the Internet, in many cases, access is quite limited. Of those with Internet access, 45 per cent had accessed the Clearinghouse site, and 55 per cent had not. The most common reasons for not having used the site were ‘lack of time’ (45 per cent) and ‘unaware of web site’ (26 per cent); and ‘limited Internet access’ (13 per cent).

Seventy nine per cent of respondents rated the *Research and Resources Database* as either ‘extremely’ (39 per cent) or ‘very’ (40 per cent) helpful; fifteen per cent rated it as ‘helpful’; four per cent as ‘not very’ helpful, and one per cent as ‘unhelpful’. Seventy one per cent of respondents reported that they were either ‘extremely’ (33 per cent) or ‘very’ (38 per cent) successful in using this database to obtain the information sought.

Eighty two per cent of respondents to the stakeholder survey rated the *Good Practice Database* as either ‘extremely’ (41 per cent) or ‘very’ (41 per cent) helpful. Eighty two per cent of respondents were successful in using this database to obtain information.

At the conclusion of the stakeholder survey form, respondents were asked to make additional comments on the Clearinghouse services, and to make suggestions for changes or improvement. Most indicated that they were satisfied with the service and were in the nature of ‘keep up the excellent work!’ The following are examples of some of the general comments made about the Clearinghouse:

I think that the clearinghouse fulfils a MUCH needed role within the sector as there is no one place that brings together all the relevant information, resources and research. I rely on it heavily to be informed and kept up to date

Your publications are particularly useful for rural/remote area services who otherwise have limited access to current information.

Survey of users of Information Service

In addition to the survey of stakeholders which was sent to all clients, the Clearinghouse also conducted a brief survey via email/fax of clients who had used the Information Service. Most respondents contacted the Clearinghouse by phone (48 per cent) or email (41 per cent). Most were looking for information on a

particular aspect of domestic/family violence (41 per cent), or seeking a copy of a particular publication (21 per cent). Other services sought were general information on domestic /family violence (14 per cent); location of a particular publication/resource (12 per cent); information on an aspect of practice (7 per cent); on a particular service (4 per cent); or ‘other’ information (1 per cent).

Respondents were very happy with the speed of the response to their information inquiries: ninety four per cent stated that the service responded either ‘extremely’ (82 per cent) or ‘very’ (12 per cent) promptly. None said the service responded ‘too slowly’. Respondents also indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the information obtained, with 82 per cent of respondents either ‘extremely successful’ (58 per cent) or ‘very successful’ (24 per cent). Comments about the Information Service included, for example: *‘I use the Clearinghouse info service regularly and find the service so efficient I invariably receive more info than I knew existed’; ‘I have always found Clearinghouse people to be extremely helpful and willing to chase up obscure information.’*

Many respondents took the opportunity to make suggestions for future directions in the development of Clearinghouse services. These included, for example: an electronic newsletter (similar to the USA Family Violence Prevention Fund); more emphasis on marginalised groups of women (e.g. women with disabilities); time-limited email dialogue on particular topics; setting up a network where people can swap contact details and share and discuss relevant issues. We thank all who participated for their feedback which will be incorporated into our ongoing planning for the further development of Clearinghouse services.

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES/SEMINARS

Violence Against Women – Meaning • Cultures • Difference

**February 18 – 22, 2002 (Conference 18-20th;
workshops and agency visits 21st & 22nd),
The University of Sydney**

The conference is aimed at increasing understandings of the complexities of violence against women, and extending the repertoire of responses to this violence. Meanings, cultures and difference will be the overarching themes of all presentations at the conference. There will be a particular focus on the Asia-Pacific region. Full program now on line at <http://www.edfac.usyd.edu.au/projects/VAW2002>

Contact

VAW2002 Conference Secretariat
Professional Development Unit, Faculty of
Education, University of Sydney
AUSTRALIA 2006
Email: vaw2002@edfac.usyd.edu.au
Phone: (+61 2) 9351 6311; Fax: (+61 2) 9351 6249

The NSW Education Centre Against Violence presents a seminar series with Liz Kelly

Professor Liz Kelly is currently director of the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit, University of North London. The Unit exists to develop feminist research methodologies, theory and practice, especially in relation to connections between forms of sexualised violence.

Seminar 1: Joined Up Responses To Complicated Lives – Developing Integrated Approaches to Violence Against Women. February 21, 2002, Parramatta

This program begins with a case study illustrating the links between domestic violence, child sexual abuse and rape in one woman's life. It will explore other connections and the potential benefits for service users, practitioners and policy makers in integrated responses. Links will be made to international law, including UN conventions and human rights perspectives. Specific attention will be paid to women with histories of multiple victimisation, and whether current service provision meets their complex needs. Examples of integrated responses from various parts of the world will be presented, and participants asked to identify key barriers and opportunities for developing similar approaches in Australia. The day will end with some personal and sector based action planning.

Seminar 2: When Protective Strategies Have Unintended Consequence: Exploring The Relationship Between Mothers And Children Who Have Lived With Domestic Violence. February 22, 2002, Parramatta

There has been much attention in recent years to children's experiences of domestic violence. A group of researchers in the UK conducted a study in which children's understandings, coping responses and needs were the primary focus. One of the key findings has been that women and children try to protect the other from knowing what they know – an unintended consequence is an unhelpful silence and communication gap. The research findings, which draw on children's and women's perceptions and

reflections, will be presented. Work will then draw on these findings to explore ways to address this in both early interventions, crisis intervention, and support for women and children post-separation.

Cost: \$70 each one day seminar

Applications close: February 6, 2002

Further Information

Pat Tierney, ECAV. Phone: (02) 9840 3737;
Fax: (02) 9840 3754;
Email: ecav@wsahs.nsw.gov.au

Unravelling the Complexities of Family Violence: A Holistic Approach

March 7-8, 2002. Coffs Harbour, NSW

This conference aims to look at family violence from a holistic perspective. It will examine practical intervention issues and prevention initiatives, as well as background issues and factors contributing to family violence. Organisers aim to make this conference relevant to as many people as possible and would like to encourage participation from all sectors of the community affected by family violence, including field workers, service providers and members of the community. There will be closed sessions for Indigenous participants. Funded by the Victims of Violent Crime Grants Program, Department of Corrective Services.

Further Information

Kirsten Busby, Violence Against Women Strategy,
PO Box 126, Port Macquarie, NSW 2444;
Email: kirsten_busby@agd.nsw.gov.au;
Phone: (02) 6588 2913

To Explore Different Methods of Engaging and Working with Children and Parents/Carers Affected by Family Violence

March 27 & 28, 2002, Melbourne

PARKAS: 'Parents Accepting Responsibility Kids are Safe' presents this two day experiential training workshop. Topics to be covered include: recent research on the neurological impact of trauma on children; attachment theory, object relations; the importance of play (including our own capacity to 'play' in therapy); the dynamic of violence ('How do we as professionals collude with or challenge it?'); PARKAS Mothers/Carers & Kids Groupwork

program; PARKAS Dads & Kids Groupwork program. The workshop will incorporate practical learning experiences where participants will be involved in activities (including playing games & doing artwork) used in the PARKAS program. Limit of 18 participants.

Presenters: Wendy Bunston (MHASKY), Tara Pavlidis (MHASKY) and guest presenters who have prior experience in co-facilitating a PARKAS program

Cost: \$253 (Includes Training Kit and PARKAS Manual)

Enquiries

Daniella Tarle: (03) 9345 6011 or (03) 9345 6019

Victims Of Crime Association Queensland State Conference – Resilient Workers Supporting Resilient Survivors

May 30 & 31, 2002, Brisbane

This conference aims to raise awareness of strategies that can be utilised to support both workers and victims of crime. It is also expected the theme will spark debate regarding the ability for victims of crime (and even workers) to be resilient throughout the criminal justice process. The conference will be a launching pad for debate and reform in the treatment of victims of crime in Queensland. The conference will work toward outcomes that enhance the recovery of victims of crime and the reparation of damage caused by criminal acts.

Further Information

Victims of Crime Association of Queensland Phone: (07) 3277 2800; Facsimile: (07) 3277 2900; Email: mail@vocaq.asn.au; Website: www.vocaq.asn.au

Gender, Sexuality and Law II

An International Conference, Keele University, UK, 28-30 June 2002

In 1998, over 200 scholars from around the world gathered at Keele University for the first Gender, Sexuality and Law conference which explored the construction of gender and sexuality as it is situated at the intersection of multiple bodies of knowledge. Gender, Sexuality and Law II aims to build on that first conference. Rather than a single, over-arching theme, this conference seeks to provide a forum at

which scholars who work broadly in the gender, sexuality and law area can gather for the dissemination of research and the exploration of ideas. The conference is open to people working within feminist theory, queer theory and critical race theory, or who are otherwise exploring, challenging and interrogating the relationship between law and the construction of the sexed and gendered subject.

Further Information

GSL Group, Law Department, Keele University, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG, United Kingdom;
Phone: +44-(0)1782-583218;
Fax: +44-(0)1782-583228; Web site:
<http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/la/GSL2002.htm>

INTERNET SITES

Family Court of Australia – Family Violence Judgements

http://www.familycourt.gov.au/judge/index/html/family_violence.html

Includes the judgement in the appeal case reported recently in the press where a woman represented herself and the findings relating to the impact of this on her ability to present evidence of domestic violence.

Deadline for contributions to the March 2002 Newsletter is February 22

The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Commonwealth of Australia, the University of New South Wales or the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* Taskforce.

Whilst all reasonable care has been taken in the preparation of this publication, no liability is assumed for any errors or omissions.

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

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

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