

NEWSLETTER 39

INSIDE

- 1 EDITORIAL
- 2 NEWS
- 3 CLEARINGHOUSE UPDATE
- 4 FEATURE
Time for Action:
responses from the sector
- 6 ISSUES IN GOOD PRACTICE
Working with men who use violence: the problem of reporting 'progress'
- 9 FEATURE
Domestic homicide reviews: recent developments across Australia
- 12 NEW RESEARCH RECENT EVENT
- 13 NEW RESOURCES & INITIATIVES
- 14 REVIEW
- 15 RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE RESEARCH AND RESOURCES DATABASE
RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE GOOD PRACTICE DATABASE
- 16 FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the Summer 2010 edition of the Clearinghouse *Newsletter*. We acknowledge and congratulate the efforts of the very many workers who held events, programs and campaigns for White Ribbon Day and the 16 Days of Activism to Stop Gender Based Violence. It was a busy and productive time, which saw many innovative and strategic initiatives held.

In this issue of the *Newsletter*, you will find a thought provoking article on how we measure success when working with perpetrators, a timely update on how Australian states and territories are progressing towards establishing death review processes, as well as the second part in our sounding out of community responses to *Time for Action*.

The Clearinghouse was delighted with the turn out and participation of nearly 100 attendees at our *Ageing Safely Forum*, jointly held with the Older Women's Network NSW and the University of South Australia, in Adelaide in October 2009. The forum presented a national opportunity to discuss issues of abuse against older adults in terms of good practice protocols, to identify opportunities for collaboration between domestic violence and aged care services, and to reflect on ideas and practice.

The forum discussed the increasing demand by older people, particularly women, on family violence and homelessness services and, consequently, their expanding role in an 'abuse of older people' response, alongside aged care providers. Representatives of state and territory departments and alliances for the ageing presented assessments of progress in their jurisdictions towards the development and implementation of statewide guidelines to address the abuse of older people in their homes. They discussed the challenges of introducing elements of good practice into statewide systems.



Representatives of the Older Women's Network NSW at the Ageing Safely Forum, Adelaide

The forum also heard from a range of community services doing innovative and significant work, including the development of joint training programs for family violence and aged care workers, and the establishment of regional networks of family violence and aged care workers. PowerPoint presentations, papers, guidelines and notes from the conference are available on the Clearinghouse website.

Thank you to all the respondents to the Clearinghouse's Stakeholder Survey. We were delighted to receive 319 responses. The Clearinghouse will be responding to your feedback in 2010 to make our services more practical and valuable for you. Congratulations to Helen from Barrabool, Victoria in winning the \$200 Dymocks book voucher. We hope you enjoy your prize for participating in this survey.

With this *Newsletter*, you will also receive your Year Planner for 2010. We hope you find it useful and if you would like additional copies please contact us. We are also pleased to invite you to the Clearinghouse's next forum, where we will present findings from our research project on women's financial security post violent relationships. Join us in Sydney on March 10 (see p. 16 for details).

Gaby Marcus, Director

NEWS

South Australia reforms protection order law

The South Australian Government has introduced new protection order laws through the *Intervention Orders (Prevention of Abuse) Act 2009*. The legislation, which passed through Parliament on 4 December 2009, features the following innovations: an expanded definition of violence, including emotional harm as well as 'unreasonable and non-consensual denial of financial, social or personal autonomy'; provisions for police issued Interim Orders; tenancy law amendments; privacy provisions; and exemptions from aiding and abetting charges for protected persons. The Act is available at:

http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/sa/num_act/iooaa200985o2009483

NSW to establish ongoing Domestic Violence Homicide Review Panel

On 25 November 2009, the New South Wales Minister for Women, Linda Burney, and Attorney General, John Hatzistergos, announced the establishment of an ongoing Domestic Violence Homicide Review Panel, to be chaired by State Coroner Mary Jerram. Funding of \$504 000 has been allocated for this financial year to establish the panel, which will consist of government and non government experts, with administrative and research support.

www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/Lawlink/Corporate/ll_corporate.nsf/pages/LL_Media_Centre_attorney_general_2009#panel_set

Victoria launches new police strategy on family violence

The Victorian Chief Commissioner, Simon Overland, launched *Living Free From Violence – Upholding the Right: Victoria Police strategy to reduce violence against women and children 2009-2014* on 25 November 2009. It includes a more effective response to perpetrators with decisive action and best practice investigative techniques that will ensure improved outcomes at court for victims. The strategy is available at:

www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=48

Victoria releases new plan to prevent violence against women

Premier John Brumby and Women's Affairs Minister Maxine Morand launched *A Right to Respect, Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women 2010-2020* at Victoria's Parliament House Gardens on 24 November 2009. This policy document is a coordinated, whole-of-community framework that contains a range of strategies to promote non violence, gender equity and respectful relationships throughout the community: in homes, workplaces, on the sporting field, and in schools. The plan is available at:

<http://www.women.vic.gov.au/web12/owpMain.nsf/AllDocs/564BC2A0475C972FCA25767800143A57?OpenDocument>

Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards announced

The recipients of the annual Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards were announced by the Minister for Home Affairs, Brendan O'Connor, on 29 October 2009. Among the recipients were three domestic and family violence prevention programs: It all Starts at Home (Victoria); Promoting Peace in Families (Victoria); and the Fitzroy Crossing Liquor Restriction Enforcement—Kartiya Future, Brighter Future (Western Australia).

www.aic.gov.au/en/crime_community/acvpa/2009.aspx



Winners of the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Awards 2009. Image provided by the Australian Institute of Criminology.

Tasmania reviews its integrated response to family violence

Success Works' independent evaluation of Tasmania's Safe at Home program was released on 30 October 2009. The review found that the key objectives of the program are being achieved but that further improvements are possible. The report contains thirty seven recommendations including: the adoption of 'family safety' as a unifying paradigm; a strengthened risk management approach by Safe At Home; and the establishment of a Specialist Family Violence Court. The report is available at:

www.safeathome.tas.gov.au/review_of_safe_at_home_services

Queensland to introduce 'battered persons' defence into law

The Queensland Government plans to introduce a legal defence for people who commit murder as a result of domestic and family violence, in a significant reform announced on 31 August 2009. A draft of the *Criminal Code Amendment Bill 2009* was released for public consultation in September 2009, with submissions closing last October.

www.justice.qld.gov.au/510.htm

VICTORIAN REVIEW OF VICTIM COMPENSATION

The Victorian Government is currently conducting a review of its victim compensation system. A discussion paper was released in December 2009, with feedback sought by 22 February 2010. The review is a valuable opportunity for domestic violence services in Victoria to comment on the access issues for their clients and the Clearinghouse encourages you to make a submission. More information is available at:

[http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/DOJ+Internet/Home/Victims/Support+for+Victims/JUSTICE++Review+of+the+Victims+of+Crime+Compensation+Scheme+\(PDF\)](http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/DOJ+Internet/Home/Victims/Support+for+Victims/JUSTICE++Review+of+the+Victims+of+Crime+Compensation+Scheme+(PDF))

CLEARINGHOUSE UPDATE

Clearinghouse contributes to ALRC and NSW LRC inquiry

The Clearinghouse was consulted by the Australian and NSW Law Reform Commissions regarding their Family Violence Inquiry in December 2009, with further consultations planned for 2010. For more details about the inquiry, see the 'Time for Action Update' on p. 5 of this *Newsletter*.

Financial security project update

The Clearinghouse is conducting a one year, qualitative research project examining factors affecting women's financial outcomes, pre and post violent relationships. A progress report documenting the first half of the project was submitted to the funding body, the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA), in November 2009. Next steps for the project are to meet with key government agencies and service staff to discuss the findings of the research and develop response strategies. The Clearinghouse will present the findings at a public forum on 10 March 2010 (details on p. 16 of this *Newsletter*).

Key meetings held

Ludo McFerran, Clearinghouse Project Officer, was the keynote speaker in Perth on 10 November 2009 at a forum on Safe at Home Programs, organised by the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence (WA) and the Department of Child Protection. Under the Commonwealth/State National Affordable Housing Agreement, Western Australia is funding an initial six safe at home projects in metropolitan and southern WA and five family violence outreach services. The forum recommended an urgent reform of WA legislation to prioritise the rights of victims to stay in their homes, as well as reform to close the gap between 24 hour police orders and the granting of a restraining order by a court.

In October 2009, Clearinghouse staff met with a delegation from Japan visiting Australia to gather information about models and management of men's behaviour change programs. Delegation members, including psychiatrists and social workers, are running the first abusive men's treatment program in Tokyo. Many thanks go to Mr Yoshi Takano for setting up the meeting and for translating.

Domestic violence and the workplace – latest developments

Since our last *Newsletter*, there have been a number of important developments in the Clearinghouse's campaign to raise awareness of domestic violence in workplaces. In September 2009, while on leave in England, Clearinghouse Project Officer Ludo McFerran met with representatives of the Women's Committee of UNISON, the United Kingdom's largest public sector union and a pioneer of domestic violence workplace policies. Women's Officers and Committee members provided a briefing for the

Clearinghouse, with a clear message to keep domestic violence on the union agenda.

Back home, the Clearinghouse continues to build its partnership with the Public Services Association (PSA) of NSW. Senior Researcher, Rochelle Braaf, presented a joint paper at the PSA NSW Women's Conference in September 2009, informing delegates that nearly two thirds of the Australian women who report violence by a current partner are in paid employment.

Since then, the PSA NSW has tabled domestic violence clauses based on the UNISON model in a round of enterprise bargaining with the University of New South Wales. The clauses cover protection from dismissal as a result of the impact of domestic violence, confidentiality requirements, special leave to attend court and other appointments, and workplace security measures to protect women. The Clearinghouse, in consultation with Working Women's Centres, is also developing a submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission on the relationship between workplace relationship laws and family violence.

Related resources include:

- McFerran L & Braaf R 2009, 'Domestic violence is a workplace issue', paper presented to the *PSA NSW Women's Conference*, Sydney, 11 September, www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/other_publications.htm
- Murray S & Powell A 2008, *Working it out: domestic violence issues and the workplace*, Issues Paper 16, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Sydney, www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/issues_Papers.htm
- UNISON Model Agreement on Domestic Abuse: www.unison.org.uk/file/W3651.1.doc

Recent papers and presentations

- Barrett Meyering I 2010, *Victim compensation and domestic violence: a national overview*, Stakeholder Paper 8
- Wilcox K 2010, *AVOs around the nation*, Topic Paper 19 (forthcoming)
- Wilcox K & McFerran L 2009, 'Staying home, staying safe: the value of protection order provisions in homelessness strategies', *REFORM*, no. 94

In the past few months, Clearinghouse staff have presented papers at the following conferences: Australian Institute of Judicial Administration *Family Violence Conference* in Brisbane; *Ageing Safely Forum* in Adelaide; *FaHCSIA Social Policy Research Workshop* in Canberra; and *Evaluation and Practice Standards in the Sexual Assault and Violence Against Women Fields* in Melbourne. Clearinghouse conference presentations can be accessed at:

www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/other_publications.htm

PLANNING ACTIVITIES FOR 2010?

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!

FEATURE

Time for Action: responses from the sector

Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2009-2021 was presented to the Commonwealth Government in May 2009. The recommendations of the Council are currently being considered by the Commonwealth, as it develops its national plan in consultation with the states and territories.

The series, 'Time for Action: responses from the sector', commenced in the last issue of our *Newsletter*. In this issue, we hear from an Indigenous perspective as Hannah McGlade comments on the implications of *Time for Action* for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



Hannah McGlade

Hannah McGlade is a Perth based Noongar human rights lawyer, researcher and writer who participated in consultations in relation to the development of the national plan. She has several publications concerning Aboriginal women, children and violence.

The level of violence in Aboriginal communities and its enduring effects on women, children, families and communities have long been recognised as 'endemic' and a threat to our future well-being. An Aboriginal woman in Australia is ten times more likely to die from assault as a non-Aboriginal woman, and 35 times more likely to be hospitalised for violence related injuries. Aboriginal women and Aboriginal children, in particular

Aboriginal girls, are at significantly higher risk of being the victim of a sexual assault.

In its immediate response to *Time for Action*, the Commonwealth Government indicated its support for a number of Aboriginal specific recommendations. These actions included: increased access to housing to reduce overcrowding; support for remote communities to develop alternative places where violent men can go or be taken; and the funding of a national network of locally developed healing centres for Aboriginal communities.

However, in developing a final national plan the Commonwealth must go much further if it is to properly include the perspective and visions of Aboriginal women. As a starting point, there are three key strategies I would like to see taken up in the national plan.

1. Establish a national body to end violence against Aboriginal women

Amnesty International Australia has recommended that a new national level body should be empowered to undertake research, build capacity and drive policy on efforts related to end violence against Aboriginal women (Fergus & Lappin 2008, p. 16). This recommendation is consistent with international human rights law and the recognition by the National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children (NCRVAWC) that diverse strategies must be adopted to recognise the intersection of gender with factors such as race. I support this recommendation and consider that such a body should be included within the proposed National Centre of Excellence.

2. Place the victim at the centre of healing models

While the Council has emphasised the need for perpetrator programs, many Aboriginal healing models focus on the victim. For example, the Community Holistic Circle Healing model of Hollow Water in Canada (recognised by two major inquiries in Australia concerning Aboriginal child sexual abuse) focuses on holistic healing for the victim, the

perpetrator and the families. We should also consider whether the immediate priority focus of the healing centres should be intergenerational trauma or addressing the direct needs of women and children who are presently suffering violence and abuse, with no healing or therapeutic response.

The Council also suggests that Aboriginal Elders could oversee restorative justice models aimed at family violence and sexual assault. However, this must be carefully considered because some Elders and leaders have been associated with sexual abuse and violence.

3. Fund Aboriginal women's legal services

The Council acknowledged that Aboriginal women face particular barriers to justice, including the historic distrust of police, the overrepresentation of Aboriginal men and women in the criminal justice system, entrenched community attitudes that violence is normal and fear of retribution from a perpetrator's family. The Council should also have recognised the critical role of Aboriginal women's legal services in addressing violence, as recommended by the Australian Law Reform Commission (1994) in their momentous inquiry, *Equality before the law: justice for women*. These are still not established in a number of Australian capital cities due to the flawed reasoning that mainstream services adequately meet the needs of urban Aboriginal women and children.

These are the kind of issues that a national level body comprised of Aboriginal women with expertise and commitment can further discuss and develop. The Council's report is a timely and important first step in the right direction but future efforts should be based on an increased understanding that Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women need to walk together as equals in our efforts to end violence. Aboriginal women should not be designated a minority within Government devised responses aimed at addressing violence against women.

These issues are acknowledged by the Council in their Statement of Reconciliation at the beginning of *Time for Action* (NCRVAWC 2009, p. iii). In developing its national plan, the Government must unequivocally recognise and affirm that Aboriginal women play a central role in ending the violence that has impacted too many of our lives, as women and children. This concerns our knowledge, our histories, our wisdom, our bodies and our human rights.

Acknowledgement

This article expresses the personal view of the author and is an extract from the ABC's *Your Voice* online discussion forum. The full text of the article is available at:

<http://www.abc.net.au/indigenous/stories/s2564683.htm>

The article, 'National Plan of Action to reduce violence' by Hannah McGlade, was first published by ABC Online, 8 May 2009. It is reproduced by permission of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and ABC Online (c) 2009 ABC. All rights reserved. Further information from ABC Indigenous Online can be found at:

www.abc.net.au/indigenous/default.htm

References

Australian Law Reform Commission 1994, *Equality before the law: justice for women*, part 1, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra

Fergus L & Lappin K 2008, *Setting the standard: international good practice to inform an Australian national plan of action to eliminate violence against women*, Amnesty International Australia, Sydney

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, 2009-2021*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra

TIME FOR ACTION UPDATE

Ministers meet to discuss national plan

The Minister for the Status of Women, Tanya Plibersek, and the Attorney-General, Robert McClelland, met with their state and territory colleagues on 5 November 2009 to discuss national efforts to reduce violence against women and their children.

The ministers agreed to prioritise actions in several areas including: school based respectful relationship programs; improving perpetrator programs; and boosting efforts to reduce violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and their children.

www.tanyaplibersek.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/tanyaplibersek.nsf/content/violence_against_women_05nov09.htm

Expressions of interest in national counselling service extended

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs widened the field of potential service providers for the National Online and 1800 Counselling Service recommended in *Time for Action* by extending the expression of interest (EOI) process from the initial closing date of 22 September 2009 to a later closing date of 30 October 2009.

Following completion of the EOI, the department progressed to the next stage of the selection process, the Invitation to Apply (ITA) for funding.

The closing date for the ITA process is 29 January 2010.

www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/funding/national_online_1800_counselling_service/Pages/default.aspx

Family violence and family law reviews – update

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) Family Violence Inquiry, announced by the Commonwealth Attorney-General shortly after the release of *Time for Action* last year, is well underway. To assist in scoping the inquiry and identifying key issues for consideration, the ALRC has conducted consultations in Sydney, Canberra, Brisbane and Adelaide with a range of groups, including the Family Law Council, Australian Institute of Family Studies, legal aid bodies, state DPPs, the Violence Against Women Advisory Group and women's legal services. The ALRC plans to release a consultation paper for community debate and feedback in March 2010. For more information about the inquiry, including the terms of reference and instructions on how to make a formal submission, go to:

www.alrc.gov.au/inquiries/current/family-violence

A separate review of the practices, procedures and laws that apply in the federal family law courts in the context of family violence, commissioned by the Attorney-General in July 2009, has recently been completed. Professor Richard Chisholm, a former Family Court judge, was asked to consider whether improvements could be made to ensure that the federal family law courts provide the best possible support to families who have experienced or are at risk of violence. His report is currently being considered by the Attorney-General, the Chief Federal Magistrate and the Chief Justice.

www.ag.gov.au/www/agd/agd.nsf/Page/Families_FamilyCourtsViolenceReview

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

ISSUES IN GOOD PRACTICE

Working with men who use violence: the problem of reporting 'progress'

by *Darian Shephard-Bayly, Northern Violence Intervention Program*

Introduction

Within the Northern Violence Intervention Program (NVIP) and, we suspect, many similar programs, there is considerable discussion around whether there is evidence that participants in the Men Stopping Violence Group (MSVG) are ceasing their violence and abuse. Such discussion might include informal practice reflection or involve processes of formal risk assessment and reporting to other agencies. In particular, we are often asked to comment on how much 'progress' men have made in the group. Our assessments may in turn inform important decisions such as: where the offender resides; whether contact with the partner or children is permitted; and sentencing outcomes.

However, our experience suggests that using the notion of men's 'progress' as the basis of these decisions can be problematic and potentially dangerous. This article explores some of the dangers and difficulties we have identified in relation to an overutilisation of the notion of men's 'progress' in providing therapeutic and statutory interventions to men who use violence. I argue that risk, along with the acknowledgement of past and ongoing violence, should take priority over and above any 'progress' men may demonstrate.

From the outset, it is important to make clear that it is not my argument that change is not a possible or worthwhile pursuit in work with men who use violence. This discussion is not a critique of the work of professionals, services and agencies working with men. To the contrary, this article seeks to support this work in the interests of women and children's safety by further contextualising the notion of men's 'progress' within a domestic violence-aware framework.

Problems with the notion of 'progress' within the context of domestic violence

There are a number of reasons why using the notion of 'progress' may be misleading in domestic violence situations. At NVIP, our main concerns are that 'progress' is not adequately contextualised, quantified or monitored; and that insufficient attention is paid to the risks arising out of the ongoing relationships offenders might have with victims.

Contextualising the violence

One of the main challenges we face is to report men's 'progress' within a context that acknowledges the history of violence towards their partners and/or children. The reporting of 'progress' can be extremely problematic due to underreporting of domestic violence within the criminal justice system. Even when reported to police, the evidence required for conviction tends to lead to both a low conviction rate and convictions primarily for physical acts of violence and abuse. As a result, the starting point from which a man may make any 'progress' is often a more extensive use of violence and abuse than is apparent at face value.

In addition, men's use of violence is often minimised by individuals, services and community attitudes. It can also be common for the woman to be blamed directly or indirectly for the man's use of violence. Men can and often do seek to minimise and deny their own behaviour, while creating stories around how they believe their partner and/or children is to blame for their use of violence. Again, these factors suggest that even where domestic violence is identified, the incidents and effects are more severe than initially reported, and are a pattern of long term behaviours.

Quantifying the violence

One of the assumptions underlying the notion of 'progress' is that the man is less likely to offend in the future. Importantly, there is evidence to support the efficacy of integrated therapeutic and criminal justice interventions in supporting men to cease their violence, including evidence of reductions in both the severity and frequency of incidents of violence (Gondolf 2004). However, quantifying these changes in behaviour is problematic, especially if and when the most valid and reliable measure – feedback from victims – is not available.

To be frank, in the absence of women and/or children's feedback, any reporting of 'progress' focused only upon a man's favourable attendance, group interaction, understanding and application of the MSVG concepts is vastly inadequate. Such reporting cannot claim to reflect levels or occurrence of violence. Even where feedback from partners is available, including this information within formal reports without further endangering victims may be extremely difficult.

External monitoring of the violence

Another factor to consider is that during the time when men attend stopping violence programs, they are usually subjected to significant monitoring, for example by police, courts, correctional services, domestic violence services, child protection services and possibly their partner. Program attendees may face serious criminal, statutory and/or social sanctions for further acts of violence or non-

GOOD PRACTICE HOTLINE

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

compliance, including incarceration, child protection orders, family law orders or separation. Because of this monitoring, the man may be on his 'best behaviour'. In fact, proponents of multi-agency domestic violence programs would argue that system level monitoring actually demonstrates the effectiveness of integrated approaches which, crucially, include criminal justice sanctions.

It is often counterproductive to violence reduction goals to assume that men's 'progress' can be ascribed to the men's group program. Ironically, if the complex array of factors that enable 'progress' to be made in relation to men's violence (including criminal justice responses, support for women and children, monitoring and intervention) are not formally acknowledged, then this may lead to decisions that discontinue these very measures, on the basis of the presumed 'success' of the men's group. The significance of all the variables which may lead to 'progress' must be recognised, rather than simply assuming that it is the behaviour change program that causes the desired outcome of reductions of violence.

Reporting 'progress' in the context of an ongoing relationship

The reporting of 'progress' for most of the men who attend stopping violence interventions for domestic violence occurs in the context of an ongoing relationship between the violent offender and their victim. This is vastly different to progress reporting for other offenders attending similar interventions relating to violence, such as generic violent offender programs, where there is no ongoing contact with the victim, much less an intimate relationship. Moreover, as has long been recognised with respect to domestic violence, any ongoing relationship is likely to be characterised by the man's ongoing pursuit, the woman's fear of leaving, financial insecurity, risks associated with shared parenting and family law arrangements, as well as the long term effects on victims of trauma, disempowerment and control.

Not only is there potentially ongoing contact between the offender and the woman (even if this is unwanted on her part), this ongoing contact occurs within a context of unequal power, as is characteristic of relationships where there is domestic violence. In addition to women's and children's experiences of violence, this power imbalance is further entrenched by the social, economic, legal and cultural forces that disempower women.

These factors significantly impact upon the potential vulnerability of victims and must be acknowledged in any consideration of men's 'progress'. Regardless of the effectiveness of interventions and the relative degree of 'progress' demonstrated, his potential ongoing contact and interaction with the victim of his violence, as well as the historical and socialised characteristics of this relationship, markedly increases his risk of re-offending.

The significance of all the variables which may lead to 'progress' must be recognised, rather than simply assuming that it is the behaviour change program that causes the desired outcome of reductions of violence.

Alternatives to reporting 'progress'

Overreliance on reporting men's 'progress' has the potential to minimise the experiences of women and children, jeopardise their safety and lead to possible systems abuse. At the NVIP, we have identified a number of strategies that serve as effective alternatives to 'progress' reporting, discussed below.

Prioritising safety and accountability in reports

One of our main responses has been to ensure that the principles of safety and accountability are prioritised within 'progress' reports for men attending the MSVG. These principles have shaped a number of practices. Men's reports are qualified with clear statements if and when men's demonstrated behaviour within intervention sessions is not correlated with actual behaviour change outside of the group. Where available and when safe, the feedback from men's partners, former partners or children is included within the report. Men's self-disclosure around additional, unreported acts of violence and/or abuse and patterns of power and control are included.

At a systems level, the implementation of risk and safety reports for women has been a vital component in documenting women's experiences and highlighting domestic violence risk factors within the criminal justice system. Risk and safety reports are linked to formalised domestic violence risk assessments (Felus, Kaye & Lloyd 2007). Similarly at NVIP, where 'progress' reports are requested by other statutory agencies, concurrent women's and children's risk and safety reports may be submitted by women's or children and young people's advocates. Both of these practices serve to challenge the often minimised, blaming and manipulative accounts offered by men who use violence.

Public acknowledgement of violence

Another practice of NVIP workers has been to support men to publicly acknowledge their use of violence and abuse. An example of this practice has occurred where a Men's Worker has attended a review meeting with other statutory agencies and effectively interviewed the man to facilitate his acknowledgement of his use of violence and abuse towards his partner. This involved asking the man to outline and summarise his discussions from the MSVG, giving the man the opportunity to outline the position and understanding he'd developed within the MSVG in ways that could be witnessed by both workers from another agency and the man's own family.

This process of the man publicly naming his responsibility for violence clearly states the extent of men's use of violence and works towards breaking the secrecy, blame and minimisation that often surround domestic violence. More broadly, it is hoped that this approach will also serve to provide other service providers within statutory agencies, such as courts, correctional services and the child protection

system, a means by which to make safe and just decisions when they work with families, using practices which ensure that men take responsibility for their violence.

Extended monitoring and suspended sanctions

Another alternative to 'progress' reporting that is arguably underutilised is the practice of extended monitoring and suspended sanctions within the criminal justice systems, which is independent of any degree of 'progress' that is, or is not, deemed to result from group work. That is, men are sentenced based on the offence but provided with the opportunity to address their behaviour whilst still in the community under statutory supervision with correctional services. The effectiveness of integrating therapeutic interventions to men who use violence within a criminal justice response cannot be underestimated.

Our anecdotal experience at NVIP is that men attending the MSVG clearly and frequently identify the value of combined MSVG interventions along with criminal justice responses, such as arrest, remand, conviction, monitoring and potential sentencing options in sanctioning their violence.¹ Likewise, the evidence base for this approach is

NORTHERN VIOLENCE INTERVENTION PROGRAM

The Northern Violence Intervention Program (NVIP) is a multi-agency criminal justice program jointly funded by Central Northern Adelaide Health Service and the Attorney-General's Department, working in partnership with South Australia Police, the Elizabeth Magistrate's Family Violence Court and the Department of Correctional Services – Community Corrections.

NVIP offers a 26 week Men Stopping Violence Group. Intervention with men is informed and enhanced by concurrent services provided to support women and children. The guiding principles of the intervention are: accountability to the experiences of women and children; prioritising safety; and men taking responsibility for their behaviour and respect.

The author can be contacted at:
Darian.Shephard-Bayly@aus.salvationarmy.org

supported by international research, such as Gondolf (2004). While no cure all, the combined response of stopping violence interventions, case management and monitoring of men, support for women, along with deterrent sentencing responses is undoubtedly effective in enhancing the safety of women and children.

Conclusion

When we ask about men's 'progress' as a result of attending stopping violence interventions, we are asking the wrong question. All too often, we make the mistake of ignoring women and children's experiences, ignoring the man's history of using violence and abuse, ignoring the vulnerability of victims and ignoring the way interagency system responses may contribute to a reduction in men's violence and abuse.

The alternatives to using reports of men's progress that we have identified at NVIP are all achievable, accessible measures. Most importantly, they are centred clearly upon our primary objective: responding to risk and enhancing the safety of women and the protection of children.

References

- Felus J, Kaye P & Lloyd E 2007, *Understandings of the criminal justice system and domestic violence*, Northern Domestic Violence Service, Northern Violence Intervention Program and Central Domestic Violence Service, Adelaide, viewed 12 November 2009, <www.dvsa.asn.au/documents/20_Resources/h_CJS%20Manual.pdf>
- Gondolf E W 2004, 'Evaluating batterer counseling programs: a difficult task showing some effects and implications', *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, vol. 9, pp. 605-631

¹ Editor's note: Most men attending the NVIP group have been charged or convicted with an offence, so injunctive sanctions are applied through mechanisms such as bail or probation. It was not common practice in South Australia at the time of writing for courts to concurrently issue protection orders with a conviction, hence these are not discussed in this list.

CAN'T WAIT FOR THE NEWSLETTER?

Subscribe to Clearinghouse e-news and get monthly updates on: news, awards, grants, conferences & events, new books and reports, new resources, journal articles.

Contact us: clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au or on (02) 9385 2990, or subscribe online:
www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/subscribe.html

FEATURE

Domestic homicide reviews: recent developments across Australia

Compiled by *Isabelle Barrett Meyering*,
Clearinghouse Research Assistant

For well over a decade, domestic homicide reviews have been standard practice in some jurisdictions, most notably the United States where domestic violence fatality review teams were first established in the early 1990s. The objective of domestic homicide reviews is to identify weaknesses in systems responding to domestic and family violence (David 2007). Whereas individual homicide investigations treat domestic violence related deaths as isolated cases, the reviews are undertaken with a view to finding patterns and commonalities between them for the purposes of systems reform.

Until recently, Australia has lagged behind international developments in this realm. However, since the mid-2000s, interest in domestic homicide reviews has grown across the country. Just within the past year, Victoria, New South Wales (NSW) and Queensland have implemented or begun the process of implementing domestic homicide reviews. The Clearinghouse is also aware of calls by community organisations for the establishment of reviews in other states and territories, including in Western Australia and South Australia.

We invited representatives of the Coroners Court of Victoria, the Domestic Homicide Advisory Panel in NSW and the Domestic Violence Death Review Panel in Queensland to comment on recent progress in their jurisdictions. Direct comparisons between the models adopted in these states are not yet possible; whereas Victoria's review is already well underway, NSW has only recently announced its intention to establish a permanent review panel chaired by the State Coroner and Queensland's Domestic Violence Death Review Panel has yet to deliver its report. Nonetheless, a common understanding runs through the three responses: domestic homicides are largely preventable deaths.

Jo Chambers, Coroners Court of Victoria

In 2005, the Victorian Law Reform Commission delivered the findings of its three-year inquiry into the state's family violence legislation. One of its 153 recommendations was that the government create a family violence death review committee. Domestic Violence Victoria and the Federation of Community Legal Services (Victoria) subsequently led a community-based campaign to have the recommendations implemented.

In November 2008, the Victorian Attorney-General announced that the Coroners Court of Victoria would undertake a Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths. The review, which began in March 2009, is the first of its kind in Australia. Jo Chambers is the Team Leader of the Intentional Deaths Investigation Team, one of three teams which make up the Crime Prevention Unit within the Coroners Court of Victoria, which was tasked with undertaking the review.

Consideration was given to three models of death review for implementation in Victoria. These were an independent, ministerial advisory committee supported by a departmental inquiry and review unit; an 'on paper' internal review conducted by a departmental officer or academic institution; or a systemic review led by the Coroners Court of Victoria. Following consultation with government ministers and other key stakeholders, the Attorney-General placed the review inside the coronial jurisdiction. The reasons for this decision include the following:

- family violence related deaths fall within the ambit of compulsory reportable deaths under the *Coroners Act 2008* (s. 4)
- coroners have a wide range of existing powers to support the investigative process
- the independence of the State Coroner can ensure an open and transparent review
- the established process of coroners making recommendations and comments provides a sound mechanism for prevention objectives to be conveyed.

Importantly, the review was established in the context of broader changes to the Victorian coronial system. The Coronial Prevention Unit (CPU), which was tasked with undertaking the review, was created in October 2008 as a four-year pilot with the primary aim of strengthening the prevention role of coroners. The new *Coroners Act 2008*, which came into effect on 1 November 2009, also bolsters coroners' prevention role. Significantly, public statutory authorities and entities, to which a recommendation by the coroner is directed, are now mandated to provide a written response to the coroner (no later than three months after receipt of the recommendations) concerning what action, if any, has, is or will be taken in relation to the recommendations. In turn, the coroner must publish these responses on the internet.

The implementation of the review is well under way. In January 2009, coroners began identifying family violence related cases and referring them to the CPU and by March the review was fully operational. The working definition of family violence for the purposes of the review is the one contained in the Victorian *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*. To ensure the widest possible value is gained, the team uses the definition in such a way as to include all cases that may warrant further investigation.

Behind the scenes, the CPU has completed a number of key tasks including:

- developing a database for tracking and monitoring family violence risk factors identified in cases under review
- establishing surveillance processes for early identification of reportable deaths where family violence issues may be present
- setting up a database for literature and research
- developing information exchange protocols with a number of critical partners, such as Victoria Police
- arranging meetings with peak family violence organisations to inform them of progress
- establishing a Reference Group comprised of 38 member organisations from both government and non government sectors.

Since the review became operational in March 2009, the CPU has continued to build its capability, and has begun to provide coroners with:

- case advice to assist with the direction of a coronial investigation and the collection of appropriate information
- assistance in the development of recommendations through the provision of information and evidence based research
- engagement with relevant stakeholders at the direction of the coroner to ascertain that any proposed coronial recommendations are reasonable, viable and likely to be effective.

The CPU also plays a monitoring function and seeks to gauge the response to and implementation of recommendations after they have been published.

The Coroners Court of Victoria hopes that by identifying systemic gaps and issues in the system, the review will help prevent further tragedy resulting from domestic homicides. Most importantly, we hope that the review may give some comfort to the family of the victim or victims, and all who work so hard trying to prevent family violence from occurring.

Lesley Laing, Domestic Homicide Advisory Panel (NSW)

In November 2009, the NSW Premier announced the establishment of an independent Domestic Violence Homicide Review Panel. The announcement followed a report from the Domestic Homicide Advisory Panel, appointed by the government in late 2008 following a sustained advocacy campaign by the NSW Domestic Violence Coalition.

The Advisory Panel was chaired by Lesley Laing, Deputy Chair of the Premier's Council on Preventing Violence Against Women. Lesley is also a Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney.

The Domestic Violence Homicide Advisory Panel met between February and May 2009 and comprised non government and government representatives. Its terms of reference were to:

- define the meaning of 'domestic and family violence related' homicide
- consider the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR)'s analysis of trends and patterns in domestic and family violence related homicides in NSW for the period 1 January 2003 to 30 June 2008
- consider the elements of an ongoing review mechanism, including: the need for a legislative basis; the need for any amendments to privacy legislation; and data collection methodology
- recommend any changes to practices and procedures that would contribute to a reduction in preventable domestic and family violence related homicides, including a model for an ongoing review mechanism.

The methodology adopted by the panel included: a review of research literature; consideration of the analysis of domestic violence related homicides between January 2003 and June 2008 conducted by BOCSAR; analysis of international models for domestic violence homicide reviews; documentation of existing death review mechanisms in NSW; consultations with officers from the Office of the NSW Ombudsman and the NSW State Coroner's Court; and attempted analysis of five case studies of domestic violence related homicides.

A key finding of the BOCSAR study, in the view of the Advisory Panel, was that 43 percent of relevant cases were not flagged as domestic violence related on the NSW Police Force's Computerised Operational Policing System (COPS). Following advice from the Privacy Commissioner and the Crown Solicitor's Office, the panel was unable to consider five cases of domestic violence homicides in depth as planned, because it was limited to publically available information. This demonstrated that any review mechanism must be supported by a legislative framework that facilitates the sharing of information between agencies.

The panel's report to the Premier recommended that the NSW Government establish a domestic violence homicide review mechanism. Its eight other recommendations pertained to the definition of a domestic violence homicide; the functions of the domestic violence homicide review mechanism; the essential features of an effective review mechanism; proposed terms of reference; improved data collection; and links with other death review mechanisms, such as the Child Death Review Team. It was also recommended that consideration be given to reviewing the scope of the definition of domestic homicide after 24 months, with a view to including suicides, given the research data on the links between domestic violence and women's suicidality.

While the Advisory Panel reached consensus on the recommendations above and on what the model should look like – that is, a team of government and non

government representatives with an appointed convenor – there was divergence between panel members about the most appropriate convenor of a review team. The majority preferred a model where the expert review team is convened by the Ombudsman. This model builds on existing powers and expertise in death review by the Ombudsman and his staff. This model was considered to be the best fit with the full range of the terms of reference proposed for the review mechanism, including the capacity to establish a database on domestic violence related homicides, draw from emerging research, and undertake public and professional education. A minority preferred a model based with the NSW State Coroner given developments in other jurisdictions.

In November 2009, the NSW Government accepted many of the recommendations of the Advisory Panel in announcing the establishment of an independent Domestic Violence Homicide Review Panel, backed by legislation and reporting annually to Parliament. It will be chaired by the NSW State Coroner. Details of the implementation process are awaited.

The Advisory Panel's full report can be viewed at:

[http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/Corporate/ll_corporate.nsf/vwFiles/251109_domestic_violence.pdf/\\$file/251109_domestic_violence.pdf](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/Corporate/ll_corporate.nsf/vwFiles/251109_domestic_violence.pdf/$file/251109_domestic_violence.pdf)

Heather Nancarrow, Domestic Violence Death Review Panel (Qld)

On 25 May 2009, the Queensland Premier, Anna Bligh, and the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women, Karen Struthers, jointly announced the establishment of a state Domestic Violence Death Review Panel. The announcement followed a four-year campaign by Queensland's Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group, culminating in the release of the discussion paper *Dying to be heard* (Taylor 2008). It also foreshadowed the broader Queensland Government strategy to reduce domestic and family violence, *For Our Sons and Daughters*, launched on 10 July 2009.

Heather Nancarrow is a member of the Domestic Violence Death Review Panel. She is also the Director of the Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research, CQUniversity and Deputy Chair of the Violence against Women Advisory Group, reporting to the Federal Minister for Women, Tanya Plibersek.

The Domestic Violence Death Review Panel (phase 1) was appointed in 2009 to oversee research, including research related to domestic violence related homicides in Queensland, and to provide advice on options for:

- strengthening coronial processes and the Coroner's capacity to comment on domestic and family violence issues
- identifying systemic gaps and barriers, to help prevent domestic and family violence related deaths in the future, including models for an ongoing death review process.

The nature of an ongoing domestic homicide review process in Queensland is yet to be determined, with the establishment of the panel being the first stage in the development of an appropriate model.

The Chair of the Board of Legal Aid Queensland, Marg O'Donnell, chairs the Domestic Violence Death Review Panel. Panel membership is comprised of representatives from the Queensland Department of Communities, the Police Service and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, and, in addition to myself, two representatives of the immediate past Ministerial Advisory Council on Domestic and Family Violence: Donna Justo (Director of the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Prevention Centre) and Ken Georgetown (Southern Queensland Legal Aid Treasurer).

The Department of Communities provides a two-member secretariat, including a Principal Research Officer, to support the work of the panel. The specific research questions for consideration are:

- what improvements can be made to current coronial processes and practices, including court forms, investigative processes and possible additional information that could be obtained by coroners when investigating these matters?
- is there a need to issue specific coronial guidelines?
- learning from approaches in other jurisdictions, what is the most effective future approach to maintain, expand and respond to our collective knowledge about domestic and family violence related deaths?
- noting the actions proposed in the Queensland Government strategy to reduce domestic and family violence, how can coordination and collaboration across and between government and non government service providers be improved to address systemic gaps and barriers and prevent domestic and family violence related deaths?

It is anticipated that the Domestic Violence Death Review Panel will meet face to face four times and report to the Queensland Government by mid-2010.

References

- David N 2007, *Exploring the use of domestic violence fatality review teams*, Issues Paper 15, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Sydney
- State of Queensland 2009, *For Our Sons and Daughters, a Queensland Government strategy to reduce domestic and family violence 2009 – 2014*, State of Queensland, Brisbane
- Taylor B 2008, *Dying to be heard: domestic and family violence death reviews discussion paper*, Women's Legal Services Inc and Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group, Brisbane

NEW RESEARCH

NSW study of women's access to legal protection from domestic violence

A new study will explore the experiences of women in New South Wales who have attempted to obtain an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO), as well as the perspectives of workers assisting women. Women aged 18 years and over who have experienced domestic violence from a partner and have tried to get an ADVO (successfully or not) in the last three years are invited to participate in the study. Interviews will take up to one hour and can be conducted by phone or face to face at the University of Sydney.

For more information: Lesley Laing (Senior Lecturer, University of Sydney) on (02) 9351 4091

Victorian study of family homelessness and citizenship

The Institute for Social Research at Swinburne University of Technology and Hanover Welfare Services are conducting a research project on family homelessness. One and two parent families in Victoria who are or have recently been homeless are invited to participate in this longitudinal study. The research will explore participants' experiences of being homeless and how it affects their ability to engage as members of society. Adult participants will receive a \$40 voucher for the first interview, \$60 for the second (six months later) and \$80 for the third (six months after that).

For more information: Angela Spinney (Research Fellow, Institute of Social Research) on (03) 9214 5637 or email aspinney@swin.edu.au

Single mother research participants required

Myjenta Winter, a PhD student at the University of South Australia, is conducting a national study on how single mothers, who have left abusive relationships, have experienced Centrelink Welfare to Work requirements. Single mothers who have left a violent relationship and applied for income support (i.e. Parenting Payment Single or Newstart Allowance) are invited to participate. Interviews will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour and can be done by telephone. All participants will receive a \$20 gift voucher. Interviews will be conducted up to the end of March 2010.

For more information: Myjenta Winter on (08) 8302 4153 or email myjenta.winter@unisa.edu.au

RECENT EVENT

Same Sex Domestic Violence Conference: Perspectives and Progress, 11 September 2009

Reported by Cristina Scott, Clearinghouse Librarian

'Outing' the hidden issue of same sex domestic violence was the focus of the second biennial Same Sex Domestic Violence conference, held at the Rex Centre in Kings Cross, Sydney last September. While research has shown that intimate partner violence in the same sex community is as prevalent as it is in the wider heteronormative community, there are significant gaps in data collection and major concerns regarding service provision and accessibility. This one-day forum brought together interested stakeholders, academic researchers and service providers in the legal, policing and health sectors.

The opening address was delivered by the Minister for Women, Verity Firth, who assured the gay and lesbian community that the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework, now in development, would address same sex domestic violence. Associate Professor, Jude Irwin, from the Faculty of Education and Social Work at the University of Sydney gave the keynote address, 'Challenging the silence: visibility and invisibility in the heteronormative society'.



Three workshops were held. The first workshop sought to define and outline the importance of safety planning and demonstrate best practice in seeking outcomes for clients living with same sex domestic violence, while the second offered 'Perspectives on Apprehended Violence Orders'. The third workshop dealt with domestic violence, same sex couples and kids from the standpoint of both the family law system and the 2008 changes to NSW laws giving greater legal recognition to same sex couples who are parents. Key themes covered in the lecture presentations included: the underreporting of domestic violence; the psychology of male same sex intimate partner violence; and providing services to people in same sex relationships who are experiencing domestic violence.

The conference was organised by the Same Sex Domestic Violence Interagency, made up of representatives from community based organisations and government agencies.

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

NEW RESOURCES & INITIATIVES

Pathways for referral: reducing violence against older women

The Benevolent Society, the Older Women's Network NSW and the Clearinghouse are conducting a project in the Macarthur area in Sydney, which aims to improve the way the aged care, health, police and domestic violence sectors work together to support victims of domestic violence, particularly older women. The Benevolent Society and the Macarthur Division of General Practice have delivered a resource toolkit to all general practitioners in the area. The project is funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

Victorian Family Violence Database

Volume 4 of the Victorian Family Violence Database (1999-2008) was released in December 2009. The report provides trend analysis of nine years of police, court, housing and hospital data relating to family violence incidents across the state. The database is the only one of its kind in Australia. The report is available at:

<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/DOJ+Internet/Home/Crime/Research+and+Statistics/JUSTICE++Victorian+Family+Violence+Database++Nine+Year+Report++PDF>

National survey explores community attitudes to violence against women

The findings of the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey 2009, conducted by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) in partnership with the Australian Institute of Criminology and the Social Research Centre, were released on 25 November 2009. While the overall trend in community attitudes to violence against women is encouraging, the survey findings indicate that certain myths about violence remain prevalent. The project summary report, full technical report and a fact sheet are available at:

www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/pubs/violence/nca_survey/Pages/default.aspx

Victorian rabbis receive special training

In October 2009, the Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence (JTAFV), in association with the Rabbinical Council of Victoria, ran a special training program for rabbis. The training took place over a period of three weeks and included an in-depth discussion of family violence with an emphasis on cultural sensitivities, as well as sessions on family law and other legal issues. The role of the Jewish Taskforce Support Line as a specialised community support service was reinforced. As a result of this forum, the JTAFV will be developing a Rabbinical Code of Practice in conjunction with the Rabbinical Council of Victoria. JTAFV is also currently developing a culturally sensitive prevention program to take into the Jewish high schools in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

For more information: Jewish Taskforce Support Line on (03) 9523 2100, Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence Admin Line on (03) 9523 6850 or visit: www.jewishtaskforce.com.au

South Australia launches 'Don't Cross the Line' anti-violence campaign

On 10 September 2009, the South Australian Government launched a new anti-violence campaign that includes television and radio advertising around the state. The campaign targets young people who are still in the process of learning to form intimate relationships. Through the phrase, 'Don't cross the line', the campaign introduces the idea of absolute boundaries of behaviour, which are further explored through practical examples. The campaign coincides with the introduction of new domestic violence laws into the South Australian parliament.



www.dontcrosstheline.com.au

WA introduces Keeping Kids Safe workforce development strategy

In 2009, the Western Australian Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services was funded by the Department for Child Protection to deliver Keeping Kids Safe, a workforce development strategy for women's refuges. After consultations with child support workers and child advocates in women's refuges, 21 training workshops were delivered around the state. The Women's Council also consulted with children residing in women's refuges to obtain insight into their experiences and perceptions of refuge services. This consultation, combined with the outcomes of a good practice forum, held in October 2009, will be used to develop good practice standards for the sector for supporting children. The Women's Council is funded to deliver Keeping Kids Safe until 2012.



For more information: Nicole Leggett (Children's Policy Officer, Women's Council) on (08) 9420 7264 or email policy@womenscouncil.com.au

Toolkit released to assist mandatory reporting in the Northern Territory

To help Northern Territory service providers meet the new mandatory reporting obligations under the *Domestic and Family Violence Act*, the Department of Health and Families has developed a toolkit capturing best practice responses in the areas of partial confidentiality, risk assessment and worker safety. The toolkit is available at:

www.health.nt.gov.au/library/scripts/objectifyMedia.aspx?file=pdf/41/30.pdf&siteID=1&str_title=Mandatory%20Reporting%20Toolkit.pdf

REVIEW

Domestic violence in rural Australia: two perspectives

Review by Gaby Marcus,
Clearinghouse Director



Nancarrow H, Lockie S & Sharma S 2009, *Intimate partner abuse of women in a Central Queensland mining region*, Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice no. 378, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra

Wendt S 2009, *Domestic violence in rural Australia*, Federation Press, Sydney

Two recent publications focus on domestic violence in rural Australia. The first, *Intimate partner abuse of women in a Central Queensland mining region* (2009), applies the researchers' lens to the mining community in the Bowen Basin region of Queensland; while the second, *Domestic violence in rural Australia* (2009), focuses on the experiences of women where its author grew up, in the renowned wine growing region of the Barossa Valley in South Australia.

The comprehensive, quantitative study of the Bowen Basin involved telephone interviews with 532 women, which were carried out in June and July 2007. The study was prompted by questions about the social impacts of shift work, commuting and 'company town' culture on families in mining communities. This combination of factors, along with the male dominated culture of mining towns and high rates of alcohol consumption, had raised concerns among service workers that women could be placed at risk of violence.

The study explored a broad range of issues, including: the prevalence and incidence of violence; the type of violence and abuse experienced; the structural and organisational operations of households; drug and alcohol use; and respondents' knowledge and use of local support services. Also explored, with those women who had experienced abuse, were factors concerning their reasons for staying in or leaving their relationship. Of the respondents' partners, 54.5% were employed in the mining industry.

The findings on socio-demographic and relational correlations are extremely interesting, showing increased rates of socio-psychological and physical abuse for women in relationships of less than five years, women in de facto relationships, women with sole responsibility for children and women with no access to joint bank accounts. It is a pity that the same definitions of violence and categories of relationship used in the *International Violence Against Women Survey* (Mouzos & Makkai 2004) or the *Personnel*

Safety Survey (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006) were not applied, as it is not possible to directly compare the Bowen Basin data with these other landmark studies.

Interestingly, the study did not find a strong link between the mining town culture and women's experience of abuse. The study contains a great deal more data than can be explored in this context and readers are encouraged to seek out the study, which is available online and in hard copy.

In contrast, Wendt's qualitative study is grounded in her own experiences growing up in the Barossa Valley and her continuing links with the community. Between 1999 and 2004, she conducted face to face interviews with eighteen key community informants about the local culture, twenty one rural women who had experienced domestic violence and twelve service workers. She also analysed local tourist information and newspapers to broaden her understanding of the local culture.

Wendt's own voice is strong in this study. She talks about her background growing up in the area and its influence on her value system and beliefs. She also explores some of the issues this raised for her as an 'insider' during the research, such as the need for the women being interviewed to locate her within the community and the assumptions made about her understanding of the local area. Her commitment to feminist research methods is clearly articulated and her exploration of issues of rurality is thorough and thought provoking. As such, this study may well be of interest to people concerned with research methodology and rural issues more generally.

For those readers particularly interested in domestic violence, the strength of the book is in the women's voices that emerge from the interviews, opening a window onto the lives of people living in a conservative rural community. For those who are short on time, the chapter on

'Implications for human services and rural communities' is particularly useful as a reminder about what policy makers and service providers need to account for in planning and implementing services in rural communities.

The book is somewhat let down by its frequent reliance on older literature and by some sweeping generalisations. However, both of these publications broaden our understanding of domestic violence in rural Australia and are valuable additions to the literature.

... the strength of the book is in the women's voices that emerge from the interviews, opening a window onto the lives of people living in a conservative rural community.

References

Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, *Personal Safety Survey, Australia 2005*, cat. no. 4906.0, reissue, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra

Mouzos J & Makkai T 2004, *Women's experiences of male violence: findings from the Australian component of the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS)*, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra

RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE RESEARCH AND RESOURCES DATABASE

Burton M 2009, 'Failing to protect: victims' rights and police liability', *The Modern Law Review*, vol. 72, no. 2, pp. 283-295

In the light of the United Kingdom's House of Lords decisions in *Van Colle and Smith*, this commentary considers whether victims can truly be said to have 'rights' without effective remedies for police inaction. It also considers the implications for ineffective police responses to domestic violence, especially cases culminating in domestic homicide.

Goodman LA, Smyth KF, Borges AM & Singer R 2009, 'When crises collide: how intimate partner violence and poverty intersect to shape women's mental health and coping?', *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, vol. 10, no. 4, pp. 306-329

Recent research indicates that intimate partner violence (IPV) and persistent poverty co-occur at high rates, produce parallel effects, and, in each other's presence, constrain coping options. This article describes mental health consequences for women who contend with both partner violence and poverty. The article describes women's methods of coping with IPV in the context of poverty and highlights the role that domestic violence advocates, mental health providers and researchers can play in addressing these tightly intertwined phenomena.

Powers LE, Renker P, Robinson-Whelen S, Oswald M, Hughes R, Swank P & Curry M 2009, 'Interpersonal violence and women with disabilities: analysis of safety promoting behaviours', *Violence Against Women*, vol. 15, no. 9, pp. 1040-1069

In this study, information about women's use of safety promoting behaviours was gathered from 305 disabled and deaf women who completed an anonymous Audio Computer Assisted Self Interview. Exploratory factor analyses revealed factors related to seeking abuse-related safety information, building abuse-related safety promoting skills, using relationship support, planning for emergencies, taking legal action and managing safety in personal assistance relationships.

Walsh A 2009, 'All children being safe – a culturally appropriate protective behaviours program', *SNAICC Newsletter*, p. 4

This Australian article describes the All Children Being Safe program, which uses non-threatening ways to help primary school age children feel strong and stay safe in their communities. The program was developed in partnership with school, children and health services and the Green Hill Aboriginal Community.

RECENT ADDITIONS TO THE GOOD PRACTICE DATABASE

Inside Out

Inside Out is an anti-violence education project from the Adelaide Hills Community Health Service (AHCHS) which focuses on developing organisational capacity to identify and address violence. The project involved organisational mapping and identification of gaps, data management, enhancement of systems and structures in AHCHS and staff development. Community education work with clients of this rural health service was also conducted.

CASA House Sexual Assault Schools Education

This schools based program, although focusing primarily on sexual assault and respectful relationships, provides good practice features which are of interest and value to the domestic and family violence sector. The program has developed through ongoing evaluation and reflection over several years and incorporates the development of strong partnerships between the community sector and secondary schools. It includes peer education, train the trainer and whole-of-school features, including resourcing, staff training and policy development. The program provides 'good practice' guidelines for working with young people in the area of education against violence.

NEW CLEARINGHOUSE PAPERS

Barrett Meyering I 2010, *Victim compensation and domestic violence: a national overview, Stakeholder Paper 8, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Sydney*

Historically, domestic violence victims have faced significant barriers when seeking to access victim compensation. However, major reforms have taken place in this area over the past decade, including the introduction of special provisions for domestic violence and/or sexual assault victims in some states and territories. This Stakeholder Paper highlights the potential benefits for women in utilising victim compensation and provides a comprehensive overview of the current schemes operating in Australia. Isobelle Barrett Meyering is the Clearinghouse Research Assistant.

NEXT NEWSLETTER

The closing date for contributions to the Autumn issue of the Newsletter is 5 February 2010. Be sure to send in accompanying photos and images!

FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

Counting the cost – building capacity: Fostering women's financial security following violent relationships

10 March 2010 – Sydney, NSW

This forum is for researchers, practitioners and professionals wanting to share and generate information about ways to empower women to be financially independent, as a means to leaving violence and staying safe. The Clearinghouse will present findings from its research project, *Enhancing financial security for women affected by domestic violence*, and workshops will offer forum participants an opportunity to discuss and develop further practical strategies. The forum is free. RSVP to clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au by 28 February 2010.

http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/events_calendar.html

6th Australian Women's Health Conference

18-21 May 2010 – Hobart, Tasmania

The major focus of the 6th Australian Women's Health conference, *Women's Health: the New National Agenda*, will be to continue the work of getting women's health as a priority issue onto the public agenda. It will provide an opportunity for individuals, organisations and services concerned with women's health to be involved and to contribute to international dialogue, share ideas, knowledge and practice. In particular, the conference offers a platform for mobilising capacity for women's health and well-being in Australia, in the context of the Commonwealth Government's agreement 2008 to develop a new national women's health policy.



www.leishman-associates.com.au/awhn2010

2010 SNAICC National Conference

27-29 July 2010 – Alice Springs, NT

The theme of this year's Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) conference is 'For our children: local strengths, national challenges'. The conference will provide an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, policy makers, researchers, government representatives, other non government organisations and various industry representatives to gather and make renewed commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

www.snaicc.asn.au/news/view_article.cfm?id=166&loadref=8

For a complete list of conferences and seminars see:
http://www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au/events_calendar.html



Australian Government

6th National Homelessness Conference

1-3 September 2010 – Brisbane, Qld



The 6th National Homelessness Conference, *Many Ways Home: Ending Homelessness by 2020*, is an opportunity to discuss the Commonwealth Government's White Paper, *The Road Home*. Will we meet the national target or can we do more? How will the White Paper impact on your service? What are other states and territories doing in relation to their implementation plans? The conference is of particular interest to specialist homelessness services and those who support these services.

www.homelessnessaustralia.org.au/site/6th%20National%20Homelessness%20Conference.php

INTERNET SITES

European Observatory on Violence Against Women

The European Policy Action Centre on Violence against Women has a website providing resources on violence against women, news, data and reports on the current status of violence against women in thirty European countries.

www.epacvaw.org

Conference papers on family violence and the law available

Papers are now available online for the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration, Family Violence Conference, held in Brisbane, 1-3 October 2009.

<http://www.aija.org.au/Family%20Violence%202009/Program.pdf>

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

The views expressed in this Newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse or the Australian Government. While all reasonable care has been taken in the preparation of this publication, no liability is assumed for any errors or omissions. The Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse is funded by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. The Clearinghouse is linked to the Centre for Gender-Related Violence Studies, based in the University of New South Wales, School of Social Sciences and International Studies.

ISSN: 1443 - 7236
© 2010

Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse
The University of New South Wales
NSW Australia 2052

p: +61 2 9385 2990
f: +61 2 9385 2993
freecall: 1800 753 382
e: clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au
w: www.adfvc.unsw.edu.au



UNSW
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES