



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL SOCIAL ISSUES STANDING COMMITTEE
Domestic Violence Trends and Issues

Responses to supplementary questions

Integration and coordination

1. In its submission, the Mt Druitt Family Violence Response and Support Strategy Leadership Group (Submission 23, p 7) argues that the replacement of the Violence Prevention Coordination Unit and Violence Against Women's Program, was a great loss. It also suggests that the NSW Police Domestic and Family Violence Coordinator positions lack coordination and collaboration with other stakeholders. What is your response to these views?

Coordination and collaboration with stakeholders

The NSW Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Framework will review the governance structures in place in NSW to strengthen accountability for the delivery of coordinated and integrated domestic and family violence services at State, regional and local levels. Consultation with key stakeholders, including the non-government sector, interagency groups and local service organisations will result in recommendations for improved coordination and collaboration mechanisms.

Regional Domestic Violence Coordinators (RDVCs)

The Regional Domestic Violence Coordinator positions are being reviewed as part of the development of the NSW Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Framework. This review will consider:

- the extent to which the RDVCs have achieved their role and met their responsibilities since their appointment
- the outcomes achieved by the RDVCs
- challenges to RDVCs carrying out their role and responsibilities and achieving outcomes
- whether the RDVC's role, responsibilities and location within the NSW Police Force remain appropriate or require adjustment.

The Office for Women's Policy

The Office for Women's Policy provides leadership in promoting outcomes for women in NSW through policy development and working with other agencies, non-government organisations and inter-governmental networks. The Violence Prevention Coordination Unit (VPCU) was established in the Office in 2008 following a review of the previous NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women. The VPCU remains an important strategic policy unit responsible for co-ordinating a whole of government response to domestic and family violence.

Situating the Office within the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) provides the opportunity to more effectively integrate service and policy responses to domestic, family and sexual violence as risk factors for homelessness and child protection.

For example, domestic and family violence combined with a lack of affordable housing is a major cause of women's homelessness. Domestic and family violence has a strong impact on women's sense of self-worth and value which can ultimately undermine their ability to participate in the workforce and achieve financial independence – putting them at further risk of homelessness. Better integrating the policy and service responses in relation to domestic and family violence will be critical to addressing client demand across different service systems. Housing NSW has estimated the potential savings to government of intervening early and preventing homelessness may be as much as double the cost of providing assistance once a person has become homeless.¹

In a child protection context, there are multiple stressors which can accumulate in the lives of children and young people living with domestic violence, including child abuse, parental substance misuse and mental health problems, homelessness and social isolation. The constellation of these problems can result in children's needs being unmet and children being at heightened risk of abuse and neglect.²

For example, data published in the report on the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection in New South Wales (Wood, 2008) showed that across 302,977 child protection reports in NSW during 2007-08, domestic violence featured prominently (31%).³

Response to Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services

- 2. What progress has been made in implementing relevant recommendations of Justice James Wood's Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW, for example with regard to referrals to the Domestic Violence Line by police and non-government organisations for children who do not meet the threshold for risk of significant harm?**

The Domestic Violence Line is a small unit of 12 full time equivalent staff who provide a telephone advice, counselling and referral service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Its primary client group is women who are experiencing domestic violence. It would have required a change in focus and/or a significantly higher level of funding to respond to increased referrals from Police and NGOs concerning children exposed to domestic violence. Implementation of this recommendation has been achieved through the establishment of the Child Wellbeing Units including one within NSW Police which manages responses to matters where domestic violence involves children but does not reach the statutory reporting threshold for child protection.

The Community Services Division within the Department of Family and Community Services has undertaken significant work to build capacity in government and non government agencies that collaborate in the NSW child protection system, to respond appropriately to domestic and family violence.

Joint domestic violence training

Community Services developed a training strategy to meet the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW recommendation that Community Services caseworkers should receive domestic violence training.

Stakeholders who assisted in the development of the training strategy:

¹ Housing NSW (2009), *The Way Home: NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009–2014*

² Cleaver, Nicholson, Tarr & Cleaver (2007) cited in Bromfield, Lamont, Parker & Horsfall (2010), *Issues for the safety and wellbeing of children in families with multiple and complex problems: The co-occurrence of domestic violence, parental substance misuse, and mental health problems*, National Child Protection Clearinghouse.

³ Wood (2008), *Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW*, p. 130.

- Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC)
- NSW Health (Education Centre against Violence)
- Community Services (Clinical Issues Unit, Child Death and Critical Reports Unit).

The training strategy was very well received; access to all the components of the training was promoted in work locations across the state and the demand for these places, programs, and kits was significant.

Key achievements in this initiative have included:

- funding 55 places at the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Seminar on *Mothers, Children and Change - Strengthening service support and safety*, auspiced by the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse in 2010 (these places were occupied by Community Services caseworkers, and other government and NGO staff)
- coordination and delivery of 11 domestic violence training courses (five different courses run multiple times), occupied by Community Services caseworkers and other government and NGO staff — a total of 203 staff members were trained
- development and dissemination of 200 domestic violence resource kits.

Improved service delivery through expanding the Clinical Issues Unit (CIU)

The Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW recommended that the Community Services Drug and Alcohol Expertise Unit be expanded to include mental health and domestic violence. This recommendation recognised the importance of addressing mental health and domestic violence concerns in child protection cases. This initiative aims to give caseworkers better and more accessible support, including cross-agency support, for their work with clients in clinical issues involving domestic violence, mental health, and substance use.

The CIU is now well established and providing responsive and expert support to the Community Services workforce. The CIU has six consultants and a strategy and program development team, as well as staff in the Youth Drug and Alcohol Court program. The clinical consultant dedicated to Intensive Family Based Services (IFBS) has commenced coaching support to all new NGO caseworkers on how to identify and manage clinical issues including responding to domestic violence in the Aboriginal families they work with.

In 2010–11, the CIU:

- provided caseworkers with over 3000 individual domestic violence, mental health and/or drug and alcohol consultations via email, telephone or face-to-face
- delivered 114 short courses on clinical issues to Community Services staff across NSW
- established an additional clinical consultancy position to support Aboriginal caseworkers in departmental and NGO Intensive Family Based Support Services
- developed an action learning package for all frontline staff on engaging with perpetrators of domestic violence to address child safety concerns, as well as the safety of the non-violent parent
- developed an additional comprehensive intranet section on domestic violence that provides current information and resources for frontline staff
- held a Domestic Violence Engagement and assessment Skills customised training event for child protection casework specialists.

Introduced new evidence based assessment tools

In response to the introduction of the new statutory reporting threshold, Community Services was tasked with “designing and testing a threshold tool (first component of the Common Assessment Framework) for mandated reported by July 2009, to be implemented when legislation is proclaimed” .

Structured Decision Making (SDM[®]) is a process that ensures key child protection decisions are based on information known from research to be relevant to those decisions. The SDM[®] system consists of a

comprehensive set of screening and assessment tools that guide each critical decision in the life of a child protection case. The tools are "structured" because the assessment results lead to a presumptive decision, through decision guidelines that are built into the assessment tools. The tools assist in reaching consistency in decision making across the agency and allow for the targeting of resources to families who are most in need.

Due to the co-existence of domestic and family violence and abuse and neglect of children and young people, assessment of domestic and family violence has been built in to all SDM® tools used by Community Services.

The NSW Mandatory Reporter Guide (MRG), available as an interactive online tool or as a PDF, has been developed to assist front-line mandatory reporters to determine what to do when they are concerned about a child or young person, including whether they should make a report to the Child Protection Helpline. The MRG consists of 19 decision trees that guide the reporter with their decision, including a domestic violence decision tree. This tree clarifies for the reporter when the circumstances around domestic and family violence are sufficiently serious for an immediate report to the Child Protection Helpline, whether they should call the police, wait for 24 hours before making a report, consult with a professional or a Child Wellbeing Unit, or document the details and continue their relationship with the child/young person or family.

The commencement of Community Services screening, assessment and intervention begins with a report to the Child Protection Helpline where caseworkers use the Screening and Response Priority (SCRPT) tool to determine whether a report reaches the threshold of significant harm. If the report reaches the threshold, it is referred to a Community Services Centre (CSC) or a Joint Investigation Response Team (JIRT) for further assessment and investigation. The Helpline caseworker uses SCRPT to identify the type and extent of harm and allocate a response time. In relation to domestic and family violence, SCRPT assists the caseworker to determine whether the:

- violence includes a single, severe incident
- pattern of incidents or pattern of abusive power and control that the child or young person has either witnessed, experienced (physically harmed during an incident) or is otherwise aware of.

The Safety Assessment helps assess whether any child or young person is likely to be in immediate danger of serious harm which requires a protective intervention, and determines what interventions should be put in place to provide immediate appropriate protection. If it has been assessed that domestic and family violence between adults in the household exists and poses an imminent danger of serious physical and/or psychological/emotional harm to the child/young person/unborn child upon birth, safety interventions will need to be identified and implemented.

The Risk Assessment helps to identify families with very high, high, moderate or low probabilities of abusing or neglecting their child in the future. By applying the SDM® Risk Assessment, the caseworker obtains an objective estimation of the likelihood that a family will ill-treat their child in the next 12 to 18 months. The Risk Assessment is composed of two indices: the neglect index and the abuse index. Both indices must be completed, regardless of the current allegation. Some of the issues that need to be assessed include:

- the number of prior screened in risk of significant harm reports
- whether the household has previously received ongoing statutory child protection casework
- any prior injury to a child/young person/unborn child resulting from abuse or neglect
- primary parent/carer's assessment of the incident
- whether there has been domestic/family violence between any adult household member in the past year
- whether the primary parent/carer has a history of abuse or neglect as a child/young person
- whether there has been excessive alcohol or drug use by the secondary parent/carer.

The *Risk Reassessment* is used periodically to evaluate potential changes in a family's risk level and includes assessment of the family's progress towards case plan goals. Typically, it is applied to an open case 90 days after the completion of the initial case plan, and at 90 day intervals thereafter if the case remains open. Some of the issues to be assessed include:

- whether any new screened-in reports of abuse or neglect have occurred during the review period
- whether there has been any alcohol or drug abuse by the parent/carer during the review period
- the adult relationships during the period, including the existence of domestic/ family violence
- parent/carer progress with the case plan.

The *Family Strengths and Needs Assessment (FSNA) Tool* is used to evaluate the presenting strengths and needs of each family member. This assessment tool is used to systematically identify critical family needs and help plan effective service interventions. The purpose of the FSNA is to identify priority areas to be addressed in the case plan. The FSNA identifies, in priority order, the needs and the strengths of each child/young person and of the primary and secondary parents/carers. The identified areas of strength should be incorporated into the case plan to the greatest extent possible to help address identified needs. FSNA reviews occur every 6 months and look at both child/young person and parent/carer characteristics separately. Issues to consider include but are not limited to:

Child/young person

- emotional and behavioural adjustment
- physical health and wellbeing
- relationship with family, other adults and peers
- relationship with carer family (if child or young person is in OOHC).

Parent/carer

- substance use or misuse
- evidence of domestic violence (between adults only)
- parenting skills
- social support systems

The FSNA was trialled in 2011 across 19 CSCs and was positively evaluated. Those CSCs now use the FSNA in their practice. State-wide rollout of the FSNA is dependent on a decision by the Senior Executive Forum on 9 February 2012. If endorsed, it is expected to occur from July 2012.

The other component of the Common Assessment Framework is the development of the *Child Wellbeing and Child Protection – NSW Interagency Guidelines* which provide information and guidance to organisations involved in the delivery of child wellbeing and child protection services in NSW. They are intended to enhance consistency and promote best practice service delivery to vulnerable children, young people, and families. The guidelines are one of the Keep Them Safe mechanisms that support collaborative practice and are applicable to both government agencies and NGOs.

Community Services is leading the development of the next edition of the Interagency Guidelines, which are being updated in stages and progressively made available online. Each chapter is developed by representatives of government human services and justice agencies and non-government organisations. The guidelines are based on the *NSW Interagency Guidelines for Child Protection Intervention 2006*.

Intervention programs

- 3. Recent BOCSAR data revealed that the rate of domestic violence for Aboriginal women is more than six times higher than for non-Indigenous women. What specific programs and policies does the government have to address domestic violence in Aboriginal communities?**

Aboriginal women have specific and complex needs and their experience of domestic and family violence warrants more targeted and integrated responses. There are complex causes behind the high rates of family and domestic violence in Aboriginal communities in NSW, including socio-economic disadvantage and historical factors such as the forced removal of children, which have increased Aboriginal families' vulnerability to family violence.

There are a number of initiatives being implemented by the Department of Family and Community Services which aim to increase the safety of Aboriginal families.

Orana Far West Safe Houses

Since 2005, extensive work has been undertaken by the NSW Government in partnership with the Australian Government, the Women's Refuge Movement and other stakeholders to identify the requirements to improve the service delivery to Aboriginal women and children in five isolated communities who are affected by domestic violence.

The Safe House Project in the Orana Far West Region of NSW aims to improve the service delivery to Aboriginal women and children in five isolated communities who are affected by domestic violence.

The Orana Far West Safe Houses project, led by Community Services, provides crisis accommodation and support for women and children in circumstances of domestic or family violence. Housing NSW has a lead role in the provision of:

- 1 new Safe House, 2 Transition Houses and 1 Exit House in Bourke;
- 1 new Safe House, 2 Transition Houses and 1 Exit House in Brewarrina;
- 1 new Safe House, and 2 Exit Houses in Lightning Ridge;
- 2 Exit Houses in Walgett; and
- 1 new Safe House, 2 Transition Houses and 2 Exit Houses in Wilcannia.

In each of these communities there are high rates of domestic and family violence and the establishment of crisis accommodation assistance for women and children has been a priority.

The Safe Houses project is funded from the Remote Indigenous Housing National Partnership.

Staying Home Leaving Violence

Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) is a specialised domestic violence program which allows women to stay at home safely while escaping a violent relationship. It requires a high level of collaboration with Police, Housing, and the Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program, as well as other local services to enable women to remain safely in their home and be supported to maintain this over time.

SHLV currently operates in 18 locations across NSW where the incidence of domestic violence is high. The program offers risk assessments and safety planning (including funds for security upgrades to the home), casework to address financial, tenancy and other personal issues, and referrals to legal advice, counselling and other support projects. In March last year, the Minister for Family and Community Services and Minister for Women Pru Goward announced a \$2.5 million expansion of the program to five more sites across NSW, enabling the service to reach more than 700 families across NSW each year.

The selection of SHLV locations involved a robust data analysis which included Aboriginal population rates. The purpose of the data analysis was to ensure that SHLV projects were located in areas of highest need, and that the service was accessible for Aboriginal families who are less likely to report violence.

A number of factors must be considered in order for Staying Home Leaving Violence to be a viable service model and a real choice for women and children escaping violence. Local collaboration and coordination in the delivery of specialised case management services is critical.

In the six-month period from July – December 2011, 15% of all SHLV case managed clients identified as Aboriginal. This is a total of 71 individual adult Aboriginal women for that reporting period.

Aboriginal Intensive Family Based Services

Aboriginal Intensive Family Based Services (IFBS) provide an intensive, time-limited, home-based program for Aboriginal families in crisis. This program also includes extended families and focuses on children at risk of entering out-of-home placement due to protective concerns or children placed in out-of-home care with a restoration plan in place. Domestic, family and sexual violence may also be present.

IFBS works intensively over a short time period (up to three months) with families referred by Community Services Centres. Eligible families are those at risk of having their children removed, or those needing intensive intervention to facilitate reunification and the safe return of children to the family. The primary focus of the service is the safety, welfare and wellbeing of the child or young person.

IFBS is available to families 24 hours a day, seven days a week to assist in defusing crises that may occur while the intervention is in progress. IFBS caseworkers are Aboriginal staff.

Office for Women's Policy Domestic and Family Violence Grants Program

The Office for Women's Policy has funded a number of projects and programs specific to Aboriginal communities through the Domestic Violence Grants program. From the \$2.9 million Grants Program, a minimum of \$900,000 is set aside to fund domestic and family violence projects that assist Aboriginal communities. This grants program is currently under review, however projects in the 2010/11 funding round included:

- Relationships Australia's Aboriginal Safety Program to develop a culturally sensitive Family Safety Program for the Aboriginal community in the Penrith and Blue Mountains area
- The Men's Business and Women's Business Program of the Aboriginal Medical Service Western Sydney Co-op Limited, for local Aboriginal men and women from three local government area to participate in group discussions to develop strategies to reduce the impact of domestic violence in the local Aboriginal community
- Spirit Dreaming Incorporated, for production of four books and a digital story in relation to issues regarding Aboriginal family violence for the distribution in Northern NSW schools, libraries, government organisations and community agencies
- National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, to run a culturally safe protective behaviours program developed specifically for Indigenous children.

Homelessness

Housing NSW recognises that domestic and family violence has a serious and harmful impact on victims and their families. Housing NSW is committed to reducing the effects of domestic violence by improving access to safe and affordable housing, and providing appropriate and timely housing assistance. The NSW Homelessness Action Plan 2009–2014, contains a number of strategies to support Aboriginal clients to deal with a range of issues, including domestic and family violence. These include:

- Juniperina shared access project, which offers housing and support for young women who have offended or are at risk. Most of the clients assisted have experienced domestic or family violence

and Aboriginal client referrals are given priority. To-date in 2011/12, 11 clients have been assisted, of whom nine are Aboriginal

- Early intervention in sustaining tenancies in Western NSW, to support individuals and families at risk of eviction. To-date in 2011/12 over 40 clients have been assisted, 30 of whom are Aboriginal
- Start Safely, which is a private rental subsidy for women escaping DV. To-date in 2011/2012, Start Safely has assisted 165 women, of whom 26 are Aboriginal
- Central Coast Family Brokerage, provides support for families at risk of homelessness. To-date in 2011/2012, this has assisted 92 clients, of whom 14 are Aboriginal
- Tenancy support, mid-north coast, provides support for individuals and families at risk of homelessness. To-date in 11/12, over 700 have been assisted, of which 252 Aboriginal
- Targeted housing and support for female ex-prisoners in Greater Western Sydney. To-date in 2011/2012, 32 women have been assisted, of whom seven are Aboriginal
- Aboriginal Tenancy and Advocacy Support. To-date in 2011/2012, 34 clients have been assisted (all Aboriginal)
- Community Connections, South-East NSW, provides support and housing for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. To-date in 2011/2012, this has assisted 298 clients, of whom 118 are Aboriginal
- North Coast Accommodation project, provides support and housing for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. To-date in 2011/2012, this project has assisted 604 clients, of whom 429 are Aboriginal
- Young Aboriginal parents project, Western NSW. This has assisted 17 clients to-date in 2011/12.

4. What plans are there to provide more men's behaviour change programs?

There has been a recent shift internationally and in Australia towards targeting primary prevention at men and to delivering interventions through a range of settings. These settings range from domestic abuse training programs for perpetrators, through to community education programs such as Tackling Violence, which uses rugby league as a medium to provide domestic violence education and to encourage men to be leaders and role models in the campaign against domestic violence in their communities.

Primary prevention interventions recognise that men are the majority of perpetrators and that male socialisation and normative behaviours are also important factors in reducing the acceptability of violence. Behaviour change programs are important strategies in holding perpetrators accountable, reducing recidivism and assisting perpetrators to end their violence. This is an area of work which warrants further exploration to ensure an integrated and coordinated approach across the government and non-government sector. This is also an issue which is being considered nationally.

Prevention and early intervention

- 5. During your evidence to the Committee it was noted that the Department was developing new primary prevention strategies (Ms Boland, Evidence, 20 February 2012, p 4). Can you please provide the Committee with details about primary prevention programs the Department currently operates and those in development?**

A comprehensive domestic and family violence response covers a spectrum from primary prevention, through early intervention to crisis responses.

Primary prevention is intended to prevent violence occurring in the first place. It focuses on strategies to reduce the risk in the total population and on preventing potentially vulnerable individuals and groups from experiencing an initial violent incident.

Early intervention focuses on relationships or communities where limited violence has occurred, but there are realistic prospects that the violence can be eliminated or its escalation prevented.

Crisis response focus on situations where violence has commenced and victims require assistance for their safety and wellbeing and/or the risk from the perpetrators must be managed.

The three components provide a useful framework for assessing where effort is distributed to best effect. Currently, most resources in NSW are applied to the crisis end of the spectrum. This formed a significant focus of the Auditor-General's performance audit of NSW responses to domestic and family violence. An integrated and strategic approach which encompasses all three components will be critical to any long-term efforts to reduce the incidence of domestic, family and sexual violence.

The NSW Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Framework (NSW DFSV Framework) under development will include an enhanced focus on prevention and early intervention. As part of the NSW DFSV Framework, work will:

- Review the extent of current primary prevention activity in NSW (NSW and Commonwealth funded initiatives)
- Identify any gaps or weaknesses in the current primary prevention efforts
- Identify strategies for inclusion in the Framework.

This work is expected to guide the development of further strategies. The VicHealth framework shown overleaf is one example of the type of prevention framework that can guide action.

Framework to guide primary prevention of violence against women

KEY DETERMINANTS OF VIOLENCE AND THEME FOR ACTION

PROMOTING EQUAL AND RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Individual/relationship determinants	Community & organisational determinants	Societal determinants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belief in rigid gender roles and identities, weak support for gender equality • Masculine orientation/sense of entitlement • Male dominance and control of wealth in relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culturally-specific norms regarding gender and sexuality • Masculine peer & organisational cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional & cultural support for, or weak sanctions against, gender inequality and rigid gender roles

KEY CONTRIBUTING FACTORS AND THEMES FOR ACTION

PROMOTING NON-VIOLENT NORMS / REDUCING THE EFFECTS OF PRIOR EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE

Individual/relationship contributors	Community & organisational contributors	Societal contributors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudinal support for violence against women • Witnessing or experiencing family violence as a child • Exposure to other forms of interpersonal or collective violence • Use and acceptance of violence as a means of resolving interpersonal disputes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neighbourhood, peer & organisational cultures which are violence-supportive or have weak sanctions against violence • Community or peer violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approval of, or weak sanctions against, violence against women • Ethos condoning violence as a means of settling interpersonal, civic or political disputes • Colonisation

IMPROVING ACCESS TO RESOURCES AND SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

Individual/relationship contributors	Community & organisational contributors	Societal contributors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social isolation and limited access to systems of support • Income, education, occupation • Relative labour force status • Alcohol and illicit drug use* • Poor parenting • Personality characteristics and poor mental health* • Relationship and marital conflict • Divorce/separation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak social connections and social cohesion and limited collective activity among women • Strong support for the privacy of the family • Neighbourhood characteristics (service infrastructure, unemployment, poverty, collective efficacy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for the privacy and autonomy of the family • Unequal distribution of material resources (e.g. employment, education)

POPULATION GROUPS AND PREVENTATIVE ACTIONS

Preventative actions	Population groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research, monitoring and evaluation • Direct participation programs • Organisational and workforce development • Community strengthening • Communications and social marketing • Advocacy • Legislative and policy reform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children • Young people • Women and men • Neighbourhoods affected by disadvantage • Indigenous communities • Rural communities • Culturally and linguistically diverse communities • Women with disabilities

SETTINGS AND SECTORS FOR ACTION

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community services • Corporate • Faith communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Workplaces • Cultural institutions & networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts • Sports and recreation • Media & popular culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government • Health • Cyberspace/New technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Justice • Academic • Military-like institutions
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INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Individual/relationship	Organisational	Community	Societal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved connections to resources and support • Respectful and equitable gender relations • Improved attitudes toward gender equity, gender roles and violence/violence against women • Improved skills in non-violent means of resolving interpersonal conflict • Responsible alcohol use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisations that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Model, promote and facilitate equal, respectful and non-violent gender relations – Work in partnerships across sectors to address violence – Implement evidence-based violence prevention activities – Are accessible to and safe and supportive for women 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environments that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Value and support norms which are non-violent and build respectful and equitable gender relations – Build connections between people and between them and sources of formal and informal support – Take action to address violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A society in which there are strong legislative and regulatory frameworks and appropriate resource allocation for supporting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Gender equity – The prevention and prohibition of violence – The positive portrayal of women (e.g. in advertising) – The development of healthy relationships between men and women

LONG-TERM BENEFITS

Individual/relationship	Organisational	Community	Societal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in violence-related mental health problems & mortality • Improved interpersonal skills & family & gender relations • Reduced intergenerational transmission of violence and its impacts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence prevention resources and activities integrated across sectors and settings • Organisations that value and promote respectful gender relations • Improved access to resources and systems of support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities that value gender equity and respectful relationships between men and women • Reduced social isolation and improved community connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced gender inequality • Improved quality of life for men and women • Reduced levels of violence/violence against women • Improved productivity

* denotes increased risk of perpetration only

Source: VicHealth (2007), *Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

FACS approaches

Research has demonstrated that domestic violence is a key cause of homelessness for women in Australia.⁴ In 2007/08, 52% of Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) clients were women, 19% with children. Domestic violence was the most cited reason for women accessing SAAP services. Homelessness can lead to lack of connection with community, isolation, and it can adversely impact on physical and mental health.

Living with domestic violence has a damaging effect on children and young people and may constitute a form of child abuse. Children and young people who witness domestic violence may be at risk of serious physical or psychological harm. Domestic Violence affects a carer's ability to secure a stable environment for children. Government and non-government agencies have a legal responsibility to protect children and young people at risk of harm.

Development of the NSW DFSV Framework provides a strategy for Government, non-government organisations and the community to work together better to both prevent domestic and family violence and respond more effectively when it happens.

Within FACS, key strategies underpinning service responses include:

- *NSW Homelessness Action Plan, A Way Home: Reducing Homelessness in NSW 2009-14.* A priority of the NSW Homelessness Action Plan is to provide safe, appropriate long-term accommodation and/or support to people experiencing domestic and family violence, relationship and family breakdown and at key transition points. The Action Plan sets the direction for state-wide reform of the homelessness service sector, increasing the focus of the service system on prevention and long-term accommodation and support, rather than crisis intervention.
- *Keep Them Safe: A Shared Approach to Child Wellbeing* is the NSW Government's five-year plan to reform the child protection system in NSW. *Keep Them Safe* includes many initiatives to support families affected by violence.

FACS currently supports the following specific programs:

Initiative	Details
Staying Home Leaving Violence (Community Services)	This program seeks to remove the violent partner from the home and ensure the safety of the woman and her children. An exclusion order is negotiated as part of an apprehended violence order. Project workers provide risk assessment and management, casework and advocacy to address housing issues, financial difficulties, legal issues and facilitate access to appropriate services. A safety plan is developed, including the provision of security equipment for the home. The program expanded to an additional 10 locations during 2010–2011, bringing it to a total of 18 locations. The NSW Government has committed an additional \$2.5 million to expand Staying Home Leaving Violence to a further five locations. The expansion will take place in two stages, with Cessnock, Gosford and Tamworth to commence in 2012, and Parramatta and Holroyd commencing in 2012/13. In addition, Blacktown and Quaker's Hill will receive an additional \$150,000 per year over two years on top of its annual funding to address growing need in this area.
Integrated Domestic and Family Violence	This is a multi-agency, coordinated response to prevent the escalation of domestic and family violence among high risk target groups and in

⁴ Tually, Faulkner, Cutler and Slatter (2008) *Women, Domestic and Family Violence and Homelessness*, Flinders Institute for Housing, Urban and Regional Research.

Services Program (Community Services)	targeted communities. Coordinated services are provided to clients through a multi-disciplinary team or are based on clear referral pathways between service agencies such as Police, Health, Housing, Community Services and non-government support agencies. The program has been implemented in ten sites in NSW.
Start Safely (Housing NSW)	The Start Safely Private Rental Subsidy Scheme provides time-limited subsidised rents to women and women with children escaping domestic and family violence. This financial assistance helps women to access appropriate and affordable housing in the private rental market and also provide much needed financial relief until their situation is stabilised. The subsidy is for a period of up to 12 months, with quarterly reviews to reassess the need for the subsidy and to ensure that plans are in place so that the client can transition from receiving financial assistance into independence. Start Safely is linked to an integrated support program and domestic violence services. Start Safely complements the range of existing private rental assistance products and services currently delivered by Housing NSW. These include Rentstart, Tenancy Guarantees and the Private Rental Brokerage Service.
Domestic Violence Pro-Active Support Services (DVPASS)	DVPASS is a partnership between a Police Local Area Command and a local domestic violence support service with the intention of providing a referral pathway for consenting victims to be linked to appropriate support services. There are a number of these partnership programs operating at Local Area Commands across the state. Recently, FACS provided an additional \$400,000 in funding from 2011-2015 to support another DVPASS called the Bridges Project which is located in the Penrith / St Marys area.
Domestic and Family Violence Grants Program (Office for Women's Policy)	The Office for Women's Policy (OWFP) administers an annual Domestic and Family Violence Grants Program of \$2.9 million to fund relevant non-Government sector projects. The Grants program is currently being reviewed in order to determine its effectiveness in terms of improving client outcomes, whether the program delivers sustainable and viable services and projects, the administrative costs of the program, the relationship and overlap to other FACS programs, and the strategic priorities for FACS.
Brighter Futures (Community Services)	Brighter Futures is delivered by 14 lead agencies across NSW and Community Services caseworkers. The program provides early support to families to help prevent problems from escalating to crisis point. To be eligible, families must require long-term support and be experiencing at least one of the Brighter Futures program vulnerabilities. One of these vulnerabilities is the occurrence of domestic violence.
Early Intervention and Placement Prevention (Community Services)	Community Services Early Intervention and Placement Prevention (EIPP) program comprises 430 services, with annual ongoing budget of \$64.2 million, which includes \$11.2 million in new early intervention and placement prevention funding made available through Keep Them Safe. This also includes \$5.5 million provided to 26 services (including child sexual assault clinics and domestic violence services).

6. What are your Department's views on prevention measures targeting young people such as the LoveBites program?

The Office for Women's Policy has provided some funding in previous years for the LoveBites program through the Office's Domestic and Family Violence Grants Program. This grants program is currently under review to ensure funding is best being utilised to support sustainable outcomes to reduce domestic and family violence.

Research shows that social norms, attitudes and beliefs contribute to all forms of violence against women, whether it is emotional, psychological, economic, physical or sexual violence.⁵ Educating young people about what constitutes healthy and unhealthy relationships is an important strategy in preventing domestic and family violence from occurring in the future.

Education about respectful relationships needs to start at a young age to influence children's attitudes towards violence, as well as to give them effective communication and dispute resolution skills. Historically, programs in NSW have targeted adolescents. The Office for Women's Policy is not aware of any programs currently being delivered to younger children through supported playgroups, or by targeting parental roles in influencing norms, attitudes and beliefs through parenting groups and family services.

The current evidence base regarding the effectiveness of prevention strategies that result in measurable behavioural change or a reduction in violence is limited and warrants further effort.

The NSW Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Framework under development will include a focus on strengthening prevention and early intervention approaches which impact on the behaviours and attitudes that contribute to domestic and family violence.

Family and Community Services would strongly support the development of best practice guidelines and minimum standards around effective prevention approaches.

7. Several stakeholders (see for example Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District, Submission 16, p 1; Metro Migrant Resource Centre Inc, Submission 20, p 4; Western Sydney Local Health District, Submission 30, p 3) have suggested that there is a lack of uniformity of early intervention service provision. What are your thoughts on these comments?

As is evident in submissions to this Inquiry, there is a range of definitions around early intervention approaches. Development of common primary prevention definitions, principles and best practice standards may be helpful in ensuring a more integrated approach to prevention and early intervention initiatives.

Historically, the Office for Women's Policy has funded a range of early intervention programs through the Office's Domestic and Family Violence Grants Program. The grants program is under review in acknowledgment that short, one-off funding is unlikely to deliver sustainable outcomes, and in recognition of the need to improve the quality of programs.

⁵ Flood & Pease (2006), *The Factors Influencing Community Attitudes in Relation to Violence Against Women: A Critical Review of the Literature*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

The Office for Women's Policy is keen to explore the development of best practice guidelines and minimum standards around effective early intervention approaches to support more integrated approaches. Future work in this area will, in part, be guided by a literature review currently being undertaken as part of the NSW Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Framework.

Consideration also needs to be given to ways of increasing the capacity of the non-government sector to provide high quality early intervention and prevention education programs, and for all to build robust evaluation of programs and their impact on behavioural change.

There may be opportunities to strengthen research partnerships between universities, government departments and the non-government sector to support more robust program development and education. The Office for Women's Policy is also considering gaps in these areas through the development of data, research and evaluation agendas.

- 8. The Benevolent Society (Submission 37, p 2) has called for specific prevention and early intervention strategies to be developed for a range of special needs groups including new and emerging migrant groups, people with disabilities, gay and lesbian people, etc. How is the Government working to ensure that services are responsive to these groups?**

The NSW Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Framework will incorporate strategies to provide targeted responses to victims with complex needs, including men and same-sex partner violence.

It will be important for this work to consider common characteristics experienced by victims of domestic violence and then identify specific additional and intersectional barriers that affect the access of specific groups to services and safety.

Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (ADVOs)

- 9. The Committee has heard that compliance with ADVOs could be improved through police and the courts taking a more consistent and serious approach to breaches, through the tailoring of ADVOs to the individual needs and circumstances of victims, and through better representation of perpetrators to ensure they understand the conditions of their ADVO. What are the Department's views on these suggestions, and any other potential measures to reduce breaches and improve compliance with ADVOs?**

Family and Community Services strongly supports any strategy that reduces the number of breaches and improves perpetrator compliance with Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders. However this question is better directed at the police or justice portfolios.

The role of domestic violence support services is critical in these instances as victims require extensive support when making the decisions to disclose abuse, report breaches and navigate the Police and Court processes.

The Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) approach to assisting clients to reduce the risk of further harm is to develop comprehensive safety plans, including plans for contacting 000 in emergencies and reporting all breaches to Police. Some SHLV projects report an increase in women's willingness to report breaches due to the support received by SHLV case workers to make reports to Police.

Penalties

10. **A large number of inquiry participants have suggested that the existing penalties for domestic violence offences are adequate but are applied inconsistently (see for example Mt Druitt Family Violence Response and Support Strategy Leadership Group, Submission 23, pp 3-4 and Legal Aid NSW, Submission 34, p 9). What is your view of this suggestion?**

Family and Community Services strongly supports the consistent application of penalties for domestic violence offences, noting that the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) has published a number of papers on this issue.

BOCSAR data confirms that magistrates tend to sentence domestic violence offenders to lesser penalties such as bonds rather than gaol terms; the majority of domestic violence related offences are dealt with by way of unsupervised bonds; and sentencing outcomes generally do not reflect the seriousness of a breach of an apprehended violence order.

Work is currently being undertaken in this area by a range of entities:

- *NSW Sentencing Council* – inquiries into use of non-conviction orders and good behaviour bonds and suspended sentences
- *NSW Law Reform Commission* - a review of the *Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999*
- *Criminal Law Review Division (DAGJ)* –statutory review of the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2006*
- *Standing Council of Law and Justice* –giving consideration to the recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission
- *Family Violence—A National Legal Response* by the NSW Law Reform Commission Report.

Most of these projects are due to be completed within the next six months. Similarly, a number of relevant projects have recently been finalised, including a report by BOCSAR on *Factors which influence the sentencing of domestic violence offenders* and a report by the NSW Judicial Commission into the educational needs of the judiciary in relation to domestic violence.

Each of the above projects will provide critical information to guide ways in which the Government can improve outcomes for victims of domestic violence and increase the accountability of perpetrators.

Education

11. **Numerous submissions have argued that there is a need to improve education/training for judicial officers and the police about domestic violence, in order to improve the consistency and quality of actions and decisions. What is your department's view of this suggestion?**

Family and Community Services supports improved education and training to enhance the quality and consistency of decisions and penalties.

In 2010, the Office for Women's Policy asked the Judicial Commission to conduct a needs analysis to identify the gaps in training for judicial officers, and provide greater consistency in managing domestic violence matters in court.

Overall, the project revealed that judicial officers felt they did not require further theory around domestic violence. Rather, they wanted to learn realistic and effective ways to deal with repeat offenders and victims who did not turn up for court or changed their stories during the process.

Areas the judiciary highlighted as being important for continuing education included the intersection of apprehended violence orders and family law, and understanding why victims stay in relationships and/ or return to the perpetrator.

The Judicial Commission has advised the Office for Women's Policy that this information will be used to assist in designing future training programs for the judiciary in NSW.

In addition to this, the final report of the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) and NSW Law Reform Commission (NSWLRC) joint inquiry into family violence – *Family Violence—A National Legal Response* – recommended the creation of a national family violence bench book to assist judges and magistrates. This recommendation is being led at a national level by the Standing Council on Law and Justice.

GPS Bracelets

12. During your evidence to the Committee it was mentioned that the Department had looked at the use of GPS tracking for domestic violence offenders and found that while the principles of such an approach are sound, the evidence base for tracking systems reducing violence is still limited (Ms Boland, Evidence, 20 February 2012, p 2).

- a. Please provide details of the target group, objectives, interventions, timeframes and costs of the project.**
- b. Ms Boland mentioned that there were a number of problems with current GPS technology including that it unreliable, underdeveloped and costly. Can you please provide further information on these drawbacks, as well as the possible advantages of GPS tracking?**
- c. Ms Boland noted that she thought GPS tracking technology should continue to be monitored however in the meantime the Department would like to concentrate on programs that are lower in cost and more feasible. A possible alternative to GPS monitoring of domestic violence offenders is the BSafe program which was recently piloted in Victoria. Has the Department considered whether the program could be implemented in NSW?**

a.

The Office for Women's Policy has assessed how a GPS monitoring system could be applied to serious domestic violence offenders who are both released on parole and considered high risk. In looking at these two eligibility criteria, the system would only apply to a small number of offenders (around 25), with significant costs for the technology and monitoring.

A private consultancy has advised indicative costs for a monitoring kit (ie victim and offender) is a minimum of \$6,000 based on purchasing 100 kits. The cost will be greater if fewer kits are purchased. The estimated annual cost is \$18,500 per offender per annum, not inclusive of victim costs. The cost to set the program up, monitor and respond to breaches is additional to the costs outlined above.

As acknowledged by Corrective Services in their evidence to the Inquiry (17/10/11), there are complexities associated with applying the technology to domestic violence matters, including operational issues such as response time, signal failure and the use of exclusion zones potentially revealing the location of the victim to the perpetrator.

This technology is less reliable in regional areas.

The Office will continue to monitor GPS-based approaches to see if further evidence emerges to support better outcomes, and the cost to implement is reduced.

b.

Advantages of applying GPS tracking to a domestic violence matter may include its ability to facilitate ongoing accountability of high-risk domestic violence offenders, its ability to provide concrete evidence of a breach of ADVO, and its potential to provide a sense of security for victims. However, as noted, the evidence base for each of these possible advantages is limited.

There are also a number of issues with the current GPS technology. GPS units are vulnerable to removal by offenders, mechanical failure, signal dropout and false alarms. GPS signals only work outside, not in buildings, and must be within range of a mobile phone network. Following technical problems with the signal dropping out in built up areas and cost concerns, the British Government ceased plans in 2007 to roll out satellite tracking of offenders. After trials over two years, the New Zealand Department of Corrections did introduce GPS technology in 2007 but for 'limited use', finding it unreliable. In addition, the Queensland Government elected not to proceed with satellite tracking (2007) based on the experience of the New Zealand trials.

Other considerations include:

- **Lack of empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of GPS monitoring for domestic violence offenders.** Evaluations of electronic monitoring have generally focused on issues of feasibility and implementation rather than outcomes. A structured review of US evaluation studies⁶ found little evidence that electronic monitoring reduces recidivism when used in the absence of intense therapeutic interventions⁷.
- **Unique dynamics of the relationship between the victim and offender** - Unlike in many other criminal offences, there is often an ongoing connection between a domestic violence victim and offender and a high likelihood that the offender and victim will re-establish their relationship.
- **High costs and small sample size** – These issues may limit the effectiveness of the scheme – GPS tracking is expensive, and depending on eligibility, may only be applicable to a small number of domestic violence offenders.
- **Civil liberties & right to privacy** – There are concerns that the use of GPS bracelets may infringe the human rights of victims.
- **Unrealistic expectations by victims** – There are concerns that GPS tracking will give victims a false sense of security given that the units alone cannot guarantee safety, particularly given the technology is fallible.
- **Interface with Family Court Orders** – Where Family Court orders exist providing for contact with the offender, the orders would then invalidate the legislation supporting the GPS tracking.

⁶ Corbett & Marx (1991), Mainprize (1996), MacKenzie (1997), Schmidt (1998), Gendreau et al. (2000), and Whitfield (2001), cited in Renzema & Mayo-Wilson (2005), 'Can electronic monitoring reduce crime for moderate to high-risk offenders?', *Journal of Experimental Criminology*.

⁷ Renzema & Mayo-Wilson (2005), 'Can electronic monitoring reduce crime for moderate to high-risk offenders?', *Journal of Experimental Criminology*.

c.

The Department of Family and Community Services is aware of a range of new approaches which are currently being used in Australia and overseas using new technologies, including the Bsafe program in Victoria.

A NSW program, similar to Bsafe, that allows victims of violence to contact emergency services is being explored to provide high risk families with a mechanism to contact 000 in emergencies both in the home and in public places. Community Services is currently working with NSW Police to consider the feasibility of implementing a pilot duress response system for Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) clients. This response would require agreement by SHLV service providers, NSW Police and a security monitoring company.

An evaluation of the pilot of the Staying Home Leaving Violence duress response system is being considered. It would involve an independent analysis of the usefulness of the technology, the effectiveness of the procedures (multi-agency response) and the role of the Staying Home Leaving Violence service in the system.

As a comparison, Bsafe Victoria note that the total cost for one BSafe client per annum is \$3755 per annum, including installation of equipment (not GPS) and monitoring.

13. Ms Jeuken mentioned that the Department, in conjunction with Corrective Services NSW, had been exploring the use of electronic monitoring of serious offenders who are released on parole and are considered high risk (Ms Jeuken, 20 February 2012, p 14).

a. In addition to the information you have agreed to provide on notice, can you please explain how electronic monitoring is distinct from GPS monitoring? Can you also provide information about the advantages/disadvantages of electronic monitoring for domestic violence perpetrators?

Electronic monitoring systems can refer to a broad range of monitoring systems used to deter domestic violence of which GPS tracking is one example. Ms Jeuken used the phrase "electronic monitoring" to refer to the GPS approach outlined in question 12.

Other

14. Some submissions suggest that domestic violence has been constructed as a 'women's issue', such that men experiencing domestic violence and women in same-sex relationships find it difficult to seek out and identify support (see for example One in Three Campaign, Submission 40 and Inner City Legal Centre, Submission 26, p 4). Do you think this criticism is fair?

Why women remain the primary target group of domestic violence programs

While the NSW Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Framework will incorporate strategies to provide targeted responses to victims with complex needs, including men and same-sex partner violence, any overarching strategic framework in NSW must recognise that domestic violence is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men against women and children. International and Australian research shows that women are overwhelmingly more likely to be victims of domestic violence and should remain the primary target group for reducing domestic, family and sexual violence.

Approximately one in three Australian women has experienced physical violence during their lifetime, and nearly one in five has experienced violence by a current or previous partner.

In contrast, men are more likely to be the victims of violence from male strangers, and the violence is more likely to take place in public places, rather than the home.

In the 12 months leading up to the 2006 Personal Safety Survey, of men assaulted, 65% were physically assaulted by a male stranger, whereas only 15% of women were physically assaulted by a male stranger. Over the same duration, 31% of women assaulted were physically assaulted by a current or previous partner, compared to 4% of men assaulted.

The type of violence also differs between genders. Research from the Australian Institute for Criminology categorises men's violent behaviour as either involving aggression, intimidation, verbal abuse and physical violence to assert domination and control, or as an impulsive act committed in response to emotions of frustration and anger.

By contrast, women who are violent are more likely to be driven by frustration and anger rather than by a specific objective, and their violence is more likely to be committed in self defence, or in retaliation to provocation.⁸

Women are also far more likely than men to be subjected to frequent, prolonged, and extreme violence; to sustain injuries; to be subjected to a range of controlling strategies; to fear their lives; to be sexually assaulted; and to experience post-separation violence.⁹

Women are also more likely to have been sexually abused than men. Since the age of 15, the incidence of sexual violence has been different for women and men, with 17% of women experiencing sexual assault compared to 4.8% of men and 4.6% of women experiencing sexual threat compared to 0.9% of men.¹⁰

Same sex violence

A 2006 report, *Fair's Fair: A snapshot of violence and abuse in Sydney LGBT Relationships*¹¹, suggested that there were significant levels of violence and abuse in same sex relationships within the Sydney gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities.

The report suggests that while the impact of domestic violence in same sex relationships is similar to the impact on heterosexual victims, the dynamics of violence in same sex relationships are complex and may include actions such as controlling behaviour, humiliation, or threats of 'outing' their partner.

In addition, it suggests that individuals may not recognise their experiences as domestic violence due to the common, but misplaced, belief that domestic violence is a heterosexual issue.

⁸ James, Seddon & Brown (2002) and Tomison (2000), cited in Morgan and Chadwick (2009), 'Key issues in domestic violence', *Research in Practice Summary Paper No. 07*, Australian Institute of Criminology.

⁹ Flood (2006), 'The Debate Over Men's Versus Women's Family Violence', *AJIA (Australian Institute of Judicial Administration) Family Violence Conference*, Adelaide, 23-24 February [available at http://www.familylawwebguide.com.au/attachment.php?id=1710&keep_session=192442293]

¹⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005), *Personal Safety Survey 4906.0* [available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0>]

¹¹ Cerise & Farrell (2006), *Fair's Fair: A snapshot of violence and abuse in Sydney LGBT Relationships*, p. 29

Different strategies are required to address these different types of violence. The NSW Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Framework will include an examination of these different experiences of violence and the strategies required to respond to them.

Services currently available include:

- Anti-Violence Project Report-Line 1800 063 060 or www.acon.org.au/anti-violence
- Another Closet – Domestic Violence in Same Sex Relationships www.anothercloset.com.au
- Inner City Legal Centre and Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Legal Service on 02 9332 1966 or www.iclc.org.au
- The Safe Relationships Project at the Inner City Legal Centre on 02 9332 1966 or www.iclc.org.au
- The Gender Centre Inc on 1800 069 115 or www.gendercentre.org.au
- Organisation Intersex International Australia (OI!) at <http://oiaustralia.com>

Men as victims

Although data is limited, it is clear that some men also experience domestic violence. Abused men are much more likely to experience psychosomatic symptoms, stress, depression and alcoholism, than non-abused men¹². Violence against any person is abhorrent, no matter what gender they are. Further research is needed to work out more clearly how often and severely men suffer from domestic violence and what responses are most effective.

Men experiencing domestic violence can access the following support and services:

- Domestic Violence Line 1800 65 64 63
- Mens Line Australia 1300 78 99 78
- National Domestic Violence Line 1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)
- www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au

¹² Stets & Straus (1990), 'Gender Differences in Reporting Marital Violence and its Medical and Psychological Consequences', in Straus, Gelles & Smith (eds) (1990), *Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptations to Violence in 8,145 Families*, Transaction, pp. 151–166.