

**INQUIRY INTO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRENDS AND
ISSUES IN NSW**

Organisation: One in Three Campaign

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One in Three Campaign

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The Director
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

9 July 2012

Dear Sir/Madam,

The One in Three Campaign thanks the Committee for the opportunity to comment upon the deliberative process and the transcript of the round table held on 18th June 2012.

As the content of the Committee's Discussion Paper has not been made available to us or to the public, we are unable to respond in any meaningful way to the material in the transcript of the round table other than to say that none of the issues we have brought to the attention of the Committee were addressed.

We understand that the recommendations that were discussed at the roundtable may not be made public as they formed part of the deliberative process at the end of the Inquiry. We do however believe that the One in Three Campaign should have been considered a significant stakeholder, as we were invited by the Committee firstly to lodge a submission to the Inquiry and secondly to present to the Committee in person.

Hence, as the sole organisation participating in the Inquiry with a focus on the neglected issue of the one-third of victims of family violence who are male, we are extremely disappointed that we were not provided with the Discussion Paper nor asked to attend the round table, nor were we informed that the 'public' round table was even to occur. We are appalled that male victims of domestic and family violence and abuse had no voice amongst the 20 or so stakeholders who attended the round table.

We once again ask the Committee to acknowledge that significant numbers of male victims of domestic and family violence and abuse exist and that they are entitled to expect support from state funded agencies. We also ask the Committee to acknowledge that significant numbers of female perpetrators of violence and abuse against men, women, children and the elderly also exist. We draw the Committee's attention to recently released figures from the Department for Child Protection Western Australia (attached) showing that women made up the greatest proportion of persons believed responsible for substantiated child maltreatment (abuse and neglect) in 2007-08. Unfortunately no other State or Territory authorities have supplied such data – which should be publicly available – since the late 1990s.

We ask the Committee to consider the attached material provided by Mensline Australia (the federally-funded 24/7 telephone counselling service for men) regarding the rights of male victims of family violence to expect the support of government-aided services.

We ask the Committee to recommend that state-funded domestic violence services be required to remove all barriers currently faced by male victims when attempting to access health, legal and counselling services currently available to female and children victims of domestic and family violence and abuse. To fail to do so is nothing less than sex discrimination.

We would like to point out to the Committee that this degree of government intervention was necessary in the past to require state-funded sexual assault services to see male victims.

We would remind the Committee of the dreadful impact that discrimination in access to state-funded counselling services has had upon the men who were victims of child sexual abuse covered in the recent Four Corners program on ABC television titled "Unholy Silence" (2nd July 2012).

We believe the Committee has the opportunity to be a catalyst for change in an area where contemptible discrimination is occurring and that this discrimination is causing profound suffering and harm.

Yours sincerely,

Greg Andresen (Senior Researcher)
and Andrew Humphreys (Member)

Are you experiencing family violence?

Family violence is any type of abusive behaviour in a family or relationship where one person attempts to gain and maintain control over the other. It can take many forms including physical violence, sexual assault, emotional abuse or social or financial control. Abuse does not have to be physical or sexual to be considered family violence.

Family violence can include:

- Slapping, hitting, spitting, scratching, and other forms of physical assault.
- Smashing things and destroying personal property.
- Psychological abuse and “mind games” such as spreading lies, setting up impossible "damned-if you-do, damned-if-you-don't" situations, etc.
- Threatening, bullying and manipulative behaviour, including using threats of self-harm to control the other's behaviour.
- Using access to children to punish, threaten or control.
- Verbal abuse such as name calling, put-downs, taunts and mockery.
- Financial and economic abuse: unreasonably limiting a partner's access to financial resources.
- Sexual assault
- Other behaviour aimed at frightening, hurting, controlling or dominating the other.

Men can also experience family violence. Men and women are physically and psychologically different, and there are corresponding differences in the way men and women typically enact and experience family violence. Men's relative physical strength means they often inflict more serious damage with their violence than women. Men are less likely to feel physically afraid of their partner than women. On the other hand, the harm caused by psychological and emotional abuse does not depend on the physical strength of the person employing it.

What effect does family violence have?

Being exposed to family violence can have a devastating effect. It can lead to profound feelings of helplessness, depression, worthlessness and low self-esteem. Because victims often feel unable to talk about what they are experiencing, and are unable to stop what is happening to them, a deep sense of powerlessness and isolation can develop.

Family violence also has severe impacts for children who witness it. They, too, can experience feelings of fear, anger, depression, anxiety and shame. They may experience physical symptoms such as stomach cramps, headaches and sleeping problems. Behavioural problems such as aggression and running away from home are also common.

Many men feel a sense of shame about the abuse they are experiencing. This is often related to the feeling that as a man they should be able to protect themselves and their children better. They fear that if they tell anyone about what is happening they will be ridiculed, dismissed, or blamed.

Will I be believed if I report it?

Unfortunately, a lack of understanding of female-male violence has often meant that many men who have reported their abuse have not received a satisfactory response. This is beginning to change with better education of police and others.

It is important to remember that men, like anyone, are entitled to the full protection of the law when it comes to family violence. If you are at risk of injury from your partner, it is better to call the police than to retaliate physically and risk committing an offence yourself. Remember, you are not powerless. Take down the names of officers you deal with. If you are not happy with the treatment of your case, register a complaint with the officer's supervisor or, if this does not help, an appropriate authority such as the police ombudsman.

Keep records

It is a good idea to keep a record of violent incidents. This could help your case if you need legal protection or police intervention. Keep a diary which factually records:

- What happened
- When
- Where
- Any supporting evidence such as impartial witnesses

This process can also help you to realise that what you are experiencing is real and serious.

Staying safe

Your personal safety and that of your children, if you have any, is paramount. It is a good idea to develop a safety plan for how you will deal with incidents of violence if there is a threat to your or your children's safety. Remember that children can be harmed psychologically as well as physically by witnessing abuse. Your safety plan could include:

- Planning under what circumstances you will leave the family home
- Will you take children with you?
- Where will you go?
- If you stay, what measures can you take to protect yourself and your kids?
- Who can you call if you need help?

Will she change?

Many people in violent relationships wait for years in the vain hope that their partner will change. This is unlikely to occur without professional assistance. Your partner may feel real remorse after an abusive incident, and may sincerely mean her promise to change, but unless she seeks help and is genuinely committed to learning new ways of relating and resolving conflict, the conditions that lead to the abusive behaviour will remain, and the violence will almost certainly recur. Ultimately, this decision to seek help and commit to a process of change has to come from her.

The decision to stay or leave a relationship is yours and yours alone. There is no right answer. But you should be realistic about the situation. If you need advice about your relationship, call MensLine Australia and talk it over with a counsellor.

Abusive relationships

It is not uncommon for family violence to go in both directions. Both parties in such abusive relationships may feel themselves to be the victim, with their own abuse justified by the other's provocation. Barring legal self-defence against a physical attack, there is no justification for using violence in a relationship. If your relationship is characterised by mutual violence and abuse, *both of you* will need to address the causes.

Violence in abusive relationships is a cycle. You can help to break this cycle by taking responsibility for your part in it. You may need the support of a counsellor, anger management group, or another professional service to help you make these changes. Call MensLine Australia for further information.

Getting help

It is important to seek help. Speaking out about what you are going through is an important step in itself. It helps you acknowledge the reality of your situation and is the first step towards empowering yourself to change it. If you are not yet ready to talk to a professional counsellor, think about friends or family you might be comfortable to broach the subject with. MensLine Australia is one safe, confidential and anonymous service where you can be assured of being heard. We can also direct you to services in your area that may be able to assist further.

The issue of female violence against men is a particularly contentious one socially and politically. Remember that if you seek help and feel that you are not receiving impartial and fair treatment, you are within your rights to look for help elsewhere. MensLine Australia can help by referring you to alternative services in your area.

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This information was sourced from www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Response:

Relationship to Child of Persons Believed Responsible for Substantiated Maltreatment 2005-06

| Relationship of Person Believed Responsible | Nature of Maltreatment | | | | | Total |
|---|------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|
| | Neglect | Emotional/ Psychological | Physical | Sexual | No Suitable Caregiver | |
| Aboriginal kinship-male | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 2 |
| Aboriginal kinship-female | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Defacto of parent-male | 7 | 9 | 25 | 16 | 0 | 57 |
| Defacto of parent-female | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Foster carer-female | 3 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 9 |
| Friend/neighbour-male | 0 | 0 | 0 | 24 | 0 | 24 |
| Friend/neighbour-female | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Guardian-male | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Guardian-female | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| Loco parentis-male | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Other-male | 0 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 0 | 13 |
| Other-female | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Other relative-male | 3 | 1 | 2 | 36 | 0 | 42 |
| Other relative-female | 4 | 0 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 10 |
| Parent-male | 37 | 41 | 65 | 22 | 0 | 165 |
| Parent-female | 161 | 72 | 76 | 3 | 0 | 312 |
| Sibling-male | 0 | 0 | 1 | 10 | 0 | 11 |
| Sibling-female | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Step parent-male | 0 | 4 | 19 | 11 | 0 | 34 |
| Not recorded | 96 | 32 | 66 | 63 | 6 | 263 |
| Total | 318 | 171 | 268 | 197 | 6 | 960 |

Note: The department's client database has the capacity to record multiple persons believed responsible for each child. This table shows the first recorded person believed responsible only. The person believed responsible is sometimes unknown or does not meet the criteria for recording.

Prepared by: Kaija Ward, Demand Planning, Research and Evaluation

Source: CCSS snapshot nat2006 dated 4 September 2006

**Department for Child Protection Western Australia
Relationship to Child of Persons Believed Responsible for Substantiated Maltreatment 2007-08**

| Relationship of Person Believed Responsible | Nature of Substantiated Maltreatment | | | | | Total |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------|------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| | Neglect | Emotional/ Psychological | Physical | Sexual | No Suitable Caregiver | |
| Aboriginal kinship-male | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Aboriginal kinship-female | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Defacto of parent-male | 8 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 0 | 40 |
| Defacto of parent-female | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Foster carer-female | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Foster carer-male | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Friend/neighbour-male | 0 | 0 | 1 | 26 | 0 | 27 |
| Friend/neighbour-female | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Guardian-male | 1 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| Guardian-female | 9 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 11 |
| Loco parentis-male | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Loco parentis-female | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Other-male | 0 | 0 | 2 | 29 | 0 | 31 |
| Other-female | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Other relative-male | 2 | 2 | 1 | 28 | 0 | 33 |
| Other relative-female | 8 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Parent-male | 15 | 43 | 63 | 34 | 0 | 155 |
| Parent-female | 261 | 91 | 70 | 5 | 0 | 427 |
| Sibling-male | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 0 | 8 |
| Sibling-female | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Step parent-male | 0 | 8 | 18 | 14 | 0 | 40 |
| Step parent-female | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Unknown-male | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Not recorded | 316 | 138 | 99 | 101 | 35 | 689 |
| Total | 622 | 306 | 281 | 261 | 35 | 1505 |

Note: The department's client database has the capacity to record multiple persons believed responsible for each child. This table shows the first recorded person believed responsible only.

The person believed responsible is sometimes unknown or does not meet the criteria for recording

Source: CCSS snapshot nat2008 dated 2 September 2008