

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

**Organisation:** NAPCAN  
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The Director  
Standing Committee on Social Issues  
Parliament House  
Macquarie Street  
Sydney NSW 2012

*"One in three Australian women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15. Almost one in five have experienced sexual violence. It is time for that to change."* (The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 COAG 2010).

## **RE: INQUIRY INTO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRENDS AND ISSUES IN NSW**

Thank you for the invitation to submit to the NSW Legislative's Standing Committee on Social Issues inquiry into domestic violence trends and issues in NSW; and to attend the NSW hearing from **12.15pm - 1.00pm on Monday 26 March 2012**. NAPCAN views this as an extremely important inquiry and would, as requested, like to respond to the Inquiry's point 2. "Early intervention strategies to prevent domestic violence".

## **PREVENTION IS WORTH IT**

NAPCAN believes Violence Against Women, Young People and Children is **preventable** and that the State of New South Wales can show leadership and vision in this area by investing substantially in a comprehensive prevention strategy for domestic and family violence (inclusive of sexual assault). Preventing domestic and family violence will bring substantial social and economic benefits, while vastly improving the health and social and emotional wellbeing outcomes for **all** men, women, young people and children in NSW.

## **NSW – A STATE COMMITTED TO HIGH QUALITY PREVENTION PROGRAMMING**

NAPCAN has been developing and delivering training on domestic and family violence prevention programs (including LOVE BiTES, ALL CHILDREN BEING SAFE and GROWING RESPECT) to communities across NSW. This has been possible because of funding from the NSW Government, as well as contributions from NSW and international philanthropic foundations.

NAPCAN is committed to providing best practice, high quality programming, and strategies to end violence against women, young people and children in NSW and across Australia. To ensure we can achieve the highest of programming we have outlined the "gold standards" principles that guide our prevention work:

- Commitment to preventing and ending violence against women and child abuse and neglect
- Commitment to modeling respectful relationships in all aspects of our work
- Belief that all Australian communities can end violence against women, and child abuse and neglect
- Commitment to children and young people having a voice in all aspects of our strategies and programming
- Commitment to deliver high quality professional development for the sector to prevent violence against women and child abuse and neglect
- Commitment to working towards ensuring that all Australians having a life of opportunity and dignity, free from discrimination and disadvantage as a basic human right (Australian Human Rights Commission)
- A recognition of the history of colonisation, dislocation and the impact of governments' policies on the present lives of Aboriginal families and communities
- Ensuring adequate resourcing for the prevention of violence against women and prevention of child abuse and neglect

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- Commitment to the ecological approach (whole of community and school) to ending violence against women and child abuse and neglect
- Commitment to building capacity in communities to ensure strategy and program sustainability
- Genuine and equal partnerships between communities, government and non-government services to create sustainable long term change
- Commitment to best practice programming, program fidelity and quality control
- Creation of a safe and supportive team environment and a commitment to life long learning
- A commitment to cross-cultural workings ensuring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal professionals are employed and collaborate on all projects
- A commitment to rigorous child, youth and community led planning research and evaluation

### **PREVENTION IS WORTH IT - THE ECONOMIC COST OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE**

Domestic and family violence has an enormous financial impact on the NSW and Australian economies. Access Economics (2004) estimated that the cost of Domestic and Family Violence to the Australian economy was \$8.1 billion in 2002/2003. Without a comprehensive strategy for and investment in the prevention of violence against women it has been calculated by the Australian Government (2009) that this will increase to \$9.9 billion in 2021-22. These costs are associated with all the following: homelessness; health including chronic illnesses and mental health; victim and perpetrator support services; legal and corrections systems; absenteeism and decreased productivity at work and permanent loss of labour (Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2011).

### **PREVENTION IS WORTH IT - PRESENTING THE CASE FOR AN INVESTMENT IN CHANGE**

The prevention of domestic and family violence is of enormous social and economic benefit to all men, women, young people and children living in NSW. The 2011 research paper "The Financial Cost Of Domestic And Family Violence" (Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse) states that:

- Reducing all forms of violence against women by **only 10%** by 2021-22 could amount to **\$1.6 billion** in savings (Australian Government, 2010).
- According to a report on disease prevention by VicHealth in 2009, eliminating intimate partner violence would save the Victorian health sector **\$207 million dollars per year** and **save \$1.8 billion in production and leisure costs annually**. Reducing the prevalence level of domestic violence from 27% to 22% could: reduce the number of all domestic violence-related deaths from **435 to 74** per annum over time; reduce 34 000 annual new cases of intimate partner violence-related illness to 6000; save **\$38 million dollars** in health sector costs and **\$333 million in production and leisure costs** over time (Cadilhac, 2009).

This **strongly indicates that substantial savings** can be made to the NSW Government by investing comprehensively in the prevention of domestic and family violence. This investment will also **improve the social and emotional wellbeing** of all children, young people, men and women across NSW by:

- Reducing the suffering experienced by women, men, young people and children;
- Reducing the mental health costs for men, women, children and young people associated with violence against women including depression, suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder or aggressive disorders that can require a lifetime of treatment;
- Reducing other health issues associated with violence including chronic illnesses like asthma, heart disease and hypertension, ulcers, diabetes and lung disease;
- Saving the lives of women that die as a result of domestic and family violence, and
- Reducing the number of young men and men in the criminal justice system.

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## DEFINING DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

The NSW Government's Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan (2010, p16) defines 'domestic and family violence' as:

*'Violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour carried out by an adult against a partner or former partner to control and dominate that person. Domestic violence causes fear, physical and/or psychological harm. It is most often violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour by a man against a woman. Living with domestic violence has a profound effect upon children and young people and may constitute a form of child abuse. The above definition includes violence in same sex relationships. Domestic violence includes physical abuse; sexual abuse; psychological, emotional and verbal abuse; social abuse; economic abuse; and harassment and stalking. These various forms of abuse often occur simultaneously as a form of systematic abuse with the effect of coercing and controlling a partner. Many forms of domestic violence are offences under the NSW 'Family violence refers to violence against women perpetrated by a family member which may include, but is not limited to, their intimate partner. The range of behaviours that constitute family violence are the same as those defined under "domestic violence" above.'*

## DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE – AN ENTRENCHED ISSUE IN ALL COMMUNITIES ACROSS NSW

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006) indicates that one in three Australian women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15, and almost one in five have experienced sexual violence. In 2005, over 350,000 women experienced physical violence and over 125,000 women experienced sexual violence. Indigenous women and girls are 35 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults than other Australian women and girls. Domestic and family violence affects the health and social and emotional wellbeing of both men and women, and young people and children and there are particular groups of individuals that are particularly vulnerable to domestic and family violence (COAG: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2010):

- Aboriginal women and girls;
- Young women;
- Women living in rural and remote areas;
- Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including refugees;
- Older women;
- Pregnant women;
- Women living with a disability;
- Women living poverty and social isolation;
- And those with past experiences of trauma.



## PREVENTION IS WORTH IT - THE WAY FORWARD

### LOVE BiTES – PREVENTION IN ACTION: WHY NSW IS READY FOR PREVENTION PROGRAMMING

LOVE BiTES is a multi-lessoned program, followed by a youth-led community campaign, which can be run in or out of the school environment. LOVE BiTES (part of the GROWING RESPECT programs) is a Respectful Relationships education program focusing on relationship violence prevention for 14-16 year olds. It aims to break inter-generational cycles of family violence, and the increasing rates of sexual assault, by supporting young people to develop respectful relationships. Young people develop the skills to:

- Identify and have safe, equal and healthy relationships;
- Develop respectful conflict-resolution and problem-solving skills;
- Access support services in their community if they need help.

Due to the consistent funding from NSW Government (2008-2011) and the UBS Optimus Foundation (2008 – 2014) the LOVE BITES program has been **sustainably implemented** in over 130 communities across Australia. NAPCAN has trained over 3,500 teachers and community service providers to coordinate and implement the LOVE BiTES program as an integrated interagency partnership. These service providers include police officers, Aboriginal health workers, youth workers, and domestic and family violence and sexual assault professionals. Over 100,000 children and young people have participated in the LOVE BITES program.

The following **70 NSW communities** have been trained and/or are currently running the LOVE BiTES program: Armidale Ballina, Bankstown, Bathurst, Bega, Blue Mountains, Bondi, Bourke, Bowraville, Broken Hill, Burwood, Campbelltown, Casino, Cooma, Coonabarabran, Dee Why, Deniliquin, Dorrigo, Dubbo, Eden, Forbes, Forster, Brewarrina, Glenn Innes, Gloucester, Gosford, Goulburn, Illawara/Wollongong, Grafton, Griffith, Inverell, Kempsey, Kyogle, Jindabyne, Laurieton, Lismore, Moree, Moruya, Mount Druitt, Maclean, Macksville, Marrickville, Muswellbrook, Narooma, Nambucca Heads, North Sydney, Narooma, Newcastle, Nowra, Oberon, Orange, Parkes, Port Macquarie, Queanbeyan, Randwick, Redfern, Tamworth, Taree, Tempe, Tenterfield, Tweed Heads, Tumut, Ulladulla, Wagga Wagga, Walgett, Wauchope, Wellington, Wilcannia, Woolgoolga and Young.

NAPCAN attributes the success and sustainability of the LOVE BITES program to:

- **The development of high quality respectful relationships programming and resources** by NAPCAN's Growing Respect Team that address **the issues identified by young people and that are relevant for young people**. All GROWING RESPECT programming is reviewed by young people and developed in partnership with sector experts and professionals in communities from around Australia.
- **Program adaptation where required** – local communities across Australia are offered the LOVE BiTES program as an example of a successful program. NAPCAN works in partnership with communities to adapt the program to local environments and to create local ownership of the program.
- **High quality professional development** in LOVE BITES program facilitation skills; working with young people (adolescent development); and the challenges of facilitating respectful relationship education.
- **Ongoing support and mentoring** to ensure sustainability across Australia to all communities to assist with program set up and implementation and to sustain the program.
- **The NSW Government's commitment to and financial support of prevention programming**. Governmental support of and financial commitment to the ongoing implementation of programming is crucial. The community services sector has a high turn

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over of staff and ongoing training, specifically for rural communities, is vital to ongoing success and sustainability.

## **PREVENTION IS WORTH IT - NAPCAN'S VISION FOR NSW LEADING THE WAY IN THE PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE**

The time has come to invest in **cohesive, best practice community led prevention strategies and programming**. NAPCAN believes that the prevention of violence against women and children across NSW is achievable with the following requirements (outlined below);

- Long term substantial financial investment from the NSW and Federal Governments,
- Well researched, community led strategies and programming,
- Facilitated by cross-sectorial collaborative partnerships between government and non-government services.

## **WHAT IS REQUIRED TO PREVENT DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IN NSW?**

### **1. LONG TERM FUNDING**

Prevention of domestic and family violence requires long-term investment in communities over a **minimum 10-year period** to break the cycles of violence in communities. Preventing domestic and family violence requires generational attitudinal and behaviour change across whole communities and requires a deep exploration of the issue of domestic and family violence to generate sustainable community solutions. Bipartisan support for prevention is essential with a commitment from all sides of politics to end domestic and family violence.

### **2. AN ECOLOGICAL VISION FOR COLLABORATIVE MULTI-FACETED APPROACH TO PREVENTION**

NSW could model its prevention strategy on VicHealth's (2009) ecological framework for action for the prevention domestic and family violence. This model identifies the importance of addressing domestic and family violence prevention with:

- *Individuals/Relationships* with improved connections to resources and support; respectful and equitable gender relations; improved attitudes towards gender equity, gender roles and violence; improved skills in non-violent means of resolving interpersonal conflict; and responsible alcohol use
- *Community* environments that value and support norms that are non-violent and build respectful and equitable gender relations; build connections between people and sources of support; and take action to address violence
- *Organisations* that model, promote and facilitate respectful and non-violent gender relations work in partnership across sectors to address violence; implement evidence-based violence prevention activities and; are accessible to and safe and supportive for women.

### **3. COMMUNITY LED PREVENTION ATTITUDINAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE**

The NSW Government could implement community-led processes in relation to developing localised and sustainable Respectful Relationships initiatives and programs for children and young people across NSW. This approach would offer the opportunity for the rich cultural and social knowledge of the communities surrounding and including children and young people, to be directly built into interventions and would offer meaningful and sustainable solutions to building on existing resiliency.

### **4. YOUTH AND CHILD-LED COMMUNITY ATTITUDINAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE**

An ecological approach would also focus on child and youth inclusiveness. Domestic and family violence prevention programs have to be written for children and young people. Being child and youth inclusive ensures that all prevention programs and strategies are developed in partnership

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with children and young people. Through the delivery of our Respectful Relationships programs, NAPCAN has always given children and young people a true participatory voice at each stage of the program development. We have learnt that program content needs to focus on children and young people's relationships. For example in primary school programs the focus should be on friendships and emerging relationships. NAPCAN has learnt from consultation with young people through the LOVE BiTES program that they want to talk about their own relationships, not entrenched adult domestic violence or child sexual abuse, but what was relevant to them in their here and now.

Being child and youth inclusive means also ensuring the use of a variety of learning styles including role-plays, small group discussion, short films, drama, art and music to engage students and make learning interesting.

## **5. ENHANCEMENT OF CROSS-SECTORAL COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT SERVICES IN COMMUNITIES**

NSW Government and non-government services are successfully collaborating and coordinating service delivery in relation to **direct service provision to victims** of domestic and family violence. The same NSW Government-led framework of collaboration and coordination is needed to implement an **ecological prevention framework** for ending domestic and family violence across NSW. This strategy has the potential for wide ranging positive outcomes for community members; the NGO and Government sector; the business sector and the NSW Government as a whole. Government and non-government community services will specifically benefit from improved health outcomes for staff, which will result in increased staff retention. This can be achieved through the development of community-led strategies, and the coordination and delivery of training of the many agencies that include prevention work as their core business across NSW. These agencies include:

- **NSW Police Force-** School Liaison, Youth Liaison, DVLO's;
- **NSW Health Service** – Sexual Assault Counsellors, Child Protection Counsellors, Women's Health Nurses / Coordinators, Adolescent Health, Headspace;
- **Mental Health Association NSW-** Mental Health prevention & awareness positions;
- **NSW DET** – PDHPE & Welfare Staff;
- **NSW Families and Community Services-** Early intervention and prevention strategy positions;
- **NGO Youth Sectors** – encompassing a variety of youth workers position;
- **Women Refuges** – Crisis Response, Outreach/ Violence Prevention Workers, Child Support Workers;
- **WDVCAS / Women's Legal Service's** – Community Education staff;
- **AMS-** Aboriginal Health Workers; Schools as Community Centres Community Workers;
- **NGO Family Support Services;** allocated community violence prevention positions.

## **6. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ONGOING MENTORING AND SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITIES**

The provision of training on domestic and family violence and localised prevention programming for all relevant government and non-government staff across NSW is imperative. All community service and education employees should have access to high quality professional development that can be delivered in their local communities. Localised training brings services together to collaborate on sustainable prevention.

## **7. IMPLEMENTATION OF BEST PRACTICE STANDARDS FOR RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS EDUCATION**

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It is recommended that the NSW Government embraces the best practice standards developed by leading academics (Prof. Moira Carmody 2009; and Dr. Michael Flood, 2010) in the area of domestic and family violence, and sexual assault prevention education.

The six standards, as implemented in NAPCAN's GROWING RESPECT programs are as follows:

1. A clearly defined theoretical perspective
2. Demonstrated use of a theory of behaviour change
3. Inclusive, relevant and culturally sensitive practice
4. Comprehensive program development and delivery
5. Effective evaluation strategies
6. Thorough training and professional development of educators and teaching staff

## 8. RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

A sustained commitment to high quality, rigorous, community-led research and evaluation (qualitative and quantitative) of all strategies and programming in the area of domestic and family prevention.

High quality research will:

- Generate knowledge and evidence of what is working to reduce domestic and family across NSW;
- Measure comprehensively the impact of programming and behaviour change in communities;
- Strengthen the voice of communities (in particular children and young people) in planning, research and evaluation of community-led initiatives and strategies to enhance safety and wellbeing;
- Develop an evidence base for community-led approaches to the prevention of violence, abuse and neglect utilising a whole-of-community (ecological) approach, to allow for the directing of funding to what can actually work in communities;
- Help form and support culturally-safe partnerships that build capacity in program development, implementation and research with Aboriginal communities.

NAPCAN thanks the NSW Legislative's Standing Committee on Social Issues for inviting us to participate in the inquiry into domestic violence trends and issues in NSW and to attend the NSW hearing from **12.15pm - 1.00pm on Monday 26 March 2012**. As stated throughout this submission, NAPCAN believes violence against women, young people and children **is preventable** and that the State of NSW can show leadership and vision in this area by substantially investing in a comprehensive prevention strategy for domestic and family violence.

Warm Regards,

Angela Walsh

National Programs Manager - GROWING RESPECT / RESEARCH & EVALUATION  
NAPCAN - Preventing Child Abuse