

**Submission
No 42**

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

Organisation: Penrith City Council

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Inquiry into domestic violence trends and issues in NSW

Submission from Penrith City Council

This submission will specifically address point two of the inquiry, early intervention strategies to prevent domestic violence.

Penrith City Council has taken a strategic and collaborative approach to responding to the issue of domestic and family violence. Council allocates resources to respond to the issue through the Public Domain Amenity & Safety Department and the Community and Cultural Development Department in liaison with external partners including State Government agencies.

An overview of key domestic and family violence initiatives undertaken by Penrith City Council will be provided which include:

- Penrith Valley Community Safety Plan
- Penrith Valley Community Safety Partnership
- Nepean Domestic Violence Network and associated initiatives
- White Ribbon Day Events
- Love Bites
- Integrated Response to Domestic and Family Violence
- Women's Service Sector Advocacy Strategy
- Domestic Violence Resource Project
- SOAAR (Speak Out Against Abuse in Relationships) Network

Penrith Valley Community Safety Plan

The Penrith Valley Community Safety Plan identifies that priority action is required to address domestic and family violence across the city. The objective as stated in the Plan is: To reduce, and raise awareness of, domestic and family violence in the Penrith LGA. Domestic Violence strategies have been included in both the 2002-2006 and 2007-2011 Community Safety Plans for the city.

In consulting with the community and relevant stakeholders to develop the Penrith Valley Community Safety Plan 2007 – 2011, over 35% of survey respondents identified domestic and family violence, and its effects on families and children as a primary community safety issue.

The Domestic and Family Violence strategies included in the current Penrith Valley Community Safety Plan can be viewed on pages 46 and 47 of the attached plan.

Penrith Valley Community Safety Partnership

Overseeing the implementation of the Community Safety Plan is the Penrith Valley Community Safety Partnership. The Partnership is a Committee of Penrith City Council and its members include Penrith City Councillors, Council Officers, NSW Police, RailCorp, Business and Community representatives, Senior Citizens, Youth and Health.

The Partnership has three objectives. These are to identify Community Safety issues and develop and prioritise strategies to combat these issues; integrate the concept of Community Safety throughout the member organisations and the City; and, monitor and review the implementation of the Penrith Valley Community Safety Plan.

As reflected through the Penrith Valley Community Safety Plan, the Partnership identifies domestic and family violence as a key priority area for the Penrith LGA.

Nepean Domestic Violence Network

Penrith City Council recognises the role of the Nepean Domestic Violence Network (NDVN) in identifying local issues in relation to domestic and family violence and working collaboratively to address these issues.



Nepean Domestic Violence Network - Terms of Reference

Purpose Statement

The Nepean Domestic Violence Network advocates, raises awareness and educates about aspects and impacts of abusive behaviours which come under the umbrella of domestic violence across the Penrith LGA community and government, professional and NGO sectors. The focus of our network is on women and their dependent children, including same sex relationships.

How we achieve our purpose

1. We identify, prioritise and respond to needs by being alert and responsive to trends
2. We advocate, influence and act for positive change
3. We facilitate the sharing of knowledge and information
4. We ensure our messages are seen and heard
5. We recognise and value the strengths of a unified network approach and position
6. Each member commits to contribute to the network and its shared actions
7. We look after our reputation as a network of professionals
8. We apply discipline to our meetings to achieve set objectives
9. Our plans are simple, focused, manageable and achievable

Council has taken a strategic approach in supporting, and seeking to add value to projects initiated by the NDVN. This includes two NSW Attorney General's Department funded projects that were strategies of the Penrith Valley Community Safety Plan 2002-2006:

- Regional Domestic Violence website <http://www.dvhelppenrithregion.nsw.gov.au>.
- Community Safety Information Stand at Westfield's Penrith Plaza.

Council had also taken a developmental approach with the network to ensure its ongoing strength and sustainability. This approach includes:

- Significant resourcing of NDVN meetings
- Acting as a clearinghouse for distribution of information to members

- Facilitation and support of the Network's annual planning days
- Financial support for identified activities and promotional events including, for example, Annual Stop Domestic Violence Day, Reclaim the Night and White Ribbon Day.

Some activities of the network include:

Family Fun Day

In 2004, 2007 and 2009 the Nepean Domestic Violence Network hosted the 'Keeping Families Safe Family Fun Day event' in support of Stop Domestic Violence Day.

The event aimed to raise community awareness about domestic and family violence, promoting safe families and safer communities.

Activities included information stalls for local community service providers, performances by community choirs and dance groups, jumping castle, PCYC van, animal farm, temporary tattoos, face painting, and a visit by Santa.

Reclaim the Night 2008 & 2010

The NDVN, supported by Council, successfully held events for Reclaim the Night in 2008 and 2010. In 2008, the NDVN decided to host an interactive drumming performance to engage local young people in the area and raise awareness about violence against women. Flyers were also distributed to young people in attendance and offering personal safety tips to stay safe.

In 2010, sessions were run concurrently at Westfield Penrith (including in the Civic Arts Space where large numbers of young people gather on Thursday evenings) and at St Marys Village Shopping Centre. Instead of holding a traditional march, the NDVN ran awareness raising events consisting of the distribution of flyers and balloons at the abovementioned locations.

Stop Domestic Violence Day 2010 – launch of Staying Home Leaving Violence in Penrith

The NDVN, supported by Council, hosted the Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) Program launch as part of Stop Domestic Violence day. The event was held in Council's Civic Centre and provided information about the launch of the SHLV Program in the Nepean Region.

The event featured a range of speakers including representatives from the funding body, Community Services NSW. The event also provided an opportunity for services to network and share information through participation in a Domestic Violence Services Fair.

Information share

The NDVN regularly distributes information pertaining to domestic and family violence which commonly includes grant funding opportunities, learning and development opportunities etc. Penrith Council acts as a clearinghouse for distribution of this information to members.

Media releases

The NDVN releases information to the media on domestic and family violence related issues with particular emphasis on news stories that encompass community education and the promotion of Network events and initiatives such as the Family Fun Day.

White Ribbon Day Events

White Ribbon Day is an international day for the elimination of violence against women. To help support and raise awareness about violence against women, Council distributes white ribbons to all Council staff accompanied by an information card for all staff with information about the day and its significance. Ribbons are also sent to Penrith Valley Community Safety Partnership members.

In 2009 and 2010, Council also supported the Penrith Aboriginal Police Liaison Committee including members of the Aboriginal Medical Service Men's Group to distribute white ribbons at their event held in the green civic space located between Council and the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre.

Love Bites

The Love Bites program is based on best practice standards for education programs as recommended by the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearing House. Love Bites is a relationship violence prevention program aimed at young people aged 14-18yrs. In 2009, Council officers attended an information session on the Love Bites program and will continue to pursue this training for the Penrith LGA.

Integrated response to Domestic and Family Violence

In October 2007 the Human Services Senior Officers Group Domestic Violence Sub Committee recommended the establishment of sub-regional structures as sub-committees of the HSSOG to address priority issues through multi-agency collaboration. Penrith LGA was identified as an initial site to trial this approach.

The terms of reference of this group include:

- Facilitating local multi-agency collaboration between local government, state and federal government regarding State and Regional priorities.
- To lead the establishment of a better coordinated and integrated multi-agency responses to family and domestic violence in the Penrith LGA in order to achieve better outcomes for those affected by violence and for their communities
- To establish operational mechanisms for leadership and coordination and integration
- To identify and work with appropriate existing interagencies and other structures and partners
- To advise the WS HSSOG on strategic direction and progress

Council has been an integral partner in this integrated response to a Domestic and Family Violence strategy in the Penrith LGA. Council has been involved in advising members of the group regarding local issues, convening meetings with the NGO sector, organising a number of forums with a working group and attending meetings as a partner of the Penrith Sub Regional Coordination Group.

Women's Service Sector Advocacy Strategy

Councils Strategic Plan 2005-2009 identified as a key issue that many women in Penrith LGA experience barriers to accessing services. To effectively address these barriers and constraints an advocacy strategy has been developed to provide the framework and scope to improve women's access to services and support the organisations that provide services to women in Penrith City.

The advocacy strategy is based upon a women's rights framework where it is recognised that women generally do not have equal power or resources in the community. The strategy will contribute to addressing these structural and societal differences that women experience in many aspects of life from a fundamental rights perspective.

The strategy recognises domestic and family violence is a major issue for women irrespective of social and economic status or cultural background. The impacts of domestic violence on mental, emotional and physical health of many women are serious and often debilitating and that violence prevents and restricts a women's participation in every day activities, in family life and in the work force.

The Women's Services Sector Advocacy Strategy includes as a goal:

To reduce the level of violence against women in the Penrith LGA

Strategy	By whom	Resources Required	Time frame
Council to support where appropriate the current Integrated Responses to Domestic and Family Violence strategy and other initiatives identified in the NSW State plan Priority 1: reduce rates of crime, particularly violent crime. This can be achieved through the support and resourcing the Nepean Domestic Violence Network and other partners.	Penrith City Council		
Comment: Joint action to reduce Violence against Women has been a Council Community Safety Plan priority for a number of years.	Penrith Valley Community Safety Partnership; Community and Cultural Development Department	Within existing Council resources	2009-2012

Domestic Violence Resource Project

Council was successful in receiving grant funding of \$60,000 under the Department of Community Services Area Assistance Scheme (AAS) to coordinate the Domestic Violence Resource Project in 2010/11.

The overall aim of the project was to build the capacity of the local community sector to support the delivery of an integrated approach to domestic and family violence in the Penrith LGA. This was based on recommendations from a series of forums held towards building an integrated approach to domestic and family violence in the Penrith region.

The project consisted of three (3) separate components. The main activities of the project included:

1. To undertake a training needs analysis to determine levels of understanding of the issue of domestic and family violence, and the level of knowledge of other services in the Penrith LGA.
2. Provide training to the NGO sector on domestic and family violence. This training will target services that have not traditionally seen domestic violence as their core business.
3. Develop a resource kit which provides workers with a consistent referral process for clients presenting with domestic and family violence issues.

A total of 14 training sessions have been delivered to date, with very positive feedback being received. Many participants as well as trainers have indicated their appreciation of Council providing leadership in this area through the coordination of such a project. Topics covered have included:

- Aboriginal families and domestic violence
- Issues for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse women experiencing Domestic Violence
- Understanding Domestic Violence for child care workers
- Older women living with violence

- Young people and Domestic Violence
- Understanding Vicarious Trauma – Playback Theatre

A great success of the program was a bus tour and service visit to 10 local services, allowing workers to gain a first hand insight into each service's role in supporting victims of domestic and family violence.

The final component of the project will involve the development of a resource kit to provide workers with a consistent referral process for clients dealing with domestic and family violence.

This project has celebrated success in a myriad of ways. It has assisted in building the capacity of the local sector, improving knowledge and consistent referral processes, which in turn improves services for victims. The project has not only targeted Domestic Violence workers but generalist workers as well building further capacity within the community (through soft referral). The partnership and networking opportunities between workers and services has also been paramount.

Council has been fortunate to work with good partners on this project including: Immigrant Women's Speakout, Benevolent Society, Older Women's Network, Aboriginal Trainers, Playback Theatre Company, Youth Accommodation Interagency Nepean, local Domestic Violence Liason Officers, Penrith Domestic Violence Services, Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme.

SOAAR (Speak Out Against Abuse in Relationships) Network

The SOAAR network is a domestic violence interagency of government organisations who are working to acknowledge domestic violence in LGBTIQ relationships. The network aims to raise awareness of and reduce the impact and incidence of domestic violence for LGBTIQ people in Greater Western Sydney through the development, implementation and evaluation of best practice domestic violence strategies.

The SOAAR network approached Council in late 2010 for assistance in resourcing their network meetings. Since then Council has supported the network through the provision of a meeting room and has also become involved in assisting the network in some of its projects such as the 'Towards Safer Relationships Out West' as detailed below.

'Towards Safer Relationships Out West' Forum – Thursday 17 March 2011

A forum for workers and the community was held at the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre on Thursday 17 March – 'Towards Safer Relationships Out West'. The forum focused on meeting the specific domestic and family violence support needs of people of diverse sexuality and gender in Greater Western Sydney, and was partly funded as part of Council's Domestic Violence Resource Project.

The forum was hosted by the SOAAR network, and was a joint project supported by the Aids Council of NSW (ACON), Penrith City Council, Safe Relationships Project, Lesbian & Gay Anti-Violence Project and the Elizabeth Evatt Community Legal Centre.

Following the successful forum a youth event was held in the civic arts green space where many young people gather on a Thursday evening. The focus of the event was healthy relationships. Over 200 show bags containing information on healthy relationships and local services were distributed to young people during the event. A range of service providers including local youth and health services engaged young people in various activities including quizzes about relationships and entertainment was provided by a local D.J.