

INQUIRY INTO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRENDS AND ISSUES IN NSW

Organisation: Lismore Men and Family Centre
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Committee Social Issues - Inquiry into domestic violence trends and issues in NSW

From: Stephen Wright
To: <socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au>
Date: 6/6/2012 3:35 PM
Subject: Inquiry into domestic violence trends and issues in NSW

Dear Ms Thompson

I would like to make a brief late email submission on behalf of the Lismore Men and Family Centre, in regard to the Inquiry into domestic violence trends and issues in NSW, .

The Lismore Men and Family Centre is a specialist in Men's Behaviour Change Programs (MBCP). MBCP's are designed for men with a history of violence and abusive behaviour. Long overdue Minimum Standards for MBCP are currently being implemented in NSW.

In general I would like to comment on the role of MBCPs.

Historically there has been insufficient consideration given to the difference between an 'anger management' program and a MBCP. Abusive and/or violent behaviour may often be positioned by magistrates, police officers, and various government agencies as an 'anger management' issue.

Unfortunately, abusive and violent behaviour towards others is not primarily a problem with anger. Anger may be the vector through which a whole range of violent behaviours are expressed, but the causes of the violence are not ameliorated by learning to manage emotional volatility. Abusive behaviour also describes a range of strategies such as verbal abuse, controlling or threatening behaviour, intimidation and so on which are not necessarily demonstrated via anger. In fact an abusive man may well not demonstrate any apparent anger at all, but still maintain ruthless control over his partner and children.

This positioning of abusive behaviour as an 'anger' issue does not address the full spectrum of abusive behaviours and simplifies the causes of domestic violence. Many men who demonstrate abusive behaviour are therefore not being referred to appropriate programs. Men with abusive behaviour also may require additional intervention beyond participation in an MBCP. This may include a specialist parenting group for men with

abusive behaviours, or access to specialist counselling which specifically targets the identification of abusive behaviour.

Currently, the referral procedures between agencies for abusive men is poor. This is partly because of the positioning of abusive behaviour as a problem of anger management, but also because of many other structural issues including lack of formal mandated protocols for agency response to abusive men.

Like many agencies working in the area of domestic violence, the Lismore men and Family Centre is not able to meet the demand for its programs. Funding commitment to domestic violence programs and for MBCP's in particular is unsteady and often patchy. Difficult work with difficult clients is being carried out with minimal resources.

Thank you for considering this brief submission.

Yours sincerely

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