

INQUIRY INTO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TRENDS AND ISSUES IN NSW

Organisation: MetWest Violence Prevention Network

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MetWest Violence Prevention Network
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Public Consultation:

Inquiry into DV trends and issues in NSW
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Legislative Council, NSW Parliament
Email: socialissues@parliament.nsw.gov.au

16 September 2011

I am writing on behalf of the MetWest Violence Prevention Network. MetWest aims to provide a forum for a combined voice for the local domestic violence committees across the Western Metro Region and to provide a means for local committees to work together at a regional level. There are 8 local D.V. networks that are represented by MetWest. We address your Terms of Reference as follows:

1. Strategies to reduce breaches & improve compliance with ADVOs including :

- a. **Use of GPS bracelets** This could be effective if there was an agency with capacity to monitor, respond and report on non observance of conditions. Probation and Parole might but they have difficulty with the current workload. This could be a useful tool if combined with a well resourced enforcement strategy that ensured that the safety of women and children was not compromised, and that they were not given false expectations.
- b. **Whether existing penalties for DV are adequate** The most common outcome is a "Section 10" a (time limited) good behaviour bond, with no criminal record (conviction not recorded). The rationale for providing a time limit to refraining from criminal behaviour is not obvious. The Court views that this kind of violence perpetrated against a further but different victim is an unrelated matter. This perception ignores a disturbing but well known characteristic of this kind of behaviour – repetition. We think that penalties are available, but that they are seldom applied as appropriate.

2. Early Intervention Strategies to prevent DV

We think this may be referring to the "Integrated Case Management " pilot programs which have been established in several locations. Properly defined, these might be called secondary or tertiary prevention programs in that they may, given sustained senior management support within participating government agencies, provide community members with a better service response to those experiencing DV, mostly women and children minimising harmful effects of the violence and sometimes, treating perpetrators. **Improving service delivery may assist in lessening the impact of DV however, there is little to no evidence that it prevents DV.** It is also possible to see the criminal justice system response to DV as a tertiary prevention strategy however there is absolutely **no evidence that it prevents perpetration and some suggestion that it may reinforce it.** Since the disestablishment of the

Violence Against Women (VAW) Strategy in NSW (2008) NSW has had no strategic approach to primary prevention of this form of violence, despite International <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence> and National <http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/progserv/violence/nationalplan/Pages/default.aspx> leadership in this difficult but critically important area.

3. The increase in women being proceeded against by Police for DV related assault

Legislative changes around 3 years ago meant that police were mandated to apply for AVOs and to charge individuals in certain circumstances. More women are being charged as a consequence. More men are being charged too. The fact that there is little to no support for the women who are so charged is a problem. We understand that the NSW Domestic Violence Coalition is partner in a research project application with Dr Lesley Laing, Julie Stubbs, Dr. Jane Wangmann and the NSW Police regarding this issue, and our MetWest Violence Prevention Network support that. It may be that there are difficulties in distinguishing self defence in such circumstances, however, our services recognise that Police especially and the Courts have made significant shifts in their response to DV in recent years and these changes are for the most part welcomed, and need to continue

Any other relevant matter

- We are concerned about the apparent “run down” of the positions of the NSW Police D&FV Coordinators. We believe their geographical responsibilities are unreasonable. As noted, we deeply regret the loss of the NSW VAW program and have found the new D&FV Coordinators positions within the NSW Police problematic in that their geographical coverage is unreasonable and their focus has been - of necessity perhaps - coordination within the force.
- NGOs are now providing the bulk of government funded ‘early intervention’ programs for families in NSW. We are dismayed to see increasing restrictions being placed on staff of these programs working on DV issues within the community. **Our view is that if you work with women, you work with violence** and that funding conditions and /or policy which have the effect of restricting the provision of support, education and advocacy for women and children affected by DV is misguided, at best.
- We support the trend to increasing Exclusion Orders. For several reasons. There is not enough emergency accommodation and remaining in the family home allows existing local supports to work for women and children. Current legislation allows for tenancy agreements to be able to be changed to formalise such situations (e.g. perpetrator’s name can be removed by letting agent). We strongly support increased access to the Staying Home Leaving Violence programs.
- There is evidence that DV can be prevented. It involves the recognition of human rights (the right to live free of violence), significant sustained attitude change. The evidence indicates that this kind of change is potentiated by coordinated action of government at National, State and Local levels.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute

Yours sincerely,
Imelda Eames

Anti Violence Worker “The Women's Cottage” Richmond NSW.
on behalf of the MetWest Violence Prevention Network.

MetWest Violence Prevention Network

Membership includes representatives of all local Domestic / Family Violence Committees in the region which are currently:

- **Greater Metro Domestic Violence Action Group (Auburn)**
- **Parramatta / Holroyd Domestic Violence Committee**
- **Hills Domestic Violence Prevention Committee**
- **Blue Mountains Coalition Against Violence and Abuse (CAVA)**
- **Nepean Domestic Violence Network (NDVN)**
- **Hawkesbury Action Network Against Domestic Violence (HANADV)**
- **Outer West Domestic Violence Committee**
- **NESB Domestic Violence Network**