

## *From the Director*

Recently I attended a workshop convened by the Townsville Region Indigenous Co-ordination Centre to further develop strategies for the implementation of the Regional Council's family violence action plans. At this workshop, I had cause for concern about a future in which Indigenous victims of family violence may be expected to "share responsibility" for ending the violence perpetrated against them.

The workshop began with a presentation about the new arrangements for Indigenous affairs, replacing ATSIC and ATSIS. These arrangements include multi-agency Indigenous Co-ordination Centres (ICCs), which "work with local Indigenous communities and negotiate regional and local arrangements for effective partnerships and shared responsibilities" (New Arrangements in Indigenous Affairs, p. 15).

Workshop participants were presented with an example of a "Shared Responsibility Agreement" (SRA), involving the installation of air-conditioning in homes located in an Indigenous community. Under the SRA, government funding for the air-conditioning was tied to a reduction in truancy from school, that is, air-conditioning would be provided for residents whose children routinely attended school. The responsibility of adults without school-aged children was to volunteer time at the school, in return for the installation of air-conditioning in their homes. There was no mention of what the school staff were required to do under the SRA, to make school a place the children wanted to be. 2004 Queenslanders of the Year, Chris Sarra, who is Principal of the Cherbourg State School, has achieved a remarkable reduction in truancy in that community by recognising the need to stop blaming communities for low attendance rates and for schools to share responsibility by changing school culture and staff attitudes and expectations.

Workshop participants were also advised that SRA's had not been introduced for government funded responses to family violence at this stage, but it was only a matter of time before they would be. I hope, but hold little confidence, that such SRAs would be applied to perpetrators, rather than victims of family violence, for what would be required of family violence victims in return for protection and support? Would they be required to leave their partner (and community) in return for support? Would they have to attend counselling themselves? Would they be required to demonstrate their efforts to avoid "provoking" their partner's violence? The notion of "shared responsibility" regarding government support for victims of family violence would represent a serious regression in efforts to eliminate violence against women. Expecting victims of violence to "share responsibility" for protection from violence (as if they don't go to extreme lengths in efforts to avoid violence already), would undermine important messages to victims that violence is not their fault, it is never acceptable under any circumstances, and that non-judgemental help is available.

Individuals, including women and children, have a right to live free from violence, and states have an obligation under various instruments of international law to protect them. These rights and obligations are detailed by Amnesty International in "*Making Rights a Reality: The Duty of States to Address Violence Against Women*", a report produced in support of its current Stop Violence Against Women campaign. The report is available at <http://www.amnesty.org/actforwomen>.

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## Centre Update

### Welcome...

CDFVR is delighted to welcome Annie Webster to the position of Administration Officer. Annie has worked in a diverse range of settings both in Australia and overseas, including administrative roles in media companies and legal firms, health promotion activities with Queensland Transport and coaching special needs students for Education Queensland. Annie's wealth of skills and experience brings a solid and valuable contribution to the Centre's work.



We would also like to express our gratitude to Marilyn Ingham for the excellent administrative support she provided to the Centre during the time it took to recruit and appoint to the position.

### Farewell...

Social Work student, Kay Gray, recently completed her fourth year field placement with CDFVR. Much of Kay's placement focused on exploring and deconstructing women's experiences of domestic and family violence from a framework of intersectionality. Kay's interest and understanding of how intersectionality features in the lives of women experiencing violence as well as the ways in which a framework of intersectionality may inform practice and policy will be presented in a series of newsletter articles in 2005.

Kay's skills, knowledge and dedication to learning contributed greatly to the work of the Centre and staff wish her the very best in her Social Work career.

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## Centre's Database Contributing to Evaluation of Amended Legislation

Heather Nancarrow, Director

Work has commenced on the evaluation of the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989*, led by the State Government's Violence Prevention Team, Department of Communities and drawing on client data from the Centre's Domestic and Family Violence Database. The evaluation will focus on the implementation and functioning of the legislation since proclamation on 10 March 2003. Its specific aims are to:

- assess the effectiveness of the Act in achieving its stated purpose;
- identify the characteristics of those who access the Act and the barriers to access; and
- assess the impact of the broadening of the Act on government and non-government agencies.

The Department of Communities, in partnership with key stakeholders, will also be responsible for ongoing monitoring of the Act.

To assist with the evaluation, the Violence Prevention Team has convened a reference group comprised of representatives from key government and non-government agencies, including the Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research, the Queensland Domestic Violence Services Network and the Domestic Violence Court Assistance Network. The reference group has met twice, first on 12 August and again on 4 November to finalise its terms of reference and the evaluation framework, and to begin the task of analysing a range of quantitative and qualitative data, including data from the Centre's Domestic and Family Violence Database, which is being collected primarily for the evaluation.

The Centre's Domestic and Family Violence Database commenced on 1 October 2003, with data being entered monthly for every new client or new client matter by more than 25 State government funded domestic and family violence support services across Queensland. Statewide summaries of the data collected are provided on the Centre's website and service level summaries are provided to each participating agency by the Centre.

The process for evaluating the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989* will adhere to the Australasian Evaluation Society's *Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Evaluations*, to ensure that all information collected is reported at an aggregate level to prevent client or participant identification.

For further information about the evaluation of the Act, please contact the Violence Prevention Team by telephone on 3224 4477 and feel free to let the Centre know if you have any anecdotal information or empirical evidence you wish to have represented at the evaluation reference group meetings.

## Yarning Up and Working with Communities

Lyndon Reilly, Indigenous Research Worker

Recently my family and I had the pleasure of being invited to attend a boy to man 'Shaving' initiation ceremony in Seisia, a community within the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA). The NPA consists of five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the communities in alphabetical order are Bamaga, Injinoo, New Mapoon, Seisia and Umagico. The invitation to the region also created the opportunity to visit Thursday Island. The purpose of my visit to this unique region was firstly to celebrate the initiation of a boy becoming a man and secondly, to obtain information on men's groups, and the perspectives of men in regard to the individual, family and community well-being.

An informal men's group was obvious from the moment of arriving in Seisia. I observed:-

- Physical positions of men and women during the preparation for the ceremony;
- Men cutting up the beast that they had caught from a hunting trip;
- Men were working and preparing for the initiation ceremony (food) whilst the women were catching up and yarning;
- Men hunted to feed the family and extended family for the days prior to the ceremony;
- Within a casual and relaxing atmosphere, the sanctity and traditions of the ceremony were honoured through the specific roles and practises undertaken by the men and women;
- Each man appeared to understand his role within the group (e.g. demographically and cultural pecking order);
- Men are key to the outcomes of this ceremony, they take on their responsibility with honour and passion.

A non-Indigenous parent of a Torres Strait Islander family stated that the role men play during the shaving ceremony needs to filter into every day life in the community. The pride, respect, cultural identity, happiness, community harmony, balance of roles ascribed on the basis of gender and status within the context of the ceremony peak during the build up to and days of celebration.

As an outsider, it was difficult to establish who the parents of each individual child were, as men and women were caring for every child, including feeding, organising, playing and working. The complexity and intricacies of family and extended family are extensive and overwhelming, making it clear in my mind, that factors related to family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities touch every individual community member and not solely the perpetrator and victim.



Informal men's group preparing the hut for the Shaving Ceremony

Jesse Sagaukaz is the chairperson of Bamaga Islander Council and, as an identified key cultural figure in the community, he is clearly conscious of being a role model. Jesse expressed interest in the establishment of a men's group, however his position and workload do not accommodate the extra responsibilities associated with forming such a group. Jesse's links with key men in the community facilitated my contact with a widely respected man within the NPA region, Clifford Wasiu.

I explained to Clifford my position and the project I was exploring. Clifford commented that there were discussions of forming a men's group within Bamaga or Seisia approximately 18 to 24 months ago, when at that time he was a Councillor for the Bamaga Islander Council.



Male (centre) in Initiation ceremony with supporters



At the Jardine River: Bamaga Council Chairperson Jesse Sagaukaz (r) and Lyndon Reilly

Attempts were made to establish a men's group with the assistance of Cairns and District Indigenous men's group. During this time the Cairns and District Indigenous men's group collapsed and along with it the concept of a men's group in the Bamaga/ Seisia communities. Subsequent to our conversation, Clifford expressed enthusiasm for re-generating interest in forming a men's group.

A lady in the Seisia community expressed the power of local women and how they have established so much, including a women's shelter, counselling and a child care centre. This lady referred to the experiences of one of her daughters, who is married with children and is regularly victimised by family violence. The old lady stated that her home has become a half way house for her daughter, resulting in her grandchildren living between two communities. What is of concern to the old lady is the lack of change in her son in-law's behaviour and she fears the cycle of family violence will extend to the next generation. The old lady also stated when her daughter places Domestic Violence Protection Orders against the partner, family members of the partner mindlessly get involved, and position the culpability on the old lady's daughter.

Another lady expressed her concerns that family violence within the Indigenous communities is a vicious cycle. When asked if the establishment of men's groups could break this cycle, she agreed entirely, "it would be a significant role, developing smart programs within the men's group, programs that will identify and deal with family violence is the key to the prevention of this epidemic". Furthermore the lady suggested there needs to be a focus on boys to men, the role of men, cultural identity and self esteem. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence Report states "programs should be planned to help young men to alter distorted views of gender roles and acceptable male behaviour" (ATSIWTFVR, 2000, p 193).

Picturesque Thursday Island was the setting for my encounter with both the Mayor of Thursday Island, Mayor Pedro Stephens, and Mr Frank Cook, who is a respected community man employed by Queensland Government Disability Service.

Mayor Stephens stated that a local high school survey revealed that young women have high aspirations of achieving careers in middle management and above, compared to male students, whose aspirations were limited to working for the Community Development Employment Projects Scheme (CDEP). One could argue the boys' attitude is a manifestation of the inherited identity disturbance created via colonialism. Mayor Stephens also declared that there had been a men's group, which was difficult to establish due to the quiet nature and cultural boundaries of men in the community. At the time of my visit to Thursday Island, the men's group was not functioning formally or informally.



Outside the Thursday Island Shire Council Building; Mayor Pedro Stephens (r) and Lyndon Reilly



Frank Cook, Local Area Co-Ordinator Torres Strait & Northern Peninsula Area, Dept. Disability Services, Qld (r)

Frank Cook, Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area local co-ordinator for the Department of Disability Services Queensland, is a keen advocate of men taking responsibility for their actions in addressing family violence. Frank referred to a Torres Strait Islander Men's Health Issues report that he authored six years ago, which identified an absence of systemic, financial and community support for men to face the many health related issues (including family violence) that confront them.

My travel also included a visit to Injinoo Council, Umagico and New Mapoon. Injinoo Council is where I met with a representative of the men's group, Gabriel Bowie. Gabriel stated that the men's group has an average of 33 members and meets every Thursday. This men's group has participated in several workshops, coordinated by a Health Counsellor from Apunipima, concerning family violence, drug and alcohol abuse and other health related issues. The Injinoo men's group receives approximately 70% support from the Injinoo Council with the Injinoo's Community Justice Group also providing support. At the time of our contact, the men's group was in the process of applying for incorporated status.



Gabriel Bowie; Injinoo men's group representative

### Acknowledgement

I would like to thank all the people within the Northern Peninsula Area (NPA) region as well as the people on Thursday Island for making my family and I welcome. I would like to especially thank the following people for their time and information:

Jesse Sagaukaz, Clifford Wasiu, Paul Hobson and family, women in the Seisia community, Gabriel Bowie, Aaron Fazzo, Gavin Cumsing, Thursday Island's Mayor, Pedro Stephens and respected community leader, Frank Cook. I would also like to express my gratitude to all the men who sat and yarned with me at the Shaving Ceremony, thank you. Furthermore, I apologise for incorrect spelling of any name.

## Silence Won't Stop the Violence, Mount Isa Workshops

Lyndon Reilly, Indigenous Research Worker

It was a privilege to be invited and co-facilitate two workshops at Mount Isa's first Domestic and Family Violence Forum, *Silence Won't Stop the Violence*. My thanks go to the North Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Resource Service (NQDVRS) for this invitation and to Shirley Slann for allowing me to speak at the opening of the forum. Both workshops were co-facilitated by John Brown, Uncle Ron Page and me. John is an administrator for the (NQDVRS) Townsville branch, where he also facilitates perpetrators' programs. Uncle Ron Page is a respected Aboriginal elder within Mount Isa community and works for the (NQDVRS) branch in Mount Isa as a men's project worker.

### First Workshop

The first workshop was titled, "Domestic and Family Violence and Men's Issues". This workshop was well attended by Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants from diverse positions including an Indigenous Magistrate, Police, DV counsellors, Co-ordinators, and community members, which made group discussions intense with numerous viewpoints. Workshop discussions identified the following as underlying issues that activated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's violence against women, family and other men: colonisation, alcohol, drugs and substance abuse. Furthermore, alcohol, drug and substance abuse are steadfastly linked to two of the three causes of domestic and family violence within Indigenous communities recognised by Memmott, Stacy, Chambers and Keys (2001). These are the **precipitating causes and situational factors**.

**Precipitating** or impulsive causes identify three distinct behaviours: (i) Jealousy (ii) Payment of debts (iii) Payback (Memmott et al, 2001, p 22). These three behaviours were discussed within the workshop as the common causes of violence, activated by alcohol, drug and substance abuse.

**"...alcohol, drug and substance abuse are steadfastly linked to two of three causes of domestic and family violence within Indigenous communities...."**

**Situational factors** include issues such as alcohol intoxication, money problems, unemployment, and communication breakdown between partners, sorry business, persons who encourage a perpetrator to act, and conflicting social differences between the antagonists (Memmott et al 2001, p 19). Most of these situational factors were discussed in the workshop.

Other issues raised are connected to the third cause of violence - **underlying factors**. These deep-rooted factors are discussed in the Centre's September 2004 newsletter article titled '*Revealing the Truth about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Men's Groups*', and include loss of self-esteem, loss of masculinity/identity, loss of self-respect, loss of respect, and loss of responsibility. Invasion and colonisation by British European imperialist (invaders, colonist, capitalist) created these sufferings, which has resulted in an identity disorder for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men.

The following statements are from ethnocentric mindsets towards our people around the time of invasion. "*They [the aborigine (sic)] are the lowest state of social existence, all equally ignorant of the very humblest of the arts of civilisation without clothing, habitations or agriculture and when pressed for hunger devour with eagerness, grubs, snakes, stinking whales and even vermin*"..... *No race of savages can be imagined more hideously ugly than the Aborigines of Australia. Their speech was likened to 'grunts' or an irritating 'jabbering' in high-pitched voices, while their uncleanliness excited general disgust*" (Macphail's Edinburgh Ecclesiastical Journal Vol. 1 1846, 453; cited Eckermann, Dowd, Martin, Nixon, Gray, Chong, 1992, p 12).

The effect of colonisation and the white/Anglo Saxon and European ethnocentrism instigated the near eradication of Aboriginal peoples' social, cultural, emotional and spiritual well-being through extermination, dispossession, oppression, segregation and assimilation.

Hence the deterioration of Aboriginal men's roles and responsibilities (e.g. warriors, hunters, teachers and protectors), left many Aboriginal men wearing the identity of an insignificant person, which has been inherited into today's society. "A strong and commonly presented view is that the incidence of violence in Indigenous communities and among Indigenous people cannot be separated from the history of European and Indigenous relations" (Memmott et al, 2001, p. 11).

Another topic that emerged from the first workshop was the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's place of well-being. This proposal originated from feedback I had received from various Indigenous communities, where Indigenous men as well as Indigenous women were articulating the need for men's shelters. Unlike a women's shelter, where it is seen to provide a safe haven or refuge for victims of violence, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's shelter may possibly function as a multi-purpose gathering place. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's place of well-being may need to be a place acknowledged specifically for men, in which all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and possibly non-Indigenous men can feel a sense of belonging. Such a place of well-being could potentially offer:-

- 24 hour counselling centre;
- Male offenders of violence counselling centre;
- Networking/ referral centre;
- Drop in centre;
- Healing centre;
- Empowerment centre;
- Enterprise centre;
- Behavioural reform/perpetrators' programs, strengthen identity and support centre;
- Intoxicated men's 'sleep it off' centre; and
- Men's group planning (strategies, programs, action) centre.

Hence the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's place of well-being needs to offer a multitude of opportunities and influences to cater for the diversity of issues faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. The need for such support, acceptance and hope is evident in the following statement from a young Indigenous man, cited in The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task force on Violence Report:

*"Sometimes I wonder where I fit in, when will I be accepted and will I ever find my place in life. Right now I feel so confused and so alone and scared by what I am seeing. I don't want to be a part of it anymore. I have had three friends who couldn't cope who suicided and I wish I had the courage to do it as well. I just don't know how to cope anymore. I just want to find peace in my life and be accepted for myself" (2000, p15)*

## **Second Workshop:**

Titled, "Men as Agents of Change, Men as Workers and Men as Leaders", the second workshop gave me the opportunity to discuss the research project 'Through the Eyes of Black Fellus'. I explained that the project aims to:

- Explore the disposition, functioning and meaning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's groups within Queensland.
- Examine the experiences of men attempting to improve individual and community wellbeing; and
- Reduce violence by documenting what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men are actually doing.

Earlier appraisals suggest that although there is diversity in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Men's groups' composition, the groups' aims and objectives are similar in relation to empowering men, supporting and being role models for younger Indigenous men, and ultimately addressing the identified factors contributing to social dissatisfaction and poor health and wellbeing in Indigenous communities.

Within the second workshop, I also employed a video as a resource tool (Stayin' Healthy, Stayin' Alive Series One episodes 4-6) to reveal a Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's groups' pro-active disposition towards individual, family and community well-being. The common theme of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's groups that I have been associated with thus far is reflected in the words of Butcheulla/Badtjala men's group spokesperson, Norman Barney, "...the need for such a group is imperative for men to come together and address problems of our families, domestic and family violence issues, health, drugs and alcohol matters affecting our families, supporting our youth and our community" (5 August 2004).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's place of well-being as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's groups are vital to the recovery of individuals', families' and communities' well-being and the maintenance of our culture. By examining existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island men's groups, *Through the Eyes of Black Fellus* is identifying the contemporary warriors who will lead us towards healing and strength.

#### References:

Eckermann, A., Dowd, T., Martin, M., Nixon, L., Gray, R., Chong, E. (1992) Bridging Cultures in Aboriginal Health, University of New England Press.

Memmott, P, Stacey, R., Chambers, C. and Keys, C. (2001). Commonwealth Government Violence in Indigenous Communities, FULL REPORT.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Task Force on Violence Report, (2000). Queensland Government (Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy and Department).

Stayin' Healthy- Stayin' Alive, Series One Episodes 4-6. (2004). Victoria: Beyond Their Limits, VHS; 190mins

## Measuring the Health Costs of Intimate Partner Violence

Michelle Bradford, Education Officer

Findings from the 2004 Victorian study, *The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence*, indicate that intimate partner violence is "the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15–44, [and is] responsible for more of the disease burden than many well-known risk factors such as high blood pressure, smoking and obesity" (VicHealth 2004 p10). Further, intimate partner violence "contributes 9 per cent to the total disease burden in Victorian women aged 15–44 and 3 per cent in all Victorian women" (VicHealth 2004 p10).

This study is the result of a collaborative and multi disciplinary partnership between the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), the State Department of Human Services and a wide range of Australian experts, and is the first in the world to use a 'burden of disease' methodology to assess and estimate the health consequences of intimate partner violence for women.

### ...intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15-44

The VicHealth study assessed three aspects of the health burden of intimate partner violence: prevalence; specific health problems; and the contribution intimate partner violence makes to illness, injury and premature death among Victorian women. The methodology used in these assessments included an extensive review of the relevant health impact data and evidence, including the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, and the burden of disease methodology, as developed by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Burden of disease is "an internationally accepted approach to estimating the impacts of health problems across a population, taking into account illness, disability and premature death" (VicHealth 2004 p25).

Key findings of *The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence* are summarised below:

#### Prevalence

Using prevalence data from the ABS 1996 Women's Safety Survey and data from other indicators such as Victorian Police records and housing agencies' figures, the study indicates that physical and sexual forms of intimate partner violence is widespread and common, affecting one in five women in Australia. Further, in 2000-2001, intimate partner violence was responsible for 21,618 Victorian police contacts and the motivation for 10,200 people (95% of whom were women) to seek housing assistance.

#### Health Outcomes - Fatal and Non-Fatal

**Fatal impacts** include femicide, suicide, life threatening sexually transmitted infections, and mother or infant death during or following childbirth.

Women are five times more likely than men to be killed by an intimate partner. In the 10 year period of 1989 to 1998, 57 per cent of deaths in women, through homicide or violence, were caused by intimate partners.

A 1997 hospital emergency department study found that women experiencing intimate partner violence were nine times more likely to report self-harm and recent suicide ideation than women who had never experienced violence.

**Non-fatal impacts** include physical injuries, reproductive health, mental health, risk behaviours, and other physical ailments such as chronic pain, gastrointestinal disorders and sleep problems.

### Injury

Women seeking hospital treatment for injuries arising out of intimate partner violence, commonly present with physical damage to the eyes, ears, head and neck as well as the abdomen and breasts (particularly during pregnancy). In the case of sexual violence, common injuries include bruising, lacerations and tears to the vaginal area and anus.

### Reproductive health

This category of health impacts includes sexually transmitted diseases, urinary tract infections, abnormal Pap smear tests, pregnancy termination and complications during pregnancy such as infections, miscarriage, inadequate weight gain, haemorrhage and low birth weight.

Abnormal Pap smear and vaginal or endo-cervical infection are more likely in women who experience intimate partner violence; and young women exposed to such violence are more likely to experience an unplanned pregnancy, miscarriage and termination. Compared to women not experiencing violence, these young women are slower to seek antenatal care and “their babies are more likely to have a problem diagnosed after birth” (VicHealth 2004 p23).

### Mental health

Rates of mental health problems in women experiencing intimate partner violence are significantly higher than those for women who have never experienced this violence. The health impacts evidence review revealed that mental health impacts associated with intimate partner violence remain long after a violent episode and can persist for many years.

Poor mental health outcomes include attempted suicide, self-harm, depression, anxiety, eating disorders, traumatic and post-traumatic stress symptoms and psychiatric disorders such as phobias, dissociative disorders and somatisation disorder (which involves a physical manifestation of psychological symptoms). These psychiatric disorders are more commonly experienced by women reporting intimate partner violence than those who are not affected.

Anxiety and depression are significantly more likely to be experienced by middle aged women exposed to intimate partner violence, with one study reporting a five-fold increased risk of depression in such women even after other contributing factors, such as low income, were considered. Similarly, women who report intimate partner violence are more likely to take medication for depression and anxiety.

### Risk behaviours and practices affecting health

Alcohol problems, smoking and using non-prescription drugs, amphetamines and solvents are more likely in women affected by intimate partner violence; as is the use of prescription drugs such as tranquillisers, sleeping pills and anti-depressants.

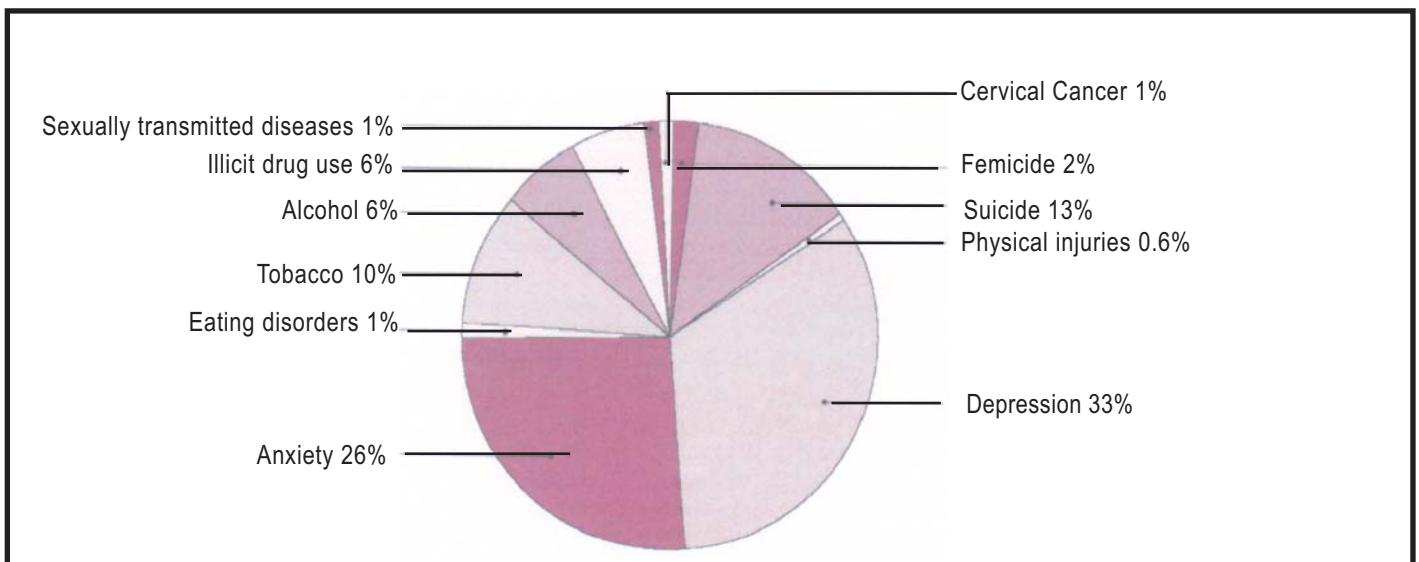


Figure 1: Health outcomes contributing to the disease burden of intimate partner violence in Victorian women (VicHealth 2004 p11).

As indicated in the pie graph from page 9, mental health problems represent the greatest proportion of the disease burden (60%), followed by significant contributions (35%) from suicide, drug use and risky levels of smoking and alcohol consumption.

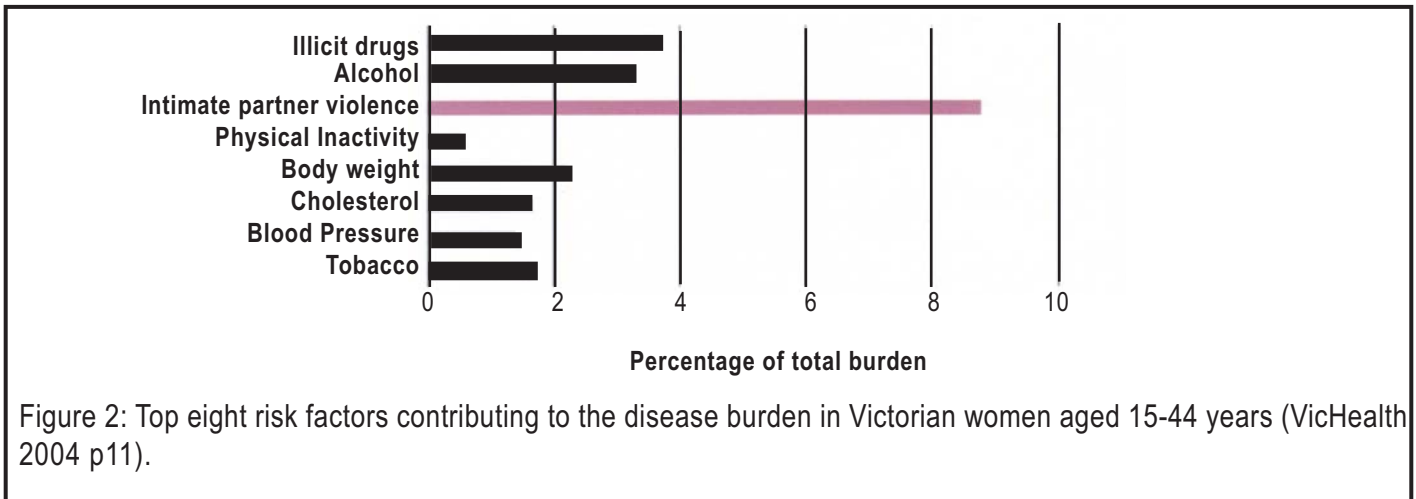


Figure 2 (above) indicates that intimate partner violence is the leading risk factor contributing to the health burden of Victorian women under the age of 45 and outweighs other risk factors such as obesity, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and illicit drug use.

The study demonstrates that intimate partner violence is a significant public health problem that warrants at least equal attention to that of other well-established diseases and risk factors such as cholesterol, high blood pressure and obesity. "...Given the prevalent, serious and preventable nature of the problem, there [is] an urgent need for further development of a public health response" (VicHealth 2004 p13). The study also suggests that, in light of the association between intimate partner violence and other major health problems, substantial gains could be made in areas such as mental health, smoking and substance abuse by attending to intimate partner violence as a factor.

The study recommends a renewed emphasis on primary prevention, which has implications for planning and service provision in the sectors of health, law enforcement, education, housing and social and economic policy.

As cited in the VicHealth study, WHO recommends a human rights, legal and health framework to address intimate partner violence, which requires the development of multi-level strategies across many sectors. The study acknowledges that collaborative action between government, community and across a range of sectors and disciplines is fundamental to solving violence, and refers to a range of Victorian initiatives including research and evaluation, community development, and communications and marketing as examples of cross government-community partnerships addressing intimate partner violence.

A publication that provides further detail about the study, including the methodology used to estimate the burden of disease is currently being prepared. Details about its availability can be found on the VicHealth website at: <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/>

The summary of findings from *The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence* is available in pdf format from: <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/default.asp?artid=683&tid=474&level=3>

References:

VicHealth, Victoria Department of Human Services (2004) "The health costs of violence: Measuring the burden of disease caused by intimate partner violence. A summary of findings".

# Legal Aid for Domestic Violence and Family Law – Fact versus Fiction

Theresa Gatbonton, Social Worker, Women's Legal Aid - Guest contributor

Did you know that Legal Aid Queensland provides legal help to respondents as well as applicants in domestic violence situations?

And did you know that you can still receive assistance from Legal Aid Queensland even if your partner has had a grant of aid approved?

If you answered 'no', you're not alone.

The Women's Legal Aid team has become aware of a range of misconceptions in the community about legal aid funding for domestic violence and family law matters.

## Common misconceptions include:

<p><b>Myth 1</b> - You will not receive legal aid if you are the respondent in a domestic violence matter.</p>	<p><b>Fact 1</b> - Legal Aid funding is available for domestic violence matters to both applicants and respondents if they meet the means and merit tests.</p>
<p><b>Myth 2</b> - If one party gets legal aid, then the other party can't.</p>	<p><b>Fact 2</b> - Both can receive help from Legal Aid Queensland, but we would make sure that one person is assisted by a private lawyer who does legal aid work (preferred supplier) to avoid any conflict of interest.</p>
<p><b>Myth 3</b> - To get aid you have to lodge the domestic violence application at the court and then come back with a temporary order or a date for a hearing.</p>	<p><b>Fact 3</b> - Legal aid is available from when the application for a domestic violence order is being completed right through to the hearing in a Magistrate's Court.</p>
<p><b>Myth 4</b> - Family law matters are a priority, so you are unlikely to get aid for the domestic violence matter - OR - You should not make an application for your domestic violence matter as it will lessen the amount available to you for your family law matter.</p>	<p><b>Fact 4</b> - As funding for domestic violence matters comes from the State Government and funding for family law matters comes from the Commonwealth Government, people can receive funding for both kinds of matters, so long as they meet the means and merit tests.</p>

Women's Legal Aid, a unit within Legal Aid Queensland, has been working to ensure women are aware of their rights when it comes to domestic violence and family law matters. For the past year, the team has been travelling around regional Queensland training community agencies and agencies which work with women. The training focussed on: legal aid for family law and domestic violence matters; when legal aid is available; how the merits, means and assets tests work; and how to make successful applications.

**Fact - Legal Aid funding is available for domestic violence matters to both applicants and respondents if they meet the means and merit tests.**

The team has also been meeting with Legal Aid staff and other service providers around the State to ensure women who require legal assistance have access to the services they need.

**Fact - Legal aid is available from when the application for a domestic violence order is being completed right through to the hearing in a Magistrate's Court.**

Women's Legal Aid provides legal advice, representation and social work support to women around Queensland.

Through funding from the Department of Communities, Women's Legal Aid also provides court assistance workers to help women who are seeking protection orders in domestic violence matters at the Brisbane Magistrates Court and the Holland Park Magistrates Court.

In 2003, Women's Legal Aid published information resources in Tagalog and English for women experiencing domestic and family violence. This resource informs women about the legal system in Queensland and about their legal rights in relation to separation, children and property.

Right: Women's Legal Aid staff and members of the Filipina community attend the forum "Women's access to justice – where are we now?" and the launch of the Tagalog version of the information resources: "Our legal system": Information for Women and "What are my rights?" in 2003.



*The Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research welcomes articles from guest contributors. Publication of the articles will be at the discretion of the Director of the Centre. Views expressed in published guest contributions are not necessarily the views of the Centre.*

## Preventing violence in the Outback: NQDVRS Mt. Isa

Heather Nancarrow, Director

As we all know, Queensland is a big state with a widely dispersed population, mostly spread along the coast between the Gold Coast and Cairns. The majority of domestic and family violence support services are similarly spread between these two locations on the east coast. Until recently the only government funded, domestic and family violence-specific services inland were the Domestic Violence Service of Central Queensland at Emerald, the Domestic Violence Regional Service (South West) at Toowoomba and the Working Against Abuse Service at Roma, also in the State's South West.

This left a huge area of the central and north west of the state, inhabited mostly by Indigenous people, virtually unsupported, in terms of government funding, in their efforts to respond to domestic and family violence. In August 1999, the Townsville-based North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service sought to address this gap by establishing an office in Mt Isa and appointed Shirley Slann to undertake community education in the vast northwest area of the State. NQDVRS Co-ordinator, Pauline Woodbridge said that this was to overcome the logistical problems and moral dilemma of trying to service those communities from Townsville. *"Those communities deserve to have a more localised response to domestic and family violence"*, Pauline stated.



L-R - Pauline Woodbridge, Julie Oberin (former chair of WESNET) & Shirley Slann, at the conference.

Shirley is an Aboriginal woman born in Cloncurry and raised in Mt Isa. She is an Indigenous representative on WESNET, the National Women's Services Network and the northwest representative for the Queensland Women's Health Network. Pauline is the Chairperson of WESNET, so together Pauline and Shirley are well placed to support women in rural and remote communities of the state's central and north west, by bringing their issues to the state and national agendas.

Shirley is also a member of the Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Reference Group. Last year she successfully completed the Australian Indigenous Leadership Program conducted by the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre and previously completed a diploma in National Indigenous Legal Studies at Tranby Aboriginal College in Sydney.

numbers, have expanded along with the area covered. The office now also employs a part-time Court Support Worker, Claire Eggmolesse and a part-time Men's Program worker, Uncle Ron Page, who also assists Mt Isa Magistrate Bevan Manthey as a cultural adviser in the Murri Court.

Currently the office provides education and support to communities from Boulia to Normanton and Morningson Island in the north and east to Julia Creek. The vast area covered by Shirley and her team is starkly illustrated in the map (above). What this means in practical terms is demonstrated in the 2004 Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month Campaign conducted by the Mt Isa Domestic Violence Agencies Network, including the Mt Isa office of NQDVRS, the Indigenous Family Support Unit, Nawamba House women's shelter, and others involved with the Domestic Violence Agencies Network.



Viv Edwards, taking her music on the road for family violence prevention.

During the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month, Shirley and her colleagues visited every community in the northwest including Boulia, Dajarra, Camooweal, Cloncurry, Mornington Island, Normanton, Doomadgee and Burketown. In each community they followed the Magistrate's Court circuit, holding sausage sizzles and community awareness activities outside each courthouse. Their audience consisted of those involved directly and indirectly in domestic and family violence matters before the court.

As reported in the last edition of the CDFVR Newsletter, Shirley also enlists the musical talents of Viv Edwards to draw a crowd with her music, prior to opening discussions on domestic and family violence prevention.

Recently the NQDVRS convened the first domestic and family violence conference held in Mt Isa. The conference, titled "Silence Won't Stop the Violence; Learning what we need in rural and remote communities" brought rural and remote workers together to discuss common issues, gain some training and network with each other. In addition to the workshops presented at the conference by the Centre's Indigenous Research Worker Lyndon Reilly (see pages 6-8 for details), the Centre's Research Fellow, Dr Susan Rees, gave a keynote address on using a human rights framework to address domestic and family violence and I presented a workshop titled "Safety and Justice: How can we prioritise and respond in our communities".



Shirley Slann with her Diploma in National Indigenous Legal Studies

The conference was a great success with participants coming from as far away as Mornington Island and Normanton. It highlighted the need for basic, intermediate and advanced training on domestic and family violence prevention for workers in the area and the need for increased access to relevant support services for men, women and children affected by domestic and family violence. It became very clear that while there has been some great work done in the area, there is still a long, long way to go.

In spite of the many challenges and inevitable frustrations that must come with her job, Shirley remains passionate, committed and positive about her work on domestic and family violence prevention, saying that "*sometimes as I am driving to a community, I think to myself how lucky I am to have such an interesting job and to be able to visit remote communities*". I'd like to say how lucky we are to have Shirley, with her leadership, skills, knowledge and commitment to do this difficult, but essential work.

## In Brief:

Update on actions from Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum "Which Way Now".

In the September edition of the CDFVR Newsletter readers were advised that in response to actions required from the Forum, correspondence had been sent to:

- the Director, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse on strategies to increase Indigenous involvement in Clearinghouse activities;
- respective Ministers for Child Safety, Communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy seeking advice on strategies for increased collaboration at policy and program implementation levels; and
- the Director-General, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy, seeking a response to the Centre's submission on the 2003 Safe and Strong Families Agreement. Progress with its implementation and evaluation and access to the data used for the evaluation.

The Centre has received a response from all of the above, though some responses are preliminary and to be followed up with more detailed correspondence. A summary of all final responses to the Centre's correspondence will be provided in the next edition of the Newsletter.

## Workshops, Conferences and Date Claimers

9-11 February 2005

### **ANZSOC Conference N.Z. - Crime, Community and the State**

Wellington, New Zealand

<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/anzsoc/>

9 - 11 February 2005

### **Families Matter – 9<sup>th</sup> Australian Institute of Families Studies Conference**

Melbourne, VIC

Web:[www.aifs.conference.org](http://www.aifs.conference.org)

21 - 23 February 2005

### **Thinking Drinking: Achieving Cultural Change by 2020**

Melbourne, VIC

Email: [thinking.drinking@adf.org.au](mailto:thinking.drinking@adf.org.au)

Web: [www.adf.org.au/](http://www.adf.org.au/)

24 – 25 February 2005

### **The Mental Health Service (The MHS) Summer Forum**

Sydney, NSW

Web: [www.themhs.org](http://www.themhs.org)

March 3 – 4

### **Introduction to Narrative Practice**

Dulwich Centre, Adelaide, SA

Phone (08) 82233966

3 – 5 March 2005

### **Couples and Relationships: What's love got to do with it? AAMFC National Symposium**

Melbourne, VIC

Contact: The conference organiser

Email: [info@conorg.com.au](mailto:info@conorg.com.au)

Web: [www.aamfc.org.au/news/](http://www.aamfc.org.au/news/)

10 – 13 March 2005

### **8<sup>th</sup> National Rural Health Conference**

Alice Springs NT

Email: [conference@ruralhealth.org.au](mailto:conference@ruralhealth.org.au)

Web:[www.nrha.net.au/nrhpublic/publicdocs/conferences/8thNRHC/home.htm](http://www.nrha.net.au/nrhpublic/publicdocs/conferences/8thNRHC/home.htm)

16 - 18 March 2005

### **Community, Work and Family: Change and Transformation**

Manchester U.K.

Web: [www.mmu.ac.uk/cwfconference](http://www.mmu.ac.uk/cwfconference)

20 – 23 March 2005

### **4<sup>th</sup> World Congress on Family Law and**

### **Children's Rights**

Capetown, South Africa

For more information: <http://www.lawrights.asn.au/>

3 – 5 April 2005

### **4<sup>th</sup> Biennial Working with Boys; Building Fine Men Conference**

Melbourne, VIC

Web: [www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/fac/programs/conference.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/fac/programs/conference.html)

14 -15 April 2005

### **Working with stories of women's lives**

Dulwich Centre, Adelaide, SA

Phone: (08) 82233966

1 – 3 June 2005

### **Mexican International Family Strengths Conference**

Contact: Dra. Rosario Esteinou

Cuernavaca, Mexico

Email: [esteinou@juarez.ciesas.edu.mx](mailto:esteinou@juarez.ciesas.edu.mx)

3 – 6 June 2005

### **ICCFR 52<sup>nd</sup> International Conference – Differing Needs: Societies' responses to children, parents, families, couples and the older generations**

Vienna, Austria

Web:[www.iccfr.org](http://www.iccfr.org)

15 – 17 June 2005

### **Pathways to Resilience: An International Conference**

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

Email: [irp@dal.ca](mailto:irp@dal.ca)

Web: [www.resilienceproject.org](http://www.resilienceproject.org)

17 – 19 October 2005

### **The Diversity in Health Conference 2005: It's Everybody's Business**

Melbourne, VIC

Web: [www.mmha.org.au/](http://www.mmha.org.au/)



## Contact Us

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We encourage readers to contribute to the Centre's Newsletter. If you have any information or articles you wish to publish, please contact Centre staff.

### HAVE YOUR CONTACT DETAILS CHANGED?

We have become aware that some recipients of the CDFVR newsletter have relocated or changed contact details. To enable us to update our records and ensure that you receive our quarterly publication, please complete the enclosed "change of details" form and return post or fax it to us. We also ask that you confirm your email address so we can update you with current domestic and family violence prevention events or opportunities that may interest you. Please be assured that the Centre does not release your details to any third parties without your permission.

If you would like to be included on, or removed from, the Centre's mailing list, please ring us on (07)49407834.

The Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research (CDFVR) receives triennial funding from the Queensland Department of Communities to undertake research, education and evaluation activities pertaining to domestic and family violence. CDFVR is located within the Centre for Social Science Research in the Faculty of Arts, Health and Sciences at Central Queensland University, Mackay Campus.

The views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of the Queensland Government, Central Queensland University, or Centre for Social Science Research.

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