

Newsletter

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From the Director



CDFVR has recently achieved a major milestone in the development of responses to domestic and family violence in Queensland, in the form of an accredited *Course in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence*, which we expect to be available for delivery by mid-2007. While there are a number of relevant accredited units in training packages, and various courses on domestic and family violence, this is the only *accredited course* on core domestic and family violence support skills. The accredited *Course in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence* will provide a benchmark for prospective employers recruiting appropriately skilled staff in community-based domestic violence support services, and government agencies that may be a first point of contact for women subjected to domestic and family violence.

The need for quality, consistent training across government and non-government agencies has been the subject of recommendations in numerous reports since *Beyond These Walls* (1988), the Report of the Queensland Domestic Violence Taskforce. The Report's recommendations led to change in government policy and practice through legislation and administrative structures, most notably in the Queensland Police Service and Courts, and agency specific training to support the implementation of those initiatives. Subsequent changes to domestic violence legislation have also been supported through training for government and non-government agencies, and there are localised or regional training initiatives delivered through various means. However, there has never been an ongoing, generic training program in Queensland to provide for training needs of new personnel, nor has there been ongoing and consistent generic training on responding to domestic and family violence to support inter-agency collaboration across Queensland.

This training gap was recognised and highlighted in Queensland's *Report of the Taskforce on Women and the Criminal Code* (2000), which strongly advocated for training to enhance co-ordination and consistency across government and non-government agencies responding to violence against women. On the basis of this Report's recommendations, CDFVR successfully applied for a Queensland Office for Women Partnerships Grant, which funded stage-one of the project, resulting in a draft course. I would like to express our appreciation to the Office for Women for funding stage-one of the project and to the Department of Communities for the triennial funding it provides to CDFVR, which also contributed to the development of the accredited course.

The achievement of this accredited *Course in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence* is the result of one of the best government/non-government team efforts I have ever had the privilege of being involved in, and there are many people to congratulate and thank for their contributions to this achievement. First and foremost, I want to congratulate Kass Fenton and Annie Webster, CDFVR Education Project Officers, who carried the bulk of the work (Kass full-time and Annie part-time), followed by Michelle Bradford, Education Officer, who supported Kass and Annie in their day-to-day work.

This internal project team was supported by a dedicated Course Development Advisory Committee (CDAC), comprising representatives from nine Government agencies, a representative of the Community Services and Health Industries Training Council, a representative of the Vocational Education and Training sector, and a private training provider, with over 15 years experience in community-based domestic violence services. The level of expertise within the CDAC, and the generosity of its members in sharing their time and knowledge were truly inspiring. We are very grateful to them all.

Our belief in the need for this Course was soundly validated when we called for expressions of interest in membership of a Training Advisory Committee (TAC) for the project and promptly received over 80 such expressions. Plans for the TAC to meet by teleconference were quickly revised and an e-bulletin consultation and communication strategy was established to ensure all those who wanted to be involved in the TAC could be. I sincerely thank all the members of the TAC for their commitment to the project and for their advice and assistance, which was particularly helpful in undertaking the state-wide training needs analysis at the commencement of the project, just over a year ago.

It is our hope that, in the near future, Queensland women seeking assistance for domestic and family violence will be less likely to be confronted by government and non-government agency personnel who directly or indirectly minimise, justify or blame the victim for domestic and family violence, which frequently inhibits effective intervention.

Further information about the proposed implementation of the accredited *Course in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence* is on page 6.

Heather Rancarrow



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Welcome

The Centre is pleased to welcome two new members to the team: Michelle Wiley and Eunice Donovan.

Michelle Wiley joins the team in the role of part-time Administrative Officer. Michelle has worked in a variety of backgrounds, including health administration, supporting people with disabilities to live independently, and in academic advocacy for Central Queensland University students. As well as working for CQU, Michelle has also been a student, completing a degree in Social and Behavioural Sciences.



Michelle Wiley

Eunice Donovan has joined the Centre as a part-time Project Officer to assist Kass Fenton and the project team in producing learner support materials for the newly accredited *Course in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence*. Eunice is a Social Worker of 12 years and brings to her work extensive experience in domestic and family violence service management, community development, social policy and vocational education.



Eunice Donovan

CDFVR welcomes Masters student

CDFVR has much pleasure in introducing Gwen Schrieber who has commenced her Research Higher Degree (Master of Arts) at Central Queensland University, under the supervision of Dr Sue Rice, School of Social Work and Welfare Studies, and CDFVR Director, Heather Nancarrow.

Gwen is a Kungghanghi woman from Far North Queensland, who has been passionate about working to address violence against Murri women for the past 30 years. She brought that passion to bear in her roles as health worker with Queensland Health, followed by her work as the Women's Officer with the Aboriginal Co-ordinating Council (ACC). Gwen's work with the ACC involved travelling to and from Indigenous communities the length and breadth of the State to consult with and advocate for Aboriginal women about the issues affecting them.



In 1998, Gwen was appointed to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Taskforce on Violence to investigate and report on the nature and prevalence of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, and to make recommendations to the Queensland Government to address this violence. Gwen is currently a member of the Queensland Mental Health Review Tribunal, and a member of the Children's Services Tribunal.

Gwen has a degree in Indigenous Community Health (Curtin University) and post-graduate qualifications in management and administration. Gwen's Masters Research project will explore the following questions.

1. What constrains Indigenous women from taking action to leave violent relationships?
2. What facilitates Indigenous women leaving violent relationships – for those who did leave, what were the turning points?
3. What can be done to enable women to remain, safely, in the relationship?

We look forward to working with Gwen and wish her every success in her studies.

Blazing the trail for combining women's services in Queensland

By Eunice Donovan, Education Project Officer, CDFVR

The inaugural meeting of the Mackay Women's Centre on Tuesday, 25 July marked an important legal and symbolic milestone for Queensland's community services sector in the amalgamation of three (3) incorporated organisations. Since 2000, the Mackay Women's Health and Information Centre Inc, Pregnancy Help Mackay Inc, and the Domestic Violence Resource Service (Mackay & Region) Inc (DVRS) have been involved in a process to achieve amalgamation and co-location. The aim of the process is to establish a central location for women's services in Mackay.

Drivers

This project began its journey in 2000 with the release of a regional discussion paper titled *Combined Women's Services in Mackay: the way of the future?* The author of the paper, Eunice Donovan, was, at that time, Co-ordinator of the DVRS. Eunice was increasingly concerned about the range of issues impacting on small to medium organisations in the community sector at the time and, in particular, on women-specific services in the region.

Issues documented in the discussion paper focussed on long-term viability and growth for women-specific services, in terms of pressure to conform to the "new managerialism" agenda of governments, the positioning of women's services to retain a unified political voice, and the need to reduce duplication and gaps in the provision of services to women in the region.

The paper generated initial discussion and cautious interest. However, threatened financial viability of three of the region's women's sector organisations in late 2000 and early 2001 kicked off serious consideration of the concepts contained within the paper.

Partners

Initial discussions involved a wide range of funded and unfunded organisations and groups involved in the delivery of services to women, including women's shelters, counselling services, Indigenous women's groups, and support services. With time and the identification of the financial viability issues mentioned earlier, three organisations agreed to work together to investigate

the feasibility of, and optimal model for, a combined women's service. These organisations are the Mackay Women's Health and Information Centre Inc, Pregnancy Help Mackay Inc, and the Domestic Violence Resource Service (Mackay & Region) Inc.

In addition to these, representatives of the major funding bodies of the three organisations – (then) Department of Families, Youth, and Community Care, and Queensland Health - were invited to participate in the process. Accordingly, a partnership arrangement was established that named all five partners, and detailed the operations of the partnership. The three community-based organisations held control of the process, in terms of decision-making, and the two government agencies held ex-officio roles.

Structural Arrangements

Throughout this journey, care has been taken to strongly ground the process in the structures and work of the organisations. Prior to beginning to “develop opportunities ... to contribute to the design, planning, implementation, and delivery of sustainable, appropriate, and integrated women's services in the Mackay region, in partnership with government” (Combined Women's Services Steering Committee, Terms of Reference, 2001), those involved discussed at length the ways in which they would work together, and the principles that would underpin the work.

Participants were keen to ensure that decision-making control remained with the organisations, rather than with government, and that imbalances in power and resources were addressed. At the time that this work began, the DVRS was the largest of the three organisations with a staff of six and an annual budget of almost \$500,000. The other two organisations, by contrast, each had a part-time staff member and annual budgets of less than \$50,000. It was vital that this imbalance did not unduly influence the capacity of the organisations to fully participate in the process. Accordingly, the three organisations have acted as full partners, with a single vote each, and equal numerical representation in all of the structures established through the process.

The first structure appeared in April 2001 with the establishment of the Combined Women's Services Steering Committee, Terms of Reference to guide the Steering Committee, and the development of the Partnership Agreement. The stated purpose of the Steering Committee recognised that this stage of the journey was the exploration of ideas, options, and opportunities for integration. The Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee detailed the purpose, broad outcomes, membership, operations, and decision-making processes to be used by the Committee, as well as the principles that would underpin all the work of the Committee.

In May 2002, the Steering Committee had completed its work. It had developed: a Vision and Mission Statement for a new body tentatively named the Mackay Women's Centre; a functional design brief for a proposed facility to house the new body; and prepared and facilitated a series of special resolutions to gain support from the general membership of each organisation to proceed with the amalgamation of the three organisations.

The Steering Committee was then replaced by a new structure known as the Mackay Women's Centre Interim Management Committee (MWCIMC). Again, a Terms of Reference document was developed, and the Partnership Agreement was reviewed and re-adopted. The Mackay Women's Centre Interim Management Committee continued to work towards amalgamation.

In addition to these arrangements, the whole project was auspiced by the Mackay Regional Council for Social Development (MRCSD). This was an important structural arrangement because it allowed the partners to work together as equals with an independent and external party available if needed.

Special contribution

The uniqueness of this project lies in the type of amalgamation being undertaken. During the first stage of the project, under the direction of the Combined Women's Services Steering Committee, considerable effort went into searching for similar pieces of work. Rather than “reinvent the wheel”, Steering Committee members sought “practice wisdom” from any previous attempts



Newly created Mackay Women's Centre management committee.
L-R Back Row: Bronwyn Warner; Belinda Hassan; Maria Porter; Martha Beatrice; Eunice Donovan; Sonya Van Tongeren; and Annette Howe front row: Liz Khalu and Kristyn Everett.

at amalgamation in Australia, that could inform and perhaps simplify the local experience. A number of models of combining services were found. However, the Steering Committee was unable to locate any information pertaining to a similar effort to amalgamate independent incorporated associations. If previous work has been attempted or accomplished, it is not recorded in a form available for others to use.

The unique processes and practices involved in the legal and structural amalgamation of three independent legal entities to create the Mackay Women's Centre breaks new ground for the community sector, and is indeed the reason for the considerable attention paid to the project by government.

Reflections and insights

The current State Government has placed considerable pressure on the community sector to develop collaborative arrangements. The *Strengthening Non-Government Organisations* initiative, led by the Department of Communities, is co-ordinating a number of projects and funding programs that encourage organisations to collaborate and co-operate. The history and success of the Mackay Women's Centre project highlights a number of areas where government's promotion of collaborative processes needs to be cautioned. The following insights were gained through this project.

1. Time is needed to allow collaborative processes to unfold. If ownership of such processes is desired, participants need time to reflect, explore, discuss, negotiate, work through differences and conflicts, and eventually arrive at an agreed and accepted position. The Mackay Women's Centre project has been in action for over five years, and there are years to go before completion can be asserted.

2. The process needs to be driven and directed by management of the organisations. Throughout the life of the Mackay Women's Centre, volunteer Management Committee members have led this project. Ironically, this has been an important characteristic of both the strengths and weaknesses of the process.

The participation of Management Committee members means that decisions are made by the appropriate decision-makers in the organisations. Additionally, it is the membership of the organisations, represented by elected Management Committee members, which ultimately decide the future of the organisations. However, volunteer Management Committee members face many restrictions on their time and availability. The majority of meetings have been held outside business hours, during evenings and weekends. Members have not always been able to complete tasks in a timely way, due to other commitments and priorities in their lives. In addition, the process has been slowed and disrupted each year by changes to Management Committee membership, and the need to inform and update new members about the status of the project.

3. Financial resources need to be allocated to collaborative processes. The Mackay Women's Centre has needed to source funds at various points in the process, especially for specialist expertise in financial matters, legal matters, and property management. Delays have been experienced while funding submissions were developed, and participants waited for the outcomes of those submissions.

4. Strong and accepted leadership is crucial to the success of collaborative processes. Progress around the Mackay Women's Centre was steady and ongoing until the loss, for personal reasons, of the acknowledged leader of the process in late 2003. The project experienced a period of great upheaval and conflict as participants struggled to regain balance and momentum.

5. Appropriate and effective communication strategies are necessary for the success of collaborative processes. Throughout the life of the Mackay Women's Centre project, written and verbal communication processes have been used to inform and encourage.

6. The lack of integration between State and Federal laws is hugely problematic for successful collaboration of this nature. State law allows the amalgamation of incorporated associations as a relatively simple process. However, Federal laws add incredible complications to this process. For instance, Australian Taxation Office (ATO) rulings in relation to Australian Business Numbers (ABNs), transfer of assets, tax-exemption statuses, and employee entitlements have involved almost three years of negotiation. Indeed, the complexities of the Australian Tax Office resulted in the adoption of a different model of amalgamation by the Interim Management Committee.

Originally, the intention was to collapse the three organisations into one. In order to receive "in-principle" approval from the Australian Tax Commissioner, the decision was made to establish a separate entity to be the Mackay Women's Centre, and then to "wind-up" the three organisations. While this is more complex for the volunteers involved in this process, it is the only option accepted by the ATO.

The future

The new Management Committee of the Mackay Women's Centre still has a huge amount of work ahead of it. Formal notice from the Office of Fair Trading about the success of the application for incorporation is still pending, and once incorporation is complete, the three partner organisations will transfer assets and liabilities, funding contracts, and staff to the new Mackay

Women's Centre Inc. This will be followed by processes to ensure transition is complete, and ensure that staff are oriented to their new work teams, new accountability and reporting systems, and to their new employer. Simultaneously, the new Mackay Women's Centre Inc will continue its search for a new "home" to complete the work started in 2000 to establish a central location for women's services in Mackay.

Progress report on the accredited Course in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence

By Kass Fenton, Education Project Officer, CDFVR

On 26 July 2006, the Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research (CDFVR) project team had its final meeting with the Course Development Advisory Committee (CDAC) in Brisbane. This meeting marked the culmination of 12 months of consultation and collaboration with stakeholder representatives to develop a training course titled: '*Course in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence*'. The primary purpose of the meeting was to secure CDAC approval and sign-off on the documentation for submission of the '*Course in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence*' to the Accreditation Branch of the Queensland Department of Employment and Training.

The training opportunity is aimed at workers in government and non-government services who, through the course of their duties, encounter women and children affected by domestic and family violence. Successful completion of the course will result in a Statement of Attainment for the '*Course in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence*', issued under and recognised by the Australian Quality Training Framework. The need for such a course has been widely recognised in the domestic and family violence and government sectors for over a decade. For example, the *Report of the Taskforce on Women and the Criminal Code (2000)*, strongly advocated for ongoing training to ensure co-ordination and consistency across government and non-government agencies responding to domestic and family violence.

Recommendation 46.1 of the *Report of the Taskforce on Women and the Criminal Code (2000)* stated that, "...The training should:

- increase understanding of violence against women, its nature, scale and impact;
- assist service providers in identifying violence against women;
- provide participants with skills and knowledge about preventative approaches, early intervention and reducing the long term impacts of violence;
- cover relevant legislation and link to any relevant guidelines or policy; and
- go beyond raising awareness to identifying desired responses..." (p. 86).

The '*Course in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence*' is comprised of three Units of Competency:

- Recognise and respond to domestic and family violence;
- Refer appropriately and effectively in response to domestic and family violence; and
- Reflect on work practice when responding to domestic and family violence.

The latter two Units of Competency were specifically written for the Course, in consultation with the CDAC, and have recently received accreditation approval from the Queensland Department of Employment and Training.

Specifically, the training course's main objectives are to:

- ensure a more consistent and co-ordinated response in dealing with domestic and family violence;
- focus on issues facing marginalised groups, in particular, working effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-English speaking background families and communities; and
- focus on issues for families and communities in rural and remote locations.

Stage two of this project entails the development of training support materials in the form of 'learner guides' for each Unit of Competency. In keeping with the commitment to ensure focus on marginalised groups and produce quality, relevant and accessible materials, CDFVR has convened a reference group of practitioners with expertise in a wide range of areas relevant to the focus of the Course, to guide the content of each learner guide.

CDFVR welcomes Eunice Donovan, who has been employed as a part-time project officer, to contribute to the writing of the learner guides. Eunice brings to this position, extensive experience in the domestic and family violence field, community development and the vocational education and training sector.

Beyond the training material development phase, CDFVR will focus on a promotion and implementation phase, which includes a two-stage plan:

- ensuring there are appropriately accredited trainers available to deliver the course; and
- promoting the availability of the accredited training to first-point of contact workers and their agencies.

The implementation strategy seeks to ensure that the 'Course in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence' is available to workers in community services and Government agencies, and through tertiary education institutions. Two Government departments have already expressed interest in taking up the training course. The Department of Corrective Services is keen to incorporate the 'Course in Responding to Domestic and Family Violence' into its training programs for Correctional Officers. The Department of Justice and the Attorney-General is interested in the training course, in particular the Unit, Referring Appropriately and Effectively in Response to Domestic and Family Violence, for court workers.

Progress on the course development project will continue to be reported through the Newsletter and the e-bulletin 'TAC-TILE' available on the Centre's website.

Domestic violence message hits the catwalk

By Michelle Bradford, Education Officer, CDFVR

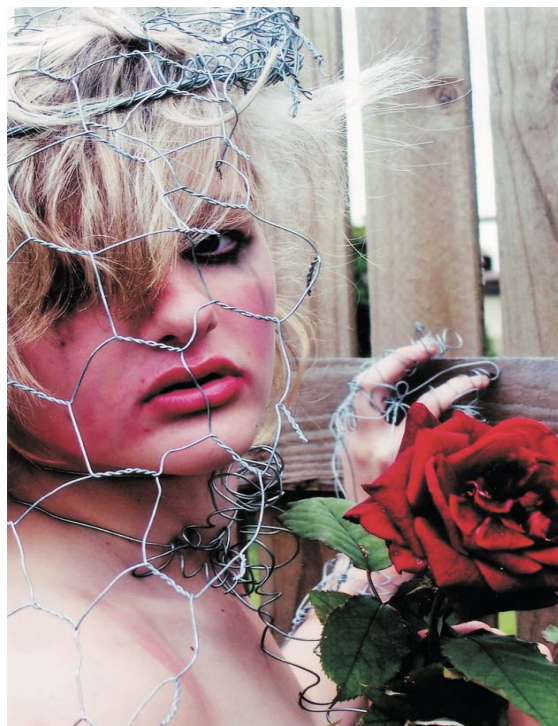
Since 1997, the Mackay Regional Arts Festival has hosted a Student Festival of Fashion, which challenges school students to design and create garments that are wearable and made from various everyday materials. This year, students could enter a garment into one of nine categories, each reflecting a particular theme and requiring the use of specific materials. The 'Wearable Art' category challenged students to enter a piece that made a bold statement, inspired by current social, political or personal issues or events.

Rebecca Macklin, a 16 year old Year 11 student from North Mackay State High School, designed, created and entered a bridal garment that made a statement about the pain, suffering and anguish experienced by women living in abusive relationships. Inspired by the stories of women and children suffering in abusive relationships, Rebecca reflected:

"I have known some people who have lived with domestic violence, and I remember a news report from a few years ago, about a man killing his children and then himself. I felt shocked and kept wondering why someone would want to hurt their children, when the problem is with the adults?"



Photograph contributed by Reflections from life.



Rebecca Macklin wearing her wire-constructed headpiece to symbolise the suffering and entrapment experienced by women in abusive relationships.

Rebecca's bridal garment is constructed from over 200 metres of wire (all entwined by hand), padlocks, black satin, black tulle and cardboard. Rebecca used the twisted and sharp wire and padlocks to produce a powerful metaphor for the suffering and entrapment experienced by women in abusive relationships. She said, "The dress reflects the pain suffered in abusive relationships. The black material symbolises mourning for a loss of freedom; and the entwined wire represents entrapment. The padlocks joining the wire show that people in abusive relationships are trapped and sort of locked in with the feeling that they can't escape".

Rebecca made the headpiece, veil, gloves and necklace from entwined wire, contrasting smooth strands with spiked and sharp edges. The bridal bouquet, encased by a brochure from Mackay's Domestic Violence Resource Service, comprises several dead flowers surrounding a single red rose, which symbolises hope. Her ensemble was completed with heavily smudged makeup, which symbolised the contrast of hope and despair so often present in abusive relationships.

Rebecca felt some trepidation when modelling her bridal garment to the Festival's large audience, as she wondered how they might react to such a provocative and confronting examination of the effects of abusive relationships. She also wondered if her challenge to the audience might result in people denying or dismissing the importance of her message. However, Rebecca also realised that avoiding the subject of domestic violence is another way of contributing to the silence that enables this abuse to continue. Rebecca said, "I wanted to dedicate this creation to all of the women who have suffered domestic violence and to help promote awareness of this terrible act that is mostly kept in darkness".

It's very encouraging to see young people take a position on domestic violence and impart messages that challenge others to seek respect and equality in their relationships. The Centre congratulates Rebecca on her remarkable creativity and talent, and wishes her every success in her future.

Book review

Bits of Caramel Marmalade on Toast

Bits of Caramel Marmalade on Toast is written by Megan Bayliss and illustrated by Jonathon Powell. Set in Cairns, North Queensland, Bits of Caramel Marmalade on Toast explores themes of abuse, fear, personal protection, boundaries and rights to safety and protection through the experiences of Bitssy, a friendly but very anxious half-dingo pet dog; Marmalade, a fat, independent and confident cat; and their 'big person'.

Bitssy has good reason to be anxious as Caramel, the mean and nasty dog from across the street, bullies and threatens Bitssy. Caramel doesn't seem to be scared of anything. Bitssy is too intimidated and scared to go out into her own front yard for fear that Caramel will attack and even kill her. Caramel has said that he'll even kill Bitssy's 'big person', if she tells. The author expertly captures the overwhelming thoughts and physical sensations associated with strong anxiety, and the very real dilemmas and difficulties faced by children experiencing abuse and violence.

Bitssy, glued to the same spot, eyes as wide as a possum's, was feeling really scared now. Her legs had that same jelly feeling...Her mind was racing around like a mouse on a wheel: no start, no end, and no escape. Her blood, rushing down through her body like rainwater racing for a storm drain, was cold, making her feet feel heavy and waterlogged. Inside her head a big piece of scratchy reef coral told her that things were out of place, not right.

Marmalade has some wonderful insights and wisdom to share about how Bitssy can handle this situation. Bitssy learns that keeping fearful thoughts inside her head turns into 'stinkin-thinkin' that clogs up her mind and makes her feel stuck. After some practice, (and some setbacks), Bitssy finds the courage from her inner-dingo to stand up for herself, assert her boundaries and enjoy the safety and protection that is her right.

Bitssy shook her ear free from Caramel's filthy mouth, threw back her head and loosed the wolves that had been hiding deep inside the fear spot in her stomach. The wolves galloped out of Bitssy's mouth, free at last. 'Don't touch me Caramel. Not ever,' Bitssy howled. 'This is my body. My home. My space. My privacy. Leave noooooowwwwwww!'

Bits of Caramel Marmalade on Toast is aimed at children aged 8-12 years and is the first in a series of five books about keeping safe. Available from Imaginif Pty Ltd and St Lukes Innovative Resources, this book can be adapted to suit children and young people of all ages and is a useful tool for teaching children about protective behaviours and personal safety.



Indigenous family violence and child abuse... Is anyone listening?

By Michelle Bradford, Education Officer, CDFVR

The long running issues of family violence and sexual abuse of children in Indigenous communities in Australia once again exploded in the media and in Federal and State Parliaments in May this year. This most recent exposé was initiated by the release of a report written by Alice Springs Crown Prosecutor, Nanette Rogers, in which she described a culture of profound violence and abuse of women and children that is maintained by the unchallenged intimidation tactics of the abusers, fear-driven silence of the victims, inaction of authorities, and inadequate responses from the justice system.

.....Australian governments and the public cannot legitimately plead ignorance about the extent, longevity and nature of this violence.

For weeks debates raged in the media, various Parliaments and in the homes of many Australians, about the factors that contribute to and enable this long-standing epidemic of violence, as well as the steps required to solve the issue. As terrifying and appalling as Nannette Rogers' accounts of the multitude of rapes, murders and bashings of babies, children and women in Aboriginal communities were, it must be said that Australian governments and the public cannot legitimately plead ignorance about the extent, longevity and nature of this violence.

Aboriginal women, themselves, were calling on Governments to address such violence in the mid-1980s through investigations commissioned by both the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments (Daylight and Johnson, 1986; Queensland Domestic Violence Taskforce Report, 1988). Then, in 1998, the Courier Mail's Tony Koch reported the rape of a 17-month-old Aboriginal girl from a Cape York community, and exposed the widespread nature of child sexual abuse and family violence in Indigenous communities. These revelations resulted in the then Governor of Queensland, Leneen Forde, calling a meeting of 400 women at Queensland's Parliament House, which prompted the establishment of the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Taskforce on Violence.

The Taskforce was comprised of 50 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who consulted widely and produced a report with 123 recommendations across the nine areas of: whole of community/whole of government interface; equity; economic development and sustainability; policing; alcohol; education; health improvement; families; justice; and healing and Indigenous cultural promotion. Some of these recommendations appear to have been absorbed into subsequent State Government initiatives, such as the Cape York Justice Study which resulted in the Meeting Challenges Making Choices strategy, the Cape York Partnership strategy and the establishment of three Healing Centres.

Again in June 2003, the issue of Indigenous family violence was placed on the national political agenda as a result of an impassioned plea from Mick Dodson, Chair of the Australian National University's Institute for Indigenous Australia, to the Prime Minister to show leadership in responding to Indigenous family violence. As a result, the Prime Minister convened a summit with 15 Indigenous leaders, including Jackie Huggins AM, Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia and member of CDFVR's Indigenous Reference Group, to discuss the issue and identify a way forward. A working group of four members was established to consult directly with the Prime Minister's Office to continue work on the issues raised.

In 2004, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed on a "National Framework for Preventing Family Violence and Child Abuse in Indigenous Communities", which embraced the following six principles: safety; partnerships; support; strong, resilient families; local solutions; and the need to address the cause (Attachment C, COAG Communiqué 25 June 2004). The federal government disbanded the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), and in November 2004, established a National Indigenous Council of 12 members.

Some three years after the Prime Minister's summit, the issue of family violence and child sexual abuse in Indigenous communities once again grabbed the headlines and the attention of politicians and the public. Following Nanette Rogers' report, the Hon Mal Brough, Federal Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, raised serious allegations of serial and organised sexual assaults of children in some communities, by perpetrators who often held positions of seniority and power, and who enjoyed protection by others, either because of fear of retribution, or on the basis of customary 'men's business'. Minister Brough called for an urgent summit with the leaders of each Australian state and territory to draft a national plan to eliminate this violence. Despite scepticism and objections from some invitees, the Intergovernmental Summit on Violence and Child Abuse in Indigenous Communities was convened on 26 June, 2006, and agreement was reached about the imperative of a "comprehensive national response" to Indigenous family violence and child sexual abuse (Hon Mal Brough, Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Affairs media release).

It appears that this issue has pushed Commonwealth and State and Territory governments together to develop bilaterally agreed actions. So what were the outcomes of the Intergovernmental Summit on Violence and Child Abuse in Indigenous

Communities? The following summary is derived from various media releases from the office of the Hon Mal Brough, Federal Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, as well as from communiqués released by COAG.

During the summit, the Federal government announced a \$130 million funding package over four years on the basis that the State and Territory governments agreed to complement this effort by increasing their resources and contributions in the area. The Federal government tabled law and order as a priority issue in responding to family violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities, “The Australian Government’s view is that law and order are also fundamental preconditions to ensuring that the expectations by governments at all levels – on priorities such as health, housing and education - to overcome poverty and generational disadvantage are not dissipated but made sustainable” (Hon Mal Brough, Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Affairs media release).

In a media release reporting on the outcomes of the summit, Minister Brough advised that each government re-confirmed their commitment to the six principles embraced in the COAG National Framework for Preventing Family Violence and Child Abuse in Indigenous Communities, and that the summit’s members had developed an action strategy for submission to COAG in July 2006.

This action strategy identified the following components as integral to a comprehensive and integrated response to Indigenous family violence and child abuse:

- “a legislative and regulatory framework that protects those at risk of, and those who have suffered, violence and abuse;
- adequate policing and child protection resources to deal with issues arising in remote communities;
- a criminal justice system that recognises and adequately addresses the particular issues faced by those living in remote localities;
- appropriate control of alcohol and other substances, and rehabilitation support for those addicted;
- complementary measures, including:
 - compulsory school attendance
 - support for local Indigenous leaders
 - sound community and corporate governance”

(Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Affairs media release).

..... “The Australian Government’s view is that law and order are also fundamental preconditions to ensuring that the expectations by governments at all levels – on priorities such as health, housing and education - to overcome poverty and generational disadvantage are not dissipated but made sustainable” (Hon Mal Brough, Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Affairs).

More specifically, the action strategy reflected agreement and commitment in the following areas, as summarised below.

1. Customary Law and Bail – “All Governments agree that customary law in no way justifies, authorises or requires violence or sexual abuse against women and children”. A Commonwealth and state review of bail legislations is being encouraged to ensure primary consideration is given to any risks to the victim, and account of impacts on families and communities should the accused person return before their case has been heard in court. Further, the Commonwealth has invited the states to review relevant legislations to delete references to mandatory consideration of cultural background, and exclude any claims of justification of criminal behaviour on the basis of cultural practice or customary law from Courts’ sentencing discretion.
2. Law Enforcement – in recognition of the importance of intelligence and effective policing in combating violence, child abuse, and organised crime involving drugs, alcohol, pornography and fraud, the summit members unanimously supported the establishment of a National Intelligence Unit. Discussion also referred to ‘strike teams’ or taskforces’ being developed to respond to serial violence and organised criminal activities.
3. Senior Indigenous Network – this initiative aims to support leadership development of Indigenous women and men and requires the states and territories to match the \$4 million investment provided by the Commonwealth Government.
4. Protection for Victims – the summit acknowledged and supported the need for additional safe places and services for victims. Consideration will also be given to increasing legal support for victims.
5. Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Services – the summit acknowledged the close links between substance abuse and violence, and recognised that those who are addicted need additional services. Bilaterally reached decisions will determine where additional and jointly funded drug and alcohol services are to be provided.

6. Health and Well-being of Children – agreement was reached to trial an extension of the Indigenous Child Health Check in one region, and complement this initiative with two special teams, to conduct a further 2000 checks and provide support and follow up treatment.
7. Corporate Governance – funding guidelines will be amended to ensure that only organisations that are managed by “fit and proper persons” are eligible to receive funding from any level of government.
8. Compulsory School Attendance – it was widely agreed that school attendance is a critical foundation element; however, little agreement was reached regarding appropriate mechanisms for ensuring school enrolment and attendance by all Indigenous children. The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs will be consulted for guidance regarding improving school attendance and data sharing.

The Council of Australian Governments met on July 14 to consider the summit’s action strategy submission. From this meeting emerged an agreement which recognised that a “long-term, generational commitment is needed to overcome Indigenous disadvantage”. “COAG has agreed to establish a working group to develop a detailed proposal for generational change including specific, practical proposals for reform which reflect the diversity of circumstances in Australia” (COAG Communiqué, 14 July 2006). This working group will report to the COAG December 2006 meeting.

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In essence, COAG endorsed the agreements reached at the Intergovernmental Summit, and specifically indicated its intention to improve policing, community education and support for victims and witnesses through the following measures:

- increase policing resources in very remote areas (where necessary);
- increase effectiveness of bail provisions;
- create a National Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task Force;
- establish joint strike teams to work in remote Indigenous communities in which child abuse and violence is endemic;
- invest in community legal education to increase awareness of legal rights and pathways to assistance, and encourage the reporting of incidents of abuse and violence; and
- increase provision of support for victims and witnesses of abuse and violence .

The Standing Committee of Attorneys-General has been asked to “report to the next COAG meeting on the extent to which bail provisions and enforcement take particular account of potential impacts on victims and witnesses in remote communities and to recommend any changes required” (COAG Communiqué, 14 July 2006).

In response to the Intergovernmental Summit’s statement of strategies regarding complementary measures, COAG flagged its intention to increase resourcing in regional and remote areas for alcohol and drug treatment and rehabilitation services; and establish a National Truancy Unit to monitor, analyse and report on truancy data. The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs has been asked to submit a report to the next COAG meeting, on the issues related to the enforcement of compulsory school attendance and arrangements for establishing a National Truancy Unit.

The most recent exposure of the atrocities of family violence and child abuse in Indigenous communities appears to have created a flurry of bilateral activity between state, territory and the Commonwealth governments. Consistent with the current Commonwealth government’s philosophical position on law and order, much emphasis has been placed on strengthening strategies to enforce state and Commonwealth laws and penalise offenders. It can only be hoped that COAG’s stated plans to build on the foundations of strong law and order to engage and collaborate with communities at the local level to deliver sustainable improvements in health, education and housing, and eliminate generational disadvantage and poverty, come to fruition.

Sources:
Council of Australian Governments Communiqué 25 June 2004 available on line at:<http://www.coag.gov.au/meetings/250604/index.htm>
Council of Australian Governments Communiqué, 14 July 2006, available on line at:<http://www.coag.gov.au/meetings/140706/index.htm>
Daylight, P. and Johnson, M. (eds) (1986), *Womens business*, Canberra: Australian Government Printing Service
Media release from Hon Mal Brough, Federal Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs titled: “Intergovernmental Summit on Violence and Child Abuse in Indigenous Communities Communiqué Safer Kids, Safer Communities” available online: <http://www.atsia.gov.au/Media/media06/4606.aspx>
Queensland Domestic Violence Taskforce Report (1988) Beyond These Walls, Queensland Government.

Update: Domestic and family violence fatality review in Queensland

The Centre's June 2005 newsletter reported on the activities of the Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group, which has been campaigning for the establishment of a formal domestic and family violence fatality review process in Queensland. The group, together with a number of concerned citizens, presented a 2000-signature strong petition to five Members of Parliament: the Hon. Judy Spence (Member for Mount Gravatt and Minister for Police and Corrective Services); Dianne Reilly (Member for Mudgeeraba); Peta-Kaye Croft (Member for Broadwater); Lesley Clark (Member for Barron River); and Christine Smith (Member for Burleigh).

Christine Smith tabled the petition in Parliament on 10 June, 2005 and it was then referred to the Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors, Warren Pitt. In June this year, Minister Pitt issued a media release that expressed doubts about the value of establishing a Domestic Violence Death Review Board, stating, "The Coroner already investigates deaths so it would be duplicating money and resources to establish another review... The State government is not convinced the money would be well spent and, instead, is focusing on prevention and early intervention and programs to help male perpetrators" (Courier Mail, 22 June 2006).

Despite the government's response, the Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group (DVDRAG) is pressing on and attempting to dialogue with government to negotiate and clarify understandings of the value and functions of a formal domestic and family violence fatality review process in Queensland, and how it differs to the role of the State Coroner. CDFVR approached the Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group and asked them to clarify the campaign's position on a number of questions. Long time domestic violence activist and member of DVDRAG, Betty Taylor, provided the following responses.

CDFVR: *Can you summarise the key features of a death review committee model that is considered good practice (i.e. how are matters identified and referred – by police?; who makes up the committee; what powers does the committee have; review period.)*

DVDRAG: Domestic Violence Death / Fatality Review Boards have now been established across many communities internationally including Canada, USA and Great Britain. While the models adopted by communities vary, in essence, a fatality review brings together representatives from various agencies within a co-ordinated response to domestic violence and include: police; courts; community corrections; health; domestic violence services; shelters; perpetrator programs; child protection agencies; and other professionals with relevant expertise. This multi-disciplinary team conducts a detailed review of public records and other documentation regarding domestic violence related homicides in order to identify gaps in community responses to domestic violence and barriers to effective intervention.

CDFVR: *What kinds of domestic violence relationships are to be covered by the prospective review committee (eg only spousal; spouses and /or children killed in a domestic violence context; non-spousal domestic relationships?). Why?*

DVDRAG: The Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group is calling on the Queensland Government to firstly give a commitment in principle to the further investigation how such a Board would be established and function. A Working Group comprising both government and non-government representatives needs to be established, which could then develop a workable model, terms of reference (including types of relationships to be included), mechanisms for reporting and accountability, as well as determine membership and role and responsibilities.

CDFVR: *What are the key objectives of establishing a committee in Queensland?*

DVDRAG: The purpose of the fatality review is not to assign blame but to create change. Information from fatality reviews, combined with other information from other sources, such as research and crime data etc, allows for the identification of patterns and trends across domestic violence fatalities. The review process focuses on the trends and issues relative to homicides across a defined time period, usually one year. The focus is primarily on social and systems change.

Some of the goals adopted by Death Review Boards in other countries include:

- learning how to reduce and prevent domestic homicide;
- implementing systemic change;
- co-ordinating local and state responses;
- identifying trends and patterns;
- identifying high risk factors;
- improving community interventions;
- developing a process for change and improvement; and
- recommending legislative and policy change

(National Domestic Fatality Review Initiative 2006).

CDFVR: *Are these objectives able to be met by any other mechanism (specifically: a major investigative study by the Crime and Misconduct Commission, for example; or the State Coroner?). Why?*

DVDRAG: In our view, a Domestic Violence Death Review Board needs to be established by Government to provide reports and recommendations back to Government. While research projects may flow from the conducting of Domestic Violence Death Reviews, we do not believe that the Reviews are, in and of themselves, research.

It has been argued that a Domestic Violence Death Review Board would duplicate the role and work undertaken by the State Coroner. Whilst it would be imperative that the State Coroner be involved in the Domestic Violence Death Review Board, the role of a Domestic Violence Death Review is different to that of a Coronial enquiry. A Coronial enquiry is focused on a single incident (which could include multiple deaths) and is bound by the perimeters of the *Coroners Act 2003*. Reviews conducted by way of a Coronial enquiry are not conducted across numerous domestic homicides concurrently and they are not conducted by a multi-disciplinary team.

A Domestic Violence Death Review Board would be more concerned with issues and events **prior** to the homicide than the homicide itself. Often within domestic violence there are several common risk factors that are present prior to the homicide. It is through gaining a more in-depth understanding of these predictive elements, that these often unnecessary deaths can be prevented.

Training opportunity

Strategic Community Responses to Domestic & Family Violence

Integrative Community Solutions presents:

A Two- Day Intensive Institute with Dr Ed Gondolf
November 13th and 14th
Parliamentary Annexe Brisbane

Edward Gondolf is Research Director for the Mid-Atlantic Addiction Training Institute (MAATI) and Professor of Sociology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He conducts grant-funded research on the response of the courts, mental health practitioners, alcohol treatment clinicians, and batterer treatment programs to domestic violence, and was the Principal Investigator for a multi-site study of batterer intervention that included a four-year follow-up of 856 batterers and their female partners. He has recently completed a four-year study of specialised batterer counselling for African-American men, an evaluation of case management for batterer program participants, and a demonstration project of screening and mandated referral for mental health problems. Dr. Gondolf has authored numerous research and clinical articles and several books on domestic violence intervention, including *Assessing Women Battering in Mental Health Services* and *Batterer Intervention Systems: Issues, Outcomes, and Recommendations*.

This two-day intensive institute provides an opportunity for intensive workshopping with Dr Gondolf, and to hear from a panel of local speakers who will further discuss and debate the issues involved in prioritising collaboration and victim safety when responding to perpetrators of domestic violence.

Who Should Attend?

- Domestic Violence Service Providers
- Perpetrator Program Managers & Facilitators
- Policy Makers and other Government Officers
- Academics and Researchers
- Education Professionals
- Law Enforcement & Justice Professionals
- Health & Welfare Professionals

For further information, contact organisers:

Betty Taylor: taylorb2@optusnet.com.au

Dr. Brian Sullivan: bsullivan@social.uq.edu.au

A celebration with a difference – Share the 20 year journey of IWSS

The Brisbane-based Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS) is a community based not-for-profit organisation based on feminist principles that is celebrating 20 years of quality multicultural service providing support and referral to non-English speaking background (NESB) women and accompanying children living with or escaping from domestic and/or sexual violence.



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To acknowledge this milestone and the resilience of their client group, IWSS will be holding a Forum on Thursday 9th and Friday 10th of November at the Bardon Conference Centre in Brisbane, with the theme: *“Moving Beyond Rhetoric to Diversity in Practice: a Human Rights Framework to Address Violence Against Women”*.

The Forum aims to nurture new and strengthen existing partnerships and collaborations, as well as to provide a mechanism to share the ‘lessons learned’ and further discuss and debate the complexities of working with diversity and with women in crisis. IWSS recognises that violence against women is a violation of human rights that occurs along a continuum that includes domestic violence and/or rape and sexual assault; although IWSS clients are survivors of multiple oppressions.

Register now to celebrate the 20 year organisational milestone, acknowledge the resilience of the NESB women and children in crisis, and take a stand against violence against women in its many forms. Visit the Immigrant Women's Support Service's website at: www.iwss.org.au for a registration form, or contact IWSS via email: mail@iwss.org.au; or by phone – (07) 3846 3490 or fax (07) 3844 8467.

“Moving Beyond Rhetoric to Diversity in Practice: a Human Rights Framework to Address Violence Against Women”

Who should attend?

- Domestic violence and sexual assault workers.
- Workers in the multicultural field – managers, settlement workers, counsellors, support workers, interpreters, bilingual/bicultural workers and volunteers.
- Workers across the women's sector.
- Government and community organisation representatives working with people from CaLD and NESB in: housing, child safety, Legal Aid, child care, health, Police, education, immigration, and other key services.
- Individuals committed to improving women's safety and the status of women in the community.
- Survivors of domestic and/or sexual violence.
- Academics, researchers and policy makers.
- Hospital emergency services and social workers.
- Human Rights – Due diligence and accountability.
- Diversity/Multicultural/Cross-cultural – Access and Equity.
- Violence against women – intergenerational, state sanctioned oppression, domestic and family violence, serial sponsorship, pawns of war, sexual assault, sexual slavery, mail order brides, rape in marriage.
- Migration experience and violence – refugee, displacement and settlement.
- Systemic issues – barriers, structures, advocacy, policies and lobbying.
- Implications for legislation – policy, research and practice.

Forum Processes

Topics to be covered

- IWSS ‘her-story’ – service delivery and shared stories from survivors and/or workers.
- Shared journey IWSS ‘her-story’.
- Key Note Speakers – Government, community organisations, academics and others.
- Snap-shot of issues/Open discussions.
- Hypothetical/Panel discussions.

Workshops, conferences and date claimers

11-12 October 2006

Young People and Family Violence
Melbourne, Vic
<http://www.dvirc.org.au>

13-15 October 2006

AGMC 2006 Conference- second biennial conference of the Australian GLBTIQ (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer) Multicultural Council
Northcote, Melbourne, Vic.
<http://www.agmc.org.au>

16-18 October 2006

Strengths-Based Practice Conference
Brisbane, Qld.
<http://www.lighthouseresources.com.au/>

22-26 October 2006

12th National Family Law Conference
Perth, WA
<http://www.familylawsection.org.au>

27-28 October 2006

14th Annual Queensland Child Health Conference - Bush, Culture and Kids
Phone: (07) 4624 2977 Fax: (07) 4624 2900
Email: AndreaL_Fisher@health.qld.gov.au

29 October - 1 November 2006

From Babies to Blokes: the Making of Men - Men's Advisory Network Inc. National Conference
Fremantle, WA
<http://www.promaco.com.au/conference/2006/man>

31 October - 3 November

Preventing Sex Crime: From Evidence and Explanation to Policy and Practice
Gold Coast, Qld.
<http://www.griffith.edu.au/centre/kceljag/anzatsa2006>

1-3 November 2006

Involve 06 - Youth Health and Development Conference
Christchurch, New Zealand
<http://www.involve.org.nz>

9-10 November 2006

Moving Beyond Rhetoric to Diversity in Practice: a Human Rights Framework to Address Violence Against Women
Bardon Conference Centre, Brisbane, Qld.
email: mail@iwss.org.au
www.iwss.org.au
Phone: (07) 3846 3490 or Fax (07) 3844 8467

10-12 November 2006

Strength Based Strategies 2006
Hyderabad, India
<http://strengthbasedstrategies2006.cfsites.org>

13-14 November 2006

The System Matters: Strategic Community Responses to Domestic and Family Violence
Intensive Institute with Dr Ed Goldolf
Brisbane, Qld.
Email: Betty Taylor - taylorb2@optusnet.com.au or
Brian Sullivan - b.sullivan@social.uq.edu.au

13-15 November 2006

Annual Australian and New Zealand Adolescent Health Conference
Sydney, NSW.
<http://www.aracy.org.au/events.htm>

16-18 November 2006

6th Annual Honoring the Child, Honoring Equity Conference: Cultures, Challenges and Change in Troubling Times
Melbourne, Vic.
http://www.http://www.ecta.org.au/02_cal/details.asp?ID=51

19-21 November 2006

United We Stand: Building Knowledge and Strengthening Practice in Our Communities
Perth, WA.
<http://aasw.asn.au/news/conferences/aasw.htm>

19-22 November, 2006

Future Directions in Child Welfare
Vancouver, BC Canada.
<http://www.aagconference2006.com/>

23-24 November 2006

Early Childhood: Evidence into Practice
Melbourne, Vic.
<http://www.qec.org.au/callabstracts2006.htm>

27-29 November, 2006

International Conference on the Family Group Conference
Wellington, New Zealand
<http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/conf/docs/familygroup0611.pdf>

March - December 2006

Domestic Violence Provisions in Migration Law
Comencing in Brisbane on March 23 and travelling to 9 other centres before reaching Cairns on December 14
Contact Lesley Hunt, RAILS DV Project Worker
Ph (07) 3846 3189 Fax: 3844 3073
Email: lesley.hunt@rails.org.au

4-5 December, 2005

10th Early Childhood Research Conference
Wellington, NZ.
<http://www.childforum.com/symposium.asp>



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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, including email address. To enable us to update our records and ensure that you receive our quarterly publication, please contact us at the above phone, fax or email address with your change of details. 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 Sciences, Engineering and Health 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 the Centre for Social Science Research.

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