HOME SAFE HOME

The link between
domestic and family violence
and women's homelessness

WESNET

DEPARTMENT OF
**FAMILY AND
COMMUNITY
SERVICES**

**Partnerships Against
Domestic Violence**

Coordinated by the
Commonwealth Office
of the Status of Women

Home Safe home

The link between domestic and family violence and women's homelessness

Why do we women live in refuges when the perpetrators live in the comfort to which they are accustomed? Why must we three eke out a living on a pension of $330 per week of which $130 goes in rent while my husband lives on his salary of $750 per week of which $85 goes on the mortgage and lives alone in a four bedroom, two bathroom house.

(Woman with two children who had experienced domestic violence)

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Partnerships Against
Domestic Violence

FOREWORD

Domestic and family violence is devastating not only for women who experience it but also for the children who witness or live with such violence. This report highlights the trauma experienced by families when they are forced to leave their homes due to violence. Women and children are often physically, emotionally, psychologically and economically displaced. It is an endemic and continuing social problem that must be addressed.

Through the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence initiative the Howard Government has demonstrated its clear commitment to preventing and better responding to domestic violence. The Government's continued support of the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement and a range of other initiatives, are further ways in which the Government assists women and children who experience domestic violence.

Alongside these initiatives the Government is developing a National Homelessness Strategy in consultation with the community. The National Homelessness Strategy will provide a broad and holistic basis for the development of future policies and programs that will lead to prevention and amelioration of homelessness. The strategy will also enhance links between housing, employment assistance, childcare and income support.

Many strategies currently in place may encourage women to believe that their only option is to flee their homes and seek refuge elsewhere. Strategies identified in this report challenge orthodoxy, but stress that the safety of the women and their children is paramount when suggesting any response. The report calls for an integrated response to the social problem which is both sensitive towards the complexity of each situation and encompasses the various social policy responses to assist women in deciding whether to remain in their own homes.

The report contains information and recommendations that will be of interest across a broad range of stakeholders — from government to community and the private sector. I commend the report to you.

JOCELYN NEWMAN

Minister for Family and Community Services and

Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women

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Various people have provided important support and information as part of the research process.

The research team would like to thank:

Executive Summary

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In attempting to obtain secure, suitable and affordable housing following the experience of domestic or family violence women and children frequently face considerable upheaval, disruption and social and economic disadvantage. In response to the threat of homelessness, crisis accommodation services, particularly women's refuges and shelters, have played a pivotal role in raising public awareness of domestic violence and enabling women to leave situations of violence and stay in safe and secure accommodation.

The research project was funded by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services to contribute to the work of the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (PADV)* an initiative between the Commonwealth, the States and the Territories. As a result of PADV there is a growing body of evidence around the impacts of domestic violence on the community and developing knowledge on effective interventions. This study has taken these findings as the starting point to further examine aspects related specifically to homelessness for women and children resulting from domestic and family violence. In exploring these dynamics it looked at the broader social systems responding to domestic and family violence and how they contribute to homelessness or can be reoriented to the prevention of homelessness.

This study has identified strategies that challenge the continuation of the majority of women and children experiencing domestic violence being forced to leave their homes and seek alternative accommodation. Such a shift in policy is not appropriate for all women and children and should be on the basis of women's choice and safety being central. It requires a change in service orthodoxy and legal, judicial, police and housing responses to ensure women's and children's safety.

However it should be stated that without the political goodwill to challenge the status quo of women and children being forced to leave the home as a result of domestic violence research findings will be of limited use.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between domestic and family violence as experienced by women (including those alone and those with children) and homelessness. In particular, it explored issues that can contribute to the national policy debate about the best options or strategies to help women and children who live with or experience domestic and family violence.

Key objectives for the project included:

- An examination of the relationship between women's homelessness and domestic violence;
- Documentation of existing interventions aimed at preventing homelessness caused by an experience of domestic violence;
- Analysis of existing interventions aimed at preventing homelessness for women and children who have experienced domestic violence (including those aimed at assisting women to remain in their own homes);
- Identification of strategies and responses required to assist women to retain secure and safe accommodation following domestic violence, or to re-establish their independence following domestic violence; and
- Informing government decisions regarding future directions for domestic violence policy and program development.

METHODOLOGY

This national study involved consultation in all States and Territories involving both urban and regional centres. The scope of

consultations with stakeholders included those involved in women's accommodation services, domestic violence services, public housing, police, courts administration and other relevant services. In total 161 stakeholders were consulted across Australia. Women were asked to participate in the research via referrals from services across Australia, in total 52 women participated. Involvement by stakeholders and women included participation in a focus group, a telephone interview or a written questionnaire.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings and associated recommendations have been categorised according to various sectors. The recommendations are founded on two principles endorsed throughout the study.

- Homelessness for women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence is the result of social failure to fully accept and deal with the criminality of the perpetrators' behaviour.
- A diverse range of service options must be available to women so that their chances of re-establishing themselves safely and quickly are optimised through acknowledgment of their individual strengths and needs.

The recommendations are predicated on the need for adequate funding for all domestic violence services and they do not propose new service options at the expense of already established ones. The recommendations also challenge a number of orthodoxies that the researchers perceived in the prevailing paradigm of service provision. These are:

- Women and children should leave the family home to escape domestic violence.
- An assumption that women in a domestic or family violence situation have a focus on rebuilding their life free of violence and the perpetrator. Women in domestic and family violence circumstance are not a homogenous group and many of them, especially those in long term relationships do not necessarily want a separation.

- A "crisis" orientation such that systematic planning is not modelled or nurtured, emergency thinking prevails and only obviously urgent situations are responded to actively.
- Constructing women as victims who need protection and seclusion rather than as citizens with rights which can and should be asserted and enforced.
- Women and children are forced to flee the home to escape domestic violence.

There are important historical and resource reasons why these characteristics have evolved in the prevailing paradigm of service delivery. However some shifts in thinking and in policy and practice, which do not compromise safety and power considerations, and promote women's rights to choose their options are both possible and necessary and are reflected in these recommendations.

Early Intervention and Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

Not surprisingly the most common response to the question of how to prevent domestic violence related homelessness was to prevent domestic and family violence occurring in the first place. Whilst this was not the focus of the study it is an important ongoing consideration worthy of mention as it corroborates previous calls for action and confirms the importance of current prevention initiatives.

The stakeholders and women in this study emphasised the importance of domestic and family violence community education and prevention activities being extended to all areas of the Australian community.

The safety of women and children is an overarching principle in responding to domestic and family violence. Participants in the study have endorsed this principle.

Domestic and family violence is more likely to be prevented if it is better understood and less accepted in the community. The enormous challenge that such an effort requires is exacerbated when many aspects of our culture

condone various uses of violence and promote rigid sexist stereotypes. These issues need to be redressed simultaneously

It is recommended that:

1   The safety of women and children continues to be an overarching principle in all service responses related to domestic and family violence including policy and protocol statements through to the involvement of women and children in their own safety planning.

2   The rights of women and children to remain safely in their own homes be upheld and that policies and protocols are developed that safely enable the removal of the perpetrator in situations of domestic and family violence.

3   Australian Governments' current commitments to community education and public awareness raising of domestic and family violence continue; approaches known to be effective are available widely and further diversity in approaches is examined to access a broad section of the Australian community.

4   Findings from recent PADV Evaluations of Domestic Violence Prevention Strategies and Resources for Working with Young People are used as the basis for future development and expansion of community education approaches.

5   Greater support is given to community development in Indigenous communities to provide community led and owned responses to addressing family violence.

Legal responses

The legal system is an essential component in the response to domestic and family violence. It provides women and children with their right to safety. The threat to safety requires the use of legislation to protect women's and children's rights.

In general, participants did not speak confidently or appear well informed about the legal rights of women in domestic and family violence situations. While some stakeholders obviously take a strong position on legal rights and action and support their clients through court processes, others seem uncertain about the benefits of such activity. The cost of legal advice for some women was also seen as prohibitive.

It was commonly agreed that women had little information about what they could do legally when experiencing domestic and family violence and that the court experience when orders were applied for was often very lonely, frightening and bewildering. Language difficulties faced by many women from non-English speaking backgrounds and Indigenous women compounded their problems. There was also a recurring theme of lack of confidence in the ability of the legal system to ensure the safety of women and children.

The attitudes of magistrates and a perceived cautious exercise of their discretion came in for criticism by a number of women and stakeholders. It was felt that they did not always understand the nature of domestic and family violence.

At present in Australia most women and children who do not wish to live with violence in the home are forced to flee the home as their safety cannot be assured within the home, whilst the perpetrator of the crime continues to live there. A social change in attitude is required in the community to alter this situation. Such a change can be supported by effective and creative use of legislation that enables women to remain in the home and make other choices that enable them to live free of violence. The following recommendations aim to enhance the rights of women and children to be able to live free of violence and not become homeless as a result of that choice.

It is recommended that:

More effective use is made of current legislation by:

6 Educating magistrates on the use and breaches of restraining and exclusion orders. This could be done for example through the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration and the Australian Association of Magistrates.

7 Consistent and comprehensive knowledge provision for women and service providers about legal rights and obligations, particularly in relation to orders and tailoring of orders created around housing circumstances. This could be done for example through police contact with the victim and the development of literature and training by various legal bodies, such as women's legal services or legal services commissions.

Current good practices are extended including:

8 Specialist legal responses such as domestic violence courts and or magistrates who have specialist knowledge in domestic and family violence.

9 Legal advisory and court support for women before, during and after an order has been applied for.

The following changes are made to legislation and other services:

10 Consistent and potent domestic violence legislation across Australia, through the introduction of model domestic violence legislation, or through legislation in each state jurisdiction which ensures the option of sole occupancy orders for women in situations of domestic and family violence.

11 The intersection between Family Law and State and Territory domestic violence and child protection legislation be reviewed for inconsistencies, gaps and overlaps that do not uphold the rights of women and children to safely retain their homes.

12 Protocols be developed between men's services and legal systems for the systematic management of men who are in both perpetrators programs and involved in State or Federal legal matters related to family or domestic violence, so that the potential effectiveness of perpetrator programs is not undermined.

Police

Domestic and family violence call outs are a major part of police business even though it is known that many women escaping domestic and family violence do not involve the police in the situation. Police attitudes and responses to situations of domestic and family violence can be critical in the future pathways taken by women and the future use of violence by some men. This is a difficult area of policing because of the relations between the parties involved and the ongoing threat to the safety of women and children. Stakeholders and women supported police policies and projects aimed at more effective responses being implemented in various locations across Australia.

In respect of homelessness participants recognised the difficulties faced by police when responding to a domestic or family violence crisis. There was a general view that the combination of concerns about safety for women and children, and the availability of refuges/shelters made a woman's removal from home the easiest, most practical and most efficient option for police.

There continue to be problems following separation when violence from the perpetrator often increases and intervention orders therefore require strict enforcement of breaches by both police and courts, to ensure safety.

All of these circumstances are a huge hurdle in the shift towards the perpetrator being removed and not the women and children. These recommendations attempt to provide direction in how policing policies and responses could further support the shift in approach where women and children can remain safely in the home.

It is recommended that:

13 Police training in the area of domestic and family violence is continued and expanded in each jurisdiction with particular reference to local conditions and contexts.

14 That police become aware of the importance of their role in educating women and service providers about the collection of evidence relevant to their cases.

15 Specialist Police Domestic Violence Units and liaison officer positions are continued and expanded.

16 While breaches of intervention orders may be difficult to substantiate with present evidentiary requirements, police continue to rigorously pursue breaches.

17 The evaluation findings of specialist police pilots which allow for increasing intensity of response to domestic violence callouts and interagency coordination be used to inform future police practice and initiatives in the areas of domestic and family violence.

18 To continually improve the effectiveness of police responses to domestic and family violence situations, each jurisdiction establish an independent body for monitoring police responses to domestic violence callouts.

19 Consideration be given to the use of new technologies which would allow breach of orders to be automatically registered with police so that the sole responsibility for reporting does not fall with women.

Men's services

The removal of the perpetrator while there is the continuing use of violence and a threat to women's and children's safety is an important factor in preventing the homelessness of women and children following domestic and family violence. This requires the availability of appropriate accommodation for the man following domestic and family violence and the need for intervention that will aim to stop the use of violence. The findings indicate the need for an examination of current men's emergency accommodation services in relation to their response to male perpetrators of domestic and family violence. There was also a strongly held view amongst many stakeholders and women that compulsory or mandatory attendance at perpetrator programs was important for men taking responsibility for their choice to use violence.

It is recommended that:

20 There is a re-orientation of men's emergency accommodation services to accommodate men removed from the home as a result of domestic and family violence.

21 The re-orientation of men's emergency accommodation services would require that services engage in coordinated intervention to work towards the man stopping the use of violence such as compulsory referral and attendance at perpetrator programs with accountability to women and children.

22 Information about men's services is available to women through domestic violence and women's services which can assist their decision making.

23 Perpetrator programs establish greater links with other relevant services such as alcohol, drug and gambling services to ensure where appropriate that multiple issues are addressed.

24 The evaluation of perpetrator programs should always include accountability to women and children in ways that are respectful and culturally appropriate to women and children.

Outreach

There is no unitary model of outreach service across Australia. Outreach models ranged from working with women who were living with violent partners through to post-separation services. The organisational arrangements for outreach varied across Australia some were stand alone services, others were part of refuges/shelters or other human service organisations. This variation in organisational arrangements does not appear to be problematic, as local context is important in determining an appropriate configuration, but access to the range of services may not be possible across all areas of Australia.

Outreach services in their various forms offer a continuum of services alongside emergency accommodation to support women and children living free of violence. They are not a substitute for women's emergency accommodation but are uniquely placed to offer flexible and timely support which can result in reducing the risk of future episodes of homelessness for women and children and give women choices about service responses.

There is no question that women do and will continue to live with men who use violence. It is possible and necessary to acknowledge this without endorsing the violence and to consider how services might be organised for these women. Already many information and

outreach services are providing services to women who continue or return to live with the perpetrator. Many service providers are respectful of women's choices and conscious of the need to keep non judgemental contact with such women so that they do not feel reluctant to seek help when they believe the danger in their homes to be escalating.

Supporting women who choose to remain with a perpetrator will involve a significant shift in thinking for some service providers. However this shift is necessary because among other things it begins to challenge the prevailing orthodoxy that encourages the woman to flee her home when faced with domestic and family violence.

It is recommended that:

25 Existing outreach services are acknowledged and funded appropriately.

26 Brokerage or discretionary funds are available to the States and Territories as part of the standard funding formula to respond to the specific longer term home security needs of women who have experienced domestic and family violence.

27 In any strategic decision about outreach services consideration be given to their use in preventing homelessness through early intervention which could involve active collaboration with other information and intervention services.

28 Conduct nationally coordinated research to identify models of good practice in outreach services for diverse groups of women and different local conditions and that the findings of such research be used to inform decision making for the strategic use of outreach services across jurisdictions.

29 Recruitment practices reflect the diversity of service users and expand the numbers of Indigenous and bi-cultural workers.

Women's refuges/shelters

Refuges/shelters remain an essential part of the domestic violence network of services that enables women and children to access safe accommodation in escaping domestic and family violence.

There was not one refuge/shelter model that operated uniformly across Australia they varied according to:

- accommodation styles;
- organisational philosophy;
- entry points into refuges/shelters;
- length of stay;
- staffing;
- services available within the refuge/shelter; and
- regulations and rules around refuge/shelter use.

The well-established links of most refuges/shelters with legal, accommodation, support and other services enable women using the refuge/shelter to gain responsive assistance. The benefits of these links can also be made available to women in violent living situations who are not using the accommodation where refuges/shelters are funded to provide such outreach services, as is the case in some areas of Australia.

While there are benefits, there are also a number of difficulties associated with communal living. Many of these have been overcome through the addition of cluster style individual units which give women and families individual space and privacy combined with a sense of community.

The ongoing challenge for many refuges/shelters appears to be how to respond to the very diverse needs of women accessing the services within their capacity. Cultural diversity in particular confronts refuges/shelters. The challenge is in providing responsive services to all women in the community who need them and managing the heterogeneity of women's and children's needs within those services.

It is recommended that:

30 High security refuges/shelters continue to be available to ensure the safety of women and children following domestic and family violence and that they are staffed 24 hours per day, every day of the year.

31 Alternative models of safe emergency accommodation and support for women and children following domestic and family violence in addition to the prevailing high security option be considered to meet the heterogeneity of needs in all jurisdictions.

32 Rules and regulations in refuges/shelters reflect the diverse needs of women and children using the services and promote minimal disruption to important aspects of their lives.

33 Recruitment practices reflect the diversity of service users and expand the numbers of Indigenous and bi-cultural workers .

34 Coordination and protocols between refuges/shelters and other services relevant to local contexts continue to be improved.

35 Both communal and individual units cluster styles of accommodation be available in refuges/shelters in each area to provide for the diverse needs of women and children.

36 Consideration be given to strategies that combat current myths and stereotypes about refuges/shelters, for example a name change for refuges/shelters and community education initiatives.

37 Flexibility in the length of stay in refuges/shelters can be accommodated in response to the needs of women and children and the local housing context.

Emergency, transitional and supported accommodation

The availability of other emergency accommodation services available to women and children escaping domestic and family violence varied across Australia whilst always seeming to be in high demand.

The extent to which emergency accommodation services were coordinated varied considerably across Australia. In some areas this resulted in a complex system to negotiate. The impasse in effective coordination seems to be how to develop a system which requires people to only make one call, and not having to contact large numbers of agencies, but how to have such a service accessible without lengthy waits or not being able to get in touch. However such a system still relies on beds being available.

Various forms of supported accommodation were identified as providing important options for women in various situations. Transitional housing for women and children who require a period of support before entering independent living was identified as being in short supply in various locations and less well coordinated. Tenancy support programs provided some women with suitable supports in the move to independent living. Safe houses, especially in rural and remote locations, were strongly supported by stakeholders in these areas.

The need for short term leases whilst women made decisions about their options and arranged their affairs was identified as important.

Stakeholders stressed there should be room for flexibility in arrangements to respond to client needs.

It is recommended that:

38 Continued support is given to the development of safe and or retreat houses on Indigenous communities.

39. Where motels, boarding houses and caravans continue to be required as backup in crisis these options should always position women and their children in networks of services that provide the relevant range of support.

40. Very short term leases are available (1-2 weeks) for women who need to briefly leave the home while arrangements for return are put in place.

41. Transitional and supported accommodation, linked to other domestic violence services, be available for flexible time periods in all regions to enable women and children to re-establish themselves and develop longer term plans.

Longer Term Housing

The overarching concerns about longer term housing for women and children who had escaped domestic and family violence were its lack of affordability and suitability. The heterogeneity of women and children leaving situations of domestic and family violence requires a diversity of affordable housing options. For women and children who are not experiencing additional social problems and for whom independent living is required following

exit from emergency accommodation the options are limited. However these will differ from those women who require support in their transition to living independently and/or require other forms of support. The following recommendations are aimed at challenging reported discriminatory practices, expanding and supporting women's choices about the type of housing, its location, affordability and suitability to their needs. To prevent homelessness we have attempted to canvass a range of innovative options in public and private housing.

Public Housing Responsibilities

It is recommended that:

42 WESNET engage in high level negotiations with the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments on the appropriate forms of affordable housing stock and location for women and children escaping domestic and family violence with reference to the need for safety and minimum disruption to schooling, employment and social supports.

43 State and Territory Governments amend priority housing evidentiary and application requirements which only acknowledge physical abuse and which require women to engage in costly, time consuming and humiliating processes to find non-public accommodation. For example obtaining a number of written refusals from more than one real estate agent in a short time period.

44 Consideration be given by, State and Territory governments to providing loans schemes and financial support to financially disadvantaged women to purchase their own house following relationship breakdown as a result of domestic and family violence.

Community and Cooperative Housing

It is recommended that:

45 WESNET seek a collaborative relationship with community housing peak bodies in Australia (the National Community Housing Forum and the Community Housing Federation of Australia) to encourage various forms of community and cooperative housing which can provide further options for women and children to gain affordable and appropriate housing.

Private Rental

It is recommended that:

46 WESNET engage in negotiations with the Real Estate Institute of Australia at the national level to redress issues of discrimination and promote fair dealings in leasing practices concerning women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

47 WESNET develop training and information packages for its members to assist domestic violence services to engage in mutually productive relationships with local real estate agents.

48 Legal Services Commissions and Women's Legal Services consider the possibility of taking discrimination or fair trading legal action in response to flagrant cases of unfair private rental practices.

Women remaining in homes that they owned, rented or were purchasing

It is recommended that:

49 Commonwealth, State and Territory governments engage in high level negotiations with financial institutions and other lending authorities to implement policies around loan restructuring for women who become sole occupants of the residence following relationship breakdown as a result of domestic and family violence.

Services for Children

Lack of focus on children's needs following domestic and family violence has been a concern in both the domestic violence and related children's fields of service. There has been in some respects an implicit assumption of a "trickle down effect", that if you can provide support for the mother it will trickle through in its positive impact on children. Whilst there is some important currency in such an assumption, children are also considered entitled to services and support in their own right as they too have been the victims of domestic or family violence.

Stakeholders and women gave reports of obtaining effective support for children who had experienced domestic and family violence. However there was an overall sense that services to children were inadequate. The

counting of children as clients in the SAAP data system was seen as important as it more accurately demonstrated how many people refuges/shelters and other emergency accommodation services were accommodating. However some stakeholders argued that this counting of children as clients in their own right needed to be translated into support services and not only accommodation.

Concern about children's and young people's needs following domestic and family violence was evident at the recent PADV National Forum on Children and Young People in Melbourne in April 2000. The requirement for adequately resourced child focussed interventions as a basic right of children to deal with the effects of violence and support resilience was evident.

It is recommended that:

50 Children in domestic violence services are consistently treated as clients in their own right and that this is reflected in specific funding arrangements.

51 In planning decisions around redeveloping refuges/shelters consideration be given to the needs of young children and adolescents accompanying women.

52 Access to child support workers be available for all women and children using domestic violence accommodation and non-accommodation services.

53 Opportunities are sought and further developed for inter-agency case management with children in domestic violence services who have special needs.

54 The provision of services for women to understand and prepare for children's behaviour following domestic and family violence experiences be available in all areas of Australia.

Supportive Inter-Agency Approaches

Early indications of coordinated inter-agency approaches indicate their worth in providing a consistent and comprehensive local/regional response to domestic violence. At the broader level a whole of services/government response is advocated, particularly if there is a plan to shift current practices to focus on moving the

perpetrator out of the home. Inter-agency cooperation is also consistent with the National Homelessness Strategy directions (Dept Family and Community Services, 2000).

There is diversity amongst the coordination models that include differences in:

• the range of stakeholders involved;

• the focus of the interventions;

• the range of other activities involved outside of intervention;

• the parties to whom intervention is targeted women, men and/or children; and

• the level of formalisation of coordinated arrangements between agencies.

Some of the complexities of coordinated approaches include differences in philosophies, policies and procedures between agencies, whether agencies are Commonwealth or State/Territory services and which target group the agency serves.

An issue that emerged from the study was that a number of agencies are core to intervention in domestic and family violence such as police, courts, refuges/shelters and other crisis services, domestic violence services (non-accommodation services) and legal services in any coordinated approach. Other services may be more peripheral, in that they are not required for all cases of domestic and family violence such as drug and alcohol rehabilitation services, mental health services, gambling services, training, employment and education services. Protocols between core and peripheral services can provide a greater opportunity to deal with issues compounding domestic and family violence.

The central concern with all models is that there is a consistent response to domestic and family violence that takes account of the various agencies' involvement and provides service users with an accessible, comprehensive and seamless response to their needs.

It is recommended that:

55 All human service organisations have domestic violence policies and that these policies do not force women to construct themselves as victims fleeing the situation in order to gain access to benefits and services.

56 Consideration be given to the expansion and greater use of coordinated inter-agency domestic violence models that include core and peripheral agencies in all areas of Australia suitable to local conditions.

57 Coordinated models be supported with protocols amongst domestic violence services and between domestic violence and non domestic violence services.

58 Single entry point into domestic and family violence services be available in all areas of Australia and that consideration be given to improving their user responsiveness.

59 Findings of the evaluations of existing domestic violence response teams are used in the strategic development of further services across Australia.

Introduction

BACKGROUND

Domestic violence has been increasingly recognised as a social problem with significant personal, social and economic effects in the last 30 years. Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments have been putting resources into this area for the best part of this time, both directly through the funding of specific domestic violence services, and indirectly such as through police time spent in domestic and family violence situations, hospital emergency services and counselling services. In recent years it has been recognised that there is a need to consolidate what are effective interventions, re-examine what have become orthodox interventions as the diversity of Australians' experiences of domestic and family violence becomes evident and identify new ways forward which accommodate the needs of those experiencing domestic and family violence. *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (PADV)* an initiative between the Commonwealth, the States and the Territories, to work together towards the common goal of preventing domestic violence across Australia provides such an opportunity.

Partnerships against Domestic Violence

In November 1997, Heads of Government endorsed *Partnerships against Domestic Violence (PADV)*. PADV is concerned with building a strategic collaboration between the Commonwealth, States and Territories to test new ways of doing things, enhance and share knowledge and develop and document good practice in preventing and responding to domestic violence.

Six priority themes have been identified as the focus for projects funded under PADV:

- Working with children and young people to break the cycle of violence between generations.
- Working with adults to break patterns of violence; working with victims and violent men.
- Working with the community, educating against violence.
- Protection of the Law.
- Information and best practice.
- Helping people in rural and remote communities.

The PADV Taskforce has representatives from Commonwealth Departments and State and Territory governments. The Taskforce identified the importance of recognising the diversities and special needs within Australian communities. It was agreed that issues such as ethnicity, race and gender would be reflected across all of the above themes rather than as stand alone issues.

PADV attempts at the national level to consolidate what is already known about domestic violence and further the strategies of prevention and early intervention, whilst taking account of the diversity of the population.

THE CURRENT NATIONAL STUDY

As a result of PADV there has been a growing body of evidence around the impacts of domestic violence on the community and developing knowledge of effective interventions. This study, funded by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services to contribute to the work of PADV, has taken these findings as the starting point to consolidate what is known about women's and children's homelessness following the experience of domestic and family violence and to identify strategies for its future prevention.

Starting points for this study: what is already known

Homelessness and transience for women and children is a common feature of many women's stories when they have escaped domestic or family violence. The traditional

crisis accommodation option available to women (and children) escaping domestic and family violence is the refuge or shelter. These services continue to be in high demand. It has also been recognised that these services are not able to meet the needs of all those experiencing domestic and family violence both in terms of numbers and the types of services provided. The Keys Young (1998) study, *Against the Odds: How Women Survive Domestic Violence* identified the following issues:

- Access is limited due to level of demand and geographical location. The problems of inaccessibility due to distance have been further highlighted in the recent report on *Domestic Violence in Regional Australia* (WESNET 2000).
- Rules in some refuges can deter some women from using them
- Policies and practices of some refuges result in some women not being able to have their needs met such as women with disabilities, young women and women with mental health problems
- Some refuges were not considered to be sufficiently culturally inclusive of the diverse needs of the women escaping domestic and family violence.

The review of Women's Domestic Violence Services in South Australia (1997) also found there was a need to re-examine and extend current accommodation options, as "one size does not fit all" and it would never be possible to resource refuges at a level which would alleviate the needs of all women escaping domestic and family violence. Since the 1997 review there has been an extensive restructure of these services in South Australia that involves the adoption of a range of strategies including outreach services.

Such diverse and innovative strategies are of obvious interest to the Supported Assistance Accommodation Program (SAAP) as considerable resources are expended on women escaping domestic and family violence. The major reason females sought SAAP services in 1998-99 were to escape domestic and family

violence (39%), the next most common reason was relationship/family breakdown (12%). As at June 1999 22% of SAAP agencies were targeted at women escaping domestic and family violence. Of these 61.2% were providing crisis/short term accommodation and 19% medium-long term accommodation. In 1998-99 women escaping domestic and family violence were the second largest client group after young people. It would also be expected that a number of the young people who accessed accommodation services experienced violence in their family of origin.

There is evidence that refuges and shelters and other crisis accommodation services play an important role for a number of women (and children) in escaping domestic and family violence. However they cannot and should not be expected to meet the needs of all women escaping domestic and family violence. Research and practice wisdom suggests that we need to look at alternative ways women's accommodation and other needs can be met whilst escaping domestic and family violence and in the post separation period.

This study represented an important opportunity through PADV as accommodation options are a major factor in women's decision making when experiencing domestic and family violence, in particular the cost of alternative accommodation, safety, location and tenure. When women have children this is often of even greater concern in their decision making as the level of disruption in children's lives through changing schools, childcare arrangements etc., can result in women remaining in situations of domestic and family violence. Women with special needs such as Indigenous women, those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, those with disabilities and those from rural and remote locations are likely to experience even greater barriers in escaping domestic and family violence and having access to suitable accommodation options.

The contribution of this study: consolidating knowledge and identifying future strategies

The importance of this National study is that it bridges a gap in identifying the needs of women (with or without children) escaping domestic and family violence in relation to accommodation and other services.

The study was conducted by Donna Chung, Rosemary Kennedy, Bev O'Brien and Sarah Wendt from the Social Policy Research Group at the University of South Australia with assistance from Sam Cody from Shelter SA.

The study involved consultation in all States and Territories involving both urban and regional centres. The scope of consultations with stakeholders included those involved in women's accommodation services, domestic violence services, public housing, police, courts administration and other relevant services. In total 161 stakeholders were consulted across Australia. Women were asked to participate in the research via referrals from services across Australia, in total 52 women participated. Involvement by stakeholders and women included participation in a focus group, a telephone interview or a written questionnaire.

Sources of quantitative data including: the Australian Women's Safety Survey (1996); the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health; and the SAAP National Data Collection (2000) were analysed to provide background information on the extent of domestic violence and its impact on accommodation services that women and children escaping domestic violence access.

Aims and objectives of the study

The broad aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between domestic and family violence as experienced by women (including those alone and those with children) and homelessness. In particular, it explored issues that can contribute to the national policy debate about the best options or strategies to help women and children who live with or experience domestic and family violence.

Key objectives for the project included:

- An examination of the relationship between women's homelessness and domestic violence;

- Documentation of existing interventions aimed at preventing homelessness caused by an experience of domestic violence;

- Analysis of existing interventions aimed at preventing homelessness for women and children who have experienced domestic violence (including those aimed at assisting women to remain in their own homes);

- Identification of strategies and responses required to assist women to retain secure and safe accommodation following domestic violence, or to re-establish their independence following domestic violence; and

- Informing government decisions regarding future directions for domestic violence policy and program development.

This report includes:

- An overview of the ways and the extent to which domestic violence impacts on the homelessness of women and children;

- An analysis of the range of responses to domestic and family violence in relation to housing and accommodation; and

- Recommendations on strategies and responses required to better meet the needs of women and children experiencing domestic and family violence, and to reduce the trauma of women and children affected by domestic and family violence.

Throughout this report the term domestic and family violence has been used. The term domestic violence is taken to cover:

> *any form of abuse, violence/or coercion by a partner or previous partner that serves to establish and maintain power and control over another person, is enacted in a context of unequal power or privilege, and has the potential to cause harm to the physical and or emotional well being of that person. The behaviours which constitute [this] violence include actual or threatened physical assault, sexual assault, verbal, social, spiritual and economic abuse. (SA Domestic Violence Unit, 1997).*

The term domestic and family violence is used to be inclusive of Indigenous views and experiences. Indigenous communities have indicated a preference for the term family violence as it more accurately reflects their experiences which along with the above behaviours may include family feuding (Blagg, 1999), and which may apply to family members beyond partners. Where the term domestic violence alone appears it is where it is used by other authors to maintain their original meaning.

This report does not contain separate chapters on the experiences and needs of Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The issues identified were not identical across Australia for all Indigenous people or all culturally and linguistically diverse communities and were often experienced by others, so it would not have been appropriate to locate the issues within separate chapters. There were many important issues raised about the experiences of these groups and they have been discussed throughout the body of the report in many sections to ensure that they are recognised and addressed across all sectors of government to whom recommendations for change are directed.

In exploring the array of complex needs this study examined the broader social systems responding to domestic and family violence and how they contribute to homelessness or can be reoriented to early intervention and prevention.

To be free of domestic and family violence most women are forced to leave their homes. This study has identified strategies that provide alternative options to women and children being forced to leave their homes and seek alternative accommodation. Such a shift in policy is not appropriate for all women and children and should be on the basis of women's choice and safety being central. It requires a change in service orthodoxy and legal, police and housing responses to ensure women's and children's safety.

Literature Review

HOMELESSNESS: WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Homelessness is a concept that is often used without much thought to what it actually means. Many definitions tend to focus on the absence of shelter. However, researchers have pointed out that the definition of homelessness has important implications for research and social policies and that homelessness is more than the absence of a house.

Neil and Fopp (1994, p. 8) defined homelessness as,

> *that state in which people have no access to safe and secure shelter of a standard that does not damage their health, threaten their personal safety, or further marginalise them through failing to provide either cooking facilities or facilities that permit adequate personal hygiene.*

Neil and Fopp (1994, p. 3) argue that homelessness implies more than "houselessness". Therefore, when defining homelessness the notion of home needs to be considered. Home, they state, can be either subjective or objective and so a "house" represents a physical structure, but a "home" indicates much more. Watson and Austerberry (1986, p. 8) argue that a "house" is generally associated with a dwelling or physical structure. However, a "home" implies social relations and activities within a physical structure. The home is strongly linked to the notion of family, which is associated with images of personal warmth, comfort, security and stability. Watson and Austerberry (1986, p. 22) interviewed homeless women in London, including women who were sleeping rough, staying in emergency hostels or refuge accommodation, restricted-access hostel accommodation and a conglomerate of non-institutionalised and hidden unsatisfactory and insecure forms of accommodation. This included staying with friends or relatives in overcrowded conditions, private rental where the woman is forced to leave, and accommodation in which the woman was forced to leave due to domestic or family violence. The women were asked open-ended questions about meanings they attributed to home and homelessness. The majority of women associated home with having decent material conditions and standards. Many associated it strongly with a sense of emotional wellbeing, comfort, warmth, security and safety. For others, the nature of social relations that existed within the home was important. The majority also mentioned the notion of controlling one's own life within the home and having privacy (Watson & Austerberry 1986, pp. 92-95). The women defined homelessness as being the opposite to definitions of home. For example, poor material conditions, lack of emotional and physical wellbeing, lack of social relations, lack of control and privacy (Watson & Austerberry 1986, p. 97).

In 1996, the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that there were 105, 300 homeless people on census night. Forty six percent were staying temporarily with other families, twenty percent were in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out, twenty two percent were staying at boarding houses, and twelve percent were in SAAP accommodation (refuges, hostels, night shelters) (Chamberlain 1999, p. 40). The Census used the cultural definition of homelessness proposed by Chamberlain and MacKenzie (1992). Their definition identifies three segments in the population:

- Primary homelessness – people without conventional accommodation, such as living on the streets, sleeping in parks, using cars for temporary shelter.
- Secondary homelessness – people who move frequently from one form of

temporary shelter to another, such as people using emergency accommodation. Women and children escaping domestic and family violence (women staying in refuges, staying with family and friends, or using boarding houses) are included in this category.

- Tertiary homelessness – people who live in boarding houses on a medium to long-term basis (Chamberlain 1999, p. 1).

The census count also included households. Three household types were identified: single person households (individuals on their own); couple households (including people in defacto relationships); and family households (at least one adult and one child aged 17 or younger) (Chamberlain 1999, p. 27). The census concluded that there were 73, 000 households in the homeless population on census night. They included 35, 500 households doubling up with friends and relatives, another 21, 000 households were staying in boarding houses, approximately 8, 200 were in improvised dwellings or sleeping rough and there were 7, 900 households in SAAP accommodation (Chamberlain 1999, p. 29). Seventy six percent were single person households, 14% were couples and 10% were families. There were 7,200 families on census night, these families included 28, 000 people (10, 752 parents and 16, 928 children) Family households represented twenty six percent of homeless people (Chamberlain 1999, p. 3).

The concept of homelessness still conjures up images of individuals who have nowhere to stay at night, no money, sleeping on the streets, and no material possessions. Rarely is homelessness associated with emotion, that is, as psychological and physical trauma associated with the loss of feeling of social and familial belonging, self worth, identity and control over one's life (Nunan & Johns 1996, p. 3). Nunan and Johns (1996, p. 3) state that the "problem of homelessness is multi-dimensional and its basis is in the psycho-social as well as the material".

Domestic Violence, Family Violence and Homelessness

Violence against women in the home denies the possibility that women may find a safe place and perhaps destroys the strongest foundations of her identity (Nunan & John 1996, p. 26).

> *The housed homelessness of domestic violence survivors often persists for years. Repeated physical, sexual and verbal abuse in the home renders women homeless, negating feelings of control and security (Nunan & John 1996, p. 27).*

Nunan and John (1996) argue that the approach needed to address homelessness, is one that introduces the notion of "home" and moves beyond the idea that a roof over one's head is all that matters.

Wardhaugh (1999, p. 4) points out that most perspectives on the "home" are based on assumptions of the white, middle class and heterosexual nuclear family and therefore, the widespread nature of violence within families is overlooked. The understanding of home as a safe and secure haven relies on the separation of inside and outside, with safety and security on the inside. Those that are abused and violated within the family home are made to feel "homeless at home", and many subsequently become homeless in an objective sense, when they escape their violent homes (Wardhaugh 1999, p. 5).

Nunan (1995, p. 37) acknowledges the argument surrounding the issues of homelessness and women experiencing domestic violence as being that women using domestic violence accommodation services do have a house/home. They simply cannot live there because of the violence, and the present inability of our society and community to prevent men's violence and abuse leaves their home environment unsafe. The home becomes one of the most dangerous places for women and children and the most feared person is often a member of the household. The meanings of a sense of security, belonging,

stability, control and basis for personal identity are denied once violence occurs (Nunan 1995, p. 38). The links to family, friends and community weaken and support networks become detached and so a woman's isolation increases. Thus, Nunan (1995, p. 38) states "women living with violence in the home effectively become the 'housed homeless' ".

Nunan (1995, p. 41) argues that women's homelessness through domestic and family violence is a demonstration of structural inequalities within Australia society. Gender inequality is widespread and embedded in social and cultural norms. To address women's homelessness, the structural causes of that homelessness also need to be focused on.

Watson and Austerberry (1986, p. 3) argue that houses embody the dominant ideology of a society and reflect the way in which that society is organised. For example in Australia the dominant social relations are both patriarchal and capitalist and so housing policy and the housing market operate in favour of the traditional nuclear family. This places certain groups at greater risk of homelessness, such as women who are financially dependent on a partner (Burke 1994). Women who are unable to independently access the financial or social resources necessary to enter the housing market may be forced to live with domestic and family violence, simply because of lack of alternatives (Watson & Austerberry 1986, p. 5). Watson & Austerberry (1986, p. 5) define this homelessness or housing need as "concealed". Alternatively they can face absolute homelessness if they are not able to continue living in the home (Burke 1994).

The majority of the literature on homelessness points out that the reasons why homelessness occurs in the community involves a complex interplay of personal and structural factors. Burke (1994, p. 10) identifies social dislocation and domestic and family violence as factors that create such breakdowns in "normal living arrangements". The recent National Homelessness Strategy (2000)

indicates the continuation of this situation as it notes that there has been an increase in the incidence of women and their children fleeing domestic violence, influencing homelessness (Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services 2000).

Various authors have argued that women are particularly vulnerable to homelessness because of their economic position. Nunan and John (1996, p. 37) and Neil and Fopp (1994, p. 95) state that in Australia, the economic position of many women is directly or indirectly dependent on men. When women do achieve economic independence, their earnings tend to be significantly lower than men's, this being the result of a gendered hierarchy of occupations and women's concentration at the lower levels of the job market and in part-time and casual positions. Women's primary role of caring for their children also means that they are more reliant upon statutory income than men and/or considerable income goes towards child-care costs.

Neil and Fopp (1994, p. 99) state that women with children escaping domestic and family violence are more at risk of homelessness. Over fifty percent of women in a North American study named domestic violence as the major reason for their homelessness (University of Massachusetts 1997). In Britain domestic violence has also been cited as a major reason for women and children's homelessness (Thomas & Niner 1989). Leaving a partner usually has a dramatic effect on women's economic and housing position because often the perpetrator of violence remains in the home. There are also obstacles and cultural expectations women face when attempting to establish their own financial independence. Women not in the work force, at the time of leaving have limited chance of gaining employment, especially if they have been out of the labour market for some time. They may have been separated from family support by the domestic or family violence situation they have left and their self-confidence is likely to be low. Their

knowledge of the financial aspects of housing may be limited and they may experience difficulties securing housing loans in their own right or discrimination by prospective landlords (particularly for women with children) (Neil & Fopp 1994, pp. 89, 103).

North American studies have shown that a high proportion of homeless women disclose domestic violence as a chronic feature of their relationships and family life or as a precipitating factor in their current homeless episode (Metraux & Culhane 1999, p. 375). Metraux and Culhane's (1999, p. 390) study showed that homelessness for the large majority of women occurred due to family breakdown and that the presence of domestic violence was one dynamic which increased the risk of them experiencing additional episodes of shelter use. Women experiencing domestic violence face economic and housing difficulties, once in the shelter system, in addition to the effects of domestic violence. This combination was found to contribute to a decreased likelihood of making a successful shelter exit (Metraux & Culhane 1999, p. 391). The probability of continuing to experience homelessness as a result of domestic violence is indicated by Nunez and Fox's (1999) research which shows that a "typical" homeless family in America today consists of a single mother about thirty years old, with two or three children averaging 5 years of age.

Studies have also focused on the impacts of homelessness on children compared to those children in stable housing. Vostanis, Grattan and Cumella (1998) found greater risk of: delayed development; learning difficulties; social and mental health problems such as sleep disturbances, eating problems, anti-social behaviours; and emotional problems including depression, anxiety and self harm.

Hague and Malos (1994) looked at the effects on children of homelessness and living in temporary accommodation. They found that women and children described living in constant fear and anxiety. Mothers reported

that their children's health and/or mental well-being had been affected by the violence which they had experienced or witnessed and that homelessness compounded their children's difficulties. Children's distress was likely to be increased by their experiences when the family applied for rehousing— especially if they were refused help or spent long periods waiting in uncertainty.

In summary domestic and family violence are major factors contributing to women's and children's homelessness. Violence against women in the home denies them their security and safety and destroys foundations of their identity.

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ACCOMMODATION INTERVENTIONS AND MODELS FOR PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS

In analysing the range of current interventions and their potential to have a preventive focus, it was important to examine existing research and literature on current programs both in Australia and overseas directed towards preventing homelessness for women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence.

Australia

Refuge Movement

The women's refuge movement emerged in the mid 1970s, beginning with a group of Sydney feminists who squatted in a couple of houses to offer accommodation to women and their children who were escaping domestic violence. The services were inundated by women, which drew attention all over Australia. In mid 1975 the Labor government provided Federal funding to the refuges that were operating. By 1979, there were 93 women's refuges receiving Federal funding and an estimated 100 in operation. About half of these were run by women's groups, the remainder being largely church run. By 1987, the Commonwealth government was funding

163 women's refuges and a further 20 non-accommodation support services (McGregor & Hopkins 1991, p. 11).

The refuge movement is often seen as a radical development. It has been criticised as "amounting only to a bandaid approach to the problem of domestic violence, failing to tackle the root cause" (McGregor & Hopkins 1991, p. 15). It is argued that as long as the emphasis is on providing emergency accommodation, male violence will continue.

McGregor and Hopkins (1991, p. 15) see the refuge movement as pursuing two purposes: to provide accommodation for women escaping domestic violence, and to publicise and work towards the elimination of violence, by men, against women in the home. To attract government funding, some refuges often argued that women who were victims of domestic violence were homeless as they were forced to remain in intolerable situations because they had nowhere else to go. Defining the issue as one of homelessness, it was argued, would more likely attract funds and, therefore once refuges were established, they would place domestic violence on the public agenda.

However, once refuges were established, they were overflowing and the need to re-house women after their stay became of paramount concern. Workers therefore made efforts to place questions of housing and income support on the political agenda. There was economic and social pressure on the system to change in a direction which would provide women and children an alternative to dependence on men. Feminists argued "until these alternatives exist, all women, whether we know it or not, are essentially homeless and dispossessed" (McGregor & Hopkins 1991, p. 17).

Feminists also argued that the law should recognise the right of a woman and her children to live in the family home advocating that violent men be evicted and that the police be more active in telling women about their rights in situations of violence (McGregor & Hopkins 1991, p. 18). The history of the refuge movement shows an interplay of the concerns of domestic violence and homelessness. Domestic violence provided the motivation for the establishment of the refuges but homelessness became the pressing day-to-day issue once in operation (McGregor & Hopkins 1991, p. 19).

Approaches that informed the refuge movement came from radical feminism, for it is argued that the hierarchical institutions of society oppress and disempower people, making them unable to take control of their own lives. Social change, therefore, depends on countering these forces and working to empower the individual. Working from this premise feminist refuges often consisted of a collective form of organisation. There was no organisational hierarchy and decisions were made by consensus. Information was shared, jobs rotated and day-to-day decisions were made as far as possible by those affected. It was argued that if violence has its roots in hierarchy, as patriarchy suggested, then non-hierarchical, empowering forms of organisation were essential in working against domestic violence (McGregor & Hopkins 1991, p. 23).

SAAP bringing together emergency accommodation

In 1983 Commonwealth funds for refuges became available under a new Women's Emergency Services Program (WESP) which was not restricted to the provision of accommodation, but covered advice and support services. In 1985, the government introduced the new Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) and WESP was included as a sub-program (McGregor & Hopkins 1991, p. 20-21). Women's refuges argued that they did not want to be labelled as "accommodation services" and preferred a national "women's services programme" under a "women's ministry". However, there were incentives to join SAAP—it provided five-year funding agreements and improved wages and conditions for women's refuges, financed by the Commonwealth and matched dollar for dollar by the States and Territories (McFerren 1990, p. 201).

While refuges have experienced sustained growth supporters of refuges have continued to argue that funding was inadequate, that annual funding reports were inappropriate, and to raise questions about why domestic violence and homelessness would not go away (McFerren 1990, p. 201).

In the first five years of SAAP the focus was on the provision of accommodation and basic assistance for homeless people. In 1989 the program was reviewed and a greater emphasis on supporting homeless people to achieve the optimal level of independence was the focus. The introduction of user rights mechanisms aimed to ensure that services respect the dignity and needs of people and encourage them to make choices and decisions for themselves (Casey et al. 1996, p. 275).

Another review in 1993 highlighted the need for SAAP to have an even broader vision than provision of shelter and support and identified the need for the program to respond to the factors causing homelessness rather than continuing to react to the crisis (Casey et al. 1996, p. 275). It was recognised that women and children escaping domestic and family violence have a wide range of needs and require access to:

- Stable and secure income;
- Training, education and employment opportunities;
- Health services;
- Disability and rehabilitation programs;
- Children's support services;
- Legal advice and assistance;
- Individual and family counselling and mediation; and
- Long term secure and affordable accommodation (Casey et al. 1996, p. 275).

In 1994-95, in line with agreed strategic directions aimed at improved client outcomes, the Commonwealth made available an additional $17.4 million over the four-year period ending 1997-98, to assist with the continuing development of SAAP. SAAP strategic directions involved:

- Supporting and encouraging the use of case management approach, where appropriate, in the delivery of service to clients; and
- Establishing or strengthening linkages between SAAP and other programs which can assist SAAP clients to achieve independent living, such as education and training, income support, labour market programs (Healey 1997, p. 36).

SAAP aimed to assist homeless people to achieve the maximum possible degree of self-reliance, gain access to a range of services and re-integrated into mainstream society. Case management was the preferred approach because it provided assistance to clients with a complex range of needs who required access to a range of services and forms of assistance. Coordination of service responses is a major focus of case management (Casey et al. 1996, p. 276). Case management within SAAP is defined as "a collaborative, client-focused approach. It is aimed at empowering and working with clients to effectively meet individual needs" (Casey 1996, p. 278). The elements of case management are entry/screening, assessment, planning, direct service, co-ordination, monitoring and review, exit planning, evaluation and case closure (Casey et al. 1996, pp. .278-280).

The Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (2000) points out that SAAP is an important part of Australia's overall response to homelessness. However, there are still serious issues that need addressing. Distance and travel difficulties mean that refuges are still very inaccessible for rural women (WESNET 2000). Another issue is the relationship between homelessness and housing policy and programs. It has long been recognised that the demand in crisis accommodation and the difficulty for homeless people to access such services are due to a lack of exit points from crisis accommodation into medium or longer-term housing. This lack of exit points means that crisis accommodation places cannot be freed up and homeless people must be turned away.

Accommodation pathways – what generally happens?

It is well known that in Australia women's refuges have been the major service offered to women and children escaping domestic and family violence. They offer women safety, support and temporary accommodation. However, Sullivan et al (1994, p. 1) points out that little is known about the process women undergo as they attempt to escape domestic violence. No study has tracked women over long periods of time to investigate the processes involved in leaving domestic violence.

Research has found that most women who experience domestic violence have turned repeatedly to outsiders for help in ending the violence (Sullivan et al. 1994, Keys Young 1998). Researchers who have examined the types of help sought by women generally categorised help into "informal" or "formal" assistance. Informal includes friends, relatives and women's groups and formal includes social service organisations, doctors/hospitals, police and criminal justice system, religious organisations and shelters. Most of the research on seeking help indicates that about half of any given sample of women experiencing domestic violence have turned to their family and friends for assistance. Women who have reported receiving help from relatives or friends have rated it as very important to being able to leave their partners (Sullivan et al. 1994, p. 3).

Hill and Stamey (1990, p. 311) argue that going from "housed" to "homeless" is rarely a sudden or unexpected event. They state that it is a process whereby people move from a self-sufficient home/house, to living with friends, relatives, or in government, temporary housing, to the streets. Wasson and Hill (1998) point out that female-headed homeless families are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. Their study conducted in New York also found that homelessness is modelled as a "three-state process". Families primarily move between their own residence, to doubling-up and finally, to homeless shelters. The study also focused on

explanatory factors contributing to female-headed families homelessness. However, domestic violence was not mentioned amongst the risk factors.

The Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (2000) points out that the private rental market is often the first choice for people exiting homelessness due to the greater control over the location of where they live. Many people are successful in setting themselves up and securing their home. However, a sizeable number of people do not make the transition and find themselves in need of support. The role of support during transition is an important area to include when developing strategies to prevent women and children who have left domestic violence continuing to be homeless or to relapse into homelessness.

Accommodation options - do they impact on decision making about leaving violent relationships?

Keys Young (1998, p. 78) reported that there was widely held acceptance that refuges were an absolutely essential service for women experiencing domestic violence and that they play a vital role in providing places of safety for women in crisis situations. However, it was also acknowledged that refuges are not always as accessible as they might be, and that certain aspects of refuge service delivery may currently be deterring some women from using them. The research identified a range of reasons why women did not access refuges. These included:

- Access was difficult because of the extent of the demand.
- Access was problematic in rural and remote areas.
- The "rules" being used in the refuges, while understandable and geared to women's, children's and workers' safety, were said to deter some women.
- The practices in some refuges were thought to be discriminatory, that is, it was felt that women with disabilities, young women and women with mental health problems were not always well served.

- The physical structure and model of communal living was threatening or challenging for some women.
- The failure of some refuges to be culturally inclusive in terms of staffing, the advertising/marketing of their service, their service-delivery approach and the development of skills in dealing with issues relating to special needs of particular women (Keys Young 1998, p. 78-80).

The Keys Young (1998, p. 49-52) study showed that although domestic violence services are publicised, some women were still not aware of them. Women in isolated situations, particularly rural and remote areas, migrant women who spoke little or no English and women with a disability, appeared to be least aware of services and how to access them. Research conducted in Western Australia found that Indigenous women were more likely to use refuges as respite from violence rather than transition (Blagg et al. 1999). Research conducted in Northern Territory also points out a number of cultural differences in use of and response to refuges/shelters by Indigenous women (McPeake 1999).

Many women still do not identify their situation as domestic violence (Keys Young 1998; Bagshaw, Chung, Couch, Lilburn & Wadham 1999). They identified their problems as marital conflict, their partner's drinking, mental health problems or their own inadequacies. Women also reported that they did not feel comfortable using refuges because of negative perceptions they had about the types of people who used the services and the types of people who ran the services. They also doubted the capacity of these services to really understand and help with their problem. Middle-class women expressed reluctance to use "welfare type services", lesbians expressed uncertainty about accessing them, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) and Indigenous women expressed concern that the services would be "feminist", "man-hating" or "run by lesbians" and the lack of culturally appropriate staff (Keys Young 1998). However, many women did attempt to access refuge services and found

that because of the demand, they were unsuccessful. They would get disheartened because of the time it took to get through on the telephone lines. Some tried to get into refuges but either no places were available or the places were felt to be unsuitable.

The Keys Young (1998, p. 78) report identified, from a range of service-providers, groups of women who they believed were less likely to use existing domestic violence crisis and related services. These included the following:

- Women residing in rural and remote areas;
- Indigenous women;
- Older women;
- Women with a disability;
- NESB women
- Lesbian women;
- Young women;
- Professional women and/or women in the middle or upper classes;
- Women who experience non-physical forms of domestic violence; and
- Women who have a mental health problem.

Public housing authorities

Outside of the crisis oriented refuge model, public housing authorities in Australia are an option for women leaving domestic violence situations. They provide longer term options than SAAP services. The types of public housing responses vary across States and Territories with varying criteria for access and availability. The housing market in Australia is not uniform and there is not one national policy governing housing (Nunan & Johns 1996, p. 39). The public housing authorities in Australia each have their own domestic violence policy and responses. They vary on waiting times, state residency status requirements, policies on prior debt, policies on the amount and formality of the evidence required to show domestic violence and on policies for managing joint tenancies in domestic violence situations. Appendix 1 outlines the policies stated by each of the housing authorities in relation to domestic

violence. Limited or no choice about location of the public housing offered often poses problems for women escaping domestic violence. For some women who have interests in family property, there may be eligibility problems with public housing.

In 1999, a new Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement was signed representing a $4 billion contribution by the Commonwealth primarily for public and community housing over four years. The Agreement was effective from 1 July 1999 continuing through to 30 June 2003. $91 million per year is spent on Indigenous housing and infrastructure through the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program, and a further $200 million is spent by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission in this area through the Community Housing and Infrastructure Program. The aim of the Commonwealth is to encourage a "a diverse and innovative housing sector that supports people where they want to live, fosters sustainable communities and links housing to other programs" (Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services 2000, p. 13).

Housing in Australia

Accessing long-term accommodation is extremely important for women and children escaping domestic violence. However, the Australian housing system has proved inadequate in many respects. Nunan and Johns (1996, p. 39) state that "it remains the case that women-headed households are among the most disadvantaged when it comes to securing appropriate housing." In Australia owner-occupation accounts for seventy percent of the population, twenty percent are in the private rental market and public housing carry only five percent.

Nunan and Johns (1996, p. 39) reported that women actually achieve higher rates of ownership than men overall (owing to their longevity and the death of a spouse) but the rate of purchase in their own right is lower. Female-headed households face particular barriers to owning their own home, with affordability being the major one and this is

often exacerbated by discrimination by financial and lending institutions (Hughes 1999, p. 6). Despite the difficulties for women, owner-occupation is seen as the most desirable tenure because of reasons concerning security (Nunan & Johns 1996, p. 40).

Nunan and Johns reported in 1996 that 14% of all women lived in private rental accommodation. They revealed that women-headed households over-represented this tenure with female sole parents accounting for 24% of private rental, compared with 21.5% of young single women in this form of accommodation. Hughes (1999, p. 7) states that this over-representation is largely due to the failure of home ownership as a viable option for this group of women. She also reported that sole parent families experience the highest levels of refusals and discrimination when attempting to access the private rental market compared with other household types.

The difficulty for women with low incomes of entering into or sustaining home ownership and the insecurity and the unpredictable changes of the private rental market, has seen the demand for public housing increased (Nunan & John 1996, p. 42). Desperate to be housed, women often move not only out of an area they know and can identify with, but also out of the metropolis altogether (Nunan & John 1996, p. 43). This is particularly difficult for women and children who have experienced domestic violence as research indicates that they are often reliant on family and friends for support (Sullivan et al. 1994). Such support networks are removed in these circumstances.

Evaluations of existing range of interventions

Neil and Fopp (1994, p. 155) acknowledged that there has been little research which actively seeks the views of the homeless people about their support requirements. However, they mention a 1988 survey of women in refuges or emergency accommodation which found that their most frequent need was related to their children

(child-care, kindergartens, schools and infant welfare services). The majority of women had a preference for follow-up support by a refuge or emergency or accommodation worker. They also expressed a need to have access to women's support groups, which specifically focused on domestic violence. Just under one-quarter of the women stated that they preferred medium-term housing (between 3 months and a year—three-quarter way house model) which provided residents with support on an occasional basis or whenever needed. Over three-quarters stated their preference for long-term housing. The main reason for preferring long-term housing was the desire to be settled. The women who favoured the three-quarter way house did so because it enabled continued contact with the refuge and secure and supportive housing pending an allocation to public housing. Many women suggested that an ideal situation for them would be long-term housing and support when they needed it.

The refuge model is the dominant service model to assist women and children escaping domestic violence. Initially feminists established their service models as a temporary measure until violence and homelessness were eliminated. However domestic violence continues and places in refuges/shelters continues to be in high demand. Nunan and Johns (1996, p. 78) argue that there has been a lack of concrete planning and therefore it is difficult to establish new services or adapt existing service models to meet needs. However it can be argued that SAAP has grown over the years in response to emerging needs and changing climates.

Throughout the 1990s SAAP has proposed numerous alternate models of service delivery. In 1992, the national SAAP/CAP Ministerial Advisory Committee proposed three models of coordination in the delivery of transitional support. Firstly, a cooperative model in which two agencies, one providing non-housing support and the other housing support, agree to cooperate (Neil & Fopp 1994, p. 184). Secondly, a co-location model, in which the

two agencies agree to operate from one location, as a "one-stop" housing and support service (Neil & Fopp 1994, p. 184). Finally, a coordination model, where one agency provides both the accommodation and housing services, and the necessary support. There is an internal separation of functions, which are offered from the same organisation (Neil & Fopp 1994, p.184). Outreach was also proposed and has been implemented. It can be provided from both supported accommodated agencies and non-housing agencies (Neil & Fopp 1994, p.185).

Reviews of the provision of SAAP funded services to women and children escaping domestic violence have taken place. For example, in South Australia in 1997, recommendations concerning the delivery and provision of services were made including:

- models, specifically recommending that shelters increase their range of accommodation, including high security communal living, high security clustered supported accommodations, high security individual accommodation, and increased range of medium security individual accommodation;
- shelters providing culturally appropriate services;
- shelters providing for women with challenging behaviours associated with disability, substance misuse and mental illness; and
- linking domestic violence services to other key services.(Thomson Goodall Associates Pty Ltd 1997, p75-77).

In response to this review, domestic violence services in South Australia have been re-structured. This has included cluster style units of accommodation and the provision of outreach services. The shift to cluster style units has also been popular in other States and Territories to provide an alternative to communal accommodation.

Reviews, proposals and recommendations have re-shaped the refuge model to a certain extent. However, Nunan & Johns (1996, p. 79) point out that still little is known about the real

demand for services or about unmet needs. There is little information about the preferred model of operation (that is, do women seek assistance from a particular service because it is the type of service they are looking for or because it is the type of service that exists?). Current models have not been systematically evaluated. An understanding about what needs exist is required to gain an understanding of how to ensure those needs are met in a most appropriate and effective manner.

Overseas responses

The United Kingdom and the United States of America are similar to Australia in that the provision of refuge or shelter services for women and children escaping domestic violence has been the major strategy used to meet their immediate needs. Shortages of suitable long term and affordable housing are also problems in both countries.

In Wales, since 1977 local authorities have been obliged by law to accept as officially homeless women and children who leave their homes because they are experiencing, or threatened with, domestic violence. Local authorities were given the statutory responsibility to address this situation (Charles 1994, p. 36). In 1988 the government decided that the need for social housing should be met by housing associations and local housing authorities should become "enablers and regulators". That is, local housing authorities should become a "residual, welfare sector". The 1988 Housing Act therefore visualised housing associations taking over the role of provider of social housing, instead of local authorities. Despite the removal of provider functions, local housing authorities have retained the statutory obligations to provide shelter and permanent housing to homeless people (Charles 1994, p. 37).

The housing associations are also increasingly becoming involved in the provision of move-on accommodation, although local housing authorities are a main route to rehousing for women and children leaving refuges (Charles 1994, p. 39). Most women who leave refuges and move into what is termed permanent accommodation are housed either by local authorities or housing associations (Charles 1994, p. 40).

Although housing associations are increasing their involvement in Wales, there is still a considerable shortfall in both refuge accommodation and move-on accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence (Charles 1994, p. 47). Part of this problem stems from the blocking of refuge space by women and children who are waiting for move-on accommodation. Women and children were staying in the refuges for three months and longer. Twelve percent of women leaving refuges were permanently rehoused (Charles 1994). Many of the women return home, either to their abusing partner or with an injunction or exclusion order. The private rental sector is not a realistic option for many women because private landlords will not accept tenants who are dependent on Income Support or who have children and often do not offer secure tenancies. In addition the rent is usually more than what women can afford (Charles 1994, p. 48).

Malos and Hague (1997, p. 400) interviewed women in England and Wales about their experiences of rehousing on grounds of domestic violence. They were asked about their reactions to refuges and other temporary accommodation. Most women reported that they support women's refuges because they felt safe. However, over time, they reported the disadvantages of refuge life, especially the pressure on space made the lack of privacy intolerable. This experience meant some women felt forced into returning to their previous home (Malos & Hague 1997, p. 403-404).

A North American study examined the experiences of women living in domestic violence shelters compared to those living in family shelters for the homeless (Calterone

Williams 1998). The study has some important findings in relation to both women's choice of agency and the model of service delivery. Those women in domestic violence shelters did not perceive themselves as homeless. Stereotypical views of the homeless such as "bag ladies" and people with a severe mental illness, alcohol or drug addiction who are living on the streets were also the views held by the women in the domestic violence shelter of homeless people. They did not identify with the label of homeless women but rather as victims or survivors of domestic violence.

The women in the domestic violence shelter perceived themselves as strong and capable having left a violent relationship in comparison to homeless women whose circumstances were seen to be of their own doing. Women in domestic violence shelters saw their situations as temporary or in transition and not a permanent lifestyle choice.

> *Culturally "battered women" are congratulated for turning to a shelter, as leaving their relationships is constructed as the defining act of "helping themselves", while those in homeless shelters generally are constructed as lazy and having turned to shelters as a way to "live off the system" (Calterone Williams 1998, p. 146).*

When women from the homeless shelter were interviewed most had previously been in violent relationships. Some who had been in domestic violence shelters at some point were no longer eligible for such a service as they were not escaping the abuser. Others, who had been in domestic violence shelters, had experienced a break down in their post-shelter housing option and had to go to the homeless shelter as they were strictly no longer defined as victims of domestic violence. Calterone Williams (1998) argues that this is important for two reasons, firstly it changes their identity to one that is less socially acceptable (homeless woman), and secondly it can change the range of services offered by the

accommodation. This study found that women want access to housing and employment and training opportunities in order to re-establish their lives and that these were available to varying degrees in the different accommodation services.

> *Shelters reinforce the distinction between homeless and battered identities through the services they offer. Notwithstanding the pattern of persistent poverty and battering, homeless shelters are likely to focus on women's housing and employment needs, while battered women's shelters concentrate on the psychological ramifications of violence, often to the exclusion of providing staff time to help with housing and job searches (Calterone Williams 1998, p. 152)*

A different shelter model operating in the United States was the "closed" shelter. This model assumes that women are addicted or co-dependent within their abusive relationship and that in order to recover they must break their addiction. This requires mandated resident confinement for a set time period in which she will receive intensive counselling and not leave the residence. During this period of confinement residents do not have contact with employment, family, friends and obviously abusive partners. All appointments and commitments must be cancelled. Apart from the obviously divergent theoretical perspective that such a program operates from, Calterone Williams (1998) also points out that for many women who are economically insecure this is unlikely to be a viable option and does not address the practical needs of leaving a relationship and establishing new accommodation.

Calterone Williams (1998) provides an important insight into the lives of women escaping domestic violence and the impact of economic insecurity on their choices. She concurs with many other authors when she concludes that lack of access to a decent income and affordable and safe housing are the major risk factors for women's

homelessness (Wong, Culhane & Kuhn 1997; Nunan 1995). Wong et al's (1997) research included the analysis of administrative data on public shelter usage over the period 1988-95 in New York City. The major finding was that obtaining subsidised housing was associated with reduced shelter re-admission. Domestic violence was a major reason for admission to the family shelters. They reported a high shelter re-entry rate following the first 6 months after discharge, however after 6 months re-admissions reduced significantly, indicating the importance of exit accommodation being suitable in order to prevent re-admissions. Another trend identified by the research was that shelter re-admission was more likely with increased number of children in the family. On the basis of the findings Wong et al (1997) argue that the cost of increased provision of longer term public housing would be offset by lower future shelter use. Their research suggests that future study in the area should examine the risks of re-entry which include: the quality of housing obtained following shelter discharge; the monetary value of housing subsidy; and the variability in case management and housing advocacy services received.

In short, evidence both in Australia and overseas strongly suggests the prevention of homelessness amongst those who have experienced domestic and family violence requires access to a reasonable income and affordable and safe housing. The opportunity for a reasonable income requires women have access to appropriate training and labour market opportunities that often require other forms of support such as affordable child care and transport.

Legal and Police Responses to domestic and family violence: the implications for homelessness

A key issue in the research around domestic violence and homelessness is that if rigorous and enforced legal sanctions were in place women and children would be able to remain in the home and the perpetrator removed, thus preventing some level of homelessness. Similarly for those who have moved, if safety could be protected in new accommodation, they would be less likely to be transient and at risk of further homelessness. This requires responsive law enforcement that can deal with the perpetrator and uphold women and children's safety. For these reasons legal and police interventions are important for preventing homelessness.

Australian criminologist and legal academic, Julie Stubbs recognises the improvements over the last decade to the provision of legal protection against violence in the home. She acknowledges the gendered nature of the crime and the necessity for this to be recognised and acknowledged within the development of legislation and policy (Stubbs 1994).

> *women most able to mobilise legal protection are those women who are most informed, most financially privileged, those in urban settings, and those who belong to the dominant cultural group (Stubbs 1994, p. 4).*

There are many Australian women who have limited access to legal protection. For example Indigenous women have been identified as experiencing extremely high rates of interpersonal violence and yet the lack of culturally appropriate legal and social responses make it difficult for them to access "protection". Stubbs (1994) challenges developers of future policy and legislation in the area of domestic and family violence to acknowledge difference in experience, difference in perspective and difference in need.

Throughout Australia specific domestic violence legislation has been put in place to stop domestic and family violence. Domestic violence restraining or protection orders are the major means of addressing women's safety. The current legal response to domestic violence within each State and Territory is an intervention order or the like, although there is variation between jurisdictions on the range of orders available and on who can be the targets of such orders. In States and Territories where the definition of "family" under the domestic violence legislation is narrow (eg Northern Territory) women who wish to obtain legal protection against members of their extended family must resort to generic restraint orders under different legislation. Domestic violence orders also go by different names, for example Apprehended Violence Order in New South Wales and Domestic Violence Restraint Order in South Australia or Family Court Protection orders under the Commonwealth *Family Law Act 1975*. Certainly the picture of legal remedies for domestic and family violence across Australia is quite complex and there have been calls to implement Federal domestic violence legislation to improve portability and equity of orders between States, Territories and New Zealand jurisdictions. There is also recognition of the gaps and overlaps which result from the intersection between state domestic violence and child protection legislation and Federal family law (Turner 1997)

The Proposed Federal Model Domestic Violence Legislation Report (April 1999) provides the basis for clear direction in this area within the Federal context. The report states that its aim was to create model legislation based on best practice. The primary role of this proposed model legislation is to reduce death and injury at the hands of fellow householders, whether it is a parent or a partner (Domestic Violence Legislation Working Group 1999). One of the challenges is that change involves a diverse range of stakeholders which often requires a longer lead time despite the urgency of the matters involved. Giving priority to the proposals at

the various levels of government is essential in order for good practice to emerge in Australian domestic violence law.

Features of the model laws include:

- Official obligations of police officers to investigate certain beliefs or suspicions. The commentary accompanying the legislation suggests that this section provides police officers with clear direction concerning their role in obtaining orders. It promotes the view that police officers will assist with obtaining an order when a crisis situation prevents those victims of domestic violence seeking orders themselves (Domestic Violence Legislation Working Group, 1999). Further, the proposed legislation requires police officers to record written reasons for not making an application for a protection order. Some jurisdictions in Australia are currently piloting such approaches.

- Adoption of CrimTrac to allow the greater portability of protection orders within Australia and also New Zealand.

WESNET (Earle, 1998) commented in the submission to the Domestic Violence Legislation Working Group regarding the Discussion Paper on Model Domestic Violence Laws that it believed that protection orders can serve to secure a safe home for women and children by excluding the violent partner from the premises/former family home. WESNET acknowledged that the numbers of women and children made homeless by domestic and family violence is disgraceful. They suggested that improved support services would be needed to protect women and children who choose to stay in their own homes and are enabled to do so by a protection order. WESNET pointed out that women are discouraged from seeking exclusion orders on the basis that they are rarely granted. There are indications that exclusion or sole occupation orders are currently grossly under-used. They recommended that the provisions relating to exclusion orders in the Model Law should be strengthened and clarified (Earle 1998, p. 6).

In May 1998 the Family Violence Intervention Program (FVIP) commenced in the Australian Capital Territory, as a one year pilot project. The FVIP is a "coordinated criminal justice and community response to violence within intimate and family relationships" (Keys Young 2000). It aimed to improve victim safety and increase perpetrator accountability through an inter-agency criminal justice intervention into family violence. The FVIP can identify significant achievements in its first year of operation. These include:

- Interagency cooperation and support with Chief Executives of the Magistrate Court, the Australian Federal Police (AFP), Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), Corrective Services, Department of Justice and Community Safety, Legal Aid Offices, the Chair of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council, and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service;

- Arresting, Charging and Prosecuting Family Violence Offences which has included protocols agreed to by AFP and DPP, and Police Victim Liaison Officer providing information, support and referral to family violence victims;

- Processing of Family Violence Criminal Cases through the Court System with evidence that cases are being processed quicker and the introduction of a special family violence list;

- Victim Support and Advocacy has been enhanced, case-tracking meetings established and advice and information materials produced;

- Supervision and Sentencing of Perpetrators which has provided the courts with the Perpetrator Education Program to refer men charged or convicted of violence against their partner or spouse;

- Case Management, Tracking and Monitoring with a number of agencies producing a proposal to establish an Integrated Victims' Database; and

- Increased Awareness of Family Violence Issues amongst Criminal Justice Agencies (Keys Young 2000)

There are elements of the FVIP that require improvement and strengthening. The major challenge that has been identified is to ensure that the FVIP model recorded on "paper" is translated into action and agencies and departments abide by the policies and protocols (Keys Young 2000).

In the United States, the Quincy District Court's (QDC) pro-active response to domestic violence has been evaluated, the findings of which provide valuable lessons for domestic violence responses in Australia. The QDC response involved the police, the prosecutor's office and the courts. All incidents involved police intervention of varying degrees. It was reported that:

- A significant number of domestic violence offenders are hard core repeat criminal offenders indicated by previous criminal history and age at first offence (84.4% had previously been arrested and over 28% had at least one restraining order issued prior to the study)

- Restraining orders, if effective, are the lowest cost method of trying to prevent repeat violence

- By enforcing the breach of restraining orders prior to new violence, it is highly likely that many acts of further violence were prevented and many potential offenders were deterred

- The victims who were least likely to want formal intervention, were involved with the least serious offenders, these victims wanted limited and less coercive assistance, the system requires flexibility to deal with these cases

- A blunt criminal justice policy of mandatory arrest and no-drop policies through conviction may not always serve the individual needs of victims

- There is an ongoing tension between the overriding mission to support prosecution and victims' preferences in some cases

- The system should have a policy to target repeat offenders; the need for enforcement in these cases may outweigh initial victim preferences

- The offender's prior criminal history and age at first offence are keys to predicting re-offending not the actual incident

- Possibilities to consider for chronic offenders included long term strictly supervised periods of probation and escalating penalties for repeat arrests and restraining order violations (Buzawa, Hotaling, Klein & Byrne 1999).

There is North American evidence to suggest that restraining orders can be effective in reducing repeat domestic violence but less so for women from lower socio-economic groups and African-Americans (Carlson, Harris and Holden 1999). Young, Byles and Dobson, (2000, p. 3) found in their study of young Australian women that those women who experienced the more severe levels of violence and who were injured were more likely to seek legal protection than those who were not as severely injured. Women with children and women who were in a defacto relationship were more likely to seek legal protection. A woman was also more likely to seek protection if she knew her partner had been in trouble with the police or had used violence in other situations. They also found that about half of the women who had been subjected to physical violence in the previous three months were not physically assaulted after they obtained legal protection. They found that the effectiveness of restraining orders in reducing repeat violence was enhanced by active police involvement in the process.

Duffy and Momirov (1997) looked at institutional reforms and criminal justice responses in Canada, for example, mandatory charging and restraining orders. However, Duffy and Momirov (1997) reported that the Canadian Violence Against Women Survey found that the majority of women who experienced domestic abuse did not turn to the police. Only 26 percent of women experiencing domestic violence reported to the police. Most turned to friends and family. Amongst those men who were reported to the police only 28 percent were arrested or had charges laid against them. Duffy and Momirov (1997) point out that while efforts continue to reform and improve the criminal justice system, some researchers question the comprehensiveness of this approach for a

diversity of women who have experienced domestic violence.

Mills (1998) acknowledges that mandatory prosecution removes the burden from the victim to prosecute the perpetrator but also raises the concern that it removes the victim's control over the decision to prosecute. Mills (1998) argues that research should be conducted to investigate whether prosecution and the court process can empower a victim of abuse and under what circumstances.

Researchers in and outside the criminal justice system argue that the ultimate solution hinges on broader social changes that will "ensure women a dignified, secure existence if and when they choose to leave their abusers" (Duffy & Momirov 1997, p.174). In response to this argument Ontario set up two domestic violence courts. The first model targets first offenders and cases with no significant injuries and where the couple planned to continue to live together. If the perpetrator pleads guilty he is ordered to have counselling and at a later date mediation if his partner decides it appropriate. The woman also has the power to decide whether the abuser is allowed to return home while he is on bail and receiving counselling. If the perpetrator pleads not guilty he is placed back into the mainstream judicial system (Duffy & Momirov, 1997). The second model seeks to bring the "full weight of criminal prosecution to bear in more serious cases." Considerable effort is made to support the victim through victim-witness programs and by having only one Crown attorney in charge of each case (Duffy & Momirov 1997, p.174).

The emphasis on arrest and tough criminal justice sanctions as the key responses to domestic violence have been criticised in recent years because it is argued that specific practices have done little to increase the safety of migrant and Indigenous women (Blagg 2000). A review of Western Australia's system of restraining orders found that strategies currently adopted to protect people from further family violence have been based on

the needs of people from European descent living in urban areas. These responses have frequently been inappropriate to Aboriginal people. Blagg (2000) points out that the Ministry of Justice (1995), recommended an emphasis on counselling, family healing and programs to deal with root problems and the development of a "healing house." The issues experienced by Indigenous people need to be addressed in the context of family violence because the current law and processes have not been effective.

The reduction in the availability of legal aid throughout Australia is a growing concern, especially the impact it has on family law, where aid has become subject to stringent guidelines. Clarke, Matthews and Jones (1999) present eight case studies in Victoria, which show the difficulties women experiencing violence had whilst engaging in legal aid assistance. Clarke et al. (1999) raised the concern that the new system in Victoria failed to take into account the particular nature of domestic and family violence cases and the experience of the legal process created frustration, disempowerment and injustice.

NEW ISSUES AND ARGUMENTS TO CONSIDER

Increased accommodation and services are often recommended and argued for by service-providers and researchers. For example, Metraux and Culhane (1999, p. 392) argue that providing women and children with affordable, stable housing should be the first step in intervention. They acknowledge that housing cannot rectify problems such as experiencing domestic and family violence, but it can provide an atmosphere more suitable to addressing these problems and it can prevent a single homeless episode from becoming a series of repeat stays. This model, therefore, questions the need for most sheltered women and their households to participate in transitional housing. However, Metraux and Culhane (1999, p. 393) also acknowledge that the major pitfall of this

intervention is the more general crisis in the availability of affordable housing.

Stanes (1998, p.48) points out that the current political and economic climate poses a threat for existing services and demand is rising within the refuge movement. Funding is being threatened by the existing governments, which inevitably means that services will need to begin to compete for funding rather than present a united front. Macklin (1998, p. 56) argues that services have had to resort to isolating women to protect them. Women are still fleeing domestic and family violence situations for their own safety because the legal system cannot guarantee their protection. The economic and social vulnerability of many women leaves them no choice but to escape a situation where they have no power. For many women the only option is to uproot their lives in response to violence. Society has accepted that the onus is on women to escape violence and services have been developed based on this principle (Macklin, 1998, p. 57).

Stanes (1998, p. 48) states that the challenge is for services to develop cohesiveness and form alliances with one another and push their own agenda with funding sources. There is also the need to diversify models to fit the needs of women rather than women attempting to fit the model (p. 48). This is very much needed in an environment where funding is limited for services responding to domestic and family violence and the societal expectation for women to leave a violent situation still exists.

A model, which has been proposed by workers, is one that recognises that women and children have the right to stay in their homes with legal protection by the police and the courts. The male perpetrator would be arrested and/or issued with an Intervention Order, removed from the home and linked with the appropriate accommodation and support men's networks (Stanes 1998, p. 49).

Macklin (1998, p. 57) also argues that a system by which the perpetrators of violence bear the burden of the disruption of the family is needed. The perpetrator of violence would be removed from the situation leaving the woman in the family home, children at school, friends and family nearby and services able to help women in their homes. Macklin (1998, p.57) suggested that it will be necessary for support services to work in closer partnership with the police and justice system. Hughes (1999, p. 8) also advocates for such a model and further suggests that it could include an expansion of outreach support programs which assist women and children to maintain their safety and security in the home after the perpetrator has left. The development of services that aim to keep women in the home while their partners are undergoing investigation, counselling and treatment requires examination. WESNET has pointed out that 87% of women who experience violence do not approach a crisis service for assistance, they stay at home or other accommodation (Keys Young 1998). National SAAP data has shown that of the women who have left the family home after experiencing violence, approximately 30% (31.9%) return, and in remote areas almost 60% (58.5%). According to Macklin (1998) this is a very strong argument for developing service models that can work with women and children in the home. It is important to investigate the pathways of women who leave violent relationships but do not use SAAP funded services because we know very little about this group. They do not use government funded services which require data on those using the service and their individually developed strategies may have broader program applicability.

The Keys Young report (1998, pp. 81-82) showed that many women thought there should be more service options available, as well as more flexibility in some of the existing service responses. In particular, it was identified that the needs of women who want to stay with their partner should be better addressed and that long-term support should be available to women who do leave their partners, particularly those who do not use crisis services or supported accommodation.

It is firmly believed by WESNET that feminist models provide the most positive response to women in crisis. Women's services operate on the premise that women lose more than a physical house when they become homeless. Some women lose their support and social networks, an element of control, identity and worth that is associated with the home. WESNET argue that responding to women's homelessness is about providing support in a manner which is contributing to empowerment and about improving their material situation (Nunan & Johns 1996, p. 76). Similarly Calterone Williams (1998, p. 160) concludes:

> *Women in both kinds of shelters express their desires to receive respectful, individualised treatment from staff who will respond to their experiences with battering and their housing and employment needs.*

Analysis of existing quantitative data relating to domestic violence and homelessness

There exists little quantitative data across Australia detailing of homelessness of women related to domestic and family violence. Most statistics relevant to domestic violence come predominantly from crime victimisation surveys and data maintained by criminal justice agencies. Such data covers the extent of violence against women; the characteristics of victims and perpetrators; the characteristics of incidents; what services are contacted and how they respond; levels of reporting of domestic violence and criminal justice responses (Putt & Higgins, 1997, p. 14). Putt and Higgins (1997) provide an overview of these data collections across Australia.

WOMEN'S SAFETY SURVEY

In 1996 the Australian Bureau of Statistics, commissioned by the Office of the Status of Women, undertook a detailed study of 6300 women across Australia to better understand women's safety at home and in the community (ABS, 1996, Cat No. 4128.0). An important limitation of the study for our purposes is that it defines violence as "any incident involving the occurrence, attempt or threat of either physical or sexual assault" (ABS 1996, p. 2) and as such fails to capture other forms of domestic and family violence. Acknowledging these limitations, the survey found that in the last 12 month period 5.9% of women had experienced physical violence and 1.5% had been sexually assaulted, very few of these women used crisis services or contacted the police.

The survey found that younger women were more at risk of violence than older women:

> 19% of women aged 18-24 had experienced an incident of violence in the previous 12 month period, compared to 6.8% of women aged 35-44 and 1.2% of women aged 55 and over (ABS 1996, p. 2).

Of those women who experienced physical violence by a man in the previous 12 month period, 13% experienced a threat or attempt and a further 31% were pushed, grabbed or shoved either alone or in conjunction with threats or attempts (ABS 1996, p. 5). Forty eight per cent of women who were physically assaulted by a man sustained physical injuries in the last incident. The most common injuries were bruises, cuts and scratches. Women were more likely to have experienced this violence from a current or previous partner than from a stranger or another man known to them.

In response to the violence women were most likely to have talked to other people, particularly family or friends. Fifty eight per cent discussed their experience with a friend or neighbour and 53% spoke to a family member. Of those women who were sexually assaulted 59% spoke to a friend or neighbour and 32% spoke to a family member. Only 4.5% of women who were physically assaulted contacted a crisis service and 8.1% of women who were sexually assaulted (ABS 1996, p 6). Nineteen per cent of those physically assaulted and 15% of those sexually assaulted reported the incident to the police. Women were more likely to report incidents that were perpetrated by a stranger (35%) and least likely to have reported physical assault by a current partner (5%) (ABS 1998, p. 5).

Violence by current partners

There were 2.6% of women who were married or in a de facto relationship who experienced an incident of violence by their partner in the previous 12 month period and 8% reported the incidence of violence at some time during their current relationship. Of these, half of the women said that there had been more than one incident, 7.4% said it occurred often and 26% said it occurred only rarely (ABS 1996, p. 7).

Violence by previous partners

Just over 3% of women had experienced violence from a previous partner during the last 12 months. Ten per cent of women had experienced sexual violence from a previous partner.

> *When violence over the whole relationship is considered, women were much more likely to have experienced violence from a partner they no longer live with than from a current partner. 42% of women (1.1 million) who had been in a previous relationship reported an incident of violence by a previous partner compared to 8.0% of women who reported violence from a current partner during the relationship (ABS 1996, p. 7).*
>
> *Approximately 700,000 women who experienced violence by a partner in a previous relationship were pregnant at some time during the relationship. Forty two per cent of these women (292, 100) reported that violence occurred during a pregnancy and 20% experienced violence for the first time when they were pregnant (ABS 1996, p. 8).*
>
> *Sixty eight per cent of women who experienced violence by a previous partner reported that they had children in their care at some time during the relationship (682, 200) and 46% (461, 200) said that these children had witnessed the violence (ABS 1996, p. 8).*

AUSTRALIAN LONGITUDINAL STUDY ON WOMEN'S HEALTH

The Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH) commenced in 1997 and aims to follow the lives of 40,000 Australian women for a twenty year period. There are three cohorts within the study— young, middle and older, who at the commencement of the project were aged 18-23 years, 45-50 years and 70-75 years respectively. The women were selected from all parts of Australia using a Medicare sampling frame.

The study to date has asked two questions of relevance to this study—"Have you ever been in a violent relationship with a spouse or partner?" and "Are you afraid of anyone in your family?". The baseline data collected in 1997 suggested that women in the middle group were most likely to have been in a violent relationship (15.5%), followed by younger women (11.3%) and older women (6.8%). Young women were most likely to be afraid of someone in their family (7.6%), followed by the middle group women (4.3%) and older women (1.4%).

The ALSWH Study will as time progresses provide important ongoing information about the incidence and impact of domestic violence in Australian women's lives. The sample of women who report experience of violence and fear could be a particularly rich and fresh source of information for other researchers who are interested in domestic and family violence questions because many women in this sample will not have ever accessed domestic violence services. Women who have experienced domestic and family violence are notoriously hard to access for research purposes and much of the work that is done only reflects the voices of those who can be contacted through services. The recent study by Young, Byles and Dobson (2000) reported earlier in this report which investigated the effectiveness of restraining orders in preventing repeat violence, involved interviews with a subsample of the 18-23 year old cohort from the ALSWH. Access to the young women who participated in the Young et al study was not dependent on and filtered through domestic violence services or courts so it may be assumed that the study findings are more representative than is often the case in domestic and family violence research. This study may herald a new phase in domestic and family violence research.

SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM NATIONAL DATA COLLECTION

Unless otherwise indicated all references and figures in this section derive from the SAAP National Data Collection, Annual Report 1998-1999 (AIHW 2000). As explained earlier in this report, SAAP is a joint initiative of Commonwealth, States and Territories governments which provides transitional supported accommodation and associated services to homeless people or people who are at imminent risk of becoming homeless. It covers a number of primary target groups in the community, including a category called "women escaping domestic violence". It also encompasses a range of different service delivery types including women's refuges/shelters, outreach services and telephone information services. Some of the service provider participants in the present study work in SAAP funded services.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare outlines the limitations of the SAAP National Data Collection. AIHW notes that while participation in the client collection has overall been satisfactory there are variations according to agency and state. Across Australia 95% of all SAAP funded agencies who provide direct support participated in the data collection but it is the case that the participation rate "was lowest for agencies targeting women escaping domestic violence" (p. 3). Within the SAAP client collection single women and women escaping domestic and family violence were less likely than other groups to give consent to the collection of various components of the data collection. Another reason for being cautious about the SAAP data is that the main reasons for clients seeking assistance were not available for over one-half of all the time periods covered (p36). In addition it is commonly reported by service providers that many women who access SAAP services often do not report a domestic and family violence problem until some time after their arrival and after initial data collection has occurred.

These limitations having been acknowledged, the SAAP data does provide important and relevant contextual information for the current study. It is difficult to précis SAAP data in an accessible way which does not compromise its integrity. However an attempt is made here to summarise a number of pertinent areas from the National Data Collection Report.

Much of the SAAP data is reported in units called support periods. That is, occasions of support provided by an agency to a SAAP client (p. xiii). Also some of the relevant material compares women escaping domestic violence and domestic violence services with total SAAP figures. The latter figures are made up of other SAAP primary target groups such as single men and young people and services for these groups.

SAAP AGENCIES TARGETING WOMEN ESCAPING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Women escaping domestic and family violence comprised 22.1% of the primary target group in SAAP agencies across Australia (p. 21). Figure 1 shows that there is considerable variation across the States and Territories in the extent to which women escaping domestic violence were represented in SAAP services. These figures say nothing about the rates of domestic violence in different areas of Australia. For example women escaping domestic violence represented only 16.1% of the total client group in SAAP in the Northern Territory and yet it is known that there is a higher rate of domestic violence in rural and remote communities compared with metropolitan communities (WESNET 2000). These figures raise some interesting issues which are beyond the scope of this report.

The service delivery model used by SAAP agencies for women escaping domestic and family violence is predominantly short term and crisis accommodation (61.2%). This is followed by medium to long term accommodation (19.0%), multiple service models (12.2%) and outreach (5.7%) (p. 22).
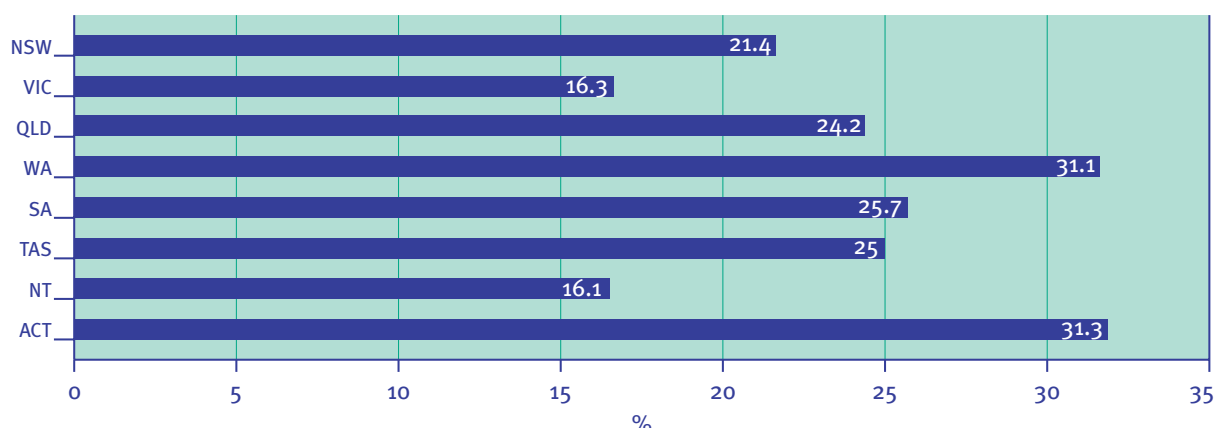
Figure 1   Women escaping domestic violence in SAAP services as a percentage of all SAAP clients

Agencies targeting women escaping domestic and family violence were more likely than agencies targeting other groups to provide predominantly crisis or short-term accommodation. … Medium to long-term accommodation agencies made up more than half of the agencies targeting single women and families (56% each) (p. 18).

Twenty six percent of support periods (p. 193) were estimated as providing support to women escaping domestic and family violence. Agencies targeting single men and women escaping domestic and family violence had the highest average costs per agency (p 19). The average case load for agencies targeting women escaping domestic and family violence was 11.4, as compared to a total across all SAAP agencies of 15.4. It may well be that women escaping domestic violence present with very complex needs which are more demanding of agencies and their staff.

Agencies targeting women escaping domestic violence had a substantially higher proportion of support periods involving Indigenous clients (25%) than other agencies. Such agencies also reported the highest proportion of cases involving clients from non-English-speaking backgrounds (16%) (p. 35).

Not surprisingly, domestic violence was the most common main reason for seeking assistance at agencies targeting women escaping domestic violence (reported in 72% of cases). It was also a commonly cited reason at agencies for single women (19%) and families (14%) (p. 36).

In comparison to other primary target groups, domestic violence counselling (48%), culturally appropriate support (16%) and interpreter services (5%) were more frequently required for clients escaping domestic and family violence (p. 39). The most common supports provided by agencies to women escaping domestic and family violence include – housing and accommodation (71.5%); general support and advocacy (76.0%); counselling (66.0%); and other support services (including laundry and shower facilities, meals and transport) (64.4%).

Arrival at SAAP

Just over one third of women self referred to a SAAP agency. Telephone/crisis referral agencies (18.2%), police/legal units (10.5%) and other SAAP agencies (10.2%) were also common sources of referral and information. Family or friends were sources of information or referral in only 2.9% and 3.5% of cases respectively.

Women contacting refuges/shelters most commonly expressed a need for:

- general support and advocacy (76.1%) – most often advice and information or advocacy and liaison on behalf of the woman;
- housing/accommodation (72.1%) – most commonly SAAP/CAP accommodation;
- counselling (68.6%) - most commonly emotional support and domestic violence specialised counselling and
- other support (66.6%) – including laundry and shower facilities, transport and meals.

Across all primary target groups more than one third of clients spent the night before requesting assistance living in temporary accommodation provided by friends or relatives (p71). The Data Collection Report does not contain specific information about women escaping domestic violence just prior to SAAP entry. Anecdotal evidence suggests that women often get accommodation free of the perpetrator before going into SAAP services. They may seek short term accommodation from family and friends whilst they obtain safe accommodation. Other women are able to set up independent accommodation but the perpetrator finds them and pursues them so they are forced into the high security safe accommodation of refuges/shelters.

Given that the aim of restraining orders is to prevent violence it is interesting to note that in 76% of all support periods restraining or intervention orders were not obtained either before or during support. In 16.9% of cases orders had been obtained before support commenced and in 7.0% orders were obtained during support. There were variations in these patterns across service delivery models. Women in medium to long-term support were most likely to have obtained a restraining order prior to support (20.8%) or during support (10.0%). In 15.7% of support periods those using crisis/short-term accommodation had obtained restraining orders prior to support and 6.8% obtained them during support. Those least likely to obtain restraining orders were those using day services—83.0% had not obtained a restraining order, though the low number of cases should be noted (N=100) (p. 201).

Figure 2 shows that considerable State and Territory differences are also evident with respect to restraining orders for women escaping domestic and family violence in SAAP services.

Restraining orders were least likely to be obtained before or during SAAP support periods in remote areas (87.5%) and capital cities (77.4%) and most likely to be obtained in large rural centres where 35.9% of clients had obtained restraining orders either prior or during support (p. 202).
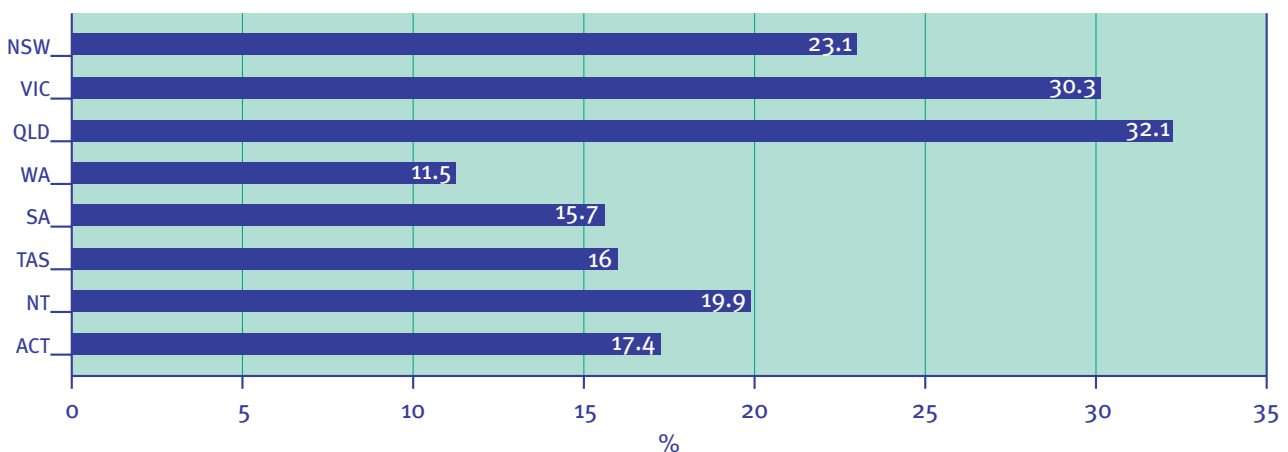
Figure 2   Percentage of women escaping domestic violence who obtained restraining/intervention orders before or during SAAP support periods.

Women aged under 15, 15-19 years and 65 years and over were those least likely to take out a restraining order (89.5%, 86.8% and 80.1% respectively) (p. 203). Indigenous women were least likely to take out restraining orders with only 16.4% using this avenue for protection. NESB women were more likely than other women to seek restraining orders (29.5% and 25.8% respectively) (p. 203).

Unmet needs

This refers to requests for support or supported accommodation by clients who do not receive such services (p. xiii). Across all SAAP client groups 91% of needs identified by clients are met by SAAP agencies through direct provision or referral on to other agencies (p 65). In absolute terms the unmet need is greatest for housing and accommodation and "other" services. Assistance to obtain independent housing was reported as an unmet need by 10% of clients. Some variation across Australia is noted with unmet need for SAAP/CAP accommodation highest in Queensland (8%), compared with 6% nationally. South Australia and Tasmania reported the highest unmet needs for assistance to obtain independent housing (14% and 15%), compared to a national average of 10% (p. 65).

Proportionately, across all target groups, needs for specialist services were most likely to be unmet (21%) (p. 65). These services included drug or alcohol support or rehabilitation, requests for financial assistance or material aid, counselling of a specific nature and transport.

Potential clients are those who although homeless or at risk of homelessness are not accepted as a client of a SAAP agency (p. 66). Of potential clients across all target groups unable to be supported more than half were under 25 years of age (56%); 12% were Indigenous Australians and 7% were NESB. The most common reasons recorded by agencies for not meeting requests for assistance was insufficient accommodation being

available (81%), followed by insufficient staff (4%) (p. 70). For women escaping domestic and family violence who were unable to be supported short term accommodation (72.1%) and medium to long term accommodation (22.7%) were most frequently being sought (p. 103).

Figure 3 shows that for women escaping domestic and family violence unmet housing /accommodation needs are substantial.
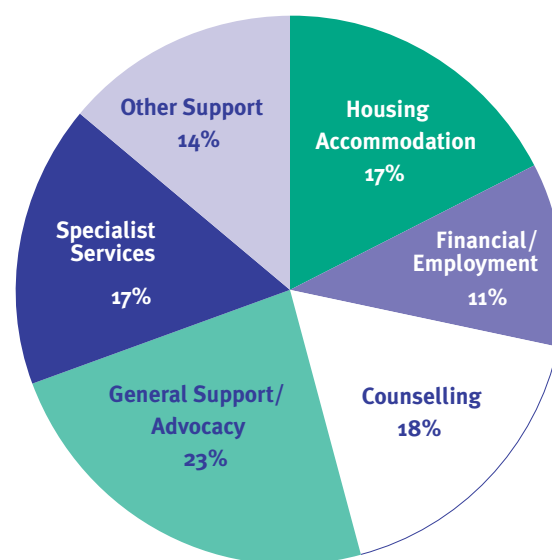
Figure 3   Unmet needs by SAAP for women escaping domestic violence

The unmet needs of accompanying children were significantly higher than those reported for women and included the need for counselling (50.0%), child care/kindergarten and school liaison (28.5%) and access arrangements (11.4%).

For women escaping domestic and family violence who were not able to be supported the majority were (the night before the request was made) staying with friends or relatives on a temporary basis (32.7%), in stable or permanent housing but at risk of eviction or becoming homeless (21.1%) or staying somewhere else (19.8%). The vast majority were deemed to require accommodation within 24 hours (75.6%) or to a significantly lesser extent, within 24 to 48 hours (8.5%) (p. 109).

Post SAAP support

Housing

Across all SAAP primary target groups almost three quarters (74%) of clients were living in housing that could be considered independent at the conclusion of the support period (p. 119). For women escaping domestic and family violence the figure was slightly higher with 74.5% residing in independent housing. Figure 4 shows the range of post support housing arrangements for women escaping domestic and family violence (p. 129). The non-independent housing figure in this diagram mostly reflects clients who have continued on in SAAP. For the purposes of the present study the significance of private rental is noteworthy (36.2%).
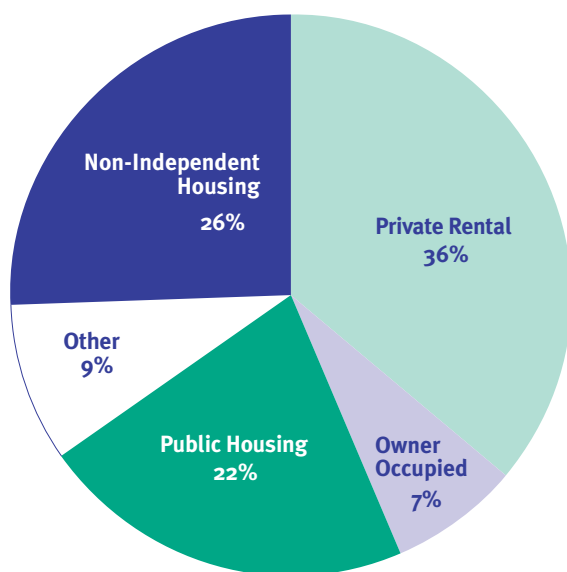
Figure 4   Housing at conclusion of SAAP support period for women escaping domestic violence

Housing outcomes varied according to the service delivery model and target group of different agencies. Clients receiving assistance from outreach agencies and medium-   to long-term accommodation were more likely to be living in some form of independent housing (after 83% and 82% or support periods respectively) than clients from crisis or short-term accommodation (70%) (p. 119).

Living in public housing after support was more common among clients of agencies targeting families (28%), single women (24%) and women escaping domestic violence (22%) (p. 119).

There were differences among States and Territories in the housing outcomes of clients. Tasmania and Queensland reported the highest proportion of clients living in private rental accommodation after support (50% and 48% respectively). The Northern Territory reported the highest proportion of clients living in public housing post support (24%)—compared to a national average of 16% (p. 120).

The likelihood of moving to public housing following SAAP support tended to increase with the duration of a clients support period. After support periods ranging from one to seven days 13% of clients had obtained public housing.

The comparable figures for clients supported for 13-26 weeks, 26-52 weeks and more than one year were 24%, 29% and 33% respectively. In general, clients' ability to secure private housing varied relatively little according to duration of support (p. 120).

Income

For 90.2% of women escaping domestic and family violence there was no substantive change in their source of income by the close of the support period. By the close of the support period 3.3% of women shifted from having no income to having some income and 2.8% reported no income before and after support. The National Data Collection Report does not provide information on numbers of women escaping domestic and family violence in SAAP services who were in receipt of Centrelink benefits.

For clients who were unemployed prior to support there was little change in this status post support. Post support, of this group 82.4% were unemployed and not studying, 7.8% were not in the labour market and not studying and 5.3% were unemployed and studying. Only 1.5% were employed part-time and 0.8% full-time.

Relationships and living arrangements

Women escaping domestic and family violence who were previously living with a spouse or partner were living with a spouse or partner at the conclusion of 32% of support periods. Post SAAP living arrangements varied with service delivery model. Clients at agencies with "other" service delivery models were least likely to be living with a spouse or partner (22.5% of cases) while clients of outreach support agencies were most likely to be living with a partner (34.6% of cases) (p. 198). Length of SAAP accommodation appeared to have little effect on the likelihood of women living with a partner post accommodation, however it is unclear if such women have repartnered or returned to a previous partner. Just over 34% of women were living with a partner post crisis/short-term accommodation and 33.6% were living with a partner post medium- to long-term accommodation.

State and Territory and regional differences were also evident. Women in Western Australia and the Northern Territory (46.9% and 46.6%) were most likely to be living with partners post support. It may be that this figure reflects in part the fact that Indigenous women were most likely to be living with a partner following support (42.7%), compared to NESB clients (30.6%) and others (29.0%) (p. 200). Women from remote areas (58.8%), other metropolitan centres outside capital cities (36.3%) and rural areas (33.0%) were those most likely to be living with a partner post support (p. 199).

The age of the client appeared to have little influence on whether or not women returned to a partner, with between 30.8% and 36.0% aged between 15 and 64 years returning to live with a partner. The exception to this was women aged 65 years and over (only a small number of 100), for whom 50.0% returned to live with a partner.

The longer the duration of the support period the slightly lower likelihood of returning to a partner. Those receiving 1-3 days support had a return rate of 37.9% compared to 23.2% following 26-52 weeks support.

Re-entry into SAAP

Across all SAAP primary target groups the majority accessed the program only once (65%) during the 1998-99 year. Nineteen per cent were supported on two occasions and 8% received three support periods. Across all target groups repeat use of SAAP services was highest in New South Wales and the Northern Territory.

For women escaping domestic and family violence 65.3% had one support period, 19.1% two support periods and 7.9% three support periods. This compares to 62.6%, 19.9% and 8.7% respectively for Indigenous clients and 71.4%, 17.4% and 6.7% respectively for NESB clients.

Methodology

STUDY DESIGN RATIONALE

The methodology for the project was based on the following important principles:

- The critical need to understand the relationship between women's homelessness and domestic and family violence; to analyse existing interventions; and to identify strategies and responses to assist women to retain safe and secure housing.

- In order to escape domestic and family violence the majority of women and children are required to leave the home and seek alternative accommodation. This situation is unjust as the responsibility lies with the victim of the crime to take responsibility to live free of violence and to endure disruption and disadvantage as a result. The methodology aimed to further explore this injustice experienced by women and children.

- The importance of participation in this study by the most relevant groups of stakeholders to ensure that the recommended strategies and responses better meet the needs of women and children and reduce the trauma of those affected by domestic and family violence.

- The adoption of ethical and inclusive consultations with a focus on process as well as product, so that the implementation of the recommendations are possible to achieve.

- The importance of not over-researching the same populations of women and/or asking the same questions, and therefore, of utilising existing research to extend our understanding of the issues.

Indigenous and other women have strongly voiced their disquiet about further research into domestic and family violence which fails to alter the outcomes or position of these women. There is a strong argument that much research and recommendations already exist and that this should be acted upon not reproduced. As such, previous quality research was utilised to provide contextual data and selective use of interviewing women in over-researched groups was undertaken to explore only those themes and issues which were underdeveloped in previous research.

The scope of consultations and interviews with key stakeholders included those involved in policing, court administration and support services. In particular these interviews focused on the factors which result in homelessness and strategies for domestic and family violence interventions which may reduce homelessness and the use of SAAP accommodation services.

STUDY DESIGN AND TIMETABLE

In consultation with the WESNET project management group a multifaceted approach was adopted for the project which included:

- A literature and document analysis to identify relevant previous research and intervention models aimed at preventing homelessness

- Use of quantitative data from the SAAP National Data Set to examine the extent to which women are using SAAP services as an immediate response to domestic and family violence or accessing SAAP some time after the violence has occurred; and the type and duration of services, along with unmet need for services

- Empirical research using a combination of focus groups and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders, agencies and where appropriate with women who had experienced domestic and family violence.

The phases of the study are outlined in more detail in Appendix 2. Some phases were undertaken concurrently.

Focus groups were chosen because they are both a manageable and productive way of widening the range of responses, activating details of experience and creating an environment where participants are encouraged to disclose. Focus groups were used to check the validity and further develop key themes and ideas that emerged from the literature, analysis of SAAP data and

preliminary consultations. Additionally focus groups were used to strategically test new approaches and ideas to identify their viability, inclusivity and contextual factors which need to be taken into account (such as location, culture, state/territory differences etc.); and analyse barriers to such new approaches and how to overcome them.

Semi-structured interviews were deemed appropriate because they provided a context for the participant to base their responses around, while also allowing for new themes and issues to be generated. From an analytical perspective semi-structured interviews generate potential categories and themes for analysis which can be built upon, maintaining the complexity of the data but also its manageability.

The questions asked of stakeholders are in Appendix 3. The questions asked of women are in Appendix 4.

Given the available resources for the project (both monetary and time) the researchers carried out interviews and focus groups in a selected number of States and Territories. The initial selection of States and Territories was based on SAAP data and other information to indicate the prevalence of homelessness for women in each state related to domestic and family violence and the extent to which SAAP services are allocated to this group. Final selection of the States and Territories to be visited was negotiated with the WESNET Project Management Team. Those States and Territories which were not visited, or where stakeholders were unavailable at the time of the consultations, were interviewed using a combination of telephone interviews and written responses. Details of arrangements are outlined below.

Stakeholders were identified through a national list of refuges/shelters and other agencies provided by WESNET and by making contact with SAAP, public housing authorities, government agencies or units whose brief included domestic violence, police, courts authorities and legal services in each state. Initial contact was made though

letter, telephone call, or both. Written invitations to focus groups were followed up with telephone calls to answer questions and encourage people to participate in the project. All potential participants received a written information sheet about the project (see Appendix 5) and written consent (see Appendix 6) was obtained prior to the interview or focus group.

Following data collection any identifying information was separated from the transcripts so that individuals could not be identified. The University of South Australia Ethics Committee regulations require that all data from the study be stored securely at the University for 7 years.

An overview of the arrangements for each State is provided below.

New South Wales

Consultations held 13-17th March 2000. Focus on Western Sydney refuges/shelters. Follow up telephone interviews and written responses.

Victoria

Consultations held 26th-31st May 2000 in both Melbourne and Mildura. Follow up telephone interviews and written responses.

Queensland

Telephone interviews and written responses sought between April and June 2000.

Western Australia

Consultations held 15th-19th May 2000 in both Kalgoorlie and Perth. Follow up telephone interviews and written responses.

South Australia

Consultations held 27th March – 3rd April 2000. Follow up telephone interviews and written responses.

Tasmania

Consultations held 17-18th April 2000 in both Launceston and Hobart. Follow up telephone interviews and written responses.

Northern Territory

Consultations held 17-20th April 2000 in both Darwin and Katherine. Follow up telephone interviews and written responses.

Australian Capital Territory

Telephone interviews and written responses sought between April and June 2000.

PARTICIPANTS

In addition to individual invitations from the researchers to potential stakeholder participants, opportunities for women to participate in the study were publicised through the WESNET newsletter and in some State based refuge and shelter newsletters. Five hundred and seventy invitations and questionnaires were distributed to women and stakeholders across Australia. In an effort to maximise responses from stakeholders, participants were given the options of participating in a focus group (where held in their location), a phone interview or completing a questionnaire. The involvement of women in the study was via service providers who were contacted as part of the consultation process. Fliers seeking women's participation in the study were handed out to stakeholders to pass on to women who were past or present clients of the agencies. The flier included a toll free number that women could call. This did not yield a large number of calls from women. An alternative strategy was implemented that involved contacting stakeholders and asking them to distribute 5 questionnaires to women who could return them in reply paid envelopes. Five questionnaires were chosen, as it was felt that would not be burdening stakeholders in their daily work. This strategy yielded a better result.

One hundred and sixty one stakeholders participated in the study either through attending a focus group, returning a written questionnaire or engaging in a telephone or face-to-face interview. Twelve focus groups were held and 51 stakeholders participated in interviews. Face to face consultations were held in six States and Territories, which included the capital city in each state and additionally a regional centre in each of three States and Territories. Figure 5 illustrates the stakeholders' State or Territory of employment. Figure 6 illustrates the areas of employment of the stakeholders. The majority worked with women and children and approximately one quarter worked with

men. Fifty eight per cent of stakeholders described themselves as Anglo-Australian. Other cultural backgrounds identified included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Asian and European.
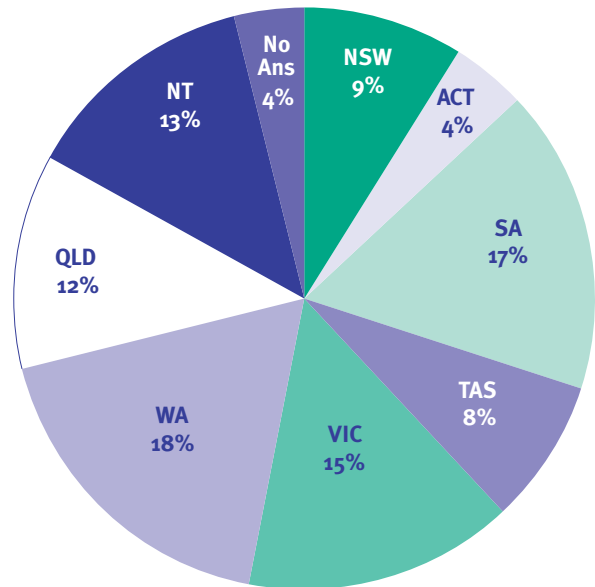
Figure 5:   Stakeholders' location of employment
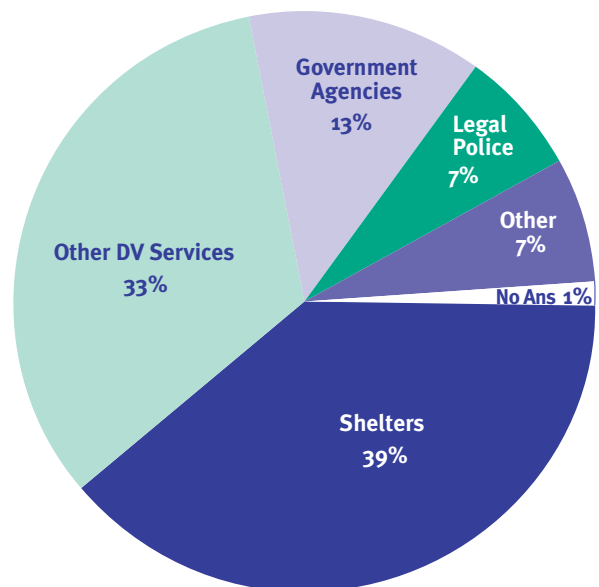
Figure 6:   Stakeholders' Sector of Employment

Fifty two women participated in the project either by forwarding written responses to the survey or by contacting the researchers on the free call number and completing the survey over the phone. With the exception of the

Northern Territory all States and Territories were represented in the women's sample (see Figure 7). Participants received the invitation to participate from 34 differing sources including refuges, friends, flyers, outreach services, counsellors and Domestic Violence Resource Centres.
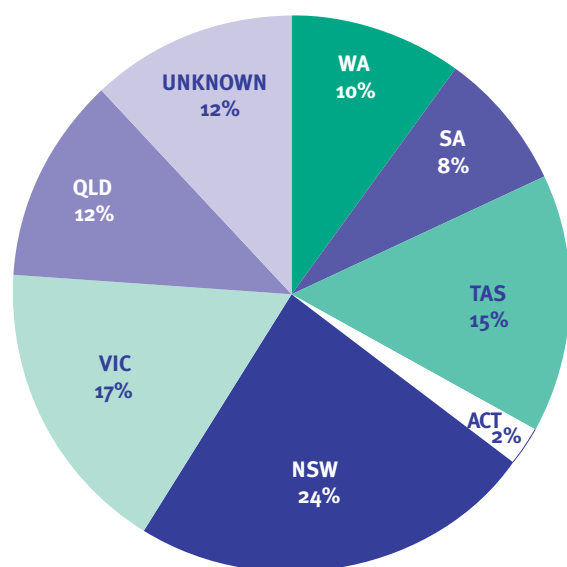
Figure 7:   Location of women participants

The majority of women were not living with their partner, but had their children residing with them (N=38). Eight women were living alone, three were living with their partner and children. Three participants did not provide information about who they were living with.

Current living arrangements varied considerably across the sample. Similar numbers of women were in both public and private housing (N=15 and N=12 respectively). Ten women were in refuges/shelters, 4 were buying a home, 4 owned their home, 2 were in boarding arrangements and 1 in transitional housing.

NB. 4 women did not answer this question.

Prior to the domestic or family violence more women were likely to have been renting in the private market, buying a home, or owning their own home (N=14, N=9 and N=10 respectively). Six women had been living in their partner's home or with family and only 5 had been living

in public housing. NB. 8 women did not answer the question about housing.

Women were asked to indicate whether they were currently living in the city or country and where they had previously lived. Prior to leaving a violent situation 21 of the women had lived in the city and 25 in the country (6 did not answer this question). After leaving the violent situation more women were likely to be living in the city (N=28) than the country (N=19). Twelve women had moved from the country to the city and 5 had moved from the city to the country.

The majority of women had escaped a violent situation in the last three years (N=35). They were most likely to have been aged between 35-39 years at this time (N=15). Figure 8 provides a breakdown of age at time of first leaving.
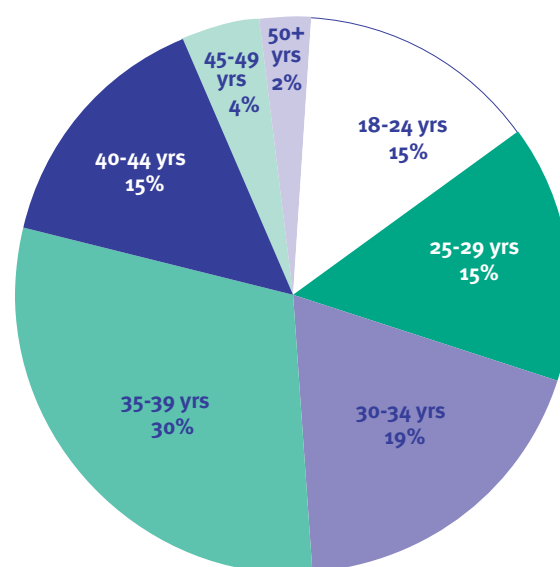
Figure 8:   Women's ages at leaving domestic violence situation

Forty participants had children at the time of leaving a violent situation. Collectively they had 95 children. Fifty-two of these children were aged 5 and under, with 23 of these being under 2 years of age. Eighteen were aged 6-8 years, 12 aged 9-11 years, 10 aged 12-14 years and 3 were 15 years of age or over. Nineteen women had three or more children at the time of leaving.

Thirty-three participants were born in Australia. Other nations represented in the sample included New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, Hungary, and several Asian countries. Five participants were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. Eight spoke a language other than English at home.

Overwhelmingly the main source of income for participants was Centrelink payments. Thirty-one participants relied totally on Centrelink payments, 10 received a combined in come from Centrelink and casual work. Only two participants were in full-time employment. NB 7 participants did not answer this question.

Impact of domestic and family violence on women and homelessness

A range of projects carried out as part of the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (PADV)* and *National Crime Prevention* programs have shown the impacts of domestic and family violence on women, children, families and the broader community (Keys Young 1998, Bagshaw et al 1999, Blagg et al 1999, Blagg et al 2000). This section draws together only those impacts as they relate to housing and/or homelessness for women and their children escaping domestic and family violence. This chapter of the report highlights the major issues identified around women's and children's homelessness related to domestic and family violence. These themes are discussed in detail in later chapters.

This study confirmed previous research showing that in order to live without violence from intimate partners women are forced or encouraged to leave their home and seek other accommodation. As a result of leaving the home, women (and their children) experienced considerable social and personal disruption and financial disadvantage. The extent to which women and children experienced all of this varied according to circumstances, for some women this can continue for many years for a variety of reasons, such as prolonged legal settlements, long periods of post separation violence and stalking or not having Australian residency status. Consequently women and children can experience various forms of homelessness throughout this period. The experience of women in this study and stakeholders' reports strongly support the view in the literature that safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing are key criteria in defining that a woman is no longer homeless. However, for most women and children escaping domestic and family violence, achieving this outcome is considerably difficult due to the economic and social barriers they face. The achievement of this outcome is further compounded for women who may be marginalised as a result of

culture, mental illness, substance dependency, disability or location.

Women who at the point of seeking help want the violence to end but wish to remain in contact with the male partner, can find that women's emergency accommodation services may not be well able to accommodate their needs as there are rules around perpetrators not knowing the refuge/shelter location for safety reasons. These women are likely to experience difficulties with accessing and living in domestic violence accommodation services as services were not established on the basis of ongoing contact as this contravenes safety concerns. This can lead to the woman returning to the home.

Women who wish to remain in the home and have the male partner leave, face barriers with this option both in the short and longer term. An important aspect of this option is that it keeps the women and children in their community, as they are not relocated. There may be limited formal support that can ensure the man leaves the property and stays away from the home despite his use of violence. This requires intervention orders that include his exclusion from residing at the property and the ongoing capacity to respond to breaches of the order. Another key consideration is the woman's financial capacity to remain in the home when there is only one income, especially when it is a Centrelink payment. For women renting public housing at the time of such experiences the financial burden could be made more manageable.

Women who wish to remain in the home with their partner and access services will be able to use outreach services and men's domestic violence services. Domestic violence services working with these communities place considerable emphasis on the safety of women and children in these interventions. In some instances women continue to live in the relationship and in other cases they require

emergency or other accommodation at a later date as the violence continues in the relationship. In the latter situation women are likely to experience some level of upheaval as described earlier related to homelessness.

From the comments of both women and stakeholders there are clear factors related to housing that increase the likelihood of a woman, and/or her children continuing to live in a situation of violence or returning to the situation. These include:

- Not being able to access shelter accommodation or that accommodation being inappropriate;
- Having to remain in a refuge/shelter environment for a lengthy period when the woman is ready to move on (lack of exit points);
- Having to accept housing of a significantly poorer standard than the family home or in a poorly serviced, isolated or lower socio-economic area; and
- Not having adequate furnishings and household goods and possessions for herself and her children.

The following impacts of domestic and family violence on women's homelessness are drawn from stakeholders' reports and the experiences of women who were not able to remain in their own homes and had to seek alternative accommodation. In many respects the following discussion highlights the need to re-examine the situation of women being forced to leave the home to escape domestic and family violence.

THE COMPLEXITY OF THE IMPACT OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Whilst there are common experiences amongst women who experience domestic and family violence, they are a heterogenous group with diverse needs varying according to their circumstances. For some women domestic or family violence has been the major problem they have confronted with its subsequent effects such as diminished self esteem and confidence, living in fear and loss of identity. For other

women domestic or family violence has been endured in tandem with a range of other debilitating problems such as mental illness, drug and alcohol addiction and gambling that they and their partners may experience. Stakeholders commented that in recent times they are seeing increasing numbers of women from the latter group, with a range of complex and inter-related problems presenting at domestic violence services, with some placing high demands on the services. They attributed this situation to the difficulty of accessing long term support for these other problems. The consequences of this shift are that:

- these women often have experience of homelessness and transitory lifestyles prior to domestic or family violence due to other complex problems;
- domestic violence workers are working with women on a range of complex issues in addition to domestic or family violence and often have to engage in a diversity of interventions involving other specialist services with such high levels of need involving considerable time and intensity of service provision;
- these women often experienced even greater difficulties in accessing longer term housing options and SAAP exit points; and
- the multiple problems they were experiencing could make it especially difficult for them and other residents living in communal situations.

Women who are homeless solely due to domestic or family violence are most likely to be able to move on more quickly and to re-establish their lives (and those of their children) after escaping the situation. Those women who have multiple issues and/or a long history of domestic or family violence will generally require more intensive, longer term and more diverse support from a range of services in order to not remain homeless.

Women who have independent financial resources through family or government assistance are potentially able to reduce the impact of domestic and family violence or the duration of that impact. These women are

able to exercise choice over their living arrangements and are often able to make arrangements more quickly. They may be able to arrange short term accommodation in a motel or apartment whilst they seek longer term arrangements. The financial resources of these women are likely to be most effective when coupled with emotional support and counselling, sound legal advice and good referral to other agencies and services. These women should not be confused with women whose partners may be wealthy but the women have no access to the financial resources and therefore may be asset rich and without access to finances.

Women who do not fear for their safety after leaving the perpetrator may also experience domestic or family violence differently. These women may be able to return to their own homes, thereby minimising or avoiding some disruptions and the need to physically re-establish themselves. These women will be in a familiar environment and more easily able to access their existing supports and networks, they may be able to continue employment or education more easily, they are more likely to have access to their furniture and other household goods and possessions. Their children are also likely to be able to continue existing friendships and supports and to maintain their school, sporting club and community associations. Other women who do not fear the perpetrator may opt to leave the family home because of the memory associations, the location or other factors associated with the dwelling. If these women do not fear for their safety, again, they may have more options regarding accommodation, as they may be able to remain in their local area, and have fewer requirements for home security.

LIVING IN TRANSITION

Some groups of women are unable to access private rental or to stay with family or friends at the point of crisis or at a later date. Where refuges/shelters do enforce their obligation to

accommodate women for a specified "crisis period" these women face moving multiple times, often to multiple refuges, before longer term housing is established. The upheaval of moving addresses, possessions, informing government departments, changing schools, establishing new relationships with refuge staff and other residents is extraordinarily difficult and stressful for the woman and her children.

Women gave accounts of being in states of constant anxiety as they did not know where they would be living in the coming weeks and the ways in which this prevented them from re-establishing themselves.

Many women and stakeholders supported the view in the literature that, unlike other homeless women, often women from domestic and family violence situations do have a home, but that they are unable to access this home.

FINDING APPROPRIATE HOUSING

The most significant point is that the lack of suitable housing options for women and children contributes to a longer term impact on women's efforts to establish a safe, secure and appropriate family environment following a period of domestic violence (Western Australian Women's Refuge Group, Newsletter).

As the literature review indicates there are groups of women and children in the community whose opportunities for establishing and maintaining sustainable housing following the experiences of domestic and family violence are likely to be even more difficult due to their circumstances. This study corroborated previous findings in this respect. Groups identified as often facing particularly difficulties in accessing and/or remaining in suitable housing included:

- Women with mental health issues that were not well managed by medication and or other supports

- Women with addictions (drugs, alcohol)
- Women without residency
- Indigenous women in some areas
- Disabilities, intellectual and physical
- Younger women
- Single women
- Older women
- Women with accompanying children: older boys, large numbers of children, those with disabilities and challenging behaviour e.g. ADHD
- Lesbians
- Women with accumulated debt and property damage from partner
- Women without credit and rental histories
- Women (or their partners) who were blacklisted from rental properties
- Women who do not want to leave their area, small towns
- Women who experienced transience and homelessness growing up, second generation
- Families with pets

The barriers to gaining long term housing can result in some of these groups having to rely heavily on the continued use of emergency accommodation.

The lack of appropriate SAAP exit points, limited public housing stock, discrimination by landlords and high costs of private rental delay the opportunity to create a home for women and children to heal, rebuild and move on with their lives.

Women who use the accommodation of refuges/shelters are often forced to remain there longer than is desirable from the perspective of SAAP funders, refuges/shelters and the women themselves, however alternatives for such women are limited and often require lengthy waiting times to negotiate.

Attempts to gain housing, or to gain access to priority housing often compound the effects of domestic and family violence on the self-esteem and confidence of women. The attitudes of and discrimination by real estate agents and landlords can have a powerful effect on women. Many women described being belittled, judged and actively discriminated against by both groups, particularly in areas where there was high demand for private rental. Women reported being:

- negatively stereotyped as "single mothers";
- told that a house was available and then told that it had been let when the agent realised they were staying at a shelter/refuge or had recently left a partner;
- refused dwellings when agents realised that their bond had been provided by a welfare agency; and
- unable to view properties because of the costs involved. These costs included transport to and from properties, fees charged by agents to view a property – which were sometimes non-refundable if the woman was unsuccessful; application fees and other charges.

Public housing policies which require women to get written "knockbacks" from multiple estate agents before being placed on a priority housing list were experienced as humiliating and confidence shattering for women whose self-esteem was low. In addition having to visit multiple agents, when they relied on public transport or assistance from friends, family or the refuge/shelter was stressful for women and further disruption for small children.

The high costs of private rental, even with rental support, led to some women being unable to access suitable housing or taking houses in locations that were not suitable to their needs, such as long distances from schools, not close to public transport or other facilities. Such housing arrangements are unlikely to be sustainable in the long term and women are likely to continue seeking more suitable accommodation therefore continuing to be unsettled.

Support Networks

For some women family and friends were highly valuable sources of practical, financial and emotional support. For other women family and friends were experienced as judgmental, disbelieving and a barrier or hindrance in their ability to leave the perpetrator. Women who were less likely to receive positive support included women from some ethnic backgrounds, women who had previously left the perpetrator and returned, women who had been transient prior to their separation from the perpetrator and women with addictions or mental health issues. Some stakeholders described these women's experiences as having "burnt out" their sources of support. In rural and remote areas support networks and kinship ties could be supportive or unsupportive to Indigenous women who were trying to live free of violence whilst remaining in their communities, some times with partners and in other cases without their partners.

This study supports the findings of the Keys Young(1998) research that found the impacts of domestic and family violence were reduced for women who received positive support from family and friends. The aspects that they found helpful in this study were:

- having their experiences of domestic and family violence validated;
- having some emotional support; and
- having a level of practical support available to them in terms of child care, assistance with accommodation, sources of information, emotional support and practical assistance to re-establish herself and her children.

Preventing homelessness: Planning to leave

Women who had had the opportunity and resources to plan leaving a violent partner were viewed by both stakeholders and the women as often achieving better outcomes when they left. The planning required may include:

- decisions about when to leave;
- what to take such as packing some items in advance;
- moving things to a friend's or family member's house;
- making arrangements for children and their care;
- arranging finances including saving some money; transferring assets into their own name;
- discussing entitlements with Centrelink;
- accessing other services;
- arranging other accommodation; and
- safety planning.

This planning enabled women to feel some control over the process, as they were able to make decisions having considered the options and it became an informed choice. This appears to be an important aspect in empowering the woman from the beginning of her decision making about the violent relationship.

Conclusions

The participants in this study confirmed many of the issues identified in the literature review from Australian and international sources. These include the disadvantaged status that women and children face if they happen to be victims of domestic or family violence and are forced to leave the family home. The lack of affordable and appropriate housing available to women and children following the experience of domestic or family violence is evident in the quality of their accommodation and in transience ranging from weeks to years. Where women fear for their safety their accommodation requirements change after leaving the family home. These needs include suitable home security such as security systems, locks on doors and windows and answering machines

to screen calls. Such requirements are not often available in rental properties and are expensive for women to install in any property. Where women have had to take properties that are not appropriate due to affordability there is a higher likelihood of the arrangements breaking down with the woman (and children) experiencing subsequent episodes of homelessness or returning the violent home situation.

The role of support networks is critical for either assisting women or hindering them in attempting to live in relationships free of violence. The heterogeneity of women's experiences of domestic and family violence cannot be underestimated and give a clear indication of the need for women to be empowered to make real choices about what strategies they wish to take in ending the violence in their lives. The following chapters attempt to address the processes and strategies that are required for women to exercise such choices.

Early intervention and prevention of domestic and family violence

Prevention of domestic and family violence in the community is discussed in the present section. When asked about preventing homelessness for women and children following domestic and family violence, many stakeholders reported that prevention of domestic and family violence was the key issue. Many women and stakeholders argued for community education to be conducted in tandem with service delivery. Interventions discussed in subsequent chapters can have early intervention dimensions according to their orientations and women's needs at the time of contact.

Endorsement of current/emerging practices

- There was almost universal endorsement for community awareness programs that emphasised the problem of domestic and family violence and kept it very visible in the community. One woman said *"make the issue big so people committing the crime feel small"*. Among the specific suggestions made were "one stop" domestic violence shopfronts to promote community awareness of the problem, media programs and advertising about women's rights, services, perpetrator penalties, warning signs and the range of domestic and family violence from social humiliation through to physical abuse. Comparisons with the power of the Quit program to stop smoking were made.

- The importance of working with young people was endorsed, the recent PADV Resource Domestic Violence Prevention: Strategies and Resources for Working with Young People provides an excellent resource for the development of such initiatives.

- There was also almost universal support for early education programs in kindergartens, schools and related places on healthy relationships, personal boundaries and choices.

- Community development in Indigenous communities to help strengthen their ability to deal with their own difficulties with family violence was endorsed. It was generally agreed that family violence could not be dealt with in isolation from the problems of damaged, fragmented and disintegrating communities. Five year plans were mentioned and the need for ensured funding for longer periods of time was emphasised. Several examples of interesting community development practice were provided :Camooweal Queensland, Bourke New South Wales, Ali Corung and Tiwi Islands in the Northern Territory.

Key issues

The stakeholders and women in this study emphasised the importance of domestic and family violence community education and prevention activities being extended to all areas of the Australian community. Such activities were seen as the basis for the primary prevention of homelessness for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence. This finding supports previous research, however it is not the focus of this study and so is not addressed in any further detail.

Legal responses, policing and men's services

CURRENT INTERVENTIONS

Legal responses

In general, participants did not speak confidently or appear well informed about the legal rights of women in domestic and family violence situations. While some stakeholders obviously take a strong position on legal rights and action and support their clients through court processes, others seem suspicious about such activity, perhaps because they lack the necessary skills or for ideological reasons. It was reported in Queensland that some church based agencies dissuade women from pursuing legal options because they may damage the integrity of the family unit. It was commonly agreed that women had little information about what they could do legally when experiencing domestic and family violence and that the court experience when orders were applied for was often very lonely, frightening and bewildering. Language difficulties faced by many NESB and Indigenous women compounded their problems. There was also a recurring theme of lack of confidence in the ability of the legal system to ensure the safety of women and children.

The cost of legal advice for women who had assets was mentioned. Views about the assistance given by lawyers appeared to be divided: the majority of the women participants had felt that they were dealt with disrespectfully and that the advice given was unhelpful while the minority described useful support. The attitudes of magistrates and a perceived cautious exercise of their discretion came in for criticism by a number of women and stakeholders. It was felt that they did not understand the nature of domestic and family violence and its effects and that in rural communities in particular they were unwilling to stand firmly against the perpetrator. One woman said that society must *"get judges who look toward the well-being of the majority of [the] people, not the dominant person in a family"*. In

the Northern Territory there was a police view that some magistrates were unhelpful and impractical in their responses when emergency orders were being sought after hours. Unfortunately this study was not successful in eliciting responses from many magistrates. With two exceptions they either did not respond, gave non specific answers or said that they could offer little about homelessness. It is of concern if this pattern of detachment reflects a perception among them of their limited impact when making decisions about orders. One of the exception participants, who sat in a domestic violence specialist court, spoke forcefully about the need to recognise and assert women's legal rights. He said:

> *Relocation does not necessarily reduce fear. We need to talk power with women and assist them to seize control of their financial and physical surroundings. Courts can play a bridging role here and in assisting women to salvage their economic circumstances*

A point made by a number of stakeholders concerned the variations in names, powers and uses of protective orders under the relevant legislation of different States and Territories and the Commonwealth *Family Law Act (1975)*. It was argued that these variations result in inequitable protection for women between jurisdictions, present policing difficulties and cause confusion among applicants or potential applicants. The confusion is especially relevant to Indigenous women living in communities near State borders and to women who move frequently between States and Territories, for example because their partners work in mining or the Defence Forces. The SAAP National Data (AIHW 2000). material outlined earlier in this report certainly reveals major variations between States and Territories in the extent to which women escaping family and domestic violence in SAAP services use restraining orders.

A number of stakeholders and women in this study also either stated or evidenced in their comments confusion about or a conflation of family law, domestic violence law and child protection law. Some women who had been granted a protective order under State legislation claimed that their sole occupancy of the family home and their sole care of the children was later compromised by property and parenting orders made by the Family Court.

It also appears that domestic violence legislation is commonly drafted in a way which assumes western nuclear family structures. For example under the *Domestic Violence Act 1994 (SA)* only family members can apply for a domestic violence restraining order (DVRO) and family is defined as including a spouse, de facto spouse or former spouse. Thus it does not cover members of the extended family. In the latter situations the *Summary Procedure Act 1921 (SA)* must be used. Similarly the Northern Territory *Domestic Violence Act (1997)* takes a narrow view of family with applications for orders under it are free. Many Indigenous women seeking protection against extended family male relatives have to apply for a Breach of Peace order under other legislation which costs $25. Federal model domestic violence legislation may go some way to fixing these anomalies.

There was a majority and strong view among stakeholders and women that domestic violence orders did not provide satisfactory protection. The contrast between these views and those studies cited earlier in which restraining orders were found to be relatively effective (eg Carlson, Harris & Holden 1999; Young, Byles and Dobson, 2000) may be accounted for by the self selection of the current sample of women who had negative stories they wished to tell. There were many comments in this study about inadequate police and court responses to violent domestic situations, the time taken to serve papers on the perpetrator and to breaches of orders. As a result perpetrators may not take legal orders seriously. As one woman said:

he was furious with the DVO at first, then later laughed at it and said it meant nothing and he would shove it in my fucking face!

It was suggested in Victoria that more demanding evidentiary requirements for proof of breaches compared with proof for granting of an order does mitigate against successful prosecutions of breaches.

A small number of women however spoke positively about having used the legal system to take control of their situation. One said:

I had to leave to get the court order to prevent my husband from entering the house. It is now a safe place.

In relation to homelessness and the response of the legal system to domestic and family violence there was a fairly general view that current legislation was not used as effectively as it could be to ensure that women could stay in their own homes. These responses affirm the conclusions of WESNET in its Submission on Model Domestic Violence Laws (1998). In some jurisdictions (eg New South Wales and Queensland) recent legislative amendments have surpassed the demands made by WESNET in 1998. However it was believed by many stakeholders and women in this study that magistrates were reluctant to exercise their full range of powers particularly those concerning sole occupancy or exclusion or ouster orders. One woman made the point that:

Women would choose the option of staying in the family home if the legal system and the police provided empathy and support.

The same group of participants commonly acknowledged that there was a problem about where the perpetrator would be housed once denied access to the joint property. Some of them also commented on women's fears that these court ordered exclusion orders might escalate perpetrator violence and that the women would be easy and inadequately protected targets in their homes.

Police

Domestic and family violence call outs are a major part of police business. Police attitudes and responses to situations of domestic and family violence can be critical in the future pathways taken by women and the future use of violence by some men. This is a difficult area of policing because of the relations between the parties involved and the ongoing threat to the safety of women and children.

For stakeholders other than police and for women there was a very strong majority view across the country that police responses to domestic and family violence were at most inadequate and at least inconsistent. New domestic and family violence police policies were often acknowledged across the jurisdictions as bringing about important progress: For example, the minimum response approach to domestic violence in the Northern Territory which requires police to take and record some action on every domestic and family violence callout. In Kalgoorlie, Western Australia the proactive police model requires police responses to be more integrated with the work of other agencies in the region. However the majority of participants argued that police attitudes "on the ground" had not changed accordingly. Many stories were told of limited police assistance to seek and understand restraining orders, problems in getting information from police about actions taken, slow responses to emergency calls, tardy or no action on breaches and judgmental and non supportive police attitudes, especially if there had been several previous emergency calls by a woman. There were also tales of some police in rural areas in particular being seen as sympathetic to perpetrators who they may have known socially, and evidencing reluctance to take firm and formal action against the perpetrator.

A smaller group of women participants spoke very positively about their experiences with the police and commented on their support and follow up service after the emergency. A South Australian woman reported favourably on the NDV model being trialed in Port Adelaide and Christies Beach. Under this model police engage with the woman and the perpetrator with progressively more active responses to repeat call outs. She is provided with a domestic violence information pack after the first call out and he is warned twice about penalties. At the third call out the perpetrator is automatically arrested, if an offence has been committed, regardless of the woman's preferences. There is debate in the literature about the deterrence effect of such mandatory arrest and prosecution policies although they have been developed in response to calls from feminist lobbyists (Mills 1998). There is also North American research which shows a general preference in society for a counselling rather than a retributive justice approach to domestic violence (Stalans 1996) so police are working within a context of contradictory imperatives.

In respect of homelessness, most participants inclusive of police recognised the difficulties faced by police when responding to a domestic or family violence crisis. Limited police resources were noted, for example in New South Wales police sometimes have to use public transport to move women to refuges/shelters. There was a general view that the combination of concerns about safety for women and children, and the availability of refuges/shelters made a woman's removal from home the easiest, most practical and most efficient option for police in some areas. Thus, at this critical point, the woman may walk or flee, with assistance, from her home.

As one woman said:

> *I went to a women's refuge because I was told that the order the police issued could not be enforced and I would be safer at the refuge as he had threatened to kill all of us.*

The following quote from an Australian Capital Territory participant makes a powerful statement about the role of police in particular

in relation to domestic violence and homelessness for women:

> *There is a historical attitude that has placed safety as paramount and this should continue. However with consistent, solid, non-negotiable police responses to breaches of orders, remaining in the family home would be an option for many women and children currently in refuges. The legal and police system could alleviate many of the practical difficulties that women who are forced into homelessness purely because they have experienced domestic violence are forced to face.*

Many participants were uncertain about where perpetrators could be moved to by police or courts in the absence of any obvious accommodation options for them. Where the police have powers of removal of the perpetrator, for example in Queensland for 4 hours, the problem of where to take him for that time remains. Dropping him off at the pub or at a mate's place are simple but obviously dangerous alternatives.

Men's emergency accommodation services and perpetrator programs

In response to the issue of men having to leave the home and women and children remaining there was strong support for this policy position. There was divergence on whether this was a social policy change that could be implemented as it required changes to the law in some areas, changes to police practices both at the time of crisis and at later stages and attitudinal changes at a broader social level.

Obviously there are women and children for whom this is not an option where the perpetrator is particularly violent and relentless in his pursuit of the woman. As violence often increases following separation this is an important consideration in pursuing such a shift in practice. This is not a suitable choice either for women and children who do not wish to remain in the house where they experienced the trauma of domestic or family violence.

Where there have been high levels of violence and the perpetrator is relentless in continuing to pursue the woman it is unlikely the woman would choose to remain in the home with such a high risk to safety. In essence where the women and children consider their safety to be a major risk this is not an option at the point of crisis. For some of these women it could be an option at a later stage.

Some women felt strongly that they should be able to remain in the home with their children, as they had not committed the offences, yet they were paying the price by losing their home. Some women did remain in the home and the perpetrator left, one woman reported that she stayed in the home for 10 months but after constant harassment by both the perpetrator and his relatives she reluctantly went to a refuge. When other women were asked what they would do differently if it happened again, a number said they would fight to stay in their homes had they known the level of disruption, displacement and disadvantage they would face from having to flee. For those women who were able to remain they felt a strong sense of justice, even if they had difficulty remaining.

> *I gained strength by being in the home and remaining.*

Many stakeholders and women argued that unless men were accessing some form of intervention then "nothing would change" as the woman could return to the violent situation or the male partner will move on to another relationship without any change in his use of violence. As some women wanted to continue the relationship if the violence could be stopped it was also critical to have men linked to services so that this option may be realised by some women. Women and some stakeholders strongly advocated for compulsory or mandatory attendance at programs once police or other authorities had identified domestic or family violence.

There were varying reports from stakeholders and women about the impact of perpetrator

programs. For some women it was reported that it was the safest they had felt when the men were in a program. One of the ways some women access services is as a result of their partner attending a perpetrator program. As part of the accountability process some men's domestic violence programs require contact with the woman when she is still living with the man attending the program, and this was an opportunity for some women to be linked to relevant services. Some stakeholders and women reported anecdotal evidence of escalations in other forms of violence as a result of perpetrator program involvement, ie physical violence decreased whilst verbal and emotional abuse increased. It should be acknowledged that these varying comments may well relate to very different types of perpetrator programs and that this study is not focussed on the value of perpetrator programs.

It was suggested that perpetrator programs also require links and protocols with drug, alcohol and gambling services for some men they are working with.

A major focus of perpetrator programs is working towards men taking responsibility for their violence. However if men are involved in an adversarial legal process related to domestic violence at the same time they are within an arena that is supportive of them denying or mitigating responsibility for their behaviour. The inherent contradiction for working with men in this situation articulated by a stakeholder requires careful consideration in mandatory or compulsory programs.

One of the reasons which has been cited for not removing men from the home in domestic and family violence is that they have nowhere to go, unlike women and children who have refuges/shelters. The concern about "Where will he go?" has been influential in reproducing the privatising of domestic and family violence. Domestic violence activists who fought for safe accommodation for women and children so many years ago could not have foreseen that it would inadvertently have led to being a reason for removing and disrupting women and

children and leaving men in the home. This requires a complete re-examination of men's emergency accommodation services. Clearly such services require re-orientation if they are to include perpetrators of domestic and family violence in their accommodation services. It raises questions about male perpetrators' inclusion in current accommodation services and/or the need for specialist men's services that can work with perpetrators. Some stakeholders suggested that the re-orientation of men's emergency accommodation services could include workers who are skilled to work with perpetrators and this can act as an entry point to beginning intervention not only the provision of accommodation. It was clearly stated by stakeholders that any re-orientation of men's emergency accommodation services to engage male perpetrators should not involve the transfer of funds from women's domestic violence services for such re-orientation.

PARTICIPANTS' SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Legal

Endorsement of current/emerging practices

- An overwhelming number of participants stated that the whole legal system including lawyers, police, court personnel and magistrates should be better informed about domestic and family violence, take it more seriously and respond to it consistently as a crime for which the perpetrator is held responsible. In the words of one woman who had experienced domestic violence:

  Take it seriously, it's a crime, don't push it to one side, make him responsible.

- A number of stakeholders thought that women should be much more actively and consistently assisted with informed legal advice about their rights, especially in relation to property and encouraged to make proactive use of this support. It was said by stakeholders and women, that those who have prepared for separation are psychologically and physically in a better

position to assist in the preparation of a stronger and more convincing legal case. As one woman participant said:

in hindsight I would have prepared to leave better – secretly packed mine and the children's things. Seen a doctor after the abuse, asked the woman who witnessed violence in public to write it down

- Expanded access to domestic violence specialist courts or magistrates in all jurisdictions was endorsed along with the provision of court services and support before, while and after orders are sought.

- There was an overwhelming call for harsher conditions on domestic violence intervention orders (eg longer exclusion periods), more stringent and consistent enforcement of orders and more severe penalties for breaches.

- It was agreed that sole occupancy or exclusion or "ouster" orders should be available under the relevant legislation in each jurisdiction; that they should be used more regularly and enforced by both police and the courts.

- A number of participants argued that reporting under child protection legislation should happen as a matter of course in serious domestic and family violence situations and those provisions which require the perpetrator to reside away from the family home be invoked.

New Ideas

- A national register of perpetrators of domestic and family violence.

- Removal of magistrates' discretion such that orders which provide for sole occupancy of the woman in the family home are assumed unless there are exceptional reasons why this is not possible.

- Reversal of the onus of proof in criminal cases which result from domestic and family violence such that the perpetrator must demonstrate that he is not violent as alleged.

- Review of the intersection between Federal family law and state domestic violence and child protection law so that all three work in an integrated, non

duplicative and consistent way.

- Perpetrator detection bracelets which set off an alarm when the woman, wearing a matched bracelet, is approached. The alarm would record with police who could respond before a crisis resulted. It was argued that this idea places the onus for action on breaches with the police rather than on the woman. It also links protection to the person of the woman rather than to a dwelling. Thus her mobility is not restricted.

- Women could be assisted to collect evidence about the domestic and family violence through the use of video cameras or other surveillance devices.

Police

Endorsement of current/emerging practices

- Support for police programs which attend seriously and consistently to domestic violence call-outs.

- Formation of regional independent bodies to monitor police responses to domestic violence call outs and recording of action.

- To assist police in the removal of perpetrators from the home options of bail hostels and other accommodation services for men are needed.

- Involvement of police in specialised mobile regional domestic violence teams like those in the Australian Capital Territory to attend emergency call outs. Such teams could stay longer than the police and provide information for all members in the house. They could also begin to establish working relationships with family members and start referral processes.

Men's Emergency Accommodation Services and Perpetrator Programs

Endorsement of current/emerging practices

- Compulsory attendance at a perpetrator program where authorities are aware of domestic and family violence

- Clear protocols for men's services in working with men who are also involved in criminal legal processes related to domestic violence and the Family Court

New Ideas

- Greater advocacy and support for women and children to remain in the home and the violent partner to find alternative accommodation
- Perpetrator programs should have links and protocols with drug and alcohol and gambling services so that they can work collaboratively when men are experiencing a range of problems
- Re-orientate single men's emergency accommodation services so that they become part of the domestic violence network of services and provide for more easy removal of perpetrators from the family home to a place where they can be monitored and perhaps counselled and referred to men's domestic violence services.

KEY ISSUES

There is unanimous agreement that if anyone is to leave the home when domestic and family violence has occurred it should be the perpetrator rather than the woman. There is disagreement about how safe, practical and likely, options to remove the perpetrator are at present. A shift in thinking and practice by the community, police, magistrates and service providers is necessary before these options can be developed and used with confidence. The options will also be dependent on the availability of accommodation options for men who have been removed.

Outreach Services

CURRENT INTERVENTIONS

There was no single model of outreach service. It is important to state that outreach did not equate with women being visited in their homes but rather included services that were non-residential.

Outreach services operated in the following ways:

- Outreach workers within refuges who provided ongoing support to prior residents in their re-established homes.
- Outreach workers within refuges who provided ongoing support to women who may have not used the refuge service and were still living with their partners.
- Outreach workers within refuges who provided ongoing support to women who had left partners and relocated without using the refuge.
- Stand alone outreach services that may or may not have connections to refuge services.
- Outreach workers who were employed in family services where the women may or may not have left their partners, with other outreach workers possibly working with the man and children.

Outreach services were generally endorsed by stakeholders and women as an important contribution to the service system. The underpinning principle of all outreach services should be the safety of women and children.

The strength of outreach services for women who have been in refuges/shelters was that they could continue to receive suitable and changing forms of support according to their changing needs. This was seen as increasing women's opportunities to maintain their new accommodation and life choices and supporting them with education, training and employment decisions that would improve their quality of life.

Outreach services that worked with women who may or may not have left partners were praised because they will support women regardless of their choices and help her make informed decisions.

Obvious concern was raised about worker safety where the woman still lived with the perpetrator. Being able to do this work was described as respecting women's decisions about their own safety and their belief that *"I don't want the relationship to end I just want the violence to stop"* even where this was a short term view for some women. The response from agencies that had provided outreach to women living with partners was positive about it being able to work. Agencies who worked with these women generally had policies of meeting women in locations other than their homes, including the agency, public places such as cafes (if appropriate) and local agencies women frequently used but were not identified with domestic violence such as doctor's surgeries. Other stakeholders were much less confident in this approach. Concerns were raised about whether this would be an effective support for the woman although practice experiences suggest women do find it useful. A second concern by some stakeholders was an ideological one. They felt that working with women who still lived in a situation of violence gave the message to the woman that his violent behaviour and her tolerance of it were acceptable.

Some domestic violence services did visit women in their homes when they were living with their partners. The agencies where this happened were generally those where an assessment had been made of the safety of workers and women and where the perpetrators were in programs (often mandatory). Some family services offered such services also with the same adherence to the safety of workers and women. Other family preservation programs may also work with women in their homes who live with

their partners but staff from such programs did not attend focus groups or complete surveys for this study.

A key strength evident across the outreach models was their focus on planning for the woman and children, both safety planning and longer term goals. One of the strengths of outreach can be its early intervention potential. Stakeholders suggested that the capacity to undertake such planning with the woman would generally result in more effective outcomes if she chooses to leave the relationship as it has been planned and she is well informed. This indication of its effectiveness is worthy of further research and evaluation to identify whether it makes a positive difference in women's decisions.

Another strength of the outreach approach was that it could be less prescriptive in response and work from a women's choice and rights approach.

A concern raised about the outreach model related to women's safety was the risk that intervention and support can endanger women's safety if the perpetrator finds out she is accessing a service or if her behaviour changes as a result such as speaking up confidently. This is a dilemma for workers but not insurmountable if this is discussed with the woman as part of the safety planning aspects.

In terms of workers involved in outreach, some stakeholders indicated that outreach workers require the same level of organisational and other supports as refuge/shelter workers but that the skills required differ due to the different focus of the work. It was important that whilst they were an outreach worker they did not work in isolation. This was seen as an advantage of having outreach offered through the refuge/shelter where workers could do both refuge and outreach work and it increases the possibility of continuity of worker where this is desired by the woman.

Feedback from women about outreach services was very positive with support and counselling for women and help with children identified as key to its effectiveness. In relation to longer term outreach support one woman suggested that it would be good to have support at night, "*sometimes you need someone to stay overnight if you are afraid*". Women who have left domestic and family violence situations commonly reported strong feelings of isolation and loneliness after business hours (Bagshaw et al 1999). Whilst this suggestion would address some of those needs it obviously has implications for worker safety and consideration would have to be given about the extent to which services could offer such support. This woman's quote summarises the benefits of outreach described by women.

> *I had an outreach worker of the same nationality and cultural background, she helped and supported me with a lot of things, like moral support, telling me my rights, visiting me and giving me comfort.*

This description could equally apply to the experiences of women who have used refuges/shelters particularly where they are able to offer outreach services. Outreach services should not be regarded as a "cheaper option" than refuges/shelters. Post refuge/shelter outreach provides women who require it the option of ongoing support through their transition to independent living. This aims to prevent recurring bouts of homelessness as support is in place to sustain arrangements. When this outcome is achieved it could be hypothesised that it is more cost effective in both the short and longer terms. Outreach not linked to the use of accommodation services can enable women who have the means and opportunities to access various forms of accommodation including refuges/shelters as part of a broader plan if the woman chooses to leave the relationship. Outreach with women who are still living with their violent partners may or may not become involved in accommodation options and so does not provide a substitute for refuges/shelters, instead it may offer a

counselling and ongoing support service for women and their children at various stages. Outreach in all its various forms offers a continuum of service options alongside emergency accommodation. It can offer women at different stages and circumstances various forms of support in relation to domestic and family violence.

PARTICIPANTS' SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Endorsement of current/emerging practices

- Most stakeholders and women supported the value of outreach in its various forms for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence as an important contribution to the service network.
- Refuges/shelters undertaking various forms of outreach work should be funded in a way that acknowledges outreach as a service provided by refuges/shelters.

New Ideas

- In locations where outreach services are not available that consideration be given to its implementation.

Key issues

There is no question that women do and will continue to live with men who use violence. It is possible and necessary to acknowledge this without endorsing the violence and to consider how services might be organised for these women. Already many information and outreach services are providing services to women who continue or return to live with the perpetrator. Many service providers are respectful of women's choices and conscious of the need to keep non judgemental contact with such women so that they do not feel reluctant to seek help when they believe the danger in their homes to be escalating.

Supporting women who choose to remain with a perpetrator will involve a significant shift in thinking for some service providers. However this shift is necessary because among other

things it begins to challenge the prevailing orthodoxy that encourages the woman to flee her home when faced with domestic and family violence.

The organisational arrangements for outreach varied across Australia some were stand alone services, others were part of refuges/shelters or other human service organisations. This variation in organisational arrangements does not appear to be problematic, as local context is important in determining an appropriate configuration. For example in a rural area it could be inefficient to have a stand alone outreach service whereas in the cities this can improve service access. A key outcome to be ensured is that coordination is maintained or improved by the organisational configuration.

Further research and evaluation could be undertaken to identify the contributions of various outreach models to women's decision making around domestic and family violence and subsequent experiences.

Women's Refuges/Shelters

CURRENT INTERVENTIONS

As women's refuges/shelters are the most well known response to women's and children's accommodation problems following domestic and family violence, this study generated much discussion on these services. There was not one refuge/shelter model that operated uniformly across Australia they varied according to:

- accommodation styles;
- organisational philosophy;
- entry points into refuges/shelters;
- length of stay;
- staffing;
- services available within the refuge/shelter; and
- regulations and rules around refuge/shelter use.

The women participants who had used refuges/shelters found about the services through the following sources:

- Centrelink
- Police
- Friend
- School
- Salvation Army
- Public Housing Authority
- Church (impeded initially and then another church assisted)
- Community health centre
- Alcoholics Anonymous
- Homeless Line
- Community newspaper
- Probation officer
- Domestic Violence Unit
- Crisis care

Women's feedback on refuges/shelters

The most common reason why women and children used refuges/shelters was that they required safety and often had no other safe accommodation options.

I'm lucky that we did not end up sleeping on the street.

Helpful Responses Provided by Refuges/Shelters identified by women

- Safe place
- Support for women following the experience of domestic and family violence
- Support for children following the experience of domestic and family violence
- Provision of useful information
- Assistance to find accommodation
- Other women to talk with who had similar experiences
- Helped in giving direction about where to after the domestic violence
- Counselling available through the refuge/shelter

Unhelpful aspects related to women's refuge/shelter experience

The unhelpful experiences women identified fall into two categories: the first category primarily related to the dynamics of communal living which is being wound back in many areas of Australia with the move to cluster units. The second category includes staff and organisational aspects.

Issues related to communal living included the following.

- *Not always easy living with other mums and kids*
  Some women raised concerns about their children picking up inappropriate behaviour at the refuge/shelter from other people's children. A similar issue raised was that women had different standards around discipline and behaviour of children that could create tensions when under the same roof and often in a state of crisis.

- *A bit scary because of other people with problems*
  As discussed earlier stakeholders report that they are often seeing women who may have a multiple range of complex issues and this is likely to have an impact on the experiences of communal living.

- *Problems trying to communicate with women in the shelter whose first language was not English was frustrating*
  This does show that the service is accessed by NESB women, but it also indicates that communication is difficult for all in a communal setting when there are language differences.

Staff and Organisational aspects included:

- *More support needed from staff*
  This is a fairly general comment and it is not possible to identify if this was related to staff-resident ratio, which prevented further contact, or the need for more support was related to the model of operation.

- Attitudes of some staff were not empathic.

- *It was a long process telling the story to three workers, I didn't know where I was going, knew nobody, no worker allocated to me, had to apply for houses alone.*
  This comment is also indicative of the variation in referral processes nationally, some processes required women to tell their story a number of times whereas others were more streamlined.

- Having to leave pets behind.

Two findings of the study that corroborate the Keys Young (1998) research were that:

- Women were not always able to access a refuge/shelter due to the high demand for places. In some States and Territories women reported not being able to get through on the phone line for referral to refuge/shelter.

- Some women would not access a refuge/shelter because they assumed it was a communal living model and that did not feel able to live in such an environment.

Women's requirements from refuges/shelters

The requirements the women identified fall into three key areas.

- A safe, quiet place
- The number of staff to be adequate to meet the needs of residents and in particular refuges/shelters should be funded to have staffing after hours and on weekends
- Ongoing contact with an individual worker after exit *"to boost your confidence and someone that you know still cares"*

Stakeholders' Feedback on refuges/shelters

A key theme amongst stakeholders was the need for a diversity of architectural options within the refuge/shelter models. There was strong support for the cluster style units that can provide both security and private space for women and children.

There was a strong view that the high security, communal living model that evolved in the 1970s still had currency for particular groups of women but that the model had been changed and transformed across Australia over time.

High Security accommodation was necessary for that proportion of women who were facing considerable safety risks and feared the perpetrator. The priority for these women and their children was safety in a location unknown to the perpetrator. It was acknowledged that this form of emergency accommodation continues to be required in order to protect the safety of women and children.

Communal Living style accommodation was often the result of necessity where women's services struggled to afford safe emergency accommodation.

Positive aspects associated with refuges/shelters identified by stakeholders

The positive aspects associated with the Communal Living Model and refuges/shelters generally included:

- Validation and support for women
- Security
- Reduces isolation

- Communal environment supportive for some remote Indigenous women to stay with other Indigenous women and for very young women who have never lived alone and are fearful about being alone
- Provides a sense of community
- Children can interact with each other
- Nurtures a culture of creating change and personal development
- Good response to immediate issues of concern for women and children
- Strong contacts with relevant and appropriate services and professionals
- Consciousness raising and meeting other women
- Empowering
- Wide accessibility criteria (specific to some rural shelters)

The last two points have been the subjects of debate in the findings. Other stakeholders felt that some refuge/shelter models with rules and regulations in order to ensure security can be disempowering for women and that in some situations it does not prepare women for independent living.

In relation to accessibility criteria, some stakeholders argued that a wide range of women in diverse circumstances could access refuges. In young women's refuges/shelters, which differ in their entry criteria, most of the young women had experience of domestic and family violence at some time. However, it varied in its recency and this variation was seen as positive for the young women in the service. Reports from some rural areas also suggest that there were a broader range of women able to access the refuge/shelter if space was available, they felt that such flexibility may not be possible in cities with high demand. In essence the argument in these situations was that access criteria were too narrow as a means of coping with demand and so only women in immediate danger were accommodated.

The negative aspects identified with the communal living model were:

- High security requirements were "out of sync" with the needs of some women and children who did not require such arrangements.
- Those refuges/shelters only with communal living arrangements were seen as less able to meet the diverse needs of women and children.
- Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse women could have difficulties in communication, customs, food preparation and cultural isolation in a communal living environment.

There was very strong support for cluster style, individual unit accommodation in refuges/shelters. A preference amongst stakeholders was for women's emergency accommodation to have either:

- Communal living and cluster style units; or
- Cluster style units with support staff using one of the units as an office.

Concerns about refuges/shelters raised by stakeholders

Stakeholders' concerns about refuges/shelters fall into two broad categories: funding or resource limitations; and policy and organisational procedures. Amongst the issues identified below some are general across Australia. Others that pertain to specific parts of Australia are denoted with an *.

Funding or Resource Limitations

- Transport for women to get to refuge/shelter*
- Lack of trained staff
- Use of volunteers*
- Lack of support in some refuges for children and the inability of some refuges/shelters to treat children as clients with separate needs*
- 24 hour staff not available in all refuges
- Facade of the refuge/shelter if it is run down due to lack of funds can turn women away and they return to the situation of violence

Policy and Organisational Procedures

- Policies of enforced relocation when entering a refuge/shelter were not always

appropriate, as it gave women and children little choice, and was disruptive of education and employment. Maintaining employment was a major concern for women as it was their financial independence that gave them choices. It should be noted that this point refers only to a relocation policy position and not relocation due to limited availability of refuge/shelter places in the woman's area of residence.*

- The rules are difficult for women to live by in many cases consequently women can breach their agreement. There were varying degrees to which this was a concern across Australia depending on local conditions.

- The women who are well served are compliant and follow the guidelines

- Other workers of the woman were concerned that they were not able to communicate with the refuge/shelter worker or their client (the woman) once she was located at the refuge/shelter.*

- Central telephone service for refuge/shelter accommodation was difficult to access in some areas.*

- Some areas did not have a central telephone service and thought it was important to have a central location for information and referral.*

- Convoluted central access procedures to refuges/shelters and how to get equitable access for all women.*

Other issues raised by stakeholders

- Rural Refuges/Shelters: Refuge/shelter locations are more likely to be known in rural areas compared to urban areas. The disadvantage of this is that women could be more easily located and harassed at the location. Evidence suggests that whilst there are occasions when men come to the refuge/shelter as a result of this being known in the community, others know it is women's space and do not trespass. The value of its location being known in the community is that women may be more likely to use the service as they know of its existence.

- Lack of other emergency accommodation services: Some stakeholders reported incidences of women not being able to gain access to refuges/shelters as the domestic violence was not an immediate threat, eg happened some weeks ago or they had moved interstate away from the perpetrator, and that women required domestic violence as a pre-requisite for entry into refuge/shelter style accommodation and this ignored women who needed housing for other reasons as well as encouraging women to report domestic violence so that they could gain access.

- Continuing lack of awareness that refuges/shelters exist: Groups of women identified as least likely to know about refuges included women from different cultural backgrounds (particularly where English is not their first language) and older women.

- The need for publicity that accurately portrays refuges and combats myths and misconceptions that are held by various members in the community.

Participants' Suggestions for Consideration

Endorsement of current/emerging practices

- High security accommodation is still required for some women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

- Expanded use of cluster style units, with refuges/shelters having as a minimum communal living and cluster units. Individual cluster units appear to overcome some of the difficulties that arise as a result of women and children living communally whilst in states of crisis.

- Maintain the strength of well established referral networks that link women with supportive services.

- Domestic and family violence accommodation services should remain specific and specialised but less isolated from mainstream services (as this was a concern in some areas).

New Ideas

- Examination of lower level security accommodation options for women and children whose safety needs are lower but who require similar other supports as women with high security needs.

- Assess how the rules established in refuges/shelters could be more flexible to meet the diversity of women's needs without compromising the safety of other residents or workers.

  - Consider a name change for refuges/shelters to redress myths as has occurred in some areas of Australia.

Key Issues

Refuges/shelters continue to have an essential place in the network of services for women and children leaving situations of domestic and family violence. The well established links of refuges/shelters with legal, accommodation, support and other services enable women using the refuge/shelter to gain responsive assistance. The benefits of these links can also be made available to women in violent living situations who are not using the accommodation where refuges/shelters are funded to provide such outreach services, as is the case in some areas of Australia.

Refuges/shelters are able to provide necessary safe accommodation for women and children and the model is powerful in giving women a sense of community and knowing that they are not the only ones to have the experience of domestic and family violence.

The ongoing challenge for many refuges/shelters appears to be how to respond to the very diverse needs of women accessing the services within their capacity. Cultural diversity in particular confronts refuges/shelters. At present, some refuges/shelters appear to attract and service culturally and linguistically diverse and Indigenous clients and others do not, even though there may be a need. In regional areas, some refuges/shelters seem to cater mainly for Indigenous clients, and in other regions, Indigenous clients do not use local refuges/shelters very much at all. The information from stakeholders supports the findings of Blagg (2000) that Indigenous women often use refuges/shelters for respite from the violent situation. The challenge will be in providing culturally sensitive services to all women in the community who need them and managing cultural heterogeneity within those services.

Other Emergency, Transitional and Supported Accommodation

CURRENT INTERVENTIONS

As discussed in the earlier section on refuges/shelters, there was concern about the lack of availability and choice of emergency accommodation for women and children escaping domestic and family violence. This is reflective of the broader situation that there is limited emergency accommodation for women outside of the high security refuge/shelter model.

The insufficient exit points from the SAAP sector rippled down the system with families' stays in emergency accommodation such that it prevented new referrals into the accommodation and increased demand and waiting lists on emergency accommodation. Women without residency status were identified as one group most vulnerable to being caught in the emergency accommodation system without exit options.

The extent to which emergency accommodation services were coordinated varied considerably across Australia. The impasse in effective coordination seems to be how to develop a system which requires people to only make one call, and not having to contact large numbers of agencies, but how to have such a service accessible without lengthy waits or not being able to get in touch. However such a system still relies on beds being available. As a result of limited bed availability motels and boarding houses have in recent years been increasingly used for crisis accommodation. Whilst this is an option generated out of necessity it has given service providers and women some flexibility in response to homelessness. It has obvious limitations relating to daily costs of living, appropriateness and social isolation.

Various forms of supported accommodation were identified as providing important options for women in various situations. Transitional housing for women and children who require a period of support before entering independent

living was identified as being in short supply in various locations and less well coordinated. Tenancy support programs such as Homemaker in the Northern Territory and SHAP in Western Australia, were identified as providing some women with suitable supports in the move to independent living. Safe houses, especially in rural and remote locations, were strongly supported by stakeholders in these areas.

Transitional housing, called community housing in some States and Territories, was identified as an affordable and appropriate option for women and children leaving violent households. Unfortunately it was also considered to be in short supply in most areas.

The need for short term leases whilst women make decisions about their options was identified as important. Some women and stakeholders noted that women sometimes left the home as a result of domestic or family violence but did not wish this to be a permanent move. A short term lease in private or public housing was said to give them time to arrange their affairs and perhaps get the perpetrator removed from the family home so that they could return safely. It was also said that such leases were not easy to get.

The Australian Capital Territory Domestic Violence Transit Flats are an example of a longer term supported accommodation approach to working with women and children who have left domestic and family violence situations. The model provides 12 months accommodation in a cluster style setting with an office on-site providing various forms of support to women and children as needed. The period of time enables women to make longer term plans which can include re-entering employment, education and training and to apply for public housing or consider other housing options.

In relation to supported and transitional accommodation workers stressed that there

should be room for flexibility in arrangements to respond to client needs. At one end of the continuum there would be women who went to a refuge in crisis and were able within a short period to re-house without the need for ongoing support, through to women who may face major barriers in independent living and gaining suitable accommodation. Those women identified as having major problems accessing accommodation such as those with mental illness or substance abuse problems are likely to be the groups requiring long term support.

Participants' Suggestions for Consideration

Endorsement of current/emerging practices

- Safe and or retreat houses on communities in Northern Territory, Western Australia and Queensland for men, women and children.
- Use of motels and boarding houses as backup in crisis.
- Emergency housing to be more accessible and to allow women to stay longer *"so women don't feel shunned so other women can move in"*.
- Consideration of the Australian Capital Territory Domestic Violence Transition Flats Model in other areas of Australia.
- Transitional and supported accommodation be available for 12 months to enable women and children to re-establish themselves and develop longer term plans which minimise the risk of future episodes of homelessness.

New Ideas

- Very short term accommodation (1 to 2 week) needed for some women while orders are served and the perpetrator removes his belongings. It was argued that on present policies a refuge is often not able to take a woman in this situation because she is not in crisis compared to other women who would not be able to return. However without this sort of assistance a real crisis often develops and she does end up homeless.

Key Issues

The availability of other emergency accommodation services available to women and children escaping domestic and family violence varied across Australia whilst always seeming to be in high demand. Coordination amongst emergency accommodation providers was variable and in some areas provided a complex system to negotiate.

To support women and children from becoming homeless there is a need for flexibility in the range of housing and support options available to women and the availability of on-going support based on the needs of women and children where required.

Longer term housing

The overarching concerns about longer term housing for women and children who had escaped domestic and family violence were its lack of affordability and suitability. Large families of 5 children or more were difficult to accommodate and women with small children required fencing and safety requirements around stairs etc. Flats and apartments were often unsuitable and sharing was not an option for many women who have children. The women's and children's experiences of domestic and family violence meant that there was a need for good security in order to feel safe. This was often not available in rental properties and costly to install. Women also identified not having adequate furniture and other household items that they had previously owned as furthering a sense of homelessness. All of this was difficult to achieve when a woman was on a limited income and had children. The common sense reaction throughout the study was that if women and children could remain in the home with appropriate social, financial and legal support then homelessness due to domestic and family violence could be minimised or prevented for some groups of women and children.

CURRENT INTERVENTIONS

Public housing

Overall concern was raised about the lack of public housing available in most areas of Australia. In particular the lengthy waiting lists were identified as an indication of this deficit for both priority housing and long term public housing.

There were mixed responses by stakeholders about the policy direction of subsidising private rental by public authorities. Some stakeholders felt that this did not support women and children in gaining housing as they were then discriminated against in the private rental market as they had a public housing bond and that rental prices could increase beyond women's means. In short they argued it would be difficult for her to access the private market and affordability was a concern on income support payments. The public housing sector was seen as more affordable to women on a limited income and tenure often more secure. In contrast other stakeholders indicated that rental in the private market was better for many women as they could then have more choice about the location in which they would be living unlike offers of public housing.

> *That public housing approach is gearing women into a whole welfare model of service, we do that because women can't access services that will get them out of that welfare state, and that is things like education, child care, you can't just look at homelessness and why the whole thing exists without talking about that, we can put a roof over someone's head but it does not mean they are going to be living in an environment that is safe, it is a house not a home.*

In some parts of Australia there was no public housing available so if women chose to remain in their area the private market was the only option. In these areas domestic violence services had to develop arrangements with the real estate agents in the areas and support women to access the private market. Such barriers were not insurmountable and were necessary under the circumstances.

An issue for women leaving violent relationships and re-entering other housing was that accumulated debt and property damage by the partner had led to women not being able to get public and/or private housing rental. This issue had been recognised in some jurisdictions and women were not disadvantaged as a result. However there were variable practices across Australia. This issue

appears to be a pervasive one for some women and locks them into a poverty trap of repaying debts and at risk of recurring homelessness.

The location of public housing was identified as a concern for two different reasons. Women living in smaller cities or towns in public housing prior to leaving a violent relationship were in some cases re-located to the same street or the close vicinity of the previous residence where the perpetrator was still living. In larger cities public housing offers were often in areas that were unsafe for their children due to high rates of crime etc. Women were hesitant to live in these locations due to fear and the impact it would have on their children. Also for many women these were unfamiliar areas which would require giving up employment and children changing schools and child care. A stakeholder summed up the consequences.

> *Rather than be relocated in "bad" areas women will return home to the violent relationship*

In some areas it was reported that increasing evidence of proof about domestic violence was required to gain access to priority housing. A support letter from a worker to whom the woman had disclosed domestic violence was considered by stakeholders to be adequate, the "weighting" towards police reports discriminates against women who did not involve or were unable to involve police. Where multiple sources of evidence were required it was considered to be demeaning to the woman and that the system forced her to construct her identity primarily as a victim.

Eligibility for priority housing in one jurisdiction was repeatedly identified as a concern because of the reported requirement that women had to have 5 written rejections from private rental properties for eligibility. This was costly, especially where women did not have transport to visit places and deposits were required to view properties. One stakeholder indicated that real estate agents were becoming aware of this requirement and thus more hesitant to provide written responses.

> *I need five rejections from the private rental before they can grant me a house. Not easy even though you already have proof of your situation, you still have to pass through the eye of a needle.*

Safe rooms, which are secure rooms within a house, available in the Northern Territory were identified as valuable in particular situations of domestic and family violence where women had obtained public housing.

Community Housing

Various forms of community housing including women's housing and housing cooperatives were identified by some stakeholders and women as an important long term affordable options for women and children re-establishing housing after domestic and family violence. However there appeared to be variability across Australia in the knowledge about and use of community housing options amongst women and stakeholders consulted. The same issues pertaining to public housing are also of relevance such as location and proximity to basic services. It would seem that community housing has an untapped potential for women's housing that could be further explored by jurisdictions.

Private rental market

There were many stories of discrimination in the private rental market cited in the consultations with women and stakeholders. There were also examples of strategies agencies had developed to work with real estate agents to gain accommodation for women from their services.

The major issues in private rental for women were:

- Affordability
- *basically they chased me out the door, prices were way out of my range across several areas*
- Not being able to access rental accommodation because of not having references or rental history
- Discrimination and stigma

- Children and pets make it difficult to get a property
- *Having four children, a dog and needing to live close to public transport because we did not have our car*
- Government bond assistance was viewed negatively by some agents
- Deposits were required to inspect the property that was not refundable if unsuccessful in securing property in some locations.
- Women were only allowed to apply for one property at a time and once they were rejected could apply for another in some areas.
- Cost of looking in private rental market was prohibitive.
- Difficult to get private rental as a result of the partner's property damage
- Name appears on a rental blacklist.

Positive experiences included:

- Development of partnerships between domestic violence services and local estate agents in the areas. This provided some women with access to private rental. The issue for some workers was that they had to be selective of who they referred, as it would jeopardise their relationship with the estate agent.
- One woman reported she found a list of agents who did not discriminate

  I was honest with rental and land agents and they were usually supportive of me in having him removed as I was the signatory

Other concerns raised about estate agents were that they did not give women reasons for not getting the property and women felt that they were unfairly treated. Some stakeholders reported that when women gave their address as the refuge they were treated unfairly and some workers had been told directly by agents not to refer particular families.

Women remaining in homes they owned, rented or were purchasing

As has already been discussed such a shift in practice requires a range of adjustments in policy and practice in responding to domestic

and family violence. In cases where women had remained in their homes, stakeholders and women reported problems with increased and one-off costs as a result of remaining. These included the costs of housing repayments on one income, especially where it was an income security payment, and costs associated with changing locks and increasing home security. A concern raised by stakeholders was that in order to be eligible for some government payments or allowances women had to leave the home, this was considered unfair for women who remained in the home but still had additional costs directly related to domestic and family violence. Such eligibility criterion supports the position that following domestic and family violence women and children should leave and not the perpetrator responsible for the violence. All of these issues can force the woman to leave the family home as she can not afford to remain in her home.

In recent years in Australia attention has been directed towards "corporate responsibility" for the public good. One strategy to prevent the homelessness of women and children following domestic and family violence would be for financial institutions to demonstrate their corporate responsibility through arrangements that enabled women to negotiate their housing repayments in order to remain in their homes.

PARTICIPANTS' SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Endorsement of current/emerging practices

- Greater development of community housing options.
- Whyalla and Tumut – "home-safe program". Women's houses were fitted with security alarms, new locks on doors and other security devices.
- Safe room policy in Northern Territory Housing.

- Development of mutually beneficial relationships with real estate agents in the local areas could be expanded into other areas through the development of such models.
- Extending various forms of community housing to enable access to long term affordable housing for women and children.
- Need for greater employment of Indigenous and bi-cultural workers in domestic violence services generally.

New Ideas

- Investigate concerns with the Real Estate Institute of Australia.
- Consideration be given to relevant fair trading, consumer and discrimination legislation which could be drawn on to raise awareness of discriminatory practices and used in individual cases.
- High level negotiations with financial institutions around arrangements for existing housing loans that enable women and children to remain in their homes following the experience of domestic or family violence.
- Use public housing bond assistance for perpetrators rather than woman so that the perpetrator can be re-housed where he is on a limited income or income security payments.

Key Issues

The need for women to have real options and choices in their future housing is important to preventing further homelessness. Currently the housing market in much of Australia does not enable many women to have an optimal choice. Public housing is an affordable option for women and children needing rehousing following the experience of domestic or family violence. The high demand on public housing stock, its location in many Australian cities and the style of housing available does not make it a viable option for a number of women and children escaping domestic and family violence. For other women public housing is able to be accessed and is highly regarded for its affordability and security of tenure.

Some choice or control over housing location is an important requirement for many women, some feel that this choice, even though it may be limited, is optimised through persisting to obtain housing in the private market with government rental assistance. While there are philosophical debates about the place of the private rental market in this area it cannot realistically be avoided in any discussions on family and domestic violence and homelessness. The SAAP National Data (AIHW 2000) material summarised earlier in this report indicates that more women who go through SAAP services end up in private rental than they do in public housing. Issues about private rental must be faced and managed.

Community housing, including women's housing and co-ops, were an affordable option for women and gave them a sense of community and security. This form of housing was considered by some stakeholders to be an area for great potential to prevent women's and children's homelessness in the future.

Services for Children

The considerable negative impacts on children and young people who have experienced domestic violence are well documented in numerous studies (Bagshaw et al 1999). Such impacts can include emotional and behavioural problems, low self esteem, lack of trust, poor school performance and inappropriate socialising with peers. A consistent concern raised by stakeholders and women was that there were not enough services for children. Stakeholders and women reported experiences of obtaining effective support for children who had experienced domestic and family violence, overall however there was a sense that services to children were inadequate. The counting of children as clients in the SAAP data system was seen as important as it more accurately demonstrated how many people refuges/shelters and other emergency accommodation services were accommodating. However some stakeholders argued that this needed to be translated into other support services for children and not only accommodation.

Children's lack of power was considered to be reflected in the lack of appropriate services available to them. It was suggested that re-orienting services to consider the needs of children affected by domestic and family violence required an ideological and practice change in services and the law so as to include children's needs as central to service planning. This comment was referring to refuge/shelter services as well as human services and family law areas.

Those children's services available in refuges/shelters and outreach services were generally viewed positively. However, the services were considered "too thin on the ground" to meet the demands.

PARTICIPANTS' SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Endorsement of current/emerging practices

- Ensuring adequate funding for children's services in domestic violence services.
- Treating children in domestic violence services as clients in their own right.
- Acknowledging the trauma that children have experienced and seen and working with them post-shelter/refuge and/or post crisis.
- Employment of child support workers in all refuges/shelters and other domestic violence services.
- Ensuring that both young children and adolescents can be accommodated in domestic violence services.
- Acknowledging that the safe community house idea has as much significance for women as it does for children particularly in remote areas.
- Enhancing and fostering inter-agency case management with children.
- Providing services for women to understand and prepare for children's behaviour after domestic and family violence experiences.

Supportive inter-agency approaches

A coordinated approach by services to domestic and family violence was endorsed and recognised to be happening in some localities. Both overseas and in Australia coordinated inter-agency approaches have been advocated and developed as a mechanism for providing an efficient, consistent, comprehensive and effective response to domestic and family violence in various localities. There is diversity amongst the coordination models that include differences in:

- the range of stakeholders involved;
- the focus of the interventions;
- the range of other activities involved outside of intervention;
- the parties to whom intervention is targeted women, men and/or children; and
- the level of formalisation of coordinated arrangements between agencies.

Some of the complexities of coordinated approaches include differences in philosophies, policies and procedures between agencies, whether agencies are Commonwealth or State/Territory services and which target group the agency serves.

The central concern with all models is that there is a consistent response to domestic and family violence that takes account of the various agencies' involvement and provides service users with an accessible, comprehensive and seamless response to their needs. In conducting the study a number of coordinated models were identified as providing innovative responses. The following discussion of current interventions is a description of some models currently in action in various jurisdictions and not a thorough assessment and evaluation of coordinated approaches as this was not the focus of the study.

CURRENT INTERVENTIONS

The Australian Capital Territory Family Violence Intervention Program was identified as a comprehensive response to women, men and children that had supported coordination across the various sectors involved in domestic and family violence including a strong criminal justice involvement in the program.

The inclusion of domestic violence in the Centres Against Sexual Assault (CASA) regional after hours services in Victoria was an innovative response to the provision of immediate and after hours services to women who had experienced violence. In the already existing model around sexual assault there are protocols between CASA, the police and public hospitals. In situations of domestic and family violence the CASA worker is able to offer the woman a face to face meeting after hours at a public hospital setting and she is referred to local domestic violence or other relevant service the following day. This model gives women an option of face to face contact and builds on existing protocols for the critical after business hours period rather than establishing an additional service from the beginning.

In the Northern Territory innovative inter-agency examples of responses to domestic and family violence included the Tribal Law and Justice program and the Aboriginal Family Violence Strategy.

Violence Intervention Programs in South Australia were identified as providing a coordinated response that included work in the difficult situation of women choosing to remain in the home with the perpetrators in some cases. The perpetrators were engaged in programs at such a time.

In Western Australia and South Australia regional domestic violence networks that included a diversity of stakeholders were considered to be an important information sharing opportunity as well as a mechanism for identifying gaps in current approaches and identifying future areas of response.

PARTICIPANTS' SUGGESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

Endorsement of current/emerging practices

- Protocols between agencies on information sharing to ensure the safety of women and children following domestic and family violence.
- "One stop shop, shop fronts" that exist in various forms across Australia were supported by women as an opportunity to get a comprehensive range of information about domestic and family violence in one place. Some women argued that these shop fronts should be very visible in the community so that the problems of domestic and family violence are not further hidden.

New ideas

- Many women requested that domestic violence outreach and information services be organised to give them information about men's services and other relevant general services eg drug and alcohol and gambling rehabilitation services. They were of the view that they could make plans before crises occurred to help their partners get assistance for problems that were causing or compounding domestic and family violence.
- Integrated assessment to enable women to decide which options are appropriate for them and to reduce the number of times they repeat their story.
- Service support available until the woman is ready to survive independently not until a funding category is exhausted.
- Discretionary funding in services for improving women's safety at home eg locks, answering machines, transport etc.

- Workers having portfolios and liaising between services, e.g mental health, drug and alcohol. This could be enhanced with the possible better use of joint case management between services.
- Core and peripheral agencies in a coordinated model: an issue that emerges from the study is that a number of agencies are core to intervention in domestic and family violence such as police, courts, refuges/shelters and other crisis services, domestic violence services (non-accommodation services) and legal services in any coordinated approach. Other services may be more peripheral, in that they are not required for all cases of domestic and family violence such as drug and alcohol rehabilitation services, mental health services, gambling services, training, employment and education services. Nevertheless they must be able to be effectively drawn into the system when required. Protocols between agencies have been effective both in domestic violence and in other areas and various jurisdictions may wish to build on these coordinated models and protocols.

Other services

Women Identified Service Needs for Consideration

There were two areas that women commonly identified as required following domestic and family violence:

- Longer term support and counselling be available to deal with the impacts of domestic and family violence and to facilitate longer-term plans. This was also identified by stakeholders as the need for longer term case management and support which withdraws when women need it, not at the end of a predetermined period.
- Support from services that included assistance with financial advice and budgeting, as for some women this was the first time they had access to an income and had to handle household bills.

Comments on other services from stakeholders

There were varied reactions from stakeholders about the Centrelink Crisis Payment. Obviously any additional payment was considered better than no payment at all. There seemed to be mixed knowledge and variability across Australia about how often the payment could be claimed and under what circumstances. The requirement that the woman had to be leaving the home to access the payment was considered to support men remaining in the home following violence and advocating women having to escape to be "deserving victims". A criterion related to women not returning to the relationship was considered to demonstrate lack of understanding of the nature of domestic and family violence, although it was recognised that there had to be conditions for the payment.

A concern raised by Indigenous stakeholders was that in some remote areas there was considered to be inadequate policing of liquor licensing.

Participants' Suggestions for Consideration

Endorsement of current/emerging practices

- Women were universally insistent about their desire for counselling of various forms. They mentioned mandatory counselling for the perpetrators. One woman said:

  compulsory courses for men on domestic violence. Whether it does them any good is irrelevant as they still should have to do it, especially to hear the effects on their children.

- Women requested counselling prior to the crisis, legal counselling, safety counselling, compulsory counselling for couples once the police are called out and financial counselling around budgeting and limited income. They consistently wanted access to longer term counselling and to other forms of psychological support such as self-esteem training.

- A number of women also requested greater availability of parenting training programs that focussed on the experiences of parenting following domestic and family violence.

New ideas

- Possibility of involuntary direct debit for rent from Centrelink benefits. This suggestion is obviously contentious on civil rights grounds. However it was raised in relation to some Indigenous women who through kinship demands on their finances can be unable to keep up rent payments and thus lose their houses.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are founded on the findings presented in the previous chapters and particularly on two principles endorsed throughout the study.

- Homelessness for women and children who have experienced domestic and family violence is the result of social failure to fully accept and deal with the criminality of the perpetrators' behaviour.
- A diverse range of service options must be available to women so that their chances of re-establishing themselves safely and quickly are optimised through acknowledgment of their individual strengths and needs.

The recommendations are predicated on the need for adequate funding for all domestic violence services and they do not propose new service options at the expense of already established ones. The recommendations also challenge a number of orthodoxies that the researchers perceived in the prevailing paradigm of service provision. These are:

- Women and children should leave the family home to escape domestic violence.
- An assumption that women in a domestic or family violence situation have a focus on rebuilding their life free of violence and the perpetrator. Women in domestic and family violence circumstance are not a homogenous group and many of them, especially those in long term relationships do not necessarily want a separation.
- A "crisis" orientation such that systematic planning is not modelled or nurtured, emergency thinking prevails and only obviously urgent situations are responded to actively.
- Constructing women as victims who need protection and seclusion rather than as citizens with rights which can and should be asserted and enforced.

There are important historical reasons why these characteristics have evolved in the prevailing paradigm of service delivery. The researchers endorse any policy or practice founded on a concern for the safety of women and children and they agree that the feminist focus on power and the dynamics of power in relationships needs to continue to be reflected in domestic violence services. However, some shifts in thinking and in policy and practice, which do not compromise safety and power considerations, and promote women's rights to choose their options, are both possible and necessary and are reflected in these recommendations.

EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION OF DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

The safety of women and children is an overarching principle in responding to domestic and family violence. Participants in the study endorsed this principle.

The rights of women and children to remain in the home and live free of violence whilst the perpetrator of violence is removed from the home was a position supported by participants in the study. It was recognised that this requires significant changes to the response to domestic violence for this shift to occur.

It was consistently supported amongst stakeholders and women that preventing domestic and family violence required the issues to be better understood and tolerated less in the community. The mammoth challenge that such an effort requires was recognised when many aspects of our culture do not condemn various uses of violence and promote rigid sexist stereotypes that have to be simultaneously redressed.

It is recommended that:

1 The safety of women and children continues to be an overarching principle in all service responses related to domestic and family violence including policy and protocol statements through to the involvement of women and children in their own safety planning.

2 The rights of women and children to remain safely in their own homes be upheld and that policies and protocols are developed that safely enable the removal of the perpetrator in situations of domestic and family violence.

3 Australian Governments' current commitments to community education and public awareness raising of domestic and family violence continue; approaches known to be effective are available widely and further diversity in approaches is examined to access a broad section of the Australian community.

4 Findings from recent PADV Evaluations of Domestic Violence Prevention Strategies and Resources for Working with Young People are used as the basis for future development and expansion of community education approaches.

5 Greater support is given to community development in Indigenous communities to provide community led and owned responses to addressing family violence.

Legal responses

The legal system provides women and children with their right to safety. The threat to safety requires the use of legislation to protect women's and children's rights. At present in Australia most women and children who do not wish to live with violence in the home are forced to flee the home as their safety cannot be assured within the home, whilst the perpetrator of the crime continues to live there. A social change in attitude is required in the community to alter this situation. Such a change can be supported by effective and creative use of legislation that enables women to remain in the home and make other choices that enable them to live free of violence. The following recommendations aim to enhance the rights women and children to be able to live free of violence and not become homeless as a result of that choice.

It is recommended that:

More effective use is made of current legislation by:

6 Educating magistrates on the use and breaches of restraining and exclusion orders. This could be done for example through the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration and the Australian Association of Magistrates.

7 Consistent and comprehensive knowledge provision for women and service providers about legal rights and obligations, particularly in relation to orders and tailoring of orders created around housing circumstances. This could be done for example through police contact with the victim and the development of literature and training by various legal bodies, such as women's legal services or legal services commissions.

Current good practices are extended including:

8 Specialist legal responses such as domestic violence courts and or magistrates who have specialist knowledge in domestic and family violence.

9 Legal advisory and court support for women before, during and after an order has been applied for.

The following changes are made to legislation and other services:

10 Consistent and potent domestic violence legislation across Australia, through the introduction of model domestic violence legislation, or through legislation in each state jurisdiction which ensures the option of sole occupancy orders for women in situations of domestic and family violence.

11 The intersection between Family Law and State and Territory domestic violence and child protection legislation be reviewed for inconsistencies, gaps and overlaps that do not uphold the rights of women and children to safely retain their homes.

12 Protocols be developed between men's services and legal systems for the systematic management of men who are in both perpetrators programs and involved in State or Federal legal matters related to family or domestic violence, so that the potential effectiveness of perpetrator programs is not undermined.

Police

It is recognised that many women escaping domestic and family violence do not involve the police in the situation. Domestic and

family violence call outs are however still a major part of police business. Police responses to situations of domestic and family violence can be critical in the future pathways taken by women and the future use of violence by some men. In various jurisdictions there are examples of police working in conjunction with other services and the legal system to have a comprehensive response to enhance the safety of women and children. Pro-active police responses to domestic and family violence situations indicate the greater importance given to dealing effectively with domestic and family violence.

There continue to be problems following separation when violence from the perpetrator often increases and intervention orders therefore require strict enforcement of breaches by both police and courts, to ensure safety.

It is recommended that:

13 Police training in the area of domestic and family violence is continued and expanded in each jurisdiction with particular reference to local conditions and contexts.

14 That police become aware of the importance of their role in educating women and service providers about the collection of evidence relevant to their cases.

15 Specialist Police Domestic Violence Units and liaison officer positions are continued and expanded.

16 While breaches of intervention orders may be difficult to substantiate with present evidentiary requirements, police continue to rigorously pursue breaches.

17 The evaluation findings of specialist police pilots which allow for increasing intensity of response to domestic violence callouts and interagency coordination be used to inform future police practice and initiatives in the areas of domestic and family violence.

18 To continually improve the effectiveness of police responses to domestic and family violence situations, each jurisdiction establish an independent body for monitoring police responses to domestic violence callouts.

19 Consideration be given to the use of new technologies which would allow breach of orders to be automatically registered with police so that the sole responsibility for reporting does not fall with women.

Men's services

To prevent the homelessness of women and children following domestic and family violence requires the removal of the perpetrator while there is the continuing use of violence. This requires the availability of appropriate accommodation for the man following domestic and family violence and the need for intervention that will aim to stop the use of violence.

It is recommended that:

20 There is a re-orientation of men's emergency accommodation services to accommodate men removed from the home as a result of domestic and family violence.

21 The re-orientation of men's emergency accommodation services would require that services engage in coordinated intervention to work towards the man stopping the use of violence such as compulsory referral and attendance at perpetrator programs with accountability to women and children.

22 Information about men's services is available to women through domestic violence and women's services which can assist their decision making.

23 Perpetrator programs establish greater links with other relevant services such as alcohol, drug and gambling services to ensure where appropriate that multiple issues are addressed.

24 The evaluation of perpetrator programs should always include accountability to women and children in ways that are respectful and culturally appropriate to women and children.

Outreach

Outreach services in their various forms offer a continuum of services alongside emergency accommodation to support women and children living free of violence. They are not a substitute for emergency accommodation but are uniquely placed to offer flexible and timely support which can result in reducing the risk of future episodes of homelessness for women and children.

It is recommended that:

25 Existing outreach services are acknowledged and funded appropriately.

26 Brokerage or discretionary funds are available to the States and Territories as part of the standard funding formula to respond to the specific longer term home security needs of women who have experienced domestic and family violence.

27 In any strategic decision about outreach services consideration be given to their use in preventing homelessness through early intervention which could involve active collaboration with other information and intervention services.

28 Conduct nationally coordinated research to identify models of good practice in outreach services for diverse groups of women and different local conditions and that the findings of such research be used to inform decision making for the strategic use of outreach services across jurisdictions.

29 Recruitment practices reflect the diversity of service users and expand the numbers of Indigenous and bi-cultural workers.

Women's refuges/shelters

Refuges/shelters remain an essential part of the domestic violence service system that enables women and children to access safe accommodation in escaping domestic and family violence. Refuges/shelters also provide women with support and are an important entry point to legal services and longer term accommodation for many women.

It is recommended that:

30 High security refuges/shelters continue to be available to ensure the safety of women and children following domestic and family violence and that they are staffed 24 hours per day, every day of the year.

31 Alternative models of safe emergency accommodation and support for women and children following domestic and family violence in addition to the prevailing high security option be considered to meet the heterogeneity of needs in all jurisdictions.

32 Rules and regulations in refuges/shelters reflect the diverse needs of women and children using the services and promote minimal disruption to important aspects of their lives.

33 Recruitment practices reflect the diversity of service users and expand the numbers of Indigenous and bi-cultural workers .

34 Coordination and protocols between refuges/shelters and other services relevant to local contexts continue to be improved.

35 Both communal and individual units cluster styles of accommodation be available in refuges/shelters in each area to provide for the diverse needs of women and children.

36 Consideration be given to strategies that combat current myths and stereotypes about refuges/shelters, for example a name change for refuges/shelters and community education initiatives.

37 Flexibility in the length of stay in refuges/shelters can be accommodated in response to the needs of women and children and the local housing context.

Emergency, transitional and supported accommodation

Access to domestic violence and other support services at various points is important for many women. Some women's first contact with the service system for domestic or family violence can be when leaving the home and seeking emergency accommodation. For other women, it is while they remain in the home and the relationship and consider courses of action. For some, this will result in the use of emergency accommodation.

It is recommended that:

38 Continued support is given to the development of safe and or retreat houses on Indigenous communities.

39 Where motels, boarding houses and caravans continue to be required as backup in crisis these options should always position women and their children in networks of services that provide the relevant range of support.

40 Very short term leases are available (1-2 weeks) for women who need to briefly leave the home while arrangements for return are put in place.

41 Transitional and supported accommodation, linked to other domestic violence services, be available for flexible time periods in all regions to enable women and children to re-establish themselves and develop longer term plans.

LONGER TERM HOUSING

The heterogeneity of women and children leaving situations of domestic and family violence requires a diversity of affordable housing options. In general particularly in the short term most women will face considerable financial disadvantage that will be a barrier to their entry into housing. For women and children who are not experiencing additional social problems and for whom independent living is required following exit from emergency accommodation the options whilst limited will differ from those women who require support in their transition to living independently and/or require other forms of support. The following recommendations are aimed at expanding and supporting women's choices about the type of housing, its location, affordability and suitability to their needs. To prevent homelessness we have attempted to canvass a range of innovative options in public and private housing.

Public Housing Responsibilities

It is recommended that:

42 WESNET engage in high level negotiations with the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments on the appropriate forms of affordable housing stock and location for women and children escaping domestic and family violence with reference to the need for safety and minimum disruption to schooling, employment and social supports.

43 State and Territory Governments amend priority housing evidentiary and application requirements which only acknowledge physical abuse and which require women to engage in costly, time consuming and humiliating processes to find non-public accommodation. For example obtaining a number of written refusals from more than one real estate agent in a short time period.

44 Consideration be given by, State and Territory governments to providing loans schemes and financial support to financially disadvantaged women to purchase their own house following relationship breakdown as a result of domestic and family violence.

Community and Cooperative Housing

It is recommended that:

45 WESNET seek a collaborative relationship with community housing peak bodies in Australia (the National Community Housing Forum and the Community Housing Federation of Australia) to encourage various forms of community and cooperative housing which can provide further options for women and children to gain affordable and appropriate housing.

Private Rental

It is recommended that:

46 WESNET engage in negotiations with the Real Estate Institute of Australia at the national level to redress issues of discrimination and promote fair dealings in leasing practices concerning women and children escaping domestic and family violence.

47 WESNET develop training and information packages for its members to assist domestic violence services to engage in mutually productive relationships with local real estate agents.

48 Legal Services Commissions and Women's Legal Services consider the possibility of taking discrimination or fair trading legal action in response to flagrant cases of unfair private rental practices.

Women remaining in homes that they owned, rented or were purchasing

It is recommended that:

49 Commonwealth, State and Territory governments engage in high level negotiations with financial institutions and other lending authorities to implement policies around loan restructuring for women who become sole occupants of the residence following relationship breakdown as a result of domestic and family violence.

SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

Lack of focus on children's needs following domestic and family violence has been a concern in both the domestic violence and related children's fields of service. There has been in some respects an implicit assumption of a "trickle down effect", that if you can provide support for the mother it will trickle through in its positive impact on children. Whilst there is some important currency in such an assumption children are also considered entitled to services and support in their own right as they have been the victims of domestic or family violence. Concern about children's and young people's needs following domestic and family violence was evident at the recent PADV National Forum on Children and Young People in Melbourne in April 2000. The requirement for adequately resourced child focussed interventions as a basic right of children to deal with the effects of violence and support resilience was evident amongst women and stakeholders.

It is recommended that:

50 Children in domestic violence services are consistently treated as clients in their own right and that this is reflected in specific funding arrangements.

51 In planning decisions around redeveloping refuges/shelters consideration be given to the needs of young children and adolescents accompanying women.

52 Access to child support workers be available for all women and children using domestic violence accommodation and non-accommodation services.

53 Opportunities are sought and further developed for inter-agency case management with children in domestic violence services who have special needs.

54 The provision of services for women to understand and prepare for children's behaviour following domestic and family violence experiences be available in all areas of Australia.

Supportive Inter-Agency Approaches

Early indications of coordinated inter-agency approaches indicate their worth in providing a consistent local/regional response to domestic violence. At the broader level a whole of services/government response is advocated, particularly if there is a plan to shift current practices to focus on moving the perpetrator out of the home. Inter-agency cooperation is also consistent with the National Homelessness Strategy directions (Dept Family and Community Services, 2000).

It is recommended that:

55 All human service organisations have domestic violence policies and that these policies do not force women to construct themselves as victims fleeing the situation in order to gain access to benefits and services.

56 Consideration be given to the expansion and greater use of coordinated inter-agency domestic violence models that include core and peripheral agencies in all areas of Australia suitable to local conditions.

57 Coordinated models be supported with protocols amongst domestic violence services and between domestic violence and non domestic violence services.

58 Single entry point into domestic and family violence services be available in all areas of Australia and that consideration be given to improving their user responsiveness.

59 Findings of the evaluations of existing domestic violence response teams are used in the strategic development of further services across Australia.

Appendix 1—State and Territory public housing authorities and responses to domestic violence

NEW SOUTH WALES

The Department of Housing in New South Wales has a Policy on Priority Assistance (ALL0040A, 1999). It states that to be approved for priority housing applicants must be:

- eligible for public housing;
- in urgent need for housing;
- unable to resolve that need themselves; or
- unable to have their housing needs met in the private rental market.

They must have these things confirmed by police or a community worker

Within the "urgent need for housing" section, it states that a client may demonstrate that they have an urgent need through some factors and "at risk" is mentioned. A client may demonstrate urgent need if they are exposed to several "risk factors". One of these states, "The client or another household member is a victim of recent domestic violence or severe harassment or violence." The Department establishes a target time frame for each priority assistance application.

However, the actual experience of people applying to get other than priority housing on domestic violence grounds needs to be looked at. In 1995-96, there were 93174 people on the waiting list for public housing and so wait times of 10 years is common in most of Sydney. Given the very high demand of public housing, there is continual tension between the competing demands of households waiting for extended periods and households claiming to be in circumstances demanding urgent housing assistance (http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au, 2000). Shelter NSW (1999) reports that some refuges are giving up even making referrals for priority housing because of the high demand and waiting lists.

VICTORIA

The Victorian government has introduced a segmented waiting list to target groups for priority housing on the basis of need. People on low income and cannot find anything suitable to rent privately, can apply to rent public housing. Depending on circumstances, people are placed in one of the four segments which make up the segmented list. The segments are:

1. Recurring homelessness segment – people who have a long history of being homeless or who are at risk of long term homelessness. This is top priority.
2. Supported housing segment – people living in unsuitable housing who either use a wheelchair or who have high support needs. This is second priority.
3. Special Housing Needs segment – people whose current housing is unsuitable for a variety of personal, health or family reasons. This is third priority.
4. Wait-turn segment – people on low incomes who do not need housing urgently but who will still benefit from living in public housing. This is fourth priority (http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au).

The part of the assessment process focuses on the risk factors which affect the client's ability to obtain and/or maintain housing. Three indicators are used when making this assessment of need:

- Social and relationship issues;
- Living skills issues; and
- Issues concerning whether the client is or has had a recent experience of violence or abusive behaviour.

Assessment of the third indicator needs to consider the impact of the violence or abuse, the level of support required by the client and whether these demonstrate, in combination with other indicators, a high level of need for public housing (Office of Housing, 1999, p.10-11).

QUEENSLAND

The Queensland Department of Housing allocations for public housing are made on a first in first served basis unless applicants are eligible for priority housing. Priority Housing provides out of turn access to public housing for applicants with urgent needs. Applicants must meet strict eligibility criteria and verification requirements. "Personal security", "safety" and "family unit is jeopardised by their present housing situation" are considered eligible criteria (http://www.public-housing.qld.gov.au)

In 1999 the Queensland Department of Housing funded a "Community Housing Best Practice Project" undertaken by the Cabbage Tree Housing Service focusing on housing women escaping from domestic violence. The manual comprises of several parts that set out general and specific guidance for housing women escaping domestic violence. (http://www.public-housing.qld.gov.au)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Community agencies and individuals came together in November 1997 to look at Homeswest's Domestic Violence policy and practices. The group prepared a submission that was subsequently endorsed by the Housing Advisory Committee and Homeswest. The new Domestic Violence Policy was introduced on 26 may 1999 (Shelter WA, 1999).

Domestic violence applicants are given prima facie priority, that is, they are automatically granted priority status, and are assessed according to standard eligibility criteria. Standard criteria includes:

- telephone numbers of two professional agencies, such as a support agency, social worker, doctor or similar professional;
- referral by a family member or friend;
- possession of a restraining order (acknowledgment that restraining orders not always guarantee safety and does not negate the need for assistance); and
- the result of an interview with a Homeswest officer (Ministry of Housing, Homeswest, Domestic Violence Policy, 1999).

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

In South Australia, The Housing Trust states in its policy (REH01044 – Domestic violence, 1992, 1.1 7 1.2) that

> *it will respond to situations of domestic violence in an effective and sensitive manner, ensuring maximum confidentiality, and wherever possible, attempting to minimise the dislocation of those affected by domestic violence.*

It also states that it will assist clients by providing emergency, short and long term housing options. This includes financial assistance for the establishment of tenancies in the private market, the re-housing or establishment of a separate tenancy for an existing tenant or spouse/partner of the tenant, and assistance to support home buyers to protect equity or purchase alternative accommodation. Substantiation of domestic violence is required and once this has occurred, clients are assessed in accordance with the Priority Housing Policy.

Substantiation may be provided verbally or in writing by either relevant support agencies or other reputable third parties. Where urgent assistance is necessary, substantiation of domestic violence can be provided after the provision of services.

On March 25th 1999 the Human Services Minister announced the details of changes to housing assistance. There are waiting list changes where 4 categories have been created. Domestic violence is included in category one – applicants in urgent need-where a maximum wait of 6 months is stated (Shelter SA, 1999).

Tasmania

Housing Tasmania is not able to provide immediate assistance with emergency accommodation. Public Housing is provided on the basis of housing need. The department aims to house those in high need under 8 weeks. Housing which becomes available for allocation is offered first to applicants most in need. The Housing Assessment System is used to determine the degree of need, by allocating points according to different categories. The risk of domestic violence is included amongst other circumstances (http://www.dchs.tas.gov.au)

Housing Service Officers are not required to establish the legitimacy of an applicants claim to be a domestic violence victim. However, to establish the eligibility of an applicant's claim, one of the following criteria should be met:

- Possession of a Restraint Order, an interim Restraint Order, an Interstate Restraint Order registered in Tasmania, or a Family Court Restrain Order or Injunction;
- Evidence of an application of any of the above;
- Criminal proceeding have commenced against the domestic violence abuser; or
- Referral or supporting written evidence from a DVCS member, shelter workers, social workers, lawyers or doctors verifying that the individual's safety and/or that of her children are at risk of further harm from an estranged or former partner (Housing Tasmania, 1996).

Northern Territory

Territory Housing generally allocates housing to applicants in the order in which they apply. Applications are placed in a "queue" which is the waiting list. However, priority allocation of public housing may be granted to people, who cannot gain or maintain private sector accommodation. Grounds for application includes family violence. Housing Policies for Women Escaping Violence were introduced in 1994. Women escaping violence can apply for priority housing where applications are critically assessed. The status of a woman as a victim of domestic violence is established by:

- referral from a support agency, social or refuge worker, doctor or similar professional; or
- possession of, or application for a Restraining Order by the applicant against the perpetrator; or
- commencement of criminal proceedings against the perpetrator; or
- advice from police (Department of Housing and Local Government, 2000, p.13)

Territory Housing can also offer additional security at home in the form of a "safe room" which includes:

- a solid core lockable door to the "safe room", usually the main bedroom;
- security screens to all the windows of the "safe room";
- a telephone connection in the "safe room",
- security screens to 2 external doors (http://www.nt.gov.au)

Australia Capital Territory

To be eligible for priority housing, a person must already by registered on the waiting list for public housing and prove that they cannot wait the normal time. The person must have lived or worked in the Australian Capital Territory for at least six months except for certain circumstances and domestic violence is listed as one of these (http://www.act.gov.au)

ACT Housing is presently revising its operational policies with the aim of publishing a completely revised set of policies at the end of June 2000. A working group exists to focus on tenancy management policies and domestic violence is a component. The development of a domestic violence policy has been given priority (Tim Tench, Housing ACT, 8/2/2000).

Appendix 2 — Phases of the Study

PHASE 1: ESTABLISH AND OPERATIONALISE PROJECT

Aim
- To refine the project methodology and workplan.
- To establish a process to ensure clear communication at all stages.
- To operationalise the project.

Process
- Meet with Project Management Group
- Review proposed methodology, workplan, key milestones and timetable
- Develop an agreed list of stakeholders to be consulted
- Appointment and induction of research assistants
- Research team meeting

Outcomes
- A clear understanding, by all involved, of the methodology, workplan, key milestones and timetable
- Clear reporting relationships
- Internal workplan including assignment of tasks and responsibilities
- Final workplan made available to the WESNET Project Management Group

PHASE 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Aim
- To carry out a comprehensive review and analysis of previous research related to domestic violence and homelessness.
- To document the existing range of interventions aimed at preventing homelessness for women and children escaping domestic violence.

Process
- Sourcing and collation of literature and documents using a combination of electronic databases, libraries and personal contact with researchers in the field in addition to the meta evaluation provided by *Current Perspectives on Domestic Violence*
- Identify the range of key interventions used across Australia and innovative models developed nationally and internationally.

Outcomes
A review of available literature and interventions relevant to domestic and family violence and homelessness. This review should make reference to:

- the issues for women of using support accommodation and outreach;
- whether such women use supported accommodation because of a lack of support to remain in their homes;
- the extent to which women use SAAP services as an immediate or delayed response to violence; and
- broader structural changes or initiatives required to enable women to stay in their homes.

PHASE 3:   ANALYSIS OF EXISTING QUANTITATIVE DATA

Aim

- To source and analyse available existing quantitative data

Process

- Review of available SAAP and other available data

Outcomes

- To establish the prevalence of domestic violence as a presenting factor in women's (and children's) use of SAAP services
- To establish the entry and exit points from SAAP services and the sources of referral for women escaping domestic and family violence
- To establish the extent and type of unmet need for SAAP services for women escaping domestic and family violence
- To establish, as far as possible, the extent to which women use SAAP services as an immediate or delayed response to domestic and family violence
- To establish women's use of accommodation and outreach services
- To identify, as much as possible, the effect on SAAP services of improved support across a range of services

PHASE 4:   DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR QUALITATIVE PHASE

Aim

- To establish appropriate research instruments and sampling frames for the collection of qualitative data.

Process

- Construct a sampling frame for the recruitment of stakeholders including police; court personnel; women's legal services and legal aid; SAAP service providers; crisis intervention services and other stakeholders as appropriate.
- Construct focus group schedules based on literature review, data analysis and preliminary consultations
- Liaise with National Shelter, as agreed, regarding the organisation of focus groups in selected States and Territories
- Seek feedback and approval from WESNET and any other agreed stakeholders on research instruments
- Determine sampling frame and recruitment method for interviews
- Construct and pilot interview schedule for interviews with stakeholders and women (as appropriate)
- A number of strategies were used in an attempt to recruit a broad range of women participants and to ensure that their views were represented in the analysis and recommendations. Contact was made with SAAP and a range of other stakeholders and their assistance sought in recruiting women to participate in the study either via a phone interview or by completing a written survey.

Outcomes

- The development and pilot of all research instruments which reflect the key questions for the study
- Organisation of focus groups and interviews

PHASE 5: COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

Aim

• To collect qualitative data from women and stakeholders which examines the relationship between domestic violence and homelessness for women (and children) and responses to homelessness.

Process

• Carrying out of focus groups or interviews with police, court personnel, State and Territory housing representatives and providers of support services
• Carry out follow up interviews with stakeholders
• Carry out interviews with women, as required
• Transcription of focus groups and interviews
• Writing up of findings
• A total of 12 focus groups and 51 interviews were conducted across the States and Territories. Face to face consultations were held in six States and Territories, which included the capital city in each state and additionally a regional centre in three States and Territories. A total of 161 stakeholders participated in the study.

Outcomes

• Interviews completed
• Focus groups completed
• Interpretation, analysis and writing up of findings
• Findings related to:
  • Issues for women accessing support via accommodation and outreach services
  • Whether or not women access supported accommodation or crisis services because of a lack of support services to enable women to remain in their homes
  • The extent to which women use SAAP services as an immediate or delayed response to domestic and family violence
  • Whether homelessness for women and children could have been prevented by adequate support services being in place
  • The effects on SAAP services of improved support across a range of services
  • Broader structural changes and initiatives which would enable women to remain in their homes

PHASE 6: REPORTING

Aim

• To finalise the report.

Process

• Workshop the findings with the Research Team and WESNET Project Management Team and WESNET Committee to consider the findings and explore their implications for national policy debate
• Write and distribute draft report to WESNET Project Management Team and other agreed personnel for comment
• Finalise report

Outcomes

- An agreed report which provides
  - An overview of the ways in which and extent to which domestic and family violence impact on the homelessness of women and children;
  - An analysis and evaluation of the range of interventions currently in use; and
  - Recommendations on strategies and responses required to better meet the needs of women and children experiencing domestic and family violence and to reduce the trauma of women and children affected by it.
- Final briefing to WESNET

Appendix 3 — Stakeholder Questions

As far as practical, questions were the same for SAAP and non SAAP stakeholders irrespective if the questions were responded to in a focus group, telephone or face-to-face interview or written response to enable comparability. Follow up or probe questions were not consistent as they were related to the context such as agency, location etc.

PROCESS FOR THE FOCUS GROUP

- Introduction to the research project and background, written background material would be provided with the confirmation of participation letter sent to participants.
- Information and consent sheets discussed and completed.
- Participants are asked to complete a sheet asking the type of agency in which they are employed, estimated proportion of their work that involves domestic violence cases, which groups they work with (women, children, perpetrators), gender, cultural background, years of experience in the area and professional background. This will provide a profile on the composition of focus groups without identifying individuals or their agencies.
- Discussion of focus group participation - what is involved and expectations around confidentiality.
- Definitions of domestic violence and homelessness provided and discussed so that all group members have a clear understanding of its definition in the context of this research. Provide copies to group members of domestic violence definition and Chamberlain's (1999) definitions around Primary, Secondary and Tertiary homelessness which can be referred back to in the focus group.

QUESTIONS

1. What are the similarities and differences between women experiencing domestic violence who are homeless and other homeless women?
   - Are their needs any different?
2. Do you work with women who experience domestic violence and do not go on to use accommodation services when leaving the relationship? If yes, what accommodation do these women go on to? What characteristics would you use to describe the situations of these women? (eg supportive families, paid employment etc.?)
   - Could the successful experiences of these women be expanded to other groups of women and children escaping domestic violence?
3. Which women are most likely to experience accommodation problems and homelessness as a result of domestic violence?
4. What do you estimate the proportions to be using the following categories:
   - shrot term/temporary/crisis
   - medium term
   - long term/chronic/ongoing
5. Do the service responses to these 3 categories need to vary? If yes, in what ways?
6. What are the most common pathways to housing for women escaping domestic violence (with and without children)?
7. How do women using refuge/shelter accommodation view themselves and their situations regarding accommodation? (Do they describe themselves as homeless?)
8. What are the strengths of the current refuge/shelter/women's domestic violence service mdels?

9. How could the current refuge/shelter models be improved?

10. Which women and children are best served by the current models?

11. Whose needs are not met by the current model?
    - Why are their needs not met? (Structural factors such as location, method of service delivery, access issues, resources, accommodation options??)
    - How could their needs be better met — what service responses are required?

12. What would the system (such as laws, policies, services and agencies) have to look like to prevent homelessness amongst women and children who have experienced domestic violence?
    - What would be some of the key features that have to be in place?
    - What needs to change to bring about such a system?
    - What are some of the barriers that inhibit the development of this system?
    - What is the role of family and friends in such a system?
    - What are the critical differences between the ideal system and the present one?

13. One option that has been suggested in addition to the refuge models, is an outreach model where women remain in the home, in some cases with their partner? Who would be the target groups for such a model and what might it look like?

14. There has always been a strong feeling that women and children should remain in the home and the perpetrator should be removed and have to find alternative accommodation. This has not been a viable option for many women and children as their safety cannot be assured under such an arrangement. However this appears to most people to be a fairer option and one that should be revisited.
    - What support would be needed in various aspects of the system for this to be an option for women and children?
    - What support should be provided?
    - For what groups of women and children would this still not be an option and why? What is (are) the most appropriate response(s) for this group?

15. In most areas of the human services, early intervention is seen as important in the prevention and exacerbation of the situations. What would early intervention involve in domestic violence to prevent homelessness of various kinds? (eg Access to crisis services, outreach services, information about housing options, legal options etc)

16. Most of the research both overseas and in Australia suggests that there are 2 responses that are critical to prevent women leaving domestic violence situations becoming homeless and remaining in poverty traps:
    - Access to housing that is affordable, safe, and long term
    - Access to education, training and employment opportunities and child care for women so they have opportunity to gain/retain economic independence as this is key to a strong position in the housing market.

    What is your response to these findings? Are there other aspects of social policy and services that you think are essential that have not already been discussed that you believe would provide an innovative response?

    What other services have to be linked/coordinated with domestic violence specific services for women and children experience domestic violence?

17. Any final comments or suggestions about future policies or programs in the area?

Appendix 4 — Women's Questions

1. Did you turn to anyone for help about domestic violence? For example:
   - Friends/relatives
   - Social service organisations
   - Religious organisations
   - Women's health centres
   - Doctor/hospitals
   - Police
   - Lawyer
   - Refuges/Shelters
   - Public Housing

2. When the situation became too much/reached crisis point did you leave the home or did your partner leave the home?

   - For those women whose partners left ask them about what happened (probe re whether the women left the home at a later date or have remained in the home)
   - For those women who left the home: What did you do about accommodation at that time?
   - How did you find out about that accommodation? (probe about longer term accommodation if went to crisis accommodation)
   - What did you need in the way of accommodation?

3. Did you have children at the time? If yes, did this influence your accommodation options? If yes, how/in what ways?

4. Would you have described yourself as being homeless at any time as a result of the domestic violence?

   - For participants who described themselves as homeless at some stage, ask "What factors led to you being homeless? What then changed that enabled you to gain housing?"

FOLLOWING 2 QUESTION FOR THOSE WHO HAVE USED REFUGES ONLY

5. How did you find out about the women's shelter/refuge?
   How would you describe your experience of accessing and staying at a shelter/refuge?
   - What assistance were you looking for?
   - What assistance did you receive?
   - How would you evaluate your experience with the refuge/shelter?

6. Why did you use accommodation services such as refuges/shelters?

7. Did you have contact with the public housing department to help with accommodation?
   - What assistance were you looking for?
   - What assistance did you receive?
   - How would you evaluate your experience with the public housing department?

8. Did you have contact with real estate agents or landlords in seeking out accommodation in the private market?
   - What assistance were you looking for?
   - What assistance did you receive?
   - How would you evaluate your experience?

9. Did you use any outreach accommodation services that provide continuing support?
   - What assistance were you looking for?
   - What assistance did you receive?
   - How would you evaluate your experience?

10. One option that has been suggested in addition to the refuge models, is an outreach model where women remain in the home. What support is needed to give women the option to remain in their home?
    - with partner
    - without partner

11. In hindsight would you have considered the option of remaining in your home while your partner was removed, providing your safety could be assured? Why, why not?

12. In hindsight would you do things differently if you were in the same situation again now? How and why?

13. What would the system (such as laws, policies, services and agencies) have to look like to ensure safe and suitable housing for women and children who have experienced domestic violence?
    - What would be some of the key features that have to be in place?
    - What needs to change to bring about such a system?
    - What are some of the barriers that inhibit the development of this system?
    - What is the role of family and friends in such a system?
    - What are the critical differences between the ideal system and the present one?

14. Any final comments or suggestions about future policies or programs in the area?

Appendix 5 — Study Information Sheet

Preventing Homelessness for Women (with or without children) Experiencing Domestic Violence

This research seeks to better understand the best options or strategies to assist women to retain accommodation following domestic violence. In particular, we are keen to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the present system; pathways for women escaping domestic violence; unmet/differing needs of this group; and alternate options for preventing homelessness. Key objectives for the project include:

- better understanding the relationship between women's homelessness and domestic violence;
- examining existing interventions aimed at preventing homelessness for women and children who have experienced domestic violence; and
- identifying strategies and responses required to assist women to retain secure and safe accommodation following domestic violence, or to re-establish their independence following domestic violence.

Who should be involved?

This project seeks to include the views of DV related service providers, police, the courts, legal services, health professionals, housing and accommodation services and women who themselves have experienced domestic violence.

How can you be involved?

A combination of focus groups and interviews will be conducted in all states and territories across Australia between March and the end of May 2000. If you wish to participate, please contact us on the number below.

What happens to the information collected?

All information will be treated in the strictest of confidence. Information presented will not identify individual agencies or the names of individuals who participated, unless express permission to do so is given. We do not require you to provide information about individual clients and you are free to discontinue, or restrict, your participation at any time. The researchers have developed strategies that respect and protect the identity and sensitivity of information provided and we would be happy to discuss these with you.

This information will be used to inform government decisions regarding future directions for domestic violence policy and program development.

Like further information? Prepared to participate?

Please contact

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Appendix 6 — Consent Form

PREVENTING HOMELESSNESS FOR WOMEN EXPERIENCING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Research conducted by: Donna Chung, Rosemary Kennedy, Sam Cody, Sarah Wendt and Bev O'Brien

- I have read the Information Sheet, and the nature and the purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.
- I understand that I may not directly benefit from taking part in the project.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.
- I confirm that I am over 18 years of age.
- I understand that I will be audiotaped during the study
- I understand that a comprehensive set of notes will be taken from the tape and the tape will then be erased.

Name of Participant

Signed

Dated

I have explained the study to subject and consider that he/she understands what is involved.

Researcher's signature and date

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Glossary

CALD   **Culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.**
                      See NESB for further discussion.

NESB   **Non-English speaking backgrounds.**
                      It is recognised that CALD is now the preferred term when referring to
                      people from diverse cultural backgrounds. However in this report the
                      term NESB has been used where the issue is related specifically to
                      language, eg daily living is difficult in a refuge/shelter as the woman is
                      unable to communicate with other residents. The term NESB is also used
                      when it is expression used in other publications, eg SAAP National Data
                      uses the expression NESB and so it is used when discussing SAAP data.

                      The term CALD is used when discussing issues related to cultural
                      sensitivity and diversity.

PADV   **Partnerships Against Domestic Violence**

SAAP   **Supported Accommodation Assistance Program**

Stakeholders   People who are employed in various areas related to domestic violence
                      who were consulted as part of the study as they have relevant knowledge,
                      interest and ideas to contribute in relation to the reasons for and
                      prevention of homelessness amongst women and children that is related to
                      domestic violence. This included workers, managers, policy analysts and
                      advocates.

                      Women are also obviously stakeholders in this study however for the
                      purposes of clarifying the different perspectives we have made a distinction
                      between women who have experienced domestic violence and
                      stakeholders who are employed in some capacity to work in the area.

WESNET

DEPARTMENT OF
FAMILY AND
COMMUNITY
SERVICES

Partnerships Against
Domestic Violence

Coordinated by the
Commonwealth Office
of the Status of Women