**Partnerships Against
Domestic Violence**

Meta Evaluation

Current Perspectives
on Domestic Violence

A Review of National
and International Literature

May 1999

**Partnerships Against
Domestic Violence**

Meta Evaluation of the
Partnerships Against Domestic Violence

Current Perspectives on
Domestic Violence

A review of national and international literature

Strategic Partners Pty Ltd
in collaboration with the
Research Centre for Gender Studies,
University of South Australia

May 1999

Foreword

In November 1997, Commonwealth and State and Territory Heads of Government endorsed *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* (*Partnerships*) as a major commitment by their Governments to address the problem of domestic violence in Australia.

Partnerships aims to build strategic collaboration between the Commonwealth, States and Territories to test new approaches, enhance and share knowledge and develop and document good practice in preventing and responding to domestic violence.

Partnerships includes diverse range of innovative projects such as research, innovation, good practice models, education and early intervention, worker education, and the development of effective organisational and infrastructure arrangements.

This literature review is the first product of the Meta Evaluation of the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence,* which is being undertaken by Strategic Partners and the Research Centre for Gender Studies (SA). The literature review provides a framework to identify benchmarks for the diverse groups of projects being undertaken.

Releasing the literature review to a broader audience will help raise awareness of the range of issues being addressed, and promote discussion about the current level of knowledge about domestic violence and the gaps that still need to be addressed.

From the beginning, comprehensive evaluation has been seen as an important part of *Partnerships*, to maximise the potential for learning from the diverse strands of the initiative and to guide future activities to address and prevent domestic violence.

JO CALDWELL
Partnerships Taskforce
A/g Chair

Contents

1.   Introduction

Domestic violence is a social problem that has considerable social and economic impacts on the Australian community. All levels of government and the non-government sector are involved in responding to domestic violence to varying extents, and the intersectoral nature of domestic violence has resulted in a wide range of interventions that have developed and been refined over some years. There are however challenges to many orthodox interventions as the diversity of Australians' experiences of domestic violence becomes evident.

> *Domestic violence is gendered violence and this needs to be acknowledged and understood. The recognition of violence as gendered, however, need not preclude an examination of the specific contexts in which the violence occurs, nor of the manner in which race, class or sexual identity (or indeed other social categories) might intersect with gender. Seeing domestic violence as gendered violence allows us to begin to ask important questions about the construction of gender, the potential to transform damaging forms of masculinity associated with that violence and about social and cultural factors which permit men to resort to violence* (Stubbs, 1994:4).

In November 1997, Heads of Government endorsed *Partnerships against Domestic Violence (Partnerships)*, an initiative between the Commonwealth, the States and the Territories, to work together towards the common goal of preventing domestic violence across Australia. The role of *Partnerships* was stated by the Prime Minister in announcing the package:

> *The funding of Partnerships is a down-payment. We need to find out more about what works then consider future priorities.*

Partnerships 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. It aims to do this by conducting a wide range of projects over a three year period, designed to stimulate new developments as well as enhance existing projects.

A total of $25.3m has been committed by the Commonwealth Government over the three and half years to June 2001. Of this, $13.3m will be for Commonwealth projects and $12m will be for national initiatives and State and Territory projects.

Six priority themes have been identified as the focus for projects funded under *Partnerships* over the next six years:

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

The *Partnerships* Taskforce also identified a need to recognise 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.

Within this framework, Strategic Partners Pty Ltd, in collaboration with the Research Centre for Gender Studies at the University of South Australia, has been contracted to undertake a comprehensive national evaluation, as a means of synthesising the practice learning into terms that can be used for enhanced field practice as well as for planning and policy developments by governments.

As *Partnerships* attempts at the national level to consolidate what is already known about domestic violence and further the strategies of prevention and early intervention, it must take account of the diversity of the population and the consequent range of responses to meet the needs of various groups. It provides an opportunity to develop innovative responses to problems associated with domestic violence and to disseminate these learnings across Australia. In moving forward it is important to examine what is already known about domestic violence[1] and identify areas for potential development. Section 2 provides a brief overview of the general directions, topics and research methodologies that have been used in researching domestic violence and evaluating interventions in Australia. This provides a context for Section 3 which describes the meta evaluation methodology to be employed for the evaluation.

---

[1] Domestic violence was originally referred to in academic literature as Battered Woman Syndrome. Since then a number of terms have been used including criminal assault in the home, spouse abuse and family violence. The term domestic violence is used throughout this report. Where the term family violence is used it is specifically in relation to Indigenous communities who have indicated preference for this term as more reflective of their experiences. Where the term violence against women is used it includes domestic violence as well as rape and sexual assault against women.

2. Research and Evaluation of Responses to Domestic Violence in Australia

Published research around various facets of domestic violence has increased considerably in the last twenty years. Cross sectoral involvement has resulted in research in many sectors including public welfare, public housing, legal responses, law enforcement and health services. The disciplinary journals in which domestic violence research has been published include criminology, social work, social policy, public health and medicine, law, psychology, women's studies, child and family welfare as well as journals specifically dedicated to domestic violence.

Given the diverse range of initiatives in various sectors that have been implemented across Australia to ameliorate domestic violence, it is not surprising that much of the evaluation research has been of particular programs. Therefore the published literature shows that various programs in the areas of law enforcement, legal responses or service delivery have been evaluated often at either a State or Commonwealth level or in particular localities. These evaluations have aided in the development of domestic violence policies, programs and training for workers.

In relation to infrastructure, information systems and organisational arrangements for domestic violence there is little published information available (Putt & Higgins, 1997). Obviously there are numerous systems in place across Australia for domestic violence. While system development is a time consuming and evolving process, it is likely that the publishing of information about these areas could be valuable to all those working in domestic violence, as it can provide important shared learnings in an area which is ever changing.

There are always limitations to researching sensitive social problems such as domestic violence. Muller (1997) has identified some of the evaluation limitations as including reliance on self report data in many instances, ethical and practical constraints on the use of control groups, subject attrition and difficulties with follow up, and varying definitions of what constitutes program effectiveness. A further difficulty in evaluating the impact of large scale domestic violence education programs and campaigns is that it is not possible to state with certainty whether changes in attitude can be solely attributed to the campaigns. In reviewing Australian research on violence against women, Putt & Higgins (1997) found that the main methods used were: phone-ins, surveys, use of existing databases, consultations with service users and consultations with stakeholders. These methods have generated considerable qualitative data about people's experiences of domestic violence and service systems.

Whilst there are evaluations of programs and reforms to redress domestic violence, there do not appear to be evaluations of 'whole of government' policy and program initiatives, although there are descriptions of what programs various government departments operate. This is not unexpected within a Federal system of government where various government departments run and fund programs in a diverse range of

areas. Putt & Higgins indicate the complexity of redressing domestic violence within such a system.

> *Although strategies to increase public awareness and to educate the community on violence against women have been orchestrated at a range of levels, criminal laws, the justice apparatus and the administration of many services are the responsibility of the State or Territory Governments. Thus, many changes have occurred within a State, or at a local level, with the separate and unrelated development of programs and approaches to the problems. The variation between jurisdictions is reflected in disparate criminal laws, organisational structures, and government departmental procedures across Australia. Due to funding arrangements and their community based orientation, a similar picture characterises the non-government sector, although the peak bodies sometimes provide overall direction and representation for certain services and lobbyists* (Putt & Higgins, 1997: xii).

3.   Meta Evaluation and Domestic Violence Policy

The issues outlined above are not unique to domestic violence or new for government policy makers. Without an understanding of the key research findings about domestic violence in Australia or clear indications of which policies and programs have had positive outcomes in particular contexts, future government directions cannot be based on what is known to be effective. A search of Australian and overseas literature revealed that there was a dearth of meta evaluation in the area of domestic violence. Thus Australian trends reflecting a focus on program evaluation are also evident in other countries. What were often described as policy evaluations in domestic violence literature tended to be evaluations or descriptions of organisational procedures to deal with domestic violence, such as in hospital emergency departments.

The *Partnerships* initiative requires a meta evaluation methodology in order to draw together the findings of the various evaluations of Commonwealth, national and State and Territory projects. This attempts to move beyond individual program evaluations to further the *Partnerships*' purpose of supporting strategic innovation and adding value to existing domestic violence responses through a national effort. The utility of meta evaluations are discussed below to provide a rationale for the basis of the meta evaluation methodology that will be used for the *Partnerships*.

3.1   Meta Analysis

The term meta analysis is more frequently found in literature than meta evaluation. Meta analysis is sometimes used interchangeably with meta evaluation, this in most respects misrepresents the clear differences between the two. The similarities between the two are that they are both concerned with identifying 'what works' and thus are focussed on cumulative outcomes. McGuire & Priestly (1995) define meta analysis very specifically as a statistical tool for analysing the results of previously

conducted experimental studies. The term meta analysis was first used by Glass (1976) when referring to the combined statistical analysis of a large number of studies on the same research question or hypothesis. As empirical data has accumulated in various areas of the social and medical sciences the use of meta analysis has subsequently grown in the 1980s and '90s.

> *The meta analytic processes of cleaning up and making sense of research literatures not only reveals the cumulative knowledge that is there, but also provides clearer directions about what the remaining research needs are* (Hunter & Schmidt, 1990: 38).

In order to conduct a meta analysis using the various statistical procedures, it is imperative that the studies which will be used are the same in their specific focus and design and results are comparable. A range of statistical methods are used to enable their comparability. Meta analyses have become popular in some areas of social science such as psychology, education and corrections. Examples where they have been used include primary prevention mental health programs for children and adolescents (Durlack & Wells, 1997); correctional programs (Redondo, Garrido, Anguera & Luque, 1995), psychotherapeutic models (McGuire & Priestly, 1995) and occupational commitment and job satisfaction (Hunter & Schmidt, 1990).

Losel (1995: 538) outlines the following steps in the process of meta analysis:
- Precisely delineating the issue under study.
- Systematically selecting primary studies.
- Coding studies according to content categories.
- Assessing methodological quality.
- Computing standardised measures of effect size.
- Analysing relationships between variables and effect sizes.

A similar trend has emerged in medicine in recent years with medical and nurse practitioners being encouraged to practice what has been termed 'evidence based medicine'. The same principle applies as meta analysis, the accumulated results of various primary studies are analysed to identify the most effective course of action. This has been described as a shift away from medical practitioners basing their clinical decisions on experience with individual patients and outdated primary training to one which involves *systematically searching the medical literature, evaluating it and applying it to patient care* (Rosenberg & Donald, 1995: 1122). In the USA and Britain, medical schools and associations are training medical practitioners in the practice of evidence based medicine. It requires skills in efficient literature searching and applying formal rules of evidence to evaluating clinical studies (Evidence Based Medicine Working Group, 1992: 2420). Evidence based medicine could be considered a practitioner form of meta analysis.

McGuire & Priestly locate meta analysis within the field of comparative outcome research. They argue there are two types of this research aimed at theory building: meta analysis and narrative review. The authors define narrative review in the following way.

The author will locate and read all research reports pertaining to the chosen area of work. Having done so, he or she will then attempt to provide a summary or interpretation of the trends amongst their respective findings. Research reviews of this kind play a major role in synthesising results (1995: 7).

Much of the work in the area of domestic violence could be defined as narrative review, as results from various studies have been synthesised. The diversity of activity in the area of domestic violence and program approaches has made this an appropriate form of comparative outcome research at this stage in the development of knowledge, for example the recent review of programs for male perpetrators of domestic violence (Keys Young, 1998). Meta analysis requires a substantial number of quantitative primary studies on the exact same problem using comparable methodologies.

In domestic violence research in Australia there has been much activity in recent years however its diversity in both focus and methodology does not suit meta analysis. The already discussed problems identified with comparable national data indicate that a meta analysis on many aspects of these data would have to be narrow in focus by definition and could result in unreliable findings. However a meta evaluation which draws together the results of the *Partnerships*' diverse projects can provide data which enables planning for future directions and will be broader in focus.

3.2   Meta Evaluation

The definition of meta analysis is relatively specific, involving adherence to a particular process and the use of various statistical techniques to analyse data from primary studies. By comparison, meta evaluation has two distinct strands: one aspect of meta evaluation can simply be described as 'evaluating the evaluation' and the second aspect, similar to meta analysis, is concerned with evaluating the combined results from various studies. Some authors only describe it as the first aspect, whilst others include both aspects. A major difference between meta analysis and meta evaluation is that meta evaluation does not necessarily involve the specific statistical techniques used in meta analysis.

Related to the first aspect of meta evaluation is a focus on improving the quality of evaluation. Scriven who first coined the term meta evaluation in 1969, defines it as follows:

Meta evaluation is the evaluation of evaluations - indirectly, the evaluation of evaluators - and represents an ethical as well as scientific obligation when the welfare of others is involved (Scriven, 1992: 228).

In this respect Scriven is concerned with improving the quality of evaluation so it is increasingly accurate for decision makers to act on. Scriven then goes on to be relatively prescriptive about the criteria for a 'perfect' evaluation. This obviously raises the question of who decides what is a 'good' evaluation. Prescriptions aside,

meta evaluation involves making judgement about the methods and utility of evaluations conducted.

Meta evaluation is a complex process that is about building a credible body of knowledge greater than the sum of the parts.

Individual evaluations are a rich source of data for a meta analysis which examines the relationships between findings across various studies. Drawn originally from medical science, and then applied to psychology, meta evaluation attempts to aggregate data across studies, but more latterly in the social sciences, builds theory and knowledge from a range of studies.

Meta evaluations take place within a political context to address:
- credibility and accountability issues
- economic issues
- values and beliefs
- effectiveness and efficiency

Meta evaluation can be used for a range of different evaluation processes, in addition to aggregating data and building theory. It can be used to establish common technical approaches to data collection, to establish common and shared processes, and to inform policy direction.

There are four key aspects within a meta evaluation:

Technical Analysis

- planning and design of tools
- developing mechanisms for data collection
- aggregation of funding on a cumulative basis
- cross comparisons
- developing empirical 'building blocks'

Process

- developing a national evaluation network
- consulting across projects/jurisdictions
- interchange of ideas - providing a 'clearing house' function
- providing an integrative approach

Theory Development

- connecting the 'building blocks'
- identifying what is known and what works
- analysing what is relevant (not all information is relevant)

- identifying:
  - causal relationships
  - gaps in knowledge
  - 'best' practice
- problem solving

Social Policy Input

- answering key questions, including:
  - what does this mean for current practice?
  - what needs to change?
  - how might this occur?
  - who needs to be engaged?
  - what further research/information is required?

Meta evaluation has a role in both formative and summative or impact evaluation. This is particularly relevant for the *Partnerships* as the methodological design aims to inform stakeholders of relevant findings for future directions throughout the life of the program and not merely report on the program after its completion. Formative evaluation methods are essential to provide decision makers with information about the process by which the *Partnerships* is being implemented, and in the case of a joint Commonwealth-State/Territory program could include consideration of how local contexts influence both the implementation and impact of the program in particular jurisdictions.

Formative evaluation processes enable changes to be made to the program throughout its life so that it is more responsive in meeting its outcomes. Thus lessons learned at the beginning of the program or in a particular jurisdiction are identified, disseminated and built upon. This requires an evaluation methodology which takes into account the environment in which the program is operating, and in this case, includes an understanding of other domestic violence initiatives at the Commonwealth and State/Territory levels and in the non-government sector.

In relation to summative or impact evaluation, identifying the outcomes and outputs from the program, this will also occur, both throughout the life of the *Partnerships* and at the end of the evaluation. As the projects funded under *Partnerships* are completed and evaluated, information from their evaluations will be fed back to decision makers and the impacts which such projects have had on various aspects such as training, infrastructure, prevention and education, policy development or intervention will be examined. These cumulative outcomes will demonstrate the impact of the *Partnerships* initiative in both directly and indirectly redressing domestic violence.

A meta evaluation methodology captures the complexity of the environment in which the *Partnerships* is operating, and takes account of the *Partnerships* process and its impacts throughout the duration of the program. Issues particular to local context and jurisdictions can be examined, whilst overall learnings from the diverse range of funded projects can be identified and widely disseminated. The methodology also

provides a measure of quality assurance over the project evaluations to ensure that project outcomes are explained and documented in order for them to be of use in the future. The meta evaluation as proposed for *Partnerships* should act as forum for exchange and dialogue whilst developing a well documented account of the achievements of the *Partnerships*.

As part of the process of evaluating *Partnerships* it is important to consolidate what has been learned about domestic violence and identify the areas where little is known. Sections 4 and 5 trace the emergence of domestic violence as a social problem and early responses to it. Section 6 examines what is already known about the six *Partnerships* priority themes and what is yet to be investigated. Section 7 looks at the emergence, development and evaluations of coordinated or inter-agency approaches as one of the current ways forward in tackling domestic violence.

4.   The Recognition and Emergence of Domestic Violence as a Social and Medical Problem in Western Countries

Early evidence of domestic violence in academic literature appeared in medical and psychiatric journals around the 1960s and was generally referred to as 'Battered Woman Syndrome'. The emergence of domestic violence within this context placed it in a medical model perspective, focussing on the individual traits of the women and men affected. This pathologised both female victims and male perpetrators to some extent, as these types of analyses were generally not considered within a social context.

In the late 1960s and early '70s feminists across the western world raised public awareness of domestic violence, and violence against women more generally. Unlike the medical profession, the women's movement viewed domestic violence as a consequence of women's oppression within a patriarchal society. Through the women's movements in most Western countries, domestic violence became addressed in various ways by both governments and self help movements. In both the USA and Britain early feminist responses to domestic violence were focussed on self help interventions involving collective action and establishing refuges and safe places for women that were independent of government. Since that time in both countries, activists from the women's movement have increased their influence into other areas such as domestic violence legislation, development of specialist services and involvement in the policy process. In all three countries the women's movement has been influential in raising public awareness about domestic violence and developing interventions. In Australia the response to domestic violence has involved governments for well over twenty years. By comparison, the North American and British responses tended to be more independent of governments reflecting both the different political structures and ideologies of the countries.

5. The Emergence of Responses to Domestic Violence in Australia

The initial focus of service responses was on safe accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence. Australian responses to domestic violence involved State and Federal governments, non-government organisations and self help groups. Unlike Britain and the USA, the Australian women's movement engaged with government early in its history in a range of areas. The establishment in 1974 of Sydney's Elsie Women's Refuge was borne out of feminist social action, while in June 1975 the Federal Labor Government introduced the National Women's Refuge Program providing funding for 12 refuges across the States (McFerran, 1990).

This engagement with government was not without ambivalence on the part of the women's movement, feminists were concerned about the dilemmas of government funding and its requirements and whether this could be accommodated within the collectivist principles on which the services were based.

There was considerable demand for such services from women and children escaping domestic violence. The limitations of unfunded services, reliant on voluntary labour and resources, were quickly being recognised (McFerran, 1990). The other significant trend at this time in Australia was the emergence of feminists in the Federal and State bureaucracies working in areas dedicated to improving the status of women (Sawer, 1991). The early 'femocrats' (feminist bureaucrats) had links to the Australian women's movement and supported funding programs for such services.

However it was not until the early 1980s that refuges began to receive stable funding. Such funding arrangements assumed that the non-government organisations and collectives would contribute 17.5 percent of the refuges' funding. This perpetuated the historical position of refuge workers as being under-paid and/or providing their labour for free in order to run the refuges. This well documented combination of feminist activists and 'femocrats' has led to a long term and unique relationship between government and feminists in Australia.

The Australian Community Health Program, also introduced by the Whitlam Labor Government, resulted in the opening of a number of community-based health services across Australia. This was another avenue for feminist involvement in responding to domestic violence. The users of the counselling and group services offered in these centres were often women who were experiencing domestic violence but who presented with problems such as depression and anxiety. With the opening of women's health centres, there was another path for women experiencing domestic violence to seek help, while the centres also provided a site for campaigning about domestic violence (Auer, 1990).

Further to these developments, by the late 1980s most State and Territory governments had held investigations into domestic violence. These investigations resulted in legislative reforms specific to domestic violence in the majority of States and Territories. Nancarrow & Struthers (1995), attribute much of the groundswell

and impetus for these investigations to feminists working in both government and non-government sectors. Thus, when reviewing the range of services funded by government for women and children escaping domestic violence, the impetus for such efforts which came from various women activists over a significant period of time must be acknowledged.

The responses to working with men who are perpetrators of domestic violence has had a different history. A number of models for working with male perpetrators of domestic violence have developed over time. Adams (1988), classifies the therapeutic group programs for working with men into five categories: Insight models; Ventilation models; Interactive models; Cognitive Behavioural and Psycho Education models; and Profeminist models. The different models draw on different explanations of domestic violence and have varied in popularity over time. Group programs for men do not necessarily adhere to one model but draw on various aspects of different models. In recent years in Australia the profeminist model has been favoured (Pease & Grace, 1996). Reviews and evaluations of male perpetrator programs have been undertaken in recent years in order to establish their effectiveness in reducing domestic violence (Keys Young, 1998; Ripper, 1998).

Domestic violence is a problem which a wide range of organisations confront either directly or indirectly, where domestic violence is disclosed during the organisation's contact with the person, such as in schools, social services and/or employment programs. Domestic violence is addressed across all levels of government and across various sectors. At present the sectors involved in dealing directly with domestic violence include:

Housing and Accommodation:

- Shelters and refuges for women and children escaping domestic violence.
- Transitional Housing programs.

Social Services:

- Counselling for women and couples.
- Child protection and domestic violence within the family of origin.
- Small numbers of specialised services for women and children.
- More recently group programs for male perpetrators.

Law

- Treatment of domestic violence as criminal assault.
- Family Law and domestic violence.
- Specific responses to domestic violence, eg protection orders.
- Mandatory Reporting legislation.

Law Enforcement

- Police attitudes and responses to domestic violence has been a focus of research which has led to an improving response from police in situations of domestic violence.
- Training for police in domestic violence.
- Specialised domestic violence units and trained officers within police forces.
- Involvement of correctional services following convictions.

Public Health and Medicine

- Recognition of domestic violence victims presenting at public hospitals with injuries sustained.
- Beginning recognition of presentation of domestic violence in general practices.
- Women presenting to mental health facilities have often experienced domestic violence.
- Development of protocols for addressing domestic violence in public hospitals.
- Screening of pregnant women for domestic violence has been a recent area of development.

It is now recognised that responses to domestic violence will not be equally effective with all groups in the community. The special needs and circumstances of particular groups, whose experiences of domestic violence may require differing responses, have also been identified. These groups or communities of interest include:

- Indigenous families.
- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- People living in rural and remote communities.
- People with a disability.
- Lesbians and gay men.

The needs and interests of these groups are emerging through various forums including conferences specifically focussed on women from non-English speaking backgrounds; lesbians and domestic violence; and family violence within Indigenous families. The needs of these groups are an important challenge to current services in relation to both their understanding of domestic violence and the responsiveness of their orthodox interventions. Commonwealth and State and Territory governments have become aware that orthodox domestic violence services should be more responsive to these groups, and as a result governments have funded research and required domestic violence services to demonstrate their responsiveness to these groups as part of their conditions of funding (see range of *Partnerships* funded projects, Ministerial Implementation Advisory Committee, 1997).

6.   *Partnerships* Priority Themes

The *Partnerships* initiative has identified six priority themes within which projects will be funded. The themes are based on the recommendations of the National Domestic Violence Forum convened in 1996 (Buckingham, 1998). The three levels of projects: National, Commonwealth, and State and Territory projects enable a wide range of areas to be covered and ensure the participation of all parts of Australia. *Partnerships* is an investment to identify both what is effective and future priorities. The six priority themes of *Partnerships* are:

- 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 through the Law.
- Information and best practice.
- Helping people in rural and remote communities.

The extent of knowledge and published literature around the six priorities varies as is indicated in the discussion below. This reflects the dual purpose of *Partnerships* in ameliorating domestic violence through consolidating current work and the further development of knowledge and interventions in new areas.

6.1   Working with Children and Young People to Break the Cycle of Violence Between Generations

Following the emergence of domestic violence as an issue of public concern, there has been concern expressed by professionals about its impact on children. The attention on domestic violence and children has been oriented to three main aims:

- improving the care and protection of children;
- reducing the negative effects of children's experiences of violence; and
- preventing domestic violence amongst future generations.

The ABS survey revealed that 61% of women who experienced violence be a current partner reported that they had children in their care at some time during the relationship and 38% said that their children had witnessed the violence.

Evidence suggests that there are often negative effects on children who witness and/or experience domestic violence. The effects which child victims are at risk of include: exhibiting aggressive behaviour; experiencing anxiety; exhibiting symptoms of depression; diminished self esteem; acting disobediently, telling lies and acting destructively; exhibiting emotional distress and somatic complaints; and intergenerational transmission of aggression ('cycle of violence') (Irwin & Wilkinson 1997a). However, as Irwin & Wilkinson (1997a) point out there are contradictory

findings about the effects and the extent to which they can be solely attributed to domestic violence in the family of origin.

Feminist researchers have also been critical of the term 'witness' or 'observer' of domestic violence when referring to children's experiences. This implies that the child merely observes their mother being abused by a partner, and does not accurately reflect people's experiences of violence in the family.

> *…the child is not merely overhearing the abuse of their mother. Children living in such circumstances are often subjected to a reign of terror, either as a result of the abuse of their mother, or by threats to, and actual abuse of, other family members. Children may also intervene to protect their mother, and thus risk, or experience, actual physical assault*
> (Irwin & Wilkinson, 1997:17).

Studies continue to examine and measure the effects of domestic violence on children, focusing on intrapsychic characteristics and behaviours. However, there has also been an important shift towards examining the complex dynamics and structural aspects of situations impacting on women and children in domestic violence. Irwin and Wilkinson's (1997b) current research reflects the latter focus. As part of examining the impact of domestic violence on children, they are exploring the implications of the assumption within the child protection system, that mothers are expected to take prime responsibility for their child's safety whilst they also experience abuse. Research examining the impact of domestic violence on women, their parenting and their children, and how this is understood and addressed by service providers and human service organisations has also been conducted in Britain (Mullender & Morley, 1995; Mullender, Kelly, Hague, Mallos & Iman, 1998).

One of the problems identified through research and anecdotal evidence from practitioners is that there are a lack of services specifically targeted and available to children who have experienced domestic violence (Smith, O'Connnor & Berthelsen, 1996; Bagshaw, Chung, Couch, Lilburn & Wadham, 1999). Whilst there have been preventive and education measures adopted in schools across Australia, with varying degrees of effort, access to specialist services for those children who have experienced domestic violence is limited.

> *The results of this study support the proposition that there is a need for professional intervention services for children who have witnessed domestic violence. Unfortunately, whilst almost half of the mothers indicated that concerns about their children's emotional and physical safety were a primary reason for separation, many mothers indicated to the interviewers that they were still seeking counselling for their children because services were limited in this area. As such services appear to be poorly funded or non-existent* (Smith et al, 1996:8).

The separation that initially developed between domestic violence and child abuse, and which treated them as separate phenomenon, has become blurred as knowledge in both areas has evolved. Research has shown that in many families where there is child abuse there is also domestic violence. Studies have shown an overlap between

violence towards women and violence towards children of up to 40 percent (Hughes 1986). Mothers in these families may be both victims of violence and abuse from their adult partners and perpetrators of abuse towards their children; whilst generally male partners or fathers may be abusive to both their adult partner and their children.

The types of abuse women are likely to inflict on children include physical and emotional abuse and neglect. The rate of men physically abusing children is similar to that of women, however men still predominate as the perpetrators of child sexual abuse.

Intergenerational transmission of domestic violence has been a major concern. It has become increasingly evident that children, who grew up in an environment where violence and abuse occurred, were more likely to be victims or perpetrators of abuse in adult life. There is not however a direct correlation between the different forms of abuse. That is an adult who experienced violence as a child will not necessarily go on to be physically violent towards others. They are equally likely to use other forms of abuse or neglect their children. Similarly some children who experienced violence in their home environment will not continue the 'cycle', usually as a result of a conscious decision to take efforts not to harm others. There is a tendency to over simplify the concept of a cycle of violence as a causal model, leading to inappropriate expectations and assumptions being made in relation to the responsibilities of women and children alike to effect their own protection.

A major problem in relation to children and domestic violence is their powerlessness and vulnerability in the situation. Whilst many groups face vulnerability due to structural inequalities, children are particularly disadvantaged due to their status. The needs of children have to be understood from their perspective. Human service and justice administration agencies have a responsibility to develop policies and practices that enable children's perspectives to be heard, taken account of and effectively addressed.

In terms of government intervention, such situations involve complex interventions that are costly. A South Australian study of the economic and fiscal costs of child abuse alone found that in the financial year 1995-96 the cost of child abuse and neglect to the State was $354.92 million (McGurk & Hazel, 1998). The costs calculated included the following areas: family and youth services; primary health services; education services; police; Attorney-General's; legal services; courts; and correctional services. The cost estimate was considered conservative and based on 3 components:

- known instances of child abuse and neglect ($41.41m);

- instances not reported but where interventions were undertaken ($10.18m); and

- costs incurred as a consequence of abuse such as child death, disability, injury and impairment ($303.33m).

Clearly prevention of domestic violence and child abuse and minimising their impact on children are important for both social and economic reasons.

In relation to addressing the needs of children who have experienced domestic violence, Queensland, through the *Partnerships*, has funded a Best Practice

Intervention for children and young people who witness domestic violence. This project has addressed what appears, from both the literature and anecdotal evidence, to be a major gap in current knowledge. An important aspect of *Partnerships* being a national program is that this work is widely circulated and its implementation within parts of Australia evaluated and documented so that the situation for children and young people is improved.

A number of other projects funded for children and young people through *Partnerships* have focussed on primary prevention such as educational curriculum and school education programs for young people. Considerable research has been conducted around children and domestic violence, and *Partnerships* funded projects will 'add value' to what is already known through identifying gaps in knowledge, developing interventions and evaluating initiatives targeted at children and young people.

6.2 Working with Adults to Break Patterns of Violence: Working with Victims and Violent Men

The ABS survey *Women's Safety Australia 1996* found that 23% of women who have ever been married or in a de facto relationship experienced violence by a partner at some time during the relationship. The proportion of women who experienced violence during a previous relationship was substantially higher than the proportion of women who experienced violence in a current relationship (42% compared to 8%).

In the 12 months preceding the survey, 2.6% of women who were married or in a de facto relationship experienced an incident of violence by their partner while 8.0% reported an incident of violence at some time during their current relationship.

42% of women who were pregnant at some time during their relationship with a previous violent partner experienced violence during the pregnancy. Of these women, 20% experienced violence for the first time while they were pregnant.

Female victims/survivors of violence within a heterosexual relationship are the group about which most is known in the field of domestic violence. Women victims/survivors are the most likely group to seek help for domestic violence and a number have been willing to participate in research in order to help others who are experiencing domestic violence, and to prevent it in the future. Evidence from service providers working with women suggests that whilst many women may present for issues of depression, low self esteem and general feelings of 'not being able to cope', commonly underlying these 'symptoms' are experiences of domestic violence.

The range of responses which has evolved in working with women who are survivors of domestic violence include: secure emergency accommodation (women's refuges or shelters); individual counselling; group support programs; police intervention; and legal responses such as restraining orders. More generally in the human service sector, domestic violence has been identified for consideration in policies of agencies such as Centrelink, law enforcement, community services, public housing authorities, public health services, the Child Support Agency and others.

As the diversity of women's needs, after leaving violent relationships, have become better understood, questions have been raised for service providers and other stakeholders about needed improvements in the responsiveness of services. For example, in South Australia there was a review of SAAP funded accommodation services for women and children escaping domestic violence (Thomson Goodall, 1997). Following the review an implementation plan was developed which aimed to increase the range of emergency accommodation options available to women and children escaping domestic violence. This has resulted in women's shelters in South Australia providing more than the original form of secure communal accommodation. Shelters have also had to develop strategies to overcome well known problems such as how to accommodate women with older sons and women with special needs such as those with a mental illness, a disability, and/or those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. An ongoing tension for many agencies is the need to be developing innovative responsive services for a diverse population whilst at the same time trying to deal with the present demands for the services as they currently exist.

Services to male perpetrators of domestic violence have not been as wide ranging as those provided to women and children. This is due to a range of factors including the focus on the safety of women and children as a primary concern, reluctance by male perpetrators to seek help about domestic violence, and limited data on the effectiveness of perpetrator programs which has made them less likely to attract funding. However, a number of programs for male perpetrators of domestic violence have been conducted in the States and Territories, and the recent national evaluation of perpetrator programs *Ending Domestic Violence? Programs for Perpetrators* (1998) by Keys Young draws together a broad range of research and practice data. Key findings of the research were:

- The Australian and overseas literature on perpetrator programs does not consistently demonstrate one preferred approach as effective.

- It is unclear whether perpetrator programs or strong arrest and prosecution practices are more effective in stopping male violence.

- There is emerging evidence to suggest that group programs for men are more effective than individual or couple counselling approaches to address violence.

Group programs considered to be more effective were those

> *…which are offered over a substantial period and focus on educational, attitudinal and behavioural change, rather than on therapy, support or counselling* (Keys Young, 1998:116).

An issue of concern is that there is some evidence that whilst programs may decrease physical abuse in the short term, other forms of non-physical abuse continue and at times escalate. This indicates the importance of evaluating perpetrator programs using strategies which involve partners and ex-partners as an integral part of the process and take account of a range of forms of domestic violence.

In order to reduce domestic violence and provide a safe and supportive environment for women and children, the recommendations contained in *Ending Domestic Violence? Programs for Perpetrators* focus on an integrated approach to intervention.

Thus they propose that perpetrator programs are conducted in an environment where there is an integrated and consistent service approach. There is growing evidence that perpetrator programs are most effective when implemented in the context of:

- *enhanced resourcing of support services for women and children and a strengthened criminal justice response*
- *strong pro-arrest policing*
- *consistent sentencing of perpetrators*
- *victim advocacy and support through the court process*
- *mandatory attendance at education programs as part of sentencing*
- *strong penalties for repeat offences and breaches of sentencing and protective orders* (Keys Young, 1998:28).

This research has addressed many outstanding questions about interventions for domestic violence perpetrators. Their research indicates that group programs are more effective than individual or couple counselling. One of the other significant aspects of the research is that it clearly identifies the need for domestic violence perpetrator programs to be integrated within the current government and non-government services involved in domestic violence to form part of the overall response to the amelioration of domestic violence.

In 1991, the NSW Women's Coordination Unit commissioned a report on the Costs of Domestic Violence. Similar to the study which investigated economic costs of child abuse and neglect, conducted in South Australia, the NSW study also used conservative approximations of prevalence as the basis for its costings. The NSW study estimated that the total cost of domestic violence to the State in 1990 was $1,524.821 million. This was based on a number of components including: direct costs to women; economic costs to government and indirect costs to others. Whilst this data only pertains to NSW and the costs will have increased, it provides a strong indication of the ripple effects which domestic violence has on the Australian economy.

There are obvious social and economic imperatives for focussing domestic violence initiatives in the areas of early intervention and prevention. Although it is recognised that such initiatives have to be balanced alongside the need to continue providing support to those currently experiencing domestic violence.

6.3   Working with the Community, Educating Against Violence

As knowledge about social and health problems expands, there is generally a shift towards measures aimed at prevention. The problem of domestic violence is no exception to this trend with an increasing interest in recent years on prevention and early intervention. One of the first major domestic violence public education and awareness initiatives was the Zero Tolerance campaign which originated in Edinburgh in 1992. It involved feminist activists in developing a campaign to educate the public about domestic violence. The campaign drew on a wide support base including politicians, churches and civic groups to challenge social attitudes and dispel myths about domestic violence. 'Zero Tolerance' adopted a crime prevention approach,

using strategies previously tested in long term drink driving campaigns (Mackay, 1996). The identified outcomes of the campaign were high levels of public and political debate about domestic violence which became an issue of recognised importance on the political agenda (Mackay, 1996). Since the successful implementation of Zero Tolerance in the United Kingdom, other jurisdictions have introduced the campaign. It was launched in South Australia in 1995.

In Australia there has been a diverse number of small and large scale education and awareness raising initiatives in a range of sectors across the three levels of government. The range has covered local government involvement in crime prevention and community development activities focussed on domestic violence, through to large scale Commonwealth funded campaigns. Domestic violence has been included in the curriculum of many professional courses such as social work, allied health, teaching, medicine, nursing and child care. Police training similarly includes components covering domestic violence. Some State and Territory Education Authorities have included information about domestic violence and dating violence in schools (Nancarrow & Struthers, 1995).

At the national level, the Commonwealth Office for the Status of Women conducted the 'Break the Silence' campaign in 1989, and the 'Stop Violence Against Women' campaign in 1993. At this time the National Committee on Violence Against Women (NCVAW) was established to provide a national forum and focus. The Committee's development of a National Strategy on Violence Against Women consolidated much of what was known about domestic violence and thus included wide ranging responses to eradicating domestic violence. The Strategy suggested action across various sectors, reflecting the complex multi-dimensional nature of domestic violence. One of the difficulties with such an approach is that within a Federal system of government such a committee has a limited mandate in affecting the agendas of different levels and sectors of government, as indicated in the quote below.

> *The NCVAW also produced a number of other valuable resources, such as National Guidelines for Training in the Area of Violence Against Women which are to be implemented at the State level. Unfortunately, it appears that such implementation in many States will be dependent on the ongoing goodwill and creativity of the community sector, working with minimal resources* (Nancarrow & Struthers, 1995: 46).

In recent times national approaches to domestic violence have been addressed though three main programs at the Commonwealth level, National Crime Prevention, (NCP, formerly known as the National Campaign Against Violence and Crime) in the Attorney General's Department, the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) in the Department of Family and Community Services and *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* in the Office for the Status of Women.

National Crime Prevention priorities include violence in the community generally, of which domestic violence is one significant area. Research commissioned through NCP has included a national review of male perpetrator programs, a national review of programs for young people around domestic violence, and a survey of young people's attitudes to domestic violence. Through the joint Commonwealth/State

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program, recurrent funding is provided for a range of services for women and children escaping domestic violence. *Partnerships*' funded projects at the national and State and Territory levels include education and prevention projects.

A further development which focuses on the role of business in domestic violence is the *Business Against Domestic Violence* (BADV) initiative which is currently developing through the involvement of the private sector. The reported effects of domestic violence on business are absenteeism, poor performance and reduced productivity, increased stress and safety risks (Heriot, 1998). The aim of BADV is to "*encourage Australian businesses to make a commitment to the community by playing a vital role in helping to prevent and respond to domestic violence*" (Heriot, 1998: 16). An example of strategies which businesses can undertake include developing policies and practices which assist workers experiencing domestic violence.

An example of how such initiatives can develop is the Polaroid Corporation in the USA. Polaroid has recognised that domestic violence is an issue affecting employees and has included assistance for workers in domestic violence situations as part of their Employee Assistance Program. In addition to providing support to employees, Polaroid provides paid leave for staff dealing with domestic violence, training to senior managers about domestic violence and puts considerable effort into community initiatives to prevent domestic violence (Solomon, 1998).

At present in Australia there is a wide range of education and prevention activities being implemented to reach a diverse range of target groups. It is essential that information about the value of these initiatives is shared through national networks so that knowledge of effective strategies develop and pitfalls can be identified to ensure maximum use of limited resources.

6.4   Protection through the Law

The police and the legal system were two areas which the women's movement originally identified as important sites of change to help women and children experiencing domestic violence. Lobbying from the women's movement and other interest groups, as well as feminists in government, led to legal reform at the State and Commonwealth levels. Whilst there is still considerable change required, much has been achieved. There is specific domestic violence legislation in some areas and protection/restraining orders have become a well understood aspect of dealing with domestic violence. Police receive training around domestic violence and there are small but specialised domestic violence units in many police forces.

To suggest that legal intervention in domestic violence in Australia is complex is an understatement. There are aspects that pertain to the Commonwealth in relation to Family and Immigration Law, while other aspects of domestic violence, such as assault charges and restraining orders, are dealt with primarily at the State level.

For many people who experience domestic violence it is their first experience with the legal system, and for many this can act to further decrease their sense of power over their own lives.

Arguably, recent decades have seen some considerable improvements in the provision of legal protection against violence in the home. However the women most able to mobilise that protection are still those who are most informed, most financially privileged, those in large urban settings, and those who belong to dominant cultural groups. Aboriginal women, women in rural areas and those from non-English speaking backgrounds remain the least protected. The challenge in re-thinking both theoretical and policy considerations in family violence in Australia, is to do so in a way which is adequate to the task of acknowledging difference in experience, difference in perspective, difference in need, and in developing policy which is responsive to those differences (Stubbs, 1994: 4).

Aboriginal women have been identified as experiencing extremely high rates of interpersonal violence, however their general lack of access to culturally appropriate legal and social remedies has resulted in many living with continuing violence. Recent reforms to examine model domestic violence laws at the national level must take account of the needs of diverse groups if the situation outlined by Stubbs is to change.

Some of the issues related to the law and domestic violence which have been of concern are:

- The inflexibility of the Family Law Court to respond appropriately to the needs of parties involved where there has been domestic violence. This has become evident through the number of interest groups which have emerged in the 1980s and '90s in Australia.

- The attitudes of Judges, Magistrates, Registrars and Justices of the Peace in relation to domestic violence as has been shown through a number of highly publicised cases. The education and training of judges around domestic violence remains on the agenda.

- The use of Battered Woman Syndrome in Australian court cases where female victims of domestic violence have killed their male partners who were the perpetrators of the violence.

- The shift in recent years towards mediation as a form of dispute resolution has been of concern to some feminists, particularly in situations where there has been domestic violence.

- The problem of women and children having to leave the family home and live in temporary and often sub standard accommodation whilst the perpetrator remains in the home.

There are both positive and negative responses to current policies and practices of the law in relation to domestic violence. Access to the law by women escaping domestic violence requires constant review to ensure that their needs are met. Whilst it is still early days, training of police officers in domestic violence and the establishment of domestic violence units within police forces have shown positive results in a recent study of domestic violence (Bagshaw et al, 1999).

Research around legal responses, and access to justice more generally, has included a number of areas in Australia. Australian feminist lawyers have made important contributions to debates around gender and the law generally and domestic violence specifically. Research and evaluation of aspects of the law relating to domestic violence have often involved consultations with specific communities of interest and service providers (Putt & Higgins, 1997). Research around police attitudes and responses to domestic violence has involved a number of Australian studies. By comparison, court proceedings and outcomes have received less attention (Putt & Higgins, 1997).

The law and law enforcement remains central to domestic violence interventions in Australia and as Stubbs has stated, the challenge is to make such systems both accessible and responsive to the needs of diverse groups of women, men and children experiencing domestic violence.

6.5 Information and Best Practice

Best Practice

'Best Practice' is a generic term, used widely in industry and the commercial sector, as a concept which is about promoting excellence, with a focus on creating organisational cultures which are directed to continual quality improvement in all aspects of the organisation and its interaction with clients. The concept of best practice is not a new one, but has recently been adopted by Australian businesses to assist them to become more internationally competitive. While the concepts and principles of best practice have mainly been applied to business and manufacturing, some applications are relevant to the human services sector, with a replacement of the concepts of sales and customers with services and clients.

Some of the arguments against applying the concepts of best practice in human services have been that the field is not homogeneous and the 'products' are not controllable. There has been a concern that 'best' implies that there is only one right way to do things, which can be applied regardless of the context and circumstances. For this reason the term 'good' practice has found more favour in human service discourse.

For an organisation to be successful it must fully satisfy the needs and wants of its clients and have a client focus. Good practice focuses on the outcomes or outputs of an organisation, and depends upon management implementing strategic directions throughout the organisational structure. The concept of continuous improvement is integral to considerations of good practice; the continual striving to find better and more effective ways of doing things. Good practice is considered to be a comprehensive, integrated and cooperative approach to the continuous improvement of all facets of an organisation's operations.

The following characteristics are common across organisations which are striving to deliver good practice:

- A shared vision for the delivery of high quality services which is supported by a comprehensive, integrated, and co-operative change strategy to bring about continuous improvement in cost, quality and timeliness.

- A strategic plan, developed in consultation with the workforce, encompassing all aspects of an organisation's operations and setting out short, medium and long term goals.

- A commitment to continuous improvement throughout the organisation, driven by the full public support of the CEO.

- Flatter organisational structures supported by the devolution of responsibility, the empowerment of workers, and improved communication. This often involves team-based work.

- A cooperative and participative industrial relations culture which incorporates effective communication and consultation processes.

- A commitment to continuous improvement and learning, with a highly-skilled and flexible workforce, and recognition of the value of all people in the organisation.

- Innovative human resource policies which include a commitment to occupational health and safety and equal opportunity employment.

- A focus on service users, both internal and external.

Within the framework of promoting continual improvement, the application of good practice principles to human service programs can provide new ways of approaching service development.

A crucial element of good practice is its holistic approach, which entails a comprehensive understanding of the needs of the different clients and stakeholders. In this context it involves a balanced handling of the needs of all client groups and a broad appreciation of the impact of domestic violence on families and the community.

The majority of available literature, in Australia and overseas, discusses the experiences and effects of domestic violence along with descriptions of a range of interventions. Much of this literature includes evaluations undertaken immediately on the conclusion of a program, however very little has been done on the long term outcomes of interventions, as resources have usually been a constraint.

National Data Collection

A commonly identified barrier to improving knowledge of the extent of domestic violence in the community and to improving infrastructure for responding to it has been the absence of coordinated national data collection systems.

Putt & Higgins (1997: 32-3) explain the various ways in which data is collected:

> *… there are differences within different parts of an organisation, between different organisations within a jurisdiction, and between like organisations across jurisdictions, both in type of data collected and in methods of data collection.*

The authors summarised the barriers to standardised and comparable data at the national level as being:

- *reliability and accuracy within collections;*
- *changes to data collections over time;*
- *restricted access;*
- *limited resources and organisational priorities;*
- *differences in definitions, classifications and counting;*
- *sensitivity of comparative analysis* (Putt & Higgins, 1997: 33).

Despite these problems and restrictions, there are strategies for developing a national data set which overcome these barriers. It should also be recognised that despite the incompatibilities of some data sets, all data is valuable within the local context in which it is collected and usually more generally. In addition, there are a number of qualitative studies that provide policy makers and practitioners with insight into the experiences of domestic violence and include community identified strategies for improving responses to the problem.

Thus despite the lack of a coordinated national data set, there is considerable information available about domestic violence in Australia.

Worker Competency Standards

Increasing attention is now being paid to worker competency in the provision of services to people affected by domestic violence across a range of services and professions. National competency standards for good practice with particular groups, including children and young people who are witnesses and/or victims and men who are perpetrators, are being developed as one of *Partnerships'* national projects.

The development of national competency standards will provide a national benchmark in the community, consolidating many years of experience to inform effective approaches for the future. Competency standards provide the basis for training workers, establishing programs, evaluating worker and program effectiveness, and funding agencies.

The need for agreement and adherence to standards and protocols in addressing domestic violence is considered to be essential for a consistent response to domestic violence which moves beyond 'the luck of the draw' of getting a good worker when seeking help. The models of domestic violence intervention which are comprehensive and consistent in approach have been based on trained multi-disciplinary staff working within an inter-agency approach. Such approaches have been implemented in some locations across Australia.

6.6 Helping People in Rural and Remote Communities

Domestic violence in rural and remote communities has been given scant attention in Australia and only a small number of Australian researchers with an interest in rural issues and/or domestic violence have published work in this area (Alston, 1997;

Coorey, 1988; La Nauze & Rutherford, 1997; Nicholson, 1998). Current *Partnerships* projects focus on rural locations in the areas of program development and some research projects have included rural communities. A number of factors are unique to rural and remote locations.

An in-depth qualitative study undertaken in rural Kentucky by Websdale (1995) identified barriers to rural women dealing with domestic violence. The author has developed three main categories to describe these barriers.

Physical Isolation

- Geographical isolation of rural living.
- Communication difficulties: these include telephone access being denied and no access to transport.
- Isolation leading to longer police response times.

Socio-Cultural Isolation

- Marriage and family values in rural areas.
- Women employed in rural areas generally earn even less than those in urban areas.
- Dominance of patriarchal ideology and attitudes of rural police officers.

Isolation from potentially supportive institutions

- Lack of privacy/anonymity.
- Lack of child care.
- Inadequate health services.
- The role of the Church and patriarchal ideology.
- Absence of women in public life/positions.
- Patronage politics and compromised policing.

In Australia, the most commonly identified issue for those experiencing domestic violence is the lack of anonymity if they wish to seek help. Whilst the help will be confidential there is still the barrier of disclosing such personal detail to a worker who you may know in another context. There is evidence that this makes help-seeking more difficult in rural areas, especially where the male partner may be a colleague or known to police or other authorities within the town. Other unique issues include the geographical isolation that can make leaving a violent relationship near impossible in some cases. Access to finances may be more difficult for women in rural areas where the household finances may be organised in ways that result in no access to either cash or credit, and assets tests prevent eligibility for social security. This can prevent some women from leaving domestic violent situations as they have no money with which to leave.

The presence of guns in farming communities has also been identified as putting women in domestic violence situations at greater risk.

Small communities are unlikely to have specialist domestic violence services. Specialist services for children who have experienced domestic violence are scarce in

urban locations and this situation is worse in rural and remote locations where there may be very few if any services targeted to children generally. Some commonly used interventions in urban areas, such as perpetrator groups and women's refuges/shelters, are not viable or necessarily appropriate to some rural locations. Researchers and service providers are aware of the need for models of intervention, community education and prevention that are responsive to the conditions of rural and remote areas. The particular needs of rural communities have been considered in recent years with specific strategies developed to target communities such as domestic violence campaigns involving groups such as the Country Women's Association. The research and programs funded under the *Partnerships* will add considerably to the effort in rural and remote areas.

7.   Coordinated Approaches

The intersectoral nature of domestic violence has led a number of countries with different systems of government to develop inter agency or coordinated models of service in the area of domestic violence. Agencies generally involved in such approaches include the police, social services, local judiciary, correctional services, women's refuges and other providers of services to men and women in domestic violence. Effective inter-agency models are based on a multi-disciplinary approach as the range of professionals involved in domestic violence must be engaged for such models to be effective. Without this dimension models are likely to be limited in the their coordination and fragmented service delivery would continue. Evaluation results of different models of coordination indicate that there are obvious benefits to such an approach, such as consistency in policy and practice for domestic violence perpetrators and victims/survivors.

One of the variables which appears important in establishing a coordinated approach is that it is contained to particular geographical or other relevant boundary. A number of the coordinated or inter agency approaches are based on the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Minnesota. The Hamilton project in New Zealand which is based on the Duluth model began in 1991, with the primary aim being to ensure safety for victims. Further, it aimed to hold perpetrator's accountable for their violence. The project contained a number of elements to achieve these aims:

- *Shared philosophy on policies and practices amongst the agencies involved*
- *Networking between agencies to ensure consistency in approach*
- *The development of protocols so that practices were not left to discretion and compliance to protocols was monitored*
- *Programs for both victims and perpetrators*
- *Evaluation of outcomes* (Busch & Robertson, 1994).

An important consideration in the project was that confidentiality and privacy were not privileged over victims' safety. This can pose an important legal and ethical dilemma for agencies' involvement in the project. The evaluation of the Hamilton project indicates increased amount of work concerning domestic violence in all agencies involved. In particular, the women's refuge reported increased numbers, police arrests for domestic violence increased and the courts charged greater numbers

of domestic violence perpetrators (Busch & Robertson, 1994). They also found early reports from women indicated positive changes in their male partners' behaviour.

In Britain a major evaluation was conducted of inter agency coordinated programs involving 200 initiatives (Hague, 1997). Such initiatives varied in scale and whilst they were focused on coordination, they were not necessarily derived from 'Duluth type' models. In Britain the Home Office was the lead agency for interdepartmental initiatives on domestic violence policy where the move towards inter-agency responses reflected a broader trend for a range of social services to adopt local responses with inter-agency work rather than centralised service responses. The research found that what was meant by interagency coordinated programs varied considerably (Hague & Mallos, 1998). Where inter-agency approaches consisted primarily of agency representatives meeting to network and share information about domestic violence they were not found to be particularly effective or efficient.

Initiatives which were identified as undertaking innovative practice were generally those where there was a designated employee to the program who acted as a coordinator. The conclusions drawn from the research were that in order for inter agency approaches to be effective, the systems they are coordinating have to be adequately resourced, agencies have to have a commitment to the project through delegated representatives who are able to implement change in their agency policy, and practice and power differences between agencies need to be acknowledged and dealt with. A further issue of importance was consideration of how such initiatives can be accountable to the women and children experiencing domestic violence whom they aim to assist.

There are a wide number of domestic violence initiatives being run in Australia at present which span the continuum from tertiary level interventions through to prevention and primary research. All levels of government and various sectors have developed agency policies and programs to respond to domestic violence. The needs of specific groups within the community, such as Indigenous women and men, are being recognised and specific responses are developing in some areas. Prevention and education initiatives have the potential to reduce the overall incidence of domestic violence in the coming years.

Inter agency coordinated approaches offer an opportunity for the development of a consistent approach to dealing with domestic violence within a specific location. Over the years a range of coordinated models have emerged, they vary in size and scope, with local conditions such as legislation, available services etc being important variables in their development. In order for them to be effective there is an obvious need for agencies' ongoing commitment, adequate resourcing and the development of a structure around the initiative which is sustainable beyond individual workers' commitments. There is evidence that it is essential that senior personnel within agencies must have the authority to make responsive changes to domestic violence policy and practice. The considerable activity around domestic violence suggests the importance of evaluating such activity to ensure that what is effective is utilised and effectively replicated.

8.   Conclusions

Australian domestic violence research and evaluation covers a wide body of knowledge across the six priority themes. Much is known about the effects of domestic violence on children and young people from both research and practice experience. There is less known about what specialist services are most responsive in meeting the needs of children and young people and preventing domestic violence in future generations. Current *Partnerships* initiatives that will address these gaps in knowledge include projects identifying best practice with these groups and the peer education and support projects being piloted in various locations.

A great deal is known about women survivors experiences' of domestic violence and some of the services which have been effective. In response to their needs services are changing and developing. Research has been conducted on the needs of women who do not access domestic violence services and what is needed to enable earlier intervention in situations of domestic violence. Such projects and research will assist in targeting more diverse groups of women experiencing domestic violence.

Historically less research attention has been given to male perpetrators of domestic violence. However in recent years a number of Australian studies have emerged around interventions for male perpetrators of domestic violence. Evidence suggests groups are more effective interventions and that such services should be located within an overall network of domestic violence services. The evaluation of such services should include the perspectives of those who were the victims of male domestic violence. Issues about perpetrator programs around which there is still debate include the need to know more about the effectiveness of the programs for 'involuntary' clients or those mandated to attend and how responsive such models are for men from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Considerable effort has gone into community education and prevention of domestic violence in Australia in recent years. Overall there are indications that there is less acceptance of the use of physical force by partners in a relationship. However, there is still considerable domestic violence in our community despite slowly changing attitudes, which tend to reflect a narrow definition of domestic violence as physical violence. The effectiveness of community education and prevention initiatives appears to be one of the areas about which little is known. There is a need for research and evaluation that measures the impact of these initiatives, on both a large scale and in local settings so that the importance of the local context and its specific variables can be better understood.

Research has been commissioned around aspects relating to domestic violence at the Commonwealth level though the Family Court and related services; while research on police attitudes to domestic violence, restraining orders and their effectiveness have generally taken place at the State and Territory levels. Despite differences in jurisdictions, there is a need for a national perspective on various aspects of domestic violence pertaining to the law. This will provide an overarching view on what has been achieved and guidance on the most appropriate responses for future planning to ensure all citizens needs in relation to the law and domestic violence are considered.

An area of domestic violence on which there is little published information is effective information systems for dealing with domestic violence. While there is knowledge about the problems of national data collections within a federal system, at the micro organisational level, there is a need for information about what are the most effective data systems for domestic violence cases that meet the requirements of service providers in various organisational settings. Tasmania is running such a project and its results should be of national interest.

There is a small but growing body of information about domestic violence in rural and remote areas. Whilst needs have been identified, and are often corroborated by both new research and service providers' experiences, there still remains an outstanding issue of developing alternative models responsive to these environments. It has been recognised that the mere implementation of urban based interventions to rural and remote areas is often inappropriate. Innovative service providers in rural and remote areas have therefore developed approaches to practice responsive to local needs. It is essential that such models for domestic violence be trialed, evaluated, documented and widely disseminated in order to provide a more timely and responsive approach to people living in rural and remote areas experiencing domestic violence.

Coordinated or inter-agency approaches represent one innovative strategy that has been of value in recent years, in developing a consistent approach to domestic violence policies and practices. Such models are generally locality based, and the challenge is to identify how the methods which have been effectively used in such models can be applied on a larger scale to develop effective policy and practice more broadly.

Partnerships provides an important opportunity for the Commonwealth, States and Territories to conduct innovative projects in areas of domestic violence where more needs to be known and their findings disseminated systematically and widely for them to be of optimum use.

Bibliography

Australian Bureau of Statistics (1996) *Women's Safety Australia* Cat No. 4128.0

Adams, D. (ed) (1988), *Treatment Models of Men who Batter: A Profeminist Analysis*, SAGE, California USA.

Alston, M. (1997) 'Violence against women in the rural context', *Australian Social Work*, Vol 50, No.1.

Auer J. (1990) 'Encounters with the State: Co-option and Reform, a Case Study from Women's Health' in Watson, S. (ed) *Playing the State: Australian Feminist Interventions*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin.

Bagshaw D., Chung D., Couch M., Lilburn S. & Wadham B. (1999) *Needs assessment of women, men and young people experiencing domestic violence,* Domestic Violence Unit, Department of Human Services, South Australia (Forthcoming).

Buckingham B. & Associates (1998) *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence National Evaluation Framework* Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Taskforce, June 1998.

Busch R. & Robertson N. (1994) 'Ain't no mountain high enough (to keep me from getting to you): An analysis of the Hamilton Abuse Intervention Pilot Project' in Stubbs J (Ed) *Women, Male Violence and the Law,* Institute of Criminology Monograph Series No. 6, Federation Press, Sydney

Coorey, L. (1988) *Domestic Violence and the Police: Who is Being Protected? A Rural Australian View.* Masters Thesis, University of Sydney, Dept of Social Work & Social Policy.

Distaff Associates (1991) *Costs of Domestic Violence* NSW Domestic Violence Strategic Plan, NSW Women's Coordination Unit, ISBN 0 7305 8777 0.

Durlack J. & Wells A. (1997) Primary prevention mental health programs for children and adolescents: a meta analytic review *American Journal of Community Psychology* April 1997, Vol. 25 No. 2 pp.115-38.

Evidence Based Medicine Working Group (1992) Evidence-based medicine: a new approach to teaching the practice of medicine *The Journal of the American Medical Association* Vol. 268, No. 17, pp.2420-6

Hague G. (1997) Smoke Screen or Leap Forward: inter agency initiatives as a response to domestic violence *Critical Social Policy* Vol. 17 No.4 pp.93-109

Hague G. & Malos E. (1998) Inter agency approaches to domestic violence and the role of Social Services *British Journal of Social Work* Vol 23 No.3 pp.369-86

Heriot D. (1998) Government and business united against domestic violence *Women and Work* July 1998, Vol 19 No. 1 p.16-18

Hughes, H. (1986), "Research with children in shelters: implications for clinical services", *Children Today*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pages 21-25

Hunter J. & Schmidt F. (1990) *Methods of Meta-Analysis: Correcting errors and bias in research findings* Sage Publications, Newbury Park

Irwin J. & Wilkinson M. (1997a) Women, children and domestic violence *Women Against Violence* Issue 3 p.15-22

Irwin J. & Wilkinson M. (1997b) In whose best interests: domestic violence and child protection *Paper presented at 25th AASW National Conference: Social Work Influencing Outcomes* p.362-5, Canberra ACT

Keys Young (1998) *Programs for Perpetrators of Domestic Violence* National Campaign Against Violence and Crime

La Nauze H. & Rutherford S. (1997) Women's work against violence: community responses in a rural setting *Women Against Violence* pp.15-21

Losel F. (1995) What recent meta evaluations tell us about the effectiveness of correctional treatment in Davies G, Lloyd-Bostock S, McMurran M & Wilson C (eds) *Psychology, law and criminal justice,* Walter de Gruyter, Berlin

McFerran L. (1990) Interpretation of a Frontline State: Australian Women's Refuges and the State in Watson S (Ed) *Playing the State: Australian Feminist Interventions*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin

McGuire J. & Priestley P. (1995) Reviewing 'What Works': Past, present and future in McGuire J (ed) *What works: Reducing Reoffending - Guidelines from Research and Practice*, John Wiley & Sons, California

McGurk H. & Hazel V. (1998) *The Economic Cost of Child Abuse and neglect in South Australia*: *A report prepared jointly by The Office for Families and Children and the Australian Institute of Family Studies* Department of Human Services, South Australia

Mackay F. (1996) The Zero Tolerance Campaign: Setting the agenda *Parliamentary Affairs* V49 N1 pp.206-15

Ministerial Implementation Advisory Committee (1997) *It's my choice: a focus on women. Implementation Plan for reform of SAAP funded domestic violence services in South Australia*, Family & Community Services, South Australia

Mullender A. & Morely R. (Eds) (1995) *Children living with domestic violence : putting men's abuse of women on the child care agenda* Whiting & Birch, London

Mullender A., Kelly L., Hague G., Mallos E. & Iman U. (1998) *Children's Needs, Coping Strategies and Understandings of Woman Abuse* Study funded by Economic and Social Research Council Program on Children 5-16: Growing into the 21st Century (http://www.esrc.ac.uk/curpog.html)

Muller D. (1997) Aspects involved with evaluating family violence programs *Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre Newsletter* Issue 1 Feb 1997; pp.11-17

Nancarrow H. & Struthers K. (1995) The growth of domestic violence responses in Australia: a flash in the pan or a sustainable program for change? *Social Alternatives* v.14 no.1 Jan 1995: pp.44-48

Nicholson D. (1998) Only a domestic: a rural perspective on police responses to violence against women *Women Against Violence* Issue 4 pp.15-24

Pease B. & Grace C. (1996) *Service Responses to Perpetrators of Domestic Violence* Proceedings of the National Domestic Violence Forum, Parliament House ACT.

Putt J. & Higgins K. (1997) *Violence against women in Australia: Key Research and Data Issues* Australian Institute of Criminology, Research & Public Policy Series No.6 AIC, Griffith

Redondo S., Garrido V., Anguera T. & Luque B. (1995) Correctional Programs in Europe: A pilot study for meta evaluation in Davies G., Lloyd-Bostock S., McMurran M. & Wilson C. (eds) *Psychology, law and criminal justice,* Walter de Gruyter, Berlin

Ripper M. (1998) *Evaluation of male perpetrator programs – Work in Progress*, Department of Social Inquiry, University of Adelaide

Rosenberg W. & Donald A. (1995) Evidence based medicine: an approach to clinical problem-solving *British Medical Journal* Vol.310, No. 6987 pp.1122-5

Sawer M. (1990) *Sisters in Suits: Women and Public Policy in Australia* Allen & Unwin, Sydney

Scriven M. (1992) *Evaluation Thesaurus (4th Ed)* Sage Publications, Newbury Park

Smith J., O'Connor I. & Berthelsen D. (1996) The effects of witnessing domestic violence in young children's psycho-social adjustment *Australian Social Work* 49 (4) Dec 1996, pp.3-10

Solomon C. M. (1998) Picture this: a safer workplace. Polaroid addresses family violence to combat workplace violence. *Workforce* Feb 1998, Vol 77 No.2 pp.82-5

Stubbs J. (1994) Introduction in Stubbs J (Ed) *Women, Male Violence and the Law* Institute of Criminology Monograph Series No.6 Federation Press, Sydney

Thomson Goodall Associates Pty Ltd (1997) *Review of services for women and children escaping domestic violence* Family & Community Services, South Australia

Websdale N. (1995) An ethnographic assessment of the policing of domestic violence in rural eastern Kentucky, *Social Justice* Spring 1995 v22 n1 p102-21