

CDFWR@der

Volume 12 No. 3
December 2014



of activism against gender violence

Activism:

Then, now and the future

Local to global



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Director's message

Kia ora koutou katoa,
Ka nui te mihi no ahau ki a koutou,
This is my greeting to you all in the Maori language- the language of the Indigenous people of Aotearoa/ New Zealand. Aotearoa means literally 'the land of the long white cloud' which is the land that I come from. It is customary for us to share such a greeting when first meeting and for most of you this is your first encounter with me albeit in print. The pathway that has brought me to this remarkable research centre and to your beautiful state is a long one. I do not intend to bore you with a lot of detail but rather am offering a brief story that covers some key stages so that you know a little about my history.

Background

I come from a long family line of Quaker missionaries on one side and farmers from Aotearoa on the other. My parents spent 12 years in India during the struggle for independence and my brothers, sisters and I were born in Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh. On returning to Aotearoa we spent much of our early years in Auckland and Wellington and in Wellington I completed a BA degree (English and History) while also completing primary teacher training. When I began teaching in an inner-city suburb in Wellington with high rates of poverty and diverse communities it struck me as problematic to expect children to sit down and learn to read and write when they were arriving at school hungry and often without warm clothing or shoes. I became involved in the local community centre and at some point was asked to become the Coordinator in what was then considered to be a community social work role. I managed the centre for three years, running a number of services including budget advice, drop-in, clothing for children and after school care programmes.

After a move to Christchurch in the late 1980s I was offered the position of social worker at Christchurch Women's Prison and spent nine years there as Senior Social Worker. I was responsible for providing crisis intervention for women arriving in prison, longer term therapeutic support for women serving long sentences and reintegration support for women leaving prison. I learnt a great deal from my clients and will always remember their courage and strength despite traumatic histories of violence and abuse. I helped to set up a house for women after release from prison after finding that they often had nowhere to go.

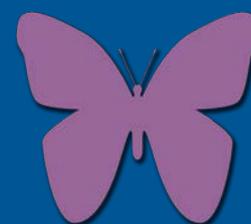
I embarked on an MSW in 1993 while working full time, and chose the history of women in prison in New Zealand as the topic for my thesis. After receiving an MSW with Hons I was invited to undertake a research Fellowship at the University of Canterbury which was to consider the role of social workers in New Zealand Prisons and completed a report on this in 1998. Then I began a gradual shift into academic work with part-time teaching and an invitation to begin a PhD. While working in the prison I found it strange that decisions were made about women's parole programmes with very little knowledge at the time about how to support them after release. My PhD topic concerned what helped women to "go straight" and among the key findings substance dependency and victimisation were reported as major challenges for women that often led them back into offending lifestyles.

When I joined the Social Work Department at the University of Canterbury full time in 2001 I gradually took responsibility for social policy, communication skills and criminal justice areas of practice and teaching. I designed and taught a Human Services course on Women's Offending and Women's Victimization as part of our programmes. I particularly enjoyed interactive teaching and learnt a great deal from my students.



"In fact in all levels of our existence- family life, social life, working life, and political life- inner disarmament is, above all, what humanity needs."

The Dalai Lama



In 2009 I became the Director of Te Awatea Violence Research Centre and began a partnership with community and government sectors to support research needs and interests aimed at reducing violence. The majority of the research projects I have led during the last five years have all been in partnership with frontline organisations and have concerned domestic violence and child abuse. Topics were as diverse as evaluating family group conferencing, recording stories of women who have successfully moved away from violence, exploring women's access to justice and the welfare system, and evaluating peer support for victim/survivors and perpetrators.

Moving to Mackay and the Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research

Having moved to Mackay and taking up this position at the centre I am keen to strengthen and expand the centre's role as a research resource for frontline organisations including both state and NGO sectors. Heather Nancarrow contributed wonderful work and more lately Heather Lovatt has laid the groundwork and they have built an established resource that has the capacity to support those who continue to develop their responses to violence in all its forms. Family violence is a 'wicked' problem but in the work I have done I remain optimistic that human change is not only possible but essential in order to nurture and support ourselves and especially our children.

At this time of year I know that many of our colleagues around Queensland have joined in the *16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence*. Over the past 25 years I can see that this campaign has played a part in transforming global opinion and pressuring governments to follow through on their commitments to securing and protecting women's rights. The success of this movement can largely be attributed to the commitment and dedicated activism of local women's rights advocates and in this edition we focus on past advocacy and contemporary approaches, and "truths" of violence against women are highlighted. We explore the impacts this violence has on our society and how we, as a community, are responding to it, living the truth that "local activism can translate into global action".

There are sheroes and heroes out there who have shown the courage and commitment to not only say 'enough is enough' but also to support others in making similar changes. I recall women who have said that they managed to get away from the violence through the help and support of a dedicated police officer or through the support and bravery of another man. We don't tend to celebrate sheroes and heroes in this way and yet the extraordinary courage it takes to face and acknowledge violence and to take steps to change deserves recognition. We acknowledge soldiers on the frontline of conflict and know that they risk traumatic stress but in the same way some homes are frontlines where women and children bear the brunt of violence and abuse. A recent study by a political scientist at Stanford University has found that domestic violence kills many more people than civil wars- because it is so prevalent and occurs each and every day. There are no medals or awards for challenging and addressing family violence.

In concluding I share with you some writing by the Dalai Lama reported in *The Australian* recently and while some of you may not recognise a spiritual domain, the words speak universally of the power of peace and how necessary this is on a personal and individual level before peace in local and international communities can be achieved.

I look forward to working with the CDFVR team and Queensland communities to help build peace within families.

“Anger and hatred, they destroy our inner peace. Compassion, forgiveness, a brotherhood and sisterhood, contentment, self-discipline, these are the basis of peace- both external peace and inner, mental peace. Only through strengthening these inner good qualities can a genuine and lasting peace develop. This is what I mean by spiritual development. I also describe this as inner disarmament.”

The Dalai Lama

Annabel Taylor

Sources

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A letter from the Interim Director Heather Lovatt

Dear Re@der Readers,

I am not sure where the time has gone since the last Re@der but it has certainly sped by. I have enjoyed the wonderful privilege of leading the Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research during this last transitional period after the departure of Heather Nancarrow. It is with great confidence that I hand the reins to Associate Professor Annabel Taylor. Annabel's opening message really tells the story as to why it is such a delight to welcome her as Director.

CDFVR has been a busy place over the past six months. In the June Re@der I flagged with you "further exciting changes happening at CDFVR in the coming months". I am very pleased to say that all the areas that were highlighted have come to fruition.

Firstly, we made a physical move to Central Queensland University's City Campus in Mackay. After 10 years at the Ooralea Campus it was a significant change for all at CDFVR. We were actually the flagship for CQU Mackay in being the first to 'migrate' from Ooralea after the merger between CQTAFE and CQU on 1 July 2014. This is an exciting development offering students opportunities to access qualifications from Certificate 1 through to Doctoral studies. Of particular note for our valued stakeholders are our new contact details, which you'll find on page 18.

You may recall that in June we were busily recruiting for a Director and Researcher/s whose focus would be on responding to the National Research Priorities under Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety

(ANROWS) Research Program 2014-16. Research will be produced under the *National Research Agenda to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children* to support the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*. The recruitment results are very gratifying. Shellee Wakefield, Senior Researcher, who joined us in August, is undertaking a 'state of knowledge' project regarding education for the judiciary in relation to domestic and family violence. In November we welcomed both Annabel, as Director, and Dr Nada Ibrahim, Senior Research Officer. You will be interested in Nada's thought-provoking article regarding the role of religion and domestic and family violence on page 17.

No sooner had Annabel commenced than she was straight to work in partnership with ANROWS and an Advisory Group to develop a significant, cross-jurisdiction project under the ambit of National Research Agenda Theme 4.1: *Improving legal and justice responses to violence against women*. Shellee and Nada, both 'Brisbane-ites' and based at the CQU campus there, wasted no time in joining Annabel and the team in Mackay for a solid planning and mapping session to commence the project.

The restructure and update of the CDFVR website was also on our agenda mid-year, to extend our reach and support of service providers and workers. While you will not have noticed changes to our website yet, our Multimedia Officer, Clinton Rawsthorne, has worked hard to restructure the 'back end' of the website to ensure it can be as responsive as possible, and much more 'mobile friendly'. The new website will also incorporate Facebook, Twitter and Google+, and fact sheets will also be 'mobile friendly' with non-pdf, searchable, text versions available. Although Clinton is currently transferring all information to our new format there will be consultation to ensure that the website is responsive to the

contemporary needs of the sector. Ten years have gone by since the original website was developed, so it is exciting for Clinton and the team to update the mechanisms to engage with you across multiple platforms- since ultimately all of our activities are undertaken with you in mind.

In our bid for greater accessibility and reach we also purchased Citrix GoToWebinar and GoToMeeting licenses and have conducted initial webinars and virtual meetings with great success. We will be utilising this technology for some of our research seminars which means participants can link in from a desk or mobile no matter where they are. Colleen Gunning, Education Officer, and Lauren Pattie, Project Support Officer, will be working with the sector to develop a schedule of practice seminars, 'by the sector- for the sector'. As always, topics covered in both practice and research seminars will be the result of consultation and planning with you.

CDFVR's commitment to accredited training also continued with Responding to Domestic and Family Violence (30629QLD) being delivered in Brisbane and Cherbourg. Colleen has been working to establish the mechanisms by which CDFVR can deliver this core training across Queensland on a more regular and sustainable basis.

An area of importance for CDFVR was representation on the Child and Family Reform Advisory Group at both State and regional levels. In this space, PeakCare and Linda-Ann Northey have been valuable partners in advocating for the understanding and inclusion of proactive responses to domestic and family violence as part of the nexus with child protection. To this end CDFVR, partnering with PeakCare, took the opportunity to have Cathy Humphreys speak to both an open audience at the State Library, and then at a round table of key stakeholders in the child protection reform area. As part of several articles relating to research seminars CDFVR has been involved in, we include a précis of Cathy's open session, regarding the child protection/ domestic violence interface, on page 12.

Now to this Re@der! As you will see from the cover there is an acknowledgement of 16 Days of Activism and each contributor to this Re@der has articulated a 'truth' which is important to them. At this time we also felt it important to look back at key events which have been foundational for our current activism. Our cover recognises the suffering and courage of the Mirabal sisters, also known as 'the butterflies' whose story appears on page 5. A later tragedy, the Montreal Massacre, is commemorated as a basis for asking the question 'have attitudes towards women changed?'

The contemporary scene is explored on the pages



following, highlighting Queensland work and workers, and recent research presentations and resources. In celebrating the specialist practice of domestic and family violence in Queensland, the questions 'what is specialist domestic and family domestic work' and 'why is it important' are answered by the sector's frontline workers. The Coalface article on pages 9, 10 features another frontline practitioner, Edward Mosby from Helem Yumba, and the proactive approach of Ed's organisation contains the practice wisdoms for us all. Articles stemming from our recent research seminars are provided for those who may not have had the time to review them on our website. Cathy Humphrey's comments struck a chord with us: *It is tempting to put nothing into the universal services- primary prevention- but on a ubiquitous problem like domestic violence we will not treat our way out of this issue.* Hence, on pages 15,16 you can read more about Our Watch and Victoria's education resources.

Finally, and very importantly, a reminder that on page 18 we have provided our new CDFVR contact details- please note and amend your records.

That only leaves me now to say a heartfelt thank you for the amazing support I received in this role at all levels. I said at the beginning of this message that it was a privilege to have been Interim CDFVR Director, and it bears repeating; it has been a wonderful experience.

As our French colleagues would say "au revoir"... 'til we meet again!

Heather Lovatt



Remembering the butterflies: the tragedy of 1960

Colleen Gunning

It is fifteen years since the United Nations General Assembly's declaration in 1999 of the *International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women*, but how many remember the deeper origins of this day? 25 November now resonates with many readers as White Ribbon Day, a time to challenge men to speak out against violence against women. This campaign began in 1991 when Canadian men commemorated the second anniversary of the Montreal Massacre. Yet 25 November had been observed in Latin America, since at least 1981, as the "Day for Non-Violence Against Women".

It was in July of that year that the first *Feminist Encounter of Latin America and the Caribbean* was held in Bogotá, Colombia. At this conference 25 November was selected as a day of commemoration, a tribute to the lives of the Dominican Republic's Mirabal sisters, murdered in 1960. The decades since the deaths of the Mirabal women had seen Latin America dominated by dictatorships and military rule, and consequently violence against women was prevalent not only in the family and community, but also perpetrated by state security forces. So it is unsurprising that "women delegates at the (1981) conference denounced domestic violence, rape and sexual harassment as well as violence against women perpetrated by the State, including torture and disappearances of women political prisoners" (Robinson 2006).

Who were the Mirabal sisters? The women were known throughout their homeland by their code name, "las mariposas," (meaning "the butterflies"). They were born into privileged circumstances: Patria in 1924, Dedé in 1925, Minerva in 1926, and María Teresa, nine years later. While the older girls were quite young, Rafael Trujillo became the dictator of the Dominican Republic in 1930. His reign was brutal, and thousands of those who opposed him were tortured and killed. When

she was a young adult, after discussion with her family, Minerva decided to resist Trujillo's regime and with her sisters she joined an underground movement.

Meanwhile, Minerva studied law, and although she was awarded her degree, she was denied a license to practice, because she had rejected Trujillo's sexual advances (Robinson 2006). It has been suggested that this refusal drove Trujillo's obsession with humiliating her: "a psychological war of fear... abuse and sexual harassment became an instrument used by Trujillo against women such as Minerva and their families. It constituted a manifestation of absolute power." (Robinson 2006).

The Mirabal sisters went on to marry men who were also opposed to Trujillo and the women and their spouses experienced repeated imprisonment, and on occasions, the men were tortured. On 25 November 1960 Patria, Minerva and María Teresa visited their gaoled husbands, and upon their return, Trujillo's henchmen intercepted their car on an isolated mountain road. Accounts vary as to what happened next, but the result was indisputable (Pineda-Madrid 2011; Robinson 2006). The three sisters, and their driver, were either beaten and/ or strangled to death by the secret agents, and their vehicle was thrown off a cliff to feign an accident.

The following year Trujillo himself was

A woman's entitlement to a life free from violence is one of her most important human rights.



assassinated. Manley (2012) notes that although other women were far from absent from the transition that led to Trujillo's murder, it is arguable that the slaying of the sisters was the breaking point for his long dictatorship: this was an assault on Dominican national morality, the women's deaths representing Trujillo's failure to "protect the sanctity of the home, embodied symbolically by women and women as mothers". The fourth butterfly, Dedé, passed away this year, at the age of 88. Her life was dedicated to ensuring the enduring of her sisters' legacy, and caring for their six children.

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Twenty five years later... have attitudes changed?

Colleen Gunning

On 6 December 1989, gunman Mark Le´pine entered the University of Montreal, on the last day of classes before the Christmas break. He began in one classroom, where he separated the women and men, forced the men to leave, and subsequently shot six women, before moving through the first two floors of the building and firing at several other students. In total, he killed fourteen women and injured fourteen other male and female students before committing suicide. Before he opened fire... Le´pine said “You’re all a bunch of feminists. I hate feminists”. He targeted women engineering students because they were taking jobs traditionally held by men; he himself had applied, but was not accepted, to the program. Within hours, the murders were labelled the “Montreal Massacre”. (adapted from McNeill, 2008 p 378)

More than two decades have passed since the Montreal atrocity and the attitudes which underpinned these murders (‘men’s jobs, women’s jobs’) are now relics- aren’t they?

The answer seems to be yes... and no. In Australia, the findings from the third *National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey* (NCAS) tell a mixed story. More than 17,500 twenty-minute telephone interviews with a cross-section of Australians aged 16 years and older investigated four key areas related to violence against women and its prevention, including attitudes towards violence against women, and attitudes towards gender roles and relationships.

Attitudes play a role in violence against women in three domains, according to Flood and Pease (2009):

- the perpetration of violence against women,
- individual and institutional responses to violence against women, and
- women’s own responses to victimisation.

In terms of **attitudes towards violence against women**, the NCAS had encouraging findings, in that only a minority of six percent of survey participants believed violence against women can be justified. In the past five years, there has been a decrease in the proportion of Australians who believe that domestic violence can be excused if the violent person is regretful afterwards. As well, since 1995 there has been a decrease in those who believe that women who are sexually harassed should “sort it out themselves”.

Most survey participants agreed violence against women (both physical and non-physical) is serious and since 1995 there has been an increase in those who recognise the seriousness of *non-physical* forms of control, intimidation and harassment. The majority of participants did not believe that

women should remain in a violent relationship to keep the family together or that domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family. Similarly, most support the current policy approach that the violent person should be made to leave the family home.

However, most Australians (nearly eight in 10) surveyed found it difficult to understand why women stay in a violent relationship and indeed, more than half agreed that ‘women could leave a violent relationship if they really wanted to’. Sadly, as in 2009, up to a fifth of people believed that there are circumstances in which women bear some responsibility for violence, and compared with physical violence and forced sex, Australians were less inclined to see non-physical forms of control, intimidation and harassment as ‘serious’. There were still “sizeable proportions” who believed there are circumstances in which violence can be excused.

There are still Australians who believe violence against women is justifiable.



There were other perpetuating myths too: more than half of survey respondents thought women often fabricate cases of domestic violence to improve their prospects in family law cases. There has been an increase, too, in the proportion of Australians who think that rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex, and almost half of the survey sample believed that a lot of times women who say they were raped led the man on and later had regrets.

With respect to **attitudes towards gender roles and relationships** it is pleasing to note that most Australians support gender equality in the “public arena”, such as workplaces and there is an acknowledgement from most that women still experience inequality in the workplace. It is concerning, though, that there exists a cohort (more than a quarter) who believe that men make better political leaders and endorse attitudes “supportive of male dominance of decision-making in relationships”.

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Guiding principles for responding to DFV and risk of DFV into the future in Queensland

Heather Lovatt and Katrina Finn on behalf of the QDVSN

In her opening remarks in this Re@der Associate Professor Annabel Taylor recognised that the success of the Women's Movement can be largely attributed to the commitment and dedicated activism of local women's rights advocates. Following these comments, it is timely to reflect on the role of Domestic and Family Violence Specialist services in Queensland and the many forms and levels of activism they provide.

Queensland's specialist Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Services have been funded since 1992 and have a long history of working with women and children who have experienced violence. These dedicated teams service varying geographical catchments: many are mostly place-based in local and regional communities and DV Connect is a state-wide crisis service, providing holistic specialist responses across the state.

Specialist DFV Services often operate at a point of crisis when triage is required, so flexibility is needed to find creative and unique solutions to highly complex problems within resource limitations. Consequently, they are engaged organisations, working in local and regional alliances with relevant social services, legal responses and advocacy/ support services to coordinate an individualised multi-layered systems response to address identified risk and client/ child needs.¹

Providing such individualised responses to clients' immediate and long-term risks and safety needs requires a sophisticated and nuanced understanding of the specific nature of DFV and the dynamics of abuse and power. Additionally there is diversity and further specialisation across the regional/ specialist services, with the sector providing extensive outreach across the state, as well as expertise for women victims, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Indigenous communities; men's behaviour change programs; court assistance; safety upgrade services for housing; counselling and support for children; and community education/ training.

The 12 regional specialist DFV Services, the Immigrant Women's Support Service and the Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research (CDFVR) form the Queensland Domestic Violence Services Network (QDVSN). This network provides an important voice at government, regional and local levels regarding practice considerations. For example, during the 16 Days of Activism QDVSN members co-ordinated events across Queensland, playing a key role in local activism, as well as responding to the growing demand for, and complexity of, direct DFV responses at place level. Members of the QDVSN also play a pivotal role in working to link the personal to the political, that is, they provide a gendered analysis of DFV and ensure practice wisdom has a voice in the policy and political arena in Queensland and beyond.

Such advocacy and activism cannot occur effectively if the interface between practice and the political/ policy nexus is not in place. It is commendable that the Queensland Government has established mechanisms to hear the voices of DFV specialists through various forums, reform advisory groups and the establishment of the *Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence*. Furthermore, the QDVSN took the opportunity to have a voice at the national level, making written and verbal submissions, based on practice knowledge, to the *National Senate Finance and Public Administration References Committee Inquiry into Domestic Violence in Australia*.

The QDVSN has identified that the success of integrated responses to DFV across Queensland requires a clear understanding of the value of specialist responses to DFV. Furthermore, the QDVSN contends that such an understanding should translate into practice at 'place' level with mutually accountable protocols and practices between service providers to ensure co-ordinated, timely and appropriate responses. This is particularly critical in light of the recent child protection reforms. To this end,





QDVSN has clearly articulated key defining aspects of their role in the Queensland service system. The QDVSN defines specialist DFV work as:

Social norms that blame, excuse, minimise and justify violence against women and their children need to change.
(adapted from Natasha Stott Despoja)

- Underpinned by an organisational commitment to:
 - ◇ a gendered analysis of violence and abuse against women and children;
 - ◇ making the safety of adult and child victims of violence and abuse central (paramount) to services; and
 - ◇ holding perpetrators accountable to adult and child victims of violence and abuse.
- Operating within a risk/protection (including a child protection) framework, with DFV as the core business of the service. As such, DFV services provide highly specialised risk assessment, safety planning and systematic monitoring, tracking and crisis management of high-risk matters.²
- Providing child focused support directly with the child, by working intensively with the child's non-violent carer and, where appropriate, coordinating support from a specialist children's service.
- Placing and operating perpetrator programs within coordinated responses: holding programs and participants accountable to ongoing risk assessment, utilising a dedicated (ex) partner advocate to contribute to assessment and responses to both static and dynamic risks.

As previously identified, in line with this defining of the specialised nature of their work, the QDVSN is providing foundational practice wisdom to the Queensland Government and other stakeholders, most recently to the *Special Taskforce*. The QDVSN suggests the Queensland Government responses should include:

1. The establishment of a policy framework that is evidence-based and responsive, ensuring:
 - ◇ The safety of adult/ child victims of DFV is central to policy and legal/systems responses.
 - ◇ A gendered analysis of violence against women and children is maintained.
 - ◇ Perpetrators are held accountable for their abuse and violence.
2. Enhanced policing and legal responses to DFV, adopting specialist policing processes.
3. Valuing diversity in the service system and the important role of specialist services.³
4. Reinforcing prevention/ early intervention and the timely and accurate assessment of need.
5. Developing a Common Risk Assessment framework for use with victims and perpetrators.
6. Improving integration/ coordination and multi-agency high-risk management responses.
7. Providing guidelines for the scope of and mechanisms for information sharing.
8. Supporting implementation and change manage reforms to achieve cultural/ societal change.
9. Collecting meaningful data and utilise a monitoring and evaluation framework.
10. Allocating resources across the service system to give effect to the above considerations.

This article has outlined a small, but important, segment of a comprehensive submission to the Special Taskforce. It is noteworthy that, despite huge demand for immediate responses as part of their day-to-day service delivery, the QDVSN services- in conjunction with DVConnect- remain passionate and committed towards social change. For the safety of thousands of women and their children, may this continue to be so!

¹ E.g. housing (homelessness, refuges and emergency accommodation); health/mental health; drug and alcohol issues; sexual assault; disability; and schooling.

² Specialised, comprehensive risk assessment is supported by the Victorian CRAF (Common Risk Assessment Framework): if risk is identified, referral is made to a specialist service for full assessment.

³ Including Specialist DFV Services, specialist children's services, sexual assault services and services for diverse and disadvantaged communities, such as specialist Indigenous services and services for women with disabilities.

At the coal face



Ed Mosby, Helem Yumba

Ed Mosby was born on Thursday Island and raised in Taroom in South West Queensland. His professional career has seen 17 years in the Army Reserve following his graduation from the Royal Military College Duntroon. Ed is also trade qualified as an electrical fitter mechanic. However, for the last nine years he has been enjoying his professional career as a Psychologist delivering both Indigenous and non-Indigenous social and emotional well-being services. He has experience particularly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's involvement with the 'mental health system' and family and domestic violence related matters. He is very passionate about Indigenous people's social and emotional well-being and healing. Ed and his wife Julie have two young boys and enjoy camping, fishing and most sports. While currently living in Rockhampton, Central Queensland, as a family they hope to one day spend more time at home in the Torres Strait.

What is Helem Yumba? What do you do there?

Helem Yumba is a community healing centre in Central Queensland. We provide psychological, counselling and case management services. Broadly we focus on healing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. While we do offer support to individuals we strongly believe in a family and community focus in our approach. We provide our service centrally from our Healing Centre in a very accessible part of town and we also believe in the need to be in the community and conduct what some might call 'outreach'

but for us it is more of an acknowledgment that there can be several barriers to accessing support and these can vary from family to family. This is also a demonstration of our commitment to the community which we seek to support.

Within our service we offer some specific targeted programs including:

1. *Gathhar Webe Barnabe* (in Darumbal language meaning Aboriginal Mans Change)
This is a stopping violence program designed to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men who perpetrate violence to put an end to their disruptive behaviours and instead build new, caring and respectful relationships with their families and their communities.
2. *Dads On The Inside Program*
This program has a focus on creating safe environments for, and safe and respectful relationships between, incarcerated fathers and their children.
3. *Women's Yarning Up*
This program targets women who are victims of domestic/family violence. Weekly gatherings provide an opportunity for women to discuss a wide range of topics, receive information and be involved in therapeutic activities. This program focuses on keeping women and children safe but also provides an avenue into counselling and further social and emotional support.

Our programs are designed to be mutually supporting. They all seek to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, including children, experiencing domestic and family violence in spousal, intimate personal, family and/or informal care relationships.

There is a continual need for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures but also within and between our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. If we don't open our eyes and perhaps our hearts we will fail to provide a future that our families, communities and cultures desire.

What are some of the pressures facing clients who use your services?

The families that have contact with our service are under several concurrent pressures, mostly they face financial, housing and justice or legal matters. I would further say that ongoing and concerning levels of disrupted physical, emotional and

spiritual health definitely compound the nature and seriousness of these pressures.

I would also like to highlight that this array of pressures is not just experienced by middle aged adults. Our young children right through to our elders are being affected. For example, I still believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue to experience difficulties in finding their place within the education system. This isn't because they don't want to be there: schools are trying and a number of the schools have some fantastic staff. However I still see a gap, going both ways, around acceptance. My sense is that there is still room to move within the cultural safety space and engagement with families who have children both in and out of school.

Finally, and I am sure this goes both ways, I believe the pressure felt by an individual is quickly felt by their family and subsequently felt by their community.

What are some of the programs and strategies you use to help your clients?

Initially it is about understanding of what well-being means for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

Our service is shaped by some additional principles which revolve around the uniqueness of each community. We have a strong belief that the community should be involved in how we design, facilitate and evaluate our programs and service. This helps us meet our responsibilities and is also a good way of ensuring that we are accountable- it supports our view that the community needs to have some 'buy in' or ownership of our programs.

What are some of the challenges that you, as a worker, face on a daily basis?

First, perhaps one of the more time consuming and emotionally charged challenges involves service collaboration. Helem Yumba feels it has some real strengths and tries extremely hard to be very good at some speciality areas (e.g. family/ domestic violence, trauma and grief). However, we also firmly accept that we are not perfect and we cannot also do it all. Challenges continue to present themselves in building collaborative relationships both with Indigenous and non-Indigenous services and Government and non-government agencies. We have done some self-reflection about this and are making changes to our own service. My sense at this point is it will be about personal relationships initially, the sharing of individual service stories, some building of trust and confidence and perhaps this may come together with a common focus of what might look like reconciliation. We strongly believe that seeking and finding and building

these collaborative partnerships will go a long way towards providing the much needed social and emotional support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

Second, maintenance and promotion of the health and well being of our staff is very important: we ask 'who takes care of the carers?'. As a service we are always undertaking our own 'health check' but importantly individual staff and their families are strongly encouraged to focus on self-care. Safety, in terms of both the physical and emotional, is seen as very important. We have definitely found great value in undertaking an inventory of our own health and healing, and in finding the balance between doing the front line work and spending very valuable time in reflection training and professional development. Accepting the sheer size of the issues and challenges that lie ahead for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families comes with a great burden. However I am confident that coming together- and maintaining faith and belief in those ingredients of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures that have allowed them to survive for a long time- will serve us well into the future.



We need to continually evaluate what we do with Family and Domestic Violence Programs. Checking in to ensure they are culturally safe and actually have the impact that we are trying to achieve is critically important.

What makes you optimistic for a future free from domestic and family violence?

When we review the family and domestic violence statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, and the flow on effects, it is easy see a bleak future- it brings a sense of sadness and weight to our shoulders. However, I feel it is very important we don't allow this to shape how we approach the future or at least consider ways that we reduce its influence.

These compounding stressors perhaps at times make it difficult to hear what people are saying. I say this because the place I get my sense of optimism from is in the voices of our children. Children are very good at sharing how they feel, and what they think. Their insights can be a place where we learn much about ourselves, and sometimes it is not always good news. However, I don't think they share these stories and views to punish us, but initially to highlight our errors and to give us hope and encourage us. We need them just as much as they need us. They give us purpose but also encouragement.

Animal abuse linked to domestic and family violence

Shellee Wakefield

Dr Frank Ascione is currently a Scholar-in-Residence at the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work (GSSW). He has published articles on the development of antisocial and prosocial behaviour in children, co-edited two books and authored two books. He recently presented a seminar, *Animal abuse and intimate partner violence: Associations between the welfare of pets and the welfare of women and children in violent environments* supported by UQ and CDFVR.

Dr Ascione defined animal abuse as “non-accidental, socially acceptable behaviour that causes pain, suffering, or distress to and/or the death of an animal”, and argued it is an important piece of the puzzle to understand and prevent domestic violence. Violence towards pets can be used as a means to intimidate and threaten victims of domestic violence and can also occur as an act of revenge, following incidents of violence or a partner deciding to leave a relationship. Further, victims may decide to stay in violent relationships to protect their pets. Dr Ascione argues there is also a risk children will imitate pet abuse.

With a background in psychology, Dr Ascione’s research has seen him collaborate with human services, social work and child development staff working with abused children, youth corrections personnel and with domestic violence shelters. His earlier research found women at domestic violence support shelters were nearly 11 times more likely to report their partner had hurt or killed pets in comparison to those who hadn’t experiences intimate violence (Ascione et al. 2007). Dr Ascione also reported on the increasing body of evidence linking animal maltreatment and violence. For example, an evaluation of developmental experiences of child sexual abusers and rapists revealed histories of violence towards animals and exposure to parental violence. Of the sample of child sex abusers, 38% reported a history of bestiality, 44% cruelty to animals and 42% exposure to parental violence. Of the sample of rapists, 11% reported a history of bestiality, 68% cruelty to animals and 78% exposure to parental violence (Simon, Wurtele & Durham, 2008). His more recent research examines the common roots of violence toward people and animals in order to identify early indicators of at-risk status in children.

Unfortunately, pets are also targeted in ‘our own backyard’. Earlier this year, a 40-year-old man from Beaconsfield, Western Australia, was fined \$5000 and prohibited from owning an animal for five years after being found guilty of brutally beating and kicking his dog. When prompted to what instigated the attack, he reported being



angry after experiencing relationship issues with his girlfriend (WA Today, 2014). Further afield, a 19-year-old man in the United States held his previous girlfriend hostage and forced her to witness the brutal killing of 29 dogs (PETA 2011).

Strong bonds between people and their pets can be exploited in families experiencing domestic and family violence.



The future

The connection between animal abuse and domestic violence is being reported publicly and supported by research. Now, the important question is- how can this information can be utilised for prevention?

There is a range of activity in this space. Firstly, vets are now being provided education on signs to look for in pets being abused. Importantly, reporting lines need to be established so that families at risk can also receive assistance via this avenue. Secondly, harm to pets is now recognised as a risk factor within domestic violence risk assessment tools. For example, in Queensland, the police risk assessment framework describes animal cruelty in their list of assessable risk factors, encouraging police to identify harm or threats to harm family pets. Finally, education for families, support services and the public on the connections between animal maltreatment and domestic violence is vital to ensuring violence is reported and protective mechanisms are put in place. Such education also encourages further development of practical support avenues for victims and their pets.

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The Domestic Violence and Child Protection Interface

Colleen Gunning

In early August CDFVR was pleased to partner with Peak Care to deliver a presentation by Professor Cathy Humphreys, University of Melbourne. For five years she held the Alfred Felton Chair of Child and Family Welfare, a professorship established in collaboration with the Alfred Felton Trust, the Department of Social Work at University of Melbourne and The Centre for Excellence for Child and Family Welfare in Victoria, the peak body for more than 95 child and family welfare agencies in Victoria. Professor Humphreys worked as a social work practitioner in the mental health, domestic violence, and children, youth and families sector for 16 years before becoming a social work academic.

Long-standing 'Re@der readers' may recall that it is almost seven years since Professor Humphreys last presented a CDFVR research seminar. Then, she examined the challenges for policy and practice for child protection in the context of domestic violence, and argued for the re-conceptualisation of domestic and family violence to acknowledge that such violence is a direct and indirect attack on the mother-child relationship. In 2014, the issue is still with us, and as Queensland prepares for the implementation of the child and family reforms arising out of the Carmody Child Protection Commission of Inquiry, the interface between child protection and domestic and family violence has seized the attention of the state's policy-makers, service designers and practitioners.

During her recent presentation, Professor Humphreys alluded to the service system being "re-built" and "re-designed", and she extended the "construction" analogy by stressing the importance of *foundations* in ensuring that interventions are well designed for women and their children. The preamble to the presentation touched on three key themes associated with solid foundations: prevention (in terms of primary prevention), access to housing, and the provision of men's services. Before discussing the strengths and weakness of current approaches, Professor Humphreys outlined domains for "defining a



functional intervention system" which she used as benchmarking criteria.

The domains were:

- Efficacy: does it produce its intended outcome- a satisfactory management of the intake and intervention for children affected by domestic violence?
- Efficiency: does it do this with the best use of resources?
- Effectiveness: does it achieve a higher-level or longer term aim- the safety and protection of children and their mothers?
- Ethicality: are the purposes of the system met in ways which are congruent with principles and values which promote respect and justice for children and others affected by domestic violence?

Complex scaffolding, according to Professor Humphreys, is what is required to build a new service system response. She proposed that there were key elements of this scaffolding, and went on to elaborate on each of these, using examples from the literature and practice to inform her assertions. These elements were:

- Community Based
- Pathway linked for Women and children
- Deciding thresholds
- Localised responses
- What about the men?
- Links to other services, in particular, alcohol and drug responses

Professor Humphreys concluded by reminding her audience that it's always easy to see the problems but the possibilities lie with the drive, creativity and resourcefulness of workers across sectors. Her principles were clear- safety and accountability; don't separate the pathway for women and children and the tertiary end of the system, in the majority of cases, should not be the starting point of referral for children living with family violence.

"The future for women and their children living with domestic and family violence is in the possibilities which lie with the drive, creativity and resourcefulness of workers across sectors."

Professor Cathy Humphreys



Alcohol and intimate partner violence



Colleen Gunning

In her research seminar Professor Cathy Humphreys referred to the “old chestnut of causality” in the alcohol/ domestic violence relationship, and a recently published systematic review has examined the effects of alcohol interventions on intimate partner violence (IPV). This research is the first of its kind and is summarised here.

The studies reviewed by Wilson, Graham and Taft (2014) included a variety of research methods from across different disciplines over the last 20 years. However, despite the significance of both alcohol misuse and IPV as public health issues, the review found the evidence base for assessing the effectiveness of alcohol interventions on IPV, was “disappointingly small”.

Because only eleven studies met the design criteria and many did not test the assumption that the “effects of the intervention on IPV were mediated by the intervention’s effect on alcohol consumption”, a second set of ten studies that “support the assumption of mediation” was included in the review. This scant literature base contributed to the key limitations of the review- it was not possible, for example, to compare intervention effects by participant characteristics or intervention type. Secondly, not all studies included alcohol consumption measures that could be used to test the central assumption that alcohol interventions affect IPV by changing alcohol consumption. Lastly, most population and community studies used police or hospital statistics to measure IPV which represent the most severe cases of IPV, and none of these studies was able to separate estimates of alcohol-related and non-alcohol-related IPV.

The review recognised there is broad evidence of effective interventions that reduce alcohol consumption and related harms. Based on this premise, the review asked the question: ‘Do interventions to reduce alcohol use at the individual, relationship, community and/ or population level, reduce IPV?’ A broad definition of “intervention” was adopted, including strategies specifically implemented to reduce alcohol

consumption within a target population or community (e.g. alcohol restrictions or addiction treatment) and alcohol policy levers that may affect alcohol consumption indirectly (e.g. alcohol taxes and planning regulations regarding alcohol outlets).

“The extent to which alcohol’s role in intimate partner violence is causal, is complex and contested.”



The evidence within the alcohol policy science literature has been consistent that interventions such as alcohol taxation (which increases the cost of alcohol) are effective demand reduction strategies- reducing alcohol consumption and related harms generally. However, the review found few studies that had examined the effect of population-level alcohol measures on IPV, and those identified suggested little or weak evidence of an effect of alcohol pricing on IPV. The authors suggested that these studies were possibly hampered by most research evaluating very small changes in taxation over time and using a measure of IPV that included both alcohol-related IPV and IPV that was not related to alcohol.

Policy interventions that restricted the availability of alcohol through reduced trading hours have been introduced into communities or areas as a response to significant problems with alcohol and violence. However, the evidence of an impact on IPV was inconclusive based on the one study, from Brazil, that met design criteria but which measured violence against women generally, not alcohol-related IPV. The remaining studies of alcohol restrictions were implemented in remote Indigenous Australian communities, and although these studies did not meet design criteria, the reviewers acknowledged that the comprehensive community approaches used in these studies provide a model for undertaking better controlled evaluation studies in the future to address alcohol-related IPV- a significant problem in many Indigenous communities worldwide.

The authors concluded that there is an urgent need for an appropriately funded research agenda to investigate the potential impact of alcohol/ policy interventions on IPV at the population, community, relationship and individual levels, and provide answers to the gaps in the evidence base. Furthermore, they urge the integration of strategies to reduce problematic alcohol use at all levels: through combining alcohol and IPV interventions, they argue, there could be the potential to reduce the incidence of IPV and enhance the safety of victims where alcohol use is enmeshed with patterns of IPV perpetration.

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Reproductive Coercion



Colleen Gunning

Dr Diana Greene Foster is a demographer who has evaluated the effectiveness of family planning policies and the effect of unintended pregnancy on women's lives. Dr. Foster is currently leading a US nationwide longitudinal prospective study of women who seek abortion including both women who do and do not receive abortion. CDFVR recently co-facilitated a presentation by Dr. Foster concerning reproductive coercion. Some of her research findings follow.

Health care providers and family planning services need to be aware of safety and referral options for women experiencing intimate partner violence.



Two recent papers exploring the role of intimate partners in women's reproductive decision-making draw on data from the US Turnaway Study, which examines the effects of unintended pregnancy on women's lives. The study seeks to describe the mental and physical health (and socioeconomic) consequences of receiving an abortion compared to carrying an unwanted pregnancy to term. From 2008 to 2010 researchers collaborated with 30 abortion facilities around the US, recruiting over 1,000 women who sought abortions. Some received abortions because they presented for care under the gestational limit of the clinic and some were "turned away" and carried to term because they were past the gestational limit.

The work of Chibber, Biggs, Roberts and Foster (2014) is based on quantitative and qualitative data from a sample of 954 women from the study. The authors note the growing recognition in the public health field of men's influence in women's reproductive health decisions and outcomes. For example, male partners may control women's contraceptive use and coerce them to become pregnant, and male perpetuation of intimate partner violence (IPV) may increase women's risk for adverse reproductive health outcomes, including the likelihood of experiencing an unintended pregnancy.

However, although men play a role in women's abortion decision making, this study sample showed no evidence that most women lack control in their abortion decision making. Rather, when deciding to seek terminations, the women in this sample seem to be reflecting "more broadly on the complexities of their intimate relationships, and their lives, values, and vulnerabilities as a whole. Even some women in abusive relationships seem to seek abortion as a way of ending abusive relationships rather than being motivated by fear of partner's threats or violence if they keep the pregnancy". These findings prompted the authors to suggest that health care providers need to be aware of the possibility of IPV among women seeking termination of their pregnancies, and the fact that some of these women may see abortion as an exit strategy from the abusive relationships. "integrating IPV identification with routine... family planning services may enable providers to offer... information about safety and referrals to counselling and other support services."

The second paper, by Roberts, Biggs, Chibber, Gould, Rocca and Foster (2014) examined the risk of violence from "the man involved in the pregnancy" (MIP) after a woman receives or is denied an abortion. The authors found that among a sample of 862 women from the Turnaway Study seeking abortion, having an abortion was associated with a reduction over time in physical violence from the MIP, while carrying the pregnancy to term was not. This finding is consistent with the hypothesis that having a baby with an abusive man, compared with terminating the unwanted pregnancy, makes it harder to leave the abusive relationship. It is also consistent with findings from other analyses of relationship outcomes among women in the Turnaway Study sample which found that women denied abortions were slower to end their romantic relationships with the MIPs than women having abortions.

The authors describe their finding as 'concerning', particularly since in the US there is an increasing number of state-based restrictions that limit women's access to abortion care. They suggest that policies restricting abortion provision may result in more women being unable to terminate unwanted pregnancies, so potentially keeping some women in physically violent relationships. Consequently both women and their children are then at increased risk of violence and other negative health consequences.

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Webwatch: Our Watch

Colleen Gunning

Background

In 2013 the Commonwealth of Australia and the State of Victoria initiated the Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children (the Foundation), with the Northern Territory and South Australian governments later becoming members of the organisation. The Foundation's work derives from the government's commitment to the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, and it is enacting many of the activities in the Second Action Plan 2013-2016- Moving Ahead.

Our Watch

Launched on the 5th September, Our Watch is a Foundation project designed to raise awareness and engage the community in action to prevent violence against women and their children and its mission is clear:

- *Our Watch has been established to drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and attitudes that underpin and create violence against women and children.*
- *Our mandate is to stop violence before it happens.*
- *Our work will always be based on sound research and strong and diverse partnerships.*

The Our Watch projects span schools, the media and the violence against women sector and include:

- National Media Engagement (NME) Project
- National Framework for Prevention of Violence Against Women and Their Children
- Respectful Relationships Education in Schools (Victoria)
- The Line
- Working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (Victoria)
- Reducing Violence Against Women and Their Children Community of Practice (Victoria)
- Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence (Victoria)

Why you should visit the Our Watch website

The stand-out data on this website are downloadable booklets to support the sector and community in preventing and responding to violence against women. Resources for working with the media and snappy policy overviews are two sets of evidence-based factsheets which are welcome additions to the range of Australian material available to contribute to informed action.

To prevent violence against women we need to understand why such violence occurs in the first place.



Resources for working with the media

The NME Project aims to “improve media reporting on violence against women and their children”. To that end, a suite of tools for the media includes key statistics and guides for journalists on reporting:

- sexual violence
- domestic violence
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Violence and
- child sex abuse.

The *Reporting on Domestic Violence* resource, for example, contains seven sections. *How to Report on Domestic Violence* reminds journalists to “name it”, ensure safety comes first and know the law. They should acknowledge that this serious and life-threatening crime has both a victim and a perpetrator, is serious and is never acceptable. The following sections provide important background material. The pages on *Facts and Figures* tease out The Problem of Data and At-Risk Groups. *Impacts of Domestic Violence* are categorised for easy reference (Health, Mental Health, Economic and Homelessness). *System Responses to Domestic Violence* gives an overview of Legal, Community and Government roles. Similar terms are explained in *Definitions*, e.g. ‘Intimate partner violence’, ‘Family violence’, ‘Violence against women with disabilities’. The guide concludes with *Resources and Further Reading and References*.

Policy briefs

Our Watch has commissioned a series of policy briefs to assist in the development of its work program. Each brief provides a summary of the subject issues and evidence, and will be published progressively into early 2015. They are designed to provide a ‘point in time’ summary and are not intended to be comprehensive or definitive. These are engaging bite-sized documents- no more than 15 pages per topic- to bring the reader up to speed on:

1. Key terms, definitions and statistics: an introduction to the issues for a novice
2. An emerging theory of change: well worth a read if you're interested in the theory behind Our Watch, ie *We cannot create change alone- we need to work with others and 'build a movement' to prevent violence*
3. The international evidence base: examples of *well-conceptualised, good practice prevention initiatives (that) can reduce future levels of perpetration and experience of violence.*
4. Prevention in other policy areas: an accessible summary of public health and criminological approaches

So, when you have ten minutes or more to spare, watch out for what's on:

<http://www.ourwatch.org.au>

Educating against violence

Colleen Gunning

Background

It is five years since the release of *Respectful Relationships Education: Violence prevention and respectful relationships education in Victorian secondary schools*, the result of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (the Department) engagement of VicHealth to review respectful relationships education in Victorian secondary schools. The report argued five “powerful reasons” to focus efforts on young people:

1. Adolescence is a crucial period in terms of (the) formation of respectful, non-violent relationships.
2. Many children and young people experience violence in their homes.
3. Young people are already being subjected to, and perpetrating, violence themselves.
4. There is already a degree of tolerance for violence against girls and women.
5. Violence prevention among children and youth has been shown to work.

According to the report, there is a minimum standard for effective violence prevention and respectful relationships education in schools, and this standard is the combination of these five good practice criteria:

1. a whole-school approach
2. a program framework and logic
3. effective curriculum delivery
4. relevant, inclusive and culturally sensitive practice and
5. impact evaluation.

Resources for Building Respectful Relationships

In the intervening years, the Department worked with other partners (CASA House and Deakin University) to develop and trial a range of the teaching and learning materials, based on the findings of the initial report. The resulting resource, *Building Respectful Relationships: Stepping Out Against Gender-Based Violence*, was launched in mid-2014.

The resource is targeted at Years 8-9, providing teaching and learning activities planned around key themes of gender, power, violence and respect, and based on a whole-school approach to violence prevention. In other words, it recognises that curriculum, teaching and learning alone are not likely to be effective in addressing the issue, and there is a need to align school policy and practices; school culture, ethos and environment; and the relationships between school, home and the community.

Why is this relevant to the sector?

The *Building Respectful Relationships* resource is unequivocal on two points.

Firstly, “regardless of the context in which this resource will be used, the focus on violence against women and on sexuality is sensitive. This resource should only be used by experienced health education teachers or other specifically trained teachers.” However, it is also acknowledged that schools will address gender-based violence and developing respectful relationships in a range of ways and some “may engage local community agencies to address aspects of this curriculum focus”. If this is the case, it may be helpful to review this suite of resources before embarking on classroom activities in partnership with specifically trained teachers.

So if a community agency is involved in this program, the resource also establishes a second imperative: it is essential to set up a ‘safe’ space for program delivery. Students and teachers should feel safe to share their ideas and opinions and ask questions without fear of judgment or silencing. Students need to be told in advance that they will be covering issues about violence and need to be allowed to withdraw if they find these issues personally confronting.

With sensitive delivery, careful planning and a whole-school approach, violence prevention education in schools can be effective.



What is in the package?

The two units, ‘Gender, Respect and Relationships’ and ‘The Power Connection’ are each based on eight sessions. Unit One for example, is aimed at Year 8 and covers the following

1. Respect and relationships
2. Gender, respect and relationships
3. The power of expectations
4. Gender positioning
5. Introducing gender-based violence
6. Understanding sexual harassment
7. Developing respectful practices
8. How to help a friend

Each session has clearly articulated learning outcomes, suggested activities, identification of time required and handouts provided. Based on sound research and presented with clean modern graphics, the whole suite of materials is available for downloading from the Victoria Department of Education and Early Childhood Development website.

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Influence of religion on intimate partner violence



Dr Nada Ibrahim

Research into the influence of religious beliefs on attitudes towards intimate partner violence (IPV) reveals that a stronger affiliation to religion significantly reduces the risk of IPV and is a means by which many women cope with distressful situations (Ansara & Hindin, 2009; Nason-Clark, 2004). Religious involvement has been indicated in three pathways namely: increasing social integration and social support, reducing alcohol/substance abuse and reducing psychological problems (depression, distress and other negative emotions) (Ellison & Anderson, 2001). For many, the symbolic aspects of religion, spirituality, prayer, meditation and scriptures provide consolation, purpose and a sense of control in everyday life (Nash & Hesterberg, 2009).

The protection against IPV is related to the propagations of religious institutions that include promotion of general commitment to family life, the institution of marriage, awareness of marital rights and responsibilities, understanding of positive partner role identities, provision of counselling and conflict strategies, provision of religious epitome and the provision of social networks (Abu-Ras, 2007; Ware, Levitt, & Bayer, 2004). Through the use of rituals, sermons and informal social interactions, religious institutions promote values of altruism and self-sacrifice that encourage individuals to defer immediate

personal gratification and self-interest in favour of family well-being, upholding the sanctity of marriage and fulfilling familial roles (Ellison et al., 2007). Individuals therefore who are intrinsically motivated toward their faith, employing devotional pursuits and religious/spiritual resources to cope with personal problems or emotions, would be less inclined to resort to IPV to resolve problems (Ellison et al., 1999).

In cases where violence is exhibited however, a difference in theological orientation within partners, especially if the male holds strong attitudes, creates a conflict in values, lifestyles, sexual behaviour, social friendship choices, leisure activities, gender-roles, child-rearing practices and other areas that affect both partners (Luke et al., 2007). The likelihood of violence by males (but not females) increases when males are considerably more conservative (in beliefs about the inerrancy and authority of scripture) than female partners, as this disparity may reflect and deepen other discrepancies in values and lifestyles (Ellison et al., 1999). For example, in some evangelical Protestant couples, the husband may hold views that the woman should not work outside the home, or make major decisions on household financial affairs for fear that this may increase their independence and erode family solidarity and cohesion, thus creating conflict between the couple (Curtis & Ellison, 2002). These perpetrators subscribe to an ideology of male supremacy that is perpetuated by their cultures-of-origin, where often women are given inferior or subordinate status through the customs that prevail (Lee, 2002; Naved et al., 2006), and the weak enforcement of women's legal rights that are rendered nominal and ineffective as a result (Neely, 2008).

Religion plays a significant part in sculpting the attitudes and beliefs that individuals hold towards intimate partner violence and its perpetration.

Abusive behaviours are justified by perpetrators with strong IPV-attitudes by misinterpreting and rationalising respective religious texts to induce shame, guilt and distress within their victims (Flood & Pease, 2009), even if traditional religious scholars emphasise differentiation only in the respective roles of genders in society and not supremacy of one gender over the other (Dangor, 2001). Abusive behaviours can also be justified by the attitudes of religious leaders or clergy, serving to exacerbate violence in families by their reluctance (sometimes due to their lack of adequate training on IPV) to deal with violence against women in their communities, or by blaming the female victims for the abuse (Pyles, 2007). For example, Christian evangelist pastors

can counsel abused women to stay with their abusers because of the faith's emphasis on wifely submission and hierarchical gender relations (Nason-Clark, 1997). Though ceremonial religious practices become dormant for many victims during the abuse, the vast majority still rely on spirituality by drawing upon religious events and archetypes to help them overcome and leave an abusive relationship (Nash & Hesterberg, 2009; Potter, 2007).

Research on the use of religion by women indicates that women use religion as a source of strength and terms of negotiation to challenge imposed cultural and religious restrictions (McMichael, 2002). Amongst female refugees for instance, religion/spirituality becomes a "plurilocal" home that is carried within the self upon relocation to a new country, helping them to overcome the upheaval that comes from being displaced and to maintain resilience in their lives (McMichael, 2002). For women who are victimised, being in control of their private thoughts through religion provides them solace and control over some parts of their lives (Nash & Hesterberg, 2009) which is particularly important when strategising any action against abusive relationships.

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ISSN 1836-9847 (Print)
ISSN 1836-9855 (Online)

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We encourage readers to contribute to the CDFVRe@der. If you have any information or articles you wish to publish, please contact Centre staff.

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We have become aware that some recipients of the CDFVRe@der have relocated or changed contact details, including email address. To enable us to update our records and ensure that you receive our quarterly publication, please contact us at the listed phone, fax or email address with your change of details. Please be assured that the Centre does not release your details to any third parties without your permission.

If you would like to be included on, or removed from, the Centre's mailing list, please ring us on (07)4940 3320.

Funded by



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The Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research receives defined term funding from the Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to undertake research and develop educational resources pertaining to domestic and family violence in Queensland.

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