

## HEALTH MATTERS

### **Dr Ruth Barker, Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit**

#### Queensland Emergency Departments' data: what they may tell us about domestic and family violence

The Queensland Injury Surveillance Unit (QISU) collects injury data from emergency departments (EDs) at participating hospitals across Queensland. The data is estimated to represent roughly one quarter to one fifth of all ED injury presentations in the state depending on the age group and injury type studied. The QISU database currently contains injury data collected over a 17 year period (January 1999-December 2015) from 33 collecting hospitals. Not all hospitals have collected for the full 17 year period and there are currently 17 active collection hospitals in Queensland comprising four sample regions: metropolitan (Brisbane), regional (including specific hospitals in the Mackay Hospital and Health Service), tropical northern coast (including specific hospitals in the Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service) and remote (Mount Isa). Data is coded for Injury Surveillance by using the National Data Standards for Injury Surveillance (NDSIS v.2c). The QISU database was searched to identify all ages' intentional injuries presenting to participating EDs during the study period. Cases were identified using a snowball technique of reviewing identified cases of intentional injury based on coded data, and developing additional "injury description" text search terms to expand case capture. The "injury description" consists of a brief free text field entered by the Triage Nurse when a person initially presents to the ED with an injury. This free text is examined in order to elicit additional non-coded information in relation to the injury event and potentially expand case identification. This analysis is limited by the fact that the entry in this field can vary depending upon triaging style and clinical circumstances at the time when the nurse is attending to the injured person. Data will be presented based on the combination of coded and text data elements and describe where possible: nature of injury, mechanism, location, admission status, relationship with assault perpetrator, associated drug and alcohol use.

### **Ms Liz Price, Children by Choice**

#### Screening to safety

Children by Choice is a small pro-choice organisation, providing Queensland wide-counselling, information, referral and advocacy on all unplanned pregnancy options. This presentation will discuss our work with women experiencing domestic violence, the link between unplanned pregnancy, abortion and reproductive coercion and our responses in this emerging area of need. With over 34% of all our counselling contacts with or on behalf of women who report domestic violence, and 12.4% of all contacts report reproductive coercion this is an area of great import to our service.

Domestic violence screening is becoming a more common feature of best practice antenatal care, but with almost 99% of Queensland's abortions being provided by a diverse range of private abortion providers, domestic violence screening in abortion provision settings has not been consistently resourced. In addition, identifying and responding to reproductive coercion is a relatively new issue in domestic violence practice, research and literature.

In August 2016 through philanthropic funding we commenced the "Screening to Safety" project to build the capacity of abortion providers in Queensland to identify and respond to domestic violence with a particular focus on reproductive coercion, and to build the capacity of domestic violence service providers in Queensland to identify and respond to reproductive coercion and unplanned pregnancy risk. The presentation will describe the research underpinning of the project initiatives and present project developments and plans. It will discuss contextual constraints, as well as early findings and recommendations for other initiatives and research.

### **Mr Stephen Bartlett, Queensland University of Technology**

#### Conspicuous by their absence: paramedics and children exposed to domestic violence

The study develops a new understanding of the role of paramedics in relation to children exposed to domestic violence (EDV). Paramedics' public health involvement in the front-line of domestic violence (DV) and EDV is significant. Currently little is known about paramedic responses to EDV. This study explores paramedics' own experiences to better understand their role in intervention and prevention of EDV in relation to s 4AB Family Law Act 1975 (Cth) and s 10 Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 (Qld). This study aims to add to the evidence base historically focused on emergency departments' identification of DV which fails to capture the paramedic role in relation to child victims of DV. Paramedics do respond to DV and rely on personal values when they respond to EDV. This is demonstrated in the breadth of their response in the absence of clear policy and defined strategies. There is evidence of polyvictimisation; paramedics identify neglect more readily and acknowledge that EDV is challenging and complex. Paramedics recognise their involvement but uncertainty exists in relation to their role and responsibilities. Paramedics value further training in this area. Paramedics will benefit their communities through further training to help them treat DV and identify and respond to EDV. Paramedics

believe an inclusive approach to inter-agency cooperation is necessary, and better feedback from agencies is essential in relation to reporting and referring EDV and other forms of maltreatment. Paramedics are an established resource and are underutilised in terms of intervention and prevention of EDV.

## ENGAGING RESEARCH

### **Ms Bonney Corbin, True Relationships and Reproductive Health**

'Tween' perspectives on gender, sexualities and respectful relationships

Primary school students have an array of intersectional knowledge on respectful relationships gained via insightful early learning processes. Last year True Relationships and Reproductive Health facilitated research with nine to eleven year old students which involved critical engagement with concepts of gender equity, sexualisation and stereotypes. This presentation will provide an overview of the methodology, a snapshot of the key findings, and open a conversation on how we can progress nationally to advance consistent, holistic and contemporary approaches to gender equity and respectful relationships education. When students transition from primary school to high school they shift between very different contexts of sexualities and relationships. How can educators support 'tweenagers' to feel prepared and to minimise risk of abuse? Listen to an overview of key findings that came from students' stories, feedback from teachers, and interactions with school administration systems. Hear student perceptions of social media, sexting, online relationships and digital cultures. Participate in a conversation about how we can value embodied knowledge, build on institutional strengths, encourage ongoing learning, and support primary school communities to be platforms for respectful relationships education and violence prevention. Consider students' voices central to informing future ongoing development of gendered violence prevention research, policy and practice.

### **Ms Romy Listo, Young Women's Advisory Group of the Equality Rights Alliance**

Sex and relationships education as violence prevention? Young women's experiences and perspectives

The *Not Now, Not Ever* Report highlights education as critical to building cultural and attitudinal change towards domestic and family violence. Considering sexuality education as a tool for violence prevention, the Young Women's Advisory Group (YWAG) of the Equality Rights Alliance conducted a national survey in 2015. The survey asked young women aged 16 to 21 about their experiences of sexuality education to investigate whether it met their needs in developing healthy and safe relationships. 1,162 young people participated across Australia (13.4% from Queensland), and three focus groups were held. The research found that young women identified problematic limitations in their sexuality education in Australian schools. Seventy-six percent of survey respondents stated they had not learnt anything from their sex education classes in school that had helped them deal with sex and relationships. The topics covered were found to be narrow in focus. A majority of respondents reported that sex education completely omitted discussion of consent (86%), pleasure (74%), and LGBTIQ identities and relationships (90%). The focus groups highlighted how young women fill gaps in their sex and relationships education, including learning through experiences in their own relationships and those of their peers. The findings indicate the importance of comprehensive sex education to foster safe and healthy relationships. The omission of consent and pleasure was identified by young women to have negative implications for their relationships. Based on the survey findings, YWAG advocates for eight core themes to be embedded in an age-appropriate way within sexuality and respectful relationships education in Australian schools.

### **Dr Cathy O'Mullan, CQUniversity**

Engaged research in action: A case study from regional Queensland

Overstretched and under-resourced community organisations often struggle to find the time and capital required for their own qualitative and quantitative research projects despite it being such an integral part of achieving better outcomes. This presentation briefly reports on how engaged research has been integrated into a sexual assault service (Phoenix House) in Bundaberg, Queensland over the past decade. It provides a snapshot of how engaged research has been used to guide and inform service delivery in order to achieve the best possible outcomes. In this presentation, we will also outline one exemplar, the 'Yarnin' Up' project. This collaborative, participatory research project explored the barriers that prevent Aboriginal and Torres Islander clients from accessing local services when they have been impacted by sexual and family violence. Findings revealed multiple barriers to service access, and a set of recommendations were put forward. This project has resulted in tangible benefits (including additional funding for the implementation of recommendations), and opportunities for further research.

## PRACTICE MATTERS

### **Ms Natalie Siegel-Brown, Office of the Public Guardian**

When 'choice' driven by domestic violence is deemed to be 'impaired capacity': The interweaving of domestic and family violence in the life of guardianship clients and what you can do

At first blush, guardians and domestic and family violence practitioners may seem like uncommon, if not strange, bedfellows. This is possibly more surprising to the former professional group than the latter. However as the Public Guardian, I regularly see client matters where the flags of insidious and un-checked domestic and family violence have existed for years. Most people expect this will be largely in the area of elder abuse, however this is equally prevalent for women with disabilities or mental illness. We know these women are more vulnerable to being victims of domestic and family violence, but sometimes the service providers and the guardianship systems designed to support them do not realise that their determination of a woman's impaired capacity (and therefore need for guardianship) is in fact a thick veil of the undue influence of domestic and family violence. We will present some case studies and then ask the audience of practitioners what their key messages would be for guardianship systems.

### **Ms Theresa Kellett, Save the Children & Ms Cindy Dawson, Griffith University**

Action research as a professional development tool in domestic violence refuges

Three Action Research Projects were undertaken by the staff of the Save the Children Australia (SCA) Gareema and Jebb refuges during 2015. The projects utilised the Circle of Change Revisited (COCR) model of critical thinking. The goal was to build SCA staff capacity to use reflective practice to improve the way they address issues and solve problems. The data gathered suggest that the COCR process was reflexive and highly significant to supporting the action research process. The research questions were: What is it about our practice that leads to positive outcomes?; What was client's experience and impression of the refuges in the first two days?; and How are the children currently using the children's spaces in the refuge and what is the value of supported play for children who have experienced trauma? Findings from the Action Research Projects and implementation of the COCR methodology highlight the ability for such programs to encourage critically reflective practice, transdisciplinary dialogue, negotiation of multiple perspectives and building knowledge and skills for deepening understandings and building capacity within staff teams. The results strongly suggest that providing SCA staff with the knowledge and skills to facilitate a critically reflective conversation is recommended to improve their capacity to articulate their practice. The knowledge and skills gained influenced their own competencies and organisational practice, provided them with a deeper evidence of the daily practices that characterise an effective service for children and families in their refuges escaping domestic and family violence, and enhanced their capacity to address issues and solve problems.

### **Ms Thelma Schwartz, Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service**

Domestic and family violence in Queensland – empowering survivors and growing stronger communities

The Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service ("QIFVLS") is a not-for-profit legal service operating since 2010. We were formed under the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services program which recognised a gap in access to legal services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of family and domestic violence and sexual assault. QIFVLS provides a culturally appropriate service to our clients and supports them through the legal processes: from advice to representation throughout court proceedings. Our service is mainly an outreach service where we go into rural and remote communities to meet with clients. We service over 50 Indigenous communities throughout Queensland. This presentation will discuss the recent changes to the domestic and family violence legislation in Queensland; how QIFVLS delivers this information into our service delivery areas and case studies. The presentation will also look at other areas of the law that are inter-connected with domestic and family violence and explore some of the key legislative changes in the areas particularly of Criminal Law and Child Protection.

## INTEGRATED RESPONSES

### **Dr Anne Butcher, QCDFVR, CQUniversity**

#### **Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Responses – What works?**

Integrated domestic and family violence (DFV) responses or community coordinated responses (CCR) as they are also referred to, have been in place for more than 40 years in some overseas countries such as the USA and the UK. However, this model, despite being in place for more than 10 years or so in Australia is still a relatively new concept of working together across agencies to support the needs of DFV victims and their children and to hold perpetrators legally to account. The Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research (QCDFVR) has been commissioned to undertake evaluations of the three Queensland DFV integrated response (IR) trials at Logan/Beenleigh, Mount Isa and Cherbourg as recommended in the Special Taskforce “*Not Now, Not Ever*” Report. These three trials are in the early stages having commenced in January this year. In preparation for undertaking these evaluations literature has been referred to and reviewed to glean what the most effective elements are to ensuring an IR or CCR will achieve the desired outcomes while ensuring services are available to victims and their children, in a highly streamlined, seamless, and timely manner. This session will provide an overview of key learnings from literature and practice experience.

### **Dr Ann Carrington & Ms Sally Watson, James Cook University**

#### **Influence of discourse and construction of domestic violence in collaborative community responses**

In the current political context, government and non-government agencies that respond to domestic violence are increasingly encouraged or required to work as part of a community or integrated response network. These networks tend to deviate from traditional agency relationships which were based on similarity of philosophy and service delivery, to now include a broad range of services such as police, legal services, housing, DV services, perpetrator programs, relationship counselling, health services and the courts. Many of these services are fundamentally different in the philosophies that inform delivery and the goals of the service and yet they are expected to work together as a core response to managing domestic violence in the community. This paper presents the preliminary findings from a small pilot project which explored the influence of discourse and the construction of domestic violence in service systems and collaborative responses. A discourse analysis was conducted using data collected from 10 agencies involved in a collective community response network. Data included the transcripts of two focus groups and publicly available organisational documents (e.g. websites, mission statements, and annual reports). The preliminary findings exploring the different ways discourse and construction of domestic violence are presented here along with potential implications for practice within the integrated response context.

### **Dr Christine Bond, Griffith University**

#### **The Southport Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Court Trial: What has it achieved in its first 12 months?**

In September 2015, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General established the Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Court in Southport, as a response to the recommendations in the February 2015 report of the Queensland Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence. The specialist court handles both civil applications for protection orders, as well as criminal matters related to domestic and family violence (breaches, and associated criminal offending) within the Magistrates Court jurisdiction. The Southport Specialist Court differs in several ways from regular court practices in Queensland, including specialist magistrates, a dedicated court registry, increased support (both for victims and perpetrators) at the courthouse, specialist police prosecutors, and weekly stakeholder working group meetings. In this paper, we summarise the results of an evaluation of the Specialist Court’s progress on its short and medium-term outcomes after 12 months of operation, using court administrative data, case file data, surveys of victims and perpetrators, as well as interviews and focus groups. The short and medium-term outcomes are a mix of efficiency, victim safety and satisfaction, and offender accountability goals. We also discuss the implications of a specialist court model for providing a court response to diverse communities.

## LEGAL MATTERS

### **Professor Heather Douglas, University of Queensland**

#### **Breaches of domestic violence orders: The Queensland context**

Civil domestic violence orders (DVOs) are the most common legal response to domestic and family violence with over 20,000 orders made in Queensland in the 2014-2015 year. The criminal charge of breach of a DVO and the associated sentence plays an important role in helping to ensure that non-compliance with the DVO is deterred and the safety and protection of the victim is ensured. While characteristics of offenders and penalties associated with charges of breaches of DVOs have been explored in depth in New South Wales and Victoria there has been relatively limited exploration of this topic in Queensland. Drawing on Queensland Courts data this paper examines breaches of protection orders in Queensland over the past five years. It explores a number of factors associated with these charges including social demographic factors relating to who is charged with breaches of DVOs, the kinds of behaviours that underpin charged breaches of DVOS, the penalties that are associated with them and whether there is a link between penalty and re-offending. This paper makes a number of important findings including identifying common approaches to sentencing and penalty, in particular it finds that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are three times more likely than others to be sentenced to serve a period of imprisonment. Furthermore, although women account for about 15% of those charged with a DVO breach, within that group Indigenous women make up roughly 20% of those charged with breaches. The paper considers reasons for the trends and practices identified.

### **Dr Silke Meyer, QCDFVR, CQUniversity**

#### **Perpetrator (non)-compliance with domestic violence orders: situational circumstances, risk factors and rationalisations**

Breaches of Domestic Violence Orders (DVOs) are a common issue for victims, perpetrators and the criminal justice system. Administrative data, along with victim reports, frequently highlight that DVOs have a limited effect on perpetrator behaviour and victim safety. This study examines perpetrator background factors, situational circumstances of their DVO breaches and their rationalisations of non-compliance. Based on a small sample of men (N=23) ordered into a perpetrator intervention program, this study draws on administrative data, interviews with perpetrators and observations of their engagement in the intervention program to better understand the circumstances and risk factors associated with DVO breaches and the implications this raises for practice.

### **Dr Heather Lovatt, QCDFVR, CQUniversity**

#### **Victims' perspectives: Enforcement of protection orders across borders**

Australia is at a transition point with regard to domestic violence orders (DVOs) and their recognition when victims move across borders in Australia. This presentation outlines some of the findings from a recent national study regarding DVOs, enforcement and information-sharing. It has a particular focus on hearing the voices of victims who had registered DVOs in more than one State or Territory. At the same time, the perceptions of police, magistrates, lawyers and victims' advocates are also considered, providing insights into what is too often a problematic legal journey for victims. The implications of the study and messages for policy and practice change and further research will conclude the presentation.

## UNDERSTUDIED/ EMERGING AREAS

### **Ms Ana Borges Jelinic, University of Queensland**

#### **Migration and domestic violence: Women's experiences under partner visas in Australia**

Increasing numbers of migrant women on partner visas move to Australia every year, despite concerns regarding immigration and national security and a persistent high level of domestic violence in the country. Many migrant women, from all cultural and social backgrounds become trapped in abusive relationships due to a combination of complex personal and systemic reasons. The situation is worsened by the existence of severe deficiencies in the immigration processes in Australia that directly affect these women. In this paper, based on my PHD research, I discuss partner visa migration and domestic violence as gendered experiences that intersect, presenting a new specific set of challenges to women. This paper also aims to not only highlight women's challenges in the system but also to unveil possibilities of better processes, exploring the downfalls of the current immigration system for partner visa holders and how it compares to the systems in place in other Anglophone countries, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada and United States.

### **Dr Liane McDermott & Dr Nicola Cheyne, QCDFVR, CQUniversity**

#### **Police training in domestic and family violence: trends, gaps and best practice**

Police training in domestic and family violence (DFV) is vital to enable officers to respond effectively to DFV situations, to enhance the safety of victims and their children, and to hold offenders accountable. This study provides an overview of the national and international literature regarding trends and best practice approaches in DFV training for police. Documents reviewed included: journal articles and books regarding DFV and police training; government and other evaluations of training and/or police performance; police codes of practice; and suggested practice guidelines for police. The Australian and international research findings outlined a number of key areas for improving police training in DFV, including the dynamics of DFV, communication skills, cultural awareness, interacting with vulnerable victim groups, knowledge of referral sources and integration of services, and internal culture and attitudes that may hinder the effectiveness of training. These findings will be discussed in-depth along with research opportunities for evaluating and influencing reform of police training packages on domestic and family violence.

### **Ms Annie Smith, PhD Candidate Griffith University**

#### **Print-media discourses surrounding domestic violence in Queensland**

Media coverage of domestic and family violence is a powerful forum for influencing public views of violence within intimate relationships. The media's responsibility to report the true nature of intimate partner violence relies on factual and unbiased journalism. Distorted representations of this crime may help normalise male violence against females and inadvertently encourage abuse within domestic settings. Prior research reports high levels of sensational, episodic, and under-reporting, coupled with victim blaming and abuser sympathising. This is troubling as it leads to negative public perceptions including: the misconception that domestic violence is rare; that it occurs in the absence of prior violence; that abusers are justified in using violence; and that victims themselves have the ability to prevent their abuse. The current study explored Queensland newsprint's coverage of intimate partner violence between 2008 and 2013. The findings align with international research and identified under- and episodic reporting, sensationalism, victim blaming and abuser sympathising. Actors in the Criminal Justice System are the most frequently quoted sources and the opinions of advocacy groups or experts are virtually non-existent. These reporting trends are likely to perpetuate public misconceptions and lead to negative help-seeking or isolating outcomes for future victims, and victims of unreported abuse. Urgent changes to current reporting trends are required to more accurately inform the public about intimate partner abuse.