Good practice in providing services: Victims of domestic violence

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1. Context


The primary purpose of this document is to deliver international and local examples of good practice that could be utilised in standardising and improving the quality of services for victims and communities impacted by domestic violence for the National Framework.

2. Defining domestic and family violence

Domestic violence is an extremely complex and diverse issue. In the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children 2010 – 2022* ("The National Plan") the Council of Australian Governments defines domestic violence in the following terms:

*Domestic violence refers to acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship. While there is no single definition, the central element of domestic violence is an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear, for example by using behaviour which is violent and threatening. In most cases, the violence behaviour is part of a range of tactics to exercise power and control over women and their children, and can be both criminal and non-criminal...*¹

*The National Plan* defines family violence as a broader term that refers to violence between family members, as well as violence between intimate partners. The term ‘family violence’ is the most widely used term to identify the experiences of Indigenous people, as it includes the broad range of marital and kinship relationships in which violence may occur.

In this report the term ‘domestic violence’ will be used to reflect both intimate partner and kinship violence.

Many domestic violence programs and services have been modelled on work undertaken by the *Domestic Abuse Intervention Project*, in the United States, known commonly as the *Duluth Model*.

The *Duluth Model* originated from the women’s movement and developed into a powerful ethos based on a feminist understanding of control and power in relationships between men and women. The *Duluth Model* emphasises the importance of interagency cooperation and involvement of key stakeholders in domestic violence responses.

3. The Duluth Model

Many domestic violence programs and services have been modelled on work undertaken by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, in the United States, known commonly as the Duluth Model.

The Duluth Model originated from the women's movement and developed into a powerful ethos based on a feminist understanding of control and power in relationships between men and women. The Duluth Model emphasises the importance of interagency cooperation and involvement of key stakeholders in domestic violence responses.

![Power and Control Wheel](image)

**Power and Control**

Domestic and family violence encompass a wide range of behaviours used to control and create fear including physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse.

Figure 1 is an illustration of the Power and Control Wheel developed by the Domestic Violence Intervention Project in consultation with females victims of domestic violence at the Duluth Battered Women’s Shelter in the United States.²

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The *Power and Control Wheel* is frequently used by domestic violence service providers and demonstrates eight (8) different connected categories of violence in addition to physical and sexual violence. The wheel illustrates the different forms of non-physical violence used to control and create fear, often with the overarching threat of physical and/or sexual violence. The wheel highlights that domestic violence is an intentional and systematic pattern of behaviours, not isolated incidents of frustration or anger.

**The cycle of violence**

The ‘cycle of violence’ model was developed in the United States by Dr Leonare Walker in 1979.

The ‘cycle of violence’ model is also widely used by domestic violence service providers, including NSW Police to depict how a violent event occurs within the context of power and control.

Figure 2, illustrates the common pattern that many violent relationships follow and is useful to explain why many victims remain in a violent relationships, confused by fluctuating periods of calm and abuse.

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4. Prevalence of domestic and family violence

The Australia Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Personal Safety Survey* (2006) found that in the 12 months prior to the survey around 5.3 percent (467,300) of women and 8.7 percent (737,100) of men had experienced some form of violence.

While overall men experience greater levels of violence, women are significantly more likely to experience violence from a current or former partner than men.

While violence toward women can occur in a range of settings, it most commonly occurs in the home, with 74.9 percent of all assaults against women since the age of 15 occurring in this setting.\(^7\)

In 2013, there were approximately 28,300 domestic violence related assaults recorded by NSW Police\(^8\) with recent research confirming that these numbers likely reflect less than half of domestic violence incidents.\(^9\)

Given the wide range of behaviours associated with domestic violence it is widely accepted that the majority of incidence go unreported. Recent international research suggests that actual figures may be substantially higher than reported figures, with as little as seven percent of women who have experienced domestic violence in developing countries reporting it to a formal source.\(^10\)

It is acknowledged that domestic violence is a widespread and pervasive problem with devastating health, social and economic impacts on victims, children and the community.

The particular vulnerability of specific individuals and communities is also recognised, including:

- Children and adolescents
- Members of culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- Refugees and individuals affected by forced migration
- People with disabilities
- Individuals suffering from mental health issues and/or drug & alcohol issues
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
- Sex workers
- Older people
- Individuals in same-sex relationships and/or sexual minorities
- Those living in rural and remote communities

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8 NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 2013, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research  
5. Theoretical framework for understanding domestic violence

Gendered analysis of domestic violence

The gendered analysis of domestic violence recognises that domestic violence is inherently a gender-based issue. While the underlying causes are complex the gendered analysis proposes that domestic violence reflects society’s views about gender, masculinity, relationships and power. A gendered analysis argues that domestic abuse is best understood and addressed by considering its history, context, meanings, impact and consequences through the lens of gender inequality.

The literature advocates for using gendered analysis to guide interventions by understanding the significant disparity between the concerns and experiences of men and women.

Australian statistics also demonstrate the disparity between male and female victims of domestic violence, confirming that domestic violence affects women disproportionately.

Socio-ecological model of violence prevention

The socio-ecological model argues that there is no single factor that “causes” domestic violence; rather, domestic violence is a function of many factors interacting at different levels of the “social-ecology”.

The socio-ecological model argues that various historical, cultural, political, community, relational and individual factors influence the whether or not individuals perpetrate violence and victim’s responses.

Figure 3 illustrates that effective strategies to address domestic violence should include a continuum of approaches directed at multiple levels of the model.

6. What is ‘good practice’?

Determining what constitutes ‘good practice’ is fundamental to planning service provision for victims of domestic violence.

The 1999 United Kingdom study of domestic violence work, ‘From Good Intentions to Good Practice: a Mapping Study of Services Working with Families Where There Is Domestic Violence’\textsuperscript{16} is well recognised for developing a number of ‘good practice’ indicators within the domestic and family violence field. These comprehensive indicators were informed by nationally acknowledged experts, mapping questionnaires, case studies, an advisory group, research team and literature review into domestic violence.

In addition, the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse (ADFVC) has developed a comprehensive set of ‘good practice’ guidelines.\textsuperscript{17}

The good practice indicators below have been adapted from these sources and have been used to compile ‘good practice’ examples predominantly identified by the ADFVC. It is acknowledged that while these indicators are extensive, they are not necessarily exhaustive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Based on ‘good practice’ definitions of domestic violence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Recognise cultural diversity and diverse needs within the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>Represents innovation or practice benchmark</td>
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<td>Adaptability</td>
<td>Demonstrates potential for adaption or use by other services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Evidence-based</td>
<td>Is evidence-based with an emphasis on behaviour change</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Has clearly defined aims that focus on safety and violence reduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consultative</td>
<td>Is informed by consultation with a diverse range of stakeholders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Has a skilled and supervised workforce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accountable</td>
<td>Are well-managed and accountable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluated</td>
<td>Collect and monitor outcomes for meaningful evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Demonstrates multi-agency collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High-level support</td>
<td>Has the support and leadership of high-level management and/or officials for affective and wide-spread implementation</td>
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\textsuperscript{16} Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, Personal Safety Survey, Australia, 2005 (reissue), cat. no. 4906.0, ABS, Canberra
\textsuperscript{17} NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 2013, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
7. The three tiers of response

Effective responses to family and domestic violence are complex, requiring the involvement and cooperation of multi-sector agencies. This can include health, police, courts, child protection, non-government, and specialist family and domestic violence services. The involvement of numerous departments and organisations can make it difficult for victims to navigate the system.

There is increasing international consensus that domestic violence is preventable and strategies to reduce violence should utilise a public health model that focuses on underlying causes/risk and targeted interventions.

The public health approach is driven by the socio-ecological model (discussed above) and addresses the health of the whole population rather than focusing on one (1) individual at a time. The National Framework is informed by the public health model of prevention and encompasses three tiers of response:

- **Primary Response** – Aimed at reducing and preventing domestic violence by addressing underlying causes before violence occurs.
- **Secondary Response** – Aimed at targeting/identifying individuals or groups at risk of engaging in violent behaviours or becoming a victim to create opportunities to prevent the problem from occurring or progressing.
- **Tertiary response** – Long-term responses centred on reducing the effects of violence after it has occurred and preventing reoccurrence.

The three tiers of response are strongly advocated in the literature as providing the most appropriate framework to tackle domestic violence. This paper will identify examples of good practice from services providing responses to domestic violence within these three tiers.

The small sample size of services demonstrating ‘good practice’ is acknowledged and any suggestions made by this report are not intended to be generalised into the broader community without further research.

Figure 3: Social-economic model

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8. Primary response

Primary prevention encompasses strategies introduced to prevent violence from occurring. These programs often focus on changing attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.

The literature on primary prevention supports the development of initiatives and programmes that target the widespread community at the earliest possible age as the most effective means of primary prevention.

Children are a particularly important target population for primary prevention of domestic violence, given evidence of the influences of childhood exposure to later perpetration of violence and the effectiveness of intervening at an early stage of the life cycle.\(^\text{23}\)

As domestic violence is the outcome of a complex interplay of individual, relationship, community, institutional and societal factors; primary prevention is most affective when targeted at multiple levels of the socio-ecology.\(^\text{24}\)

Examples of targeted primary response

There are a number of initiatives combining public education and community awareness being undertaken in Australia and internationally. The initiatives are primarily focussed on specific communities or groups, aiming to increase knowledge and shift social norms.

The following table and examples of ‘good practice’ have been primarily been adapted from the ADVFC and illustrate which indicators of ‘good practice’ are being demonstrated in a sample of Australian and international primary prevention programs.

While the importance of local knowledge and targeting is acknowledged, the samples suggest that primary prevention strategies may be fragmented, frequently lacking in meaningful evaluation, monitoring, accountability and high-level support.

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**A sample of service provision - ‘Good practice’ in primary response provision**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary responses</th>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Diversity</th>
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<th>Accountable</th>
<th>Evaluated</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>High-level support</th>
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<td>White Ribbon campaign (National &amp; international)</td>
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<td>The Line campaign (National)</td>
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<td>Through Young Black Eyes Workshop Kit (NSW)</td>
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<td>Creating New Choices: A Violence Prevention Project for Schools (Vic)</td>
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<td>When love Hurts’ – Violence prevention for young people (Vic)</td>
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<td>Home + Harmony = Happiness (3H) Project (NSW Police)</td>
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**Disability**

***Tell Someone (Victoria)***

*Women with disabilities experience violence that is common to all women.* Women with disabilities also experience forms of violence that are particular to their situation of societal disadvantage, cultural devaluation and increased dependence.25

*Tell Someone* is a project of the Southern Metropolitan Region Integrated Family Violence Executive in Victoria to address domestic violence experienced by people with disabilities.

The project involved collaboration of Victoria Police, Department of Human Services, courts and various disability services to lead to the development of two (2) key resources: a website and DVD, which are designed to educate people who have a mild intellectual disability or cognitive impairment about family violence.
Six (6) videos that may be freely downloaded were produced with actors who have disabilities, playing the roles of people with disabilities experiencing family violence. The Tell Someone resource also helps families and carers to understand family violence against people with disabilities and how to respond. While the program provides an example some elements of ‘good practice’, including collaboration and diversity, the project does not appear to have an accountable governance, collection or evaluation of outcomes, and lacks high-level support vital for widespread adaption.

Indigenous

Koora the Kangaroo (Queensland)

Koora the Kangaroo is a school-based community education project targeting Indigenous children at the Woorabinda State School in Queensland. The project involved a presentation and printing of stories written by a local community member, and the development of a Koora “mascot” to accompany story telling aimed at addressing children’s attitudes to violence. The stories were to be delivered by local community members.

The Koora the Kangaroo project provides useful examples of ‘good practice’ in the areas of diversity, and innovation however was evaluated by the Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research as lacking in community involvement due to inadequate motivation and fear of embarrassment. It is suggested that issues with community involvement could be related to lack of high-level support within the local and wider community.

Same sex and/or sexual minorities

Another Closet (NSW)

Another Closet is a community education campaign and website developed and managed by the NSW lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender/intersexed/questioning (“LGBTIQ”) Domestic Violence Interagency. The campaign targets LGBTIQ people experiencing domestic and family violence, as well as their families and friends. It includes information about abuse, healthy relationships, safety planning and case studies. The information is presented on the Another Closet website and in a booklet and information card which can be ordered through the website. The resources and site are managed by the LGBTIQ Domestic and Family Violence Project Officer, based at Aids Council of NSW (ACON).

While Another Closet meets a number of ‘good practice’ indicators, including aiming to reduce violence and increase safety, diversity, and consultation, it also appears to lack in meaningful evaluation and high-level support.

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

Immigrant Women’s Support Service (NSW)

The Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS) provides domestic violence and sexual assault support services to women from diverse cultural backgrounds in Queensland. IWSS management and staff have developed a strong skills base and have achieved state awards for workplace excellence. IWSS has developed a practice framework based on the gender analysis of domestic violence, while maintaining sensitivity to the cultural, linguistic and spiritual contexts of women's lives.

IWSS maintains a library of material relating to domestic and sexual violence, and other social issues and services to women, children and young people of non-English speaking backgrounds. There is an emphasis on cross-cultural communication and counselling, multiculturalism, feminism, health care and legal issues.

Children and young people

The Line (National Campaign)

The Line is a national campaign seeking to encourage respectful relationships and change attitudes and behaviours which support violence. The campaign targets young people at an age when they are forming their ideas about relationships. The project is based on extensive research, and uses the social media and language that young people can relate to.

The Line is an example of various aspects of ‘good practice’ including an emphasis on monitoring and evaluation, including monitoring of young people engaging with the projects Facebook page. The Line evaluation indicates that 83 percent of young people engaged with the campaign had improved their understanding of domestic violence.

International

Safe Dates (USA)

Safe Dates is a long running and carefully evaluated program targeting high school students in years 8 & 9 in the United States. The program is delivered over ten (10) sessions aimed at challenging social norms and relationship violence. The program is evaluated immediately after the program and also at one (1), three (3) and six (6) years on with students showing more positive attitudes at the three (3) year follow-up than a control group. While school based programs generally focus on developing respectful relationships and promoting gender equality, it is suggested that a holistic whole school approach that includes creating a supportive school environment and teacher training is crucial to sustain teaching and learning. The Safe Dates program is an outstanding example of meaningful and long-term evaluation.


9. Secondary response

Secondary prevention centres on timely identification, intervention, and immediate responses. Secondary prevention strategies target those individuals at high risk of violent behaviour and victimisation and acts to reduce the likelihood of their further or subsequent engagement in or subjection to violence.

Secondary responses aim to create opportunities for identifying the problem before it becomes evident and to intervene as soon as possible to prevent the problem from occurring or progressing.\(^{28}\)

The following table and examples of ‘good practice’ have primarily been adapted from the ADVFC and illustrate which indicators of ‘good practice’ are being demonstrated in a sample of Australian and international secondary prevention programs.

While the sample suggests that secondary prevention responses may be more likely than primary response to be accountable; secondary strategies may also be fragmented, lacking in meaningful evaluation, monitoring, and high-level support. Interestingly, the sample (while small) suggests that secondary responses may be particularly weak in the areas of collaboration and consultation. This could indicate that secondary responses operate in greater isolation than other response levels, possible due to an increased emphasis on targeting particular ‘at risk’ populations.

A sample of service provision – ‘Good practice’ in secondary response provision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary responses</th>
<th>Parameters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mentors Mothers (The Netherlands)</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northern Beaches Family Relationships Centre (NSW)</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feeling is Thinking (FiST) (Vic)</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who’s The Boss? (Vic)</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity Counts – Non-English Speaking and Indigenous Legal Resources (Qld)</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSW Health Domestic Violence Screening Project</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔ ✔</td>
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<tr>
<td>Looking After Me (NSW)</td>
<td>✔ ✔ ✔</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Northern Beaches Family Relationships Centre (NSW)

Northern Beaches Family Relationships Centre is a post-separation service for families seeking alternative dispute resolution pathways for family law. The centre has an informed approach to domestic violence that focuses on risk and safety. The service offers referrals, family dispute resolution practitioners, child consultants and family advisors for families in the process of separation.

The highly trained staff demonstrate ‘good practice’ in the areas of skill and safety however the service appears to lack on-going and meaningful evaluation.

Feeling is Thinking (FiST) – Victoria

*Feeling is Thinking* is an eight (8) week group work programme developed for children aged 8 to 11 who have difficulty managing their strong emotions, in particular, their angry feelings. These children may be very aggressive in their interactions or conversely very withdrawn (rather than being shy) and demonstrate a limited range of emotional expression and comprehension. The program is a collaborative initiative of the Royal Children’s Hospital Mental Health Service and Travancore School in Victoria, targeted at children who may be at risk of perpetrated violence in the future. The program won a Gold Award (Australian and New Zealand Mental Health Services Conference) in early intervention and mental illness prevention in 2002.

Who’s The Boss? (Victoria)

*Who’s the Boss?* is an eight (8) week long program aimed at stopping adolescent violence to parents, by engaging with and supporting parents who have experienced abuse and/or violence from their adolescent. The program has been limited by funding and only the parents participate. While the program demonstrates potential it does not appear to have undergone meaningful evaluation or had high-level support for widespread adoption.

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

*Diversity Counts (Queensland)*

*Diversity Counts* is a community education programing targeting Filipino, Vietnamese and Indigenous women. The program is designed to raise awareness of domestic violence issues and provide legal information, particularly in rural areas of Queensland. A “pocket pack” (a pocket-sized fold-out pamphlet) and a leaflet have been produced, with language translations. A pocket pack for Indigenous women has also been developed.

The program has not been formally evaluated, and lack of funding means the translated languages are limited to Tagalog, Vietnamese and Mandarin.

Screening for domestic violence – Health

**NSW Health Domestic Violence Screening Project**

Routine screening for domestic violence is a key strategy of the *NSW Health Policy and Procedures for Identifying and Responding to Domestic Violence*. The NSW Health model is designed to maximise privacy and safety and provides the opportunity for health workers to respond most appropriately to a woman’s health needs. Routine screening for domestic violence allows for at risk women to be referred to appropriate support, like accommodation, counselling, and court assistance.

The domestic violence routine screening programs demonstrate ‘good practice’ across a variety of indicators, however appear to lack in the area of diversity and consultation suggesting improvements
could be made in developing and utilising screening tools for individuals with different needs/languages. The screening program also has the potential of being expanded to all health providers, for example GPs and to include male victims.

While there is limited evidence to support the effectiveness of screening as a preventive measure for domestic violence, some studies have shown that screening and offering a wallet-sized referral card to patients who disclosed abuse was associated with reduced physical violence over time when compared to the level of violence disclosed at the time of screening.29

Disability

**Looking After Me (NSW)**

*Looking After Me* was a domestic violence project for women with intellectual disability and for mainstream and disability workers who may be working with women with intellectual disability run by Penrith Women’s Health Centre. Women with intellectual disability are considered to be at much greater risk of experiencing domestic violence than those without and targeting secondary responses are needed.

The program used group-work to support women with an intellectual disability to understand the features of safe and healthy relationships while also providing education about domestic violence. Evaluation showed that participants had increased self-esteem and understanding of domestic violence, however has not had a longitudinal evaluation. Despite demonstrated elements of ‘good practise’ the program was completed in 2006 and does not appear to have been more widely adopted.

International

**Mentor Mothers (The Netherlands)**

The *Mentor Mothers* intervention is a unique approach to supporting women with young children experiencing domestic violence, who are at an early stage of their decision-making and who may not be ready to leave the home.30 Within this model, advocacy is offered by ‘mentor mothers’ who live in the projects service area. A volunteer ‘mentor mother’ provides weekly social support, parenting skills, coping with depression, safety planning, and assistance in developing a social network to ‘at risk’ mothers.

At risk women are identified by nurse’s routine domestic violence health screens. The intervention is evaluated on contact success with women by ‘mentor mother, number and type of advocacy contacts and number and type of referrals made.

As the program utilises volunteer workers it does not have highly skilled workforce and it also does not appear to be accountable. The program demonstrates adaptability and was subsequently adopted in Melbourne, Australia in the ‘*Mothers’ Advocates In the Community program*’. The program also appears to have been well evaluated, has high-level support, and has the potential to be adopted more broadly in other jurisdictions.

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10. Tertiary response

Tertiary response occurs after an incident of violence. The focus is on responding to the effects of violence via ongoing counselling, restoring health, and preventing further victimisation. The criminal justice response may include punishment, rehabilitation, and the prevention of further offending behaviour.

Tertiary response encompass all services directed to victims and perpetrators once violence has occurred, with literature emphasising an increased need for interagency cooperation at this stage.

The following table and examples of ‘good practice’ have been primarily been adapted from the ADVFC and illustrate which indicators of ‘good practice’ are being demonstrated in a sample of Australian tertiary response programs.

The sample indicates that some tertiary response programs demonstrate all indicators of ‘good practice’; possibly due to the increased involvement of accountable agencies (for example police) after violence has occurred. Other responses, particularly those targeted at particular populations, for example perpetrator programs may be operating in isolation.

Such information would support various reforms currently underway in NSW, including the *NSW Domestic Violence Justice Strategy* and *It Stops Here: Standing together to end domestic and family violence*, both aimed at improving interagency cooperation in responding to and preventing domestic and family violence.

A sample of service provision – ‘Good practice’ in tertiary response provision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary responses</th>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Diversity</th>
<th>Innovation</th>
<th>Adaptability</th>
<th>Evidence-based</th>
<th>Safety</th>
<th>Consultative</th>
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<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>High-level Support</th>
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<td>Safe Beds for Pets (NSW)</td>
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Integrated responses

**Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response (Queensland)**

The Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response is a community-based integrated response to domestic violence that focuses on multiple agencies providing coordinated and appropriate responses to violence. It has a coordinating committee with representatives from family violence centres and shelters; police; the Gold Coast Hospital; the Southport Magistrates Court; Legal Aid; the offenders’ program service provider; and government departments for corrective services, justice, child safety, community services, and housing.

The response run a suite of programs directed at improving the safety of women and children, including:

- The *Domestic Violence Court Support Program* – to support women at court
- The *Safety 1st Program* – To promote information sharing between police and local refuges
- The *Domestic Violence Prevention Centre* – Telephone counsellors receive referrals from police and hospitals, then telephone victims to offer referrals and counselling.
- *Men’s Domestic Violence Offender Education and Intervention Program*
- *Project SAFER* – Safety Assessment for every police response.

Effective participation of agencies in integrated responses necessitates the sharing of information, thus requiring agencies to have limitations on their confidentiality arrangements in relation to information concerning personal safety.

The Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response has been identified as demonstrating all indicators of ‘good practice’. It is suggested that interagency services with high-level support are best placed to demonstrate multiple ‘good practice’ indicators.

**Perpetrator programs**

**BCS LifeCare Relationship Services (NSW)**

BCS LifeCare Relationship Services run a perpetrator program that provides a ‘whole of family’ approach to domestic and family violence. Priority is given to increasing the safety of women and children, with acknowledgement that men can be victims of violence as can people with disabilities, the aged, gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual and intersex people (GLTBI).

The integrated response includes counselling, group programs and referrals as well as specialised domestic violence programs and counselling. The BCS LifeCare Relationship Services includes programs specifically targeting children, victims and perpetrators.

The BCS LifeCare Relationship Service has been identified as demonstrating a number of ‘good practice’ indicators including having an evidence-base practice and focusing on safety. The programs however appear to lack in the areas of consultation, collaboration and high-level support. This would suggest that despite demonstrating promising practice, the programs offered by LifeCare may not have the capacity to be widely adopted without greater support and multi-agency integration.

**Women and children**

**Barnardos – Domestic Violence Family Program (NSW)**

Barnardos – Domestic Violence Family Program operates within an integrated Children’s Family Centre with a number of addition programs also offered, for example accommodation, childcare, counselling and family support. The program offers: group work with women, support for children, practical support, and community development.

The program demonstrates adaptability, diversity, and has skilled workers however lacks in the areas of evaluation, accountability, high-level support, and collaboration.
**Women in Motion – Lifecare (NSW)**

*Women in Motion* is a three (3) week program produced by *LifeCare Family and Intervention Services*. The program is delivered by refuge workers with the purpose of allowing women escaping domestic violence to share their story and learn about domestic violence.

The program demonstrates multiagency collaboration and adaptability, however lacks in accountability, meaningful evaluation and high-level support.

**Staying Home, Leaving Violence (NSW)**

The *Staying Home, Leaving Violence (SHLV)* program commenced in 2007 at two (2) pilots sites with the aim of reducing homelessness for women and children as a result of domestic violence. *SHLV* is currently operating at 18 sites across NSW, and provides practical and emotional support to assist women experiencing violence remain in their own home.

*SHLV* services are accountable to a central funding body and workers attend regular training days to ensure consistent service standards across the state.

Research also indicated has indicated that the advantage of *SHLV* is the skills of the workers, integration with key agencies, the fact that support can be offered in the long-term basis, not just at the time of crisis, and that the service it provides emotional as well as practical support.

Some weaknesses of *SHLV* includes inadequate funding to provide culturally appropriate services for Indigenous Australians and those from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and an inconsistent approach regarding the exclusion of the perpetrator from the home by the police and judicial services in different areas. Research has also concluded that *SHLV* lacked of appropriate state-wide coordination, resulting in a ‘postcode lottery’ of whether women can access *SHLV* services.  

**Child protection**

**Women’s Safety After Separation Project (NSW)**

The *Women’s Safety After Separation Project* is a collaboration between the *National Council of Single Mothers and their Children* and the *Australian Coalition of Violence Against Women Inc*. The program focuses on a range of services promoting the safety and recovery for women and children who have experienced domestic violence, specifically focused on those involved with the child protection system. The program runs various activities including: a web-based resource, a network of organisations and resources to assist women involved in child protection matters, and resources promoting research into assisting women involved with child protection services.

**Police initiatives**

**“Operation Choice” NSW Police Initiative**

*Operation Choice* was a NSW Police Initiate in the Shoalhaven Local Area Command catchment that demonstrated an integrated police response to domestic violence. The Shoalhaven is a relatively geographically isolated area with a higher than average Aboriginal population.

During the pilot, offenders were categorised by police into a risk level of high, medium and low-risk, with responses prioritised accordingly. The initiative was aimed at police concentrating their efforts on offenders considered to be the highest risk.

Initiatives such as this provide a model for the development of future tertiary responses, where the use of structured decision making instruments tends to increase the overall level of police action. Unfortunately, the pilot was focused on localised, smaller-scale service delivery and was not rolled-out broadly.

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Rural and regional victims

**Menindee Family Violence Rural Crisis Intervention Project**

The *Menindee Family Violence Rural Crisis Intervention Project* was a crisis intervention services for victims of domestic violence living in the rural area of Menindee and surrounds in 2001. The program involved two (2) community workers employed to provide a callout service to domestic violence incidence attended by police or hospital emergency services within the Menindee area and surrounds.

While the program demonstrates a number of ‘good practice’ indicators, particularly in providing a collaborative response to indigenous victims and those living in remote communities, it does not appear to have been rolled-out consistently or funded on a long-term basis.

Legal and court support

**Women’s Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme (NSW)**

The *Women’s Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme (WDVCAS)* is a collaboration of 28 locally-based, independent programs providing support to women and children involved in court proceedings due to domestic violence. The programs are funded by Legal Aid NSW and service 114 local courts in NSW.

The WDVCAS has been identified as meeting most of the ‘good practice' indicators, excluding high-level support and consultation. While the WDVCAS is provides an excellent ‘good practice’ model, it is currently not funded sufficiently to cover all courts and victims consistently across the state.

Pets

**Safe Beds for Pets – NSW**

The *Safe Beds for Pets* program is run by the NSW RSPCA and allows domestic violence victims to leave violent situations without fear for the safety of their pets. The program offers temporary housing for pets of people seeking refuge from domestic violence, with the aim of addressing the link between animal, human abuse and child protection.

Perpetrators of domestic violence may lure family members back home, or prevent them from leaving, by threatening to harm the pet. Sometimes the lack of pet-friendly accommodation options stop people from leaving a dangerous situation.

*Safe Beds for Pets* represents innovation in addressing the real concerns of victims with some research demonstrating that as much as 65 percent of some victims feel unable to leave a violent situation due to fear of what might happen to their pets.33

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11. Summary

This report has provided international and local examples of ‘good practice’ that could be utilised in standardising and improving the quality of services for victims and communities impacted by domestic violence in Australia.

The examples outlined in the report have primarily been adapted from services identified by the Australian Domestic Violence Clearinghouse as demonstrating indicators of ‘good practice’.

Due to increasing consensus that domestic violence is preventable and that strategies to reduce violence should utilise a public health model, these examples have been categorised into the three tiers of response; primary, secondary and tertiary. These response strategies cannot be separated and need to be considered as part of a holistic and integrated system that upholds victims’ rights to live without violence.

Despite literature supporting the development of initiatives and programs targeting the widespread community at the earliest possible age, primary responses appear to be highly fragmented, inconsistent and often lacking in high-level support. Secondary responses may operate in greater isolation than other response levels, possibly due to an increased emphasis on targeting particular ‘at risk’ populations.

While tertiary responses may be the most likely to demonstrate all indicators of ‘good practice’ those responses identified do not appear to have been consistently or extensively implemented, with some key tertiary responses, like those targeting the rehabilitation of perpetrators, operating in relative isolation.

While the importance of local knowledge and targeting is acknowledged, it is suggested that the development of national standards should focus on increasing high-level support for services across all three tiers, and developing structures to improve the consistency, evaluation, and monitoring of domestic and family violence services.

While further research is needed to generalise these suggestions into the broader community, these examples may be useful in developing coherent and improved services standards for victims and communities impacted by domestic violence in Australia.
12. Bibliography


Catherine Humphreys, et al., Domestic Violence Good Practice Indicators, From Good Intentions to Good Practice: A Mapping Study of Services Working with Families Where There is Domestic Violence (The Centre for the Study of Well-being, University of Warwick). See: <http://www.jrf.org.uk>


