



House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence July 2020.

Introduction

YACSA is the peak body in South Australia representing the interests of young people, youth workers, organisations, and networks throughout the non-government youth sector. Policy positions are independent and not aligned with any political party or movement. YACSA supports the fundamental right of all young people to participate in and contribute to all aspects of community life, particularly the decision-making processes that impact them.

YACSA welcomes the opportunity to provide comment to the Inquiry into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence. Domestic, family, and sexual violence continues to be a significant issue in Australia that affects mostly girls and women, their families and the wider community and has a significant social and economic cost for the whole country.

YACSA contends that governments, institutions, workplaces, and communities play a vital role in instigating the social and cultural change needed to prevent violence against girls and women before it starts.

In responding to the Inquiry, YACSA has consulted members who work in the domestic, family, and sexual violence sector to inform this submission.

Key points

- Young people are impacted by domestic, family, and sexual violence by witnessing it, intervening to protect a parent who is the victim of violence, and experiencing intimate partner violence themselves.
- Domestic and family violence makes a significant contribution to the burden of disease, preventable ill-health, and premature death in women under the age of 45.
- Some groups of women face a greater risk of experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence, such as young women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with a disability, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or queer women and women living in rural and remote areas.
- Reports from domestic, family, and sexual violence practitioners point to an increase in frequency and severity of violence against women during the COVID-19 shut-down phase.
- Federal, state, and local governments, institutions, sporting clubs, and communities need to challenge damaging structures, norms and values related to gender, gender roles and the acceptability of violence against girls and women.
- Primary prevention is a national priority and is the single most effective way to change the structures, attitudes and practices that drive gender-based violence. For young people in particular, primary prevention is about promoting gender equity, while also building an understanding of respect and respectful relationships.

The impact of domestic and family violence on young people

It is important to acknowledge that children and young people are not merely bystanders in homes where violence occurs. Flood¹ suggests that the children and young people who witness or experience violence look for logic behind their experiences and look for ways to find relief from the stress, fear and uncertainty created by violent events. Children and young people also experience the impacts of interventions, which can include the involvement of police, moving to and living in a refuge or living with relatives or friends, and the financial disadvantage that often comes when women escape a violent partner². This negative atmosphere can be damaging for the health and wellbeing of young people. Domestic, family, and sexual violence can influence negative behaviours, cognitive and emotional functioning, psychosocial development, educational attainment, and employment in children and young people³.

Young people also experience domestic, family, and sexual violence in their own intimate relationships with young women at significant risk of experiencing higher levels of violence⁴. The 2016 ABS Personal Safety Survey⁵ found that in the 12 months prior to the survey, young women in the 18-24 year age group were the most likely to have experienced violence and in the 2013 survey, women in the same age group experienced sexual violence at twice the national average⁶.

The social cost of domestic, family and sexual violence

The impacts of domestic, family, and sexual violence amass a significant social cost that affects victims, families, and the wider community. Of most concern is that domestic, family, and sexual violence increases the risk of homicide for women. According to data in the Homicide in Australia: 2017-18 report, 53% of all female homicide victims were killed by an intimate partner. Women also comprised 71.7% of all intimate partner homicides⁷.

Domestic and family violence also makes a significant contribution to the burden of disease in Australia. According to a 2010 VicHealth review report, intimate partner violence has significant and sustained effects on the physical and mental health of women and is responsible for more preventable ill-health and premature death in women under the age of 45 than well-known risk factors such as obesity and smoking⁸.

In addition, domestic, family, and sexual violence is a significant contributor to homelessness for women and young people in Australia. Studies show that in order to escape violence, women and their children are often encouraged or forced to leave their homes which can create a significant financial crisis that places them at greater risk of homelessness. The 2016 Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia Study

¹ Flood, M., Fergus, L. (2008). An assault on our future: The impact of violence on young people and their relationships', White Ribbon Foundation, Sydney. Viewed 12 July 2020,

https://eprints.qut.edu.au/103828/1/_qut.edu.au_Documents_StaffHome_staffgroupB%24_bozzetto_Documents_2017001017.pdf

² Laing, L. (2000). Children, young people and domestic violence', (Issues Paper 2, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse).

³ Flood, M., Fergus, L. (2008) 'An assault on our future: The impact of violence on young people and their relationships', White Ribbon Foundation, Sydney, viewed 28 June 2020,

https://eprints.qut.edu.au/103828/1/_qut.edu.au_Documents_StaffHome_staffgroupB%24_bozzetto_Documents_2017001017.pdf

⁴ Politoff, V., Crabbe, M., Honey, N., Mannix, S., Mickle, J., Morgan, J., Parkes, A., Powell, A., Stubbs, J., Ward, A., & Webster, K., (2019). Young Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality: Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) (ANROWS Insights, Issue 01/2019). Sydney: ANROWS.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Personal safety survey, Australia 2016. ABS cat. no. 4906.0. Canberra: ABS, 2017-18.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Bricknell, S. (2020) Homicide in Australia 2017-18. Australian Institute of Criminology: Statistical Report no. 23. Viewed 8 July 2020,

https://www.aic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-05/sr23_homicide_in_australia_2017-18.pdf

⁸ VicHealth (2010). The Health Costs of Violence: Measuring the Burden of Disease Caused by Intimate Partner Violence: A Summary of Findings, VicHealth, Melbourne. Viewed 2 July 2020,

https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~/_media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/PVAW/IPV%20BOD%20web%20version.ashx

Snapshot⁹, found that domestic and family violence is a major driver of young people becoming homeless. Of the approximately 400 homeless young people surveyed, over one third reported that they had witnessed violence between parents where police attended, with 14% experiencing police attending their home on more than 10 occasions. A further two-thirds (63%) of respondents had been placed in some form of out-of-home care before turning 18. In 2017-18, almost 2 in 5 young people (15-24) reported domestic and family violence to Specialist Homelessness Services¹⁰.

The economic cost of domestic and family violence

While the social costs of domestic, family, and sexual violence are far reaching and impact upon individuals, families and communities, there is also a significant economic cost to the Australian economy. According to the KPMG Cost of Violence Against Women and Their Children Report¹¹, in 2016, violence against women and their children cost the Australian economy an estimated \$22 billion. Out of this staggering amount, the cost to the Australian Government and state and territory governments was \$4.1 billion, and \$6.5 billion was carried by the community, children of women experiencing violence, the perpetrators, and their employers.

Without widespread prevention and intervention of domestic, family, and sexual violence in Australia, PwC expects this figure to accumulate to \$323.4 billion by the year 2045¹².

Responses to the Inquiry terms of reference

a) Immediate and long-term measures to prevent violence against women and their children and improve gender equality.

Flood and Pease¹³ contend that public attitudes towards violence against women influence the development of societal norms and responses to domestic, family, and sexual violence that either tacitly supports or sanctions this behaviour including:

- traditional notions of masculinity, gender roles and male privilege
- experiencing or witnessing violence (intergenerational transmission - children who either witness or are subjected to violence are more likely to have an attitude that supports violence)¹⁴
- attitudes supporting violence in masculine-centric environments such as sporting clubs and the military
- traditional religious notions of gender, gender roles and power
- male peer group attitudes and social relations
- depictions of gender, gender roles, power, and violence against women in the media, the movies and music
- advertising that sexualises girls and women and portrays traditional gender roles

⁹ Flatau, P., Thielking, M., MacKenzie, D., Steen, S. (2015). The Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia Study: The Australian Youth Homelessness Experience, Snapshot Report 1. Viewed 28 June 2020,

https://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/UWA_Cost_of_Youth_Homelessness_2_KuddSko.pdf

¹⁰ Mission Australia. (2019). Out of the shadows: domestic and family violence: a leading cause of homelessness in Australia. Viewed online 8 July 2020, <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/domestic-and-family-violence>,

¹¹ KPMG (2016). The cost of violence against women and children final report. Final report prepared for the Department of Social Services. Viewed 9 July 2020,

https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2016/the_cost_of_violence_against_women_and_their_children_in_australia_-_summary_report_may_2016.pdf

¹² PricewaterhouseCoopers Australia (PwC). (2015). A high price to pay: The economic case for preventing violence against women. Viewed 7 July 2020, <https://www.pwc.com.au/pdf/a-high-price-to-pay.pdf>

¹³ Flood, M., Pease, B. (2006). The Factors Influencing Community Attitudes In Relation to Violence Against Women: A Critical Review of the Literature', Violence Against Women Community Attitudes Project. Viewed 14 July 2020, https://eprints.qut.edu.au/103401/1/_qut.edu.au_Documents_StaffHome_StaffGroupR%24_rogersjm_Desktop_CAS_Paper3_CriticalLiterature.pdf

¹⁴ Chan, A., Alif, A., Nelson, B. (2020) The Impact of Family And Demographic Factors On Intergenerational Transmission Of Violence. Applied Psychology Opus. Viewed 15 July 2020, https://wp.nyu.edu/steinhardt-appsych_opus/the-impact-of-family-and-demographic-factors-on-intergenerational-transmission-of-violence/

- criminal justice policies and wider social policies and Government attitudes¹⁵.

Such attitudes must be challenged by governments, institutions, communities, and individuals.

Local, state, and federal governments should:

- adequately fund domestic, family, and sexual violence services
- increase investment in men's behaviour change programs (MBCPs) that are specifically targeted at young men and fund trauma informed support programs for young women who have experienced domestic, family, and sexual violence
- eliminate the use of traditional and out-dated notions of gender and gender roles in government workplaces
- expand existing domestic, family, and sexual violence awareness campaigns and translate into other languages to reach all community, cultural and religious groups
- regulate, and prohibit the sexualisation of girls and women and support for traditional gender roles in advertising, movies, television, the media, and sport
- fund targeted primary prevention respectful relationships campaigns that challenge traditional notions of masculinity, gender roles and the acceptability of domestic, family, and sexual violence in tertiary education settings¹⁶.

b) Best practice and lessons learnt from international experience, ranging from prevention to early intervention and response, that could be considered in an Australian context.

Primary prevention is a priority in both the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children (2010-2022) and the fourth and final action plan released in 2019¹⁷. Primary prevention focusses on stopping violence before it occurs by changing the structures, norms, attitudes, and practices that drive gender-based violence. While secondary and tertiary responses are vital in preventing the reoccurrence of violence, primary prevention has the potential to have the greatest impact on the rates of violence against girls and women over time¹⁸. Examples of primary prevention campaigns and programs include:

- school-based programs to challenge traditional notions of gender and promote respectful relationships
- campaigns to challenge and reduce the negative, inequitable, and exploitative portrayal of women in the media
- bystander training to empower individuals to challenge gender inequality, the acceptance of violence against women and to intervene when girls or women are at risk¹⁹.

To be most effective, primary prevention responses should:

- challenge the acceptance of violence against women
- challenge the structures, norms and values that support and promote inequality and violence
- promote women's independence and decision-making in their personal relationships and in their communities
- challenge gendered power, gender stereotypes and gender roles

¹⁵ Flood, M., Pease, B. (2006). The Factors Influencing Community Attitudes in Relation to Violence Against Women: A Critical Review of the Literature. Violence Against Women Community Attitudes Project. Viewed 14 July 2020, https://eprints.qut.edu.au/103401/1/_qut.edu.au_Documents_StaffHome_StaffGroupR%24_rogersjm_Desktop_CAS_Paper3_CriticalLiterature.pdf

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Commonwealth, state and territory governments. (2019). Fourth Action Plan—National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022. Department of Social Services. Viewed 21 July 2020, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2019/fourth_action-plan.pdf

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Our Watch. (2017). What is primary prevention of violence against women? Viewed 21 July 2020, <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/resource/what-is-primary-prevention-of-violence-against-women/>

- strengthen positive, equal, and respectful relationships
- have an intersectional focus that acknowledges that the experience of gender inequality can be greater for some women based on other identities such as race, sexual and gender identity, and disability
- promote and normalise gender equality in relationships, families, communities, institutions, workplaces, and wider society²⁰.

Best practice examples of primary prevention programs and campaigns include:

- *Rise Above the Pack Bystander Intervention Workshops* delivered by the YWCA. These workshops are designed to highlight and challenge gender inequitable attitudes and behaviours and their close links to violence against women. The workshops provide participants with the knowledge and skills to safely intervene where the safety of women is at risk, and to challenge anti-social, gender inequitable attitudes and behaviour. The workshops are delivered in partnership with workplaces and community groups and are based on best-practice principles for the prevention of violence against women²¹.
- *Building Respectful Relationships: Stepping Out against Gender-based Violence*, was developed by Our Watch as a respectful relationships education pilot in secondary schools. The program worked with 19 schools in Vanuatu to embed a whole-of-school approach to respectful relationships education into the curriculum of years 8 and 9 and addressed school culture, policies, and procedures. An evaluation of the program found that the program resulted in positive impacts on the attitudes, knowledge and skills of students and initiated changes to school policies and school culture²².
- *Equal Playing Field for Schools program*, is an 8 week respectful relationships sports-based curriculum that trained over 80 teachers, 90 volunteers and reached 3000 students at year 7 level in Port Moresby PNG. A 2017 program evaluation found that the program has been effective in positively influencing gender equality and gender norms and attitudes amongst students, the community volunteers, and teachers²³.
- *Respect, Communicate, Choose* is an evidence-based program delivered by the YWCA in South Australia designed to give young people (10-12 years old) the tools and support they need to prevent violence and to have positive relationships throughout their lives. The program is delivered in partnership with schools, non-government organisations and related services²⁴.

e) All forms of violence against women, including, but not limited to, coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse.

The term “domestic, family and sexual violence” covers a range of complex and invasive behaviours that extend well beyond that of physical violence. These behaviours can comprise:

- psychological, emotional, or verbal abuse, for instance, the use of words to abuse, insult, humiliate, put down or subjugate the victim
- sexual abuse including sexual assault, indecent assault, coercive sex, sexual degradation, and rape

²⁰ Our Watch. (2017). Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to Change the story. Viewed 21 July 2020, <https://d2bb010tdzqaq7.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/11/07042017/Putting-prevention-into-practice-AA-web.pdf>

²¹ YWCA. (2019) Rise Above the Pack Bystander Intervention Workshops. Viewed 20 July 2020,

<https://www.ywca.org.au/programs/domestic-and-family-violence/rise-above-the-pack-bystander-intervention-workshops/>

²² Barclay, A., Trembath, A., Russell, M. (2018). Promising Approaches for the Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls. Care International. Viewed 27 July 2020, <https://www.care.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Review-of-effective-strategies-for-the-prevention-of-VAWG.pdf>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ YWCA. (2019). Respect, Communicate, Choose. Programs. Viewed 20 July 2020, <https://www.ywca.org.au/programs/domestic-and-family-violence/respect-communicate-choose/>

- social abuse, which is characterised by one partner preventing another from having contact with and socialising with friends and family and restricting their activities outside of the home
- financial abuse, where the perpetrator will not allow the victim to share control or make decisions about finances and where the victim is denied access to money or credit and may need to account for all spending
- stalking including loitering around places the victim is known to frequent and watching, following, or making persistent and unwanted contact (phone calls, texts, letters, cards, and gifts) during a relationship or post separation²⁵.

Many of us are familiar with these behaviours and are cognisant of how they impact victims and their families. However, there is a more subtle form of abusive behaviour that is just as harmful and can in fact be the precursor to more invasive and harmful forms of abuse. Coercive control describes a tactical pattern of behaviours that are designed by the perpetrator to control, intimidate, create dependency, and render the victim powerless. The perpetrator will use a range of tactics to leverage the emotional investment the victim has in the relationship to introduce rules and regulations that only apply to the victim, as well as penalties for non-compliance²⁶. The perpetrator may control all facets of a woman's life and may isolate her from family, friends, and support networks (either physically or online) and may exclude her from financial control. The perpetrator uses intimidation, put-downs, threats of self-harm, threats to destroy property, threats to use a weapon, gaslighting, stalking and physical violence to ensure compliance. Coercive control eventually erodes the victim's confidence, self-esteem, and independence^{27 28 29}.

Research from the US found that 60-80% of women who sought help for domestic, family, and sexual violence had experienced coercive control and that the level of control in these relationships was a significant predictor of severe and fatal violence³⁰. In Australia, a review of domestic violence-related homicides in NSW found that in 99% of cases, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator was characterised by the perpetrator's use of coercive and controlling behaviours³¹.

Cyber abuse is another form of violent behaviour that is impacting the victims of domestic, family, and sexual violence. Cyber abuse is behaviour that uses technology to track, intimidate, threaten, harass, or humiliate someone, with the intent to control or isolate them or hurt them psychologically or physically. Cyber abuse can take place on social media, online chat, and messaging platforms and by text and email³². New forms of communication and surveillance technologies have made it easy to monitor an intimate partner and who they relate to. Perpetrators have placed tracking devices in the vehicles of victims and used spyware to track internet use, email, and social media. The children of victims have also unknowingly

²⁵ Domestic Violence Prevention Centre. (2020). Forms of Abuse. Viewed 7 July 2020, <https://www.domesticviolence.com.au/pages/forms-of-abuse.php>

²⁶ Gleeson, H. (2019). Coercive control: The 'worst part' of domestic abuse is not a crime in Australia. But should it be? ABC News. 19 November 2019. Viewed 10 July 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-11-19/coercive-control-domestic-abuse-australia-criminalise/11703442>

²⁷ Stark, E. (2012). Re-presenting Battered Women: Coercive Control and the Defense of Liberty. Prepared for Violence Against Women: Complex Realities and New Issues in a Changing World, Les Presses de l'Université du Québec. Viewed 7 July 2020, https://www.stopvaw.org/uploads/evan_stark_article_final_100812.pdf

²⁸ Gleeson, H. (2019). Coercive control: The 'worst part' of domestic abuse is not a crime in Australia. But should it be? ABC News. 19 November 2019. Viewed 10 July 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-11-19/coercive-control-domestic-abuse-australia-criminalise/11703442>

²⁹ McGorry, P., McMahon, M. (2020). Coercive control is a key part of domestic violence. So why isn't it a crime across Australia? 27 February 2020. Viewed 7 July 2020, <https://theconversation.com/coercive-control-is-a-key-part-of-domestic-violence-so-why-isnt-it-a-crime-across-australia-132444>

³⁰ Gleeson, H. (2019). Coercive control: The 'worst part' of domestic abuse is not a crime in Australia. But should it be? ABC News. 19 November 2019. Viewed 10 July 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-11-19/coercive-control-domestic-abuse-australia-criminalise/11703442>

³¹ NSW Government (2017). NSW Domestic Violence Death Review Team Report 2015-2017. Viewed 7 July 2020, https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lc/papers/DBAssets/tabledpaper/WebAttachments/72106/2015-2017_DVDRT%20REPORT%20PDF.pdf

³² E-Safety Commissioner. Adult cyber-abuse. Viewed 8 July 2020, <https://www.esafety.gov.au/key-issues/adult-cyber-abuse>

been used by perpetrators to track the movements of victims. Devices have been found by victims in the backpacks and stuffed toys of children or sewn into clothing³³.

Perpetrators of cyber abuse may:

- share intimate or sexual photos or videos online without consent
- engage in persistent personal attacks aimed at ridiculing, insulting, or humiliating the victim
- encourage a victim to self-harm and/or suicide
- repeatedly send offensive messages to the victim, their family or friends or work colleagues
- post personal information of a victim on social media including phone number, home or work address or threaten or attempt to incite violence against the victim
- hack into the victim's social media, banking, or email accounts³⁴.

A survey undertaken in 2015 by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre of Victoria of domestic violence sector practitioners and women who had experienced domestic, family and sexual abuse, found 98% of domestic violence workers had clients who had experienced technology-facilitated abuse³⁵.

g) The efficacy of perpetrator intervention programs and support services for men to help them change their behaviour.

Men's behaviour change programs (MBCPs) are a major component of perpetrator intervention that are often used in conjunction with protection orders and other criminal justice responses³⁶. MBCPs have existed in Australia since the early 1980s and many programs are based on the Duluth model³⁷. Perpetrator intervention programs have historically been controversial, with arguments that these programs divert resources from victim's services, act to reduce criminal justice system accountability and that the programs are expensive and haven't been shown to be effective in reducing perpetrator attitudes or violence³⁸.

Whether MBCPs are successful in reducing the violent behaviour of perpetrators and improving the safety of women and their families is a difficult question to answer^{39 40}. While many programs have been found to have a positive effect in terms of changing the perpetrators' attitude towards their violent behaviour, this attitude change does not necessarily result in behaviour change⁴¹.

In Australia, there has been limited research that shows the effectiveness of perpetrator intervention programs, but the studies that do exist show some promise. In 2010, a study undertaken in Queensland found that after 12 months, only 7 out of 20 perpetrators who completed the program had further charges recorded against them, compared to 16 of the 18 perpetrators who did not complete the program⁴².

³³ Scott, K. (2020) What to do to protect yourself from a cyberstalking ex. ABC Life. 9 March 2020, Viewed 9 July 2020, <https://www.abc.net.au/life/protecting-yourself-from-cyber-stalking-by-an-ex/11631224>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Woodlock, D. (2015) ReCharge: Women's Technology Safety, Legal Resources, Research and Training, Women's Legal Service NSW, Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria and WESNET, Collingwood. Viewed 7 July 2020, https://www.dvrcv.org.au/sites/default/files/ReCharge_0.pdf

³⁶ Stopping Family Violence. (2017). Family and domestic violence perpetrator programs: Issues paper of current and emerging trends, developments and expectations. Viewed 14 July 2020, <http://sfv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/FDV-perpetrator-programs-issues-paper.pdf>

³⁷ The Duluth Model shifts the blame for domestic, family and sexual violence from the victim to the offender and is based on a shared understanding of how interventions should be centred on victim safety and offender accountability.

³⁸ Mackay, E., Gibson, A., Lam, H., & Beecham, D. (2015). Perpetrator interventions in Australia: Part one – Literature review. State of knowledge paper (ANROWS Landscapes, PP01/2015). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Stopping Family Violence. (2017). Family and domestic violence perpetrator programs: Issues paper of current and emerging trends, developments and expectations. Viewed 14 July 2020, <http://sfv.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/FDV-perpetrator-programs-issues-paper.pdf>

⁴¹ Mackay, E., Gibson, A., Lam, H., & Beecham, D. (2015). Perpetrator interventions in Australia: Part one – Literature review. State of knowledge paper (ANROWS Landscapes, PP01/2015). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS.

⁴² Ibid.

In 2008, a Monash University study that conducted surveys and interviews with perpetrators involved in a MBCP and the victims of their violence found the program was successful in reducing violent behaviour. The research showed that 69% of the men involved in the program reported ceasing their violent behaviour after participation in the program, while 22% reported that they had reduced their violent behaviour. Only 7% of men reported no improvement at all⁴³.

In South Australia, a two-year evaluation of the implementation of the Intervention Order (Prevention of Abuse) Act 2009 (SA) and accompanying Domestic Violence Prevention Program found that there had been a modest positive impact on the attitudes and beliefs of perpetrators who had completed the course compared to perpetrators who had not⁴⁴.

The United Kingdom's Project Mirabal released findings that showed a considerable number of men either reduced or ceased their use of violence and coercion after completing a program⁴⁵. Project Mirabal reviewed 40 years of MBCP literature in the UK and international jurisdictions to determine the efficacy of the programs and found that both the quantitative and qualitative data showed "steps towards change" for most program participants. Further, the programs were found to enhance men's understanding of the invasive impact of violence and coercive control, which led to a reduction or cessation of physical and sexual violence for most of the women detailed in the evaluations⁴⁶. The authors cautioned that while there is more work to be done to improve the ways in which some programs operate, how the programs work in an integrated service system and how they are evaluated, there was general optimism about the role MBCPs play in reducing and ending domestic, family and sexual violence⁴⁷.

The Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) has suggested that to get a clearer picture of the impact of MBCPs, best practice evaluation principles should be developed to guide a standardised approach to evaluating programs. These principles should take into account different methodologies, diverse philosophical approaches and the long-term effectiveness of program components⁴⁸.

h) The experiences of all women, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, rural women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, LGBTIQ women, women with a disability, and women on temporary visas.

While all women can experience violence, there are some groups of women who face a greater risk of family, domestic and sexual violence. These groups can include young women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with a disability, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or queer (LGBTIQ+) women and women living in rural and remote areas⁴⁹.

Young women

The 2016 ABS Personal Safety Survey⁵⁰ found that in the 12 months prior to the survey, women aged 18 to 34 were more likely to experience intimate partner violence and/or sexual violence than women over the

⁴³ Brown, T., Hampson, R. (2009). An Evaluation of Interventions with Domestic Violence Perpetrators. Monash University. Viewed 14 July 2020, <https://www.violencefreefamilies.org.au/web/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/ResearchReportWeb.pdf>

⁴⁴ Mackay, E., Gibson, A., Lam, H., & Beecham, D. (2015). Perpetrator interventions in Australia: Part one – Literature review. State of knowledge paper (ANROWS Landscapes, PP01/2015). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS.

⁴⁵ RMIT. (2015). Opportunities for Early Intervention: Bringing perpetrators of family violence into view. Centre for Innovative Justice. Viewed 14 July 2020, <http://mams.rmit.edu.au/r3qx75qh2913.pdf>

⁴⁶ Kelly, L., Westmarland, N. (2015) Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes: Steps Towards Change. Project Mirabal Final Report. London and Durham: London Metropolitan University and Durham University. Viewed 17 July 2020, https://www.nr-foundation.org.uk/downloads/Project_Mirabal-Final_report.pdf

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Mackay, E., Gibson, A., Lam, H., & Beecham, D. (2015). Perpetrator interventions in Australia: Part one – Literature review. State of knowledge paper (ANROWS Landscapes, PP01/2015). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS.

⁴⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2018). Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia 2018. Cat. no. FDV 2. Canberra: AIHW.

⁵⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2017). Personal safety survey, Australia. ABS cat. no. 4906.0. Canberra: ABS.

age of 35. The survey results found that 4% of women aged 18 to 34 experienced intimate partner violence, compared with 1.5% of women over the age of 35; 4.3% of women aged 18 to 34 experienced sexual violence from any perpetrator, compared with women over the age of 35; and 2.3% of women aged 18 to 34 had experienced both intimate partner violence and sexual violence, compared with 0.4% of women over the age of 35⁵¹. Further, according to the 2019 ABS Recorded Crime - Victims Australia report, young women aged 15–19 had the highest rates of reported sexual assault of any age and gender group, with 813 sexual assault victims per 100,000 girls and women⁵².

The 2016 Personal Safety Survey also showed that a substantial number of women reported experience of domestic, family, and sexual violence before 15 years of age. The survey results reported that 535,800 women had experienced physical and/or sexual abuse before the age of 15 by a partner; 398,600 had witnessed violence towards their mother by their mother's partner; and 399,300 respondents reported the age they first experienced abuse was between 10 and 14 years of age⁵³.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

The 2008 ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were at least four times more likely to experience domestic and family violence than the rest of the population. In fact, almost a quarter of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women had experienced physical violence in the 12 months prior to the survey, compared to 4.6% for non-Indigenous women⁵⁴. This disparity has significantly impacted the burden of disease for Indigenous women, with intimate partner violence accounting for 1.6% of the total burden of disease. This figure is 5 times higher than the disease burden rate for non-Indigenous Australians⁵⁵. When you consider the significant underreporting of physical assault amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, the numbers of Indigenous women experiencing domestic, family, and sexual violence is thought to be much higher⁵⁶.

Women with disabilities

Women with disabilities are especially vulnerable to violence, particularly when the perpetrator may be in a position of power such as a carer or someone else the woman relies upon for physical or financial support. Women with disabilities are also at increased risk of experiencing violence from people with whom they share accommodation⁵⁷. Acknowledging the barriers women with disabilities face reporting violence and seeking support, there are estimates that women with disabilities are 40% more likely to be the victims of domestic and family violence compared to the rest of the population. In addition, over 70% of women with disabilities have been victims of violent sexual assault over their lifetimes⁵⁸.

⁵¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019). Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story 2019. Cat. no. FDV 3. Canberra: AIHW.

⁵² Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2020). Recorded Crime – Victims, Australia, 2019. ABS cat. no. 4510.0. Canberra: ABS.

⁵³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2017). Personal safety survey, Australia. ABS cat. no. 4906.0. Canberra: ABS.

⁵⁴ KPMG (2016). The cost of violence against women and children final report. Final report prepared for the Department of Social Services. Viewed 9 July 2020, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2016/the_cost_of_violence_against_women_and_their_children_in_australia_-_summary_report_may_2016.pdf

⁵⁵ Closing the Gap Clearinghouse (AIHW & AIFS) 2016. Family violence prevention programs in Indigenous communities. Resource sheet no. 37. Produced by the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. Canberra: AIHW & Melbourne: AIFS.

⁵⁶ KPMG (2016). The cost of violence against women and children final report. Final report prepared for the Department of Social Services. Viewed 9 July 2020, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2016/the_cost_of_violence_against_women_and_their_children_in_australia_-_summary_report_may_2016.pdf

⁵⁷ VicHealth. (2011). Preventing violence against women in Australia Research summary: Addressing the social and economic determinants of mental and physical health. Viewed 20 July 2020, https://www.thelookout.org.au/sites/default/files/VH_VAW%20Research%20Summary_Nov2011.pdf

⁵⁸ KPMG (2016). The cost of violence against women and children final report. Final report prepared for the Department of Social Services. Viewed 9 July 2020, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/08_2016/the_cost_of_violence_against_women_and_their_children_in_australia_-_summary_report_may_2016.pdf

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer (LGBTIQ+)

Unfortunately, there is a shortage of reliable statistical data collected on the experience of domestic, family, and sexual violence by LGBTIQ+ women that can accurately reflect the prevalence of domestic, family and sexual violence in these communities^{59 60}. Surveys such as the ABS Personal Safety Survey, don't collect data on LGBTIQ+ identity, and data that is collected by national and state mainstream domestic and family violence services does not generally include sexuality indicators, making it difficult to quantify and track prevalence of domestic, family and sexual violence in the LGBTIQ+ population⁶¹.

However, the limited data that has been collected on the LGBTIQ+ community suggests that rates of intimate partner violence is either equal to, or higher than the rest of the population⁶². The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia report highlighted the results from the 2003 Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health which found that women who identified as lesbian and bisexual were more likely to experience physical, sexual and emotional abuse than exclusively heterosexual women⁶³.

To obtain a clearer picture of domestic, family and sexual violence amongst the LGBTIQ+ population, each community must be consulted and counted in statistics to ensure that LGBTIQ+ people are not excluded from discussions, programs or services to respond to domestic, family and sexual violence⁶⁴.

Rural and remote women

Determining the prevalence of domestic, family and sexual violence in rural and remote areas can be problematic due to reporting barriers⁶⁵, however, the 2016 ABS Personal Safety Survey reported that women living outside major population centres were more likely to have experienced violence from a current or previous partner. Of women living outside of major population centres, 23% reported experiencing intimate partner violence, compared with 15% of women living in larger population centres. These figures were similar to the findings in the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, which found that the overall lifetime prevalence rate of domestic and family violence was 20% for women living in larger population centres, 24% in inner regional areas and 26% for women living in rural areas⁶⁶.

More consultation with women from communities at greater risk of domestic, family and sexual violence as well as regular collection of data that records the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, rural and remote women, LGBTIQ+ women and women with disabilities will assist in determining the prevalence of intimate partner violence in these communities.

⁵⁹ O'Halloran, K. (2015). Family violence in an LGBTIQ context. DVRCV Advocate: Royal Commission. Viewed 7 July 2020, <https://www.thelookout.org.au/sites/default/files/Family-violence-in-an-LGBTIQ-context-Kate-OHalloran.pdf>

⁶⁰ Campo, M., Tayton, S. (2015). Intimate partner violence in lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer communities: Key issues. Child Family Community Australia: Information Exchange. Viewed 7 July 2020, <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/sites/default/files/publication-documents/cfca-resource-dv-lgbti-2020.pdf>

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² O'Halloran, K. (2015). Family violence in an LGBTIQ context. DVRCV Advocate: Royal Commission. Viewed 7 July 2020, <https://www.thelookout.org.au/sites/default/files/Family-violence-in-an-LGBTIQ-context-Kate-OHalloran.pdf>

⁶³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019). Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story 2019. Cat. no. FDV 3. Canberra: AIHW.

⁶⁴ O'Halloran, K. (2015). Family violence in an LGBTIQ context. DVRCV Advocate: Royal Commission. Viewed 7 July 2020, <https://www.thelookout.org.au/sites/default/files/Family-violence-in-an-LGBTIQ-context-Kate-OHalloran.pdf>

⁶⁵ Campo, M., Tayton, S. (2015). Domestic and family violence in regional, rural and remote communities: An overview of key issues. Child Family Community Australia: Information Exchange. Viewed 7 July 2020, <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/sites/default/files/publication-documents/cfca-resource-dv-regional.pdf>

⁶⁶ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019). Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story 2019. Cat. no. FDV 3. Canberra: AIHW.

i) The impact of natural disasters and other significant events such as COVID-19, including health requirements such as staying at home, on the prevalence of domestic violence and provision of support services.

In data analysed in April 2020 by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), it is expected that for every three months that enforced COVID-19 restrictions continue, an additional 15 million cases of domestic and family violence will occur worldwide⁶⁷. There has been an increase of calls to domestic, family, and sexual violence helplines and increased reports of domestic violence in Brazil, Greece, Spain, Cyprus, and the United Kingdom⁶⁸. COVID-19 restrictions, lockdowns and the need to self-isolate have also contributed to increases in the experience of domestic, family, and sexual violence in Australia⁶⁹.

A study by Monash University, that surveyed 166 family violence victim support practitioners across Victoria during a four-week period between April and May 2020, found that 59% of respondents reported increased frequency of violence against women and 50% reported increased severity of violence against women⁷⁰. The study also learned that 42% of practitioners had noted an increase in first-time family violence reported by women and new forms of intimate partner violence against women that included increased tactics to achieve social isolation and new forms of violence relating to the risk of COVID-19 infection. This included perpetrators demanding that women wash their hands and body excessively, spreading rumours that victims had COVID-19 to further isolate them from family and friends, increased monitoring of mobile phones and internet use, and preventing women from leaving their homes under the guise of protecting them from the virus⁷¹. As such, numerous challenges to risk assessments and providing effective supports were reported by a range of practitioners during the COVID-19 shutdown phase⁷².

In Queensland, the Monash University survey found that in April and May 2020, practitioners reported an 81% escalation of controlling behaviour; 49% reported an escalation of perpetrators using COVID-19 as a reason for any form of abuse; 36% reported an escalation from non-physical to physical forms of abuse; 33% reported an escalation of perpetrator threats to kill the victim; and 21% reported an escalation of perpetrator threats to children. Further, Queensland domestic and family violence practitioners reported that COVID-19 had not only instigated an increase in client numbers but had also contributed to an increase in the complexity of client needs, and an increase in reported perpetrator anger/violence due to COVID-19 related income reduction or unemployment⁷³.

Fear and uncertainty over COVID-19, lockdowns, social distancing, restricted travel and access to services and support creates an environment that can dramatically increase the risk of violence for women⁷⁴. As Victoria faces a return to restrictions and lockdowns and the potential for outbreaks of COVID-19 in other parts of Australia, policy responses, and programs and services that ensure girls and women have access to information, safety and support are vital.

⁶⁷ Pfitzner, N., Fitz-Gibbon, K., Meyer, S., and True, J. (2020). Responding to Queensland's 'shadow pandemic' during the period of COVID-19 restrictions: practitioner views on the nature of and responses to violence against women. Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Monash University, Victoria, Australia.

⁶⁸ Neil, J. (2020). Domestic violence and COVID-19: Our hidden epidemic. Australian Journal of General Practice. Viewed 14 July 2020, <https://www1.racgp.org.au/ajgp/coronavirus/domestic-violence-and-covid-19>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Pfitzner, N., Fitz-Gibbon, K. and True, J. (2020). Responding to the 'shadow pandemic': practitioner views on the nature of and responses to violence against women in Victoria, Australia during the COVID-19 restrictions. Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Monash University, Victoria, Australia.

⁷¹ Mills, T. (2020) New reports of family violence spike in COVID-19 lockdown, study finds. The Age. June 8 2020. Viewed July 7 2020 <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/new-reports-of-family-violence-spike-in-covid-19-lockdown-study-finds-20200607-p55096.html>

⁷² Pfitzner, N., Fitz-Gibbon, K. and True, J. (2020). Responding to the 'shadow pandemic': practitioner views on the nature of and responses to violence against women in Victoria, Australia during the COVID-19 restrictions. Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Monash University, Victoria, Australia.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Usher, K., Bhullar, N., Durkin, J., Gyamfi, N., Jackson, D. (2020) Family violence and COVID-19: increased vulnerability and reduced options for support. Int. J. Ment. Health Nurs. (2020), 10.1111/inm.12735



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