



Australian Government

Department of Family and Community Services

Telephone 1300 653 227

TTY 1800 260 402

www.facs.gov.au

Australian Government Response to United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) request for information on Australia's work in combating violence against women.

Gender based violence

The Australian Government remains strongly committed to addressing domestic violence and sexual assault, and has committed \$75.7 million over the next four years to a new Women's Safety Agenda. The Australian Government has already committed \$50 million over the years 1997-2005 to the *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* (PADV) initiative. PADV sought to find better ways of preventing and addressing domestic violence in the community.

The initiative has funded over 230 diverse and innovative projects related to domestic violence at local, regional and national levels, and has supported the development of research and the documentation of good practice. It has produced a wide range of publications relating to domestic violence and held national forums covering the areas of children and domestic violence, men and relationships, indigenous family violence, and domestic violence across the lives of women and girls. The key goal of PADV was to create comprehensive, coordinated and effective whole of government and sector responses to domestic violence and to break the cycle of violence across the lifespan. A major element of PADV was a \$6 million *Indigenous Family Violence Grants Programme*. The grants assisted Indigenous non-government organisations to work with local communities to help them develop and implement grass roots, culturally appropriate projects to strengthen their capacity to prevent and address family violence.

Another major PADV initiative was the establishment of the *Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse* which gathers together, and facilitates public access to, domestic violence research and publications from states, territories and internationally. The Clearinghouse provides information services and conducts research into a wide range of domestic violence issues. It produces regular newsletters and issues papers.

The *PADV: A Business Approach* worked with the business community to raise their awareness of domestic violence in the lives of their employees, and its impact on workplace productivity. The initiative developed a range of workplace materials including training materials, to assist the corporate sector to support their staff.

The Australian Government launched a national campaign in June 2004 to address domestic and family violence and sexual assault in Australia. The campaign delivered the very strong message that violence against women is totally unacceptable. The campaign comprised:

- A nation-wide, purpose-built 24 hours a day, 7 days a week helpline;
- TV, radio, cinema and magazine commercials;
- A householder booklet;
- A schools kit; and
- A website.

Funding for the campaign is provided under PADV and the National *Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault*. It is part of the Australian Government's \$73.2 million commitment to address domestic and family violence and sexual assault in Australia. This campaign has cost just over \$20 million so far.

Sexual assault

The \$16.5 million *National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault* was announced in the 2001-02 Budget. The initiative represented the Australian Government's commitment to the important area of sexual assault and aimed to increase women's safety and build safer communities by reducing the incidence of sexual assault. The initiative aimed to foster the development of an Australian culture that will not tolerate violence. The focus of the initiative was the establishment of a sound evidence base to ensure that the most effective policy and service responses are developed and implemented. Specific strategies included:

- making better use of data currently available on sexual assault by developing a Sexual Assault Information Development Plan to identify existing sources of data on sexual assault, identify gaps in data currently available, and propose strategies to address these gaps;
- improving understanding of specific aspects of sexual assault through the funding of a full-time data analyst position at the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) to work solely on sexual assault. To date the data analyst has produced an international literature review on the non-reporting and hidden recording of sexual assault, an analysis of recidivist offenders and a report on prosecutorial decision-making in adult sexual assault cases. Work is currently being undertaken on victim decision-making in sexual assault cases;
- funding Australia's participation in the first International Violence Against Women Survey run by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute and administered by the AIC. Results from the Australian component of the Survey are now available; and
- providing mechanisms to encourage sharing of information across jurisdictions, including through the funding of an Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault based at the Australian Institute of Family Studies. The initiative focussed on raising awareness in the community on the impact of sexual assault, in an attempt to reduce its incidence, through a National Community Awareness Campaign.

People Trafficking

The Australian Government's *Action Plan to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons*, released in June 2004, outlines Australia's efforts in the four key areas of prevention, detection and investigation, criminal prosecution and victim support.

On 13 October 2003 the Australian Government announced a major strategy to combat people trafficking. The \$20 million strategy will complement existing efforts to significantly enhance the detection, investigation and prosecution of traffickers and improve the range of support available to victims.

As part of the strategy, the Office for Women coordinates support for victims of trafficking through the *Support for Victims of People Trafficking Programme*. The Programme provides financial and other support to victims around Australia who are of interest to the police or assisting with criminal investigations and prosecutions in Australia. The support provided assists with victims' living expenses and their general well-being and includes income support, accommodation, medical treatment, basic legal advice, counselling, training and social support.

The support is provided by a case manager who is responsible for ensuring the appropriate coordination or delivery of these support services from the time the client is referred to them by police to the conclusion of the victim's assistance with the investigation and prosecution in Australia.

Key measures of the government strategy also include the establishment of the new 23-member Australian Federal Police (AFP) mobile strike team (the *Transnational Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking Team*) to investigate trafficking and sexual servitude. A Senior Migration Officer (Compliance) of Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs (DIMIA) is based in Thailand to focus on trafficking in the South-East Asia region. The officer has completed a survey of the region and has established productive working relationships with key regional stakeholders. AFP and DIMIA working closely on the detection and investigation of trafficking, with enhanced training on trafficking issues being provided for AFP and DIMIA officers.

Australia also supports the reintegration of victims of trafficking upon their return to their home country. AusAID, in association with the International Organization for Migration, is establishing a capacity building reintegration assistance project for trafficking victims who are returned to key source countries in South East Asia.

The Government remains committed to monitoring the impact of these measures to ensure Australia remains at the forefront of efforts to eradicate trafficking in persons.

AusAID

Australia is concerned about the feminisation of HIV/AIDS and the role sexual violence plays in exacerbating the epidemic. It is now widely acknowledged that sexual coercion and violence lead to greater chance of HIV/AIDS infection. Research shows that one in three women around the world will be raped, beaten, coerced into sex, trafficked or abused in her lifetime. Prevention and care will fail women and young girls, if the determinants of the epidemic – sexual violence, gender in equality and poverty - are not addressed.

The Australian Agency for International Development, **AusAID**, is working with partner countries in the Asia Pacific Region to combat violence against women by supporting activities that address gender based violence and by documenting lessons and good practice. For example:

Prevention of Trafficking especially in Women and Children

Trafficking has grave consequences for its victims' health – often severely. Victims are confined, secluded and suffer sexual violence and physical abuse. The risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS among trafficked women and children is high. Trafficking of women and children for sexual or labour exploitation is a serious problem confronting many countries, including those in the Mekong sub region. Australia is working with partner governments and civil society organisations to reduce the incidence of trafficking by building institutional capacity in the criminal justice

system as well as by providing practical support, care, protection, recovery and reintegration of trafficked women and children.

In addition, a comprehensive package of new measures to combat trafficking was introduced by the Government in 2003. This package builds on existing aid programs and places Australia at the forefront of good practice in the fight against trafficking in women and children.

Violence against Women

Fiji Women's Crisis Centre – is an example, which represents good practice of how assistance to one Centre has spread to other countries in the Pacific.

Since 1990, Australia has been supporting the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre's aims to eliminate all forms of violence against women and children and to raise the status of women in Fiji and the Pacific region. In Fiji, the Centre provides counselling and legal services to assist victims of violence and carries out advocacy and community education programs to change prevailing attitudes and behaviour towards women and children. It provides training to Fiji's police and military and for men's groups.

Regionally the Centre serves as a secretariat to the Pacific Women's Network against Violence. For some years it has been Australia's managing agent for similar program to the Vanuatu Women's Centre in Port Vila, providing very effective South-to-South mentoring. The Centre also supports other organisations in Micronesia, Melanesia and Polynesia through its Regional Training Program.

STATE AND TERRITORY INITIATIVES

Australian Capital Territory

The ACT Government:

- provides community development, education and support for women affected by violence through the ACT Women' Health Service; and
- continues to purchase services from non-government organisations to provide crisis services for women experiencing violence, including the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service.

A *Human Rights Act* has been enacted in the ACT, which recognises equal rights and access to justice for everyone. The *Act* protects the right of all individuals, including women and girls, to personal security and liberty.

The ACT government recognises that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms that results in women and girls being denied the opportunity to live fulfilling lives. The ***ACT Women's Plan*** has as one of its key objective areas safe, inclusive communities. An annual action plan is a component of the Women's Plan. The Annual Action Plan is a key-driving document, providing details of supporting structures, policies and processes in place to achieve it objectives, as well as planned future actions across Government agencies.

Through the *ACT Women's Plan*, the policy framework *Justice, Options and Prevention – working to make the lives of ACT women safe* guides actions across government agencies to achieve three key outcomes:

- *Protection and Justice*: Women have a right to access a justice system that provides protection, support and advocacy;
- *Options for Women*: Assistance provided to women is appropriate, accessible and responsive; and
- *Prevention of Violence*: Understanding, acceptance and acknowledgment of the right of women to live their lives free from violence.

The development and implementation of an annual action plan specific to this policy framework, identifying the range of strategies in place across agencies to achieve progress towards the three key outcome areas, will continue. The *2004-05 Second Action Plan Addressing Violence and Safety Issues for Women in the ACT* was released in July 2004. The 2005-06 Action Plan will be released shortly.

A range of programs are being undertaken to achieve the three key outcomes. Examples include:

The Family Violence and Intervention Program (FVIP)

FVIP is an integrated and coordinated criminal justice and community response to criminal family violence matters. The FVIP received seed funding under the national Partnerships Against Domestic Violence initiative from 1998-2001. From 2001, funding for the program was endorsed by the ACT Government.

Since 1998, the FVIP has evolved as a phased and strategic developmental program of system-wide change. Under each planning cycle, participating agencies developed more detailed objectives specific to their core business. The FVIP has grown in four Phases:

1. **Phase I** (1998-1999) - the pilot phase that established a broad policy framework, baseline measures, and the core interventions of specialised court list and the perpetrator education program.
2. **Phase II** (1999-2001) - was the research and development phase where new initiatives in policing and prosecution were tested and externally evaluated.
3. **Phase III** (2001-2003) - involved the extension of the leading practice model in policing, prosecution, offender management and victim support to the ACT Region as a whole.
4. **Phase IV** (2003-2005) - represents both the consolidation of the leading practice model with the identification of areas that may require a flexible response.

Since 1998, key achievements of the FVIP have included:

- In 1998-99, the year the FVIP commenced, the Office of the ACT Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) prosecuted 168 matters involving a FV offence. In 2003-04, the Office prosecuted 812 matters involving a FV offence. This represents a 383% increase in FV matters over a six year period,
- An increase from 24% to 76% of early pleas of guilty from 1998/99 to 2002-2003,

- The number of defendants convicted of one or more FV offences increased from 68 defendants in 1998/99 to a peak of 298 defendants in 2001/02, and has stabilised at 194 in 2003/04
- 86% of all family violence matters commenced and completed resulted in a conviction in both 2000/01 and 2001/02, and
- Strengthening mechanisms for inter-agency collaboration and planning.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Council (DVPC)

The DVPC is a body established under the *Domestic Violence Agencies Act 1986* to provide advice to the ACT Attorney-General on matters relating to domestic violence. The Council comprises 6 government and 6 community representatives with an independent chairperson. Its remit is to seek a reduction in the incidence of domestic violence in the ACT.

Tasmania

Safe at Home: Tasmanian Government Response to Family Violence

The key policy outcomes being sought by the Tasmanian Government through *Safe at Home* are enhanced criminal justice responses and the introduction of an integrated response to family violence built around the principle of primacy of safety for the victim. The initiative is part of whole-of-government efforts to reduce the level of family violence in Tasmania.

Safe at Home has been developed through drawing on national and international research into what works, and through community consultation. The Tasmanian Government has committed significant recurrent resources to the *Safe at Home* strategy.

Tasmania has a population of approximately 500,000. Whilst an estimate of 1800 families being affected by family violence annually was used as baseline data to determine the level of services for the initiative it has been recognised that family violence is often a hidden crime. Part of the *Safe at Home* strategy has included an awareness raising campaign designed to alert the general population of the criminality of family violence and to encourage victims to report incidents of family violence.

The legislation, which underpins the *Safe at Home* strategy, the *Family Violence Act 2004*, was proclaimed on 30 March 2005. This is the first time Tasmania has had specific family violence legislation which recognises that family violence can take many forms, not all of them involving physical violence. Family violence offences in Tasmania now include:

- assault, including sexual assault;
- threats, coercion, intimidation or verbal abuse;
- abduction;
- stalking;
- economic abuse;
- emotional abuse or intimidation; and
- contravening any Family Violence Order.

The legislation also introduces for the first time in Tasmania specific Family Violence Orders and Police Family Violence Orders. There is now a presumption against bail for offenders charged with family violence offences unless the judicial officer or police officer is satisfied with the safety and well being of the victims, both adult and child.

A package of programs that support the *Safe at Home* strategy has been developed and are delivered by a range of government departments who work collaboratively together to ensure coordinated case management. The *Safe at Home* package includes the following services:

Family Violence Response and Referral Line

The line, which is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including public holidays, offers an information and referral service by which callers are able to access the full range of response, counselling, information and other support services provided by *Safe at Home* on a 24 hour basis. All callers who are in immediate danger are referred directly to Tasmania Police for an immediate response.

Victim Safety Response Teams

The Victim Safety Response Teams (VSRTs) deliver a range of services with a focus on improving victim safety and supporting victims in crisis situations. The VSRTs are a part of the Tasmania Police response to family violence, with teams being located in the four Police districts. Risk assessments of offenders are now a feature of the Tasmania Police response to family violence offenders.

Police Prosecutions

Additional Police Prosecutors have been employed to cover the increased workload that comes with the pro-arrest, pro-prosecution policy.

Court Support and Liaison Services

Dedicated court support officers are available to provide support to victims (including referral to appropriate counselling and other services) and guide them through the justice system during and after court appearances.

Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania

The extension of free legal aid to all eligible victims of family violence ensures no victim is disadvantaged by lack of legal representation and advice.

Court Activity

Special family violence sessions have been created in Magistrates' calendars for listing and consolidating all family violence proceedings as far as possible. These special listing arrangements enable better case management of family violence matters, and also facilitates better access by victims to the specialist court support services.

Child Witness Program

The Child Witness Program assists children who are called to give evidence in family violence cases.

Family Violence Counselling and Support Service

Both adult and child victims are offered a range of counselling and support services to assist them regain control of their lives.

Family Violence Offender Intervention Program

The Family Violence Offender Intervention Program was introduced in 2004. The program is court mandated and assesses the ongoing risk an offender poses to their family and provides rehabilitation programs for suitable offenders.

Aboriginal Family Violence Working Group

The *ya pulingina kani* Working Group supports the implementation of culturally appropriate responses for Aboriginal people under *Safe at Home*.

Non Government Providers of Family Violence Services

A number of non-government counselling, crisis and refuge services for women are provided in Tasmania. Many of these are funded through SAAP agreements.

Sexual Assault and Rape in Tasmania

In 1995 the Tasmanian Government established a Task Force to review the whole-of-system response to sexual assault and rape. Since then a considerable amount of progress has been made in Tasmania to ensure victims are responded to sensitively and effectively. Sexual assault services, funded by the Tasmanian Government, provide services to victims/survivors as well as a substantial program of community and professional education. The services operate in all three regions of Tasmania.

The criminality of sexual assault and rape was reinforced in the *Report of the Task Force on Sexual Assault and Rape in Tasmania 1998* which made a number of recommendations to improve the response to sexual assault and rape in Tasmania. Most recommendations of the *Report of the Task Force on Sexual Assault and Rape in Tasmania 1998* have now been implemented.

Although there are still a number of victims who do not report offences for various reasons there have been several high profile cases which have been dealt with strongly by the criminal justice system.

Community Safety and Awareness Raising Strategies

The need to provide safe communities has been recognised by State and local governments in Tasmania and indirectly address the need to eliminate violence against women. The Tasmanian Government's Partnership Agreements has proven an effective mechanism for both State and Local Government to work together to reduce crime and fear of crime.

A number of programs are operated that aim to make communities safer including: Tasmania Police Crimes Prevention Council; Neighbourhood Watch; and, Safety Houses. Many local government councils now have safer community policies that embrace a broad range of strategies to make the physical environment safer for residents.

The Department of Police and Public Safety also undertake on-going liaison with schools to discuss crime and community safety issues.

Tasmania has been involved in a number of awareness strategies around the elimination of violence against women. A number of initiatives have been ongoing throughout the State including the following:

Dorset Community Association – Our Safe Community Project

The aim of the project is to promote a safer, non violent community through the promotion and support of behaviours that:

- are protective of one's self;
- are protective of others;
- are supportive and respectful of all.

The Dorset Community Association provides information and community education so that people can learn alternative strategies to violence. The “Safer Community” Charter articulates the goals of the program.

Women’s Safety in the Community Awards

These awards are part of the annual “Reclaim the Night” celebrations in Northern Tasmania and are sponsored by Women Tasmania. Reclaim the Night came out of women's need to challenge:

- male sexual violence against them;
- the curfew mentality imposed on all women.

The Women’s Safety in the Community Awards categories are: Education; Government; Non government; Business; Media / Arts; and, Individual. The awards are presented to entries from those categories which have demonstrated initiatives which have improved the safety of women in the community.

Queensland Government

Services to Women and Children experiencing Domestic Violence

The Queensland Government commits \$26.6M triennially to provide a range of services to people experiencing domestic and family violence. These services include \$1.9M allocated to court support and counselling services, \$3M toward regional domestic violence services, \$1M in child witness counselling services, two police referral services (known as ‘fax-back’), a research, education and evaluation service, and a telephone counselling and referral service.

Dvconnect and Mensline

The Department of Communities funds a number of services specifically to assist men to deal with perpetrator behaviours. These services for men include 11 counselling and support programs, a police referral program known as ‘fax-back’ and two court support services at a total of \$537,414 triennially. The Department also funds DVconnect, a domestic violence telephone service, to provide a specific ‘men’s line’. This line both counsels and supports perpetrators to address their violent behaviour, in addition to counselling and supporting male victims of domestic and family violence.

Sexual Assault Support and Prevention Program

Queensland Health operates a Sexual Assault Support and Prevention Program. This program budget provides funds to organisations with the aims of:

- improving the quality and cost-effectiveness of sexual assault support services for women who have experienced sexual violence
- working towards a reduction in the negative health impacts on women who have experienced sexual violence

Policing Domestic Violence

A network of police Domestic Violence Liaison Officers (DVLO) has been established state-wide. The majority of police stations in Queensland have an appointed DVLO. For stations that do not have an appointed DVLO, the officer in charge of the station is, by virtue of that position, the DVLO for the station. The DVLO has a number of functions, both internal and external to the Queensland Police Service and in many cases they perform these functions in addition to their normal policing duties.

The external functions of a DVLO include:

- Assisting members of the community in direction and advice on domestic violence matters
- Establishing communications and relations with groups and organisations and promoting domestic violence prevention and support strategies

The Domestic Violence Liaison Officer course is delivered by facilitators from the police, Department of Communities, Department of Child Safety, and guest presenters from members of the domestic violence support and counselling sector. Supporting station DVLOs are District and Regional DVLOs. The State Domestic Violence Coordinator stationed in the Crime Prevention Unit Brisbane oversees the entire DVLO network.

Women in the Smart State Directions Statement 2003-2008

The Queensland Government is committed to working in partnership with women and men, businesses, other governments and community organisations to achieve tangible outcomes for women. This commitment is defined in the Queensland Government's five year plan for women, *Women in the Smart State Direction Statement 2003-2008*. Defined within the document the goal of "Enhancing Women's Safety" which will be achieved by:

- Implementing strategies to reduce violence against women
- Helping women to feel safe and supported in their homes and communities
- Improving transport services to women

New South Wales

In New South Wales, the NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women is managed by the Communities Division of the Department of Community Services (DoCS). The Strategy is a partnership initiative between DoCS, Attorney General's Department, NSW Health, NSW Police, the Office for Women (NSW Premier's Department), Department of Housing and Department of Education and Training. The Strategy has 18 Regional Violence Prevention Specialists located around NSW, who develop Regional Violence Prevention Action Plans in partnership with the regional offices of the partner agencies.

The NSW Office for Women, situated in NSW Premier's Department, works closely with the Violence Against Women Specialist Unit in DoCS and other key agencies to develop innovative strategies to promote violence prevention and raise awareness of the issue.

Input from Western Australia into the Country Report for CEDAW

The Western Australian Government receives advice and analysis on issues affecting women through the Office for Women's Policy. The Office uses a community engagement approach to identify issues for women and provide a mechanism for women to influence government policy and programs. A range of consultative mechanisms are used including standing advisory committees such as the Indigenous Women's Congress and the Women's Advisory Council.

A set of indicators on the status and progress of women in Western Australia, called a "Women's Report Card" has been published and will be updated as new data becomes available. A similar set of Indicators has been developed on Indigenous women.

The Western Australian Office of Women's Policy is collaborating with the South Australian Office for Women, University of WA and the University of Adelaide in developing gender analysis techniques and practice for application by mainstream government agencies in the development of policy and programs. These are being trialled in several major government agencies.

The Western Australia Family and Domestic Violence Strategic Plan 2004-2008 seeks to reduce and ultimately prevent family and domestic violence through a coordinated response across government agencies. The plan guides all government departments in the planning and implementation of policies and programs aimed at the safety of women and children. The Plan is based on three priorities – prevention, protection and provision.

The Report of an Inquiry into child abuse and family violence within Indigenous communities, *Putting the Pieces Together*, resulted in the WA Government developing a comprehensive response, *Putting People First*. This has produced a range of measures aimed at increasing the safety of women and children and addressing systemic barriers to the effectiveness of existing Government service responses.

The Government responses have featured new child protection legislation, mandatory reporting and strengthening of inter-agency protocols, improved information sharing and data collection, advocacy, review and complaints mechanisms for children and child death review mechanisms. The Government is working closely with Aboriginal communities to address child abuse and family violence.