

Hume Region Family Violence Prevention Newsletter Spring 2001



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The Week Without Violence – October 22–28

Yep, its happening...sort of. After being initially told that funding would not be available for the Week Without Violence, the Department has provided a small amount of money to each region. The short notice however has meant that there are limited activities going on. Some activities will actually occur later in the year.

Here's the Regional Calendar

Monday 22

Albury Wodonga 9.30 Vigil at Court House
Wangaratta/Benalla Banner painting for women and workers, preparation for the Field of Broken Dreams.

Tuesday 23

Albury Wodonga 10am-12noon Self Defence for Women at The Women's Centre
Wodonga Regional Launch of REAL Life at Mitchell Secondary College

Wednesday 24

Albury Wodonga Neighbourhood house presentations on Child Sexual Assault
Lunch – STRAWS award
Wangaratta Field of Broken Dreams – King George Park

Thursday 25

Regional Event at Benalla
Benalla Forum: Towards an Integrated Domestic Violence Response
Albury Wodonga Field of Broken Dreams
Clothesline Project – Wodonga Plaza
Child Abuse panel for Agency Workers
Noisemaker W'Shop & Self Defence W'Shop – Women's Centre

Friday 26

Albury Wodonga Lantern making & Chalk drawing at QEII Square
Albury Wodonga Reclaim the Night March
Seymour Reclaim the Night March & BBQ

Hume Region Family Violence Prevention
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The Big Agenda

One in eight women are affected by domestic violence (Women's Safety Australia, ABS, 1996). This means that 9434 women are affected by domestic violence in the Hume Region. Whilst I often quote the first figure in the course of my role as networker I've never done the number crunching that tells me just how many women we're talking about in our area.

Overwhelming isn't it. So few of these women are accessing our services and assistance. We know this through our statistics. Why is this so?

Many women aren't ready or able to access help for domestic violence. But what of those who are?

A recent conversation with a local woman highlighted to me just how far we have to go in making our services truly accessible and useful to women in crisis. More importantly, it highlighted the fragmentation between our services and the difficulties that this causes.

I came away from meeting this woman impressed and empowered by her courage and bravery – not so much for having survived domestic violence – but for navigating and surviving the service system that we have created supposedly to assist her. Her story is not unique.

Having made the difficult and life threatening decision to leave her violent and abusive partner her troubles really began. Police misinformed her about her right to obtain an intervention order. Once she clarified this and moved to obtain an intervention order another police officer actively worked against

her, after all her ex-partner was a "good bloke". She felt she couldn't make a complaint as it was a small station – she may need the...and who would she complain to?

She received misleading and misinformed legal advice. She was refused continued access to legal aid because she disagreed with her solicitor's recommendation to allow the ex-partner access to her children ...even though there were substantiated child protection concerns. At court the magistrate permitted the perpetrator to question her. She felt she was the one who had done something wrong.

She found it almost impossible to access counselling and support in her own town – it had to come from a service in another town almost an hour away. She had to change counselors several times because of staffing changes. Welfare agencies demanded that she pay money back accessed for food and bills. Housing opportunities were non-existent.

Each time this woman was faced with a new hurdle or service she had to re-tell her story. Each time she had to take the risk that she would be believed. If she wasn't she had expend time and energy bringing services on side to assist her.

The amazing thing to me is that she is still in there fighting. She hasn't given up on the system even though the system is failing her. She is still passionate, energized and determined to receive the services and opportunities that are her right.

As workers we are very keen to see perpetrators take responsibility for their actions in domestic violence. Who is responsible for the systemic issues that place numerous barriers in front of women experiencing domestic violence? We can say that it is "the system's" fault. But who is the system?

We can all say that each of our services is doing a good job in our respective areas. I believe this is true. I also believe though that we are the system and that we have a responsibility to look at streamlining a woman's pathway through the services that we provide. She has the right to be believed. She has the right to support and assistance. She has the right to good and timely legal advice and support. She has the right to feel that the police are there to protect her from ongoing violence and intimidation. We all have the responsibility to look at ways of integrating our services so that these changes occur.

**Hume Region
Family Violence
Network**

Week Without Violence 2001

Towards An Integrated Domestic Violence Response

Speakers include

Betty Taylor—Gold Coast Domestic Violence Service

Sandra Russell – Family Violence Unit, Victorian Police

Penny Drysdale & Katherine Koesasi – Office of Women’s Policy

Thursday, 25th October 2001

Benalla Art Gallery

10.00am-3.00pm

Cost - \$20.00



WOMEN'S HEALTH
GOULBURN NORTH EAST

Have you heard of the **Hamilton** or **Duluth Models of Integrated Domestic Violence Response?** Successful adaptations of these models are now being used in Australia. This is a vital event for those involved in aspects of domestic violence service delivery.

RSVP 18th October 2001
Jo Loiterton: 03 57223009

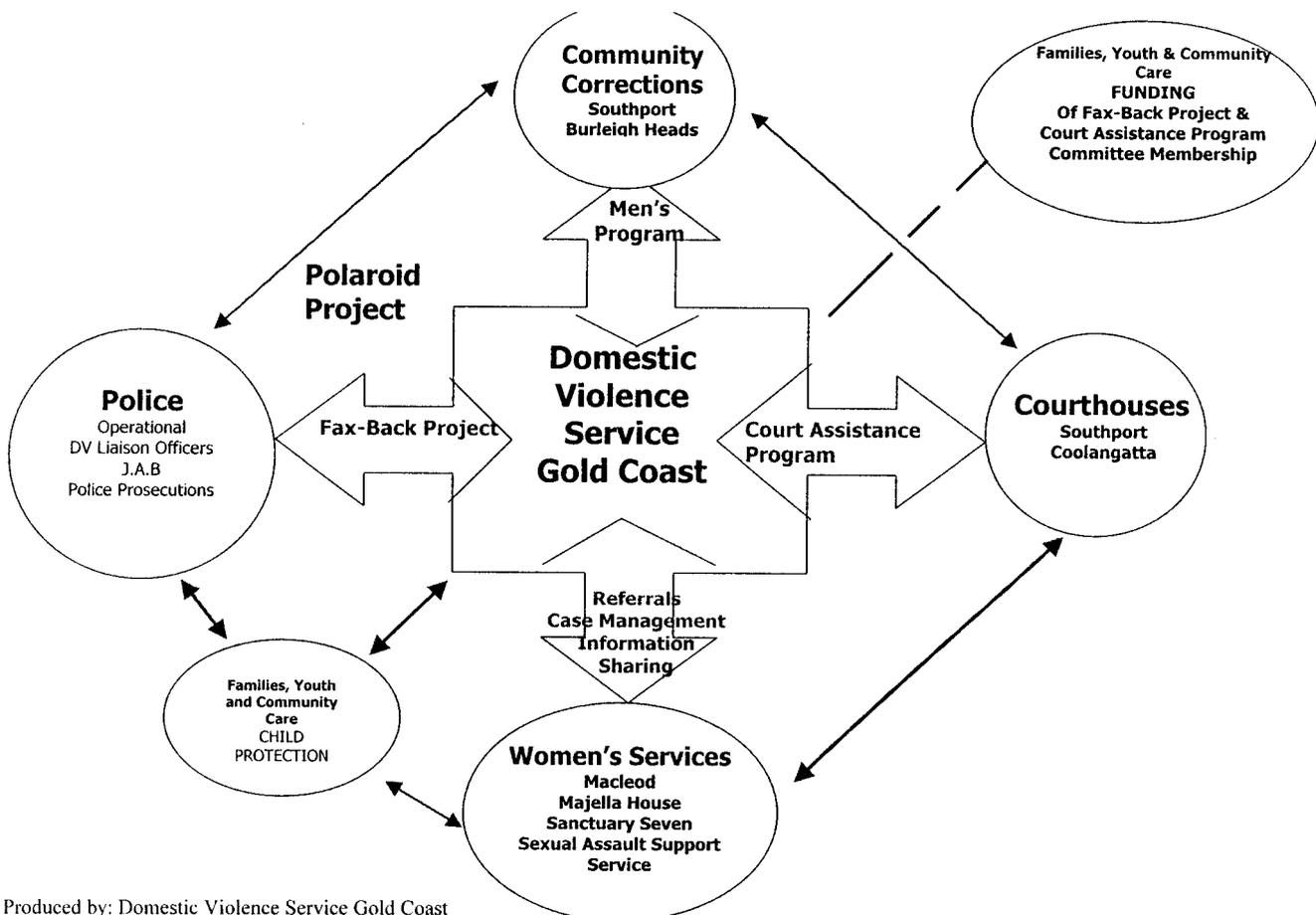
What is An Integrated Response to Domestic Violence?

The Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response.

This project was modeled on successful, overseas community-based interventions. Over the past twenty years, a large variety of domestic violence interventions have been developed both overseas as well as within Australia. More recently, intervention projects coordinating the responses of the police, legal systems and social services have been developed. Successful Examples are the Quincy Court Model and the Duluth Domestic Abuse Project, both in the USA and the Hamilton Abuse Intervention Project, New Zealand. Such interventions have been developed out of a recognition that inconsistent social responses have failed to adequately

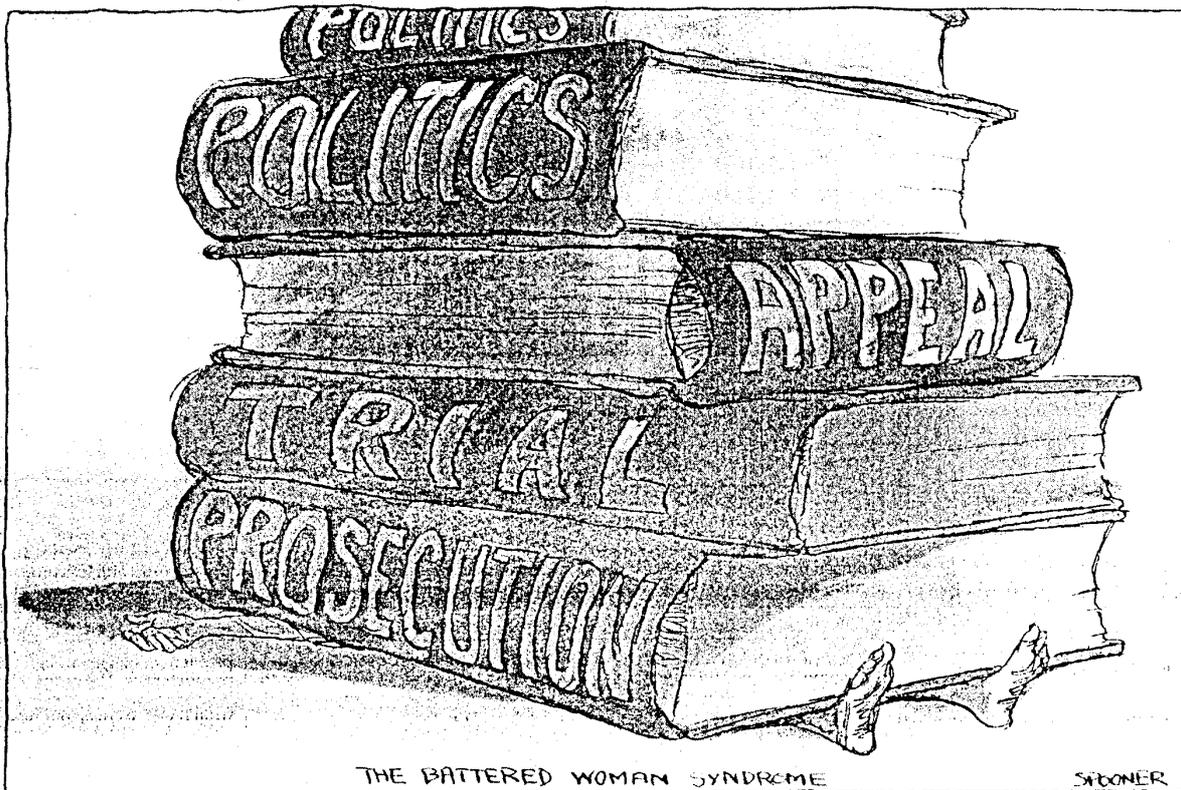
support and protect victims of domestic violence. Overseas studies have shown that police action, in coordination with the responses of other systems, has become a significant deterrent in reducing domestic abuse. (Elderson;1988)

It has been the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Responses experience that a multi-agency model of intervention with organizations working collaboratively and cooperatively together has the potential to not only enhance the responses to victims and their families but maximize the effective use of resources within and across agencies.



Produced by: Domestic Violence Service Gold Coast

Battered justice



THE BATTERED WOMAN SYNDROME

Granting a pardon to Heather Osland would have shown the moral leadership for which women yearn.

By MARY CROOKS
and DUR-E DARA

TO THE Premier and the Attorney-General: When people elect governments, they expect leadership. Your decision last week to deny the petition of mercy for Heather Osland, the battered woman serving a 14-and-a-half-year sentence for the murder of her abusive husband, reveals an inability to provide moral leadership on an issue affecting every woman — her right to adequate protection from the law when her safety, her family and her life are at risk.

You took advice from three lawyers. But you heard from others — masses of women and men across Victoria who wrote to you and your government begging you to show mercy to Heather.

These fellow citizens felt Heather's pain, even though they have not endured what she endured. They sensed the inadequacy of the law on domestic

violence. They understood the need to show compassion to people who have faced years of unrelenting, unthinkable and almost unspeakable brutality.

A pardon was always to be a political decision. Yet you chose to elevate legal opinion above the needs and yearnings of Heather's huge army of fellow citizens. To privilege such advice may well have the ring of legal "correctness", but it offers no moral leadership.

Heather was initially let down by the state. Police officers let her down. The judicial system, operating within a particular mindset of self-defence, let her down. Now our current law-makers — you, Mr Premier and Mr Attorney-General — have let her down.

To the female ministers in the Bracks cabinet:

Why was this decision not judged significant enough to warrant cabinet consideration? By not taking the matter of a pardon to cabinet, the government has effectively blocked a crucial opportunity for you and others to advocate on behalf of women.

The whole point about increasing female representation in our parliaments is that it leads to more reliable translations of the everyday realities of women's lives into policy.

We do not presume that you all think the same on issues affecting women. But we are confident you have been more exposed than your

male counterparts to the issue of domestic violence through your networks of female acquaintance, friends, family members and constituents. These perspectives should have been brought to bear on the final decision.

Your government is proud of the unprecedented numbers of women in its cabinet. However, it has denied cabinet scrutiny of this issue. It blocked your final opportunity to give your advice to the Attorney-General and the Premier on the problem of domestic violence in our community, including a pardon for Heather.

To the women of Victoria:

The petition of mercy is not only about Heather. A pardon would certainly have been a sensitive and humane response to her experience of the unthinkable. But, more widely, it would have signalled the Bracks Government's commitment to act with boldness and courage on the awful problem of domestic violence that mostly afflicts women in our community.

In 1996 an Australian Bureau of Statistics survey found that 330,000 women across Australia had experienced physical violence inflicted by their current partner, and a further 1,070,000 women had experienced physical violence inflicted by a previous partner. Thirty-eight per cent of these women said their children had witnessed the violence.

Since taking office, the Bracks

Government has held two summits for Victorian women and is developing a Women's Safety Strategy. Yet here was an opportunity for government to really make a difference for women — one of those great moments in time.

A pardon of Heather would have shown its seriousness on the broader question of domestic violence. But the government resiled. Without clemency extended to Heather, how seriously are we to take these existing initiatives?

For the record, the Victorian Opposition offers no joy either. Its position is that it would not have granted the pardon.

To Heather and your son, David:

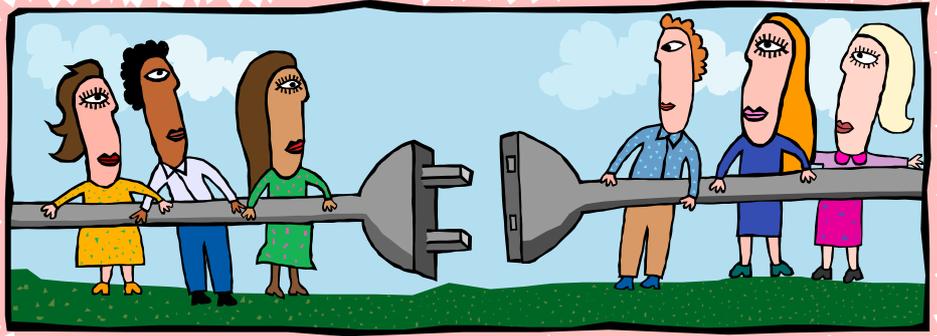
You both need to know that many of your fellow citizens, women and men, are angered and bewildered by this decision. If you feel let down and even betrayed, understand that we feel so too.

Try to keep as well as you can. We will continue to provide you both with support.

In the meantime, we will explore the political avenues available to address this particular great community problem of domestic violence against women — indoors, private and barbaric.

Mary Crooks is executive director and Dur-e Dara is convenor of the Victorian Women's Trust.
E-mail: Mary@vwt.org.au

Family Violence Schools Project



REAL Life – RELATIONSHIP EDUCATION & AWARENESS FOR LIFE

Yes, the project has a new name – one that is hopefully relevant and meaningful to young people.

Worker training has begun...

A huge thank you to the thirty workers from a range of agencies, who came together on the 10th of October in Wodonga to be trained as schools presenters for the REAL Life program. Training covered the operation of the program in schools, background information on domestic and relationship violence, and working with young people. Trainers were given the opportunity to be 14 years old again, going through the activities that they will take young people through on the workshop day. Whilst it was a long day it provided workers with a great opportunity for networking, increasing their knowledge of other services, and to contribute to the development of the program activities.

A second worker training of another 30 workers will occur on Wednesday October 17 at Wangaratta.

Schools launch...

Galen Catholic College has provided a Year 9 focus group of students to contribute to the development of the program. These young people will have a role in ensuring that the content of the program is relevant and meaningful to them. The REAL Life

program will be piloted and launched at Mitchell High School on Tuesday October 23 with Year 9. Rutherglen High School will follow soon after on November 20. We hope to have piloted in one more school in the Central Hume area by the end of this year. The project will then be reviewed and be ready for full implementation in high schools in the New Year. Schools have shown a strong interest in being part of this program. They recognize that young people need every opportunity to learn how to deal with relationship issues and that providing contact with health and welfare services is an invaluable opportunity for young people to learn how to get help.

Funding boost...

Women's Health Goulburn North East have been successful in attracting partial funding from the Helen Macpherson Smith Trust to go towards the operation of this project. This funding will be useful in supporting the operation of the program in the schools in the coming year.



TRAINING & EVENTS

Grief & Loss Issues

Women who have experienced domestic violence and sexual abuse have suffered great losses as a consequence of the abuse. If ignored, the resulting grief can hinder recovery. This workshop will explore those issues and how to support women within our own roles.

Date: Tuesday 30 October, 9.15 -4.30

Venue: Dept of Natural Resources, Benalla

Facilitator: Chris Hall, Centre for Grief Education

Cost: \$35

Registration: to Jo Loiterton by 18 October, 57223009

2nd Annual Legal Forum

Presented by Pearsons Solicitors & DVIRC

Speakers include:

The Honourable Justice Sally Brown, Family Court

Her Honour Judge Jennifer Coate, Children's Court

Miranda Stewart, Victorian Gay & Lesbian Rights Lobby

Leanne Abela & Other Partners from Pearsons Solicitors

Date: Wednesday 14 November, 9.15-1.00

Venue: Gardenhurst Reception Centre, Essendon

Cost: \$10.00

Registration: DVIRC 03 9486 9866

Have you received your survey?

The Hume Region Family Violence Network survey has been distributed to all agencies who should be participating in collecting data about domestic violence service. If you have not received a survey and feel you should have please call Jo on 57223009 ASAP. The data collection period is this month.



It's a zoo out there...

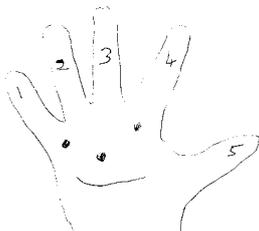
At least it was for 19 children and 9 mums who were given a day out at Melbourne Zoo on July 11. Cooroonya House workers organized a jam packed day for these families, providing everything they needed for an enjoyable day out. The Benalla Rotary, Local Blokes and Apex Clubs along with Benalla Bi-Lo provided the funding to make this day possible.

DEAR KAYE

THANK YOU

THE ZOO WAS FUN

ER OM
HANNAH 4



Regional Services

Domestic Violence Outreach Workers

- Benalla 03 5762 7330
- Seymour/Broadford 03 5784 1306
- Shepparton 03 5831 2012
- Wangaratta 03 5721 8277
- Wodonga 02 6056 1550

Centres Against Sexual Assault

- Shepparton 03 5831 2343
- Wangaratta 03 5722 2203

Victim's Assistance Program

- Wangaratta 03 5722 2355

Refuges

Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service 039373 0123 or
1800 015 188 (Toll free)

Family Violence Prevention Network Meetings

Upper Hume – Albury Wodonga

Next meeting 20th November 2001,
1pm at Albury Community Health.

Central Hume – Wangaratta

Not currently meeting

Lower Hume – Seymour/Broadford

1st Thursday of the month @ Goulburn
Valley Family Care - Seymour

Goulburn Valley – Shepparton

Wednesday 21st November 2001-10-12
At Marian Community

Regional Meeting – Benalla, DHS Office

Wednesday 28th November 2001



If undelivered return to:
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Wangaratta 3676

Print Post Approved
Publication No: PP 346626100047

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