

***‘Turning the key in the door’***

***Developing an Integrated Service Response  
to Family Violence  
with the Criminal Justice System***

# **Wangaratta Family Violence Integration Project**

**December 2002 to December 2003**



Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) was established in July 2000. Previously known as NEWomen, Women's Health Goulburn North East is the government-funded, specialist women's health service for the Goulburn Valley and north-east Victoria.

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This report has been compiled by Debbie Bailey, Project Worker for the Wangaratta Family Violence Integration Project over the period of December 2002-December 2003.

WHGNE thanks and acknowledges the commitment, tolerance, energy and drive of all those involved in the pilot project. They are

- Claire Lewis, Manager, Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services
- Superintendent Ken Lay, Sergeant Graeme Threlfell, Sergeant Michelle Dawson, Senior Sergeant Shane Downie, Senior Sergeant David Ryan, Sergeant Laurens Soyer and Senior Constable Sandi Brereton of Wangaratta Police
- Nicole Saunders, Deputy Registrar, Wangaratta Court
- Lynne Allan, Domestic Violence Outreach Worker, Central Hume Domestic Violence Service
- Jenny Pretty, Manager, Hume Region Victim's Assistance Program, Ovens and King Community Health Service
- Natalie Greenham and Debra McLay, Solicitors, Albury Wodonga Community Legal Service.

We also acknowledge these listed services and their commitment to community change through their staff members' involvement in this project.

And lastly, Debbie Bailey expresses her appreciation for great support from the team at Women's Health Goulburn North East: Jean, Christine, Julie, Kylie, Karen, Emma, Deb and Kerry.

Editor: Judi Fisher

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## Partnership Services



Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services

Wangaratta Police

Wangaratta Court

Central Hume Support Services

Hume Region Victim's Assistance Program, –  
Ovens and King Community Health Service

Albury Wodonga Community Legal Service

Coordinated by

Women's Health Goulburn North East

*Recipient of 2003 Community Safety-Crime  
Prevention Award:  
Crime and Prevention in Rural and Regional*

# Wangaratta Family Violence Integration Project

## ***‘Turning the key in the door’***

**Developing an integrated service response to family violence  
with the criminal justice system**

### **Brief Project Description**

The Wangaratta Family Violence Integration Project was a twelve-month pilot project conducted in the Rural City of Wangaratta in north-east Victoria. The project ran from December 2002 until December 2003.

Funding was secured for the project by Women’s Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) through the Department of Human Services - Rural Health Innovative Practice Fund.

A project worker, Debbie Bailey, was employed by WHGNE in October 2002.

Partnership organisations to the project were:

- Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services
- Wangaratta Police
- Wangaratta Court
- Central Hume Domestic Violence Service
- Hume Region Victim’s Assistance Program - Ovens and King Community Health Service
- Albury Wodonga Community Legal Service
- Women’s Health Goulburn North East.

The introduction of the project was timely, due to a number of state-wide initiatives focusing on the service response to family violence as well as various policy documents. For this project, the key documents were:

- Women’s Safety Strategy, Department of Human Services
- Family and Domestic Violence Crisis Protection Framework, Department of Human Services
- *A Way Forward*: Victoria Police Violence Against Women Strategy
- Magistrates Court of Victoria Family Violence Protocols.

The project was completed in December 2003 with the draft of this report.

## Recipient of 2003 Community Safety Award

The Wangaratta Family Violence Integration Project was announced the winner of the 2003 Community Safety - Crime Prevention Award in the category of *Crime and Violence Prevention in Rural and Regional Victoria*. The project was one of eleven Victorian award winners who were presented with a trophy and \$500.

The award was received in a presentation at Parliament House on Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2003. Three members of the project working group attended: Debbie Bailey, Integration Project, Women's Health Goulburn North East; Claire Lewis, Manager, Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services; and Sergeant Graeme Threlfall, Wangaratta Police.

This presentation occurred in the closing week of Debbie's employment with the project and was a fitting acknowledgment of her coordination and the partners' collaboration.



Claire Lewis (Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services), Sergeant Graeme Threlfall (Wangaratta Police) and Debbie Bailey (Women's Health Goulburn North East) – recipient representatives of the Wangaratta Family Violence Integration Project at the 2003 Community Safety and Crime Prevention Award presentation.

## Background to the Project Initiative

Throughout 2001 and 2002 the Hume family violence service sector acknowledged that the level of effective service provision to women affected by family violence was being directly affected by the fragmented nature of the service system. The quality and extent of service provision that these women received was more often due to good fortune than good planning or a robust service system.

In addition, it was recognised that if a woman received a poor service response, the individual was a) more likely to become disillusioned and b) less likely to continue to report family violence. This placed each woman at further risk.

### Issue of Ad Hoc Service Intervention in Family Violence

Family violence is a complex and difficult issue and no one agency has the authority or expertise to manage all components of the issue. To have an effective system we need:

- Police – to manage safety and any necessary legislative requirements
- Lawyers – to represent those affected by family violence
- Courts – to hear applications for intervention orders and charges of assault
- Refuges – to isolate victims from danger
- Support services – to assist, advocate and counsel those affected by family violence.

“A pilot and an engineer are walking towards the newest addition to the aeroplane fleet. The pilot is discussing how he intends to fly the new plane. The engineer disagrees with him and tells him he must fly it in a different way. Passengers walking behind the two airline employees overhear this conversation and wonder should they be taking this flight!”

*“I often think that this is how our clients feel when they come to our services.”*

Noel MacNamara, Men and Violence Workshop, Wangaratta 2003

These concerns were also aptly expressed by a member of the Victoria police when he later reminded the project team that:

*Domestics don't happen 9 to 5, Monday to Friday. We can never get hold of someone from a DV service when we need them and that is then and there.*

A woman affected by family violence also expressed strong concerns about existing limitations:<sup>1</sup>

*I just wanted someone to stay with me and look after me. I wanted someone to walk me to my car and check my house. I wanted someone to be there during the long night in case he came back. I wanted someone to do*

---

<sup>1</sup> Comment used with her permission – Central Hume Support Services.

*something to make me feel safe. I know the police don't have the time to do this but I wish that there had of been someone that night that did.*

Frustration and misunderstanding was evident throughout the sector. Family violence workers were angry at police for what was perceived as a lack of empathy and understanding and the mistreatment of women affected by family violence. Everyone had something to say about how women who were affected by violence were further abused when they entered the court system. Police were frustrated at the lack of accessibility to domestic violence services and the demands that were placed upon them by each individual case.

Most services appeared frustrated by the demands placed on them, when time and time again some women who had been abused returned to an abusive environment and the cycle would start all over again.

In practice, each service in our region played out its own role. There was little, if any, interface between the services. This led to a frustrating and fragmented service delivery model; not only were women confused but service providers had little understanding of the roles of other services.

This reality is visualised diagrammatically below (refer Diagram 1). Seeing this lack of connectivity visually reinforced our recognition for interagency collaboration and joint action.

#### **Diagram 1: Pre-Integration Project**

Prior to the integration project, there was a fragmented service system with little interaction between key organisations. For women affected, this system is represented by separate functions and roles.



#### **Emerging Trends**

Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE) also looked at recent research and trials in collaboration. WHGNE found that international and national trends during the opening years of this decade have seen a clear move towards interagency collaboration in responding to family violence.

Several successful programs based on this approach are in place. These are located in:--

- Duluth (USA) - <http://www.duluth-model.org/ntpcat.htm>
- Gold Coast (Australia) - Domestic Violence Integrated Response 2001: *A multi agency response to domestic violence*
- Hamilton (New Zealand) – Abuse Intervention Project.



The local impetus for the Hume Region Family Violence Integration Trial Project came from a family violence forum held in Benalla in October 2001.

At the Benalla forum, the service sector acknowledged that “*service to victims of family violence was adversely affected by the fragmented and ad hoc nature of service provision*”. Specifically, the forum highlighted the need for a consistent and dedicated approach to achieve integration between family violence services and, in particular, the criminal justice service sector.

## **Project Development**

In the initial stages of the project, the aim and objectives and methodology were drafted with a number of key stakeholders that would participate in the pilot working group. A funding application was written by WHGNE and submitted to the Department of Human Services. Once these steps were achieved and funding was secured, a project worker was sought.

### **Aim & Objectives**

The project aim was:

“To conduct an open and honest examination of the service system to look at ways that we [key organizations of the Wangaratta region] could work together to create a seamless service in the criminal justice system for women and children affected by family violence.”

The project’s objectives were:

1. To enhance working relationships between service providers
2. To improve pathways between women experiencing family violence and services
3. To provide greater access to information for the purpose of providing services and support
4. To improve pathways for women seeking assistance at the Wangaratta Court in regard to family violence matters.

### **Funding**

Funding was secured for the project through a successful application to the Department of Human Services - Rural Health Innovative Practice Fund. An initial total of \$65,000 was sought for the financial year 2002-2003; in reality, when the grants were distributed, WHGNE received \$60,000 from DHS.

Additional funding was sought prior to completion of the twelve-month pilot project. As this was not available, the trial learning was embedded into processes which endeavoured to ensure the long-term sustainability of the project.

At the time of finalising this report (June 2004), a further \$20,000 has been received from the Reichstein Foundation to extend the collaboration of the Integration Project.

## **Methodology**

The project was developed through a participatory, collaborative partnership approach. The project was informed by other integrated models, including Duluth [<http://www.duluth-model.org/ntpcat.htm>] and Gold Coast [Domestic Violence Integrated Response 2001 *A multi agency response to domestic violence*].

It was important that the family violence integration project, although developed and adapted from different models, fitted the individual needs of the Wangaratta region. During the life of the project, the knowledge, commitment and strength of the pilot working group allowed problems to be solved thoroughly and effectively. This is evidenced by the later evaluation of the project which rated as successful all implementation tasks.

It has been this ability of the project team to solve problems and to increase trust that provides the platform for long-term sustainability of the outcomes in the Wangaratta region.

## **Employment**

A project worker was appointed by Women's Health Goulburn North East to oversee and implement the direction and tasks set by the pilot working group. The person employed was Debbie Bailey. Debbie has worked both as a member of the Victoria Police and as a domestic violence worker.

## **Structure of the Team**

The team members of the working group were structured to represent the various services involved in the Wangaratta region. The partnership representatives who contributed to this project were:

- Claire Lewis, Manager, Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services
- Superintendent Ken Lay, Sergeant Graeme Threlfell, Sergeant Michele Dawson, Senior Sergeant Shane Downie, Senior Sergeant David Ryan, Sergeant Laurens Soyer and Senior Constable Sandi Brereton of Wangaratta Police
- Nicole Saunders, Deputy Registrar, Wangaratta Court
- Lynne Allan, Domestic Violence Outreach Worker, Central Hume Domestic Violence Service
- Jenny Pretty, Manager, Hume Region Victim's Assistance Program, Ovens and King Community Health Service
- Natalie Greenham and Debra McLay, Solicitors, Albury Wodonga Community Legal Service.

Each member brought useful skills and a wide knowledge of either the Wangaratta region or the field of family violence. They also displayed a sense of commitment

for the wellbeing of women and children in the community and a desire to improve the delivery of present services.

## **Project Implementation**

With the establishment processes in place, the project worker coordinated activities to achieve the key objectives.

### **Formative Stage of Working Group**

The funding application for the project documented a number of key stakeholders to be involved in the pilot working group. Once employed, the project worker made contact with all parties and visited their places of work.

Discussions took place about each participant's understanding of an integrated model, why it was needed and what they expected to achieve. It was very clear that working with police in this project would also need engagement with the court, as police and court work was heavily intertwined. The court had not previously been identified as a stakeholder.

It was necessary to build a mutual relationship between the service providers before change mechanisms could be introduced. Therefore, through all the initial project team meetings, members of the working group identified who these service providers were, their history of concerns and respective roles within their organisations.

Some of the issues within the working group were:

- Lack of understanding of different organisational roles
- Mistrust of other service providers, due to the handling of previous incidents of family violence
- Frustration of police and courts at not having access to appropriate domestic violence services when required
- Concern over the lack of legal representation at court for women affected by family violence
- Lack of knowledge in regard to the role of the Victim's Assistance Program in responding to family violence.

The project worker continued to monitor these issues throughout the life of the project to minimize anything detrimental to the growing interagency collaboration.

In addition, the project worker also acted as coordinator of the working group. Most of the stakeholders involved in this project had little allocated time to be involved in this project. All members made a real commitment, sometimes at the expense of other responsibilities. To additionally burden these service providers with the mechanics of the process would have led to disengagement and frustration.

## **Plan of Action**

The project team confirmed the project aim (originally incorporated in the funding application), formed terms of reference and identified what it was that they wanted to see the project achieve.

A planning framework was developed and tasks and timelines were set. [See Appendix B]

To facilitate this plan of action, meetings were regularly held, initially every two weeks for the first six weeks and from then on every month. Minutes and agendas were documented by the project worker and distributed to the members of the working group within seven days of meeting dates.

## **Communication and Coordination**

The project worker acted as a 'driver', bringing all parties together and managing the process of change on behalf of those participating. An important aspect of this project was the independence of the project worker; this was acknowledged by all stakeholders. The project work, as well as the project management and support, was placed with WHGNE. WHGNE as an agency is not part of the direct family violence service system.

The project worker was supported by the team of workers at WHGNE, providing secretarial support at meetings, day-to-day support and supervision and development and evaluation of the project.

Effective communication was also facilitated between parties during meetings and as a result of minutes and other pertinent information being regularly distributed. Despite some disappointing attendance rates at the beginning of the pilot, the working group eventually settled into an overall attendance rate of 75%.

Together, the elements of communication and coordination ensured significant progress towards the development of the working relationship between the organisations involved in the project, as described below:

*The development of relationships amongst services has led to stronger and interrelated service between police, courts and family violence services.*

---Lynne Allan, Central Hume Domestic Violence Outreach Worker

## **Workload Limits and 'High Demand'**

Claire Lewis, the Manager of Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services, cited concern over the increase in workload the implementation of new systems presented to the domestic violence services. There was also concern regarding the number and complexity of referrals that would come from the police.

Lynne Allan, Domestic Violence Outreach Worker, identified those likely to be referred through this process as 'high demand' women. As no additional funding was to be made available to the domestic violence services to cope with any

additional demand, it was decided to contain the trial within the Rural City of Wangaratta.

### **Scope of Project Involvement**

The working group was also very aware of the effects of family violence on children. This concern was identified early in the process, together with an awareness that child protection could play a part in the project.

Meetings with DHS Child Protection Unit occurred in the early stages of the project to inform them about what was happening. The group had no further initiative from the Child Protection Unit to engage with the process. It is clearly identified as an important next step in expansion of this project.

### **Organisational Representation on the Working Group**

Another issue related to the involvement of key stakeholders was the decision-making authority of agency representatives.

This was of particular concern regarding police participation. The police hierarchical structure does not allow for autonomous decision-making in lower ranks. It was, therefore, essential that our process involved meetings with the police superintendent to gain support for our initiatives.

Superintendent Ken Lay was the regional commander of Region 4 at this time and he made a strong commitment to the group and to the issue of family violence in this region:

*Family violence in the home is a major policing issue in north-east Victoria. Nearly 30 % of all reported assaults in the North East occur within the home. This growing problem cannot be solved by any one agency alone. The Wangaratta Family Violence Integration Project is a great example of support agencies, Victoria police and the courts working together to address this significant community safety problem.*

---Superintendent Ken Lay, Region 4  
*Wangaratta Chronicle*, May 2003

The current police practice has the Family Violence Liaison Officer (FVLO) role issued to a police member as a portfolio. At one stage, the Hume region FVLO had a large number of portfolios which limited the time he could dedicate to the project. In addition, police wanting to attend meetings were often rostered on conflicting shifts and/or other duties. Despite some excellent direction from police command (eg. *A Way Forward: Victoria Police Violence Against Women Strategy*), it appears that it will take some time before these directions can be achieved at 'ground level' by making practical changes to rosters and workloads.

Over time, the project engaged with other police officers at Wangaratta; this resulted in a high level of representation and commitment from the Regional Training Officer, Senior Sergeant David Ryan; Senior Constable Sandi Brereton; Senior Sergeant Shane Downie; Sergeant Michele Dawson; Sergeant Laurens Soyler; and Sergeant Graeme Threlfell.

It is also worth noting that the Integration Project Worker's (Debbie) past experience as a servicing police officer gave her great credibility with the local police. She also knew protocol in engaging a range of police members throughout the organisation. It became clear that Debbie and the group had raised the profile of family violence as an issue at Wangaratta Police Station. The group also profiled the police role in responding to family violence in the wider sector. Wangaratta police remain committed to working collaboratively and provided much energy and input into the pilot project.

## Key Project Results

### Shared Training

The working group facilitated three significant training initiatives. Joint training between police and family violence service providers was conducted at the Wangaratta Police Station in November 2003 by the Victoria Police Family Violence Training Officer, Sharon Hunter. Sharon was first invited to attend a working group meeting and it was later arranged for her return as a trainer.

Thirty-two people attended. Very positive feedback through a formal evaluation process suggested that the Victoria Police Family Violence Training Officer consider conducting similar training sessions biannually.

As one participant in joint training stated;

*I now understand how hard it is for police to respond to this very difficult and complex issue. A day like this is great to make connections with these other organisations. It can only improve on the way we work together.*

---Joint training participant

During the project, it also became apparent that many gaps existed in family violence workers' knowledge of the evidentiary procedures relating to the courts. For example, local magistrates Peter Couzens and Peter Reardon identified the need for service providers to be clear about the evidence that is required to gain an intervention order.

The Albury Wodonga Community Legal Service conducted training on Intervention Order processes for service providers, following a request from the project group. Training was conducted in Wangaratta and Wodonga during November 2003 and will be provided again on demand in the future.

The Wangaratta Family Violence Integration Group also identified a lack of appropriate men's behavior change programs in the region. They invited Noel MacNamara to present at a workshop on men's violence, attended by 30 service providers. Noel has extensive experience running similar workshops, both nationally and internationally.

The workshop content centered on why men are violent and on appropriate models to deal with violence. In discussion, the project group members were insistent that

any program developed in this region needs to be appropriate and to be informed by the No To Violence best-practice standard. This standard has women and children's safety as its paramount concern. These accredited programs deal with men's use of violence and offer constructive relationship patterns while engaging men's responsibilities and choices.

Following this work, there are moves afoot to identify a funding source in order to establish a men's program informed by the No To Violence standards for this region. There is a possibility of linking this program in with the Fax-back process.

To further this initiative, in November 2003 the project group invited the Coordinator of Men's and Youth Services at Child and Family Services (Ballarat), Michael Brandenburg, to discuss the benefits and limitations of a program for men, informed by No to Violence principles, for men in a semi-rural area.

### **Development of the Fax Back Referral System**

A key objective of the project was to improve pathways for women by trialing a Fax Back Referral System.

The flow chart (See Illustration 2) details the fax back procedure developed by the project for women affected by family violence after they have come to the attention of the police and/or the court. In the Hume Region, a woman coming into contact with the police or the court is offered a faxed referral to Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services. If the woman consents, a referral is faxed through to Cooroonya.

The woman will be contacted by Cooroonya staff at a nominated time and she will be offered appropriate services for her needs. Following Cooroonya contact with the woman, an acknowledgement fax will be sent to the Family Violence Liaison Officer at the police station and the Deputy Registrar at the court. The staff member(s) that made the referral are notified and the acknowledgement form is filed.

(See Appendix C for acknowledgement form)

### **Development of a Brochure and Referral Form**

The brochure (see Illustration 1) was developed collaboratively by the work group. Each service from the project team is identified with contact details and a brief explanation of what the service offers.

Attached to the brochure is a referral form; this can be detached and faxed to Cooroonya. The information section of the brochure is retained by the woman.

### **Court Improvements**

The Wangaratta Court was interested and committed to the project from the outset. Deputy Registrar, Nicole Saunders, was invaluable with her knowledge of court process and guided the improvement to family violence matters at Wangaratta Court with professionalism and insight.

The Wangaratta Court, with the support of the project agencies, has implemented the following changes to facilitate both a more appropriate response to women affected by family violence and a safer place for them at court:

- Wednesday set aside as a Crimes Family Violence hearing day
- Availability of the Albury Wodonga Community Legal Service on each Wednesday to represent women who required intervention orders.
- The Victim's Assistance Program present at court on Wednesdays to provide emotional support to women that have been affected by family violence.
- Summonses issued for 9.30 a.m. on the date of hearing to give legal advisors time to seek instructions from women and enable court to proceed at 10 a.m.
- Meeting with the local magistrates Peter Couzens and Peter Reardon in April 2003 to raise the profile of our group and gain identified support for the fax back referral process.
- Implementation of the fax back referral process.
- Allocation of an interview room at the court for women to stay in rather than wait in the lobby of the court.
- Proposal for a domestic violence paralegal worker to help facilitate women through the entire court process.

The project group was invited to attend future court user group meetings.

*In all my years of working in the field of family violence in this region, this is the first time we have had the court involved and this had been incredibly beneficial for our clients.*

---Claire Lewis, Manager,  
Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services

## Diagram 2: Post-integration Project

Following the project, there was a greater integration of services, with higher levels of interaction between the key organisations. Ideally, this delivery is represented by overlapping organisational roles and functions, with no gap in the provision of service from the women's perspective, as diagrammed below. Collaboration in this project is further evident in a Memorandum of Understanding which has been jointly signed by the key organizations. [Pre-project comparison on page 8]

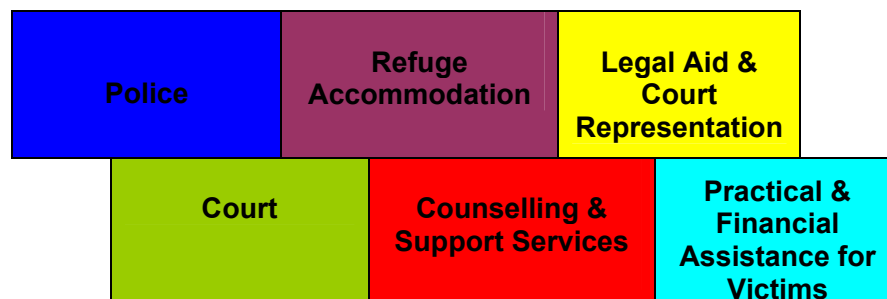






Illustration 1

**Memorandum of Understanding Adopted by All Parties**

The development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was seen as an appropriate tool to ensure the longevity of the processes developed and implemented during the pilot project period.

With many pilot projects, there is a significant risk that, without a project officer and additional funding, the achievements of the trial can dissipate over time. The development of the MOU was seen as the most appropriate method to minimise this risk.

A copy of the MOU is attached in Appendix C.

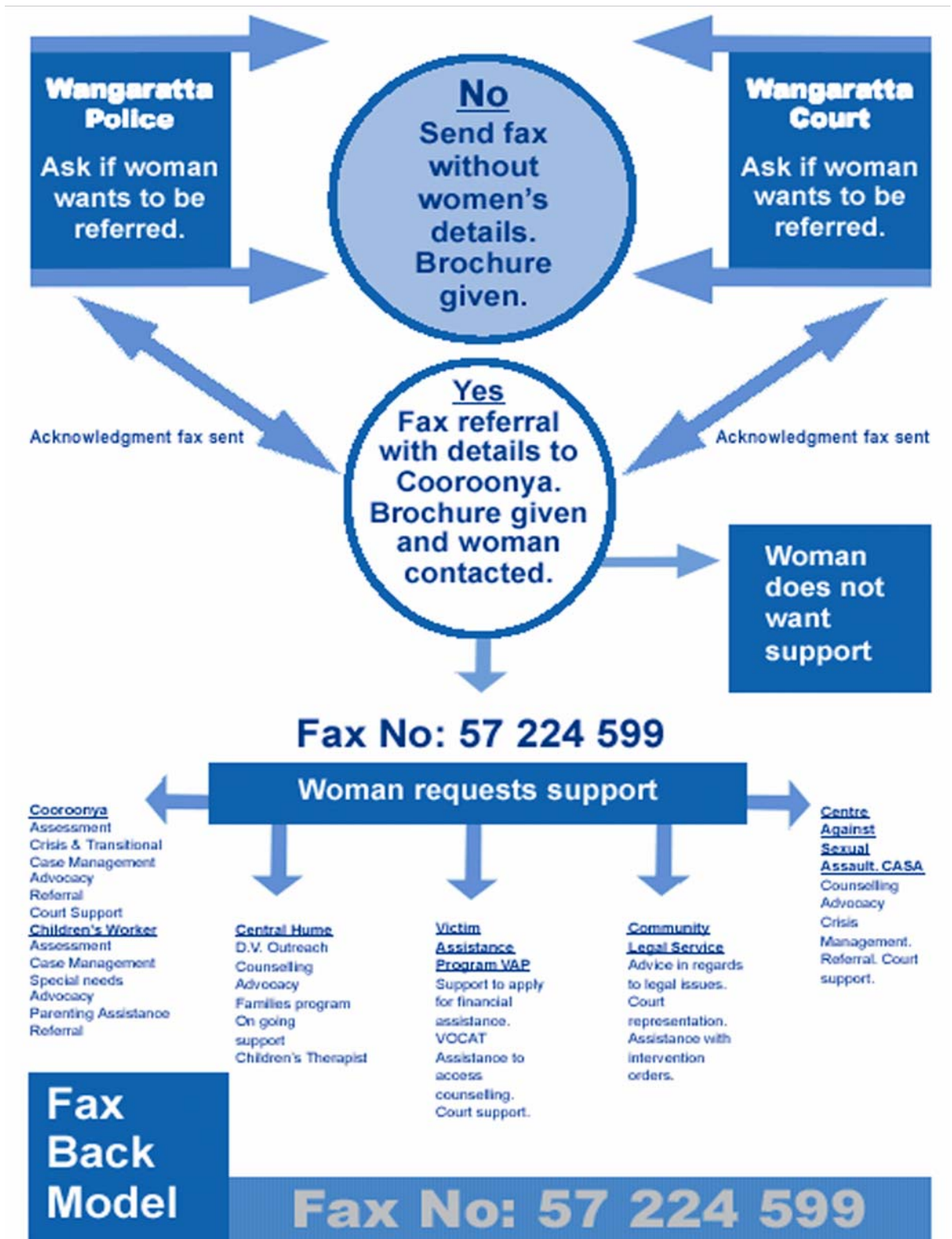


Illustration 2

## **Publicity and Presentations**

### **Launch of the Project**

The project was successfully launched in August 2003 with more than 70 people present. The launch consisted of a presentation from each of the organisations on the project team.

The key note speaker, the Coordinating Magistrate, Hume Region, Dr Kate Auty, commented:

*I complement the project team on the massive dialogue that has so very obviously occurred in this process and acknowledge the upsurge of goodwill that has come about as a result.... This project illustrates local people finding local solutions.... I thank court staff for doing what is possible to change the culture of the court and ensure you that we will continue to be involved in this worthwhile process.*

A copy of the video of the launch is available for viewing and can be borrowed from WHGNE: 57223009 or [whealth@whealth.com.au](mailto:whealth@whealth.com.au).

### **Presentation at Initiatives for Justice Conference, Ballarat**

The project was presented to this conference in August 2003, informing more than 100 participants in attendance. The project was well received, with significant interest from Anne Goldsborough, State Supervising Magistrate for Family Violence and Family Law. Anne requested additional information to distribute to the state-wide steering committee on family violence.

### **Presentation at a Number of Community Safety Meetings in Wangaratta**

The project worker had a number of requests from local community safety committees based in Wangaratta. The project has been presented to various representatives from local government.

### **Publicity through Local Newspapers and Radio**

The project and issues relating to family violence have received appropriate publicity: from the local press, including the Wangaratta *Chronicle* and *The Border Mail*. The project has also been featured on regional radio, eg ABC.

### **Recipient of the 2003 Community Safety – Crime Prevention Award**

This award of recognition in the category of Crime and Prevention in Rural and Regional Victoria was presented to Debbie Bailey, Claire Lewis and Graeme Threlfell at Parliament House, Melbourne, in December 2003. [See photo, page 6]

## Evaluation

Evaluation was conducted by WHGNE, facilitated by the project worker and guided by a Research and Evaluation team leader. In addition, the funding body, the Department of Human Services, recommended an external evaluation of this project to further workers' understanding of good rural health promotion practice. This was conducted in September 2003 by consultant to DHS Peter Axton and Associates.

### Four Levels of Evaluation

In brief, four levels of evaluation were undertaken:

- Process evaluation (i.e. the reach of the message being disseminated)
- Impact evaluation (what has changed, was there any impact?)
- Measurement of shift in the perception of service providers (particularly among the key organisations in the working group)
- Measurement of any changes for woman caught up in the family violence criminal justice system, based on their perceptions

The details of these four levels of the project evaluation are outlined below:

1. The first level was *process evaluation* which considered the reach of the message as it is heard within the sector.

Throughout the project, the process was carefully documented, with all project group meetings minuted and attendances noted at all public events and training sessions.

Over 150 people were involved in attending seminars, launches and training sessions for this project. [For details, see Appendix B].

2. The second level of evaluation was *the impact evaluation* which assessed what had changed; or in short, what the impact of the message was.

Key performance indicators were set against the objectives for the project.: see Appendix B for level of achievement against each KPI. Overall, most KPI's were reached. Most significantly, the working group achieved a 75% representation of stakeholders at meetings and implemented all tasks.

The building of relationships and trust also takes a significant amount of time and this must be recognized in any project planning. The collaborative process impacted on the timelines, but it was essential for service providers participating in the project to take on shared responsibility.

In achieving this project ownership, the external evaluation identified the need for the project worker to have credibility with all parties. The key elements required to achieve this were:

- Good understanding of all organisations involved in the project
- Excellent understanding of the complexities of family violence

- Good relationship and community development skills
- Independence from key stakeholders.

The project worker had an employment background with police, paralegal work and family violence. She attended at all key stakeholders' places of work in the initial period of the project to develop relationships and to discuss the direction of the project. This procedure was evaluated highly by stakeholder representatives as an important key to the process of building trust and rapport.

3. The third level of evaluation measured if there had been a *shift in the perception of service providers* on key issues identified by them through a consultation process (see page 11).

Both qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the project, conducted via pre- and post-survey work of the service providers, showed an improved understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the other organisations by the staff of all participating organisations.

A shift in police, court staff and family violence services' understanding, evident in our evaluations, showed a significant move towards a more integrated service; this was assisted through several shared activities.

One shared activity was the initial mapping of existing services and identification of service system gaps. Time was spent working out what services the Wangaratta service system consisted of and how these services could be best interconnected.

A feedback form was developed to evaluate the shift of perception for service providers beyond the key working group. The feedback form used Likert scales so that the information would be easy for people to convey, and easy to analyze and report on. Three time periods, three different weeks, were chosen for data collection: midway through the project, at the completion of the project and three months after the completion of the project. Feedback forms were distributed to women via the domestic violence services and to service providers via the project group representatives.

It is estimated that the total population of workers would be 100 and women would be 30. In each time period, 20 feedback forms were received from workers and 6 from women. This represents feedback of around 10% of the worker and women's group.

These return percentages are clearly small numbers and do not represent the whole population; however, the information received gives a snapshot of the extent that service providers perceptions have shifted during the course of the project. We have had a substantial shift in most of the service providers, other than police.

More work is required to access other police and draw them in to a range of training and local initiatives. It was evident that we had a great shift in those

police represented on the project team but this somewhat dissipated when police other than those represented on the group filled in feedback forms.

*The Wangaratta Family Violence Integration Project has meant working together with local agencies to reduce domestic violence by providing support and better outcomes to victims and in doing this creating a safer community.*

---Sergeant Michele Dawson,  
Wangaratta Police

It was also clear from evaluation and qualitative comments obtained by the project worker that there was a significant shift in court staff's response to women affected by family violence.

The recognition and acknowledgement by court staff of the security requirements for women seeking intervention orders illustrates their understanding of the manipulation and intimidation techniques of some men who use violence against women.

*By the court participating in this project we have been able to respond more appropriately to women who come to us for help and we are able to refer them to appropriate agencies to give them on-going support. We now have a more streamlined approach to Crimes - Family Violence matters; we have appropriate support services in place and we have a room that women can wait in if they are feeling unsafe.*

---Nicole Saunders,  
Deputy Registrar, Wangaratta Court

Although responses from women were limited both before and after the pilot period, (women responding to feedback forms was voluntary), much anecdotal evidence was collated by the project worker and recorded in a journal. Again we are not claiming to be representative of the whole community but a small shift was obvious in that court staff and police were exhibiting more appropriate responses when dealing with women who had been affected by family violence.

4. The fourth level of evaluation concerned *any evident changes to women that occurred during the life of the project*; ie. had there been any change for women that had been involved in the new process.

## Limitations of the Project

It is consistently recognized in the domestic violence field that only 20% of women experiencing family violence have contact with domestic violence services and the criminal justice system. This is one in five of women affected. [See pie graph below]

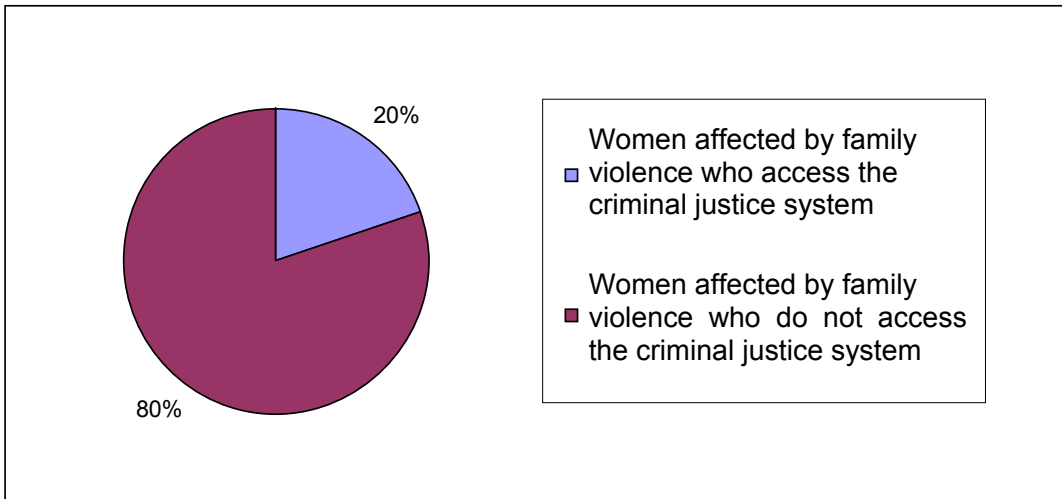


Diagram 3 [Reference: 1986 National Women's Safety Audit]

This project was, therefore, limited to women and children affected by domestic violence and using the Criminal Justice and Family Violence Service System.

## Critical Issues Identified During the Life of the Project

Some gaps and limitations of these have been developed into recommendations for family violence work and services in the area (Also see page 26):

- Appropriate and accountable men's services to educate and, where possible, change behaviors. (We have no one service that does all of this)
- No police Family Violence Liaison Officer designated solely to family violence
- Gap between legal advice and specialist domestic violence knowledge at the court
- Lack of specialist domestic violence knowledge by the majority of police officers
- No 24-hour, 7 days-a-week domestic violence service in our region (This means that, if an incident occurs out-of-office hours, victims have only one service to call on and this is the police)
- Initial engagement with DHS Child Protection Unit was limited
- Ability to trial this process in the whole of the region unattainable through a lack of resources
- Lack of time allocated to workers to participate in the working group

- Challenges of engaging with some women after a fax-back referral to Cooroonya
- Pressure placed on domestic violence services to cope with the growing demand and limited resources in rural and remote communities.
- Insufficient understanding of domestic violence in volunteers at the Victim's Assistance Program
- Concern raised by the service sector of the inappropriateness of 'Undertakings' in preference to intervention orders, as sometimes advised by legal practitioners and others to women affected by family violence.
- An evident lack of understanding about the exact role the Victims Assistance Service plays in regards to family violence.



## Recommendations from the Project

- Locally-based integration practice be extended to other regions, if not already in practice; that project funds be made available to each region to support this innovation; and that a project worker with a good knowledge of the service sector, family violence, demonstrated community development skills and perceived independence be employed to drive this process
- Funding is increased for family violence services to resource integration models and expanded to a larger geographical area
- DHS Child Protection Unit be engaged during the next stage of this project
- Police appoint a committed Family Violence Liaison Officer position for the Hume Region
- The Victoria Police Family Violence Training Officer conduct joint biannual family violence training sessions with regional family violence service providers and local police officers
- The regional Police Training Officer be involved in future projects, as this is the police member responsible for delivering family violence training to members in regional areas
- Funding be sought for a paralegal domestic violence worker
- This domestic violence paralegal worker be available to facilitate a pathway through the court for women affected by family violence
- When a paralegal domestic violence worker is employed, the worker be expected to attend future court user groups
- A funding source be identified to establish men's programs for the Hume region, informed by No To Violence standards, with a possibility of linking this program in with the fax-back process.

## **Post-2003 Action**

By the end of the pilot project, so much positive energy was coming from the group that it was important to capture this and carry it through into the future.

## **Memorandum of Understanding**

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the seven partners in December 2003 for a 12 month period.

## **Bi-Monthly Meetingss**

Proposed meeting dates have been set and distributed to key stakeholders, with WHGNE taking on the administration requirements and stakeholders alternating the chair position.

## **Reichstein Foundation Funding**

In addition to a signed Memorandum of Understanding, the working group through WHGNE lodged a joint funding application between WHGNE and Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services with the Reichstein Foundation. This funding will continue facilitation and expansion of the project in Wangaratta, as well as supporting other locations in the Hume region to enhance service co-ordination.

The Wangaratta Family Violence Integration Project has recently received notice of a further grant of \$20,000 from the Reichstein Foundation. These funds will be monitored by one of the project partners, Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services.

It is planned that this funding will allow the Family Violence Integration Partners to identify gaps in service provision and to evaluate changes in practice, relationship between services, levels of collaboration, shifts in attitudes and the potential for long term systemic change.

## **Specifically-Identified and Coordinated Training of Domestic Violence Workers**

This training was required, as Cooroonya workers were finding difficulty in engaging women referred through the fax back process. Training in the engagement of women on the telephone when following up referrals from the fax back process supports the best outcomes for women in this process.

Women's Information and Referral Service (WIRE) committed to train workers in telephone engagement and service provision. This training, currently in the planning stage, will be coordinated by WHGNE.

## Summary

*"We have put the key in the door but we are still to turn it and open it wide."*

---Claire Lewis, at the project launch, August 2003

The Wangaratta Family Violence Integration Project has demonstrated success at bringing together a number of agencies that work with women and children in the criminal justice system affected by family violence. The level of cohesive service delivery achieved is unprecedented in this region.

Our achieved successes include an improved understanding of roles and responsibilities, a mapping of existing services and identification of gaps, facilitation of joint training, development of a fax back referral system and a range of improvements at Wangaratta Court.

Acknowledgement of our fragmented and inadequate service system was not always an easy path to adhere to. We had a vision to improve our service system to benefit women and a great sense of goodwill to persevere through any hardship to achieve our goal.

This project should be seen as the beginning of a process, not a 'fix it' solution to fragmented service delivery. True cultural and sustainable organisational change will take longer than any twelve-month pilot project can achieve.

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix A	Glossary of Terms
Appendix B	Planning Framework
Appendix C	Memorandum of Understanding with Acknowledgement Form
Appendix D	Contact Details of Partner Services
Appendix E	Selected Documents

## **Appendix A**

### **Glossary of terms**

#### **Family Violence –**

Violent, threatening, coercive or controlling behaviour in current or past familial, domestic or intimate relationships. This encompasses not only the physical injury but direct or indirect threats, sexual assault, emotional and psychological torments, economic control, property damage, social isolation and behaviour which cause a person to live in fear.

Family violence is committed primarily, though not exclusively, by men against women. This definition encompasses violence against children and between siblings and is not limited to criminal behaviors as identified in the Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987.

(Source: Victorian Community Council Against Violence (2002))

#### **Men who use violence**

This term replaces the previous term 'perpetrator'.

#### **Women who have experienced violence**

Describing women who have been victims of family violence.

## Appendix B

### Planning Framework with Key Performance Indicators

#### Measuring Achievements against Key Performance Indicators (KPI's):

Table 1 indicates the extent to which each objective was met by a range of determined KPI's and the actions taken to fulfill these indicators.

**Table 1**

Objective	Key Performance Indicators set Jan 2003	Achievement as of December 2003
To enhance working relationships between service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing information about roles.</li> <li>• Family violence and police training</li> <li>• Attendance at the Integration Group meetings</li> <li>• Regular communication: eg. Minutes of meetings</li> <li>• Project worker to visit stakeholders at place of work</li> <li>• Qualitative evaluation at completion of project</li> <li>• Evidence of future planning with workgroup to maintain</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieved throughout duration of project</li> <li>• Sharon Hunter in March 2003</li> <li>• Conducted training day for 32 workers (Nov 2003)</li> <li>• 75 % attendance rate achieved</li> <li>• All minutes distributed within seven working days</li> <li>• Project worker visited workplaces monthly in initial phase and bi-monthly at later phase</li> <li>• Pre and post surveys distributed to clients and service providers. Assessed by December 2003</li> <li>• MOU developed and signed in Dec 2003 .</li> </ul>

	relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding submission to Reichstein Foundation (December 2003)</li> </ul>
<b>Objective</b>	<b>KPI's set Jan 2003</b>	<b>Achievement as of December 2003</b>
To improve pathways for clients and services through the implementation of fax-back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approval sought to implement fax back process with police and court</li> <li>• Develop fax back model for this region</li> <li>• Negotiate pilot fax back process with police and courts</li> <li>• Implement and manage fax back pilot</li> <li>• Develop brochure and referral form for project and printed for distribution</li> <li>• Evaluate fax back pilot October 2003</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Letters of support received by February 2003</li> <li>• May 2003</li> <li>• May 2003</li> <li>• May/on-going 2003</li> <li>• June 2003</li> <li>• Quantitative completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2004.</li> </ul>
To provide greater access to information for the purpose of providing information, services and support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compilation of brochure.</li> <li>• Training to staff for fax back process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brochures distributed by June 2003</li> <li>• Training conducted with police and court staff</li> </ul>
To improve the experience of women seeking assistance at the Wangaratta Court in regards to family violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish separate room</li> <li>• Lobby to have Wednesday for intervention order application hearings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Achieved June 2003</li> <li>• Achieved June 2003</li> </ul>

## Appendix C

# MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

## WANGARATTA FAMILY VIOLENCE INTEGRATION PROCESS



Memorandum of Understanding between:

Wangaratta Court

Wangaratta Police

Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services

Central Hume Support Services

Victim's Assistance Program, Ovens and King Community Health  
Service

Albury Wodonga Community Legal Service

Women's Health Goulburn North East

Regarding the integrated service response to family violence in the Wangaratta region.

Prepared by Debbie Bailey  
Integration Project Worker  
Women's Health Goulburn North East  
November 2003



## **Introduction**

This is the formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that becomes the document detailing the roles and responsibilities for each organization involved in the Wangaratta Family Violence Integration Project. This document has been developed to sustain interagency collaboration and to ensure longevity of the systems put into place during the pilot project period.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the MOU is to provide clear direction to participating organizations and their staff regarding the roles required in the integration of service provision. This document clarifies roles and responsibilities in the operational and referral process.

## **Life and reviewing of the MOU.**

This MOU will cease on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2004 or earlier by agreement. In addition the parties to the MOU may by agreement, review and if necessary modify or vary the terms of the MOU from time to time as necessary.

## **Commitment**

We are committed to work together to provide better outcomes for women and children who are affected by family violence.

## **GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL SIGNATORIES TO THIS MOU**

1. Each organization is responsible for the operation and ongoing maintenance of their own assets.
2. Each organization commits to identify funding opportunities to continue and expand on the project.
3. Each organization commits to salaries and on costs for participation of staff members in the working group.
4. Each organization commits to legislative responsibilities under current operational practices.
5. Each organization will endeavor to have a staff member represented at bi monthly working group meetings.
6. Each organization commits to share non confidential statistical information that is relevant to the project and will be of us to other agencies addressing the issue of family violence.
7. Each organization will commit to educate workers in regards to family violence and to attend appropriate training where possible.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SPECIFIED SIGNATORIES TO THIS MOU**

### **WOMEN'S HEALTH GOULBURN NORTH EAST**

1. Women's Health Goulburn North East will commit to co ordinate bi monthly meetings including times, dates, location, agenda and minutes for the Wangaratta Family Violence Integrated Process.
2. Women's Health Goulburn North East will commit to co ordinate correspondence including matters arising from minutes and funding applications for the Wangaratta Family Violence Integrated Process.

### **WANGARATTA COURT**

1. Wangaratta Court staff will show the brochure and explain the faxback process to all women who present to the court in relation to an Intervention Order.
2. Wangaratta Court staff will give the brochure to women to read whilst they lodge their application for an Intervention Order on the court link system.
3. Wangaratta Court staff, where the woman chooses to participate in the fax back process, will immediately after contact with her, fax the referral to Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services.
4. Wangaratta Court staff, where the woman chooses to not participate in the fax back process, will encourage her to take the brochure away with her explaining that services can be contacted by telephone when and if required.
5. Wangaratta Court staff will record contact details of women presenting at the court for intervention orders in the attached proforma (See Appendix 1) and report these details to the project group as required.

### **WANGARATTA POLICE**

1. Wangaratta Police members, attending at, or in having contact with a woman in a domestic dispute will show her the brochure and explain the fax back process and offer to refer her to Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services.
2. Wangaratta police members, where the woman and or children choose to participate in the fax back process, will fax the required information to Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services prior to the completion of their shift.
3. Wangaratta police members, where the woman chooses to not participate in the fax back process, will encourage her to take the brochure and will

explain that services can be contacted by telephone when and if required.

4. Wangaratta Police will record the details of the woman they have contact with due to a domestic dispute on the attached proforma (See Appendix I) and report numerical information to the project group as requested.
5. Wangaratta Police will contact Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services when necessary to clarify any questions relating to the referral.

### **Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services**

1. Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services will maintain a free and confidential service to women and children who experience domestic violence.
2. Cooroonya staff will accept faxed referrals and will make all attempts to offer assistance to clients within 48 hours of the referral.
3. Cooroonya staff will only respond to fax referrals during office hours (9 a.m. to 4.30 p.m.) Monday to Friday.
4. Cooroonya staff will respond to the referring service provider by faxed acknowledgement form (See Appendix II) within 48 hours of receiving the initial referral.
5. Cooroonya staff will contact the referring service when necessary to clarify any questions relating to the referral.

**This Memorandum of Understanding is agreed as per the undersigned:**

Wangaratta Court

Name	Signature	Date
<hr/>		

Wangaratta Police

Name	Signature	Date
<hr/>		

Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services

Name	Signature	Date
<hr/>		

Albury Wodonga Community Legal Service

Name	Signature	Date
<hr/>		

Central Hume Domestic Violence Service

Name	Signature	Date
<hr/>		

Victim's Assistance Program

Name	Signature	Date
<hr/>		

Women's Health Goulburn North East

Name	Signature	Date
<hr/>		



**APPENDIX II: COOROONYA ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**COOROONYA DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE SERVICES**



**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FAX**

TO \_\_\_\_\_

POLICE  COURT

LOCATION \_\_\_\_\_

**WE HAVE RECEIVED YOUR REFERRAL**

**FOR:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>ACTION TAKEN:</b>	<b>SERVICE UPTAKE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>REFERRED ON</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>NO FURTHER ACTION</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>UNABLE TO CONTACT</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**COMMENTS:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### Contact Details of Partner Services

- Manager  
**Cooroonya Domestic Violence Services**  
Ph: 03 5722 1100 or 1800 721 100 (refuge)  
03 5762 7330 or 02 6056 0925 (outreach support)
- Superintendent  
**Wangaratta Police**  
Wangaratta  
Ph: 03 5723 0888
- Deputy Registrar  
**Magistrates Court**  
Wangaratta  
Ph: 03 5721 0900
- Domestic Violence Outreach Worker  
**Central Hume Domestic Violence Service**  
Wangaratta  
Ph: 035721 8277
- Manager  
**Hume Region Victim's Assistance Program**  
Ovens and King Community Health Service  
Wangaratta  
Ph: 03 5721 4695
- Solicitors  
**Albury Wodonga Community Legal Service**  
Ph: 02 6056 8210

## Appendix E

### Selected Documents

Department of Human Services (2002) *The Family and Domestic Violence Crisis Protection Framework*.

Dept. of Human Services (2004) *Towards Collaboration – A Resource Guide for Child Protection and Family Violence Services*.

Dimopoulos, M. et al. (1999) *Mapping pathways of service provision: Enhancement of family violence protocols and interagency linkages*

Emergency Accommodation and Support Enterprise (2003) *Through Women's Eyes – Police and Family Violence*.

Office of Women's Policy, Victorian Government (2002) *The Women's Safety Strategy*.

Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (1999) *Competency Standards, Research Report, Stage 1*.

Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (2002) *Taking Responsibility – A Framework for developing best practice in programs for men who use violence toward family members*.

*Review of Police Responses to Violence Against Women* (2001).

Victoria Police (2002) *A Way Forward: Violence Against Women Strategy*.

Victorian Community Council Against Violence (1996) *Violence Against Women, An Integrated Strategy for Change*.