Developing an Integrated Response to Family Violence in Victoria — Issues and Directions

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1.   INTRODUCTION

Background

Violence against women, particularly within the context of marriage and the family, became a concern of the Women's Liberation Movement (WLM) in the late 1960s. At that time 'domestics' were largely regarded as a private matter and violence within the family a male prerogative. Exercise of that prerogative might be regarded by the wider community with disapproval, but it was not seen as a matter for community or state intervention, or for public debate. As a result there were few sanctions that women and children could use to protect themselves within the family against violence, and no services to meet the needs of women and children seeking to escape violence or its effects.

As the WLM began to incorporate domestic violence within its political analysis of the oppression of women, individual women's groups saw the need to take action by establishing services that would both support women affected by domestic violence and call public attention to it, as well as to the 'hidden homelessness' of women forced to stay in violent relationships for lack of anywhere to go. The first women's refuges were set up in Sydney in 1974 (Elsie) and in Melbourne in 1975 (WL Halfway House). In Victoria there are now 23 refuges, a domestic violence outreach service for every region, as well as three statewide services—all government funded.

In 1987 the Crimes (Family Violence) Act came into effect in Victoria. This Act enabled women to seek the protection of the law and state intervention in a violent relationship without always having to seek criminal sanctions against the perpetrator. Since then, although crisis services have continued to expand, there have been few other changes to the way the system responds to women who have experienced violence.

For a long time the only preventative work was being done within the crisis system, with workers supporting women with information and advocacy to ensure the safety of women and children and to prevent recurrence of the violence. Men's behaviour change programs developed during the 1990's as another way of preventing the recurrence of male violence. Since the early 1990s Family Violence Networkers have been funded to take on the role of co-ordinating regional prevention activities and community education.

Need for change

Domestic Violence and Resource Incest Centre (DVIRC) has worked for 14 years within this context, initially as a support and counselling service for victims of violence, expanding its role to training and publications and policy work. Since DHS directed DVIRC to discontinue its telephone counselling service in 1999, DVIRC has focused on resourcing and training professionals in the domestic violence and broader health field. DVIRC views domestic violence as a political issue requiring political responses and has always agitated for changes that would make the legal system and services more responsive to the needs of women and children.

Since the early flurry of activity following the women's movement's exposure of domestic violence, new initiatives have been limited. While the number of refuges and associated services has continued to grow, the demand for places in refuges has kept pace. The system itself has remained largely unchanged despite the cries of victims of violence and those who work with them.

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Over recent years domestic violence workers in Victoria have looked on longingly at new responses to domestic violence being tried overseas (for example, in the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth Minnesota and the Hamilton Abuse Intervention Project in New Zealand). At interstate conferences we have heard exciting discussions about these projects as well as some new Australian initiatives. We have sometimes been shocked at how creatively some of the issues that have seemed insurmountable in Victoria are being addressed elsewhere.

New developments

Finally, things have begun to change in Victoria. Over the last 4 years we have seen the State government make a commitment to a whole-of-government response to family violence through its Women's Safety Strategy. Significantly, the new Chief Commissioner of Police, Christine Nixon, has nominated family violence as a top priority for Victoria Police. In 2001 she initiated a long overdue review of police responses to family violence which documented the inadequacies already obvious to those working with victims of domestic violence. The recommendations in that report were welcomed by women's domestic violence services. One of the most significant recommendations was the development of a new police Code of Practice for responding to family violence and the establishment of the Statewide Steering Committee to reduce Family Violence (SSCRFV) with 10 representatives from a number of government departments and a broad range of organisations with specialist knowledge of family violence.

This is an exciting time in Victoria. Government is engaged in extensive consultation with women's domestic violence services to an extent that we have never experienced before. A range of government committees set up under the Women's Safety Strategy all include representatives from women's domestic violence services. Many women working in the field feel for the first time that their expertise in the area has been taken seriously. A degree of trust and good faith in the intentions of those working within government has been fostered. This is an important change in a field where there has been a good deal of cynicism about consultations that lead to no change and reports that sit on bookshelves. This optimism and trust will now be tested as the work of the government and Statewide Steering Committee moves closer to the point of translating ideas into action; and to having to commit resources to the services and issues identified by domestic violence workers as crucial building blocks of an integrated response for Victoria.

The climate of co-operation opens up the possibilities for the conversations and debates that must take place in Victoria if we are to reform our service system to produce just, consistent, transparent responses to all women and children who experience violence. We now have an unprecedented opportunity to develop effective integrated community responses to domestic violence.

Purpose of this paper

This paper is designed to inform the work currently being undertaken in Victorian in the development of an integrated response to domestic violence.

In 2002 DVIRC workers undertook a review of the local and overseas literature on coordinated and integrated responses to domestic violence.[*]

The following key points emerged from the literature review:

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[*] 'Co-ordinated and Integrated Responses to Domestic Violence—A Briefing Paper for Victorian Community Workers', unpublished, November 2002.

- A focus on the safety of women and children as the goal of all intervention offers diverse agencies with differing ideological perspectives a way to come together to develop effective integrated responses.
- Integrated responses to domestic violence may be more effective because they tackle multiple, not just single aspects of the problem; because they make it harder for victims to 'fall through the cracks' and for perpetrators to avoid accountability; and possibly also because their effects both for victims and perpetrator may be cumulative.
- Most integrated responses to date have focussed on the criminal justice systems and crisis responses. Other prevention activities and services that respond to violence have tended to sit outside these systems.
- Victims of domestic violence, and their advocates, need to be involved in policy and service development and, importantly, in evaluating the effectiveness for victims of integrated and co-ordinated community responses.
- The networks that develop and implement integrated and co-ordinated responses need to be inclusive in their membership, to be united by a common intervention goal, and to be accountable to victims in their policies and operations.

This paper draws on these findings and presents for discussion:
- the question of what we mean by an integrated response
- what goals and principles should guide community intervention
- current challenges in community responses to domestic violence
- strategies for integrating responses, particularly across the justice system
- strategies for effective networking
- a model for policy development, implementation and evaluation.

We hope that discussion on these questions will assist policy makers and providers to work effectively together to increase the safety of women and children.

'Without the input of resources and energy, and without guiding principles, action plans and concrete policy and practice changes, multi-agency work … can be a talking shop and an effective time-waster'

Hague, 1998:448

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2. OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS TO DATE

Victorian Statewide Policy Framework

In October 2002 the Victorian government made a substantial high-level commitment to reducing violence against women in the community by launching its statewide policy framework, the Women's Safety Strategy. This policy framework is being implemented across government, and has the backing of 12 government Ministers who meet annually to review progress in improving women's safety and to jointly set priorities for the coming year.

The Women's Safety Strategy aims to reduce violence against women in all its forms, including domestic violence, by co-ordinating and integrating policy development and implementation across the whole community (i.e. across all government portfolios and the non-government sector). The strategy has led to the establishment of three main co-ordination and policy development mechanisms.

1. A Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence

2. A Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Sexual Assault and Non-Relationship Violence against women

3. A Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Violence Against Women in the Workplace.

Each of these committees will have representation from relevant government departments and key community organisations.

Most relevant to this paper is the Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence which has been established:

> *'to improve the effectiveness of responses to family violence, including the development of a more integrated multi-agency approach to family violence'*
> *(Acting on the Women's Safety Strategy, p.9).*

The Steering Committee aims to improve service delivery at a local level through the establishment of stronger links between services and more consistency of practice. The committee is developing a 'Best Practice Framework for an Integrated Response to Family Violence in Victoria'. The Best Practice Framework will outline optimal responses to women and children experiencing violence, responses to perpetrators, as well as effective approaches to prevention and early intervention.

Current State policy development initiatives

Police Responses
Victoria Police conducted a review of police responses to violence against women in 2001/02. The substantial recommendations from this review are currently being implemented and include the establishment of the Victoria Police Violence Against Women Strategy. VicPol have set an internal steering committee for this project, which has responsibility to reform internal policy and procedure, improve accountability mechanisms, enhance police training and review family violence staffing. This includes an examination and enhancement of the role of the Family Violence Liaison Officers. VicPol has also developed a draft Code of Practice for responding to Family Violence and it is anticipated that this Code will become Force policy in early 2004.

Court Responses

During 2002 the Victorian Attorney-General announced the establishment of a 'Domestic Violence Court' for Victoria to enable victims to have a range of legal issues dealt with within one court. A reference group for developing the court model was established in June 2003, and the intention is to have a demonstration court up-and-running by October 2004. The court will take the form of a Family Violence Division of the Magistrates Court.

The Office of the Chief Magistrate has developed Magistrates Court protocols to assist Registrars and Magistrates in the consistent interpretation of the *Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987.*

A new Judicial College has been established in Victoria, which is developing special training for judicial officers to improve their understanding of violence against women, and gender and cultural issues.

Legal Responses

The Victorian Law Reform Commission currently has references from the government to review:
- the Crimes (Family Violence) Act;
- law and procedure in relation to sexual offences;
- defences and partial excuses to homicide;
- reform and expansion of legislation relating to stalking.

The Department of Justice will pilot a project to provide men's behaviour programs mandated as a condition of an Intervention Order.

Service System Responses

The Department of Human Services is addressing violence against women through:
- development of the *Family and Domestic Violence Crisis Protection Framework*. This policy framework is aimed at improving the flexibility and capacity of the broader service system to respond to the diverse support, housing and advocacy needs of victims. It focuses on local responses and collaboration between the community and government sectors;
- provision of recurrent peak body funding for *Domestic Violence Victoria* (DVVic)—formerly the *Victorian Women's Refuges and Associated Domestic Violence Services*;
- enhancing the *Family Violence Network Program* to increase the role and capacity of these networks to respond effectively to domestic violence at a local level.

Other Violence Prevention Strategies

Other government departments have undertaken a range of policy and program initiatives to reduce violence against women:
- Development of education programs designed to reduce cultural acceptance of violence in school children and to improve the 'social competency' of young people.
- Development of a *Safer Streets and Homes* strategy – a strategic framework for preventing violence in the community.
- Development of an *Indigenous Family Violence Strategy* to resource and support an Indigenous-led approach to preventing, reducing and responding to family violence in Indigenous communities.
- A review of services to victims of crime.

DVIRC believes there are great opportunities in the current policy climate in Victoria for transforming responses to women and children experiencing violence in their homes. We are working with government and other service providers towards common goals, but consider

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there are some fundamental issues and principles that must remain central to this process of transformation:

- All policy initiatives and program must centralise the safety of women and children.
- Prioritising the safety of women and children will mean that crisis services must be better resourced. Initiatives to increase information and access to services will result in an increase in reporting in the short to medium term.
- Before we engage in institutional reform, essential services for women experiencing violence must be in place: emergency housing, legal advocacy, support groups and financial resources. 'Without [these services], battered women may be placed in greater danger when the criminal justice system responds to the offender's violence' (Shepard 1999a:116; Coker 2001).

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3. GOALS AND PRINCIPLES OF INTERVENTION

Importance of a shared philosophical framework

In a political climate of shrinking resources for the delivery of social services, 'co-ordination' and 'integration' are often simply viewed by governments as a means of doing more with less (Hague 1998). Without a grounding philosophical framework that informs and directs actions, however, these strategies can be mistaken for goals and may achieve little. Co-ordination that places systemic goals first (for example, achieving an increased rate of arrest and conviction) may end up ignoring women's and children's needs and marginalising their safety.

Centralising women's and children's safety

Articulating a philosophical framework that will give direction and focus to the actions of agencies and individuals from widely differing organisational contexts and ideological traditions can be challenging, and can founder on ideological conflict about 'What causes the violence?' This impasse can be avoided if agencies develop a unifying philosophy which establishes the need to ensure victims' safety as the basis for *all* interventions.

The DAIP intervention principles
Practitioners in the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) in the US have developed a set of 'core' and 'guiding' principles of intervention that have subsequently been influential around the world.

Under these principles the **goal** of intervention is **stopping the violence** and the **focus** of intervention is **protecting the victim**. In summary, the DAIP principles emphasise that intervention should:
- protect and be accountable to victims
- address the 'totality of harm done'
- hold the community and not the victim responsible for confronting the perpetrator
- focus on the use of violence and avoid making the victim the problem
- use co-operative strategies to change community responses to violence.

(See Appendix 1 for the full text of the DAIP Intervention Principles.)

Australian models
In their report to the Office of the Status of Women in 2002 on good practice models for access to the Australian justice system, urbis keys young identified similar principles operating in projects which were achieving positive outcomes. These Australian 'good practice principles' give priority to:
- the safety of the victim
- the empowerment of the victim
- holding the perpetrator responsible
- recognising victim's diverse needs
- a co-ordinated response, and consistency in policies and procedures.

(See Appendix 2 for the full text of the Australian 'Good Practice Principles'.)

A number of local 'integrated' and 'coordinated' projects that are attempting to put some of these principles into practice are currently being developed in Victoria. For further info on these see Section 5 of this paper.

Why do we need integrated community responses?

Social and justice system responses to domestic violence continue to be only partly effective in ending or reducing domestic violence and ensuring the safety of victims.

Some of the reasons for this are discussed below but key among them is a fragmented approach in which agencies and individual practitioners focus only on aspects of the problem. By coming together, different agencies can better understand the whole problem. This can lead to a search for *new* ways of doing things — 'solutions that go beyond their own limited version of what is the problem' (Gray quoted in Office of Women's Policy 2002).

What do we mean by an integrated response?

A review of the literature shows that the terms 'co-ordination', 'co-operation', 'collaboration', 'integration', 'networking' are used in inconsistent and often confusing ways. In this paper we propose the making of a key distinction between co-ordination and integration.

Co-ordination between agencies can be seen as occurring on a continuum, where co-ordination is a question of degree—in the exchange of information, the timing and management of service delivery. Agencies which co-ordinate their service delivery might share information and dovetail their processes, but they do so essentially in order to each pursue their own goals more efficiently.

Integration, by contrast, requires agencies to decide on articulate common goals and agree on ways to pursue those goals. Integration of services is more than co-ordinated service delivery—it is a whole new service. Co-location of agencies, agreed protocols and codes of practice, joint service delivery, agencies reconstituting or realigning their core business to confront the challenges posed by a broadened conception of the problem: these are the key indicators of an integrated response.

A common example of integration is the establishment of multidisciplinary teams to case-manage victims and perpetrators through the justice system. For example, the team could include a worker from correctional services, a representative of the court-mandated perpetrator education program, a domestic violence advocate and a child protection case worker. Each member has clearly defined and interlocking roles and responsibilities and their activities are coordinated but the team has a joint function and identity as well. Another example of integration is the establishment of domestic violence courts that house and integrate a range of support, advocacy and judicial functions.

'You can have co-ordination without getting systemic change, but you can't have integration without having system change, and that's what we set out to do.' - A member of the Gold Coast Integrated Response Coordinating Committee, quoted in urbis keys young'

(2002:45)

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4.   ISSUES COMPROMISING EFFECTIVENESS

Before the community can respond more effectively to domestic violence, we need to
- engage with some problematic areas in our existing responses, and
- tackle a number of barriers to effectiveness.

Problematic areas

The literature on co-ordinated and integrated responses to domestic violence abounds with tensions, controversies, silences and reports of unintended consequences. These include:
- the active pursuit of charges and victim choice
- the class and race implications of proactive policing policies
- women as perpetrators of violence
- the narrow criminal justice focus of integrated responses to date
- the economic constraints on community sector involvement in integrated responses
- silences around child abuse
- silences around sexual abuse

Proactive policing and victim choice
'Proactive policing' encompasses both mandatory arrest policies (where arrest and prosecution are mandatory if there is evidence of an offence) and pro-arrest policies (where arrest and prosecution may be discretionary but are the preferred option if there is evidence of an offence). It has been argued that proactive policing dismisses victims' perspectives and choices. Pursuing arrest and prosecution contrary to a victim's wishes can exacerbate the danger a victim is exposed to, compromise their social empowerment and frustrate their processes of recovery. While acknowledging these issues, pro-arrest advocates argue that criminalisation is a necessary, if flawed, device for shifting the climate of institutional and cultural tolerance towards domestic violence. A compromise position has been adopted in some jurisdictions according to which cases are actively pursued but not at the expense of victim safety or to the point of punishing victims for non-co-operation with the process.

DVIRC takes the view that:
- while pro-arrest policies can expose and visibly criminalise domestic violence, the police response should put the safety of victims first and it should acknowledge that, unless other supports are provided, arrest and prosecution do not always protect the victim. Protocols on arrest, prosecution and case conferencing must be developed with Indigenous and other diverse communities.
- as soon as a victim reports to police she must receive information about what action police will take and she must be given ongoing support. Support and advocacy services must be funded to allow for 24-hour support to victims.
- police responses to all domestic violence calls must be monitored (including when and where the call was made, repeat calls, action taken, outcomes etc.). There must be an expectation of and support for evidence gathering and rigorous investigation. Evaluation of the police response must be based on victim safety and victim satisfaction and on the perception of other women in the community.

Proactive policing: class, race and gender politics
Proactive policing policies arguably have a disproportionate impact on those in lower socio-economic classes and outside the dominant cultural group. Not only are perpetrators in these groups more likely to be subject to police surveillance, but arrest has a different impact on them and on their partners. Given that jails around the world are populated predominantly by

the poor and culturally marginalised, a range of activists have criticised the overwhelming criminal justice emphasis of integrated responses to domestic violence. Reformers should consider instead, they argue, the diverse causes of violence in the community (including poverty and the impact of colonisation) and develop intervention policies and strategies that confront these in culturally relevant and empowering ways.

Again, DVIRC stresses that any changes to policing procedures must be done in consultation with organisations representing marginalised women, and that protocols need to be developed to ensure policing practices do not make things worse for women.

Where's the 'community' in 'integrated community response'?
A central focus of most integrated community responses is an improved criminal justice response to domestic violence.

In view of the race and class issues that arise from a criminal justice emphasis, we need also to consider interventions that are educational and cultural.

DVIRC believes that in addition to integration of the criminal justice and crisis systems, we also need to foster discussions and awareness of domestic violence in mainstream community settings such as schools, churches, social service agencies. The work of Family Violence Prevention Networkers is important in this respect.

The process of change is as important as the actual changes made. The community's most marginalised victims of domestic violence need to be empowered to be part of the process if an improved response is to be genuinely a *community* response. The expertise of those who work with victims must also be included. In a climate of economic rationalism, many community organisations are fighting for survival or caught up in crisis-response work, with little time and few resources to spend on community development or changing the system.

Women as perpetrators of violence
An unintended consequence of instituting proactive and uniform policing practices in some jurisdictions has been that the number of women arrested for perpetrating violence against abusive partners has escalated wildly (see Gamache & Asmus 1999: 71-73). Gender-blind policing and prosecution processes have resulted in the violence of these women being treated much more seriously by the criminal justice system than the violence of their partners. In some instances these practices have obscured the threat posed by the primary perpetrator and exposed victims to heightened danger. Women convicted of assault have also found themselves directed to attend mandated perpetrator programs that are entirely unsuitable for their educational or therapeutic needs.

Silences around child abuse
In the literature on social responses to domestic violence, a view persists of domestic and family violence as being first and foremost 'spouse abuse'. Children are largely viewed as secondary victims. Their unique experiences of violence, or the fact that their needs and interests may be different to or in conflict with those of their mother, are not often acknowledged adequately in the delivery of domestic violence services. Fortunately there are exceptions to this tendency, the Northern Violence Intervention Project in South Australia being one (see urbis keys young 2002).

The child protection system has remained largely outside integrated responses to domestic violence. While domestic violence interventions often overlook children's victimisation, child protection interventions typically overlook women's, despite the high correlation between both forms of abuse. Moreover, by focusing on women as mothers (who have failed to protect their children or have perpetrated abuse in the context of their own victimisation) child

protection agencies pit women's and children's interests against each other and fundamentally fail to make the father/husband perpetrator accountable for his behaviour.

If the goal of developing an integrated community response to domestic violence is to achieve the safety of victims and the accountability of perpetrators, a more inclusive and continuous notion of violence in the family is required. DVIRC believes that much more work must be done to build partnerships between domestic violence and child protection services, to ensure that 'good practice principles' become part of the Victorian response.

Silences around sexual abuse
Again, despite increasingly broad definitions of family and domestic violence, social and legal responses to family violence have tended to remain narrowly focussed on *physical* violence. Sexual violence and abuse are common dimensions of domestic violence but receive little attention from intervening agencies. The implication is that rape is still viewed culturally as a crime only a stranger can commit. In other words, forced sex is viewed as less bad if it occurs in a relationship or even as something to be expected in that context.

This criticism is not restricted to police and court interventions. Building closer relationships between sexual assault, child abuse and domestic violence services – acknowledging the continuum and diversity of violence in the family – is an important first step in addressing this silence.

Systemic barriers to effectiveness

The literature on multi-agency responses to domestic violence shows that they have tended to develop as a response to shortcomings in the justice system in particular, which seem intractable or widespread. They include the following obstacles:

The failure of progressive law reform and social policy to change institutional attitudes, practices and processes
In spite of laws and policies protecting victims of domestic violence and holding perpetrators accountable, victims still have considerable difficulty accessing legal remedies. The process can be slow, intimidating, humiliating, confusing and frustrating, and often fails to provide victims with the best outcomes. People who work in the system—magistrates, court staff, police and prosecutors—often fail to use the full extent of their powers to ensure the safety of victims and the accountability of perpetrators. The view persists that family violence is primarily a relationship problem or a personal pathology, not a crime or a life-threatening activity. A belief that victims bear at least partial responsibility for the violence they suffer is also deeply pervasive.

The Family Violence Intervention Project (FVIP) in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) focused on these sorts of problems and was designed to address concerns that criminal justice agencies in the ACT did not treat family and domestic violence matters seriously, particularly in relation to victim safety and perpetrator accountability. Specific concerns included:
- low charge and conviction rates;
- not enough attention paid to acting on 'belief on reasonable grounds', evidence-gathering, victim safety and arrest options at the time of the incident;
- prosecutions dropped too easily;
- dilemmas in balancing victim ambivalence about prosecution with agencies' responsibility to uphold the criminal law and protect vulnerable people;
- difficulties in proceeding with ambivalent or hostile witnesses;
- difficulties in matching victim services to victim needs at the right time;

- the length of time for criminal family violence matters to be heard in court, leading to delays that saw victims give up on prosecutions;
- sentencing options that failed to reduce repeat offending, and failure to enforce compliance with court orders.
- See urbis keys young (2002:31).

In Victoria, the Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence has acknowledged the importance of changing institutional attitudes and practices and has established a Professional and Community Education Sub-Committee to examine current training and make recommendations concerning gaps.

The fragmentation of the justice system and its isolation from the delivery of other social services

Traditionally, the individual agencies of the criminal justice system 'emphasise their own operational imperatives, core legislative functions and independence' and 'the resultant fragmentation presents significant obstacles to victims seeking justice and to coordination efforts' (Holder 2001:18). This has a considerable impact on policy co-ordination across the justice portfolio.

This fragmentation means that information doesn't flow effectively through the system, exposing vulnerable victims to even greater danger. The breakdown of communication between police and prosecutors is a frequently cited problem in the literature, with abundant examples of tragic outcomes for victims (see, for example, Gamache & Asmus 1999).

Under the present multi-jurisdictional system, it is possible for a Victorian woman and her children seeking to escape from or deal with the consequences of domestic violence through the justice system to find themselves simultaneously or sequentially:
- seeking an Intervention Order in the (state) Magistrates Court;
- responding to a cross-application for an Intervention Order;
- giving evidence in criminal proceedings in the Magistrates Court against the perpetrator for assault;
- pursuing a breach of an Intervention Order in the Magistrates Court;
- applying for, or opposing an application by the perpetrator for, contact or residence orders in the (federal) Family Court;
- seeking a restraining order in the Family Court;
- seeking a property settlement following separation in either the Family Court or the state Supreme Court;
- appearing in the (state) Children's Court in relation to child protection matters;
- pursuing a claim for compensation through the Victims of Crime Administrative Tribunal.

Currently the victim must negotiate different locations, may or may not qualify for legal aid, may have to employ different advocates, and will appear before different judges, each of whom may have only a partial awareness of the related matters, due to the way information is compartmentalised. In addition, different judicial responsibilities imposed on judges by the specific jurisdiction and its governing legislation and procedures may force them to look at only isolated aspects of the victim's case rather than its totality, and to apply different standards of proof to assessing the perpetrator's actions. As a result the family can find itself coping with 'multiple conflicting orders that simultaneously govern its existence' (Epstein 1999:5). Such fragmentation may also expose victims to life-threatening risk.

In addition to its own internal fragmentation, the justice system operates largely in isolation from the broader social service system, meaning that victims who approach the legal system

for assistance directly (that is, not via a domestic violence service) often have unmet support needs.

Efforts in Victoria to develop a Family Violence Division of the Magistrates' Court, which will eventually operate statewide, are underway through the Department of Justice, and the Family Violence Court Reference Group is considering many of these issues. Discussions are favouring a model that allows a victim of domestic violence to deal with a range of related legal issues within the one court.

The development of Codes of Practice by agencies aims to provide consistent and interlinking responses to violence. Key 'partner agencies' that provide a direct response to individual cases of family violence are preparing to sign on to develop complementary Codes of Practice.

Partner agencies currently include Victoria Police, the Courts (Magistrates and Children's), DHS Child Protection, DVVic (women's domestic violence services), No to Violence (men's behaviour change program and men's referral service), Royal Children's Hospital Gatehouse Centre, and CASAs.

The fragmentation of the broader social service system

Victims of domestic violence are likely to need a wide range of services including health, housing, financial, therapeutic, cultural, educational, legal and child-specific services. No single agency is able to provide all these services. Communication between relevant agencies within this broader service system is often too limited to ensure that victims can use the services they need in order to be safe or to recover satisfactorily from the effects of violence.

In Victoria the regional Family Violence Networkers work towards improving communication between agencies through the establishment of local area Family Violence networks. In some regions they have developed strategic plans to strengthen service capacity. As the justice and crisis systems integrate their responses, other parts of the service system (e.g. health and education) will be encouraged and supported to co-ordinate their responses, and become partner agencies with their own Codes of Practice.

The power of the system itself to shape what happens

The practitioners in the influential Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) in the US have developed a critique of why the system fails victims in which they argue that 'the private lives of women are shaped not by the men they marry or live with as much as by *the institutions in our society that define and shape intimate relationships*' (Pence 1992: 32).

The DAIP practitioners assert that 'the state's response to offenders both [causes] and, in a much broader sense, [contributes] to batterers' sense of entitlement to use violence in their private, intimate relationships' (Pence 1999: 26). They argue that 'institutional policies and practices can either marginalise or centralise attention to victim safety' and in particular that:

- The failure of the system to protect victims and hold offenders accountable does not lie simply in the victim-blaming attitudes of the individuals who operate these institutions or in the way they are trained.
- The administrative processes that turn the victim's experiences into a 'case' that can be recognised and acted on within a bureaucratic framework have the power to 'screen, prioritise, schedule, highlight, route and mask' those experiences (Pence 1992:36-40).
- Work practices (such as recording information in response to computer screen prompts or filling out standardised forms) reflect the organisational needs and concerns of the institution itself. These work practices shape the way people in the system respond to victims, and ways of thinking about the violence are built into the work practices.

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This means that a starting point in building a more effective justice system response must be to scrutinise and reform institutional processes and practices. The Duluth experience emphasises the usefulness of having policies and practices reviewed by victims and their advocates, both against the goals of interventions and the outcomes.

Despite the Victorian Government's commitment to consult widely, there are inconsistencies in the degree to which different departments consult and some examples of policies that undermine efforts to improve women's safety (for example, the introduction of home detention). The participation of domestic violence service providers and their service users at all levels of the reform process is an issue that cannot be taken for granted in Victoria.

5.   WAYS TO ACHIEVE THE GOALS OF INTERVENTION

Community intervention projects across Australia and overseas have come up with a wide range of ways to improve the safety and empowerment of victims and the accountability of perpetrators.

Some of these, such as perpetrator education programs, 'mandatory arrest' and 'no drop' prosecution policies, have come to be seen as the sum total of a co-ordinated community response—as *the* solution to the problem of domestic violence. However, more arrests, more prosecutions and higher enrolments in perpetrator education groups do not necessarily mean that victims will be safer.

The evidence suggests that these strategies are of relatively little value if they are not part of an overall response to domestic violence that is more holistic and is guided by a philosophy of accountability to victims. (See Laing 2002 on perpetrator programs, for example).

''The key message from the international research on [perpetrator] program effectiveness is that … "the system matters" … the major focus of efforts to intervene with men who use violence must be on building strong systems within which these programs are located.'

Laing 2002:23

Researchers have identified other shortcomings in our community responses to domestic violence. Their findings underscore the need for more complex, flexible and consistent responses to domestic violence and support the move to multi-agency responses. In particular, research indicates:

* *Consistent responses are important.*
  From her research in the United Kingdom, Kelly (1999 in Holder 2001:8) found that 'it is the quality, consistency and reliability of responses abused women receive that is strongly influential in their achieving effective outcomes for themselves and their children'.
  Likewise Wearing's (1992) research with women in Victoria found that 'swift and thorough' responses to domestic violence improved women's sense of safety and ability to cope. On the basis of her research she asserts 'It is the *unpredictability*, *arbitrariness* and *variability* of police action that is perhaps the most problematic and dangerous aspect of family violence legal procedures in Victoria' (Wearing 2001:10). The value of consistent, decisive responses by the police and broader community was also identified in research conducted by Keys Young (1998).

* *Generalist services and informal networks need to be included in domestic violence strategies*.
  Recent national research (Keys Young 1998; Bagshaw et al. 2000; Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996; and Chung et al. 2000) indicates that most victims of domestic violence do not approach the justice system or family violence specific services for assistance. They are more likely to visit generalist services (for example, relationship counselling or health services) and to rely on friends and family than seek legal protection or professional support and advocacy. This knowledge of victim's help-seeking behaviour suggests a need to broaden the scope of traditional responses and build stronger links between generalist and family violence specific services.

- *Service provision needs to be more holistic, flexible and responsive to the particular needs and aspirations of individuals and their families (Keys Young 1998; Bagshaw et al. 2000).* A streamlined, one-size-fits-all approach to service delivery does not meet the needs of the wide range of people affected by domestic violence. Such an approach clearly discourages many in need of assistance from seeking support.

In summary, to be effective, integrated strategies need to be:
- supported by structures that ensure that the primary goals of intervention are not sidetracked by competing priorities;
- evaluated in terms of these goals; and
- relevant to the local context, and appropriate in view of local resources, conditions and priorities.

Overview of reported integrated responses in the justice system

The most common integrated responses reported in the literature all fall within the justice system. They are:
- domestic violence courts
- enhancing victim advocacy
- mandatory arrest policies
- special prosecution policies
- court-mandated perpetrator education programs
- offender supervision/Monitoring offender compliance
- interagency information management systems

Domestic Violence Courts
Court processes and outcomes in relation to domestic violence have frequently compromised the safety of victims and failed to hold perpetrators accountable. Most victims who approach the court without support find the environment unsafe and the process slow, confusing and disempowering. In response to these issues, specialist domestic violence courts have been set up in many jurisdictions around the world over the last 10–15 years. Domestic violence courts can vary tremendously in how they are constituted and structured, but all involve some form of specialised management of domestic violence cases with a view to improving victim safety and perpetrator accountability. Common features include:
- Specialist intake and information management systems. These are designed to fast-track domestic violence cases and link them to related cases (i.e. criminal matters with protection orders and family law proceedings) to reduce conflict and inconsistency in orders and judgements;
- Specialist advocacy and support services for victims;
- Specially designed court facilities to make victims safer and house related support services;
- Employment of court administrators and judicial staff with expertise in domestic violence matters; and
- Proactive monitoring of cases to ensure that orders are complied with.

Enhancing victim advocacy
Empowering victims by improving their access to a range of legal remedies and support services is a key part of most integrated responses to domestic violence. A large number of specialist advocacy services have developed for this purpose around particular court precincts.

Other domestic violence advocacy services operate on an outreach basis to victims living with domestic violence or trying to escape it. Sometimes these services are integrated into the police response to domestic violence (for instance, the ACT Family Violence Intervention Project and the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response project documented in urbis keys young (2002)). The assistance these services offer victims includes the provision of information, support groups, legal and generalist advocacy and safety planning. The development of victim witness support programs to assist victims giving evidence in criminal assault cases is another key development in this area.

Proactive Policing & Mandatory Arrest Policies

Despite laws criminalising domestic assault and breaches of protection orders, low charge and conviction rates for these crimes have been common around the world, suggesting that criminal justice institutions do not consider them serious enough to warrant the full force of the law. As arrest and prosecution are significant social means of insisting on perpetrator accountability and may provide a level of protection to victims, proactive policing policies have been seen as important components of an improved community response. A strong criminal response is also an important means for changing social norms about violence.

Mandatory arrest policies, or 'the active pursuit of charges' as they are more commonly referred to in Australia, are designed to reduce the discretion individual police officers can use in deciding whether to press charges in the face of reasonable evidence of a crime having been committed. These policies are usually integrated with special prosecution policies and supported by improved evidence-gathering techniques by police.

Special Prosecution Policies

When police do arrest and charge perpetrators for assault or breach of protection orders, a large number of these charges are never prosecuted. A significant reason for this has been a lack of evidence to support the charges, either because police failed to collect the evidence at the time of the incident, or because the victim was unwilling to give evidence against the perpetrator. Sometimes charges are dropped at the request of the victim, who may fear repercussions from the perpetrator or does not want their partner, lover, parent or child convicted.

'No drop' prosecution policies have been developed in some jurisdictions to alleviate the pressure placed on victims by perpetrators to have the charges dropped. Likewise 'evidence-based' prosecution policies have been developed to reduce the extent to which the prosecution of perpetrators relies on the victim's testimony, thus removing or reducing the need for victims to give evidence in court against them.

The appointment of specialist domestic violence prosecutors is another innovation that has been tried in a number of jurisdictions in Australia to improve the prosecution of domestic violence cases. Policy development in this area usually requires coordination with policing agencies, because of the operational and functional interdependency of these elements of the justice system. That is, proactive prosecution relies on proactive arrest policies and improved evidence-gathering procedures, etc.

Court-mandated perpetrator education programs

The development of perpetrator education programs as a sentencing option in domestic violence cases has arisen in response to recognition that

- alternative sentencing options are not effective in reducing repeat offending;
- without intervention most offenders will continue to be violent;
- prison is not a place that typically teaches men to respect women or question men's entitlement to use violence; and

- many victims are reluctant to engage a criminal justice response because they do not want to see their violent loved one incarcerated. Instead they want the violence to stop and the perpetrator to be 'helped'.

Perpetrator programs vary considerably and there is debate about which type of approach is most effective (see Laing 2002). The highly influential 'Duluth model' developed by Pence & Paymar (1990, 1993) focuses on 'gender-based, cognitive behavioural' group work. It aims to stop the violence, abuse and controlling behaviours of perpetrators by challenging and dismantling belief systems that support these behaviours.

The effectiveness of these programs in reducing repeat offending has long been in question, but the most recent and comprehensive research on this issue (reviewed in Laing 2002) suggests that these programs can have a significant impact on reducing men's use of violence and controlling behaviours. However, the type of intervention does not seem critical to success. Instead, the success of these programs is seen to lie in how well they are supported by and embedded within the total social response to domestic violence. That is, how well they are backed-up by criminal justice monitoring and sanctions and how thoroughly they are delivered in co-ordination with the support and advocacy services to victims. The purpose of such co-ordination is to reduce the extent to which perpetrators can minimise past and present violence towards victims. It also empowers victims and emphasises the accountability of the criminal justice response to victims.

'Gondolf (2002a:199) argues that, rather than a refinement of therapeutic/educational techniques used in perpetrator programs, what is most needed is system development … The main challenge appears to be in making the existing components of intervention work together more decisively and consistently. They need to hold men accountable for their behaviour … the notion of accountability warrants some reinforcement.'

Laing 2002:17

Offender Supervision/Compliance Monitoring

Another innovation in the criminal justice response has been to monitor more proactively the effectiveness of protection orders and criminal sanctions on perpetrator's actions. This is difficult to do without correctional service agencies co-ordinating their case management with agencies which provide services to victims and perpetrators. Without such co-ordination the information gathered is likely to be unreliable and to understate the perpetrator's ongoing use of violence and other abusive behaviour.

Interagency Information Management Systems

The purpose of interagency information management systems is to reduce the fragmented operation of the service system—in particular, the criminal justice system—and to ensure that the right information gets into the right hands within the required timeframe to ensure the safety of victims and the accountability of perpetrators. Case tracking systems can also provide an invaluable tool for system evaluation by identifying blockages, gaps and inconsistencies across the network.

Some of the elements of integration found in Australian 'good practice models'

While Victoria is in the early stages of setting up statewide policies and processes for an integrated response to family violence, many good practice examples exist both interstate and locally.

The urbis keys young (2002) report into good practice models for facilitating access to the justice system identifies the following strategies being used across a number of innovative Australian intervention projects:

- interagency co-ordination and collaboration
- integration and co-location of services
- information sharing across jurisdictions, government agencies and the non-government sector
- consistent responses to family violence across agencies and jurisdictions
- procedural and policy reform for the courts
- early intervention following a victim's first contact with justice system
- improved police response
- personalising the justice system
- comprehensive and workable information management systems
- specialising rather than mainstreaming
- a holistic approach to service provision
- allowing enough time for results to be achieved
- continuity of project and service personnel
- contacting victims proactively
- tailoring support to the needs of individual victims
- being non-judgmental and respecting victims' choices and decisions
- providing services to the victims' family
- providing culturally appropriate services
- improving access and equity policies of mainstream services.

Implicit is the need for comprehensive, well-funded monitoring and evaluation systems.

(See Appendix 3 for a more detailed description of these approaches and the projects using them.)

While the Best Practice Framework is being developed at a statewide policy level in Victoria, there is an increasing number of projects developing at local levels that explore integrated or co-ordinated responses:

- *The Wangaratta Family Violence Integration Project*
  This project has involved the Wangaratta Court staff, the Wangaratta police, two community health services, the Albury–Wodonga Legal service, two domestic violence support services and a victims assistance program coming together to work out how to improve pathways to and linkages between services for victims of family violence in the region. Other objectives are improved information about services; improved victim access to the court system; and improved working relationships between service providers.

- *Swan Hill Family Abuse Integrated Response (FAIR) project*
  Police take an active role in identifying victims and referring them to Mallee Domestic Violence Service (MDVS). They also ensure that legal action is taken (applications for

Intervention Orders and prosecutions). MDVS provides support and assistance to victims. Police/MDVS co-operation ensures that victims receive information, support, referrals and assistance. This co-operation is made possible via a number of jointly developed protocols and procedures. The victims, the police, MDVS and the Swan Hill Magistrates Court have all been able to identify benefits resulting from the program.

- *The Gippsland Family Service Co-ordination Project*
  A project to formalise the process used by police to refer all parties involved in family violence incidents to services for support, assistance, accommodation and, for perpetrators, behavioural change programs. Previously referral was ad hoc and informal, relying on members' initiative and local knowledge. The project involves the Gippsland police and a number of regional agencies providing support to victims of family violence.

- *WAYSS South East Family Violence Crisis Service (WAYSS)*
  This project has increased the capacity of the service to respond to crisis calls, by extending service hours during the week and by co-locating a DV support worker over the weekend at a 24-hour police station in the Southern Region. The worker assists the police response to family violence incidents by providing general support to women and children, transport, access to medical assistance and accommodation.

- *Eastern Domestic Violence Outreach Service (EDVOS)*
  EDVOS has a dedicated worker 2 days a week at the Ringwood Magistrates Court specifically to help women remain safely in their existing housing by ensuring that the Intervention Orders they obtain contain exclusion provisions. This is also a focus of other workers in the outreach service. The worker's support has succeeded in helping women and children avoid homelessness, has assisted women to obtain Intervention Orders while representing themselves, and has improved court awareness of the needs of victims of family violence.

- *Colac Court Project*
  With no crisis services or DV outreach services in the local area, workers at the Colac Area Health service are investigating ways of streamlining referrals to them by police and the Registrar, of women attending Colac Court because of family violence. Referrals are by consent and lead to priority interviews for counselling and other support.

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6. INTERAGENCY NETWORKING: THE BACKBONE OF AN INTEGRATED COMMUNITY RESPONSE

The purposes of interagency networking

Networking is the key to building an integrated community response to domestic violence. Its functions include:

- improving communication between individuals and between organisations;
- improving each participant's understanding of "the problem" by exposing them to a variety of perspectives;
- improving decision making on collective strategies and individual cases in response to more complete information;
- facilitating consistent and philosophically coherent policy development across services;
- improving the accountability of each network participant to victims;
- facilitating evaluation of the collective response;
- facilitating broader cultural change.

'While building relationships is, in many respects, simpler because it is something we do everyday, the sorts of relationships required for a successful integrated response are difficult to build, especially where the elements of the service system diverge on key philosophical issues.'

Office of Women's Policy 2002:2

Who makes up an integrated community response network?

Any agency, body or individual who is involved in some way in delivering services to victims of family violence, in enforcing the laws related to family violence, or in making laws and policies in relation to family violence, is part of the community response to domestic violence.

In practice it is not possible to involve every individual or agency that makes up this network in the activities of an intervention project. Decisions need to be made at a local level, taking into account the available resources, about which are the most useful agencies and which individuals to include in the project.

Nevertheless, experience suggests that the capacity of a network to achieve systemic change still relies on getting participation from the following groups:

1. *Social policy making bodies* – such as government departments or agencies, statutory bodies.

2. *Victims and/or victim advocates* – who can contribute the victim's critical perspective on policies and services.

3. *Executive staff within agencies* – who can make policy decisions and lead change at an agency level.

4. *Direct service staff within agencies* – who can contribute the practitioner's critical perspective on the service system and provide feedback to the network about the effect of policy changes.

5. *Agencies providing advocacy or support services for communities outside the dominant cultural group* – who can offer a critical perspective on how policy development will affect these groups.

Challenges and tensions in interagency networking

Not having adequate representation from the five groups listed above, especially senior agency staff or direct-service practitioners, is a consistent obstacle to effective networking and generating systemic change.

The Victorian experience has been that while there is executive and high-level involvement at a statewide policy committee level, very little of this has filtered down to those working on 'the ground'. Community representatives on the statewide committee have been frustrated that they have not been permitted to distribute documents from the committee to their constituents. The fear is that we could end up with a system designed from the 'top-down'.

Other problems cited throughout the literature include:
- differences across agencies in philosophy, work practices, expectations and goals;
- failure to develop a shared understanding of the problem and clearly defined collective objectives and strategies;
- inadequately skilled leadership or an over-reliance on particular individuals;
- lack of process or skill in negotiating conflict;
- lack of funding for co-ordinating network activities;
- unequal power of participant agencies, with well-resourced, high-status and politically powerful organisations dominating (see Hague 1998:446);
- a tendency for the network to marginalise victim advocates and exclude survivors altogether;
- lack of trust between agencies and an unwillingness to share information or surrender a degree of autonomy; and
- dilution or erosion of grounding feminist principles in the interest of achieving consensus ('a lowest common denominator approach to domestic violence' – Hague 1998:446).

(Compiled from Hague 1998; Hague et al. 1996; Gardiner 2000; Office of Women's Policy 2002; Holder 1997; Gamache & Asmus 1999; Pence & McDonnell 1999.)

Some guides for effective networking

Philosophy must come first
Many problems can be avoided by starting with a coherent philosophical framework and set of principles that centralise victim safety. The philosophical framework and shared principles must inform the network's very formation. Trying to reach consensus after the network has been formed invites a lowest common denominator scenario. If there is not initial agreement by all agencies to the basic principles, the network may have to start smaller and incorporate agencies as it goes along.

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Written agreements between agencies

Having written agreements between agencies that define working relationships and accountability appears to be effective. Agreements can be quite basic to start with and can develop in complexity over time. The formal nature of a written agreement helps to create an environment in which differences can be more productively explored and negotiated.

Developing effective co-ordination or leadership structures

An integrated community response network generally requires a formal body or structure. A well-chosen coordination/leadership structure can address some of the power inequalities that exist within and between organisations and can ensure accountability to victims and those outside the dominant group. The leadership structure can also facilitate a sense of ownership by member organisations and can ensure both direct service practitioners and executives are heard.

Developing an Equality Framework

This means developing access and equity policies and procedures that promote participation by victim advocates and agencies representing marginalised communities, for example, those representing or providing services to indigenous and migrant women, lesbians, children, women with disabilities.

Creating an inclusive, non-threatening environment based on dialogue

This point is well made by Pence & McDonnell (1999:46).

> Community members wishing to initiate successful institutional reforms should anticipate resistance, be inclusive rather than exclusive, and avoid slogans and rhetoric. They should create an atmosphere conducive to dialogue to sustain relationships through the difficult discussions. Advocates must give up the notion that only they care about battered women and that practitioners in the system are personally responsible for failures of the legal system. Practitioners need to give up the myth that they as professionals have been trained to be objective and fair (as opposed to advocates) and recognise that bias is built into their training and discipline. Finally, administrators must prioritise the protection of victims over the protection of the agency.

Network co-ordination/leadership structures

Networks seeking to establish integrated community responses require a co-ordination/leadership framework which can:

- manage the tensions between participating agencies;
- maintain a commitment to intervention principles;
- sustain the energy of the collaborative effort;
- oversee the establishment of formal interagency agreement;
- facilitate the policy development process;
- facilitate evaluation of the community response; and
- oversee the accountability of participating agencies.

Many different structures have been developed for the purpose of co-ordinating a community response to domestic violence. Some have been highly successful while others have failed to address the tensions that arise in multi-system interagency collaborations (see Gamache & Asmus 1999). Some structures are bottom-up while others are top-down; some are a combination of both. Some are led by the community sector, while others are led either by a government department, the police or the judiciary. What works well in one place for one

community intervention project may not be effective in another context with a different project.

In the absence of a universally successful blueprint, it is important to look at a range of 'good practice models' (see, for example, urbis keys young 2002). Both the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (see Shepard & Pence, 1999:66–70) and the Joondalup Family Violence Court in Perth, WA offer interesting case studies. The latter is a co-ordinated criminal justice project that has a three-tiered management structure incorporating executives, policy makers and case-workers. Separation between these groups presumably neutralises certain power imbalances while overlaps between tiers facilitate interactive policy development across these groups.

Questions to ask about a proposed co-ordinating structure:

1. How will it maintain the network's accountability to a) victims and b) those outside the dominant cultural group?
2. How will it manage the power dynamics *between* organisations in the policy development process?
3. How will it manage the power dynamics *within* organisations in the policy development process (so that the insights of service practitioners are not silenced by the participation of their managers)?
4. How will it manage conflict between participating agencies?
5. How will it uphold a commitment to centralising victim safety in the face of competing agendas and priorities?
6. How will it monitor adherence to interagency agreements and ensure accountability?
7. How will it foster in participating agencies a sense of ownership and trust?
8. How will it evaluate the impact of the integrated response on victim safety?
9. Will it be adequately resourced to undertake these roles?

'Without some kind of significant input from victim advocates and victims in [the co-ordination] process … the justice reform effort is unlikely to actually centralise issues of victim safety. … The creation of [a] co-ordinating structure alone … will accomplish little unless the co-operating agencies are willing to hold themselves accountable not only to each other but ultimately to the victims in their community. This commitment is best demonstrated through the active monitoring of compliance with interagency agreements and the ongoing evaluation of reforms from a perspective of their impact on the safety, autonomy, and agency of domestic violence victims.'

Gamache & Asmus 1999:78,86

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7.   POLICY DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION & EVALUATION

The capacity of the co-ordinating body to facilitate the policy reform process and its ability to engage all stakeholders in the process is pivotal to achieving desired system reform.

'Policy making is as much about the process as it is about content ... the process needs to be inclusive and based on dialogue, not debate. It must also be attentive to practitioners' knowledge, research findings, and experiences of victims. Finally, the process must be open to scrutiny and evaluation.'

Pence & McDonnell 1999:45

Overview of policy process

The policy making model which follows is a basic formula derived from surveying various approaches used elsewhere, with particular debt to the policy making and evaluation framework of the DAIP outlined in Pence & McDonnell (1999).

Step One: Prerequisites
Effective policy development requires prior agreement about the goals of intervention (as discussed above). These goals may be formalised in writing as a mission statement or a charter. There also needs to be strong leadership and unanimous commitment to the goal of institutional reform. High level executive support at an agency level is particularly important.

Step Two: Assess current practices relative to the primary goals of intervention
All agencies need to reflect critically on how their practices, processes, policies and relationships to other agencies contribute to
- keeping the violence private,
- making victims vulnerable to ongoing or increased violence and
- allowing perpetrators to avoid accountability for their actions.

To identify gaps in the delivery of services to victims and perpetrators as they pass through the entire system, the DAIP has promoted the practice of case analysis. Clearly the first-hand knowledge of direct service practitioners is particularly important in this part of the process, as is that of victims and their advocates, who 'often have the best opportunity to gather information on the overall impact of the system's intervention on victims.' (Gamache & Asmus 1999:78)

Step Three: Macro Policy Reform
Following this analysis of how the system responds, a common next step is to undertake some broad policy reform. This can include basic interagency agreements and memoranda of understanding which specify the roles of individual agencies in relation to each other. The ACT's Family Violence Intervention Project, for instance, is underpinned by agreements between the Federal Police, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), the ACT Magistrates Court, the Corrective Services Department and the Domestic Violence Crisis Service as to how domestic violence prosecutions will be mounted, processed and followed up. (See Holder 1999:263.)

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It may also involve law reform, the development of interlocking codes of practice, and modification of infrastructure, such the redesign of court buildings and other facilities used by victims of family violence. The scope of reform achievable at this level will obviously depend on the level of government involvement in and commitment to the project.

Macro policy development is already underway in Victoria following the development of a comprehensive statewide strategy to address violence against women. (See Section 1 of this paper.)

Step Four: Micro Policy Reform

Policy reform also needs to occur at an organisational level to make practices and process consistent with changes to the law and the requirements of interagency agreements. Joint case analysis may indicate other areas of organisational policy and work practice that need reform in line with the goals and principles of intervention. Reform at this level must build good practices into the detail of organisational processes.

'If you expect a practitioner in a heavily burdened court system to consistently do something, look for something, or think about something, then request the information on the form that the practitioner uses to process the case. Do not leave safety or accountability to the whim, memory, or personal commitment of hundreds of people.'

Pence & McDonnell 1999: 48 9

A variety of good-practice models have developed around the world to improve the practices of organisations that are involved in responding to domestic violence. Those undertaking this type of reform may find these of some assistance. DAIP has developed, for example, a risk assessment tool that could be built into work routines to gauge victim safety. To view this, visit their web site at http://www.duluth-model.org/23questions.htm. Another good source of practice ideas is the program manual of the Central Violence Intervention Program in South Australia. View this on line at http://www.salvationarmy.org.au/cvip/default.asp.

Reform at this level should also serve to link together people within and across organisations given that 'each practitioner is part of an organisational network. For the network to function properly, each player must be consistent in his or her actions and be aware of what others in the system [need to know and] are likely to do in certain circumstances' (Pence & McDonnell 1999:43).

Step Five: Training and Implementation

Training that focuses on case examples and the application of policy and procedure is possibly one of the best ways to effectively implement change. Conducting joint training sessions with practitioners from different organisations who are responsible for managing or handling different aspects of the same cases is also a useful strategy for creating an understanding of linkages and fostering a sense of joint responsibility.

Step Six: System Audit or Evaluation

Evaluation plays a critical role in effective institutional reform processes. It is crucial to build dynamic evaluation processes into local initiatives from the start. Establishing tracking systems to monitor the passage of cases through the system can contribute considerably to an evaluation of the total system response but can also provide invaluable feedback on case handling at each point in the system and improve the accountability of individual

practitioners. (See Falk & Helgeson 1999 for a further discussion on developing monitoring and tracking systems.)

What is essential in any evaluation process is to ensure that other institutional priorities have not been allowed to obscure the primary goal of victim safety. The involvement of victims and victim advocates in evaluation processes is obviously crucial.

Step Seven: Further Macro and Micro Reform
As the Office of Women's Policy has noted, 'evaluation does not signal the end of a process, but marks the beginning of a more complex understanding of that process' (2002:8). In response to feedback from system evaluations, further macro and micro policy reform will be required and the long haul of finetuning and extending the integrated community response will have just begun.

For a checklist and template for good policy making developed by DAIP staff over the years of the project's operation, see Appendix 4. The DAIP model may assist others undertaking similar work.

For a specific example of responsive interagency policy development overseen by the DAIP, see Gamache & Asmus (1999) in Shepard & Pence (1999: 71–3).

APPENDIX 1

Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) Core and Guiding Principles of Intervention

[This text has been removed for the online .pdf version of this paper due to copyright limitations.]

The Core and Guiding Principles for Intervention are available on the DAIP website: http://www.duluth-model.org/daipccr3.htm

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APPENDIX 2

EXTRACT: Australian 'Good Practice Principles'

From urbis keys young 2002, *Research into Good-Practice Models to Facilitate Access to the Civil and Criminal Justice System by People Experiencing Domestic and Family Violence: Final Report*, Office of the Status of Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra.

The text for Appendix 2 has been removed from the online pdf version of this paper.
This document is available online at http://ofw.facs.gov.au/PADV/projects/access_to_justice.pdf

APPENDIX 3

EXTRACT: Effective Strategies and Approaches used in Australian Good Practice Models

From urbis keys young 2002, *Research into Good-Practice Models to Facilitate Access to the Civil and Criminal Justice System by People Experiencing Domestic and Family Violence: Final Report*, Office of the Status of Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra, pp. 15–22.

The text for Appendix 3 has been removed from the online pdf version of this paper.
This document is available online at http://ofw.facs.gov.au/PADV/projects/access_to_justice.pdf

APPENDIX 4

EXTRACT: A template and checklist for policy development

From Pence, Ellen & McDonnell, Coral 1999, "Developing Policies and Protocols', in *Coordinating Community Responses to Domestic Violence: Lessons from Duluth and Beyond*, in eds M. Shepard & E. Pence, SAGE Publications, Thousand Oaks, pp. 62–3.

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