

PREVENTION AND REDUCTION OF

Family Violence

NOVEMBER 2008

AN
AUSTRALASIAN
POLICING
STRATEGY

The front image is the New Zealand Flax Flower representing “Te Rito” which is the core, the heart of the harakeke. If the rito is plucked or severely and frequently abused the plant will wither away and perish. But if the rito is nurtured and shielded from adverse conditions it will grow and the plant will flourish. So “Te Rito” is the symbol for the New Zealand Family Violence Prevention Strategy (February 2002).

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Australasian Police Leadership Statement

As community leaders, the Australasian Police Commissioners will not tolerate family violence and are committed to protecting all victims. Family violence is a serious crime that damages our community at all levels. Perpetrators of family violence are accountable at law for their actions. The Australasian Police Commissioners are committed to reducing and preventing family violence through strong, consistent, and compassionate responses. Central to this response is the safety and wellbeing of victims and other persons affected by family violence. This includes appropriate responses to women, men, children, the elderly, Indigenous communities, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

We will work across all Australasian police jurisdictions and with our government and non-government partners to reduce and prevent family violence. We are committed to sharing information, research, experiences and knowledge to continually improve our response and knowledge base.

Andrew Scipione APM
Commissioner, New South Wales Police

Darren Hine APM
Acting Commissioner, Tasmania Police

Mick Keelty APM
Commissioner, Australian Federal Police

Karl O'Callaghan APM
Commissioner, Western Australia Police

Howard Broad
Commissioner, New Zealand Police

We are committed to delivering evidence-based strategies that reduce and prevent family violence at all levels. A key priority is improving capacity to employ early intervention strategies and programs.

This Strategy will ensure responses by Australasian jurisdictions are based on more consistent policies and practices. The Strategy outlines priorities for action to improve our systems of information and intelligence sharing between police, and between our partnership agencies.

This Strategy document signals the commencement of a comprehensive and coordinated response to identify best practice and ensure consistency amongst jurisdictional approaches to reducing and preventing family violence.

** Whilst it is recognised that some jurisdictions use the term 'family violence' and others use the term 'domestic violence', for the purpose of this document, the term 'family violence' will be used so as to encapsulate all forms of violence across all types of relationships.*

Christine Nixon APM
Chief Commissioner, Victoria Police

Robert Atkinson APM
Commissioner, Queensland Police

Malcolm Hyde APM
Commissioner, South Australia Police

Paul White APM
Commissioner, Northern Territory Police

Introduction

The reduction of family violence is an Australasian policing priority. Family violence has a measurable impact on many individuals, families and communities each day. Policing responses need to be supported and underpinned by interventions at the local, community and government levels.

Family violence is a gendered issue. That is, men are predominantly the perpetrators, whilst women and children are predominantly the victims. This finding has been established through extensive research on the issue, and figures supporting these findings are duly reflected in the statistics recorded. Family violence is also not restricted by race, religion, socio-economic status, age or sexuality, and it can and does occur across many different types of relationships and family units. Family violence can take on many forms, and in recent times, recognition and acceptance of this has grown. Examples include physical, sexual and psychological forms of abuse and violence.

The impact upon the community from a health and economic perspective is substantial.

Family violence is a significant contributor to health and welfare problems amongst women. Family violence is also linked to a multitude of other societal issues that cost the community. This includes substance abuse, mental illness, poverty, homelessness and crime.

Despite the wealth of knowledge and tremendous efforts to prevent family violence, more needs to be done to ensure the safety and well being of victims. This includes support through the criminal justice systems.

Bringing Australasian police jurisdictions together to further enhance partnerships and ensure consistent approaches is a positive step in achieving the goal of having safer communities that are free from family violence.

Principles

It is important for police services to respond to family violence in accordance with sound principles that guide our attitudes and actions. These principles should include:

1. Every adult and child has the right to a safe environment;
2. Zero tolerance to perpetrators of family violence;
3. Implementation of targeted education, early intervention and prevention programs for the community and high risk groups;
4. Implementation of targeted education and workforce development programs for service providers;
5. Provision of information and support for victims, and treatment programs and services for perpetrators;
6. Well developed strategic partnerships, collaboration and cooperation between policing jurisdictions, government and non-government agencies;
7. Service delivery principles that are effective, responsive and in line with best practice protocols;
8. Flexible service delivery for diverse and emerging communities, and individuals in rural and remote areas;
9. Use of new technology and other innovations to allow police to work faster and smarter in their response to family violence;
10. Integrated and coordinated information gathering and intelligence sharing methods locally, nationally and internationally.

An Australasian Policing Strategy

Vision

To improve policing practice to prevent and reduce family violence across Australasia.

Our Aims

1. To achieve more effective frontline policing responses both locally, nationally and internationally to family violence.
2. To enhance support for victims of family violence.
3. To shift the focus from reaction to early intervention and prevention of family violence.
4. To identify, document and share standards and principles of best practice.
5. To achieve widespread support for and acceptance of a collaborative approach to family violence, including with government and community.
6. To achieve greater consistency across Australasia in the investigation and management of family violence incidents.
7. Improve the quality and outcome of prosecutions for family violence.

Indicators of Success

Outcome Measures

- A recorded increase in the number of family violence incidents reported;
- A recorded decrease in the number of repeat police attendances to the same household/offender/victim;
- A recorded increase in the amount of successful family violence prosecutions processed by the courts;
- A recorded increase in the number of offenders completing behaviour change and other similar treatment programs.

Process Measures

- The development of better working relationships between the police and child protection services;
- The development of better working relationships between the police and family violence support services, including Indigenous specific services;
- The development of integrated case management systems that reflect best practice protocols.

Priorities for Action

This Framework outlines ten *Priorities for Action* (see diagram below) that will provide the basis for reducing and preventing family violence at local, national and international levels. Strong collaborative partnerships between police and key service providers are essential to reduce and prevent the cycle of family violence.

Each priority for action is a strategic pointer for each jurisdiction, enabling a common platform for identifying best practice protocols. Each Priority for Action will be supported by a number of programs, projects and initiatives designed to achieve a measurable improvement in the response to family violence.



Priorities for Action include:

1. **Education and Training** intended to improve the knowledge and understanding of all police in the investigation and management of family violence offences.
2. **Research and Knowledge Base** intended to identify and share success across jurisdictions.
3. **Policy and Legal Response** designed to influence reform in family violence process.
4. **Incident Response** intended to achieve greater consistency in the level of response to family violence.
5. **Early Intervention** designed to shift the focus from reaction to prevention.
6. **Communication and Information Sharing** intended to remove barriers to the exchange of information between jurisdictions and agencies.
7. **Diverse and Emerging Communities** designed to build confidence by the community with police intervention and responses to family violence.
8. **Indigenous Family Violence** intended to reduce the impact of family violence on Indigenous people.
9. **Children at Risk** designed to protect children from family violence.
10. **People affected by Family Violence** intended to ensure responses reflect the need of victims.

1. Education & Training

Desired outcome

Improved knowledge and understanding of all police in the investigation and management of family violence offences.

Actions

- Audit training to ensure that the education and training provided incorporates technical, conceptual and interpersonal skills including appropriate behaviours, cultural awareness and attitudes;
- Include victim case studies in the training program where appropriate;
- Engage in joint training between police and other organisations where appropriate to facilitate a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities;
- Develop an understanding and an awareness of cross-sector training needs and participate in delivering this training;
- Review and enhance Workforce Development:
 - General
 - Specialist
 - Supervision

2. Research & Knowledge Base

Desired outcome

Improved policing response to family violence through sharing success across jurisdictions.

Actions

Audit research (jurisdiction):

- Identify and share potential Australasian research topics;
- Kept abreast of latest research findings;
- Conduct evidence based audits and evaluations of programs, policies and practices;
- Undertake a comparative analysis across jurisdictions;
- Contribute to the central repository of information;
- Contribute to and utilise the National Australian Domestic Violence Clearinghouse and New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse.

Jurisdictions will work towards the development of an Australasian Knowledge Base that comprises:

- Examples of good practice;
- A comparative matrix of what is occurring within the jurisdictions on priority issues such as legislation, risk assessment, integrated case management, etc;
- A common risk assessment framework;
- External and academic research.

All jurisdictions will contribute to the Knowledge Base, envisaged as an accessible online capability that integrates with existing similar initiatives.

3. Policy & Legal Response

Desired outcome

Policy and legal processes provide the basis for effective responses to the investigation, management and prosecution of family violence incidents.

Actions

- Audit current policy, and legal systems and processes;
- Identify gaps in current policy, legal systems and processes and seek to amend;
- Identify privacy barriers and limitations;
- Establish quality assurance and continuous improvement models;
- Development of a legislation matrix for comparisons across jurisdictions;
- Determine the impact of the Federal Family Law/Family Violence Strategy for progression to APMC;
- Review civil responses and criminal investigation processes, and identify areas for improvement;
- Confirm the roles of specialist courts/prosecutors and other response units;
- Consider repeat attendance strategies;
- Identify and address any cross-jurisdictional issues.

4. Incident Response

Desired outcome

Greater consistency in the level and appropriateness of responses to family violence.

Actions

Audit:

- Risk assessment processes and audit models;
- Supervision and management framework that supports incident response methods;
- Integrated case management practices between police and other agencies to respond to critical incidents;
- Uniformly defining and measuring repeat attendances to victims/offenders/households.

5. Early Intervention

Desired outcome

A measurable shift in the focus from reactive responses to prevention and disruption of the cycle of family violence.

Actions

- Audit programs, including those involving participation with other agencies;
- Strategic intelligence assessment of family violence;
- Identify collaboration points (diversion, referrals, joint investigations, case management/conferencing);
- Tailor early intervention strategies to the target group as different groups can have different needs;
- Establish joint training with police and agencies on early intervention models and best practice.

6. Communication and Information Sharing

Desired Outcome

Removal of existing barriers to information sharing between police and other agencies.

Actions

- Develop a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities;
- Establish and facilitate information sharing practices and protocols between local police and service providers;
- Identify and mitigate communication risks;
- Identify and resolve issues where privacy legislation impedes valid information sharing;
- Identify and resolve issues where IT systems impede sound information sharing between other agencies and police or within police jurisdictions.

7. Diverse and Emerging Communities

Desired outcome

Greater confidence amongst our diverse and emerging community members about the police role in intervening in family violence.

Actions

- Overcoming communication barriers;
- Building awareness of the issue amongst new and emerging communities;
- Encouraging confidence in reporting;
- Developing education and cultural awareness programs for police;
- Building the capacity of support services to respond;
- Establishing community, government and agency partnerships.

8. Indigenous Family Violence

Desired outcome

Measurable reduction in the over representation of Indigenous people as both victims and offenders.

Actions

- Encouraging community engagement;
- Encouraging community ownership of the issue;
- Establishing community, government and agency partnerships;
- Appropriate resource deployment;
- Developing culturally relevant responses;
- Developing diverse approaches and solutions;
- Examining alternative diversionary practices;
- Implementing Indigenous education and cultural training for police members.

9. Children at Risk

Desired outcomes

Greater protection and support to children from family violence.

Actions

- Developing models for identification of high risks/needs children;
- Developing models for early intervention and prevention;
- In conjunction with other relevant agencies, developing specialised responses and interventions for unborn children, babies, infants, children with disabilities and children who witness family violence;
- Developing specialised responses and interventions for adolescents;
- Implementing guidelines for short and long term interventions and pathways;
- Developing positive working relationships between the police and child protection services;
- Establishing collaborative and coordinated case management practices.

10. People affected by Family Violence

Desired outcomes

Responses to family violence reflect the needs of victims.

Actions

Victims:

- Increasing victims levels of support, safety, and access to services;
- Consider the specific needs and interventions for vulnerable victim groups;
- Develop strategies to reduce the need for the victim to repeat their story and attend court proceedings multiple times (for example in absentia prosecutions could be considered);
- Improve frontline police response to victims to increase confidence and trust in police.

Offenders:

- Directing offenders to participate in diversion and treatment programs;
- Developing specific strategies to identify and manage repeat offenders.

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