

Family and Domestic Violence - Overview from the Field

Introduction

In attempting to coordinate the content of this newsletter I recognise that there are areas of information and expertise that have not been included. The information provided will hopefully provide an overview of policy and service implementation initiatives. The AASW Conference in September will offer members opportunities to participate in sessions addressing practice concerns.

A further group of articles that deal with domestic violence will be included in the August issue of the newsletter.

I would like to acknowledge on behalf of the AASW the time and commitment made by each of the contributors. Should you have any feedback, or want further information with which I can assist, I can be contacted directly on Tel (08) 9264 1907; Fax (08) 9264 1924.

MARIBELLE THOMAS (COMMITTEE OF MANAGEMENT)

Domestic Violence Prevention Unit

The Domestic Violence Prevention Unit, located in the Women's Policy Development Office, has responsibility for coordinating the implementation of the Government's strategy to address family and domestic violence.

In March 1995 the Government established the Family and Domestic Violence Taskforce to develop a comprehensive strategy aimed at preventing and reducing the incidence of family and domestic violence. The Taskforce report "*It's Not Just A Domestic*" An Action Plan On Family and Domestic Violence was launched by the Premier, the Hon Richard Court, MLA, in November 1995.

Central to the *Family and Domestic Violence Action Plan*, is the proposal to develop locally relevant responses to family and domestic violence based on "grass roots" knowledge and local assessment of needs.

The Government is committed to the development of an integrated, co-operative and collaborative response by government and community agencies to family and domestic violence. Each of sixteen Regional Domestic Violence Committees, which have formed across the State of Western Australia, incorporate senior officers from the key government departments, the key non-government service providers and other relevant groups, to ensure firstly, the development of an informed, flexible and effective partnership between the various sectors, and secondly, an approach consistent with the principles that :

- family and domestic violence is a criminal offence;
- strategies must reflect the need to protect those at greatest risk;
- services should be responsive to the needs of victims and address perpetrator behaviour; and
- while recognising practical limitations all people in Western Australia should have access to appropriate services, irrespective of where they live.

IN THIS ISSUE

Family and domestic violence

Introduction by Maribelle Thomas	1
Domestic Violence Prevention Unit	1
CentreCare Marriage & Family Service	3
Relationships Australia	6
Regional perspective by Kaye Murray	8
Office bearers of WA Branch	2
Article on Centrelink	9
Letters	11
Text of press release	11
New members	12
Net watch	12

Notices

Quality Practice Options	10
Youth policy subcommittee	10
CPE event (Parents with mental illness)	11

THE WEST AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORKER

Editor: Greg Swensen
Phone: 08 9483 8212 (W)
Email: swensen@cleo.murdoch.edu.au

WA Branch Home Page

<http://westausaasw.highway1.com.au/>

Printing by On Printing

Advertising rates

Full page	\$180
Half Page	\$100
Quarter Page	\$60
Eighth Page	\$45
Pre-Printed A4 Insert	\$70-80

WA BRANCH OFFICE

PO Box 198, West Perth WA 6872

Phone: 08 9220 0670 Fax: 08 9444 5410

Email: aaswwa@aasw.asn.au

Executive Officer: Elizabeth Retamal

NATIONAL OFFICE

PO Box 4956, Kingston ACT 2604

<http://www.aasw.asn.au/>

Phone: 02 6273 0199 Fax: 02 6273 5020

Membership inquiries only: 1800 630 124 (toll free)

The West Australian Social Worker is published monthly by the WA Branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers Ltd (ACN 008 576010). Articles, letters, services, products, opinions, enclosures or any other materials published in or included with the newsletter are not considered as necessarily endorsed by the Branch nor represent AASW policy. Contributions are accepted on the understanding they may be subject to editorial revision

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL WORKERS LTD - WESTERN AUSTRALIAN BRANCH

President

Brian Wooller 08 9400 6500 (W)

Secretary

Claire Heffernan 08 9323 7950 (W)

Treasurer

Dawn Mielins

Vice-President

(Ethics & Professional Practice)

Virginia Scott 08 9450 2833 (W), 08 9313 4229 (Fax)

Vice-President (Finance)

Barbara Meddin 08 9350 7221 (W)

Vice-President (Social Policy)

Pattie Benjamin 08 9381 9496 (H)

Vice-President (Education)

Lynn Selepak 08 9426 9366 (W)

Committee Members

Marie Arends 08 9490 3571 (H)

John de Jongh 08 9550 1234 (W)

Brian Dodds 08 9222 2631 (W)

Mary Joyce 08 9346 4666 (W)

Pauline Meemeduma 08 9780 7751 (W)

Rosina Pruiti 08 9344 9666 (W)

Dyann Ross 08 9780 7743 (W)

Maribelle Thomas 08 9264 1907 (W)

Richard Wilkins 08 9371 0473 (H)

Student Representatives

UWA: Sara Terry 08 9225 3696

Curtin: Nerrida Pickles 08 9450 7008

ECU: monthly rotation

Representatives on External Bodies

Combined Health Professions Association

Representative: Mary Joyce

University of WA Social Work Board of Studies

Representative: Judy Esmond

WA Council of Social Services

Representative: Pattie Benjamin

Sub-committees

Continuing Professional Education

Convenor: Anne Pickard 08 9273 0253 (W)

Ethics

Convenor: John de Jongh 08 9550 1234 (W)

Mental Health

Convenor: Chris Coopes 08 9399 0555 (W)

Health

Convenor: Wendy Butler 08 9382 6111 (W)

Recent Graduates

Contact: Diane Smith 08 9321 7033 (W)

South West Regional

Convenor: Laurie Sutherland 08 9722 0424 (W)

Administrators in Health Care

Convenor: Jenny Wignall 08 9346 8000 (W)

State Conference

Convenor: Daphne Cross 08 9222 2816 (W)

Youth

Convenor: Nic James 08 9458 9899 (W)

Professional Practice

Convenor: Virginia Scott 08 9450 2833 (W)

Significant consideration is also given to the particular needs of people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and the strong emphasis and recommendation by Aboriginal people of the need for a healing approach, healing the past, the present and preventing future violence.

Following extensive consultation within regions by each Regional Domestic Violence Committee and coordination by the Domestic Violence Prevention Unit *Family and Domestic Violence Integrated Resource Plan* has been produced to guide funding allocation for family and domestic violence initiatives across Western Australia.

Responsibility for the State Government's strategy on Family and Domestic Violence rests with The Minister for Women's Interests, the Hon. Rhonda Parker. It is estimated funding for domestic violence services will increase by more than \$7 Million during the term of the current Government.

Significant commitments and gains being made in a number of areas, include:

- Legislative change in the form of *Restraining Orders Act 1997*; (the first 6 months of operation of this act is currently being reviewed.)
- The establishment and development of 16 Regional Domestic Violence Committees and the funding of regional coordinators to support those committees.
- The funding of new services for victims, perpetrators and children, including:
 - Victim support services in Albany, Kalgoorlie, Narrogin, the Pilbara and Mandurah/Rockingham
 - Children's programs in Albany and Bunbury in addition to those running in the metropolitan area
 - Perpetrator programs in Albany, Bunbury, Geraldton, the Goldfields, Narrogin, the Pilbara and Mandurah/Rockingham.
- The development and provision around the state of a generic training package *Understanding And Responding To Domestic Violence*
- The development of a training manual *Understanding And Responding To Aboriginal Family Violence*
- Initiatives to specifically address the issue of Aboriginal family violence will take place in Narrogin and Northam.
- Aboriginal community education initiatives are being funded in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions.
- A men's crisis centre in Albany will provide the first crisis service of its type in Australia.
- A domestic violence community education campaign is being developed.
- A number of the regional domestic violence committees are also being funded to develop some local community information projects.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Unit, has developed a:

- Best Practice Model for the Provision of Programs for Perpetrator of Domestic Violence in Western Australia; and
- Best Practice Model for Victim Services.

These documents set out essential principles and guidelines to underpin the establishment and delivery of domestic violence services in this state.

The DVPU also has responsibility for managing the allocation made to Western Australia from the Commonwealth Government initiative "*Partnerships Against Domestic Violence*". Tenders will be called for shortly to:

- provide specialist training to staff delivering the recently funded victim support, children's and perpetrators domestic violence services; and
- complete a research project regarding Aboriginal family violence.

In addition each of the 16 regional domestic violence committees is to receive funding for a small project aimed at improving access to domestic violence services by people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, an area of specific concern identified in the *Action Plan*.

The DVPU is a small but busy team. Progressing the Government's strategy on family and domestic violence is occurring because government, non-government and community groups are working hard at meeting the challenges inherent in providing all victims of family and domestic violence with the services and support they need.

CAROLE KAGI

DIRECTOR, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION UNIT

Centrecare Marriage and Family Service

Centrecare Marriage and Family Service is a non-government agency providing domestic violence programs for male perpetrators and female survivors of domestic abuse. The agency head office is located at 456 Hay Street Perth, with branches at Mirrabooka and Carlisle.

The agency shares in the community's responsibility for the identification and prevention of domestic violence. As an agency we have responsibility to provide adequate and constructive responses to protect the survivors of domestic violence and to offer appropriate services to the perpetrators of domestic violence within our resources.

Services provided by Centrecare include individual and couple counselling and group programs for female survivors and male perpetrators of domestic violence.

The nature of abuse

Centrecare has adopted the following definition of domestic abuse:

“Domestic abuse refers to those actions which occur in an unequal relationship, in which one partner uses the imbalance of power to cause fear and physical and/or psychological damage.”

The term “relationship” in the context of domestic abuse includes those persons who are or have been in an established relationship, whether married or de facto, and whether living together, separated or divorced.

Domestic abuse can take a wide variety of forms which are not mutually exclusive, including:

- Physical abuse eg pushing, kicking, punching, choking, hitting, damage to property, and/or including pets. All acts of physical abuse/assault and threats of assault are criminal offences.
- Psychological, emotional and verbal abuse eg threats, insults, harassment which can undermine a person’s self-concept, confidence, perception of reality and self-esteem. This type of abuse includes threats to children’s safety and well-being.
- Social abuse eg keeping a person in isolation from family and friends and/or forbidding social contact outside the family.
- Sexual abuse eg forced compliance in sexual intercourse and other sexual acts, threats of physical violence during sex, indecent assault, forced viewing of pornography, and sexual harassment. Sexual abuse/assault is a criminal offence.
- Financial/economic abuse eg the perpetrator assumes total control and/or withholds access to the family’s economic resources which may include money, the car, and the purchase and ownership of goods and property.

Philosophy

Centrecare is committed to taking appropriate action in all known cases of domestic violence among agency clients. It is therefore essential that an adequate knowledge and skill base in relation to domestic violence is maintained by agency staff. Domestic violence may be identified in a number of ways and at different times during the course of contact with clients. When domestic violence is identified as an issue, workers always pay attention to immediate safety needs and this is given the highest priority in service delivery.

Centrecare is guided by the following eight principles.

1. Each person has the right to live safely and free of fear within their own family and home. The rights of individuals to be protected from violence take precedence over the rights of the family, such as the right to privacy.
2. Domestic abuse is a multifaceted problem which has social, legal, cultural and gender components.
3. Acts of domestic abuse are the sole responsibility of the perpetrator.
4. Violence is the immediate problem to be addressed and the safety of the survivor is paramount.
5. The rights of individuals to make choices about their lives should be respected.
6. Domestic abuse occurs across all socio-economic and cultural groups. People from different cultures may have unique needs which should be acknowledged and considered.
7. The prevention of domestic abuse is the ultimate objective of service delivery. However, the immediate safety needs of individuals is given immediate and highest priority.
8. Children who witness violence are also considered to be survivors. Their interests and needs should be responded to appropriately.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAMS

Women’s program

Each module of the women’s program has individual objectives relevant to that module. The broad group objectives pertaining to the overall women’s program include the following:

- To promote the safety of women and children through the development and implementation of culturally appropriate protection planning.
- To provide group members with knowledge and understanding about the nature of domestic violence and the patterns of abuse.
- To provide a broader understanding of domestic abuse through the discussion of the socio-political context in which domestic abuse occurs.
- To validate and acknowledge the reality of women’s experience of abuse.
- To promote the empowerment of women through culturally appropriate skills training.
- To provide a safe environment for women to express feelings.

- To raise women's feelings of self worth by highlighting women's strengths and capabilities and encouraging self care.
- To provide a non judgmental environment for the decision making process regarding the continuation of the relationship.
- To reinforce that women are not responsible for men's violence.

Men's program

Each module of the men's program also has individual objectives relevant to that module. The broad group objectives pertaining to this program include the following:

- To stop the perpetration of domestic violence.
- To enable perpetrators to recognise domestic violence, its social context and its effect on both survivors and perpetrators.
- To enable perpetrators to accept responsibility for their violence.
- To impart skills basic to living in a non violent relationship eg self control, communication and conflict resolution.
- To promote the safety of women survivors.

Process of referral

Referral to Centrecare's domestic violence program, or to counselling programs, may occur in a number of ways, eg self referral, court referral or agency referral. Contact is initially made with the Client Liaison Officer who assesses whether the behaviour falls into the agency's definition of domestic violence. If domestic violence is identified, information regarding the survivors' safety is requested and referral may be made to a crisis service, refuge, police and/or other relevant services.

Information on relevant issues is also offered to perpetrators eg accommodation. The Client Liaison Officer extends an invitation to attend an interview with a trained domestic violence counsellor to discuss the violence and assess the suitability for individual or group counselling. Couples counselling is only offered if it is deemed safe for the survivor.

Services provided in the metropolitan area

Centrecare is currently offering a range of programs for female survivors and male perpetrators of domestic violence. These programs are provided at the Perth City office, located at 456 Hay Street.

"Abuse to Self respect" is a closed group program for women who are or have been in an abusive relationship. The program is based on a psycho-educational model and comprises two, ten module programs which run coincidentally with the 10 week

school term. Currently these group sessions are offered on Tuesday and Thursday mornings between 9.45 am and 12.15 pm.

The first ten modules are designed to provide a conceptual understanding of domestic violence, address safety issues and to encourage protection planning. The second ten modules have been developed for women who have completed the first ten modules and would like to further develop their personal skills and sense of self. A support group program is also offered on alternative Wednesday mornings to provide the opportunity for ongoing information and support sessions for women who have participated in the "Abuse to Respect" program.

Child care is considered essential in order to enable women to participate in these group sessions and is provided as an integral part of the program.

"Beating your Temper" is an open group program for men who are perpetrators of domestic violence. This is a 16 week program which is offered in two formats – group one is based on the Duluth model and is offered on Tuesday evenings between 6pm and 8.30 pm. Group two is based on a Narrative perspective and is offered on Thursday evenings between 6 and 8.30 pm. To have completed this program a total of 22 sessions should have been attended, 16 weekly sessions and 6 follow up sessions at monthly intervals.

"Beating your Temper" has been developed to challenge the male perpetrator's life long pattern of thinking, rationalising and acting that leads to domestic violence in all its various forms. The primary objective of this program is to encourage the full acceptance of responsibility for violence in offering this service, the safety of the women survivors (and their children) is always the immediate and highest priority.

For further information on Centrecare's domestic violence intervention programs contact the Client Liaison Officer or a Domestic Violence Counsellor on 08 9325 6644.

SUZIE HERBERTE

Conference Sponsors

PRINCIPAL SPONSORS

*Centrelink
Family & Children's Services*

GENERAL SPONSORS

*Dwyer Durack Barristers & Solicitors
Ministry of Justice
Stockton Metcalf Management Options*

**The WA Branch appreciates the support for
the Annual State Conference**

Relationships Australia Domestic Violence Services

“Washing one’s hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral” (Freire).

Relationships Australia was the first non-government counselling agency to be funded for a program aimed at both perpetrators and victims of domestic violence. The funding was received from Family and Children’s Services in 1989. We have also received funds for our Child Witness Program and for a child-focused sexual abuse program and throughout this time RAWA has continued to develop strong links with women’s services in the community.

The staff at Relationships Australia was instrumental in the development of community domestic violence committees in the 1990’s and continue to be active in regional domestic violence co-ordination committees today.

The presence of a specialist domestic violence team in the agency has increased the skills of the general counselling staff by enabling them to identify the signs of power and control issues which signal the presence of violence in a relationship. An increased awareness of the effects of gender roles and the consequent limitations this places on individuals in a relationship has also been an offshoot of the implementation of the specialist domestic violence program within the agency.

RAWA is also committed to continuing the development of sensitive and appropriate services in consultation with people from indigenous communities and CALD groups.

Philosophy

Every person has the right to be safe. RAWA’s intervention is directed towards the perpetrator not the couple or family and the agency also focuses on the safety of the victim as the priority. This two-pronged approach aims at supporting the victims of domestic violence (women and children) whilst assisting the perpetrator to examine his behaviour with regard to self-responsibility for his beliefs, actions, and subsequent choices for change and non-violence. Supporting the rights of victims of domestic violence is always of paramount importance, and intervention with the abused partner emphasises the development of personal safety as well as self-empowerment.

Principles

The perpetrator of violence is always responsible for his use of violence, and the tactics used to control the partner must be addressed individually for change to be achieved. Survivors of domestic violence are supported by this philosophy and in such a way that it does not disempower the person or continue the pattern of control. All groups and counselling is based on a safe place

ethos so that the experience of being abused and the concurrent fear can be expressed, choices can be explored and information on the tactics of control examined.

RAWA’s domestic violence team operates according to a number of principles.

- Women and children have a right to live safely and free of fear within their homes.
- Domestic violence is a range of abusive behaviour perpetrated by one partner upon the other to gain control and maintain control.
- Domestic violence occurs across all cultural and socio-economic groups.
- Domestic violence is a phenomenon based in and perpetrated by existing social conditions which reflect gender inequality and promote male power.
- Domestic violence is perpetrated by men in a majority of cases (95% or reported cases).

Models of Practice Women’s Support Groups

Relationships Australia maintains a consistent focus on supporting women and children who are victims of domestic violence through the provision of counselling and support groups. RAWA’s primary object in the provision of perpetrator groups is the promotion of the safety of the victims. All interventions with perpetrators focus on this objective, and men’s progress, although validated and supported strongly, is secondary to the paramount safety of the victims.

RAWA has developed and implemented support groups for women since 1990 with an aim to:

- provide a supportive, safe environment to tell their story, through the use of a closed membership support group staffed only by female facilitators;
- counteract the isolation of abused women by their partners by providing women with an opportunity to develop a support network with other women who have experienced domestic violence and abuse;
- educate women on the tactics of control used by abusive men to control women and examine the cultural values which underpin and support the abuse of women;
- encourage women to develop safety plans; and
- encourage women to recognise and value their strengths and their rights as a person.

Men's Groups

The men's group model used at RAWA examines the perpetrator's use of control tactics in his relationship with his partner and children. This encourages men to deconstruct their beliefs about gender and power within an audience of their peers and in an environment supportive of change.

This model is psycho-educational in nature and was developed in Duluth, Minnesota. It places emphasis on examining men's actions, intentions and beliefs in the light of a critique of society's gender roles. The Duluth model defines abuse behaviour as the following:

- Physical and sexual violence eg hitting, pushing, kicking, slapping, unwanted sexual touching, rape etc.
- Using coercion and threats eg threatening to hurt her, to report her to the welfare, making her drop her charges, making her do illegal things, threatening to commit suicide.
- Using intimidation eg making her afraid by using looks, actions or gestures, smashing things, destroying her property, displaying weapons.
- Emotional abuse eg putting her down, making her feel bad about herself, humiliating her, calling her names.
- Using isolation eg controlling what she does, who she sees, who she talks to, limiting her outside involvement, using jealousy to justify actions.
- Minimising, denying and blaming eg making light of the abuse, not taking her concern seriously, saying the abuse didn't happen, shifting responsibility for abusive behaviour.
- Using children eg making her feel guilty, using the children to relay messages, using visitation to harass her, threatening to take the children away.
- Using male privilege eg treating her like a servant, making all the big decisions, acting like "master of the castle".
- Using economic abuse eg preventing her from getting/keeping a job, making her ask for money, taking her money.

Relationship Australia maintains a consistent focus on women's safety by:

- Ensuring that contracts with perpetrators clearly state that our primary duty of care is to the victim.
- Ensuring that the perpetrator supplies us with all information in regard to current or ex-partner's contact details so that we may fulfill our obligation to inform the victim/s of any perceived threat to her safety.

ASSOCIATION FOR PSYCHODYNAMIC PSYCHOTHERAPY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA (APPWA)

Psychotherapy Training Programme (Re-advertisement)

Applications are invited from interested professionals for a training program in dynamic psychotherapy with adults, to begin in February 1999. This programme involves three years of didactic lectures and seminars on a part-time basis, with concurrent personal psychotherapy and clinical supervision.

APPWA is the Western Australian affiliate of the Psychotherapy Association of Australia – a national body which operates through a single accredited organisation in each state. Training programmes run by member organisations are approved and monitored by the federal body. Successful completion of this programme allows trainees to apply for membership of APPWA, and thereby to be involved in PAA activities.

As a general rule, applicants will be clinical professionals with at least three years of post-graduate clinical experience. They will need to be working in a setting where they have access to long term therapy cases for supervision.

Initial enquiries and requests for application forms should be directed to:

**Dr John Penman on (08) 9385 2774
(email: penmanj@ozemail.com.au) or
Dr Noel Howieson on
(08) 9387 8930 (fax 9383 7930).**

Closing date for applications is 30th June 1998.

- Monitoring the perpetrator's behaviour by perpetrator weekly self reporting, contact with the victim where possible and any other available sources eg Community Corrections, Family and Children's Services, other counselors, women's group facilitators, refugees.
- Ensuring that all staff undertake regular supervision and have immediate access to the "Serious Matters Team".
- Obtaining an undertaking by the perpetrator to remain non-violent.
- Ensuring that at no time victim or perpetrator groups occur at the same time, in the same place.
- Informing current and previous partners of perpetrator withdrawal from the program.

The purpose of the perpetrator's program is to:

- Assist the participant to understand his acts of violence as a means of controlling the victim's actions, thoughts and feelings by examining the intent of his acts of abuse and the belief system from which he operates.
- Increase the participant's willingness to change his actions by examining the negative effects of his behaviour on his relationship, his partner, his children, his friends and himself.
- Increase the participant's understanding of the causes of his violence by examining the cultural and social context in which he uses violence against his partner.
- Provide the participant with practical information on how to change abusive behaviour by exploring non-controlling and non-violent ways of relating to women.
- Encouraging the participant to become accountable to those he has hurt through his use of violence by encouraging him to acknowledge his abuse and accept responsibility for its impact on his partner and himself.

Men's groups always have a female and male facilitator. This provides an opportunity to model a respectful, equal relationship between a male and a female.

Services provided

Relationships Australia continues to expand its specialist response to domestic violence and currently not only conducts domestic violence women's support groups and men's groups (perpetrator groups) but also children's individual and group counselling and individual counselling for perpetrators and victims.

Support groups for women who are, or have been in relationships in which they have been abused, were instigated in 1990 and continue to be available at Fremantle, East Victoria Park and Midland centres. With both day and evening group times available. Groups for perpetrators currently are run at East Victoria Park, Midland and Fremantle, with future plans for a group at Kingsley, and are held in the evenings. Funding has recently been received to conduct perpetrator programmes in Mandurah/Rockingham, Bunbury and the southern region. These programs will commence in August this year.

A specialist team of child therapists is also available for children who have witnessed domestic violence and their care giver(s). These therapists are available to all our metropolitan centres and an out reach service in Armadale and Rockingham. Groups for children are currently being held at East Victoria Park.

Individual counselling for both perpetrators and survivors of domestic violence is available at all centres.

ROS ADAM

Family and Domestic Violence – One Regional Coordinator's Perspective

Certainly, after working in a broad range of social work positions over the years, taking on a coordinator role for a Domestic Violence Region has had its challenges. Then to take on a second coordinator position!! So what is this role about?

The Coordinator position is funded by the Women's Policy Development Office via the Domestic Violence Prevention Unit and is currently funded on a contract basis for 12 months at a time. The funds are paid to the Regional Committee, if incorporated, or to a sponsoring body if not. In my case, I am responsible to two Regional Domestic Violence Committees and one sponsoring body, Communicare, which has generously housed and resourced the position. Each Committee is comprised of representatives of organisations from the region. These are service providers in the domestic violence field, which include State and Federal Government Departments, non-government welfare agencies and particular representation from Aboriginal and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) groups.

The Coordinator, in conjunction with the domestic violence service providers in the region, aims to improve access to services for victims and perpetrators, to improve services and attempt to establish new services in the region where there are identified gaps in service provision. Each region has a regional plan which outlines the broad objectives that the Coordinator is working towards over a two year period. There are a number of elements that are needed in order that the Coordinator be able to make a difference to what is happening in a domestic violence region. These include:

- a sound networking with key service providers;
- a good relationship with key representatives of the particular groups within the region;
- good communication with the Chairperson of the Committee;
- support from the Committee to actually provide coordination within a service sector in the region; and
- a sound relationship with the Head of the sponsoring organisation in order to get approval and cooperation for any projects requiring additional funding.

One exciting initiative has been the recent collaboration and cooperation across regional boundaries in order that regional funding can be combined and an almost metropolitan-wide project be established. This project aims to provide training in understanding domestic violence for a number of bicultural workers, to enable them to then target their communities with information about domestic and family violence.

KAYE MURRAY

Linking Australian Government Services

Making a difference to the Australian community through

- ◆ responsive, high quality government services and opportunities
- ◆ building partnerships
- ◆ providing a personalised service
- ◆ adopting creative and innovative solutions
- ◆ bringing decision making closer to customers

CENTRELINK – INTO THE FUTURE

The name 'Centrelink' may still be a new one for many people, so if you'd like a quick overview of what we do and how we do it, keep reading....

Centrelink has 5.1 million customers, issues 232 million payments each year and employs 25,000 staff, including some 600 social workers, throughout Australia. Our customers come from all sections of the community and include the retired, families, sole parents, the unemployed, people with disability, carers, some farmers, students and young people.

Centrelink was established as a new Commonwealth Government Agency in September 1997 to allow customers access to a range of related government services in one location.

We provide all the payments and services formerly delivered by the Department of Social Security as well as some services that DEETYA (Department for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs) used to provide. Social Security and DEETA still exist but they are now smaller Departments mainly responsible for formulating policy.

We also administer some services on behalf of Health and Family Services, mainly to do with assessments of income for Childcare Assistance and Aged Care Reform, and provide payments to farmers in hardship or retired farmers who want to transfer their farms to a younger generation, on behalf of the Department of Primary Industries and Energy. It is likely we will provide an even wider range of government services in the future.

One of the newest programs we are involved in is 'Job Network'. Job Network is an integrated program of job matching, job search training and job preparation services, and Centrelink is the gateway to the Job Network.

Unemployed people visit Centrelink Customer Service Centres to register as looking for work, apply for Newstart or Youth Training Allowance and find out about job vacancies and Job Network members on our touchscreens.

We can refer eligible jobseekers to Job Network for job matching, job search training or intensive assistance. You can find out more about the new Job Network on the DEETYA web site at www.deetya.gov.au

Centrelink is one of the major employers of social workers in Australia, with social workers employed at nearly 500 sites. Social workers provide services through Centrelink Customer Service Centres, Youth Service Centres and Centrelink Call Centres. They are also employed in policy development, training, management and staff support among other areas.

The customer groups Centrelink social workers most frequently assist are:

- ◆ young people without adequate family support;
- ◆ women and children escaping domestic violence;
- ◆ people who have been out of the workforce for a lengthy period and need extra assistance to improve their labour force opportunities;
- ◆ sole parents, especially in the early phase of separation, and people caring for disabled children and adults; and
- ◆ people in financial hardship seeking urgent assistance.

The social work section in Centrelink is doing exciting work in the area of youth. With Youth Service Units established all around Australia we are working with youth drop in centres, hostels, hospitals and prisons, and ensuring the most marginalised of our youth have adequate access to income support and community services.

The Youth Homeless Pilot Program involve trials of different models for providing services to young people in many different locations, both rural and urban. The pro-

grams are integrated into Centrelink's social work service thus reaching many young people with limited family support.

Centrelink is also one of the first points of contact for many families and children who are experiencing domestic and family violence. We are committed to directly assisting people experiencing violence by providing a service that takes into account their overall needs. As a result of consultations with community agencies, Centrelink staff and customers and related government departments, we have developed a comprehensive set of strategies for providing services to customers in violent situations.

As the Centrelink social work service moves into the future our challenge is to use new technologies to personalise service, expand choice, increase convenience and support accurate decision making.

The partnership between Centrelink, related government departments and the community is growing quickly. We encourage your feedback as we enter this new era and strive to create an innovative, flexible and responsive Government Agency.

You can give us your feedback on our services by ringing our Customer Service Line on 1800 050 004 or by visiting our web site at <http://www.centrelink.gov.au>

FCS Ad
Enhancing family life

Quality Practice Options

Questionnaire responses

As the Association continues to develop and strengthen its self regulation strategies it is important for the Association to receive the views of the members.

The Quality Practice Options document sets out four possible directions for the Association to take for its future. The Board of Directors will consider this matter at the November 1998 Board meeting

The Quality Practice Working Party urges you to respond to the Questionnaire – your opinions are important.

Mislaidd your copy of the Options document? Call National Office on Freecall 1800 630 124 for another copy. Your Branch representative is Mary Joyce. Tel: (08) 9346 4666. mail: Mary.Joyce@health.wa.gov.au

Youth Policy Subcommittee

Anyone interested in youth policy issues are invited to attend our monthly meetings, held on the 1st Monday of the month at Andrea Way Community Health Centre, Andrea Way, Queens Park, commencing at 1.00 pm.

If you are interested in becoming a member of this committee, and you are a member of the AASW, please contact Nic James on 9458 9899.

CPE Event

Working Together. An interagency response to the needs of parents with mental illness.

The Keynote Speaker is Ms Vicki Cowlin, a social worker and psychologist from Victoria. She has made a special study of this field and has written a number of papers on the subject.

Tuesday 30 June 1998 – 8.30 am to 5.00 pm

This seminar will explore issues concerning parents with mental illness and the needs of their children by:

- ◆ examining current practices;
- ◆ presenting up to date research;
- ◆ discussing current local initiatives;
- ◆ exploring interagency collaboration to work more effectively in this area;
- ◆ using an interactive format to discuss scenarios, issues and options; and
- ◆ presenting consumer and carer perspectives at both personal and agency levels.

Registrations close Friday 26 June. For further information or to obtain a registration form contact Liz Retamal on 08 9443 2934 (business hours) or by fax on 08 9444 5410.

PRESS RELEASE

Brian Wooller President of the WA Branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers was shocked to discover that the fiasco created by the WA Government not signing the Medicare Agreement with Federal Government has led to the possible closure of the Mental Health Outreach Project sponsored by the Women's Health Care House. This project won an international award in 1997 which was presented by the State Minister for Health, Mr Kevin Prince. The irony of a program being worthy of such an award then not receiving funding because of the bickering between federal and state governments is unacceptable according to Mr Wooller.

To lose a program of such eminence through the inability of politicians to behave in an appropriate fashion is disappointing said Mr Wooller.

People cannot wait around unpaid for politicians and governments to sort out their differences. Ordinary people ultimately pay the price through lack of services, confusion and the individual pain and distress of this situation. Surely programs that provide good and appropriate service should receive all of our support. Mr Wooller urges the Minister for Health to ensure that somehow special provisions be put in place to enable this important and world recognised program to continue.

Brian Wooller, AASW (WA Branch) President
14 May 1998

Letters

**The Editor
The West Australian Social Worker**

Dear Greg

When I read this last issue of The West Australian Social Worker I felt I must write to say how impressed I was with its contents. There was so much good news with the Awards for Excellence both to members and recent graduates. I was sorry that I was away and unable to attend the presentations and to miss the talk by Sir Ronald.

The pages of the newsletter are now testimony to the profession's ongoing interest and involvement in current affairs, important social issues and initiatives such as the National Sorry Day. Congratulations to everyone, the profession has really got its tail up.

Yours sincerely

Roma Lewi
13 May 1998

**Hon. Kevin Prince MLA
Minister for Health**

Dear Mr Prince

It is with some sadness that I have discovered that the disagreement between the State Government and Federal Government over health funding is placing the Mental Health Outreach Project sponsored by the Women's Health Care House, in jeopardy.

It is hoped that you and the West Australian Government can find its way clear to ensure that this program continues. I am sure that you will remember that you presented them with an international award for excellence only last year, and it is somewhat sad and worrying that the program will flounder and their expertise be lost through what is essentially political bickering.

Once again it is hoped that you can somehow ensure that the funding continues so that this valuable resource remains for the Western Australian community.

Yours sincerely

Brian Wooller
WA Branch President
14 May 1998

New Members

Welcome to the following new members:

Marianne Hodgson (St Munchins Catholic School)

Colleen Kirby (Health Department of WA)

Barry Luxton (Family & Children's Services)

Rosemary Mero (Family & Children's Services)

Net Watch

Members will have noticed at p. 2 the URL for the WA Branch's recently established Home Page [<http://westausaasw.highway1.com.au>]. A range of **Branch related** information has been uploaded, such as annual reports, how to contact the executive officer, details of members of the committee of management and convenors of sub committees.

All downloadable material is formatted as PDF documents, which retains original formatting. PDFs can also be read on line. These archives include newsletters from April 1997, proceedings of the 1997 State Conference, programs for the 1997 and 1998 conferences and the text of submissions made by the Branch to inquiries.

Newsletters, notices of CPE events and meetings, etc will be regularly uploaded to the Home Page, providing timely information about Branch activities, for members throughout the State.

To ensure ease of access, the Home Page has been designed with few pictures to avoid the penalties of extended download times that occur with sites containing graphic intensive designs and effects. **ED**