



New survey findings released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics

Newsletter

Issue 4, October 2006

This August saw the release of findings from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Personal Safety Survey 4906.0 2005*. The Personal Safety Survey (PSS) details women's and men's experience of physical or sexual assault or threat by male and female perpetrators. Respondents to the survey were asked about their experiences of different types of violence, since the age of 15, by different types of male and female perpetrators (including current partner, previous partner, boyfriend/girlfriend or date, other known man or woman, and stranger). Information was also collected about experience of current and previous partner violence such as frequency and fears of violence, incidents of stalking and other forms of harassment. Where relevant, the PSS includes comparisons with the *1996 Women's Safety Survey (WSS)*, which covered the same broad range of topics as the PSS.

Some findings include:

- Of the 195,300 women who experienced physical assault by a male perpetrator within the last 12 months, 64% of incidents occurred in the home (ABS, 2005, pg 10).
- Men were more likely to be physically assaulted by a stranger in the most recent incident since the age of 15 (71% assaulted by a male stranger); women were more likely to be assaulted by a current or previous partner (51%) and only 15% were assaulted by a stranger (ABS, pg 10 and Table 16, pg 30).
- Of those who have experienced violence (physical or sexual) by a current partner, 70% are women and 30% are men (ABS, Table 20, pg 34).
- Of those who have experienced violence (physical or sexual) by a previous partner, 75.5% are women and 24.5% are men (ABS, Table 21, pg 35).
- For the women who had experienced violence by a previous partner, 36% experienced violence during pregnancy, with 17% of these women stating that violence occurred for the first time while they were pregnant (ABS, 2005, Table 26, page 39).

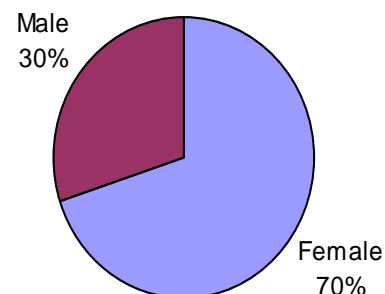
Often when we carry out community education there is an argument put forward that men will be less likely to report physical assaults by partners than women because it is not 'manly' to report being abused. However, the statistic in the PSS regarding whether men and women report physical assaults to the police are very similar. The findings show that 76% of men **do not** tell the police if they are physically assaulted by a partner whereas 83% of women **do not** tell the police if they are physically assaulted by a current partner. However, the figure for women's non-reporting drops to 39% if the assault was carried out by a previous partner (ABS, 2005, Table 7, pg. 21). Unfortunately there are no comparable statistics for men in this situation but given the results for current partners we would expect it to be a similar figure to women's reporting.

Amanda
CRDVS Coordinator

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Percentage of women and men experiencing physical or sexual violence by a current partner



Reference:
Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005),
4906.0 Personal Safety Survey 2005, ABS,
Canberra.

Community Attitudes towards Domestic Violence

Despite being a significant cause of emotional distress, isolation, injury and death, domestic violence has in the past been largely seen by society as a 'private matter'. It has been an accepted practice by society to keep violence in the home 'behind closed doors'.

This historical attitude towards domestic violence has been supported by:

- A long held belief in Western society that to some degree men have the right to use force and control women by whatever means available (male privilege)
- Rigid views about gender roles which endorsed a man's role to be the 'Head of the House', and expected women to submit to the needs and will of their husbands
- Idealisation of family life being entirely loving and safe
- A view that families need to resolve matters themselves and not involve outsiders

In 1782 a British court ruled that a husband could beat his wife so long as the stick he used was no thicker than his thumb. (Hence the term "rule of thumb")

This right was removed in 1891.

Longstanding conservative beliefs that domestic violence is 'acceptable' and 'nobody else's business' serve to keep the cycle of violence going. When men don't feel challenged by community attitudes about their violent behaviour, they don't believe there is a problem and they don't seek support to change their behaviour. Rather they feel safe to claim "She deserved it" "She's at fault" or "She's mad" (Morgan Disney Associates et al, 2000).

Community attitudes which condone domestic violence have also been found to contribute to women keeping silent about abusive experiences (Keys Young, 1998). Some men may still perceive that there are few societal consequences for behaving violently with their partner, however community attitudes are changing and there have been moves to bring domestic violence out into the open. There has been legislation in Queensland relating to domestic violence since 1989 and this was extended in 2003 to include family violence. There are now more services to support victims experiencing abuse, as well as an increase in the number of services supporting perpetrators to change their violent behaviours. There has also been a national media campaign conveying anti-domestic violence messages.*

Newer thinking includes:

- ◆ **Men do not have the right to use power and control over women**
- ◆ **It's not OK to be abused, just because you're in a relationship**
- ◆ **No one has to put up with abusive behaviour of any kind**
- ◆ **Say no to violence and sexual assault**

By talking about domestic violence there is a greater awareness amongst the general community about domestic violence issues, and the power of silence that abusers have over their families can be broken. Community disapproval and action can encourage men to stop being violent towards their partners.

Communities need to be constantly alert so as not to slip back into deep-rooted beliefs that violence between a man and his partner is acceptable, by asking themselves – Does minimising or covering up domestic violence protect the family or leave the family to suffer alone and in silence?

References:

Young K, 1998, *Against the Odds*, PADV, ACT

Morgan Disney & Associates et al, 2000, *Two Lives – Two Worlds*, PADV, ACT

Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 (Qld)



* www.australiasaysno.gov.au/ This website provides detailed information about the national campaign as well as access to the campaign booklet titled "Violence Against Women, Australia Says No".

Will I call the police?

Have you ever felt reluctant to report an incident of domestic or family violence to the police because you're not sure what this involves?

We invited Sgt George Michael, Cairns District Domestic Violence Coordinator at Queensland Police Service, to answer some readers' questions and clarify police roles and responsibilities



Q1. Will police take my report of verbal abuse and/or physical abuses seriously?

A. Police are obligated under their Operational Procedures Manual to investigate all allegations of domestic violence.

Q2. If I call the police what information will I need to provide?

A. If you are the victim of the domestic violence police will need to know your full name and address and the name and address of the offender. This will let police carry out computer checks to see if there is a current domestic violence order in place or any history of domestic violence. A brief outline of what is happening and when it happened will also be required.

Q3. If I am a neighbour can I remain anonymous?

A. Police always ask the identity of callers in an attempt to prevent hoax calls. The identity of the neighbour who reports the disturbance will remain anonymous, unless you witness a serious crime and you are required to give evidence in court.

Q4. What will the police do with my personal details? Will the police tell the offender or victim who reported the incident?

A. If you witness domestic violence it is certainly helpful if you can provide police with a statement if this is needed, so an order can be taken out or an offender charged. However, if this is not the case then police will have no need to rely on the informant's evidence.

Q5. What can police do when they attend the domestic violence incident?

A. Police have the power to enter a premises, demand the occupants name and address, and to search the premises for any weapon, to fully investigate any allegation of domestic violence. Police have the power to take persons into custody to take out a domestic violence order or arrest persons who breach an existing order.

Q6. If I am a neighbour will my involvement with this matter end here, or may I later be asked to appear as a witness in court?

A. A small number of matters that involve domestic violence are contested in court. If what you witness as a neighbour is crucial to the police case, you may be required to give evidence. The investigating police will let you know what is needed if this happens.

Q7. I keep calling the police but the situation hasn't got any better. What suggestions do the police have for neighbours of households where domestic violence occurs?

A. Sometimes neighbours endure very loud and abusive arguments and the sound of doors slamming, but when police arrive all is quiet, or the occupants make no complaints to police and allege that it was just a minor disagreement. If this continues, and it's a rental property, a complaint to the landlord can sometimes assist in changing this behaviour.

Q8. Will the police provide interpreters where there are language difficulties?

A. Police can access interpreter services via the telephone to make sure accurate information is received.

Will I call the police? Continued

Q9. What if I live in a remote area, for example an outer island in the Torres Strait? Is it still worth calling the police? What can I expect from the police in this instance?

A. Police attempt to service all of the state and in the Torres Strait Community Police assist in relaying any domestic violence incidents to state police. If people are in imminent danger in remote areas, police will make every effort to get there and investigate the allegations.

Q10. What does the role of Cairns District DV Coordinator involve and how can this role benefit our newsletter readers?

A. All police receive training in domestic violence laws and procedures, so most police will be able to answer questions in relation to domestic violence.

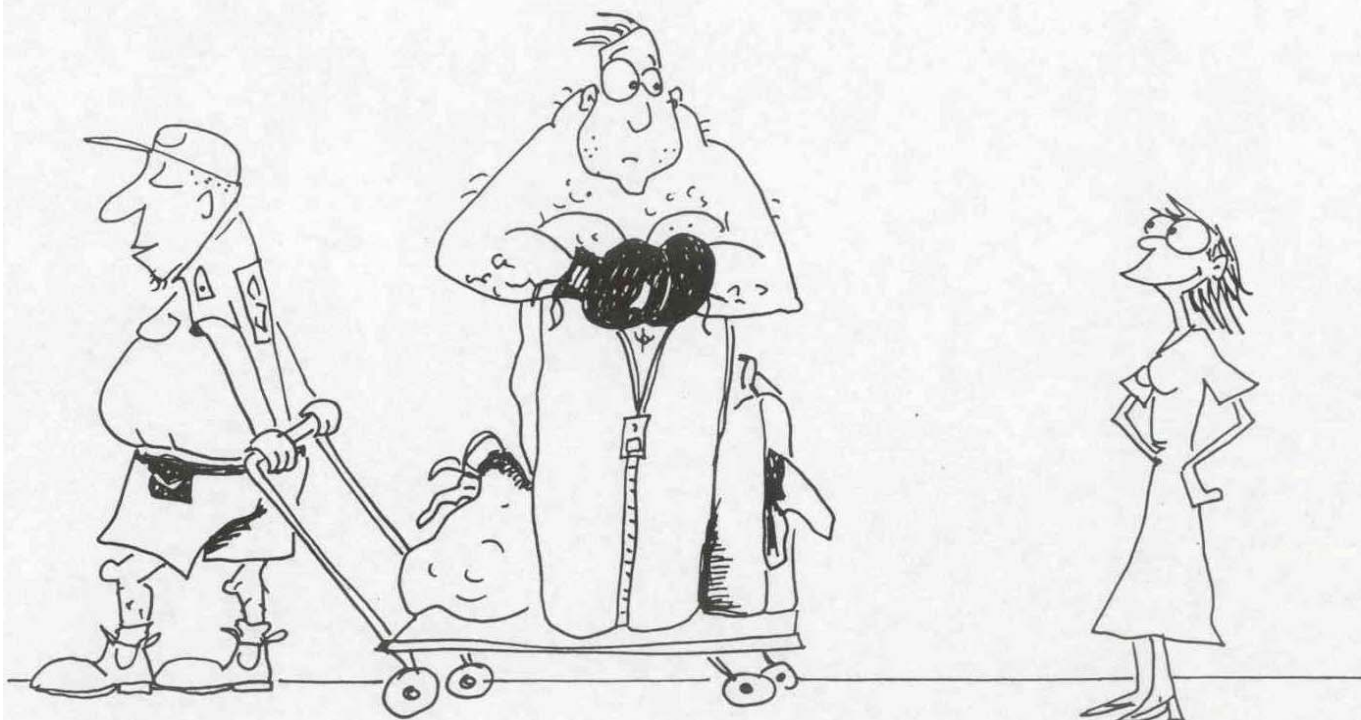
The role of the coordinator is to make sure training on domestic violence is kept up to date, the public are aware of their rights to report domestic violence, and strategies are put in place in an attempt to reduce domestic violence. The coordinator looks to support community groups and agencies who provide services to victims and offenders.

**Thank you to Sgt George Michael
Cairns District DV Coordinator
Queensland Police Service**

BY CALLING THE POLICE YOU:

- Are exercising your rights as a community member
- Can get support through police and legal processes
- Will be sending a clear message to the perpetrator that such behaviour is not acceptable and will not be tolerated

Source: Bolger et al, 1995, *Stop Domestic Violence*, TAFE, Qld.



“TAKE HIM AWAY OFFICER, THERE’S NO ROOM IN MY HOME FOR VIOLENCE.”

Source: **SEND VIOLENCE PACKING** — A Cartoon Storybook by Marta Ponti & Robyn Edwards, 2004, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse.

The cartoon caption is based on words and stories of women who contributed to the research report: *Staying Home / Leaving Violence: Promoting choices for women leaving abusive partners* available at: www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au/PDF%20files/SHLV.pdf

Are you in a Verbally Abusive Relationship?

Some people are uncertain of whether they are in an abusive relationship especially when physical violence hasn't occurred. However, a relationship does not have to contain physical abuse for it to be abusive. In fact, some victims say that the emotional scars inflicted upon them from verbal abuse are harder to heal than the physical ones. Verbal abuse can also be an indicator of future physical violence.

Listed below are examples of how you may feel or what you may experience if you are in a verbally abusive relationship:

- You feel as if you are walking on eggshells most of the time, trying not to upset him.
- You feel upset, tense, drained, angry, sad or depressed and out of control much of the time.
- Your partner switches from charm to anger without warning.
- You feel as if you are in a no-win situation. Your partner twists whatever you say or do so that you seem to be in the wrong.
- You rationalize your partner's poor behaviour and make excuses for it. You even lie to cover it up.
- Conversations and intentions that first seem clear become muddled. You feel confused and doubt your view of things. Sometimes you fear you are going crazy.
- You feel inadequate, incapable, stupid and bad about yourself.
- He is possessive and jealous of time you spend with others including children and family.
- Your partner belittles you or calls you names.
- You often feel lonely, even when your partner is right beside you. You miss the 'him' you used to know and love.
- You feel that you cannot tell anyone what you are going through because they would not understand because they see your partner as charming, wonderful and likeable.
- You feel trapped and hopeless.
- You feel restricted, watched over, scrutinized and accused of things you did not do.
- He tries to control what you wear and to whom you talk to.

Adapted from: Ellis A & Powers MG, 2000, *The Secret of Overcoming Verbal Abuse*, Wilshire Book Company, Hollywood.

If you're in a verbally abusive relationship you might like to have a confidential chat with a domestic violence worker at CRDVS - Call 4040 6100 during business hours

Know Your Rights!

If you are being abused, it is likely that you have gradually given up your rights as a person to avoid upsetting your partner. It may even be hard for you to realise what your rights are. This is a list of rights all people are entitled to:

You have the right:

1. To state opinions, including unpopular ones
2. To express feelings, even if you feel down
3. To privacy
4. To choose religion and lifestyle
5. To be free of fear
6. To have some time for yourself
7. To spend some money as you please
8. To paid employment at fair wages
9. To choose your friends
10. To emotional support from family and friends
11. To be listened to by family and friends
12. To decide whether to have sex or not

Adapted from: NiCarthy G & Davidson S, 2006, *You Can be Free*, Seal Press, Emeryville.

Domestic and Family Violence Counselling

Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service offers free counselling sessions with a counsellor who specifically deals in domestic and family violence issues.



- Counselling sessions involve individual face to face counselling with a domestic violence counsellor in a private, confidential and safe environment.
- Counselling sessions are tailored to help you achieve your personal goals.
- Counselling enables you to discuss your experiences with someone who is understanding and supportive.



Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service

Services We Provide

Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service provides confidential and free services for family members suffering from domestic violence. There are many issues that you can discuss with our staff members such as:

- Information about your rights and the rights of your children
- Steps that may help you to protect yourself from further domestic violence
- Information and assistance in making an application for a Domestic Violence Protection Order
- Support services that are available through our organisation, including Court support
- Counselling for you or your children to overcome the effects of domestic violence

Our Domestic Violence Workers can also refer you to other support services for financial assistance, crisis accommodation, relationship counselling, legal advice on matters of family law, parenting education and many other issues.

Useful contacts

Telephone Contact Numbers

If you're in immediate danger call the POLICE 000

If you want to access safe accommodation (refuge for women and children who are in danger), or you need help and support dealing with a violent relationship you can call **dvconnect**, the Queensland 24hr domestic and family violence telephone service on:

1800 811 811

Cairns Police 4030 7000

Legal Aid Qld 1300 651 188

**Lifeline Telephone Counselling
13 11 14**

Controlled Aggression in the Home
A 12 week education course for men
4050 4955

dvconnect men's information line
1800 600 636

Websites with information about domestic and family violence

www.noviolence.com.au/

www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au

www.families.qld.gov.au/violenceprevention

One member of our team is a Child Counsellor, who can provide face to face counselling for children and young people aged 4 to 16 years who are affected by domestic violence.

We can also provide information about programs for perpetrators of domestic violence.

Our service regularly conducts and participates in workshops, seminars, conferences, lectures and training sessions in Cairns and surrounding areas. If you are not sure that we can help with your needs, then please telephone on (07) 4040 6100 and ask us.

We're open Mon-Fri 9am - 5pm



Phone: (07) 4040 6100



Email: office@dvcairns.org



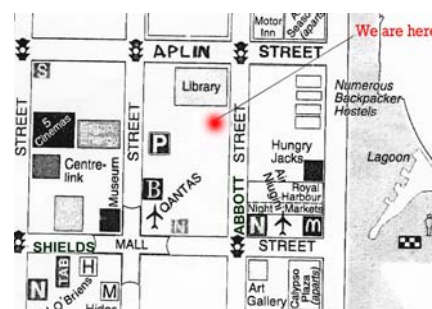
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www.dvcairns.org

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**Look out for the next
issue in
April 2007**