



youth affairs network qld

***DIVERSITY,  
DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE, &  
YOUNG PEOPLE  
FORUM REPORT***

Produced by John Bamborough (Youth Affairs Network of Queensland) in partnership with Othila's Young Women's Housing & Support Service, Immigrant Women's Support Service, Peace Centre, Young Parents Program and the African Australian Association of Queensland.

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*Sponsored by Brisbane City Council*

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## THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WORKING GROUP

### **BACKGROUND & HISTORY:**

The Domestic Violence Working Group (DVWG) is comprised of workers from the community sector who work with young people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Members of the DVWG include the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ), Immigrant Women's Support Service (IWSS), Othila's Young Women's Housing and Support Service, the Peace Centre, Young Parent's Program, and the African Australian Association of Queensland. The above organisations are also members of the NESB Youth Issues Network (NESBYIN) that is a statewide issues based Network comprising of 130 members. NESBYIN supports the NESB Policy Officer at YANQ and visa versa. The DVWG was originally established in June 1998 to provide the following opportunities:

- A forum where community workers share information.
- Explore intra-group opportunities regarding individual skill development.
- Explore the impacts of domestic violence on young people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) and seek opportunities to raise awareness of these in the broader community.
- Influence policy development as it relates to domestic violence and young people from NESB.
- Explore service delivery/practice issues as they relate to domestic violence and young people from NESB.

The DVWG decided to host a forum as the vehicle through which policy development issues, service delivery issues, and the impacts of domestic violence on NESB young people could be explored.

## **PURPOSE OF THE FORUM**

The *Diversity, Domestic Violence and Young People Forum* held at Yungaba on May 10th 1999 was developed as a means to explore the issue of domestic violence in culturally and linguistically diverse communities and its impacts on young people. Workshop questions were developed to facilitate discussion among participants regarding policy development issues and service delivery issues. It was also intended that information gathered would feed into the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland's (YANO) policy development processes in this area. The forum was intentionally held during Domestic Violence Prevention Week 1999 and included on the Queensland Calendar of Events. The DVWG also believed that it was necessary to document forum findings and issues to enable this report to be widely distributed to stakeholders.

### **WORKSHOP QUESTIONS**

1. What are the key issues and/or cultural protocols that need to be considered in policy development processes as they relate to domestic violence, cultural diversity and young people?
2. What service delivery models and/or components of service delivery are most relevant when responding to NESB young people who have experienced or are experiencing domestic violence?

### **SPECIFIC AIMS OF THE FORUM**

- Raise awareness with government and community workers about issues regarding domestic violence and NESB young people.
- Provide a forum for workers to come together and raise concerns, issues, and recommended responses.
- To locate issues within an ideological, political and social context.
- Information derived from the forum to feed into YANO's policy development processes.

### **FORUM THEMES**

- The relationship between domestic violence, culture and gender.
- Identifying key practice issues.
- Young people's experience of domestic violence.
- Responding to young people and their families.
- Policy and resourcing issues.

### **FORUM PRESENTERS & PRESENTATIONS**

1. Ron Frey (University of Queensland/Queensland University of Technology) and Raquel Aldunate (IWSS) - Defining the Relationship between domestic violence and culture.
2. Francine Seeto (Keynote Speaker) - Working with NESB Young People.
3. How-Kee Ling (University of Queensland) - Service Delivery Issues.
4. Nga Hayden (Vietnamese Women's Association), Meetya Iyer (Domestic Violence Resource Centre), and Cecilia Barassi-Rubio (IWSS) - Women's Discussion Panel.
5. Marina Castellanos (Centre for Multicultural Pastoral Care) - Domestic Violence and Religion.
6. Muna Ibrahim (Islamic Women's Association) - Domestic Violence and Religion.
7. Andrew De' Ambrosis (Kinections) - Overview of Perpetrator Programs.
8. Ron Frey and Gary Foster (Kinections) - Perpetrator Programs and Masculinity Issues

## ISSUES RAISED BY PRESENTERS AND PARTICIPANTS

### *Defining the Relationship Between Domestic Violence and Culture (Ron Frey & Raquel Aldunate)*

In the Australian context, white Anglo culture is dominant. Due to this overarching dominance, Anglo culture is able to exert its influence in areas such as the categorisation of other cultures based upon underlying values, legal responses to domestic violence, significant contributions to the maintenance of patriarchy, and overriding diverse cultures in critical decision making processes in favour of the dominant culture.

Other points raised include the following:

- Anglo-Australian culture often defines itself as complicated, yet conversely, expects other cultures to be less complicated.
- The oppression of women through violence cuts across many cultures, not just diverse cultures.
- Cultures change over time, even if this process is resisted by those in it.
- A basic human respect and dignity for each other should guide all cultures rather than being dominated by one culture, men, violence, and/or oppression.
- Domestic violence issues are often dealt with differently when people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds are involved due to 'perceived cultural barriers'. This raises issues of safety for women, children and young people.
- Globalisation has developed the scope for new opportunities regarding the development of constructive relationships that may assist to break down previously held stereotypes, networking, and remarkable cultural change affecting many people.

### *Working with NESB Young People (Francine Seeto)*

All community sector organisations, especially the youth sector, should develop, implement, and monitor access and equity policies. On-going cross-cultural youth work training is essential. However, one off training can often be ineffective. Essentially, appropriate cross-cultural youth work practice starts with the individual developing an understanding of how they view the world and the cultural framework that influences this perception. Youth workers therefore need to consciously acknowledge their own cultural background. It was stated that young people are often associated with alternative and/or diverse cultures, whether this is Rasta, surffe, NESB, or whatever. Youth workers also need to develop an understanding of multiculturalism, otherwise, discomfort can arise regarding intervention due to an inability to see the world through the cultural framework held by a young person the worker is connected to.

Networking in youth work is critical. Workers who develop strong networks are often better positioned to assist and support young people from NESB. There is a dearth of ethno-specific youth workers in the field. This creates a gap in opportunities for peer learning processes. Settlement issues as they relate to refugee young people or newly arrived migrant young people are not well understood, yet these issues impact greatly. Art was flagged as an extremely positive medium through which to explore and identify common ground between workers and young people or across groups of young people. Time and resource issues often prevent youth workers from being able to be innovative and creative. Debate about culture can often cloud more relevant issues such as class and gender.

### *Service Delivery Issues (How-Kee Ling)*

Again, this presentation raised issues regarding settlement and its impacts on young people from NESB. For older members of the family, settlement issues are often related to fears about children and the family unit as a whole losing their culture. The presenter termed this process as the 'onslaught of western culture' in a dominating context. What does this mean for the notion of multiculturalism, especially regarding the principle of freedom of affiliation to a religion or culture?

Some key service delivery issues raised include service responses being developed around stereotypes of young people, cultural excuses regarding domestic violence impeding service responses, and the categorisation of diverse cultures as an impediment to service delivery and responses.

Services need to work with families rather than just the individual. This work needs to be undertaken in a non-threatening way because some cultures are very suspicious of social workers and people in authoritative positions. Service providers also need to concentrate on working with more positive aspects of a particular culture rather than just focusing on negatives. It is also important to be creative about issues of domestic violence. For instance, not naming violence directly but addressing the issue through other strategies depending on the background of the victim. It was also suggested that community workers could facilitate the use of traditional healing processes with victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. Finally, human rights as a basis for prevention and intervention into domestic violence was flagged as a possible barrier among men in some cultures. This can be prevalent where the male gender is dominant and a human rights analysis emerges as a legitimate threat to their status and power.

### *Women's Discussion Panel (Nga Hayden, Meetha Iyer & Cecilia Barassi-Rubio)*

Clearly, it was the view of both presenters and participants that domestic violence is a legal issue, as well of course, as a social and political concern. Community workers may need to consider 'reflective practice processes' as a way to develop an understanding of the kind of responses they create. The education system was named as an institution that directly and indirectly sustains discrimination and racism against certain groups. Again, settlement issues were raised as major factors for NESB migrants. Young NESB people having to grapple with traditional cultural values and the dominant values in the new host country were identified as significant stressors.

Immigration processes where men sponsor young women was named as a concern because it is believed that this places some young women at the mercy of their sponsor and therefore vulnerable to exploitation. It was stated that we live in a culture of denial regarding the absolute oppression of women. Violence for instance, is a core part of western culture, which plays itself out in sport, media, and television predominantly. This culture of violence supports the violent oppression of women perpetrated by men. The culture of blaming the victim also contributes to the continued oppression of women.

### *Domestic Violence and Religion (Marina Castellanos & Muna Ibrahim)*

Religion as a set of beliefs and values, can prevent women from speaking out about domestic violence. However, global belief systems are permeating all cultures and religions, which means some religions are beginning to recognise issues regarding the violent oppression of women. Some women may also not want to speak out about incidences of domestic violence because of the perception that they are being disloyal to their family and religion. This especially affects

young women because of the added burden and pressure of being ostracized from the family and community. This situation can be compounded even further because the male perpetrator can be seen as a figure of authority that should not be questioned by any woman, especially young women. Additionally, it is also difficult for many young women to report incidences of domestic violence because this would mean involving government agents such as the police, who in many cultures are feared because of past experiences.

It was stated that some religions such as Islam do not condone violence of any sort and that this is contrary to popular belief. Seemingly there are common perceptions that violence against women is religiously condoned or supported when it is often grounded in cultural practices. It was suggested that religious leaders should be available to assist where incidences of domestic violence are occurring. Any kind of violence against women and children is never justified because it is clearly a crime. It was also stated that for religious people it is a sin. Religious leaders should respond with similar statements rather than ones which indicate that it is the woman's role to keep the family together regardless of her being subjected to violence.

### *Overview of Perpetrator Programs and Masculinity Issues (Ron Frey, Gary Foster & Andrew De' Ambrosis)*

On average 10,000 protection orders are served against perpetrators of domestic violence per year in Queensland. Men breach 60% of these protection orders. If men are fined because they have perpetrated incidences of domestic violence, this can often hurt women and children too because the fine has to be paid from the 'family budget'. The need for more mandatory men's programs was raised. However, it must be noted that any increases in resources for men's programs **should not** be at the expense of women's programs. Currently there is an overall budget of 13 Million Dollars per annum, of which 2.8% is channeled into men's programs.

The construction of masculinity in all cultures, but especially western culture, needs to be deconstructed through education systems and other key social institutions. Currently notions of masculinity are built around concepts of power and control. Men are socialised into this paradigm from a very early age. Power and control are concepts that are explicitly linked to competitiveness. Indeed, power and control are probably the key issues preventing the deconstruction of masculinity and the contradiction of domestic violence.

## FORUM WORKSHOP RECOMMENDATIONS

*Question 1: What are the key issues and/or cultural protocols that need to be considered in policy development processes as they relate to domestic violence, cultural diversity and young people?*

- The safety of women, children and young people is paramount.
- A standard definition of domestic violence needs to be developed that is accepted by all cultures and communities. This would ensure a solid base from which to further develop policy responses.
- Issues regarding dating violence need to be included in all policy development processes.
- Policies in this area need to work around issues for young people regarding gratuitous concurrence because of respect for authority. In incidences where such issues arise, it could be worth touching base with impartial people who are conversant with cultural protocols and norms as a way of gaining a better understanding of what might be occurring.
- Language and terminology in any policy in this area needs to be 'user friendly'.
- There is an identified need for more resources in the area of service responses with young people who are victims or perpetrators of domestic violence.
- Policies must recognise and include same sex relationships.
- Policy responses must be inclusive of women and men.
- Policies should not confer with stereotypes or with discriminatory practices/assumptions.
- Policy developers need to be clear about what is meant by the term *cultural diversity*.
- Access and equity policies within government and not-for-profit organisations are critical.
- Responses need to be tied into current youth culture and structures.
- Policy makers and policy development processes must as a matter of course, consult with a range of young people regarding policy initiatives.

*Question 2: What service delivery models and/or components of service delivery are most relevant when responding to young people from NESB who have or are experiencing domestic violence?*

- There is an urgent need for workers from a diverse range of backgrounds who are competent in working cross-culturally in youth shelters and services.
- More resources need to be put into youth services that deal with domestic violence related issues.
- Government and community services need to develop more coordinated integration models of service delivery to ensure that holistic practices become standard and referral processes greatly enhanced.
- Outreach in service delivery is absolutely essential when working with NESB young people and NESB communities generally.
- Peer support mechanisms involving community workers should be explored by all services as an urgent human resource management issue.
- On-going cross-cultural education and training should be made available for community workers.
- Services with resourcing roles should be resourced financially to employ Access and Equity Resource Officers who would be responsible for ensuring that programs implement and monitor access and equity initiatives.
- Housing options are critical for young people from NESB. These must be culturally appropriate, safe, secure and affordable.
- More opportunities should be given to NESB young people to be employed as youth workers. Additionally, positive discrimination could occur through selection processes where a young



person may have bilingual skills and/or a bicultural background, especially in youth sector agencies responding to issues of domestic violence.

## RECOMMENDED POLICY DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

### GOVERNMENT POLICY

- Genuine consultation needs to occur with young people regarding the development of policies that effect their lives in the area of domestic violence.
- Policies should not detract from the safety of women, children and/or young people because of cultural considerations. For example, the perception that domestic violence may be common practice in some cultures should not be used to support/justify any perpetrator's actions in a way that will detract from the safety of women, children and/or young people.
- A standard definition of 'domestic violence' and cultural diversity' needs to be developed through a process of consultation with the full range of ethnic communities in Queensland.
- Policies should articulate the need for community workers to work with families as well as young people who are victims of domestic violence.
- Policies should articulate as a standard requirement, the need for all community services to develop, implement and monitor on an on-going basis, access and equity policies.
- Policies should articulate a requirement to work with perpetrators of domestic violence as a way to break the nexus. Such work with perpetrators must include evaluation processes that are managed by external stakeholders.
- Policies need to articulate that the same options should be given to NESB young women who are victims of domestic violence as any other group. Options should not change due to culture, however, consequences relating to options should be explored.
- Issues of gratuitous concurrence should be considered in policies. This may mean that people with specialist knowledge of a particular culture are available to be consulted regarding issues that may impede young people from disclosing critical information.
- Policies should articulate that it is a fundamental right for any individual to request the assistance of a professional interpreter.
- Policies should ensure that community development occurs in each community regarding the issues of domestic violence and violence generally.
- Policies should ensure that outreach work is a core component of service delivery.
- Policies should ensure that in the event that a victim of domestic violence is ostracized from their respective community, that there is always on-going support mechanisms available for the person involved.
- Policies should encourage the development of culturally appropriate mediation processes.
- Policies should ensure that all newly arrived migrants are given comprehensive and user friendly information regarding violence and the law in the Australian context.
- Policies should articulate the need for service responses to explore creative and innovative approaches with young people who have or are experiencing domestic violence. For instance art therapy.
- Policies should articulate the need for the development of 'culturally safe places' for NESB women experiencing domestic violence or at risk of domestic violence.
- Policies should articulate as a minimum standard, the provision of on-going cross-cultural training and education.
- Each government department and agency should seek to develop Access and Equity Resource Officer positions that would resource the whole community on access issues from a specialist knowledge base.
- The Office of Youth Affairs located in the Department of Families Youth and Community Care should as a matter of urgency, develop and implement a NESB Youth Strategy to ensure collaborative and coordinated policy and service provision for these young people. Such a strategy should be developed in partnership with the youth peak, YANQ, and NESBYIN.

## **ORGANISATIONAL POLICY**

- As mentioned above, all human service organisations must develop, implement, monitor and evaluate access and equity policies. Service providers should not defer from such an exercise due to resourcing issues. If such issues are relevant in attempts to develop accessible services to the whole community, then government or other funding providers need to be aware of this as a matter of urgency, otherwise the problem will never be resolved. Service providers should also be aware that there is a whole-of-government policy designed to manage multiculturalism in Queensland that specifies all people being able to fully access services. This could act as a useful tool if resourcing issues need to be presented to government funding bodies. Service providers should also be aware that they could link in with their peak body, for example YANQ, for support in raising resourcing issues with government.
- Organisational induction processes should include a core component on access and equity and ways the respective organisations are ensuring these are carried out across all workers.
- Organisations need to be networked with key stakeholders in the NESB sector so support, advice and information is accessible. Key stakeholders may include NESB workers and community leaders such as elders, religious leaders connected to religious institutions, advocates and so on.
- Organisations should invite key ethnic community leaders to their organisational events, or to simply begin the process of developing relationships.
- Organisations need to be proactive about locating translated information on a range of services and issues in their community.
- Services should be proactive regarding the development of community worker peer support processes involving NESB workers.
- Service providers should explore the potential for outreach work and make representations to government if this is impeded due to resourcing issues.

## FORUM EVALUATION

80 participants attended the forum. Of these, 18 completed and returned forum evaluation forms. The results are as follows:

1. Participants were asked about their expectations regarding the forum. Of those that completed the evaluation forms, all stated that opportunities to develop knowledge regarding the forum themes and information sharing were their expectations of the forum. Others stated that they also expected to explore issues relating to NESB young people and domestic violence open debate around issues raised and networking opportunities.
2. Participants were asked to what extent had the forum met their expectations? Of those that completed the evaluation forms, 11 participants felt that the forum met their expectations. Of these 11, 10 stated that their expectations were met above and beyond their original predictions. 4 Participants declined from answering this question on the evaluation form. The remaining 3 responses indicated that while the forum did not meet their original expectations, it was however, quite informative and interesting.
3. Participants were asked about what they thought was the most useful aspect of the forum for them. Responses from the 18 participants ranged from the following:
  - Useful strategies
  - Relevant stakeholders in attendance
  - Holistic exploration of issues
  - Women's Discussion Panel and the focus on men's issues
  - Diversity of speakers and presentation topics
  - Networking opportunities
  - Practice issues
4. Participants were asked about what they would have liked to have changed regarding the forum or what they would like to see done differently the next time? Of the 18 respondents, 7 stated that sticking to time would have been more beneficial, 7 stated the word 'nothing', 1 person stated more discussion regarding children's issues, 2 people stated that they would have liked to have seen more young people in attendance, and the remaining 1 stated that the food could have been better.
5. Participants were asked if they had any other comments? 1 person stated that they would recommend longer breaks between speakers, 3 people declined from answering this question, 9 people stated that they thought the presentations were excellent, 4 people stated that the food could have been much healthier, and 6 people said that they thought the venue was very appropriate. NOTE: Numbers of respondents do not add up to 18 in this question because most participants choose to put more than one comment.
6. Finally, participants were asked about any ideas they had regarding further forums they might be interested in attending? 2 people stated that they would like to see more young people in attendance at future forums, with 1 of these also stating that a focus on children would be beneficial. 10 people declined to respond to this question. Of the remaining 6, 2 people stated that they would like to see workshops on specific skills development, 1 person stated that they would like to see a focus on female genital mutilation issues, 1 person stated that they would like to see a focus on bullying in the workplace and schools, 1 person suggested shorter sessions in future forums, and 1 person stated that they would like to see a focus on lobbying processes for funding.

Overall, evaluation forms indicate that most people felt the forum was very successful. Very few respondents couched comments in a negative context. It is acknowledged that the most predominant issue for participants who took the time to complete evaluation forms was 'sticking

to time'. It is also positive to see that many people felt the presentations were informative, interesting, challenging and diverse enough to have something to offer everyone.

Many thanks to all the wonderful presenters and organisers of this event. It would never have been possible without their efforts and commitment. Special thanks to Brisbane City Council for providing funding to support the development of the forum.

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