

SUMMARY VOLUME

WORKING WITH ADOLESCENTS TO

**PREVENT
DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE**

RURAL TOWN MODEL

A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

The NCAVAC Unit would like to thank the following groups and individuals for their involvement in and contributions to the domestic violence prevention project:

- the National Anti-Crime Strategy;
- the Project Management Group, comprising Superintendent Ron Carey (and, more recently, Superintendent Max Jones) of the Western Australian Police, Ms Sue Millbank from the South Australian Attorney-General's Department, Mr Scotty Mitchell of the Northern Territory Police, and Ms Judy Putt from the NCAVAC Unit; and
- the research team and authors of the original report from the Crime Research Centre at the University of Western Australia — Ms Lynn Atkinson, Dr Harry Blagg, Dr David Indermaur — and the Centre's Director, Professor Richard Harding.

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FOREWORD



The prevention of domestic violence is an important and challenging issue for all Australians. We need to look at ways of preventing domestic violence by working with families, children and young people. This is one of the most significant approaches we can use to reduce domestic violence amongst future generations of Australians.

The research summarised in this report is the product of a partnership between the Commonwealth Government's National Campaign Against Violence and Crime (NCAVAC) and the National Anti-Crime Strategy (NACS). As a joint initiative, both organisations are supporting research and the piloting of a demonstration project in order to enhance our understanding of how to work with adolescents to assist in preventing domestic violence.

The full report by the West Australian Crime Research Centre provides an insightful overview of adolescent violence prevention literature and a practical register of relevant violence prevention programs in Australia. It also details the researchers' model program for rural towns which will be implemented in a rural town in Western Australia.

Together the findings from the research and the pilot project will assist others to consider new and improved ways of working with adolescents to prevent domestic violence.

I hope you find the report a useful and thought provoking document. As the initial investigative phase of a project that focuses on young people, especially in rural settings, it represents a critical step towards the prevention of domestic violence.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Vanstone".

Senator the Hon. Amanda Vanstone

MINISTER FOR JUSTICE

P R E F A C E

This summary volume prepared by the National Campaign Against Violence and Crime Unit (NCAVAC) is based on the full report *Working with Adolescents to Prevent Domestic Violence: Rural Town Model*, which is available in hard copy form at no cost from NCAVAC or can be accessed on the NCAVAC website (www.ncavac.gov.au).

The main aim of the summary is to convey key information and conclusions to practitioners and policy makers interested in preventing domestic violence by working with adolescents.

I N T R O D U C T I O N

BACKGROUND

The prevention of domestic violence was identified as a priority area quite separately by the National Campaign Against Violence and Crime (NCAVAC) and by the National Anti-Crime Strategy (NACS). It is also the cornerstone of the Commonwealth Government initiative *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence*, launched by the Prime Minister in November 1997.

Based on a preliminary analysis of the literature, it appeared that working with adolescents was a promising way of approaching the primary prevention of domestic violence. This approach was supported by the recommendations that emerged from the National Domestic Violence Forum. Held in September 1996, the Forum included representatives from Commonwealth and State governments, and the community sector.

Early in 1997, NCAVAC and NACS decided to work together on a joint project, which has the overall aim of identifying effective ways of working with adolescents to prevent domestic violence. It is designed to take place in two stages. The main phase of Stage 1 has been completed and is the subject of this summary volume. The tasks for Stage 1 included a literature review, an audit of Australian violence prevention programs, and the design of a pilot program. Stage 2 involves the piloting of a program in Western Australia.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of Stage 1 were to:

- identify the nature and extent of existing violence prevention programs and resources for adolescents, including those which specifically address domestic violence;
- identify the nature and extent of existing interventions for adolescents at risk of becoming perpetrators or victims of domestic violence and those already involved in violent or aggressive intimate relationships with their peers;

- establish key features and educational resources that could be incorporated into a domestic violence prevention program for adolescents; and
- establish key features that should be incorporated into an early intervention program for adolescents at risk of becoming perpetrators or victims of domestic violence and adolescents already involved in violent or aggressive intimate relationships with their peers.

COMPLETION OF STAGE 1

The Crime Research Centre at the University of Western Australia was selected to undertake Stage 1 of the project. Its proposal addressed the objectives of Stage 1 *via* a survey and an analysis of the international literature. It also had the additional features of an environmental assessment of a rural town and a further phase involving consultations with Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. This emphasis was based on earlier research by the Centre that had shown that the incidence of domestic violence was high in rural Western Australia and amongst the Indigenous population (Ferrante *et al*, 1996).

The Crime Research Centre completed Stage 1 of the project between September 1997 and January 1998—its full report on Stage 1 is available from NCAVAC. The Centre is preparing a separate report on its consultations with Aboriginal communities.

This summary report has been prepared by NCAVAC and is an abridged version of the full report by the Crime Research Centre. The summary outlines the Centre's research methodology, sets out the key findings of the literature review and audit of violence prevention programs, and describes the development of the rural town model and specific recommendations relating to future piloting of the model in the Western Australian town of Northam. The summary report also draws from the main report important implications for national policy and practice.

OUTCOMES OF STAGE 1

The two major outcomes of the research project are:

- a national register of violence prevention programs for adolescents; and
- a model program for rural towns that includes a dual approach for work with adolescents and a framework for implementation.

The national register of violence prevention programs is an outcome of the audit phase of the project and contains 98 programs, one third of which are situated in schools. The register is at Appendix 3 of the full report and is also available as a database that can be accessed from NCAVAC's website. The register indicates the range of violence prevention programs that are available for adolescents, rather than being a complete record of all such programs.

The model program for rural towns is an outcome of the research as a whole and is centred around:

- a curriculum based project run within the school with the support of relevant agencies; and
- a 'case work' approach for young people (and their families) exhibiting violent behaviour and those deemed at risk.

To implement the strategy, the model incorporates a project management structure involving a cross-section of agencies, the appointment of a full time project coordinator, and the provision of counselling services for at risk youth.

STAGE 2

For Stage 2 of the NCAVAC/NACS project on domestic violence prevention, funding will be provided to actually test out the model program in the Western Australian town of Northam. The pilot project is due to begin in mid-1998 and will run for at least a year. Preliminary results should be available in July 1999.

SECTION 1: RESEARCH PROCESS

INTRODUCTION

This section outlines the research methodology adopted by the Crime Research Centre, while subsequent sections present the findings of the various phases of the research.

The different components of Stage 1 of the research project were:

- a review of the literature on adolescents and violence prevention;
- a national audit of past and present violence prevention programs for adolescents in Australia;
- an environmental assessment of a rural town;
- community consultation; and
- the development of a model program for rural towns.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review and the audit of programs were intended to identify the most highly regarded and appropriate strategies for reducing the likelihood of adolescent relationship violence. These strategies would then inform the development of the model program.

Because of the breadth of the literature available, there was a need to be selective and strategic in moving through the different areas. The review was guided by the critical question: what evidence is there for the effectiveness of violence prevention projects?

The literature was considered in three main areas:

- contemporary developments in understandings of violence;
- policy responses; and
- evaluated programs.

What evidence is there for the effectiveness of violence prevention projects?

The key area for the literature review was the third area—the evaluation of intervention programs. However, to understand the grounds upon which interventions are developed and the reasons why they may be successful, it was first necessary to consider contemporary research on the development and dynamics of relationship violence. This provides the theoretical rationale for violence prevention strategies. The next step was to consider statements of policy that adopt a position in relation to violence. The final stage of the review involved examining literature on evaluated interventions and programs.

The key findings of the literature review are outlined in Section 2.

AUDIT PHASE

The national audit of violence prevention programs for adolescents was conducted at the same time as the literature review. The purpose of the audit was to unearth programs operating around Australia (currently or in the recent past), to understand and describe the programs, and to assess their success. The audit was intended both to provide the project with information from the field and to produce a register of programs that would be useful and accessible to anyone working in the area.

In establishing the methodology for the audit, the research team asked the question: what does a violence prevention program for adolescents look like? The research team assumed discrete programs for the most part, with a specific focus on violence prevention, and roots in theories of violence on the one hand, and theories around its prevention on the other. The research team also assumed certain boundaries in relation to program type, time frame, clientele, location, and so on, and these assumptions underpinned the very idea of an audit as well as the choice of methodology: to elicit the information by questionnaire.

*What does
a violence
prevention
program for
adolescents
look like?*

Work began on the questionnaire in September 1997. The questionnaire was trialed and feedback was incorporated into the final form. The questionnaire asked for information on the clientele, location, *modus operandi*, theoretical underpinnings, funding and evaluation of specific programs.

The introduction to the questionnaire defined ‘program’ as inclusive of ‘resources, programs, educational curricula, specific intervention strategies, and support groups aimed at preventing current (adolescent) or future (adult) violence, including, but not only, domestic violence’.

To be eligible, the program needed to focus on or include, and be relevant to, adolescents. It needed to be current, or to have operated in some form, including as a pilot, at some time during the last three years. The questionnaire is at Appendix 2 of the Crime Research Centre’s full report.

The questionnaire was sent to organisations and agencies in Australia that were most likely to fund or run such programs. Over 500 questionnaires were distributed to people and agencies positioned to run adolescent violence prevention programs.

In all, 133 completed questionnaires were returned. Each of the completed questionnaires described what the respondent defined as a violence prevention program for adolescents. About three-quarters of these programs (98) actually met the research team’s criteria—a response which was greater than anticipated.

The key findings of the audit phase are outlined in Section 3.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT OF A RURAL TOWN

As part of Stage 1, the research team undertook an environmental assessment of a particular rural locale to examine the feasibility of developing a pilot project for rural communities. Earlier research by the Crime Research Centre had identified rural towns as particularly at risk of domestic violence, and a key question for this research project was: what kind of pilot program could be run in a rural town?

What kind of pilot program could be run in a rural town?

The Western Australian wheatbelt town of Northam was chosen as an appropriate site for the environmental assessment. Northam is about one hour's drive from Perth and was considered appropriate because it fits the description of a 'depressed rural town'. It exhibits many of the socioeconomic features congruent with sites of high rates of domestic violence, including:

- economic hardship;
- social conservatism;
- a lack of post secondary educational opportunities;
- high youth unemployment;
- a lack of social opportunities; and
- emigration of the young adult population.

Another factor in the choice of Northam was the town's proven track record in developing local multi agency strategies for dealing with a diversity of youth related issues. A third factor was the well established and significant Aboriginal presence in the area.

The research team made three consultation visits to Northam to examine existing services, perceptions of need and general receptivity to new input. The assessment was largely carried out through consultations with relevant agencies, individuals and community organisations. The research team convened meetings with health and mental health representatives, workers from the Waminda Women's Refuge, representatives from Indigenous organisations with an interest in domestic violence issues, Northam Senior High School and the Western Australian Department of Family and Children's Services. These meetings provided valuable information and confirmed that Northam had some well established foundations on which to base any new program.

The findings of the environmental assessment of Northam are outlined in Section 5.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The research project involved considerable community consultation.

Early in the project, the research team initiated the establishment of a Reference Group consisting of Western Australian representatives of relevant agencies and specific interest groups. The Reference Group met twice to consider the progress of Stage 1. The membership of the Reference Group is set out at Appendix 1 of the full report.

Throughout the project, the research team had considerable contact with practitioners in the youth, domestic violence and juvenile justice sectors, primarily during the environmental assessment of Northam and as part of the audit research process. Field visits were also made to program sites in Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE RURAL TOWN MODEL

The research team developed a model program for rural towns based on:

- the findings of the literature review and the audit of Australian adolescent violence prevention programs;
- the environmental assessment of Northam;
- consultations with practitioners and key stakeholders; and
- prior knowledge of, and analysis of the literature on, interagency, multi-disciplinary approaches to program development and service delivery.

In relation to the last point, Section 4 in the full report analyses the advantages of, and barriers to, interagency cooperation. The research team drew on this analysis as well as the other research to provide recommendations concerning a model program for rural towns.

Essentially, the research team made two sets of recommendations. The first set relates to a generic program model and its implementation and could broadly apply to rural regional centres across Australia. These recommendations are outlined in Section 4 of this summary.

The other recommendations are more specific and relate to the piloting of an initiative in the town of Northam. These recommendations are outlined in Section 5.

SECTION 2: THE LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This section outlines the findings of the literature review process.

The literature was considered in three main areas:

- contemporary developments in understandings of violence;
- policy responses; and
- evaluated programs.

CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS IN UNDERSTANDINGS OF VIOLENCE

Social learning and feminist theories

There is a well established body of research which maps the development of aggression and violence. The review found that the dominant theory in regard to violence is social learning theory or one of its variants. Since physical violence is largely perpetrated by males, feminist theories adapt the basic principles of social learning theory and, using this, explain the adoption of violent behaviours by boys and men.

Feminist theories argue that the way gender is construed is of central importance in providing the basis for violence in intimate relationships. Accordingly, preventing relationship violence involves, at least partly, reconstruing gender and gender relations.

Disadvantage and masculinity

There is a large and rapidly expanding literature on masculinity and its relationship to violence. The literature review highlights the importance of understanding the interaction between masculinity and social structure. According to the authors, the higher degree of violence and self destructiveness

among socially marginalised boys may reflect a ‘reactive masculinity’ formed through the experience of rejection from mainstream society. The principles of social learning theory help explain how individuals learn from experiences with the environment about what works in creating, defining and defending social status. For some disadvantaged boys, violence is a way of proving masculinity and thereby claiming social status and power.

Numerous studies point out that bullies and other violent offenders are actually more likely to have high self-esteem and a sense of ‘entitlement’. These findings challenge the common assumption that violent behaviour reflects a lack of self esteem. The literature relating to masculinity and disadvantage suggests that violence prevention programs need to be culturally relevant in all senses of the word ‘culture’.

Family violence

Tremblay and Craig (1995) provide a detailed description of the large array of studies on the origins of family violence, including the ‘cycle of violence’ theory. In the literature review it is noted that the cognitive behavioural model helps explain the effects of being a witness to, or victim of, family violence at an early age. For children growing up in violent environments, the essential sequential lessons are:

- *violence is used to gain control;*
- *violence is accepted as a means of control;*
- *violence is acceptable;*
- *violence is an acceptable means of control.*

Research indicates that children who have experienced family violence are at a much higher risk of becoming perpetrators, and have a far greater acceptance of violence as a means of control.

Table 2 in the research team’s full report (sect2:23) lists a number of studies that explore the factors underlying relationship violence.

Protective factors

The literature confirms that early experience with violence does not ‘determine’ later violence. Despite their higher risk, most children who have witnessed or are victims of violence in their families of origin do not go on to be perpetrators. Resilience to early conditioning can be supported if the disadvantages of violence as a means of control can be clearly illustrated.

Factors protecting witnesses to, or victims of, violence from becoming perpetrators have been identified and include success at school and healthy relationships with siblings and friends. While the degree to which protective factors can be taught or their development facilitated remains somewhat contentious, prevention efforts are certainly required in early childhood. The literature on the development of aggressions consistently points to the early years (prior to twelve years of age) as critical in the establishment of aggressive and violent response styles.

Most victimised children do not become perpetrators.

Prevention efforts are required in early childhood.

Intervening with adolescents

Wolfe *et al* make the point that ‘processes associated with adolescent development and dating experiences suggest that this period of development may be crucial to the formation of healthy, non-violent relationships later in life’ (1995: 256). Experiences of early relationship violence may represent a bridge between early childhood experiences of family violence, and the occurrence of similar patterns of behaviour in adulthood. Adolescence represents a time of opportunity to disrupt destructive constructs of normative gender relations before they are set in adulthood. It therefore remains important to work with adolescents as well as younger children in preventing violence.

Key findings

The key findings of this first area of the literature review were:

- Violence is a socially learned response that has value within certain subcultures and meaning and functions within certain family systems.
- The construction of gender is central to an understanding of violence and its prevention.
- The violent response is learned early in life through witnessing or being the victim of violence.
- Violence is more likely, and more acceptable, in certain cultures and subcultures than in others. In Australia, these cultures and subcultures are characterised by poverty and marginalisation.
- The cycle of violence needs to be recognised and addressed in interventions so that intergenerational transmission is prevented.
- While pre-adolescent years are pivotal in learning violent and aggressive responses, adolescence is an opportune time to reconfigure such responses.

POLICY RESPONSES

Over the last two decades in Australia the nature and extent of violence in the home, amongst youth and in schools has been recognised at various levels of government in a series of papers and policy responses.

Domestic violence

The growing interest in domestic violence reflects a greater awareness of, and sensitivity to, violence in general and a growing recognition of gender inequality.

In relation to domestic violence, a key document is the *National strategy on violence against women*, which was released by the National Committee on Violence Against Women in 1992. The strategy does not mention the primary prevention of domestic violence. Like other policy papers mentioned in the full report, it was concerned with reinforcing the unacceptability of violence against women through publicity, policing and prosecution.

There are some position papers that attempt to locate family violence as a health issue. In the United States, the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention has promoted a public health approach to violence prevention since the early 1980s. According to the research team, this approach has the advantage of focusing on the evidence of the effectiveness of the intervention or strategy.

Adolescent violence prevention

In relation to the primary prevention of violence, the review found that there is growing support for a holistic approach, with strategies targeting young people that integrate safe school policies, educational goals and social skills courses. Adolescent violence prevention represents a meeting place for those interested in reducing school violence, those dealing with the needs of youth and those concerned with reducing gender inequality.

An Australian example of the holistic approach is the *Gender and violence* position paper commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training (Ollis and Tomaszewski 1993), which was concerned with how to prevent violence against women and girls by bringing about changes at the school level. Although the paper identified programs and resources that relate to gender and violence, the authors note that it was the protective behaviours materials, which are designed to assist children to take appropriate precautions in regard to possible abuse, that have been most widely adopted at the school level.

A Canadian example is the ‘multilevel’ approach taken by the Ontario Ministry of Education, which involves professional development programs for educators and the development of curriculum materials.

School based violence prevention

There have been a number of important enquiries, reports and responses from various sectors around Australia concerned with the school community and/or school violence. For example, the 1994 Commonwealth report *Sticks and stones: Report on violence in Australian schools* helped establish an awareness of the problem of school violence and the role of the school in preventing violence. The review found that there is a wealth of material being developed in Australia and overseas for adolescents and children to teach prosocial behaviour in the related areas of social skills, social problem solving and education regarding the dynamics of violence.

The school is seen as a very important institution by many authors. The research team found that preventing relationship violence through work with adolescents cannot be divorced from the general efforts to make schools safer and promote prosocial behaviour generally amongst students.

At the very least, schools should offer some system of early warning and referral of either victims or perpetrators of relationship violence. At best, a school can develop a holistic approach that incorporates teacher training, social skill training, parent involvement, reforms to school policy and practice, and information sharing.

EVALUATED PROGRAMS

Introduction

The lack of Australian reviews of evaluated programs meant that the research team had to draw on overseas sources for the final phase of the literature review. This phase was guided by three key questions:

1. *Should violence prevention strategies aim for a universalist (all students) approach or a focused approach?*
2. *What should educational curricula contain?*
3. *How should school based programs be supported?*

Reviews of evaluated programs

The American National Research Council report (Crowell and Burgess, 1996) constitutes one of the major reviews in the area of violence prevention programs for adolescents. It notes that school based preventative interventions have mainly focused on attitudes to violence and, where evaluations are available, have measured personal experiences with dating violence. These studies can demonstrate significant improvements in knowledge, attitudes and behavioural intention after relatively brief classroom interventions. These effects are likely to be enhanced by more intensive programs that include social skills training and follow up sessions, particularly if they come as part of a comprehensive strategy for change that is based in the community.

A special supplementary issue of the *American Journal of Preventative Medicine* (1996) contains evaluations of 15 projects that the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) has been funding since 1992. The projects are designed to reduce the frequency and severity of interpersonal violence amongst youths and involve arrangements between academic centres, health departments, schools and other community agencies (Powell *et al*, 1996).

The review found that, based on the information available, the most promising violence prevention programs include both universalist and focused approaches.

The most promising violence prevention programs include both universalist and focused approaches.

The review found that comprehensive social competency programs were more effective.

Programs for adolescents should centre on social competency skills whilst conflict resolution skills should be taught to a younger age group.

Educational curricula

Brewer *et al* (1995) provides a comprehensive summary of a range of conflict resolution and violence prevention curricula. The review found that there is considerable scepticism regarding school based conflict resolution programs (Webster, 1993). Many techniques and the general content of curricula may be more effective if targeted at younger children. The American National Research Council recommended teaching conflict resolution skills at around third grade level. Webster (1993) recommends targeting social information processing skills to younger age groups (4 to 9 years of age) and asserts that adolescent programs should be targeted more to the social and academic needs of adolescents.

The review found that comprehensive social competency programs were more effective. Basic and well accepted procedures such as cognitive-behavioural training methods (for example, feedback, reinforcement and behavioural rehearsal) rather than traditional lecture and discussion formats were recommended. Programs based solely on information and education were seen to be limited.

Gottfredson (1997) outlines critical features of effective programs:

- Programs should be aimed at clarifying and communicating norms about behaviours.
- Instructional programs need to be comprehensive, focusing on a range of social competency skills that are delivered over a long period of time to continually reinforce skills. Strategies should include the school but also be highly integrated with other community resources and developments.

The review found that programs for adolescents should centre on social competency skills whilst conflict resolution skills should be taught to a younger age group.

Family support

The review found a recognition across the literature that more is needed than just classroom instruction. Stress is placed on interventions in the formative environment by working directly with families to tackle the underlying functionality of violence. Strategies are essential that improve communications, behaviours and relationships within the family. The apparent success of early intervention and parenting assistance underscores this point. The focus on high risk groups and intensive involvement fits in with a family focus and involvement at an earlier point in the developmental continuum of children.

The review found that educational programs in schools are enhanced by broad based community initiatives and family support for high risk groups.

Educational programs in schools are enhanced by broad based community initiatives and family support for high risk groups.

Evaluation

The analysis of the review led the research team to two essential conclusions:

- there is insufficient detailed evaluation to judge the efficacy of many programs; and
- where evaluations have been conducted, they often lead to mixed results.

The following explanation is cited in the literature review — that part of the reason why there are so few scientifically evaluated interventions is because the origins of violence are structural, cultural and developmental. Violence prevention efforts are therefore not amenable to short term interventions that do not take into account cultural and structural change.

The review found that it is necessary to continue questioning the processes and programs that will make a difference to preventing violence. Violence prevention requires an investment in long term strategies with in-built evaluation.

Violence prevention requires an investment in long term strategies with in-built evaluation.

Key findings

The key findings of the literature review of evaluated programs were:

- While certain interventions show promise with at risk groups, working with whole populations can produce broader benefits.
- Successful programs are likely to be skills based, long term, and multicontextual.
- The school is an important site for violence prevention; however, a whole school approach is required for school based programs to be effective.
- Many conflict resolution and violence prevention curricula are based on the assumption that aggressive youths have deficient social and self perceptions; however, there is little evidence to support this assumption.
- Social skills training can enhance an existing focus on changing attitudes to violence.
- More commitment to the evaluation of programs, including school based programs, is needed.

SECTION 3: AUDIT OF PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

Of the 133 programs outlined in the questionnaires that were returned to the Crime Research Centre, 98 (approximately three-quarters) met the research team's criteria for inclusion in the national register of violence prevention programs for adolescents.

These programs are listed by State or Territory in Appendix 3 of the full report. The register is also available as a database attached to the NCAVAC home page on the Internet (www.ncavac.gov.au). The information fields on the database include:

- contact details
- target group
- location of program
- description of program
- timeline
- budget
- evaluation.

Those programs that were not eligible for inclusion in the register are listed in Appendix 4 of the full report. The research team found that these programs provided important contextual information on youth development initiatives.

The 98 programs included in the national register fall into three categories:

- programs in schools;
- programs in juvenile justice settings; and
- community based programs.

PROGRAMS IN SCHOOLS

One third of the programs on the register are located in schools and range from the broad based to the specific.

The audit found that:

- Whole school approaches to violence tend to be community development oriented and seek to address the cultural support for violence; however, they do not necessarily deal with sexual/dating/domestic violence.
- It is often difficult for programs focusing specifically on sexual and domestic violence prevention to be accepted and supported in schools.
- Interventions are needed for girls to enable them to articulate clear messages about the unacceptability of violence and what constitutes violence.
- Up to date (and, preferably, Australian) multimedia materials are urgently needed to support programs.
- Without a whole school approach, anti-violence programs for violent and at risk students are less likely to be effective and can even become counter productive.

PROGRAMS IN JUVENILE JUSTICE SETTINGS

Ten of the programs on the register are based in juvenile justice settings, mainly in detention centres.

The audit found that:

- Few violence prevention programs are designed specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.
- A number of programs in juvenile justice settings tackled sexual violence prevention, mainly through group work and peer education.
- There are inherent difficulties associated with running violence prevention programs in hierarchical settings such as juvenile detention centres. Careful staff training is a fundamental prerequisite to the implementation of programs in these settings.

COMMUNITY BASED PROGRAMS

Community based programs include domestic violence programs, sex offender programs, young men's anti-violence programs and other youth programs.

The audit found that:

- Group work that includes peer education is important in dealing with sex offending and other violent behaviour.
- Facilitators of young men's groups need to be highly skilled and experienced and to have an understanding of the relationship between young men's backgrounds and the use of violence.
- Family counselling has become an important component of anti-violence work with adolescents.

LOCATION AND FUNDING

Many of the programs on the register are based in cities or metropolitan areas. This partly reflects selection bias in the audit process and partly reflects population densities, but it also reflects a genuine under representation of such programs in non urban areas. In a climate of diminishing government funding for youth programs it is likely that, over time, more programs in rural and regional areas will fail, or will not be funded at all.

The audit found that:

- The issue of access to funding and the related issue of program packaging will increasingly need to be addressed.

EVALUATION

Although various aspects of many programs—including school based and therapeutic programs—are monitored, rigorous external evaluations are rare.

- Finding the means and commitment to evaluate is crucial if program funders and providers are ever to know whether programs achieve their aims.

SECTION 4: RURAL TOWN MODEL

INTRODUCTION

The model program developed by the research team is based on the findings of:

- the literature review;
- the audit of Australian adolescent violence prevention programs;
- the environmental assessment of Northam;
- consultations with practitioners and key stakeholders; and
- prior knowledge of, and analysis of the literature on, interagency, multidisciplinary approaches to program development and service delivery.

TYPE OF MODEL PROGRAM

The research team recommends a model program for rural towns that has a dual focus centred around:

- a curriculum based project run within the school, with the support of relevant agencies; and
- a ‘case work’ approach for young people (and their families) exhibiting violent behaviour and those deemed at risk.

The model takes into account the need to provide for both general prevention work within mainstream structures, and more focused interventions for those at risk and/or disengaged from the mainstream.

IMPLEMENTATION

The model program must:

- have a multidisciplinary base;
- be capable of enlisting and sustaining the commitment of a range of agencies;
- focus on identifying primary decision making or ‘gatekeeping’ points in the system;
- identify lead agencies; and
- ensure that interagency dialogue does not take place at the expense of genuine dialogue with communities.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The model program must have:

- strong and consistent management support;
- a management team drawn from relevant local agencies that can keep the project on track and ensure that protocols and procedures are adhered to; and
- a regional steering group made up of chief officers and community representatives to ensure the overall support of government and non government agencies.

The program does not necessarily require the creation of new structures. It may be possible to access existing interagency bodies and expand existing structures.

PROGRAM COORDINATION

The development and coordination of the program requires the full time commitment of a suitably trained and qualified person.

THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR ROLE WOULD INCLUDE:

- establishing program objectives;
 - developing guiding principles for the scheme (in association with relevant agencies) such as:
 - stopping and preventing violence,
 - protecting victims,
 - encouraging equality in relationships,
 - seeing relationship violence as being as serious as ‘public’ forms of aggression,
 - respecting cultural diversity while not condoning violence;
 - undertaking program development, interagency coordination and liaison, and referrals (including ‘gatekeeping’) to the case work program;
 - conducting a needs assessment (audit) of the area as the basis for an action plan (this action plan would include the development of an interagency framework and protocols);
 - establishing a data collection system (particularly focusing on the initial collection of baseline data) and methods of monitoring and evaluating the progress and impact of the program;
 - linked to the above, conducting school surveys on attitude and behaviour changes over the lifetime of the project;
 - maintaining regular contact with local professionals involved with the scheme to ensure that they are aware of the implications of the scheme for day to day practice; and
 - identifying sources of funding for youth activities associated with the project.
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SCHOOL BASED WORK BY THE PROGRAM COORDINATOR WOULD INCLUDE:

- staff development and awareness;
 - school and community development work to encourage a whole school approach;
 - supporting staff already undertaking related work (such as in the health education program);
 - conducting direct work with students as part of the curriculum program;
 - complementing this direct work by introducing material into the school, such as multimedia kits and visual aids;
 - liaising closely with educational support staff, including Aboriginal Liaison Officers, to identify at risk young people; and
 - developing a working relationship with youth outreach services as an appropriate site for providing out of school programs for groups of young people beyond the reach of mainstream services.
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COUNSELLING SERVICES

Providing counselling services for at risk youth would entail further, focused training for professionals already working in the region, plus, ideally, the appointment of a specialist therapist/counsellor.

Referrals for individual case work, from whatever source, would be made through the coordinator.

EVALUATION

Process evaluation and outcome evaluation are both essential. The evaluation methodology must be planned at the outset so that important baseline information can be collected.

Process evaluation would be carried out through:

- analysis of program and other documentation (for example, the coordinator's records) and the practices that evolve;
- interviews with key players and those affected by the program;
- meetings with various groups associated with the program; and
- seminars and workshops.

Outcome evaluation would encompass the collection, at specified intervals, of self report information on:

- violent offending and victimisation;
- attitudes to violence;
- community and agency responses to violence; and
- community and agency responses to the progress of the program.

While outcome evaluation is more difficult and more expensive to undertake, it is vital to knowing whether a program actually brings about change.

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SECTION 5: PILOT PROJECT IN NORTHAM

FINDINGS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Issues

From the consultation visits in Northam, the research team established that there was considerable consensus amongst community groups on the following issues:

- the ‘conservatism’ of the local culture, which was seen to have a significant impact on the values of young people holding ‘traditional’ views about relationships;
- the difficulty of neatly demarcating adolescent patterns of gender relations from those prevalent within adult life;
- the embryonic existence in adolescent relationships of many of the fundamental features of violent adult relationships (confirming the findings of the literature on ‘dating violence’);
- the need for interventions with Indigenous people to be focused on the family as a whole, rather than simply isolating young people as a specific group; and
- the need for interventions with Indigenous people to be based outside the school, due to the degree of disengagement of Indigenous people from the mainstream school system.

Existing services and initiatives

The research team also found that Northam has existing services and initiatives on which to build a pilot domestic violence prevention program for adolescents. These include the following:

- Northam Senior High School has established an anti bullying strategy and is conscious of the need for interventions to challenge attitudes and behaviour patterns that could prefigure abusive adult relationships.
- The local police, through the school based officer, are involved in teaching young people protective behaviours.
- Northam Youth Outreach provides an outreach service and educational and life skills programs for young people disengaged from the mainstream school system.
- The Department of Family and Children's Services funds a number of community based organisations (including Northam Youth Outreach), and the Ministry of Justice employs personnel skilled in working with Indigenous organisations. Both agencies run services for at risk young people.
- The local mental health team runs a number of adolescent focused initiatives in the region.
- Northam has a women's refuge (Waminda) that serves the whole of the wheat belt area of Western Australia and has developed considerable knowledge of the effects of domestic violence on children and young people.
- Northam already has an interagency body, the Regional Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee, that coordinates work in a closely related field and that could provide the necessary framework for a pilot program.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A PILOT PROJECT

To implement the Rural Town Model in Northam, the research team recommends:

- basing the program coordinator at Waminda Women’s Refuge (although it is anticipated that a substantial part of the coordinator’s time would be spent in the high school);
- expanding a committee or sub committee of the Regional Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee to act as a key management and coordinating committee for the program;
- incorporating into this committee structure relevant agencies not currently involved, such as Northam Youth Outreach; and
- establishing a regional steering group made up of chief officers and community representatives, to ensure the overall support of government and non government agencies.

C O N C L U S I O N

STRATEGIC FOCUS

The full report from the Crime Research Centre contains many findings that have wider policy and practice implications. Principles are identified for general violence prevention strategies that focus on adolescents, along with more specific recommendations for strategies and programs that seek to prevent all forms of interpersonal violence. Special emphasis is placed on ensuring that domestic violence prevention work is integrated within the broader context of other violence prevention strategies.

The full report underlines the following:

- Violence prevention strategies that focus on adolescents need to be supported by strategies and programs that target younger children. There is a need to promote resilience and protective factors in early childhood, and alternative means of communication to aggression and violent behaviour.
- Violence prevention strategies should not be limited to interventions with individuals but should consider family groups and even communities.
- Violence prevention strategies need to suit the socioeconomic and cultural contexts in which they are implemented.
- Strategies need to focus on preventing the development of an association between social status and aggressive masculinities, especially amongst socially and economically marginalised boys.
- In recognition of the overlap between self harm behaviours, drug and alcohol abuse and violent behaviours, strategies need to be implemented and integrated in a multidisciplinary context through a range of agencies.

DEVELOPING PROGRAMS

Throughout the Crime Research Centre's full report, reference is made to the need for integrated, holistic approaches to violence prevention. The audit of programs identified many adolescent violence prevention programs, but it appears that they are often discrete and unrelated initiatives. In order to create multi agency approaches to domestic violence prevention, links have to be created across existing services, including domestic violence services, family support and counselling services, outreach youth services and the education sector.

However, integrated approaches should acknowledge diversity within the community, and be flexible enough to foster the tailoring of programs to local conditions. Programs are required in different settings and, where appropriate, should incorporate group work and peer education, for example in juvenile justice institutions. Youth development programs, particularly outreach services, are an important adjunct to school based programs.

The significance of gender and definitions of 'at risk' groups have to be considered whenever any violence prevention initiative is formulated, but should be reassessed and adapted if the focus is on domestic violence prevention. This might influence, for example, the selection of target groups and program curricula.

The following key points are made in the full report:

- Universal programs should be complemented by programs for at risk groups.
- Programs that have shown promising signs of effectiveness:
 - are based on the social learning approach;
 - focus on high risk groups;
 - provide intensive interventions; and
 - work hard to elicit the involvement of participants.

Youth development programs are an important adjunct to school based programs.

- Within a strategic framework, developing sound violence prevention programs for young people requires attention to:
 - context
 - location
 - issues of gender, masculinity, sex roles (with respect to clients and facilitators)
 - theoretical underpinnings and
 - operational structures and processes.
- The essential features for effective programs include:
 - a manifest (and ongoing) nexus between theory and practice
 - careful staff selection, training and support
 - in built mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating performance and
 - the commitment of all agencies.

SCHOOL BASED PROGRAMS

Schools clearly have a vital role in violence prevention. Education policies are required that enable a commitment to programs that focus on sexual and domestic violence prevention. These policies should recognise the extra demands placed on schools through the introduction of such programs. The Crime Research Centre’s full report makes the following key points:

- Violence prevention programs for adolescents need to include the school but also be highly integrated with other community resources and developments.
- The whole of school community development approach provides a valuable model and can link with appropriate referral agencies and other programs for at risk populations.
- Schools need to concentrate on behavioural change as a priority, mainly through an emphasis on social skills training for different age groups.

PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE

Two crucial, interrelated aspects to the identification and promulgation of good practice are singled out in the full report. They are:

- funding
- evaluation.

Evaluation is essential to identifying good practices and to determining the effectiveness of programs. More resources have to be channelled into long term, strategic initiatives that are subject to longitudinal evaluation. The evaluation process must include the formulation of realistic goals that can be assessed through process and outcome evaluation.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

STAGE 2

The Rural Town Model for domestic violence prevention work with adolescents is a significant contribution to developing initiatives in this field. The basic tenets of the model could be used in many regional centres and, with modifications, may be suitable for city based programs. As stated earlier, Stage 2 of the domestic violence prevention project will involve the piloting of the model in the Western Australian country town of Northam. The evaluation of this second stage will assist in refining the model and provide practical information on aspects of implementation and achievable short term objectives. Stage 2 will commence in mid-1998 and be funded for at least one year.

OTHER PROJECTS

Other NCAVAC/NACS projects consider or concentrate on young people. They include the projects on fear of crime, public space, public events, homeless youth and early intervention.

Across these projects common themes are emerging in relation to young people and the more generic area of program development and implementation. For example, the main conclusions in the Crime Research Centre's full report provide a basis for broad based violence prevention approaches to work with adolescents. It is anticipated therefore that the findings from individual projects will tend to overlap and complement each other.

Of special note is the emphasis, in the Crime Research Centre's report, on violence prevention strategies and programs for younger children. This matter is being examined closely in the NCAVAC/NACS project on early intervention and developmental approaches to crime prevention.

Two further projects should be mentioned because of their direct relevance to young people or domestic violence. NCAVAC and the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs are jointly funding national research on young people's attitudes to domestic violence. In addition, NCAVAC has funded a national review of domestic violence perpetrator programs.

Information on these projects is available on the NCAVAC website (www.ncavac.gov.au).

FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

In the Crime Research Centre's full report, drawing on the audit findings, it is recommended that special consideration should be given to developing the following:

- programs and strategies tailored for girls;
- up to date Australian multimedia materials; and
- programs and strategies for Aboriginal young people.

The third point will be taken up by NCAVAC within the context of its project on the prevention of violence in Indigenous communities. Further input to this project will be provided by the forthcoming report from the Crime Research Centre on their consultations with Aboriginal communities in the Kimberley region, about working with adolescents to prevent domestic violence.

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