

Men's Advisory Network (M.A.N.) W.A. Incorporated

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Family and Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee

Response to the Discussion Paper

The Men's Advisory Network is the peak body for men's health and wellbeing and other issues that impact on men in WA. It receives funding from the Department of Health to carry out these functions.

I am a member of the Freedom From Fear Campaign Advisory Group.

The main point that I wish to make is that the approach that is adopted MUST recognise that perpetrators of family and domestic violence may be both men and women and similarly that victims may be both men and women.

The current approach appears to presume that all perpetrators are men and all victims are women. This assumption is based on the police reports that are quoted in the literature that has been produced. Although the number of reports that are made to police is not being disputed, these statistics are not an accurate picture of the extent of the incidence of domestic violence.

The attached paper by Yuri Joakimidis points out the shortcomings of using these statistics plus the design flaws in the 1996 ABS survey of violence against women, which is also quoted as a source to support the current approach.

Further evidence to support this assertion is contained in the excellent review of literature in the submission from Jodie Leonard.

These comments are not aimed at downplaying the very serious problem of violence against women. However, they are aimed at raising awareness of the problem of men being abused by women.

Currently there are virtually no strategies in place to address this equally serious issue. That is there are no programs aimed at women who are perpetrators, nor are there any services that support men who are victims.

With reference to the various questions posed in the discussion paper, the Men's Advisory Network strongly supports the comments made in the submission from Jodie Leonard.

I would suggest that an appropriate strategy to be adopted would be to conduct a widespread community education campaign aimed at raising everybody's awareness that all forms of abuse are inappropriate and will not be tolerated. This should not only cover the various forms of abuse outlined in the discussion paper, but the many other forms that occur in our society including:

- Physical, sexual and emotional abuse of children
- Bullying and teasing of children by other children whether at school or elsewhere
- Bullying in the workplace
- Bastardisation in some organisations, including boarding schools, agricultural colleges and the armed forces

Men and women, plus boys and girls must be made aware that abuse of another person will not be tolerated in our society.

At the same time support programs for victims, both male and female, plus treatment programs and where appropriate sanctions, for both male and female perpetrators, must be developed.

I trust that the Coordinating Committee will give very serious consideration to the issues that have been raised in this submission.

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