



VIOLENCE AND SAFETY

equalityfamilies**justice**education**violence**work**safety**power**leadership**training**communities**health

Introduction

The prevalence of violence against women has been well documented. National estimates were published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 1996.¹ These findings were based on a nationwide survey and remain the most comprehensive and up-to-date statistics available. Some of the major findings were as follows:

- ◆ 30 per cent of women over the age of 18 had experienced physical violence since the age of 15;²
- ◆ 18 per cent had experienced sexual violence since the age of 15;³
- ◆ 5 per cent had experienced physical violence by a man and 2 per cent had experienced sexual violence in the last 12 months;⁴
- ◆ 19 per cent of women aged 18–24 years had experienced an incident of violence (physical or sexual) in the last 12 months;⁵
- ◆ 6.6 per cent of women aged 18–24 years had been stalked during the previous 12 months;⁶
- ◆ 6.1 per cent of women who had been in a previous relationship had been stalked by their partner at some time;⁷ and
- ◆ 27 per cent of these women reported that the stalking lasted 2 years or more.⁸

It is now well-established that violence is primarily perpetrated against women by men they know, generally a partner, former partner or boyfriend. The *Women's Safety Australia* survey showed that 15.9 per cent of women who had experienced physical violence during their life had been assaulted by their

current partner, 51.2 per cent by a previous partner and 10.8 per cent by a boyfriend or date. 10.7 per cent had also been assaulted by a family member and 8.2 per cent by a friend. Only 15.5 per cent had been assaulted by strangers.⁹

With sexual violence, the figures are equally stark. While only 3.6 per cent of women had been sexually assaulted by their current partner, 21.5 per cent had been sexually assaulted by a previous partner, 34.1 per cent by a boyfriend or date and 26.5 per cent by a friend. 8.3 per cent had been sexually assaulted by a family member and 7.4 per cent by a boss or co-worker. Less than a quarter (22.3 per cent) had been sexually assaulted by a stranger.¹⁰

It is particularly revealing to note that:

- ◆ 23 per cent of women who had been married or in a de facto relationship experienced violence by a partner at some time during the relationship.¹¹

The United Nations has provided figures from a variety of countries, showing percentages of adult women assaulted by an intimate partner. While the figures vary greatly from country to country, ranging from five per cent in the Philippines to 48 per cent in Puerto Rico,¹² they amply demonstrate the global nature of violence against women.

The NSW Government acknowledges its responsibility to address the issue of violence against women and has implemented a wide range of initiatives over many years. The types of approaches include legislative and policy responses, services provided and/or funded by government to assist victims of violence, interagency and other coordinating mechanisms to ensure the responses work together smoothly, and community education campaigns and other types of prevention programs.

Most forms of violence against women constitute criminal offences¹³ and are subject to a criminal justice system response. Physical violence, sexual assault, harassment, intimidation and stalking are all subject to criminal sanctions administered by the police and courts. Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs) can also be obtained from Local Courts to provide protection from violence, harassment or intimidation, by imposing restrictions on the behaviour of the person who is feared, stating they may not (for example) assault, harass, threaten, stalk, or intimidate the protected person, or go within a certain distance of their home or workplace. Breaching an AVO is a criminal offence.

Women experiencing violence have complex needs that must be taken into account and will impact on their chosen course of action. They will need to decide whether to pursue a criminal justice response and/or seek counselling, while those who experience violence within a domestic relationship may wish to seek alternative accommodation, and access financial support for themselves and their children—and all at a time when they may be in crisis. The Government provides services and funds community organisations to give information to women about their options and provide support.

Our commitments:

- ◆ Gradually increase the annual budget of the *NSW Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program* by \$1 million to a total of \$2.8 million.
- ◆ Trial a new scheme to reduce court trauma for victims by allowing photographic evidence in domestic violence cases. This involves police taking photographs of a victim's injuries at the scene of a domestic violence dispute to add weight to

an application for an Apprehended Violence Order or criminal proceedings.

- ◆ Implement a statewide education campaign aimed at reducing violence against women targeting men aged 21–29 years of age. The campaign will use sporting personalities to convey the message that violence against women is unacceptable.
- ◆ Pilot a two year *Domestic Violence Intervention Education Program* as a condition of an Apprehended Violence Order. The NSW pilot will teach violent men to take responsibility for their abusive behaviour.
- ◆ Examine the feasibility of introducing a 12 month program based on a successful Canadian program, *Criminal Justice Intervention in Domestic Violence*. If feasible such a program would result in court and police staff being trained in issues affecting women experiencing domestic violence and its effects.
- ◆ Through the Judicial Commission, conduct research and training on issues that affect women who are the victims of violence. The first project will be publishing a study currently being conducted on judicial attitudes towards apprehended violence orders. The Commission will conduct training for the judiciary in accordance with the findings of the research.
- ◆ Monitor compliance with the new NSW Police Service Domestic Violence Liaison Officer procedural manual, particularly the breach of AVOs.
- ◆ Continue funding effective sexual assault services across the state.
- ◆ Continue to progress the *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)* reform agenda by implementing

the key recommendations of the evaluation of the NSW SAAP program and by building upon the work already undertaken. The evaluation provided no clear support for the competitive tendering models of funding that have been introduced in other states.

- ◆ Commence negotiations with the Commonwealth concerning the new SAAP Agreement to ensure the program is maintained and enhanced after December 1999.
- ◆ Educate all SAAP services on violence issues. This will be achieved by developing pilot projects which provide for improved collaboration between SAAP funded domestic violence services and other family, youth and single women services.
- ◆ Enhance funding for the *Women's Safehouse* project in Brewarrina, Walgett, Lightning Ridge, Bourke and Wilcannia. The project helps women in remote regions who are victims of domestic violence and addresses a major service gap in the Orana Far West region. The *Women's Safehouse / Community Centre Model* comprises three components: Safehouse Emergency Accommodation, a Women's Resource Centre to provide information and support, and a Women's Meeting Place. The project aims to be flexible to local needs, sensitive to Aboriginal cultural issues and cost effective in rural and remote areas.
- ◆ Conduct a research project *Violence in the Home: Older Women Speak Out* to examine older women's experience of violence and develop prevention strategies.
- ◆ Develop regional media campaigns highlighting the problem of violence against older women and effective prevention strategies.
- ◆ Expand the *Safe Women Project* which has successfully

devised crime prevention strategies to make public areas and streets safer for women.

- ◆ Complete the \$55 million safe stations upgrade. All stations will have high intensity lighting, closed circuit television and platform passenger help points.
- ◆ Continue to work with local councils to ensure that bus and train interchange areas are developed and maintained with the safety and convenience of commuters as a focal point. The Fairfield *Out and About* project with its particular focus on women's safety concerns will be replicated at other metropolitan interchange areas.
- ◆ The continued installation of video surveillance cameras on buses and high intensity lighting at bus stations will ensure passenger safety.

What we are doing

TAKING INTEGRATED MEASURES TO PREVENT AND ELIMINATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The *NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women* was announced by the NSW Government in 1996, establishing the NSW Council on Violence Against Women as an advisory body to the Government, the Violence Against Women Specialist Unit in the Crime Prevention Division of the Attorney General's Department and a Statewide network of Regional Violence Prevention Specialists.

The Strategy is managed and financed by the Attorney General's Department, NSW Health, the NSW Police Service, the Department of Community Services and the Department of Housing, agencies that provide the bulk of government services and programs as part of their core business, in

partnership with the Department for Women. Its three key elements in reducing violence against women are:

- ◆ a partnership response to all violence against all women;
- ◆ a focus on prevention; and
- ◆ a broad definition of 'violence against women'.

<http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd.nsf/pages/vaw2>

The elements of the Government's response to violence against women are as follows:

- ◆ legislative amendments;
- ◆ policy initiatives;
- ◆ program and support service delivery;
- ◆ information and referral services;
- ◆ funding programs;
- ◆ prevention programs;
- ◆ community education; and
- ◆ interagency and other coordinating mechanisms.

Legislative amendments

An evaluation of the Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) Scheme conducted by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research in 1997 revealed that more than 90 per cent of people who had been awarded an AVO felt that they had benefited from it. Benefits cited included reduced or no contact with the defendant, peace of mind and feeling safer.¹⁴ The response to breaches, however, was less successful: in almost three-quarters of the breaches reported to the police, police took no action.¹⁵

Legislation to improve the operation of the AVO system commenced in April 2000, following a review by the Attorney

General's Department that examined concerns regarding policing of breaches and public criticisms of the AVO system alleging widespread abuse of the system.¹⁶ The amendments introduced a filtering process for Personal AVOs and a mechanism for improved enforcement of breaches and will themselves be reviewed in late 2002 to assess whether they still address the policy objectives of the legislation.

http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lc/dvlink.nsf/pages/news_crimesact

- ◆ 18,853 Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders were granted in 2001, with the highest rates per 100 000 population being in the Far West (1077.7), the North West (584.8), the Mid North coast (489.3) and Northern (481.3) Statistical Divisions.
- ◆ The highest rates per 100 000 population for Sydney were in Blacktown (326.5) and Outer Western Sydney (300.7) and the lowest in Lower Northern Sydney (75) and Central Northern Sydney (84.2).¹⁷
- ◆ There has been an increase in breaches of AVOs over the three years 1999–2001, from 150.7 to 170.9 per 100 000 population statewide.
- ◆ This increase applies, though not uniformly, to all Statistical Divisions outside Sydney, with the largest increase (471.3 to 707.0 per 100,000) being in the Far West. In Sydney, the overall rate has increased from 119.8 to 130.2, although it has remained fairly steady in the Eastern Suburbs (108.3 to 109.9), Central Northern Sydney (44.4 to 45.2), Outer South Western Sydney (216.6 to 217.7) and Fairfield–Liverpool (124.5 to 123.0). The rate declined in Outer Western Sydney (195.8 to 161.4) and Blacktown (218.7 to 192.9). The steepest rise was in Canterbury–Bankstown (65 to 112.3).¹⁸

Policy initiatives

PREVENTION POLICY INITIATIVES

The Attorney General's Department has prepared a *Prevention Framework for Violence against Women* to investigate theories and issues around the prevention of violence against women in the context of crime prevention. The project was designed to provide guidance to staff of the Violence Against Women Specialist Unit in their implementation of the NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women and to inform the field as to theoretical perspectives on prevention.

VICTIM POLICY INITIATIVES

The Attorney General's Department, in consultation with NSW Police, the Department for Women and the Department of Health is in the process of developing a protocol to protect victims when they undergo forensic procedures for the purpose of investigating a crime. This is particularly important for victims of sexual and other assault.

SEXUAL ASSAULT POLICY INITIATIVES

The Attorney General's Department is currently reviewing the implementation status of the recommendations of the Heroines of Fortitude report, published by the Department for Women in 1996. The report contained recommendations for government, community and professional organisations aimed at addressing the difficulties experienced by women sexual assault victims in court during the trial process.

<http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/publications/publica2.html>

- ◆ In 65 per cent of trials there were, on average, two interruptions to evidence because of the distress suffered by complainants.¹⁹
- ◆ 52 per cent of complainants were accused of making false reports based on ulterior motives, such as vengeance or applications in Family Court proceedings. 32 per cent were asked if they had made applications for victims' compensation.²⁰
- ◆ 59 per cent were questioned about drinking on the day of the offence.²¹
- ◆ 57 per cent of complainants were questioned about behaving in a sexually provocative manner; 42 per cent were asked about the way they were dressed at the time and 22 per cent were cross-examined about their responsibility for the offence.²²
- ◆ 43 per cent of complainants were asked about why they were in the location where contact with the accused was made. 82 per cent were cross-examined about lying. More than two-thirds were questioned about lack of resistance to sexual assault.²³
- ◆ In 40 per cent of trials, judges gave the old-style corroboration warning that it is dangerous to convict on the complainant's evidence alone.²⁴

Evidence related to sexual reputation was raised in 12 per cent of trials, despite such evidence being completely inadmissible. Matters related to sexual experience (which is only to be admitted in strictly defined circumstances) was admitted in 84 per cent of the instances in which it was raised—in 35 per cent of these cases without prior application having been made, without challenge by either counsel and without justification by the judge.²⁵

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) employs a Sexual Assault Liaison Officer to promote training and understanding to lawyers, Crown Prosecutors and Witness Assistance Service (WAS) staff in relation to the needs and rights of victim/witnesses in sexual assault cases. The Officer also develops policy in relation to sexual assault matters, makes recommendations to the Assistant Solicitor on issues related to sexual assault prosecutions and considers complaints about the prosecutions in consultation with the Assistant Solicitor and the Client Services Officer.

The Sexual Assault Liaison Officer works with other WAS staff to ensure services to sexual assault victims are consistently improved and meet the ODPP's standards for sexual assault cases at all times.

Domestic violence policy initiatives

To assist women in domestic violence situations access alternative housing, the Department of Housing is currently reviewing its allocation policies, procedures and referral mechanisms to ensure women and their children in situations of domestic violence are housed or rehoused within reasonable timeframes. A review of public housing policies, including priority housing assistance and transfers, is currently underway, so as to ensure that clients with complex needs have improved access to housing and support.

The Department has developed a specific domestic violence policy to ensure that women and their families who are victims of domestic violence are appropriately housed or rehoused. Policy guidelines and procedures for child protection have also been implemented and training delivered to staff statewide to

ensure departmental compliance with legislative responsibilities. <http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/domestic.pdf>

The Department of Community Services (DoCS) is conducting a project to investigate the factors preventing women from choosing to stay in their own homes after experiencing domestic violence and to consider what strategies and interventions would assist women and their children to make this choice safely. DoCS has provided \$88,660 to the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse and the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies at the University of NSW to conduct the research in two rural locations and develop a framework of the range of services that would be needed to allow women to make such a choice. The research will address the key recommendations from the *Partnerships against Domestic Violence* report *Home Safe Home: The link between domestic violence and women's homelessness*.

The Department of Community Services (DoCS) is also developing a new domestic violence policy in line with the requirements of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*. The policy will assist staff to provide a comprehensive response when working with families, women and children living with domestic violence. DoCS is developing a related Domestic Violence Strategic Framework to ensure that intervention in domestic violence will be prioritised in all aspects of the Department's business.

NSW Police has established a State Domestic Violence Council to promote best practice in policing domestic violence, provide advice to the Service on operational and policy issues, analyse the impact of legislation on practice and evaluate specific projects. The Council meets quarterly.

The Police Service has Domestic Violence Standard Operating Procedures that provide clear guidance to police officers responding to domestic violence related incidents. These Procedures are currently under review to ensure officers comply with statutory responsibilities under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and that NSW Police policy and procedures are in line with related policies of other government agencies. The Policy and Standard Operating Procedures for the Investigation and Management of Adult Sexual Assault are also under review, to ensure they are operationally relevant and accessible to police officers involved in responding to and investigating adult sexual assault incidents.

The Attorney General's Department has conducted a research project into the feasibility of establishing a domestic violence specialist court, considering existing features of the NSW court system and examining integrated criminal justice systems that are operating successfully in other parts of Australia and overseas to identify aspects that could be effectively introduced into NSW. A summary of the research findings and recommendations for improvements to the NSW system will be prepared.

Aboriginal family violence policy initiatives

The Attorney General's Department and the Department of Community Services are conducting a pilot project in Wellington and Bega to enhance access to mainstream services for Aboriginal women who are experiencing violence. The issue was first raised at an Aboriginal women's conference at Lake Burrendong and the project aims to assist Aboriginal women to articulate their difficulties in accessing the services and work with services to review their policies and procedures

and provide appropriate training to staff to ensure equitable service delivery.

The Department for Women is also conducting a comprehensive audit of recommendations from a variety of reports published over the last ten years to address the high degree of violence and sexual assault encountered by Aboriginal women, children and young people. The research will provide evidence of the need for services and government agencies to change practices and organisational cultures in order to respond effectively to Aboriginal women and children.

Programs

POLICE PROGRAMS

NSW Police provides a statewide *Domestic Violence Liaison Officer Program* with 160 liaison officers based across the state's 80 Local Area Commands. The Domestic Violence Liaison Officers (DVLOs) provide strong support to domestic violence victims in their interaction with police and at court in Apprehended Violence Order matters. They act as a central focus for community issues and concerns, provide information and intelligence to their colleagues about domestic violence and help to raise other officers' awareness of its impact of domestic violence.

DVLOs also monitor Local Area Command responses to domestic violence related incidents and undertake targeted community education programs and local victim support initiatives in collaboration with other agencies. A training program addressing domestic violence issues and police responsibilities is provided to DVLOs and general duties officers by the NSW Police College.

<http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/prevention/dv.cfm>

- ◆ Reporting of violence against women to the police is low, with only 20 per cent of women reporting an act of physical assault by a man to the police and only 10 per cent reporting a sexual assault to the police. Only 5 per cent of those who were assaulted by their current partner reported the incident to the police.
- ◆ 12 per cent of those who were sexually assaulted did not report to the police because they were ashamed or embarrassed.²⁶
- ◆ An Australian Bureau of Statistics survey found that 67.3 per cent of women were satisfied or very satisfied with services provided by police, compared with 64.5 per cent of men. In particular, 76 per cent of women aged 65 and over reported high levels of satisfaction. 1.7 per cent of women surveyed reporting being very dissatisfied, compared with 2.9 per cent of men.²⁷

PROGRAMS IN THE COURTS

The Legal Aid Commission funds the *Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program*, which seeks to empower women experiencing domestic violence to use the legal system by funding 34 court support schemes at 47 court locations in NSW. The schemes provide direct assistance to 20,000 women annually seeking Apprehended Violence Orders, along with other support, legal representation, information and appropriate referrals. \$2.6 million in funding has been provided for the Program in 2002/03. <http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/dvlink>

Legal representation is not generally available to women seeking Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs) unless they can afford to provide their own. Following a successful pilot, the Legal Aid Commission has established a domestic violence solicitor scheme in cooperation with Community Legal Centres

and private legal practitioners at Bankstown, Penrith, Waverly, Sutherland, Wollongong Blacktown, Burwood, Gosford, Wyong, Woy Woy, Campbelltown and Liverpool courts, providing legal representation to all women applicants at mention, through a roster of solicitors, and at hearing through a grant of aid or on a pro bono basis. Permission is currently being sought to extend the scheme to Fairfield and Camden.

PERPETRATOR PROGRAMS

The Attorney General's Department allocated \$300,000 over 2001–2003 to trial and evaluate a *Domestic Violence Education and Intervention Program* designed to minimise reoffending by domestic violence perpetrators and to provide appropriate support to women and children. The men's component consisted of a 16-week education program for men convicted of a domestic violence offence in the Penrith Local Court, provided by the Penrith Probation and Parole Service. The women's component operated by Penrith Women's Health Centre provided support to partners and ex-partners of the participants and appropriate referrals for their children. The trial, which concluded in July 2002, is being independently evaluated by Urbis Keys Young, with an interim report to be provided in October 2002, and a final report outlining longitudinal findings, in June 2003.

ACCOMMODATION PROGRAMS

The Department of Community Services <http://www.community.nsw.gov.au> administers the Commonwealth/State *Supported Accommodation Assistance Program*²⁸ to assist women escaping domestic violence and their accompanying children, single women, young women

and women with children/families experiencing or, at risk of, homelessness and in crisis. The Department is providing \$36.25 million in 2002/03 to 144 agencies to assist women and their children escaping domestic violence and single women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. An estimated 11,550 women were assisted in 1999/2000. These agencies provide a range of support services, including emergency and longer term accommodation, counselling, general support and advocacy, referrals to specialist services, domestic violence support, linkages to income support and education, training and employment services, child care and liaison with kindergartens and schools.

TRAINING PROGRAMS

NSW Health provides a statewide education, training and resource development program for health and other workers through the Education Centre Against Violence, based in Western Sydney. In 2001–02 the Centre conducted 129 training programs around the State for workers in sexual assault, domestic violence, Aboriginal family violence and Physical Abuse and Neglect of Children services. Specialist training and resources in relation to domestic violence, sexual assault and child protection have also been developed for doctors, interpreters and workers in mental health, drug and alcohol and other health services, disability services and Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. <http://www.ecav.health.nsw.gov.au>

PROGRAMS FOR VICTIMS

The Department of Corrective Services has established a Restorative Justice Unit on a three-year pilot basis that provides

a variety of programs designed to repair the damage done by criminal acts, give victims of crime a voice, encourage offenders to take responsibility for their actions and their impact on others and promote healing and forgiveness. The Unit also keeps a Victims Register that provides notifications to victims in relation to the release of relevant offenders.

The *Victim Awareness Programs*, offered to both inmates and offenders undergoing community supervision, are designed to enable offenders to understand better the effects of their offending on victims, while the *Victim-Offender Conferencing and Communication Program* enables family group conferences, meetings or exchange of letters or tape recordings between victims and offenders. Applications for contacts can be initiated by victims, offenders or people who work with them, and can be considered for any crimes. Conferences following sexual assault or domestic violence offences can only be initiated by the victim, in consultation with a counsellor.

Support services

SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT SERVICES

NSW Health allocates approximately \$9 million annually to provide Sexual Assault Services for adults and children across the State, including 38 services in rural areas. The services provide information, counselling, support, testing and treatment services for victims of sexual assault. Services also offer groupwork programs, court support work and education for health and other professionals and the community in general. The services also assist victims' families and friends as appropriate. <http://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/services>

- ◆ In 2000/01 Sexual Assault Services provided face to face and telephone counselling and other forms of assistance to approximately 5000 adults, of whom 86 per cent were women, and more than 2500 children.
- ◆ The Services also conducted more than 2100 medical examinations, prepared more than 1000 court reports, attended 650 days in court and saw 820 clients in groupwork programs. Sexual assault workers conducted more than 1250 hours of community education and provided education to more than 3700 professionals.²⁹

Sexual Assault Services also conduct a variety of locally relevant projects and promotional campaigns. The New England service is conducting the *Bridge Project*, designed to improve access by Aboriginal communities in Tamworth, Gunnedah and Qurindi and to work with people in the local communities to encourage earlier intervention. The Cultural Equity Unit based at Wentworth Area Health Service employed a project officer to work with the Illawarra and St George Sexual Assault Services to improve its services to people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

VICTIM SERVICES

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) provides a Witness Assistance Service (WAS) for victims of violent crimes that are under prosecution, located at Head Office and each of the ten regional offices. The Service provides information about rights, entitlements, the legal service and support services, assessment, referrals, liaison with lawyers, advocacy regarding special needs and circumstances, support during conferences, court preparation and debriefing to

victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, along with vulnerable victims and members of special needs groups.
<http://www.odpp.nsw.gov.au/odppmsie.html>

The WAS aims to reduce violence against women and improve responses to women who are victims of violent crime. It is based upon a philosophy that successful prosecution is not just about punishment of offenders but about preventing crime from happening to others, rehabilitation of victims and forced rehabilitation of offenders.³⁰

The WAS employs an Indigenous-identified position to provide specialist support to Aboriginal victims of violent crime, many of whom are women and children. The officer works closely with Aboriginal communities to ensure appropriate information, referral and support are available to Aboriginal victims of crime who are going to court. Although the position is based in Sydney, it has a Statewide focus, requiring the officer to travel to regional centres to personally assist in relevant matters and provide advice to other WAS officers.

The ODPP engages external trainers to provide in-service training for its staff on the impact of sexual assault and domestic violence on women and children and provides training for workers in sexual assault services on the role of the ODPP. WAS officers coordinate Sexual Assault Regional Liaison Forums for ODPP lawyers, Crown Prosecutors and sexual assault workers to facilitate increased understanding of each others' roles.

- ◆ The rate of recorded incidents of sexual assault increased from 50.0 per 100 000 population in 1999 to 56.2 in 2001.³¹ (It should be noted that there was no significant trend over the longer period 1997 to 2001, with a marginal decline from 57.4 to per 100,000 population in 1997. The rate of recorded indecent assault/act of indecency declined from 68.8 to 54.3 during this same period).³²
- ◆ However, this must be read against a generally low reporting rate for sexual assault, as indicated by victim surveys. Indeed the trend in the late 1990s was of a sharp decline: only an estimated 12.6 per cent of victims reported the assault to the police in 1999, down from 25.6 per cent in 1994.³³
- ◆ Nor was the 1999–2000 increase uniform across the State. Nine of the fourteen Sydney statistical divisions showed an increase, with the rate for Sydney overall increasing from 43.3 to 46.1 per 100,000 population. The rate in Inner Western Sydney, however, fell during the same period from 39.3 to 31.6, and declined from 57.2 to 37.6 in Canterbury-Bankstown. Outside Sydney, the rate rose in all statistical divisions except the Far West, where the rate fell from 140.6 to 112.1. The most marked increase was in Murray where it rose from 71.5 to 105.3 per 100,000.³⁴

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORT SERVICES

Area Health Services provide a range of domestic violence support services. South Eastern Sydney, for example, provides a counselling service for adult women in the Sutherland Shire and Illawarra provides support groups in Bulli, Nowra, Warilla and Wollongong.

The Attorney General's Department conducted a pilot project at Tamworth in 2001, which established a Domestic Violence

Project Officer position at a police station to provide follow-up information, support and referrals to victims of domestic violence identified by the police as 'high risk' or who are making a first report. \$60,000 was provided by the Commonwealth/State *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* initiative to fund this position. Although a culture of interagency networking and referral exists in Tamworth, prior to the establishment of this position there were no strategic mechanisms in place to ensure that domestic violence victims seen by the police were provided with subsequent support by other agencies. This project shifted the responsibility for initiating follow-up support from the victim to a service provider. The project is currently being evaluated.

The Attorney General's Department has employed a project officer at Dubbo to develop a model for an integrated service response to domestic violence by the criminal justice system and support agencies in a rural setting. \$80,000 has been provided under *Partnerships* for this project, which has established a 24 hour on-call domestic violence service that provides for a crisis worker to accompany police to a domestic violence incident and to provide information and referral to women and children. Training is also being provided to service providers regarding the range of issues facing women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

SUPPORT SERVICES TARGETING ABORIGINAL WOMEN

The Department for Women conducted projects in Far West NSW that provided rural crisis intervention to Aboriginal women in situations of domestic violence at Broken Hill, Menindee and Wilcannia. \$200,000 was provided by *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* to employ two project workers who provided direct assistance to 110 women, conducted community

education and developed a model of best practice to address violence within Aboriginal communities. As a result of the project, Aboriginal women in the communities have reported they are now able to talk openly about violence and three young women from Menindee who participated in the core domestic violence training made a video on violence, featuring interviews with members of the local Aboriginal community. The Far West Area Health Service has subsequently employed three workers to continue the Menindee project.

The Department of Community Services provides \$150,000 annually to run the Orana Far West *Safe Women's Safehouse Project* that will provide cultural and client specific support services for Aboriginal women escaping domestic violence. Women will be able to access culturally sensitive short term safe accommodation to escape domestic violence brought about by their partner's alcohol consumption and the project also provides a Women's Centre where women can meet for mutual support and to access emotional support programs. To date, training has been provided and the infrastructure established. The next step will be for the Department to provide assistance to communities so that projects can commence operation.

Information and referral

The Department of Community Services provides a 1800 Domestic Violence Line to provide information about domestic violence and assist women in crisis situations. This service is co-located with the Department's Helpline, which provides appropriate technological support to the ten full time caseworkers. <http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/phonelist.htm>

The Violence Against Women Specialist Unit produces a quarterly *Bulletin* for key stakeholders, service providers,

academics, students and other interested parties to keep them informed about the work of the *NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women* and other developments in the field. <http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd.nsf/pages/vawnewsindex>

The Mid North Coast Area Health Service has funded the Manning/Great Lakes Domestic Violence Monitoring Committee to develop a local domestic violence website as an information tool for local women and service providers. The site records an average of 21 hits per week. South Eastern Sydney Area Health Service has also funded the AIDS Council of NSW to set up and maintain a page on its website providing information on same-sex domestic violence.

The Attorney General's Department is developing an information sheet for victims of sexual assault to provide clear and concise information regarding entitlements to victims compensation and approved counselling for victims of sexual assault.

South Western Sydney Area Health Service funded the *Safe as Houses* project in Campbelltown. The project provided education to young women about the effects of violence in women's lives and an information brochure about the services available in the local area.

Funding programs

The Department of Health provides \$1.2 million to the *NSW Aboriginal Family Health Strategy* to fund Aboriginal community-based organisations to develop and implement community-controlled and culturally specific programs that address family violence in their local communities. The principles of the Strategy encompass a holistic approach to Aboriginal family and community violence by encompassing

the whole family and extended family networks and addressing cultural well-being, physical, emotional, spiritual, social, and economic health. The right to self-determination and working partnerships is a critical component.

The *NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women* provides funding for the *Local Domestic Violence Committees Grants Program*, administered by the Attorney General's Department. The Program provides approximately \$45,000 annually to assist local domestic violence committees conduct projects or community education campaigns that respond to the needs of the local community. In 2001–02, \$600 was provided to 75 local committees.

PlanningNSW provides funding for projects through Area Assistance Schemes.

<http://www.duap.nsw.gov.au/aas/index.html>

Current projects related to violence against women include:

- ◆ \$30,000 over three years to Kempsey Women's and Children's Services to fund a South-East Asian Domestic Violence Project Worker. The worker will work with community leaders to establish a reference group, implement support groups, educate women about their rights, increase access to existing services and develop sustainable initiatives;
- ◆ \$49,494 over two years to Bankstown Women's Health Centre to conduct the *NESB Women's Support Project*. The Centre will develop multilingual information packs for women from non-English speaking backgrounds around issues of domestic violence, provide information and training to relevant community organisations and establish partnerships with them to develop support programs for non-English speaking background women experiencing domestic violence;

- ◆ \$6,000 to South Lakes Family Refuge to provide appropriate training for volunteer carers in the refuge and to provide life skills training for residents; and
- ◆ \$2,258 to WILMA Women's Health Centre to provide self defence, assertiveness and self-esteem training to women with physical and intellectual disabilities in the Macarthur region who are at high risk of physical and sexual abuse.

The *Women's Grants Program*, funded by the Department for Women, provides one million dollars annually to fund innovative projects that benefit women. Each year, a proportion of this funding goes to projects related to violence against women. <http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/grants/grants2.html>

Projects funded in the last two years have included:

- ◆ \$30,000 to the AIDS Council of NSW to conduct community awareness strategies and produce resources around lesbian domestic violence in Lismore and Wollongong;
- ◆ \$20,000 to the Northern Rivers Community Legal Centre to produce a video on Local Court defended hearings for AVOs, designed to be culturally appropriate for Aboriginal women;
- ◆ \$26,450 to the Australian Sikh Association to conduct community awareness raising around domestic violence, to provide assistance to victims and to produce culturally appropriate information resources in the Sikh community in Western Sydney;
- ◆ \$75,000 to the Goulburn Family Support Service to undertake a *Women's Safety Plan* project which assisted women to draw up personal safety plans;
- ◆ \$25,063 to the University of Newcastle to conduct the *Caravan Project for Women escaping Domestic Violence*, which provided a personal development outreach program to women living in caravan parks in the Lower Hunter. The

project included group work on conflict resolution skills, relaxation methods, anger and stress management skills and improving knowledge of learning opportunities;

- ◆ \$15,650 to Arts Mid North Coast to conduct the *Garri Darri Doobay: With Strong Women* project, a five-day residential camp for 10 indigenous women in the Coffs Harbour LGA to assist them to deal with issues of addiction and domestic violence through writing and performance-based activities, linked to indigenous cultural heritage; and
- ◆ \$56,858 to Police and Community Youth Clubs to conduct the *Outta the Lounge Room – Young Women’s Safety Project*, to assist young women in Bankstown, Parramatta and the Shoalhaven to develop strategies to enhance their personal safety, using peer education and cultural development activities.

NSW Health has funded several violence-specific projects through the *Public Health Outcome Funding Agreement – Women’s Health Component*:

- ◆ the Illawarra Area Health Service received \$55,000 to establish, maintain and evaluate sustainable community activities to promote cultures of safety through regional and local partnerships between government and non-government agencies and women in the community;
- ◆ Cumberland Women’s Health Centre received an additional \$84,974 for its *Anti-Violence Project* to enable it to target new and emerging communities in the region;
- ◆ the Northern Sydney Area Women’s Health Service received \$20,000 to conduct an awareness raising domestic violence campaign targeting and linguistically diverse communities;
- ◆ the Northern Sydney Area Sexual Assault Service received \$30,000 to conduct the *Jacaranda Project*, to reduce the negative health and social consequences of untreated child

sexual abuse in women through the provision of therapeutic groups for women and training for health and community services staff to improve detection;

- ◆ the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists received \$10,000 to conduct domestic violence workshops to assist its members to identify victims of domestic violence and to provide appropriate medical management; and
- ◆ the Wentworth Area Violence Abuse and Neglect Services and Penrith Women’s Health Centre received \$70,000 to conduct *Girls Just Want To Have Fun: Sexual Safety in Night Clubs and Pubs*, a two-stage project that will undertake research into the social, environmental and individual risk factors associated with sexually abusive behaviour in pubs and clubs and develop and implement a risk prevention strategy.

Prevention programs

The Attorney General’s Department provides a Regional Violence Prevention Specialist Program that aims to promote effective prevention strategies targeting violence against women and improve access to services at a regional level.

<http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd.nsf/pages/vaw3>

The Program employs 18 Regional Violence Prevention Specialists, located in each of the NSW Health regions, whose role is to:

- ◆ enhance linkages within and between government and non-government agencies;
- ◆ conduct community education and training; and
- ◆ develop programs aimed at reducing and preventing violence against women.

Despite the progress made in changing community attitudes towards violence against women and the many mechanisms employed to address it, including service provision for women experiencing violence, many women continue to feel unsafe.

The complexities and dynamics of various forms of violence against women and the myriad barriers that exist for women seeking assistance, particularly where those women have special needs, can exacerbate their experiences of violence. The *Regional Violence Prevention Specialist Program* aims to promote effective prevention strategies and improve access to services at a regional level by establishing partnerships with and coordination between regional stakeholders.

The Specialists' work is informed by Regional Reference Groups, which aim to identify ways of addressing regional service delivery issues. In 2000–01, each Specialist developed a two-year regional activity plan, reflecting regional priorities. Each Specialist has a budget of \$10,000 to conduct projects that address domestic violence, sexual assault and violence in public places, targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds, women with disabilities, older women, children and young women, women living in rural and remote areas, homeless women or lesbians, population groups identified by the *NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women*.

The Specialists are currently conducting or have recently concluded a wide range of projects, including the following:

Projects targeting Aboriginal women:

- ◆ the *Linking Women with Safety Project*, aimed at increasing and formalising Aboriginal women's networks in the shires of Bogan, Warren, Gilgandra, Coonamble and Coonabarabran;

- ◆ *Healing the Spirit*, an Aboriginal Family Violence project; and
- ◆ the *Prevention of Violence against Aboriginal Women* project, which resulted in the recruitment of two domestic violence outreach workers for Taree and Foster.

Projects targeting women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities:

- ◆ production of the *Safe Families Kit*, addressing domestic violence issues for recently arrived migrant communities in the South West;
- ◆ prevention campaigns conducted with a variety of communities, including the Sikh community in Wentworth and the Somali community in Western Sydney;
- ◆ production of a pamphlet about AVO hearings in Arabic, Vietnamese and Chinese; and
- ◆ cross-cultural domestic violence training for community workers in Lightning Ridge, Moree and Dubbo to enhance non-English speaking background women's access to services in rural and remote areas.

Projects targeting women with disabilities:

- ◆ development and distribution of appropriate resources about violence against women with disabilities;
- ◆ a forum for accommodation services in New England to address issues of sexual assault for women with disabilities; and
- ◆ a community awareness campaign around violence against women with disabilities in the Mid West.

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Projects targeting older women:

- ◆ a forum addressing older women's experiences of violence;
- ◆ development of appropriate resources for older women, including key rings and spectacle cleaning cloths; and
- ◆ training for aged care workers around violence issues.

Projects targeting younger women:

- ◆ a youth theatre program, *Control*, performed in schools in the Hunter;
- ◆ the *Fractured Fairytales* conference in Northern Sydney and the Central Coast examining domestic violence and child protection issues;
- ◆ production of *Date Rape Cubes* in the Southern Region as a resource to promote discussions with young people about sexual assault and consent issues; and
- ◆ the *Young Women's Peer Education Project* in Western Sydney and Wentworth, including training for TAFE students and other young people in providing support to peer groups on issues of violence against women.

Projects targeting rural women:

- ◆ the *Crookwell Women's Health and Safety Project*, in which a number of communities made quilts on the theme of violence against women;
- ◆ the *Small Towns Project*, supporting local violence prevention groups in rural and remote communities in the Mid West; and
- ◆ information sessions for rural women in remote communities in the Far West to improve their access to services.

Projects targeting homeless women:

- ◆ an art competition and a *Speakout* forum for homeless women to promote discussion of violence against homeless women.

Projects targeting lesbians:

- ◆ the *Stir it Up Project*, a lesbian speakers series in the Illawarra, examining issues of violence against lesbians;
- ◆ *Lesbians Initiating Positive Strategies*, providing training and information to non-lesbian workers in the Northern Rivers around issues of violence against lesbians;

Projects related to domestic violence:

- ◆ the *Exclusion Orders Project* in South Eastern Sydney researching the granting of exclusion orders and developing strategies to assist women in situations of violence to remain in the family home; and
- ◆ participation in *Stop Domestic Violence Day* activities around the State.

Projects related to sexual assault:

- ◆ an information campaign for young people about the dangers of spiked drinks; and
- ◆ the *Safe Chix Project*, a sexual assault education project for young people in Northern Sydney.

Projects related to violence in public places:

- ◆ the *Reclaim the Train* initiative that encourages women to use public transport, organised to coincide with Reclaim the Night; and
- ◆ participation in *Reclaim the Night* and *YWCA Week Without Violence* activities around the State.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION

NSW Health provides routine screening for domestic violence for women attending antenatal and early childhood services, drug and alcohol and mental health services. The project aims to increase disclosure of domestic violence to health workers, to enable staff to respond appropriately to disclosures, to improve support and referral pathways for women who disclose and to prevent its onset in some cases by educating women who are screened about its nature and effects. A pilot was conducted in 2000 in South East Sydney and Macquarie Area Health Services and it is currently operational at 17 sites within the Mid Western, New England, Mid North Coast, South East Sydney and Hunter Area Health Services. To date, more than 500 staff have been trained and it will be progressively implemented across the State by December 2004.

\$81,887 was provided to Big hART by the Department for Women, the Attorney General's Department and Partnerships Against Domestic Violence to conduct the Domestic Violence Prevention Film Project in 11 communities in northern and north west NSW. The project worked with young women living in transient accommodation who have experienced domestic violence, using a community development approach to build support networks and awareness across the community. Material was filmed by young women in the communities and will be used to create a docu-drama.

PROMOTING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

\$74,000 has also been provided through *Partnerships* to conduct the *Promoting Healthy Relationships Project* in Grafton. A review of violence prevention programs for adolescents

has been conducted and the findings have informed the development of a curriculum-based program, currently being piloted with year seven students at a local secondary school. A further three high schools in the Clarence Valley have also expressed interest in piloting some of the modules. By targeting students on entry into high school, the project aims to reach young adolescents before the patterns in intimate relationships are well established.

The Northern Rivers Area Health Service is conducting the *Kids Really Count* project, funded by the Casino Community Benefit Fund, to consult with young people aged 14–24 in Byron Bay, Mullumbimby, Lismore, Casino, Grafton, Kyogle, Ballina, Evans Head and Tweed Heads and develop a multi media awareness campaign explaining the impact of domestic violence on people in relationships, and potentially on children, and providing information about strategies to deal with issues of violence in their own relationships – both as victims and as perpetrators.

Wentworth Area Health Service is conducting the *Pair Project: Preventing Abuse in Relationships*, based at Katoomba High School. The project aims to increase the capacity of young people to choose healthy supportive relationships, increase the awareness of violence early warning signs and increase young people's access to local support services.

South Western Sydney Area Health Service funds the Bankstown Community Health Service to provide relationships workshops at the Birrong Girls High School. The workshops have been run annually for the past four years for years 11 and 12, and consist of group activities that explore the dynamics of personal relationships and distinguish types of abuse. The workshop is

conducted for students as part of the Personal Development and Health Curriculum.

DRUG AND ALCOHOL FACILITATED SEXUAL ASSAULT

The Attorney General's Department is conducting a range of information and prevention strategies around NSW, in relation to drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault, including consultations with licencees about how they may assist in preventing this type of assault, preparation of posters and other information materials to raise community awareness of the dangers, training of police detectives about this type of assault and preparation of a kit to assist communities, local councils and licencees to conduct safety audits in and around licenced premises. The initiative has been promoted in Northern Sydney, Central Sydney, Hunter, Southern and Greater Murray regions of NSW.

Central Sydney Area Health Service has also focused attention on drug and alcohol facilitated sexual assault. After an initial focus group study of young women's perceptions of risk conducted in 2001-02, a new project has commenced to develop appropriate resources for a campaign to target potential victims.

VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN THE WORKPLACE

Illawarra Area Health Service is conducting the *Culture of Safety Project* to prevent violence and abuse in the workplace, particularly targeting small human service agencies. After an initial survey of more than 300 organisations within the region and two conferences, a draft toolkit has been developed to raise awareness of violence prevention strategies for the workplace. The toolkit will be piloted with ten organisations and then revised for wider distribution.

Community Education

A statewide community education campaign, *Violence against women – it's against all the rules*, was conducted by the Attorney General's Department in association with the partner agencies of the *NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women* and the Department of Sport and Recreation. The campaign targeted men aged 21–29 years and featured prominent sporting identities as role models.

http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd.nsf/pages/vawsu_facts_rules

The campaign aimed to:

- ◆ increase the unacceptability of violence against women;
- ◆ increase men's commitment to preventing violence against women;
- ◆ stimulate discussion amongst men who would not normally discuss this issue; and
- ◆ encourage men to have a broader understanding of violence against women and an understanding of the ramifications of violence and abuse.

Approximately \$350,000 was spent on the campaign, which featured posters on buses in metropolitan Sydney and on billboards and banners on freeways around Sydney, Wollongong and Newcastle, radio advertisements, information materials provided to community groups and organisations and a variety of associated local campaigns conducted around NSW by the Regional Violence Prevention Specialists.

The Community Relations Commission and Victims of Crime Bureau are planning to facilitate a series of forums in 2003

to disseminate information to community groups that provide assistance to people from non English speaking backgrounds about services and remedies available to victims of crime in NSW, with a particular emphasis on women victims. Forums for Arabic, Vietnamese and Chinese speaking people will be held in Sydney as well as a generalist forum covering a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Three generalist forums will be also held in regional areas.

The Attorney General's Department, in partnership with the Anti-Discrimination Board and the Department of Education and Training, conducted *Skool's Out*, an initiative designed to reduce homophobia and bullying in and around schools. The focus was on discrimination and harassment and encouraging effective responses so that all students, teachers, and parents can feel safe and secure in the school environment.

Components of the initiative included a forum, a stall at the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day and an entry in the Parade. Information and resource materials were developed, including a wallet sized card for students with tips and referral services relating to homophobia and bullying. The initiative won the Mardi Gras Outstanding Community Event Award and led to a funding commitment of \$25,000 for 2002–03 to provide a grants scheme targeting homophobia in schools.

The Legal Aid Commission provides a community legal education program on domestic violence and family law for women from Spanish, Vietnamese, Arabic and Chinese backgrounds and community workers in the Fairfield and Canterbury areas of Sydney. To date, six sessions have been conducted with a total of 140 participants.

Wentworth Area Health Service is funding Penrith Women's

Health Centre to conduct the *Be Safe Be Sure* project, a sexual assault education program for women with intellectual disabilities. The project aims to foster greater independence and improve the safety of women with intellectual disabilities, by providing them with education in interpersonal skills, develop partnerships between disability and mainstream services and strengthen carer and worker skills and knowledge.

Northern Sydney Area Health Service is conducting a community education campaign in the local Korean communities to raise awareness of domestic violence and develop collaborative partnerships with mainstream agencies.

Interagency and other coordinating mechanisms

The Apprehended Violence Legal Issues Coordinating Committee, an interagency committee facilitated by the Criminal Law Review Division of the Attorney General's Department, has been established to monitor the implementation of apprehended violence legislation. The brief of the Committee is to identify legal, policy and procedural barriers to the provision of adequate criminal justice system services and to ensure appropriate coordination of services to people seeking protection from domestic and personal violence.

The Attorney General's Department is developing *Criminal Justice System Interagency Guidelines for Responding to Domestic Violence* to provide clear direction and instruction to staff about appropriate responses and to provide associated support services with information on the role of the criminal justice system. \$50,000 has been provided for this project by *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence*. The Department is also

organising a series of domestic violence workshops for staff from all relevant agencies to support the implementation of the new Domestic Violence Policy and Procedures in Local Courts.

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) convenes an interagency Sexual Assault Review Committee to discuss issues relating to the investigation and conduct of sexual assault prosecutions. The purposes of the Committee are:

- ◆ to recommend improvements to minimise stress or anxiety for victims of sexual assault and ensure the recognition of their concerns reflected in the preparation and conduct of Court proceedings;
- ◆ to recommend and monitor training for ODPP lawyers;
- ◆ to make recommendations and to liaise with other agencies and assist in attaining a more co-ordinated approach to sexual assault prosecutions;
- ◆ to monitor investigations/proceedings relating to sexual assault allegations and review individual sexual assault prosecutions; and
- ◆ to identify and recommend legislative reform relevant to sexual assault prosecutions.

NSW Police convenes the NSW Government Interagency Committee on Adult Sexual Assault to address issues relating to the management of sexual assault cases, government policy and program through a collaborative approach with other government agencies. The Committee has established two sub-committees. The Legal Issues Sub-Committee will explore and make recommendations on issues relating to the legal system and adult sexual assault and the Alternative Models Sub-Committee will examine challenges relating to the provision

of services to victims of sexual assault across the State, and propose ways to meet these challenges.

NSW Police is also convening a review of the *Adult Sexual Assault Interagency Guidelines*, in collaboration with the Department of Health and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

SAFETY IN PUBLIC PLACES

The Department for Women has developed a *Safe Places Project* reflecting an ongoing commitment to working in partnership with key state and local government agencies and community organisations to improve safety for women in public places. The project builds on recommendations from a one-day forum held in November 2000 and aims to promote awareness of successful safety initiatives, identify best practice models that develop and strengthen community capacity in local areas and promote partnership arrangements between local government, community and commercial organisations to develop local initiatives that lead to improvements in women's public safety. The Department intends to publish a guide to good practice in safety initiatives to assist agencies to develop local strategies.

A number of initiatives have been introduced by the Department of Transport to address concerns about safety on public transport, including the installation of high intensity lighting and digital security cameras at all CityRail stations at a cost of \$100 million. Digital help points are currently being installed at each station and contracted security guards patrol CityRail services from 3pm daily and all services from 7pm. Transit Officers, a new class of security personnel, are to be appointed in the near future.

http://www.cityrail.info/service/content_6.jsp

- ◆ Of 16 per cent of women who had used public transport alone after dark in the previous year, 35 per cent felt unsafe while using it and 52 per cent felt unsafe while waiting for it;
- ◆ Of 84 per cent of women who had not used public transport alone after dark in the previous year, 30 per cent did not do so because they did not feel safe; and
- ◆ Of 66 per cent of women who didn't walk alone at night, 58 per cent did not do so because they felt unsafe.³⁵

Transport NSW undertakes the development of public transport facilities with the prime objective of improving the safety, security and convenience of users at interchanges, working with local councils and using detailed design guidelines that include planning for crime prevention through environmental design features such as CCTV, bright lighting and improved access. Ongoing audits are conducted with Police, local government, transport providers and relevant stakeholders, so as to identify strategies to improve the safety of the travelling public. This year, Transport NSW has completed four major interchange projects in the Metropolitan Sydney Region and a major upgrade at Gosford Station, at a cost of \$40 million, and plans are underway for a further five major upgrades next year.

The Department of Gaming and Racing conducts the *No more – it's the Law* campaign, which provides educational material at point of sale in licensed premises encouraging responsible alcohol consumption, and promotes this message generally within the community. The Department also facilitates local initiatives such as liquor accords designed to minimise harm associated with alcohol. More than 40 liquor accords are now

in place, instigated in most cases in response to local concerns about late night or early morning alcohol-related anti-social behaviour and disturbances. The police report that these accords have resulted in a reduction of alcohol-related assaults, disturbances, vandalism and other anti-social behaviour, and complement other community safety initiatives such as the STRAWS project in Albury-Wodonga.

<http://www.dgr.nsw.gov.au>

STRAWs (Safer Times Round Albury Wodonga) has been operating in the Albury Wodonga area since 1999. The project developed as a result of concern about the safety of women in public places. The Regional Violence Prevention Specialist for the Greater Murray region and the Albury Wodonga Women's Refuge initiated the project to address this concern.

STRAWs is a multi-agency and cross-border partnership between the Victorian and NSW Police Services, Albury and Wodonga City Councils, Albury Wodonga Women's Refuge, Albury Wodonga Women's Centre and the *NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women*.

STRAWs aims to:

- ◆ contribute to the reduction of violence against women in licensed premises in Albury Wodonga; and
- ◆ develop and enhance awareness of women's public safety issues in the area.

The objectives are to:

- ◆ implement an annual awards system to recognise licensed premises for their contribution towards public safety for women;

- ◆ involve licensed premises in the issue of public safety for women;
- ◆ encourage broader community participation in the issue of public safety for women; and
- ◆ advocate a partnership approach to violence/crime prevention.

Each year STRAWs gives an award to a licensed premise in Albury Wodonga for its contribution towards making Albury Wodonga a safer place for women. Venues that enter the project competition undergo a safety audit that includes assessment of:

- ◆ interior and exterior lighting;
- ◆ access to the licensed premise (location of car-parks, the entrance, lighting, potential hiding places, surveillance, etc);
- ◆ taxi stand locations (visibility, presence of other people, etc);
- ◆ venue (security, design, potential hiding places, location of toilets, etc); and
- ◆ staff and management attitudes (responsible service of alcohol, easily identifiable security staff, method of dealing with harassment and complaints, identification of safety issues for staff, etc).

The results from the safety audits are ranked and the participating licensed premises are provided with comments in relation to positive aspects of their premises, as well as areas for improvement.

In 2000 a People's Choice category was added to STRAWs. Women and men over 18 years of age who frequent various licensed premises in Albury Wodonga are encouraged to vote for the venue that they consider best ensures the safety of women patrons, providing an additional means to generate

public awareness about women's safety in public places.

STRAWs has raised awareness about issues of safety for women in licensed premises and there has been a decrease in reported incidents of public violence since the inception of the project. For example:

- ◆ one licensed premise has implemented a car-park escort service as a direct result of participation in the project; and
- ◆ statistics compiled by Albury police indicate that the number of assaults in and around licensed premises has dropped dramatically, from over 100 per year in 1998 to 70 in 1999 and 2001. The Local Area Commander of Albury Police Service has stated that he believes the decrease in public violence towards women is a direct result of STRAWs.

STRAWs won the Community and Business Partnership category of the Victorian 2000 Crime Prevention Awards and the 2001 Australian Violence Prevention, Special Category Award for drugs and alcohol initiatives.

The CEDAW promise

Violence is a fundamental violation of women's human rights. CEDAW calls on all governments to take all appropriate measures to ensure that women are able to exercise and enjoy their human rights and basic freedoms.

In particular, governments will address political, social, economic and cultural factors, including policy and legislation, that preclude women from living in safety and from accessing appropriate legal recourse.

Women have a right to live in a society that values their safety and protects them from violence in order that they may develop and advance in full equality with men.

Agencies with initiatives in this section

- ◆ Attorney General's Department
- ◆ Community Relations Commission
- ◆ Department for Women
- ◆ Department of Community Services
- ◆ Department of Corrective Services
- ◆ Department of Gaming and Racing
- ◆ Department of Housing
- ◆ Department of Transport
- ◆ Legal Aid Commission
- ◆ NSW Health
- ◆ NSW Police Service
- ◆ Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
- ◆ PlanningNSW

- 1 Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996, *Women's Safety Australia*, Cat no 4128.0, ABS, Canberra.
- 2 *Women's Safety Australia*, p13.
- 3 *Women's Safety Australia*, p13.
- 4 *Women's Safety Australia*, p5.
- 5 *Women's Safety Australia*, p5.
- 6 *Women's Safety Australia*, p62.
- 7 *Women's Safety Australia*, p62.
- 8 *Women's Safety Australia*, p63.
- 9 *Women's Safety Australia*, p23.
- 10 *Women's Safety Australia*, p23.
- 11 *Women's Safety Australia*, p50.
- 12 United Nations 2000, *The World's Women 2000*, UN, New York, p154. Caution should be exercised in attempting to compare these statistics directly with those found in the Australian survey, as little information is provided about the methodology of the overseas surveys, and there are likely to be a variety of operational factors affecting the disclosure rates in different countries.
- 13 Some forms of domestic violence, such as social and financial abuse, fall outside the criminal definition.

- 14 NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 1997, *An Evaluation of the NSW Apprehended Violence Order Scheme*, by Lily Tromboli and Roseanne Bonney, BoCSaR, Sydney, p61.
- 15 *Evaluation of the NSW Apprehended Violence Order Scheme*, p59.
- 16 NSW Attorney General's Department 1999, *Apprehended Violence Orders: A Review of the Law – Discussion Paper*, Attorney General's Department, Sydney, p7.
- 17 NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2002, *Local Courts Statistics 2001: AVOs Granted*, BoCSaR, Sydney http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/bocsar1.nsf/pages/lc_2001_avo
- 18 NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2002, *New South Wales Recorded Crime Statistics 2001*, BoCSaR, Sydney, p67. <http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/bocsar1.nsf/pages/crimestatsindex>
- 19 Department for Women 1996, *Heroines of Fortitude: the experience of women in court as victims of sexual assault, Summary Report*, DFW, Sydney, p10.
- 20 *Heroines of Fortitude*, p13.
- 21 *Heroines of Fortitude*, p13.

- 22 *Heroines of Fortitude*, p14.
- 23 *Heroines of Fortitude*, p15.
- 24 *Heroines of Fortitude*, p17.
- 25 *Heroines of Fortitude*, p20.
- 26 *Women's Safety Australia*, p 29.
- 27 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2000, *Population Survey Monitor*, Cat no 4103.0, ABS, Canberra, p7.
- 28 See also chapter on Families and Communities.
- 29 Information provided by Department of Health, September 2002.
- 30 The practice of the Witness Assistance Service is informed by issues raised in *Heroines of Fortitude*.
- 31 *New South Wales Recorded Crime Statistics 2001*, p43.
- 32 NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2002, *NSW Recorded Crime Statistics 1997–2001*, BoCSaR, Sydney, p1. <http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/bocsar1.nsf/pages/crimestatsindex>
- 33 NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2000, *Key Trends in Crime and Justice New South Wales 1999*, BoCSaR, Sydney, p10.
- 34 *New South Wales Recorded Crime Statistics 2001*, p43.
- 35 *Women's Safety Australia*, p61.