



**IN THE MATTER OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION
INTO FAMILY VIOLENCE**

**ATTACHMENT DM-7 TO STATEMENT OF ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DEAN
MCWHIRTER**

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This is the attachment marked 'DM-7' produced and shown to **DEAN MCWHIRTER** at the time of signing his Statement on 27 July 2015.

Before me: ... 



An Australian legal practitioner
within the meaning of the
Legal Profession Uniform Law (Victoria)

Attachment DM-7



VICTORIA POLICE

LIVING FREE FROM VIOLENCE – UPHOLDING THE RIGHT

**VICTORIA POLICE STRATEGY TO REDUCE
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN 2009–2014**

**OUR VISION: SUPPORTING WOMEN AND
CHILDREN TO LIVE FREE FROM VIOLENCE**

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER



OUR VISION IS TO SUPPORT WOMEN AND CHILDREN TO LIVE FREE FROM VIOLENCE. THIS IS BASED ON THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE THAT EVERY PERSON HAS THE RIGHT TO LIVE A LIFE FREE FROM VIOLENCE.

Victoria Police is committed to upholding the right to live a life free from violence. We want victims of family violence, sexual assault and child abuse to be confident that they can call Victoria Police and receive a timely, thorough and respectful response that ensures their safety and wellbeing.

The Victorian Government has achieved much over recent years in responding better to victims of these crimes, but a huge challenge still exists in reducing violence against women and children. More than one in two Australian women experience physical or sexual assault by a man in their lifetime, and, more than one in three women who have had an intimate partner, have experienced violence from a partner. The level of violence in the home, and against women and children by those known to them remains unacceptable.

Victoria Police is often the first point of contact for victims of these crimes. We have a responsibility to provide high quality responses for those whose lives are affected, and to hold perpetrators of this violence accountable.

Responding effectively to violence against women and children requires all parts of the system to work together. Victoria Police will continue to collaborate with our key partners in the courts, government and community services.

This five-year Strategy seeks to build on our achievements in the *Violence Against Women Strategy: The Way Forward 2002*. From this strong foundation, we will further embed and improve our response to the most common forms of violence against women and children – family violence, sexual assault and child abuse.

The Victoria Police strategic plan, *The Way Ahead 2008–2013*, articulates our commitment to three key priorities: a safer Victoria; connecting the community; and valuing our people. Our focus on delivering a safer Victoria is supported by our commitment to ensuring that people feel confident to report matters to police. We know that raising awareness of violence against women and children has resulted in an increase in reported crime, especially family violence. An important indicator in this matter is that women and children have the confidence to report to police.

I commend Victoria Police's hard work and dedication, and I encourage all members to work together to achieve our vision. We must provide the best response possible every time we are called out to help victims of family violence, sexual assault and child abuse.

Victoria Police will strive to make Victoria a safer place for women and children, because it is our duty, and because it is the right thing to do.

Simon Overland, APM
Chief Commissioner of
Victoria Police

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, VICTORIA POLICE WILL:

OUR VISION IS TO SUPPORT WOMEN AND CHILDREN TO LIVE FREE FROM VIOLENCE. THIS STRATEGY PROVIDES A CLEAR DIRECTION AND COMMITMENT FROM VICTORIA POLICE, AND OUTLINES KEY OBJECTIVES AND TASKS WE WILL UNDERTAKE TO WORK TOWARDS OUR VISION.

OBJECTIVE 1

RESPOND TO AND INVESTIGATE FAMILY VIOLENCE, SEXUAL ASSAULT AND CHILD ABUSE MORE EFFECTIVELY.

We are joined across Victoria by government and community in a united effort to provide the best response to all victims of family violence, sexual assault and child abuse. Victoria Police works in partnership to prevent this violence from occurring in the first place.

Over the last six years, Victoria Police has worked closely with our partners in government and the community sector to implement the 25 recommendations of the original Victoria Police *Violence Against Women Strategy: The Way Forward 2002*. We have developed a consistent and comprehensive response to family violence. Victoria Police is also working hard to improve our response to sexual assault and child abuse through the implementation of Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCITs).

OBJECTIVE 2

TAKE A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN DRIVING INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY.

Despite the ongoing efforts of Victoria Police and our partners, the problem of violence against women and children remains all too prevalent in our community.

We have put in place measures and processes to track our progress. An expected increase in reporting of family violence, sexual assault and child abuse, along with a demonstrated increase in action taken by police will be two measures of our performance. We know that the rate of reporting directly correlates to the degree of confidence victims have to come forward and seek help from police.

We will also monitor our performance through whole of government evaluation and research efforts to track systems performance in responding to violence against women and children.

OBJECTIVE 3

REDUCE RISK TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OF ONGOING EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE THROUGH PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

OBJECTIVE 4

INCREASE MEMBERS' UNDERSTANDING ABOUT ISSUES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN (VAWC) IN ORDER TO PROVIDE APPROPRIATE POLICING RESPONSES

Victoria Police has contributed to the development of the Victorian Government 10 year Family Violence strategic framework (forthcoming) and the 10-year Prevention Plan, *Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women 2010-2020*. These plans are underpinned by the *Violence Against Women Policy Statement*.

These important plans include high-level indicators, which we will collectively work towards over the next 10 years. Furthermore, Victoria Police continues to collaborate with the Department of Justice and its partners on the Sexual Assault Reform Initiative, and is working strategically with the Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Protection to respond more comprehensively to child abuse cases.

THE FOLLOWING PERFORMANCE MEASURES WILL TRACK ACHIEVEMENTS AGAINST OUR OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE	MEASURES OVER THE NEXT 5 YEARS
Respond to and investigate family violence, sexual assault and child abuse more effectively.	<p>Increase family violence reports to Victoria Police by 10% and charges laid by 5%.</p> <p>Increase sexual assault reports to Victoria Police by 15%.</p> <p>Increase Family Violence Intervention Order applications by Victoria Police by 10%</p>
Take a leadership role in driving integrated service delivery.	Increase referrals from police to family violence services by 15%.
Reduce risk to children and young people of ongoing exposure to violence through prevention and early intervention.	Increase reports for child physical assault (family related) by 10%.
Increase members' understanding about issues of Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) in order to provide appropriate policing responses.	Demonstrated increase in members understanding of violence against women and children.

1. THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN (VAWC):

HOW PREVALENT IS IT?



1. THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN (VAWC) HOW PREVALENT IS IT?

1.1 EVIDENCE ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Research informs us that the underlying cause of violence against women is the unequal relationships between men and women. This includes both the unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women, and the broader societal structures that place women and children in a vulnerable position.

Table 1: Underlying determinants of violence against women: Gender roles and relations

INDIVIDUAL/RELATIONSHIP	COMMUNITY AND ORGANISATIONAL	SOCIETAL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Belief in rigid roles and identities, weak support for gender equality → Masculine orientation/sense of entitlement → Male dominance and control of wealth in relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Culturally-specific norms regarding gender and sexuality → Masculine peer organisational cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Institutional and cultural support for, or weak sanctions against, gender inequality and rigid gender roles.

According to Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) research, the strongest and most consistent predictors of violence-supportive attitudes were: being male; and having weak support for gender equality.¹ Men are more likely to engage in violence against women if they hold negative attitudes towards women, and if they identify with traditional masculinity and male privilege. To prevent violence against women, we must not only change attitudes. We also need to change the structural inequalities that perpetuate violence against women and children, and violence supportive social norms more broadly.²

We know that women and children are the predominant victims of family violence, sexual assault and child abuse. More than one in two Australian women experience physical or sexual assault by a man in their lifetime, and, more than one in three women who have had an intimate partner, have experienced violence from a partner.²

One in four young people has witnessed family violence. "Children who either witness violence or are subjected to violence themselves are more likely to adhere to violence-supportive attitudes".¹ This places boys at higher risk of future perpetration and females at higher risk of victimisation.

Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria (VicHealth, 2007)

1. THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN (VAWC) HOW PREVALENT IS IT?

“The cost of the pain and suffering experienced by the children and young people who are abused and neglected present a burden that is most heavily paid in the loss of their childhood.”

The Cost of Child Abuse in Australia (2008)

In 2007–2008, more than 6,000 Victorian children were considered to be at risk of child abuse (substantiated investigations) as reported to the Department of Human Services, Child Protection.⁵ In terms of prevalence, it is estimated that in 2007, 44,250 Victorian children were abused or neglected.⁶ This is considered to be a conservative estimate.⁷

This evidence highlights that we must continue to address violence against women and children by improving our response. In addition, the way we work must contribute to an organisational culture of non-violence and gender equity, promoting respectful and non-discriminatory working and personal relationships.

We acknowledge that most men are not violent towards their partners. However, most violent offences against women and children are committed by men who are known to the victims, including family members and partners. It is important to remember when responding to these crimes, that it is very difficult for victims to take action against their own partners and family members. Fear of ostracism, reprisals against themselves and their children, and disbelief from family, friends and police are some of the reasons why women find it so hard to report. Victoria Police, however, has a legal and ethical duty to take action and investigate these crimes the first time they are reported.

We know that many victims are the most marginalised and vulnerable members of our community. To address this problem, all police who respond to family violence, sexual assault and child abuse will work with specialist members within Victoria Police. Specialist members include Multicultural Liaison Officers, the New and Emerging Community Liaison Officers, Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, and Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers.⁸ Working together will assist members to understand the additional barriers and vulnerabilities faced by many women and children, and to respond appropriately.

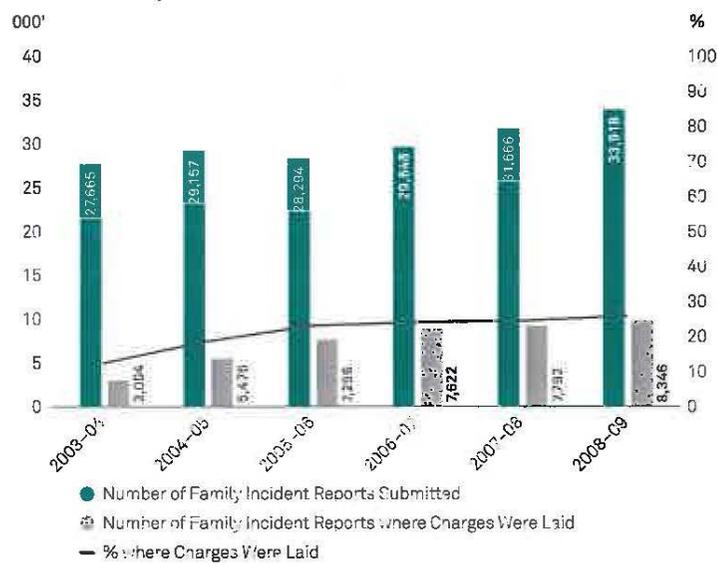
Women and children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable and we will continue to work with key partners to ensure our response is accessible and informed.⁹

The prevalence and incidence of family violence, sexual assault and child abuse is widespread throughout Victoria. Despite increasingly high quality interventions, there is little evidence to suggest that this has decreased over time.¹⁰

Intimate partner violence is the largest known contributor to the preventable disease burden of Victorian women and girls aged between 15 and 44.¹¹

1. THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN (VAWC) HOW PREVALENT IS IT?

Figure 1: Number of family violence incidents attended (Family Incident Reports) and number of charges laid by Victoria Police from 2003–2004 to 2008–2009



“What I found most difficult was being so young and not having a clue about services or where to go ... It’s important to let people know about it because if no one knows that this place is here then it’s not going to help.”

(Client feedback from SOCIT/MDC pilot site)

FAMILY VIOLENCE

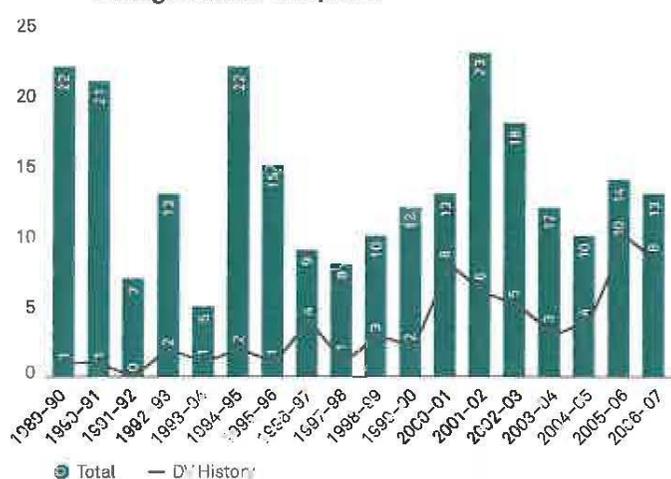
Over the past six years, reporting of family violence incidents to Victoria Police has increased by 22%, from around 28,000 incidents in 2003–2004 to nearly 34,000 in 2008–2009. Of these incidents, most victims are female.²⁰ The number of Family Incident Reports where charges were laid for criminal offences have increased by 178%, from 3,004 in 2003–2004 to 8,346 in 2008–2009 (see figure 1).²¹

Increased reporting of family violence and improved actions taken by Victoria Police is no reason for complacency. We know that every year women and children die at the hands of their family members.

Although intimate partner homicide has decreased by 25% nationally, the rate of intra-familial homicide has remained constant.²²

Whilst the overall number of intimate-partner homicides is declining, more than half of all intimate partner homicides have a recorded history of prior police involvement (see figure 2).²³ This means that police have had previous involvement in over half of all intimate partner homicides. We need to ensure that our risk assessment and action taken to ensure safety and accountability is scrupulous, so that women are protected and well-informed of their options for risk management and safety planning.

Figure 2: Victoria intimate partner homicide incidents 1989–1990 to 2006–2007 and a known history of domestic violence through contact with police



Source: ICJ Homicide Monitoring Program. Data extracted for Victoria Police, August 2009

We know that the number of sexual assault victims who report to police has remained low over the past six years. This is the case for both categories of sexual assault – rape and other sexual assault offences categorised as sex (non-rape).²⁴ Unlike reports of family violence, there has been no significant increase in sexual assault reports. A number of factors may have contributed to this, including the quality of police responses and the challenges victims face in the criminal justice system.

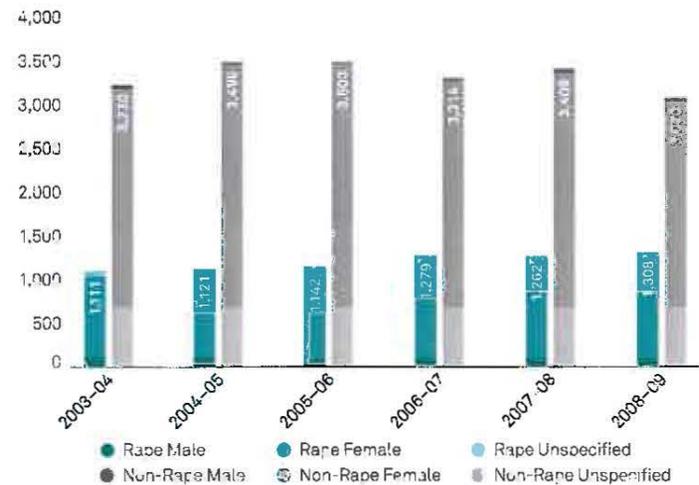
The proportion of women experiencing sexual violence in their lifetime since the age of 15 has increased (17.9% in 1996 to 19.1% in 2005)

Personal Safety Survey 2005

1. THE PROBLEM OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN (VAWC) HOW PREVALENT IS IT?

Of the 4,378 reported sexual assaults in 2008–2009, 62% were for children, and most of these reported sexual assaults were perpetrated against females (see figure 3).⁴³ Reporting of sexual assault by adult females to Victoria Police is lower than the national average, so we need to keep encouraging victims to come forward. This is an area we will be working to improve significantly through our new approach to investigating sexual assault, of both adults and children, and child physical assault.

Figure 3: Reported sexual assaults to Victoria Police by victim, offence category and gender 2003–2004 to 2008–2009



Source: Corporate Statistics, Victoria Police. Data extracted from LEMF 12 July 2009

“I don’t think I would have reported if I’d had to go to a police station ... Even the idea that somebody sees you from the outside thinking, ‘Why is she going to the police station?’ Here (MDC) it just looks like any other building. Nobody knows your business. They’re not all in uniforms.”

(Client feedback from SOCIT/MDC pilot site)

2. THE RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN:



2 THE RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

There are international, Australian and Victorian policy and legal frameworks that underpin and support Victoria Police's work to reduce violence against women and children.

The international law that commits Australia to eliminating violence against women and children includes the *Convention to Eliminate Discrimination Against Women*²⁵ and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (see figure 4).²⁷

Nationally, we are guided by the *Australasian Policing Strategy to Reduce and Prevent Family Violence*²⁸ and the *Commonwealth's National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women*.²⁹

2.1 VICTORIAN RESPONSE TO VAWC

At a state level, Victorian legislation such as the *Charter Of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* and the *Victim's Charter Act 2006* guide our response under a range of relevant laws.

The Victorian Government also has a clear policy on prevention to which Victoria Police has committed. This involves working together with government and non-government organisations to reduce violence against women and children through various prevention initiatives. Victoria's state plan to prevent violence against women is a high-level framework for government and community policy and practice over the next ten years. Its ultimate aim is to create Victorian communities, cultures and organisations that are non-violent and gender equitable, and relationships that are respectful and non-discriminatory.

The Victorian Government has undertaken significant legislative, criminal justice and service sector reforms in family violence, sexual assault and child protection. New legislation such as the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005 (Vic)* and the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)* has been introduced. In addition, the *Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)* and the *Evidence Act 1958 (Vic)* have been reformed.³⁰

Achievements of the Violence Against Women Strategy 2002–2008

LATE 2001

Former Chief Commissioner, Christine Nixon, announced a new focus on violence against women (VAW) as a priority for Victoria Police. VAW Internal Steering Committee formed to implement the *Violence against Women Strategy: A Way Forward* (VAW Strategy).

1 AUG 2002

Inaugural meeting of Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Family Violence (SSCRFV) held. Now known as the Family Violence Statewide Advisory Committee (FVSAC), the committee is co-chaired by Victoria Police and the Office of Women's Policy.

JUNE 2003

Inaugural meeting of the Statewide Steering Committee to Reduce Sexual Assault (SSCRSA) held, co-chaired by Victoria Police and the Office of Women's Policy.

1 SEP 2004

Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence launched. Over 6,400 members trained, and 10 Family Violence Adviser positions funded.

OCT 2005

Code of Practice for the Investigation of Sexual Assault reviewed and re-released. Multilingual brochures developed.

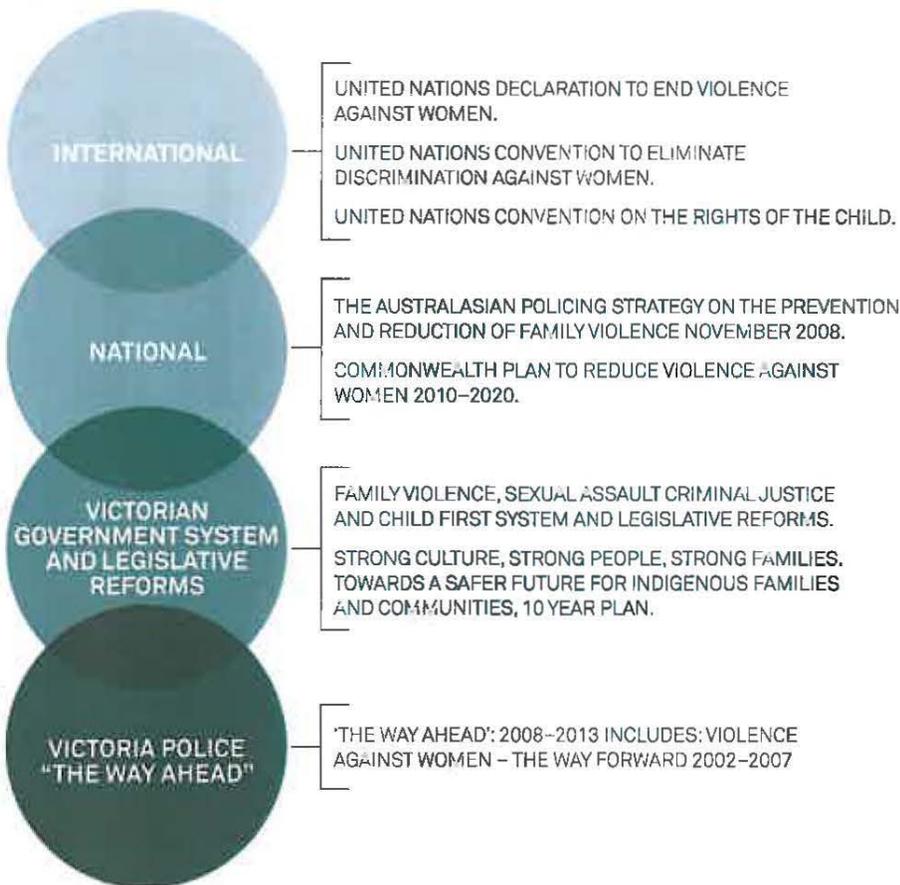
DEC 2005

Concept of Operations for the Investigation of Sexual Assault developed, leading to the implementation of the Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SO:IT) pilot project.

FEB 2006

SSCRFV report to government on developing an integrated family violence system for Victoria: *Reforming the Family Violence System in Victoria*.

Figure 4: Policy and Legislative Framework



Significant increased investment and coordination has provided new opportunities and challenges for Victoria Police to deliver better services individually and in partnership to ensure that the objectives of state legislation are achieved.

Victoria Police is represented on all key government and stakeholder forums to ensure that we work in an integrated way to improve outcomes for victims of violence.

2.2 VICTORIA POLICE'S RESPONSE TO VAWC OVER THE PAST SIX YEARS

In the past six years, Victoria Police has worked alongside the community and government to implement the 25 recommendations in the *Violence Against Women Strategy: The Way Forward 2002*. They were overseen by the Victoria Police Violence against Women Steering Committee. Some of the many achievements are listed in the adjacent table.

Since the introduction of the *Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence* in 2004³² and the Risk Assessment and Management Process³³, supported by Family Violence Advisers, actions taken by Victoria Police to support victims and hold perpetrators accountable have improved. Examples of this include a significant increase of 212%³⁴ in intervention orders (see figure 5) applied for by police on behalf of victims, and referrals to family violence services made in 80% (see figure 6) of attendances by police as per the DHS/Police Protocol.

JULY 2006

Legislative powers implemented – 'holding powers' to increase safety of victims and accountability of perpetrators.

JULY 2006

Formal protocol between Department of Human Services and Victoria Police: Family Violence Referral Pathways 2006–2008

NOV 2006

Study of Reported Rapes in Victoria 2000–2003 by Dr Melanie Heenan and Dr Suellen Murray.³¹

DEC 2008

Legislative powers implemented – *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* and police-issued Family Violence Safety Notices.

ONGOING

Victoria Police has played a critical leadership role and has actively participated in all key developments in the whole of government reforms in this area. For further detail see www.familyviolence.vic.gov.au

2. THE RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

We have ensured that children are included in our family violence risk assessment. The number of children recorded as present at family violence incidents in 2008-2009 was 12,047, or 35.5% of all incidents.³⁵ Notifications to DHS Child Protection arising from Family Violence Incident Reports (FIRs) increased to 4,079 in 2008-2009 (see figure 7).³⁶ It is very important that we remain vigilant about protecting children's human rights, and ensure that they have access to the best investigation and services.

We are working hard to improve our response to sexual assault and child abuse, and aim to make significant progress through the SOCIT project. Research, projects and formal evaluations across the sexual assault reforms conducted over the past six years have provided a sound basis for identifying areas of improvement. Significant in this area has been the development of the SOCITs and the Multi-Disciplinary Centre (MDC) pilot sites, the Video and Audio Taped Evidence (VATE) review, and the *Study of Reported Rapes in Victoria 2000-2003*.³⁷

To respond to and investigate incidents of sexual assault and child abuse, a high standard of training and professional development is critical for our members. We have worked closely with the Victoria Police Education Department to enhance response and investigative capacity. Specialist content experts have delivered high quality training in interviewing offenders and vulnerable witnesses.

Figure 5: Family Violence Intervention Orders (FVIO) applied for by police on behalf of affected family members in total numbers and as a percentage of family violence incidents attended by Victoria Police from 2003-2004 to 2008-2009

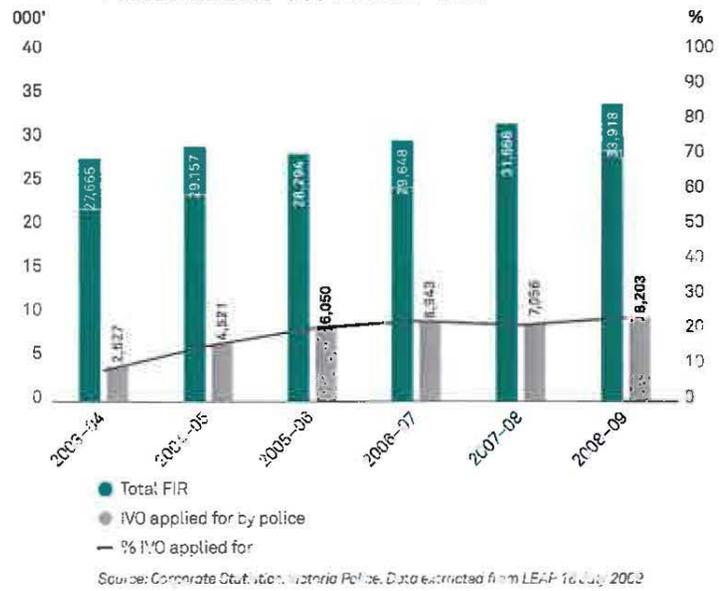
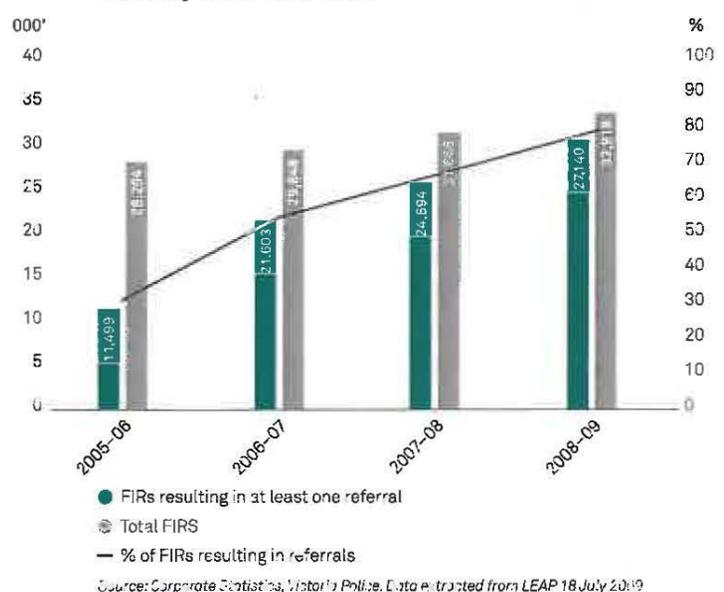


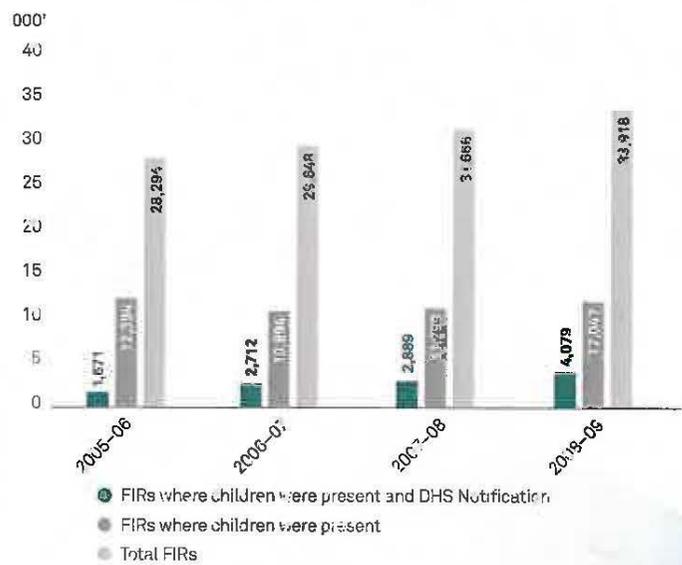
Figure 6: Family violence incidents attended by Victoria Police and percentage of incidents that result in one or more referrals to family violence services



“I think it’s just the general understanding of the public that if you report sexual assault to police you have to tell your story on numerous occasions. But that’s one of the advantages now. We can say, ‘If you report to police then the chances are that the police officer you tell your story to today will be the one that follows it all the way through.’”

(CASA Counsellor, SOCIT/MDC Pilot Site)

Figure 7: Family Incident Reports where one or more child was recorded as present and where a notification was made to DHS Child Protection



Source: Corporate Statistics, Victoria Police. Data extracted from: LSEP 15 July 2008



The development of the ENOUGH campaign was a collaboration between DOJ, DHS, DPCD, Victoria Police, family violence peak organisations and other stakeholders. The campaign, aimed primarily at women, sought to raise awareness of the new Family Violence Protection Act and the help services available to people experiencing family violence. The campaign carried the tagline, Family Violence. Victoria has had enough." for more information see <http://www.familyviolence.vic.gov.au/> Credit: Department of Justice

3. NEXT STEPS IN DEVELOPING OUR FUTURE RESPONSE:



3. NEXT STEPS IN DEVELOPING OUR FUTURE RESPONSE

3.1 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONSULTATIONS

In 2008–2009 we have consulted both internally and externally with members and key stakeholders. These consultations have shaped the development and emphasis of this Strategy.

Also informing this Strategy has been feedback on both the strengths and weaknesses of our response. We have sourced additional information from:

- The Victorian Auditor-General's report on 'Implementing Victoria Police's Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence'²³
- The Sentencing Advisory Council Report on Sentencing Practices for Breach of Family Violence Intervention Orders²⁴
- ARC research projects in which Victoria Police is an industry partner, and
- Evaluation reports such as the VATE Review.

We also gather feedback through our involvement in numerous stakeholder and whole of government committees, where issues and concerns are raised on a regular basis.

3.2 WHAT WE STILL HAVE TO ACHIEVE

We have undertaken a comprehensive mapping and gap analysis exercise. The key directions and priorities are outlined in the actions associated with each of our objectives (see Section 4).

In short, we have achieved a great deal around family violence, and have a solid foundation from which we can continue to improve our response and our role as part of the integrated family violence system. Over the next five years, we need to enhance our response by improving risk assessment and management, conducting more effective investigations, working across the integrated family violence system, and responding better to children affected by family violence.

In responding to sexual assault and child abuse, we are undertaking groundbreaking work to establish a victim-centred service delivery and investigative model (the SOCIT model). This model is leading the way to ensure that victims receive the best possible service and the highest standard of investigation that increases the chance of prosecution and victim satisfaction. Key elements of our response are our focus on both adult and child victims, and our enhanced professional development and training program.

We need to embed within policing culture a message to both the public and police members that we take this issue seriously, and will take immediate action.

“My ideal type of (police officer) would be someone who (you) can go to talk to and you can tell them anything and they’ll listen. They’ll advise you on things but they won’t judge you.”

(Client feedback SOCIT/MDC)





3. NEXT STEPS IN DEVELOPING OUR FUTURE RESPONSE

3.3 VALUES AND EVIDENCE THAT UNDERPIN OUR FUTURE WORK

The values that underpin our approach over the next five years are premised on agreed principles across government. They are:

- human rights and respect for women and children
- safety and agency for victims
- accountability and responsibility for perpetrators
- diversity and access and
- sustainability, consolidation and integration.

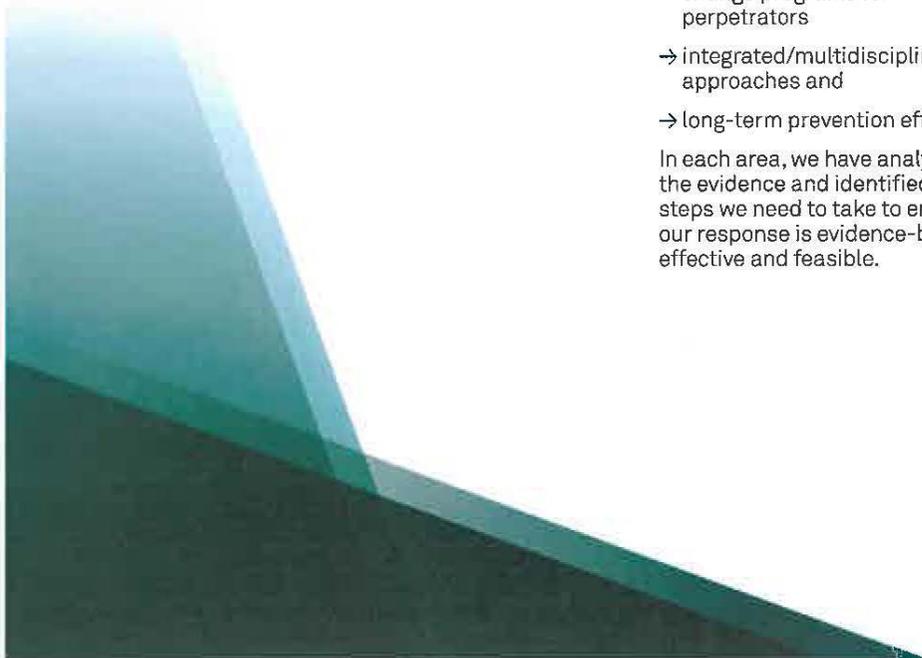
“They (police officers) were fantastic, absolutely ... They listened ... I sort of feel OK about my case not going forward because they (the investigators) believed me and did as much as possible.”

(Client feedback SOCIT/MDC pilot site)

The evidence on what works when responding to family violence, sexual assault and child abuse has both commonalities and points of difference. We know that the key ingredients to success include:

- a strong criminal justice response
- an effective investigative and victim-centred approach
- an effective and immediate crisis response for women and children
- accountability and behaviour change programs for perpetrators
- integrated/multidisciplinary approaches and
- long-term prevention efforts.

In each area, we have analysed the evidence and identified the steps we need to take to ensure our response is evidence-based, effective and feasible.



4. OUR VISION AND OBJECTIVES:



4. OUR VISION AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 VISION

The vision that underpins our strategy is to support women and children to live free from violence.

The role of Victoria Police is to:

- provide a respectful, timely, coordinated and thorough response to ensure victim safety and wellbeing and
- hold perpetrators accountable through prompt action and thorough investigation.

4.2 OBJECTIVES

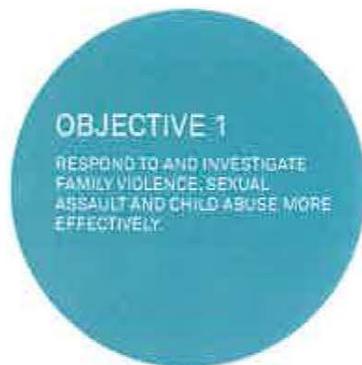
This Strategy has four key objectives to achieve our vision. Over the next five years we will:

- **OBJECTIVE 1**
Respond to and investigate family violence, sexual assault and child abuse more effectively.
- **OBJECTIVE 2**
Take a leadership role in driving integrated service delivery.
- **OBJECTIVE 3**
Reduce risk to children and young people of ongoing exposure to violence through prevention and early intervention.
- **OBJECTIVE 4**
Increase members' understanding about issues of VAWC in order to provide appropriate policing responses.

4.3 ACTIONS FOR EACH OBJECTIVE

Victoria Police is committed to progress a number of action areas over the next five years. Each objective contains its own action areas. Some of this work builds on existing work such as updating the *Codes of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence and Sexual Assault*. New work will include developing new approaches to investigation of child abuse as a crime theme, and prevention and early intervention work with children and young people.

The vision that underpins our strategy is to support women and children to live free from violence.

**OBJECTIVE 1****Respond to and investigate family violence, sexual assault and child abuse more effectively.**

The response that victims of family violence, sexual assault and child abuse receive is critical to their safety, wellbeing and their engagement with the criminal justice system and support services. As such, we must continue to improve our initial responses, and carry out comprehensive investigations that focus on victims' wellbeing and dignity. In doing so, we will see increased reports to police, especially in the most under reported of all crimes – sexual assault. It is also critical that perpetrators are held accountable, and are engaged in appropriate services.

Actions

1. Continue to monitor, review, and embed implementation of the *Codes of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence and Sexual Assault* and related protocols.
 2. Implement, monitor and evaluate responsibilities pertaining to the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*, including evaluation of Family Violence Safety Notices.
 3. Participate in the Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths led by the State Coroner, and develop an investigative model for family violence crimes.
 4. Continue to strengthen positive working relationships with community leaders and organisations in diverse and vulnerable communities.
 5. Reward and recognise excellence and best practice in policing of family violence, sexual assault and child abuse.
 6. Improve investigative response to sexual assault and child abuse through the statewide expansion of the Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCIT), including better outcomes for cognitively impaired victims.
 7. Implement recommendations of the VATE Review as well as a process for ongoing specialist sexual assault and interviewing training.
 8. Develop quality assurance frameworks for family violence, sexual assault and child abuse including ongoing monitoring and evaluation of SOCIT program and transition.
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4. OUR VISION AND OBJECTIVES



OBJECTIVE 2

Take a leadership role in driving integrated service delivery.

We know from experience and practice that taking a leadership role in an integrated system is critical to achieving better outcomes for victims. We also know that taking a collaborative investigative response, and ensuring victims are connected to the right support services will result in greater victim satisfaction and better safety and criminal justice outcomes.

Actions

1. Implement Victoria Police commitments in the *Strong Culture, Strong People, Strong Families: Toward a safer future for Indigenous families and communities: 10 Year Plan*.
2. Develop strategies to enhance collaboration between police, sexual assault and family violence services and child protection.
3. Participate in the development of an integrated strategy to better respond to high-risk victims and perpetrators of family violence. This includes multi-agency responses to risk management.
4. Continue regional coordination between Victoria Police, courts and victim/perpetrator services in relation to family violence.
5. Enhance risk management and information sharing capabilities to increase safety while respecting privacy.
6. Undertake research and analysis of repeat family violence to inform statewide strategy to reduce repeat offending and victimisation.
7. Continue to participate in whole of government coordination mechanisms, and provide a social leadership role in reducing violence against women and children.
8. Ensure support for Family Violence Advisers and Family Violence Liaison Officers to match new regional boundaries.
9. Participate in internal and whole of government evaluations and data collection projects such as the Family Violence Data Base and Sexual Assault Reform Initiative evaluation.

OBJECTIVE 3

REDUCE RISK TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OF ONGOING EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE THROUGH PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION.

OBJECTIVE 3

Reduce risk to children and young people of ongoing exposure to violence through prevention and early intervention.

Violence against children and young people is an emerging issue that requires a concerted effort from Victoria Police. We must intervene early. We must also ensure that we provide appropriate responses to children and young people who are at risk of continued exposure to family violence, sexual assault or other forms of child abuse.

“They (police) were impartial. They couldn’t say “Oh yes, you’re right. We’re totally there for you. But they actually were there! They did a lot of research and hours and gee, I was really wrapped that they did it ... They weren’t biased in any way and I felt that’s how they had to be. They left me feeling good about the whole situation.”

(Victim feedback, SOCIT pilot project)

Most reported victims of sexual assault are children. Police attend at least 12,000 family violence incidents each year where one or more child is present.⁴⁰ Each of these reports provides us with the opportunity to respond, investigate and link these young people into services to reduce their exposure to risk, and enhance their safety and wellbeing. Alongside this, we have the opportunity to collaborate with internal and external stakeholders to prevent violence before it occurs. This is an area we will work towards over the next five years.

Actions

1. Improve children and young people’s access to Victoria Police services by enhancing communication, information provision and consultation (linking to Victoria Police Child and Youth Strategy).
2. Develop skills, capacity and understanding of Victoria Police members regarding earlier intervention strategies to reduce risk of re-victimisation or perpetration of violence.
3. Collaborate in internal and whole of government early intervention initiatives for children and young people.
4. Collaborate and participate in statewide and policing prevention initiatives such as White Ribbon Day to promote respectful relationships.
5. Develop quality assurance indicators to measure Victoria Police response to violence against children.
6. Improve joint investigative responses (VicPol/DHS) to children at risk of abuse.
7. Develop a specialist community of practice and investigative guidelines for child abuse.

4. OUR VISION AND OBJECTIVES

OBJECTIVE 4

INCREASE MEMBERS' UNDERSTANDING ABOUT ISSUES OF VAWC IN ORDER TO PROVIDE APPROPRIATE POLICING RESPONSES.

OBJECTIVE 4

Increase members' understanding about issues of VAWC in order to provide appropriate policing responses.

Providing the very best police response requires a high standard of knowledge, skills and an understanding of the complexity of the issues to which members respond. Family violence, sexual assault and child abuse are complex crime themes that require extensive training. Over the next five years, we will work towards increasing members' understanding of these issues in order to provide the most appropriate policing response to both victims and perpetrators.

Actions

1. Develop and implement a training and professional development strategy to ensure that training on violence against women and children is included in all relevant training courses.
2. Ensure data systems are meeting the needs of the organisational response to violence against women and children. This includes Interpose, LINK, and LEAP to ensure ongoing performance monitoring and improvement.
3. Support existing research initiatives to enhance Victoria Police response to violence against women and children.
4. Develop and implement violence against women and children performance measures for Compstat reporting to identify actions taken in each Police Service Area (PSA).
5. Develop internal and external communication strategy for violence against women and children.
6. Maintain support for the Crime Department to provide relevant strategy, policy and practice advice, and project development and implementation.
7. Develop a benchmark for members' skills, knowledge and attitudes in responding to VAWC.
8. Develop a mechanism to gauge victim satisfaction regarding police responses to VAWC.

5. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW:



This Strategy has corporate sponsorship from Chief Commissioner, Simon Overland, and Detective Superintendent, Wendy Steendam.

5. IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

VICTORIA POLICE WILL USE THE FOLLOWING TO OVERSEE THE STRATEGY'S IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW:

- internal reporting such as Compstat and the Violence Against Women and Children Steering Committee
- external reporting such as the Family Violence Ministers Meeting, and whole of government committees relevant to family violence, sexual assault and child abuse
- development of an annual action plan and report
- an annual stakeholder review and report back
- a mid-term review in 2012
- monitoring performance measures.

It is important for internal and external stakeholders that Victoria Police report on progress and challenges, and highlight good practice. Agreed measures will be reviewed over the period of the implementation plan in consultation with whole of government partners. Commitments have been made through government policy such as the forthcoming 10-year family violence framework⁴¹, and the *Strong Culture, Strong People, Strong Families: Toward a safer future for Indigenous families and communities, 10 Year Plan*.⁴²

Victoria Police continues to be a critical partner in all governance and advisory structures that oversee the range of reforms underway to address violence against women and children. These include those at ministerial, departmental, regional and local levels, where multiple agencies are required to work together. Victoria Police will also continue to work closely with non-government partners through the leadership role it has maintained with the statewide family violence and sexual assault advisory committees.

The performance measures for this Strategy have been developed by analysing Victoria Police data over the past six years. They are five-year targets and are conservative estimates. The measures outlined will be monitored through the Victoria Police Compstat process from 1 July 2010.

Each Police Service Area (PSA) will work towards achieving these measures, with data measuring performance in their local PSA being compared with performance targets at a statewide level.

The Crime Department is responsible for developing and coordinating the Annual Action Plan. The activities identified in the Action Plan will be implemented by the most appropriate area within the organisation.

The Violence Against Women and Children Internal Steering Committee will monitor and review the implementation of this Strategy.

Additionally, Victoria Police is committed to collaborating and reporting through whole of government forums and systems evaluation.

“But, after 20 years of living in fear, Ms Reddish spoke out. “I’d seen my 18-year-old daughter get beaten up against a wall, and I thought ‘enough is enough’. Former officer in charge of Diamond Creek police station, Michael (Mick) Millen took me into his office, sat me down and said “its alright Bev, I believe you”. “His words will never be forgotten.”

Police Life, February 2009 (http://www.police.vic.gov.au/content.asp?Document_ID=1219).

MEASURES OVER 5 YEARS 2009/10 – 2013/14

1. INCREASE FAMILY VIOLENCE REPORTS TO VICTORIA POLICE BY 10%
2. INCREASE SEXUAL ASSAULT REPORTS TO VICTORIA POLICE BY 15%
3. INCREASE CHARGES LAID FOR FAMILY VIOLENCE BY VICTORIA POLICE BY 5%
4. INCREASE APPLICATIONS BY POLICE FOR INTERVENTION ORDERS BY 10%
5. INCREASE REFERRALS FROM POLICE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES BY 15%
6. INCREASE REPORTS FOR CHILD PHYSICAL ASSAULT BY 10% (FAMILY RELATED)
7. DEMONSTRATED INCREASE IN MEMBERS UNDERSTANDING OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

All of the performance measures are expressed in terms of total outcomes to be achieved over five years to 2013/14.

All of the performance measures have been calculated using trend data over the past six years as well as population data trends to develop conservative and achievable estimates for this Strategy.

All of the performance measures have been calculated using 2008/2009 figures as the benchmark.

6. CASE STUDIES:



6. CASE STUDIES

RISK ASSESSMENT AND MANAGEMENT PROCESS – A NEW LEVEL OF SOPHISTICATION IN RESPONDING TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

In September 2004, Victoria Police launched its *Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence*. This Code is renowned for developing and implementing a consistent police response to family violence across Victoria.

Accompanying the Code of Practice was the Risk Assessment and Management Process (L17) to assist members to identify women and children who may be at risk of future violence. This was the first formal victim-focused tool that helped members to identify complex risk factors. It contributed to, and supported, their decision making regarding further action to ensure immediate safety. The tool also outlined specific factors affecting children who either experienced violence directly or were witness to violence against their non-offending parent. The tool was based on those used successfully by national and international jurisdictions.

Due to the L17's success, the integrated reforms coordinated by the State Government have incorporated a similar tool, consistent with police process, for all other family violence services. The Victorian Government now has an integrated Risk Assessment and Management Process that has provided a framework and tools for all family violence services. It also provides an official training program across all parts of the integrated system, including courts, family violence services, and key health services such as child and maternal nurses.

CO-LOCATION OF SOCIT AND CHILD PROTECTION – FRANKSTON

The Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Team (SOCIT) and a specialist Child Protection sexual assault response team, (the Frankston Sexual Assault Investigation Team) has been co-located since July 2008. Located in the multidisciplinary Peninsula Sexual Assault Centre, Frankston, they work together with staff from the South Eastern Centre against Sexual Assault (SECASA).

In one year, police and Child Protection responded to over 100 children, resulting in effective outcomes for the victims and their families. The cases were challenging, complex and highly sensitive. However, there have been many positive outcomes. Some of the benefits and outcomes of the pilot have included the following:

- Only three Protection Applications have been issued.
- Except for two children who were placed with extended family members, all children have remained in the care of the non-offending parent.
- Only three children have been re-notified to Child Protection, with only one being re-investigated.

In one example of collaboration, Child Protection received a report that two young girls aged 14 and 16 could be at risk of sexual assault. Their older half-sister had made recent disclosures that her father (the two younger girls' step-father)

had sexually abused her during childhood. The reporter suggested that the girls' mother loved her children, and that she was likely to act in a protective manner if she felt that her children were at risk of harm. Consultation occurred with other professionals who specialise in the area of sexual offending and sexual assault, and a joint decision was made to investigate the case.

Child Protection convened a meeting with SOCIT and SECASA to discuss the planning of the forensic interviews and what role each agency would play. A decision was made that Child Protection would invite the children's mother to meet with Child Protection staff at the Peninsula Sexual Assault Centre. The children would then be interviewed jointly by Child Protection staff and police. The children's mother met with Child Protection staff, and the allegations were discussed with her. She was understandably shocked and visibly distressed. Child Protection arranged for an onsite SECASA counsellor to conduct a crisis session with the children's mother immediately after the interview with Child Protection. At a later date, the children's mother stated that the session with SECASA greatly helped her to process her own feelings, and empowered her to act in the children's best interest.

6. CASE STUDIES

The children's mother later agreed for the children to be interviewed by Child Protection and police the following day. The Victoria Police Forensic Interviewing of Children Advisor was consulted at this stage to discuss the best method of interviewing the girls, given they had not made any disclosures of sexual abuse. A decision was also made to ask the mother to be involved at the start of the interview so that the children could feel relaxed and comfortable when discussing the purpose of the interview. This greatly helped the children to be less fearful of the interview, and to speak more freely about their experiences.

Both girls disclosed sexual assault by their step-father during the forensic interview. Police arrested and charged the children's step-father with sexual assault the next day, and bailed him to an address away from the family home. As a result of all the planning and prior discussion about the case, the police acted quickly and efficiently in relation to the criminal proceedings. Child Protection also arranged for the girls to commence counselling with SECASA shortly after their disclosures.

Over the following few weeks, Child Protection spent considerable time with the girls and their mother. It was a difficult and emotional time for the family. Although the mother remained protective, she sometimes doubted whether she could live without her husband, and experienced both financial and social difficulties. It was at these times that intense support and assistance from Child Protection

and SECASA was crucial. With this support, the mother was able to continue to ensure her children's safety by refusing to reconcile with her husband. She became empowered to take actions such as initiating Family Law Court proceedings and changing her financial situation.

At the final Child Protection family meeting, the mother stated that, although it had been the most difficult and stressful period of her life, she was extremely appreciative of the process. She was grateful to Child Protection and police for not blaming her, and for showing her empathy and respect. She also emphasised that without the support and assistance she received from Child Protection, police and SECASA, she could not have made the changes necessary to ensure her children's safety.



This set of creative mosaics, Earth, Water, Fire, and Air were produced by a group of women as part of their recovery from sexual assault. The artist, Anne Riggs, established the project to contribute to the skills and well-being of women. The women found within themselves astonishing abilities to design, create and learn many techniques of mosaic-making and installation.

SE CASA has co-located with Victoria Police as part of the innovative and successful SOCIT/MDC project at Frankston. These mosaics are displayed at the office. <http://www.secasa.com.au/> Credit: Anne Riggs

7. FURTHER INFORMATION:



To provide comment or to
order a copy of this Strategy, email
violenceagainstwomen@police.vic.gov.au

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USEFUL CONTACTS AND WEBSITES

- **Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault**
www.aifs.gov.au/acssa/
- **Australian Domestic Family Violence Clearing House**
www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au
- **National Child Protection Clearing House**
www.aifs.gov.au/nch
- **Victorian Centres Against Sexual Assault**
www.casa.org.au
- **Department of Human Services**
www.dhs.vic.gov.au
- **DHS – Child Protection and Family Services**
www.cyf.vic.gov.au/child-protection-family-services/home
- **Department of Justice**
www.justice.vic.gov.au
- **Department of Planning and Community Development**
www.dpcd.vic.gov.au
www.familyviolence.vic.gov.au
- **Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV)**
www.dvrcv.org.au
- **Domestic Violence Victoria**
www.dvvic.org.au
- **Magistrates' Court of Victoria**
www.magistratescourt.vic.gov.au
- **Men's Referral Service**
www.mrs.org.au
- **Office of Public Prosecutions Victoria**
www.opp.vic.gov.au
(particularly 'publications' and 'policies and guidelines')
- **VicHealth**
www.vichealth.vic.gov.au
- **Victoria Police**
www.police.vic.gov.au
- **Victoria Police News**
www.vicpolicenews.com.au

ENDNOTES

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2. Dr. Michael Flood (La Trobe University) and Professor Rob Pease (Deakin University), *The Factors Influencing Community Attitudes in relation to Violence Against Women: A Critical review of the Literature*, *MCHHealth* 2007 http://www.mchhealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ProgramsAndProjects/MentalHealthandWellBeing/DiscriminationandViolence/ViolenceAgainstWomen/CAS_Paper3_CriticalLiterature.aspx
3. Jenny Mouzos and Toni Hakkarai, *Women's Experience of Male Violence, Findings from the Australian Component of the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS)*, 2004, Research and Public Policy, Series No 56, Australian Institute of Criminology, and Indermaur, D. 2001, *Young Australians and Domestic Violence, Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, no 135, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.
4. Dr. Michael Flood (La Trobe University) and Professor Rob Pease (Deakin University), *The Factors Influencing Community Attitudes in relation to Violence Against Women: A Critical review of the Literature*, *MCHHealth* 2007, http://www.mchhealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ProgramsAndProjects/MentalHealthandWellBeing/DiscriminationandViolence/ViolenceAgainstWomen/CAS_Paper3_CriticalLiterature.aspx
5. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2009, *Child Protection Australia 2007-08*, Child Welfare Series, No. 45, Canberra.
6. This calculation is 25% of the national figure based on Victoria's population comprising 15% of the total national population.
7. Taylor, F., Moore, P., Pezzullo, L., Tunoi, J., Goddard, C. and De Bortoli, L. (2008), *The Cost of Child Abuse in Australia*, Australian Childhood Foundation and Child Abuse Prevention Research Australia, Melbourne.
8. For more information please see http://www.policies.vic.gov.au/content.aspx?Document_ID=10606
9. Nationally and internationally there is a consensus among researchers that women identified as having a 'disability' experience violence and abuse at a much greater rate than the rest of the population. From *Getting Safe Against the Odds* at <http://www.dvrc.org.au/Disability-GettingSafeAgainstOdds.pdf>
10. Comparison between Australian Bureau of Statistics, Personal Safety Survey Australia (2005) and Australian Bureau of Statistics, Women's Safety Survey Australia (1996). Comparison indicates that the proportion of women experiencing sexual violence in their lifetime since the age of 16 has slightly increased by 17.9% in 1996 to 13.1% in 2005.
11. *The Health Costs of Violence, Measuring the Burden of Disease Caused by Intimate Partner Violence*, a summary of findings, *MCHHealth*, 2004.
12. National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, *The Cost of Violence Against Women and their Children (Australia)* 2009. Data calculated on Victoria's proportionate population of 25% of national total population.
13. Taylor, P., Moore, P., Pezzullo, L., Tunoi, J., Goddard, C. and De Bortoli, L. (2008), *The Cost of Child Abuse in Australia*, Australian Childhood Foundation and Child Abuse Prevention Research Australia, Melbourne.
14. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Personal Safety Survey Australia (2005), 4900-0 Release
15. Ibid
16. Taylor, F., Moore, P., Pezzullo, L., Tunoi, J., Goddard, C. and De Bortoli, L. (2008), *The Cost of Child Abuse in Australia*, Australian Childhood Foundation and Child Abuse Prevention Research Australia, Melbourne.
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20. On average over the past six years, 77% of victims of family violence incidents reported to police were female and 13% of victims were male. source Corporate Statistics, Victoria Police, extracted from LEAP on 18 July 2009.
21. Corporate Statistics, Victoria Police, Data extracted from LEAP database 18 July 2009.
22. Australian Institute of Criminology, *Intimate Partner Homicides (Crime Facts Info)*, No. 182, December 2008, accessed at <http://www.aic.gov.au/documents/630/D/E9D79CB-842E-476B-A16D-B534F07BE351/cfi182.pdf>
23. Australian Institute of Criminology, *Intimate Partner Homicides (Crime Facts Info)*, No. 182, December 2008, accessed at <http://www.aic.gov.au/documents/630/D/E9D79CB-842E-476B-A16D-B534F07BE351/cfi182.pdf> in combination with Victorian data provided by the AIC and analysed by Victoria Police.
24. Over the past six years reported rapes to police have remained constant, ranging from 1,111 to 1,308 reports per year. Reports of all other forms of sexual assault have increased at rates between 3,232 to 3,070 per year.
25. Corporate Statistics, Victoria Police, Data extracted from LEAP database 19 July 2009.
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27. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
28. Australian Policing Strategy to Reduce and Prevent Family Violence (2008)
29. Forthcoming Plan based on public commitments of the Australian Government following the release of The National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, *Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children* 2009-2021, 1 March 2009
30. Soon to be replaced by the Evidence Act 2006 (Vic), and Criminal Procedure Act 2009. This legislation will commence operation on 1 January, 2010.
31. *Study of Reported Rapes in Victoria 2000-2003* Summary Research Report, State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Sexual Assault, Based on a study by: Dr Melanie Heenan; Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Dr Suelien Murray RMIT University, 2006. In this study, 113 cases (19.3 per cent of the total sample) included current or former intimate partners. All but five victims were female and all offenders were male. While 60 per cent of the offenders were former partners of the victim, a substantial number were also reporting rapes in the context of their current relationships.
32. *Victoria Police Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence*, August 2004.
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34. Corporate Statistics, Victoria Police, Data extracted from LEAP database 18 July 2009.
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41. Forthcoming
42. *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families - Toward a safer future for Indigenous families and communities*, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, Department of Planning and Community Development, Melbourne, 2008.



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