

[REDACTED]

To whom it may concern,

I am a qualified welfare worker of more than twenty years experience. I have worked for the [REDACTED], with an agency in [REDACTED] where my clients were all female, mostly street sex workers and currently I work for a [REDACTED] agency in the [REDACTED]

My agency covers a huge area, with the majority of our clients coming from non-English speaking backgrounds. There are migrants, refugees and Asylum seekers. All are on very low incomes, most are in receipt of Centrelink.

Domestic violence is not uncommon amongst my clients, but in particular the area of D.V which I want to highlight, and which I encounter often is the type involving women brought into Australia, on visas such as spousal or student visas. It is men who bring/sponsor these women in and then, (under threat of sending them back to their own country) they force the women to do whatever the men want. These women will do anything to stay in Australia and the men know that. I've seen many cases like this. In the course of my work, I interviewed a Korean lady who was injured so badly by her husband that she had to see a doctor.

To her credit, the doctor insisted on reporting to the police. The Korean lady told me she had no idea of her rights and that she was allowed to call the police.

I've interviewed women who live in fear of their husband withdrawing sponsorship to Australia or threatening to tell immigration to send them back to their own country, so they endure whatever the man inflicts on them.

Many of our clients are from countries where it is acceptable for a husband to beat his wife, and I know for a fact, and through talking to our settlement workers, that they have enormous difficulty trying to realise that it is illegal in Australia.

I encountered an Indian lady, who was pregnant to her husband he treated her abominably, under threat of withdrawing money/food so the baby would die!

Our advertising campaigns against DV target English speakers. We need these campaigns to target those from C.A.L.D backgrounds. Any written, anti DV material MUST be in languages including Hindi, Urdu, Afghani, Sudanese, Burmese, Chinese and Vietnamese. They should be widely distributed amongst these communities.

Please see the relevant, enclosed copy of an article by Pandenong Councillor Heang Tak.

Regards,

Migrant family violence

FAMILY violence doesn't happen just in migrant communities, but they suffer the most.

As recently as last year, there were an estimated 400 intervention order applications at Dandenong Magistrates' Court each month.

As an immigration lawyer, many of my clients have wrongly thought family violence was confined to physical acts.

They were brought up in their home countries to believe intimidating behaviour or putting a bit of pressure on their partners was OK.

Such behaviour is not tolerated in Australia, but it's happening in great numbers and often goes unreported.

When involved with migration law, the matters can become particularly murky.

In the case where an intervention order is taken out, the offending husband may be kicked out of the house.

When that happens, it is the newly-arrived wife and children who may be left without an income.

I know of cases where husbands can pressure



COMMUNITY
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HEANG TAK
GREATER DANDENONG COUNCILLOR
AND IMMIGRATION LAWYER

wives, who are on a partner visa, by threatening to withdraw sponsorship of the wife unless they do as he wants.

Under the visa, the wife would have to be sponsored by her husband for two years before qualifying for permanent residency.

If sponsorship is withdrawn before that point, she faces deportation.

On the other hand, I believe a number of sponsored wives have cynically sought full intervention orders against the husband in an attempt to shortcut their two-year wait for permanent residency.

Underlying the situation are high levels of do-

mestic stress. Often the wife is isolated at home without family and friends, while the husband works.

She comes to Australia with high expectations but she's left at home alone in a new culture.

She becomes depressed, which influences relations between husband and wife.

If a sponsored partner is unable to find work, they are unable to get welfare benefits for two years – which also places pressure on their sponsor.

As an immigration lawyer, we don't want to see family violence happen. We want to see happy endings.

The council, police and law agencies have done a lot so far but should do more to educate new and emerging communities.

After all, prevention is better than the cure.

I don't want to discourage people reporting this to police.

But if there's more community education on these issues, perhaps there will be fewer breaches in the first place and fewer going to court.

Burn-out for baby

POLICE caught a driver performing a burnout in Dandenong South last week – with a passenger in the front seat and an infant in the back.

Frankston police saw the driver, 25, perform the manoeuvre near National Drive about 11.15pm on 1 July.

They intercepted the car and spoke to a probationary driver.

A vehicle check uncovered two unroadworthy tyres, a broken engine mount, a number of cracked light covers, no grill and a damaged front bumper.

Police impounded the vehicle and passed on \$813 in towing costs to the driver. They also interviewed him for driving in a dangerous manner, careless driving, improper use of a motor vehicle, using an unroadworthy vehicle and driving without headlights.

He will be charged on summons.