

Question One:

I feel the goals represent the changes/reforms that are needed.

Question 2:

It appears that at least some people in our society have an understanding of what family violence constitutes, however there is a majority who do not. The "wife basher" stereotype is not the only type of violence that exists in families, it is often less overt and more insidious and not always perpetrated by men against women. There is inadequate education about these other types of violence and both victims and offenders may be unaware that they are violent actions. For example, restricting a person's freedom by preventing them from leaving a stressful or dangerous situation-no harm is done-physically and there are often no witnesses. Anyone who has tried to raise this issue with police has been told "you can apply for an intervention order...but it may not be granted...good luck".

Raising awareness, bringing it out of the dark, talking about it and responding appropriately would help to get perpetrator's to think twice, question their actions and for victims to consider exercising their rights to feel safe and be protected, for themselves and their children.

I have heard too many cases, as a 40 year-old woman, of men having court-ordered counselling. As a woman who experienced 10 years of family violence I have to ask why it must get to. 1-Obvious serious crime against a person, 2-Police intervention, 3-Trauma and lack of support, 4-Court Cases, 5- Home Dislocation and Living in Fear. Before a person will be "forced" to get help.

My experiences from 2003 to 2011 highlighted the inadequacy of the current system, the lack of early intervention paths, the re-enforcement of the feeling that you must deal with your own situation alone, and look after yourself. There is no guidance and no protection that I found.

Question 3:

Public education campaigns- ineffective, can't even recall one.

Range of support services- Police referred me to family violence Case Manager, effective.

Programs to promote behaviour change- ineffective and too late.

Family Violence Courts- Court is a cold and frightening place for victims of personal crimes, it matters little to me what the purpose is.

Police Code of Practice- Police were good, sensitive, but told me there was not enough evidence (meaning physical harm signs) to press charges. Victim is left to go this path alone.

Improvement to Legal Remedies- Not even experienced. The Magistrate hearing my intervention order did warn the perpetrator that I could press charges and what the outcome would likely be. But I just wanted it over, I had no strength left to keep fighting.

Preventing Violence against women- How? What is this? Its invisible to most.

Family Violence protection Act- Good if you have the strength and guidance to plough through the legal system....alone...or basically alone.

RAMPS- Not aware of these, may be agency specific.

National Plan to reduce Violence Against Women- No evidence of any effect of this in my experience. Maybe the “middle class victims” are never exposed to this plan?? Maybe it was more specific in its focus?

There is a lot about “response” which is great but prevention of course should be the equal focus.

Question 3:

Public education is needed, there needs to be a spotlight put on the issue, from a secondary-school level I suspect. It’s been such a hidden issue. As mentioned, I think there is such a lack of understanding about what family violence is that it’s possible a lot of people are not aware that they are in that situation already.

Question 4:

N/A

Question 5:

N/A

Question 6:

Circumstances. Financial pressure, mental illness, poor health /stress.

Conditions: Where there is a power imbalance or lack of mutual respect. poor coping mechanisms.

Situations or events: Unexpected changes/added stressors, disasters, home relocations.

Community: Any community can be affected, some are more obvious or the prevalence is higher.

Economic Circumstances- absence of resources for people to escape violent situations may contribute. Unable to be independent and remove self/children due to lack of finances.

Question 7: Where equal partnerships exist, there is respect and a focus on care and support in a family. Where partners work to understand each other, work together to overcome difficulties and share common goals. Where behaviour which falls in the category of violence is not accepted or tolerated.

Question 8:

The response is adequate, its not good, it does not support or empower victims to exercise their rights to safety. I think the response of “the system” is undermined by the cases where victims re-enter violent situation and the efforts of “the system” appear useless or thwarted. After all we all have free-will and some will return to “try again” for the same result. Victims are not all like that and that perception needs to be challenged and examined.

It almost needs to be compulsory that a victim receives counselling. Just as it is that a perpetrator is ordered to have counselling, in the end they both need to look at what went wrong and how to prevent this re-occurring.

Early education, about the issues, the signs, the steps to get assistance.

Question 9:

Maybe, not sure. Question 10: Not sure.

Question 11:

Support workers, they listen, validate, support and advise. For someone who has never been down the path before this is so helpful in making sure you follow through with required actions.

Access to specialist legal advice about the situation victims face. Its daunting and a lot of victims just want to run and hide, not deal with messy legal situations involving a former aggressor.

Reducing the impact- Only suggestion would be to get in early, encourage people to take action when they see the warning signs- get supports in place and don't let it escalate too much by staying in violent situations. They tend to get worse over time, not better.

Question 12:

I have not personally participated.

Role models are important, our society is inundated with media of all kinds depicting violence in relationships. Fictitious as it is, it de-sensitises us to the images and the actions. We seem to have become "adrenaline junkies" for crimes and violence and the saturation of this in the media does have the effect of "normalising" violent behaviour.

Behaviour change programs- The Courts need to ask perpetrators what kind of intervention will work for them, it's not a one-size fits all approach. Plus this helps those people take some direct responsibility for their own self-improvement.

We should consider a "zero tolerance" type law for repeat offenders. And perhaps the compulsory counselling rule for victims who re-enter a violent relationship with the same person?

Question 13: N/A Question 14: Unsure. Question 15: N/A Question 16: N/A

Question 17:

Economic and Geographical. As mentioned above, not having finances to escape a violent situation will prevent or delay action. Being geographically remote would add difficulty to the exit plan or isolate a victim from support networks.

Question 18:

I can only talk about my experience which is what I describe as "middle class, educated, not from violent family background". I did not identify what was going on in my relationship, I had no idea, it just felt bad, restricting, upsetting, frightening, I felt I could change it by changing myself- victims often get blamed for what happens to them. Then accepting that it was wrong, coming to terms with the fact that I was a victim-me- I never thought of myself that way, it was too confronting.

It comes back to education, clear support pathways, skilled intervention, guidance and support with "the system".

Question 19:

Education people that they should not accept any of the forms that family violence covers, make phone support available readily, often the problems are more serious than anyone will admit. Educate victims about safe extraction from dangerous situations, building support networks and empowering them to move away from violent relationships.

We all know how controlling a violent person can be and how dangerous they can become when a victim tries to leave- the risks are high at that time and the plan needs to be thought through with this in mind.

Question 20:

N/A