

Changes that will make a difference

Programs

Best program for preemptive reducing family violence early between parents in conflict "***The Keeping Kids in Mind (KKIM) Program***" operated by a consortium of Catholic Social Services Agencies (CSSA). The problem is this is only offered by a very limited number of places in Victoria. If possible this should be mandatory prior to mediation.

Even though I am one of the very few males with teenage children that teach "Tuning into Teens" program by Melbourne University, it seems more suited to reducing conflict in relationships not so much family violence.

I was dissuaded from teaching ***Men's Behavioral change programs*** by other practitioners due to the feminist bias of the course and results were ***only positive for those that actually wanted to attend***. I am actually amazed at the number of female respondents for family violence orders, in my experience almost no males admit to taking action against their partners no matter how violent they are.

Mental Health

Where mental health issues or participants are medicated for mental health issues are present it seems most programs are ineffective. I almost always recommend discontinuing the course and seeking professional help if medicated referral to a Psychiatrist, if not medicated a Psychologist or Psychiatrist. It is well beyond the scope of almost all counselors to deal with mental health issues and in my experience quite often makes family violence worse.

There is ***a significant number of the population on medication for long term for mental health*** issues that have ***never seen a Psychologist or Psychiatrist***, this is a contributing factor in a lot of cases.

Government and Judicial

Until we have a clear law that states ***a child should spending equal time with each of the parents*** (as research clearly shows is in the best interests of the children) family violence will continue to increase. Look at the high profile family violence cases, they quite often involve a parent that still is granted access but not equal time, this is normally after a long fight for custody because there is no default position and our adversarial legal system. The Family Law Act (SECT 60CC) and (SECT 65DAA) provides some guidance but it is often only considered appropriately in a final hearing. Throw in mental illness or medication and family violence is guaranteed. ***If equal time was the default position how many adults and children would still be alive?***

With Generation X parents (raised in a feminist ideal of equal rights for BOTH sexes) coming into the prime divorce age, not having presumed equal time will cause a major increase in family violence. These are parents that were enticed to have children for cash (baby bonus) and will use children to get more cash upon separation. **Lawyers and support agencies already incite people to commit family violence** by forcing a partner out of home by bogus family violence orders or threats of (quite often the start of ongoing family violence post separation). Last year I attended a funeral of a [REDACTED] that committed suicide two weeks after he personally told me of such a threat.

Any **orders restricting parent's access to children should be served by warrant not summons** and dealt with in front of a Magistrate as soon as possible, currently it is the norm for interim orders to be granted without the other party present and variations to interim orders refused to be heard denying access to children for many months. This is directly against section 60B 2(b) of the Family Law Act and the Convention on the Rights of the Child "States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will.." I have personal experience and can provide further details.

It is **common place for police to serve a summons on a parent and tell them if they do to want to see their ex partner they don't have to attend court**, only to find out after an order is made a child was included on the order and they **cannot see their children**. If there are further charges or incidents the respondents believe they do not have to attend court for those as well.

I have seen **parties manipulate the other party to breach orders**; usually child access is used for such purposes, this is a major cause of family violence increasing there is never any action on the party inciting the breach. Once an order has been granted it is very hard to stop the feeling of ongoing persecution of the parent if they try to obtain access to their children. **There is a general lack of understanding that we have a slow unyielding legal system not a justice system where the best interests of children are put first**. Most people mistakenly believe they will be able to tell the Magistrate the truth get a just outcome. I have seen Magistrates not want to deal with what they believe are Family Law Act issues, but will continue to deny a parent access to their children for months and undertakings being taken out on the hearing date.

Police charging offenders for assault when it is verbal in nature can cause an escalation, when the magistrate tells them it does not matter if it was physical or verbal it is still assault. Next time there is an incident offenders believe, quite often correctly, they will get the same charge and outcome in court if the attack is physical in nature.

There is a major lack of support for males in legal services. Another complaint is often lawyers will tell clients to attend both free legal services at courts, so the other party is unable to receive legal advice.

There needs to be a ***better gender equality in court staff numbers on all levels not just at the top, 50/50 at all levels should be the aim***. For example there is currently one Male Registrar in the Family Court System in Victoria. I have seen the despair in a man's face that had to deal exclusively with female's at Frankston magistrate's court and being told to adjourn his hearing several times until he got a magistrate that would give him a fair hearing. The vast majority of people I deal, with this is their first time in court and are totally unprepared for the system and bullying tactics of lawyers.

Well educated, mentally stable parents not on medication for mental health issues and that have not entered into the legal system reduce the occurrence of family violence. If you want to guarantee an increase in family violence the introduction into the legal system without any support structure is the way to go.

There need to be a recognition that a large number of suicides are caused by family violence and these numbers need to be taken into account. The statistics collected are inadequate and presented in a deceptive manner. Most of the research is out of date based on baby boomers instead Generation x and beyond.

One last small recommendation, from a client my parenting course; if Liquor retailers were forced to sell single bottles of alcohol for the same price as bulk purchases. Ie 1 beer cost the same as 1/24 the price of a 24 beers, he would personally buy two or six beers instead of 24 or 48 beers and feel happier for it.

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