

Commonwealth programs directed at youth such as income and accommodation support, provision of health and other support services, access to legal services and improvements to the education system and job training and employment programs. The Report's major recommendation (contained in chapter 24) was for a new youth accommodation and support services program jointly funded by federal, State and Territory governments. It recommended that standards be developed for all services provided to homeless children and young people which would take account of the following:

- the need to provide every assistance to children and their families to enable them to live together where this is possible, consistent with the child's right to be protected from cruelty and abuse;
- protection and promotion of the rights of children — including the rights to adequate care, protection from exploitation and abuse, and enjoyment of their other basic human rights;
- the obligation of the state, or agencies funded by the state, to provide adequate care to children whose families cannot or will not do so; and
- the need to provide this care through a network of integrated services with agreed aims — one of which should be to assist each child, according to his or her needs, to become a fully-participating member of our community. (HREOC Report, 333)

The Report also recommended that

State and regional objectives must be based on the need to move all residents out of crisis refuges as quickly as possible — either back to their families or into more permanent, secure accommodation suitable to their needs. For the foreseeable future, all States and regions must focus on:

- a significant increase in family support and reunion services, which may include short term community placement programs;
- a significant increase in the quantity and quality of long term youth housing; and
- a significant increase in detached housing support services. (HREOC Report, 333).

*conclusion.* The release of the Homelessness Report received widespread newspaper coverage and a general recognition that a real problem existed and could not be ignored within Australian society. In an editorial on 23 February 1989 *The Age* concluded

If society at large does nothing to tackle the problem now, it will have to pay for it eventually in other ways — in crime, in drug abuse, in health and medical costs and in lost lives and lost human resources. The choice is ours, though it is really no choice at all. For the sake of humanity, we must act with the utmost urgency and compassion.

HREOC has said that it will reconvene its inquiry in 6 months to determine the extent to which the recommendations have been implemented.

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## violence

To be fair to Australians, they don't afford excessive respect to anybody. It's one of their virtues.

Malcolm Muggeridge,  
*Age* 4 October 1976

*national committee on violence.* Two incidents of shoot-outs in Sydney city streets in recent weeks demonstrate the

growing violence in Australian society. The federal and State Governments have responded to this increasing violence by establishing a National Committee on Violence. The Committee, which was announced on 16 October 1988 by the Minister for Justice, Senator Michael Tate, is a joint Commonwealth-State initiative and is required to make its final report to the Prime Minister and the Premiers by 31 December 1989. Its brief is wide-ranging. The 12 member committee will enquire into and report on violent crime and violence generally in Australian society, recommend preventive strategies and suggest ways in which victims can be effectively assisted and offenders appropriately treated.

The Committee, which is chaired by Professor Duncan Chappell, the Director of the Australian Institute of Criminology and a former ALRC Commissioner, has already released several publications about violence. They are: *Violence in Australia: Rates and Trends*; *Violence, Crime and Australian Society*; *Domestic Violence*; and *Victims of Violence*. Several other publications are planned before a final report.

Persons wishing to obtain copies of the publications or who wish to make submissions to the committee should contact the Australian Institute of Criminology, PO Box 28, Woden, ACT, 2606, Australia.

*community forums.* The Committee is holding a series of community forums aimed at giving interested professionals, policy-makers, organisations and members of the public an opportunity to meet with the Committee. Forums have already been held in Canberra, Perth and Adelaide and are to be held in other cities over the next three months. The dates are: Sydney — May 26, Brisbane — May 29, Darwin — May 31, Alice Springs — June 2, Melbourne — July 24 and Hobart

— July 26. For further information on the forums, please contact the Committee's Executive Assistant, Marina Farnan, on (062) 83 3803.

*domestic violence.* April is National Domestic Violence Awareness month. It is part of the federal Government's national domestic violence education program. In 1987-88 the federal Government allocated \$1.6 m over three years to this program. It has been developed by the Office of the Status of Women within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet as part of the National Agenda for Women. The Office has revealed that one in five Australians condones the use of physical force by a man against his partner. This information was gleaned from research undertaken in the first year of the program. The same research showed that one in three Australians regards domestic violence as a private, family matter in which the community as a whole has no responsibility.

The *West Australian* reported on 5 April 1989 that 'women in isolated rural areas throughout Australia were — proportionately — more often the victims of domestic homicides than their metropolitan counterparts'.

The *Launceston Examiner* reported on 5 April 1989 that Launceston's Gambit Theatre has received a \$4 000 grant from the Prime Minister's department to do a production about domestic violence. It is the only theatre company in Australia to be funded for such a project.

The *Adelaide Advertiser* reported on 6 April 1989 that 'last year wife-bashing cost about \$30 million in joint Commonwealth and State funding to keep South Australia's many refugees open, while seven of the States thirteen murders were domestically related'.

The federal Government has established a domestic violence hotline. The

Melbourne *Herald* reported on 26 April 1989 that the hotline has received 500 calls in the three weeks since it opened, 100 from men.

The Brisbane *Courier Mail* reported the results of a phone survey conducted in 1988 by the Queensland Domestic Violence Task Force. It reported that 52 percent of 661 respondents said they suffered physical and emotional abuse. 'One quarter of respondents suffered physical sexual and emotional abuse, with 76 percent of people suffering emotional abuse on a daily or weekly basis.' (*Courier Mail*, 25 April 1989).

*victorian family violence act.* The Crimes (Family Violence) (Amendment) Act 1988 was passed by the Victorian Parliament in December 1988. The Act is designed to provide ongoing protection to victims of violence in the home. It empowers magistrates to make intervention orders in cases of family violence. It allows police prosecutors to act on behalf of police complainants in bringing applications for intervention orders on behalf of victims in cases of family violence.

*domestic violence in the ACT.* The ALRC's 1986 report (ALRC 30) *Domestic Violence* resulted in the Domestic Violence Ordinance 1986 (ACT) and associated legislation. The report stressed the need to educate the public about domestic violence and proposed protection orders which could be obtained in a magistrates court to prohibit violence and harassment and exclude the violent party from the home if necessary. As a result of the report a domestic violence unit was established in the ACT to provide victims of domestic violence with access to helping services. That unit is responsible for providing information through publicity and public education, advise to victims and to perpetrators and is responsible for compil-

ing statistics on domestic violence in the ACT. (See [1986] *Reform* 77-79).

The ACT Administration is currently reviewing ALRC 30 and the abovementioned legislation.

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## evaluation of children's evidence by video link

Barrister: Just answer me yes or no.  
Child: Yes or no.

M & R Brennan *Strange Language* RMIHE 1988

*the problem.* Where children are required to give evidence in a court proceeding, a number of problems can arise. It is now accepted that children can suffer severe trauma in giving evidence in court and that the quality of their evidence may be adversely affected by the requirement.

*video link as a solution?* One method believed to alleviate these problems is to enable the child to give evidence in another room which is linked to the courtroom by a video link system. This can protect the child from the experience of giving evidence in an anxiety inducing courtroom, full of strangers and rituals. Additionally, in a criminal proceeding, the child is not required to physically confront the accused. Where the child is not distressed or frightened, the quality of his or her evidence may improve, allowing the better ascertainment of the facts.

*other interests.* The need to protect the child must be balanced with the need to safeguard the interests of other parties to the proceeding. This may differ according to the type of proceeding and the issue. Often the interests of the parties will co-incide with the needs of the child, but there may be a conflict. At the same time,