

8 November 2011

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Organisations generally work together to improve the safety of victims when there is an overt and serious crisis, particularly where children are involved.

“My concern is that the response before and after crises is fragmented. Access to help varies depending on where you live,” said Mr Achterstraat.

There are no standard ways for victims and perpetrators to access help that might prevent ongoing violence and address underlying issues. This is particularly problematic where there are repeat victims and perpetrators, many of whom have complex mental health, drug and alcohol problems and are difficult to work with.

“Nearly half of the 92,215 victims and 81,772 perpetrators, who came to the attention of Police in 2010 over family and domestic violence incidents, had a history of such incidents over the preceding five years,” explained Mr Achterstraat. “Organisations are not providing a response that works or lasts for many victims and perpetrators,” he said.

New South Wales has trialled a number of projects to improve the way that organisations work together to support vulnerable people in particular communities.

“Some programs such as Staying Home Leaving Violence show promise. It is now time to consolidate and mainstream successful approaches across the State,” said Mr Achterstraat.

Two in three victims of violence do not go to the Police and there has been little progress in reducing this high level of under-reporting.

“Many people who do not go to Police will seek help from doctors, charities, welfare agencies, other government and non-government organisations and friends”, said Mr Achterstraat. “A coordinated response is required,” he added.

Domestic and family violence damages too many people in our community.

“In 2010, NSW Police responded to over 126,000 incidents involving domestic and family violence. It is also present in 50 per cent of the households where children are neglected or abused, and contributes to nearly 20 per cent of homelessness. It contributes to ill health and disability amongst women under 45 years of age more than any other single factor, including smoking or obesity,” said Mr Achterstraat.

Domestic and family violence costs the NSW economy more than \$4.5 billion each year and on average, kills 36 people each year.

“Domestic and family violence is responsible for nine per cent of police call-outs, 13 per cent of court time and 22 per cent of offenders on probation in the community,” said Mr Achterstraat.

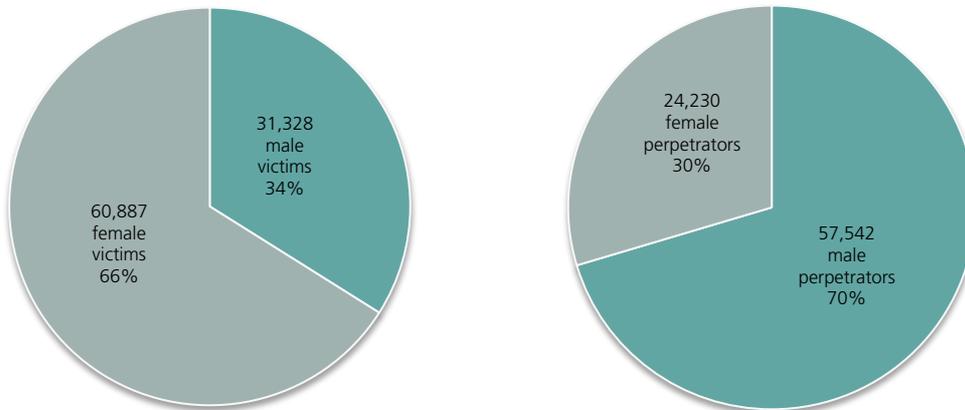
Mr Achterstraat recommended that government and non-government organisations adopt a common framework to identify domestic and family violence, assess risk, prioritise need and refer people to services. The Government needs to resolve problems around the sharing of information so government and non-government staff can work together locally to help victims and perpetrators.

“No single organisation can fix this. It requires a whole of government and a whole of community approach to encourage respect and help people live a life free of violence,” said Mr Achterstraat.

Further information

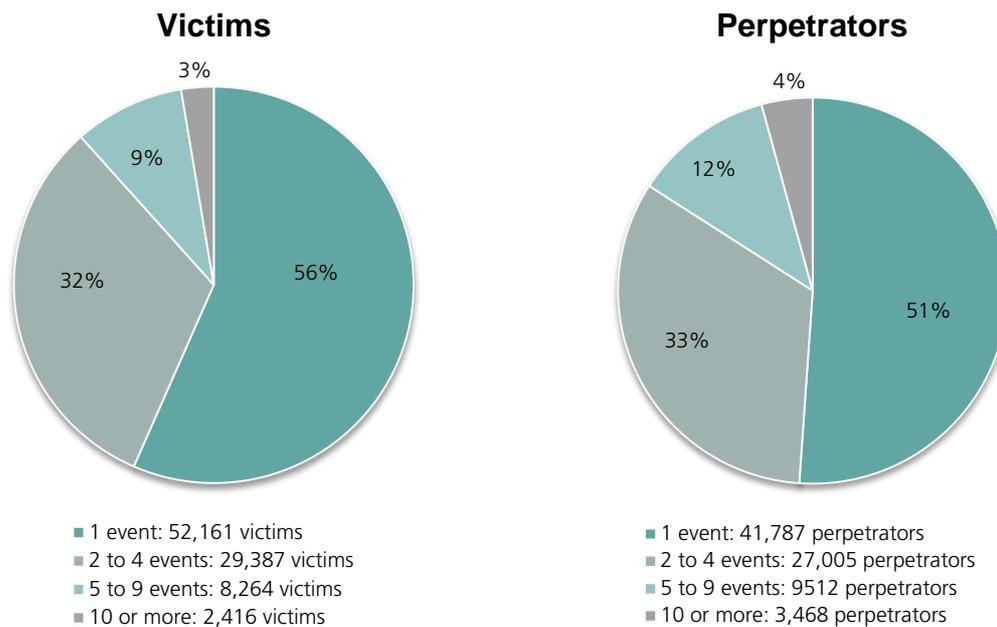
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Gender and domestic and family violence incidents recorded by Police in 2010



Source: NSW Police Force 2011

Revictimisation and reoffending amongst people reported to Police in 2010



Source: NSW Police Force 2011

Higher rates of domestic and family violence assaults are recorded in regional and rural New South Wales - Refer [Appendix 4](#) of report.