
New South Wales Auditor-General's Report

Performance Audit

Responding to domestic and family violence

Department of Family and Community Services

Department of Attorney General and Justice

Ministry of Health

NSW Police Force



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ISBN 978 1921252 570



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In accordance with section 38E of the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*, I present a report titled **Responding to domestic and family violence: Department of Family and Community Services, Department of Attorney General and Justice, Ministry of Health, NSW Police.**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Peter Achterstraat'.

Peter Achterstraat

Auditor-General

8 November 2011

Foreword

Antisocial Behaviour: 'Patch up' or 'Prevent' the damage

Over the past two to three years I have undertaken a number of detailed reviews in relation to social issues.

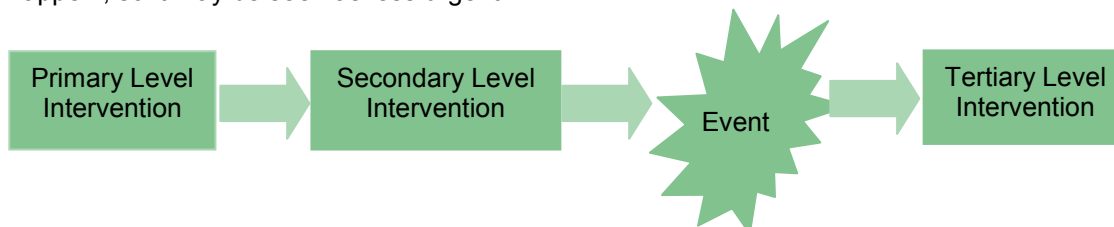
For example, I have looked at the issues of homelessness, cannabis use, respite care, motor vehicle speeding, literacy and numeracy and alcohol related crime. My reviews have focused on the actions that government departments have taken to address these issues.

In the main, government agencies' responses to these issues have been in the form of tertiary intervention. The responses are usually undertaken to address damage that is caused after the incident has occurred.

For example, in relation to domestic violence, government agencies quite rightly need to support victims after the violence has occurred. This support is undertaken in the form of health services, refuges, alternate accommodation etc. There is some intervention at the primary and secondary levels to predict and prevent the violence, and to create a 'safe' environment where there is freedom from fear of further violence. However, the main focus appears to be at the tertiary level. This is also the case in the other social issues that I have reviewed.

Patching up the damage gets more attention by government agencies because it is immediate, visible and more closely linked to government's core business of keeping the peace, treating injury or housing the homeless. Often the immediate damage is addressed without tackling underlying problems that contribute to ongoing damage and disadvantage that can extend across generations.

Tertiary intervention is urgent and in response to a known, visible situation. Primary and Secondary Level Intervention on the other hand is in response to a situation 'that might happen', so it may be seen as less urgent.



There are many reasons why social violence issues might occur. My work has indicated that in many cases the incidents occur because of deeper issues facing the perpetrator, including physical health issues, mental health issues, poor education and lack of satisfying employment. Problem gambling and alcohol abuse also appear to be contributors in many cases. However each case is different and not all perpetrators of events are homogeneous.

Factors leading to events include:



A typical case study could be a young child's unattended hearing problems, which may lead to:

- irritability, which contributes to
- lack of commitment to learning while at school, which contributes to
- poor educational outcomes, which contributes to
- poor unemployment prospects in adolescence, which contributes to
- a lack of self respect, which contributes to
- anti-social behaviour.

In an ideal world it would seem that early intervention could have prevented, or at least reduced, the possibility of the antisocial event occurring. However, it is difficult for policy makers to positively prove that it was the hearing problem, the lack of education or the lack of meaningful employment that ultimately lead to the antisocial event.

Society might be concerned that early intervention initiatives could divert resources from urgent tertiary needs. The challenge for public sector policy setters is to persuade taxpayers and their elected representatives that specific early interventions at the primary or secondary levels will have direct long-term benefits.

Antisocial behaviour has a significant financial cost on society. For example, in 2009 the estimated cost of family violence alone to the Australian economy was \$13.6 billion (FaHCSIA, 2009).

Can society continue to fund this behaviour? In many cases society does not have a choice. By any moral compass it must fund programs to address the issues at the tertiary level.

Are there any further early interventions which can be done which will not divert funding from the tertiary interventions?

There are no magic solutions. However, as an Auditor-General, I am particularly concerned about how effectively limited public funds are used. Governments have a legitimate role of leading the debate on how to prevent anti social behaviour, and a community commitment to prevention makes economic sense and will lead to far better outcomes.

If one of the root causes of anti-social behaviour is lack of respect for oneself and others, then community based programs to enhance respect may be one tool to assist. A change in community culture may be able to achieve results using minimum amounts of dollar outlays but using maximum amounts of leadership.

Positive role models have a vital part to play in shaping community attitudes and in instilling self respect in individuals. Key community role models may be able to convince potential high risk perpetrators that their sense of worth is not dependent upon them undertaking antisocial behaviour. Role models may be able to raise these people's self respect so they will feel comfortable in themselves and may be less inclined to commit undesirable behaviour.

A way forward. As individuals, we often think that "other people" are responsible for addressing issues. But I would suggest that we can all have a part to play in helping build respect amongst the most vulnerable. We need to provide and support positive role models in our communities and help others build respect for themselves and others.

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Executive summary

Background

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 households where children are abused, and contributes to nearly 20 per cent of homelessness. Australian studies indicate that domestic and family violence contributes to death, ill health and disability amongst women under 45 years of age more than any other single factor, including smoking or obesity. Domestic and family violence is estimated to cost the NSW economy more than \$4.5 billion each year.

The NSW Government recognises that domestic and family violence requires a coordinated response, particularly from the NSW Police Force (Police), Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS), NSW Ministry of Health and the Department of Attorney General and Justice (DAGJ).

This audit assessed how well government and funded non-government organisations work together to respond to domestic and family violence. We use the words 'organisation', 'health' and 'human services' to refer to both government and non-government sectors unless specified otherwise. NSW Health is used to describe health services operated by the NSW Government.

Conclusion

Organisations generally work together to improve the safety of victims when there is an overt and serious crisis, particularly when children are involved. After the crisis, there is some coordinated follow-up in a growing number of locations. These initiatives operate in isolation without common oversight or a plan to extend them across the State.

Organisations fail to respond to most of the domestic and family violence that occurs largely because it is not reported. They are not providing a solution that works or lasts for many victims and perpetrators.

Apart from Police and DAGJ, government organisations do not know how much their day to day operations are affected by domestic and family violence.

Organisations do not have a strategy for working together across the State in response to domestic and family violence. There is no shared understanding between organisations of each others roles in providing a more responsive system that encourages people to seek help and provides them with support when they do so.

Supporting findings

Two in three victims of violence do not go to the Police and we found no progress in reducing this high level of under-reporting. There was no significant increase in the amount of domestic and family violence reported to Police between 2006 and 2010. On average, domestic and family violence kills 36 people each year, but only one in ten victims were known by Police to be in an abusive relationship in the year before their deaths.

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. Twelve per cent (10,680) of victims had been victimised five or more times and 16 per cent (12,980) of perpetrators had been identified as perpetrators five or more times.

Domestic and family violence generates a significant amount of work for Government including nine per cent of police call-outs, 13 per cent of persons charged in Local Courts and significant health and welfare activity. Better information about the effect of domestic and family violence on organisations could help set priorities and drive a more balanced and strategic response to domestic and family violence.

There are no standard ways to access services for victims and perpetrators that might help prevent ongoing violence. Unlike Victoria, Western Australia and parts of England, New South Wales does not have a common framework to identify domestic and family violence, assess risk, prioritise need and refer people to services. The lack of coordination is a particular problem for repeat victims and perpetrators, many of whom have complex mental health, drug and alcohol problems and are difficult to work with.

New South Wales has trialled a range of projects to improve the way that organisations work together to support vulnerable people in particular communities. Many of these projects have been evaluated, found to help and continue to be funded. Some have been expanded to other communities, but there is no plan to consolidate or mainstream these approaches across the State. The response to domestic and family violence remains fragmented and access to help depends on where you live.

Government and non-government staff dealing with domestic and family violence at the State and local level told us the biggest challenges they faced were a lack of the following: coordination, an effective way to refer people, safe accommodation for victims and children, training and perpetrator programs.

In its current form the *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan* does not provide an adequate framework for coordination. There is no implementation plan, no performance indicators for monitoring progress and no comprehensive mapping of available services.

Recommendations

We recommend that by June 2012, the Chief Executives of the NSW Police Force, Department of Family and Community Services, NSW Ministry of Health and the Department of Attorney General and Justice:

- 1) establish domestic and family violence protocols that:
 - a) clarify what, and how, information can be shared between organisations within the existing law around privacy (page 21)
 - b) implement privacy codes of practice, or promote legislative reform, for the appropriate exchange of information to keep victims safe and perpetrators accountable (page 21).
- 2) ensure that local staff from police, prosecutors, child protection, probation, health, housing and appropriate non-government organisations meet regularly. These meetings should use existing forums where available and should:
 - a) identify victims and perpetrators most at risk, share information and agree on a plan of response (page 29)
 - b) monitor whether these plans are keeping victims safe and perpetrators accountable and revise plans as things change (page 29)
 - c) provide feedback to senior management about opportunities to improve coordination between services (page 29).
- 3) ensure that their organisations build on existing resources to develop and maintain an integrated online directory of specialist and mainstream services for victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence (page 24).

We recommend that by December 2012, the Chief Executives of the NSW Police Force, Department of Family and Community Services, NSW Ministry of Health and the Department of Attorney General and Justice:

- 4) report on:
 - a) the impact and the estimated cost of domestic and family violence on their operations (page 14)
 - b) what they are doing, or funding other organisations to do, to respond to domestic and family violence and what this is achieving (page 14).

- 5) agree, in consultation with non-government organisations, on how to respond to domestic and family violence. This framework should:
 - a) establish minimum standards for identifying domestic and family violence, assessing and prioritising risk, making referrals and working with victims and perpetrators (pages 19 and 23)
 - b) be based on a comprehensive service gap analysis (pages 24 and 30)
 - c) establish mechanisms to continuously address the barriers to victims reporting violence and the barriers to victims and perpetrators seeking and being provided with help (page 29)
 - d) spell out the responsibilities of each service in respect of domestic and family violence and the referral pathways between services (page 22)
 - e) require organisations to provide cross-sectoral training to staff responding to domestic and family violence services (page 24)
 - f) revise governance structures to ensure that organisations are accountable for working together to deliver domestic and family violence services at the State and local level (page 18)
 - g) ensure joint planning with each other and with non-government organisations (page 30)
 - h) be signed off by the four Chief Executives (page 15).
- 6) ensure that organisations comply with the framework (established per recommendation 5), and attend inter-sectoral committees for the reduction of domestic and family violence (pages 23 and 30).
- 7) publish their strategies including output or outcome measures that can be used to monitor their impact on domestic and family violence over the following five years (2013 to 2018) (pages 17 and 30).

Response from the Department of Family and Community Services on behalf of the NSW Police Force, Ministry of Health and the Department of Attorney General and Justice



REF: MFACS 11/1137

Mr Peter Achterstraat
Auditor General
Audit Office of NSW
GPO Box 12
Sydney NSW 2001

- 1 NOV 2011

Dear Mr Achterstraat

Performance Audit - Domestic and Family Violence

Thank you for your letter dated 30 September 2011 providing the final report of the Performance Audit 'Responding to Domestic and Family Violence'.

This response sets out the consolidated comments of the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS), Department of Attorney General and Justice (DAGJ), NSW Police Force, and the Ministry of Health on the audit pursuant to section 38C of the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*.

Our departments have welcomed the opportunity provided by the audit to assess how well government and non-government organisations are working together to respond to domestic and family violence.

Under the NSW 2021 plan, the Government is committed to implementing initiatives to significantly reduce domestic and sexual violence against women and their children. Initiatives include providing long-term accommodation and support, expanding the availability of legal advice and support, delivering a more coordinated police and service response and ensuring appropriate court support is available to victims (see Goal 16).

As you would be aware, the Minister for Women, the Hon. Pru Goward MP, has referred the issue of domestic and family violence to the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on Social Issues and announced an independent review of the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan (the Action Plan) to ensure that our strategies are current, effective, and in alignment with best practice national approaches.

The findings and recommendations of this audit will provide important input to this review process, which will be conducted under the governance of the Justice and Human Services Chief Executive Officers Forum to ensure coordinated cross-portfolio action.

I note that the audit recommendations can be grouped into two key sets by proposed delivery dates: (i) 1-3 recommended for completion by June 2012, and (ii) 4-7 recommended for completion by December 2012. The recommendations are supported in principle, with the following comments provided against each set of recommendations in turn.

(i) Recommendations proposed for completion by June 2012

Recommendation 1: The recommendation to implement privacy codes of practice, or promote legislative reform, for the appropriate exchange of information to keep victims safe and perpetrators accountable will be considered by a working group to be established by the Department of Attorney General and Justice.

Examples of existing arrangements include the NSW Health administered Cross Agency Risk Assessment and Management tool for domestic and family violence (CARAM) and the FaCS-led *One Place, One Plan* initiative, which aims to break down barriers to information-sharing, streamline processes, and make client data available across its service lines. The Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model (DVCIM) is another example of best practice information-sharing, whereby the development of privacy codes of practice has enabled government and non-government agencies in DVCIM sites to share information to keep victims safe and perpetrators accountable.

NSW Police notes that consideration could be given to a similar approach to that recently adopted in relation to child protection, where legislative amendments have been made to support the appropriate exchange of information between agencies to provide increased safety and support for victims.

Recommendation 2: As the audit report acknowledges, regular meetings between local government and non-government staff are already occurring in some areas and it would be important to build upon these existing integrated case coordination mechanisms, such as the Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model, Family Case Management, Staying Home, Leaving Violence Local Advisory Groups and FACS Complex Case Panels.

It is noted that, within the range of services funded by the NSW Government, there are different models for improving local level coordination, collaboration and integration of responses to domestic and family violence, and a "one size fits all" approach may not be appropriate, particularly given the range of community sizes and the availability of service providers.

Staff participation in interagency meetings has resource implications, particularly in rural areas where travel time can be significant. Building upon existing integrated case coordination mechanisms would help to ensure the most efficient and effective approach is adopted at a local level.

Recommendation 3: The Action Plan review will consider the potential for organisations to build on existing resources to develop and maintain an integrated online directory of specialist and mainstream services available to respond to domestic and family violence. Establishment of such a directory would be dependent upon appropriate resourcing and management, and will need to be subject to a cost benefit analysis.

(ii) Recommendations proposed for completion by December 2012

Recommendation Four: The NSW Government is committed to strengthening its evidence base in assessing its response to domestic and family violence across NSW, and is establishing a Bureau of Women's Statistics and producing an Annual Report on the Status of Women. As one of its discrete topic areas, the first annual

report planned to be delivered this year will include information about women's experience of domestic violence, the cost of violence as well as women's perceptions of personal safety and attitudes and beliefs toward domestic violence.

The report will also identify a data development agenda to fill information gaps over time. This could include strengthening information on the cost of violence and draw on, for example, previous work undertaken by Access Economics and the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children ("the National Council"), the latter of which found that NSW spent approximately \$180 million on addressing domestic violence against women in 2007–08.

However, it is noted that, due to current data systems and the fact that the effects of domestic violence are often intangible and difficult to quantify, accurately measuring the time and resources spent by agencies on domestic violence is a difficult task. In this regard, NSW Police notes that for its operations, determining the cost of responding to domestic violence may present challenges in light of the differing pay scales of the officers who attend incidents, the number of officers attending, the duration of the investigation, involvement in court proceedings, and consideration of ancillary roles such as those of prosecutors and Domestic Violence Liaison Officers.

Recommendations Five: The review of the Action Plan commissioned by Minister Goward is designed to deliver an effective cross-agency and cross-sectoral framework for dealing with domestic and family violence.

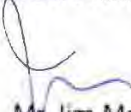
It is agreed that the development of such a framework needs to be underpinned by a comprehensive service gap analysis to ensure effective planning and delivery. A statewide domestic and family violence service mapping exercise is currently being completed under the auspices of the Domestic and Family Violence Senior Officers' Group (DFVSOG), which will provide critical input to the review of the Action Plan.

Recommendation 6: Ways to strengthen governance arrangements, to improve reporting and accountability and to reinforce cross-sectoral collaboration on domestic and family violence at a state and local level will be considered as part of the review of the Action Plan.

Recommendation 7: The need for improved measurement and public reporting on the impact of domestic and family violence is agreed. As noted above, under NSW 2021, the Government is committed to implementing initiatives to significantly reduce domestic and sexual violence against women and their children and work is underway on the production of an Annual Report on the status of women, which will include domestic and family violence data.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to comment on this performance audit report, which will provide important input to work underway to improve the response to domestic and family violence across NSW.

Yours sincerely



Mr Jim Moore
 Acting Director-General

Introduction

8

NSW Auditor-General's Report
Responding to domestic and
family violence
INTRODUCTION

Domestic and
family
violence is
abusive and
controlling
behaviour

Only one-third
of violence is
reported to
police

1. Domestic and family violence

1.1 What is domestic and family violence?

The *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan* (Action Plan) describes **domestic violence** as violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour inflicted to control or dominate a person. It includes physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, social, economic and verbal abuse, harassment and stalking. It is most often (but not exclusively) inflicted by an adult male on a female partner or former partner.

The Action Plan defines **family violence** as violence against women perpetrated by a family member who may include, but is not limited to, their intimate partner. The Action Plan focuses heavily on intimate partner violence by men.

Because domestic and family violence is suffered disproportionately by women, there is broad support for a gendered approach that provides women-based programs and promotes respectful relationships and female equality. Some organisations focus their response on female victims of male intimate partners. As shown in Exhibit 2 these victims account for 48 per cent of all domestic and family violence assaults reported to the NSW Police Force (Police). Organisations need to be aware that partners are not the only perpetrators inflicting domestic and family violence on women and that men also suffer abuse.

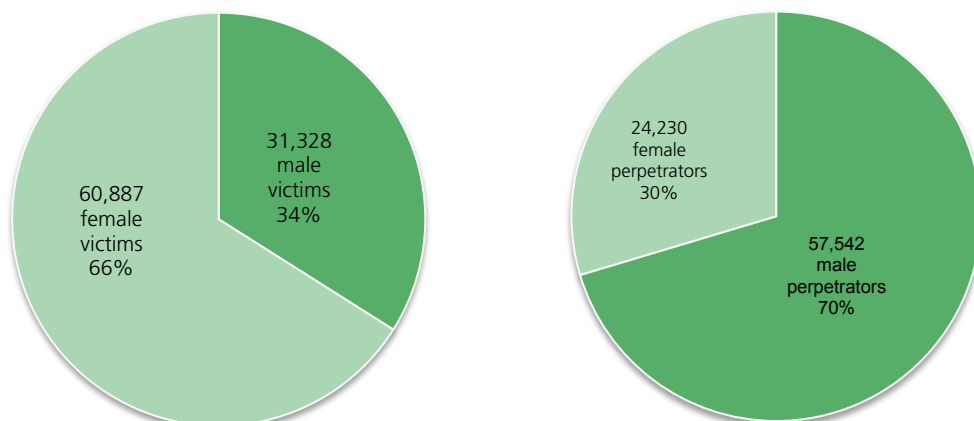
Many forms of domestic and family violence are offences under the law. Both men and women can be victim or perpetrators and offences are not limited to physical abuse. The *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence Act) 2007* also makes it an offence for a person to harass, intimidate and stalk others with whom they have or had a domestic relationship. This Act covers a broad range of relationships including extended kin, carers, same-sex and housemates.

1.2 What is the prevalence of domestic and family violence?

It is difficult to determine the prevalence of domestic and family violence. Only a fraction of what occurs is reported to police. A better estimate comes from surveys conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It reports that only one-third of all interpersonal violence is reported to police. While men are twice as likely to experience violence as women, women are more likely to be attacked in their home (64 per cent versus 14 per cent for men) and by someone they know (81 per cent versus 26 per cent). This indicates that women are significantly more likely to be abused by people with whom they have some relationship. Thirty-one per cent of assaulted women were attacked by their current or ex-partner and 18 per cent by their boyfriend. Women abused by their current partner are the least likely to seek help with only 17 per cent going to the Police.

In 2010, NSW Police recorded 126,325 domestic and family violence incidents involving 92,215 victims and 81,772 perpetrators. There were twice as many female victims as male and twice as many male perpetrators as female.

Exhibit 1: Gender and domestic and family violence incidents recorded by Police in 2010



Source: NSW Police Force 2011.

These domestic and family violence incidents included 26,006 assaults, 33,000 other offences including stalking and property damage and 66,000 verbal arguments where Police detected no offence.

The 26,006 domestic and family violence assaults represent around 40 per cent of all assaults reported to Police. NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BoCSAR) analysis indicates 60 per cent of recorded domestic and family violence assaults involved intimate partners or ex-partners, predominantly male on female.

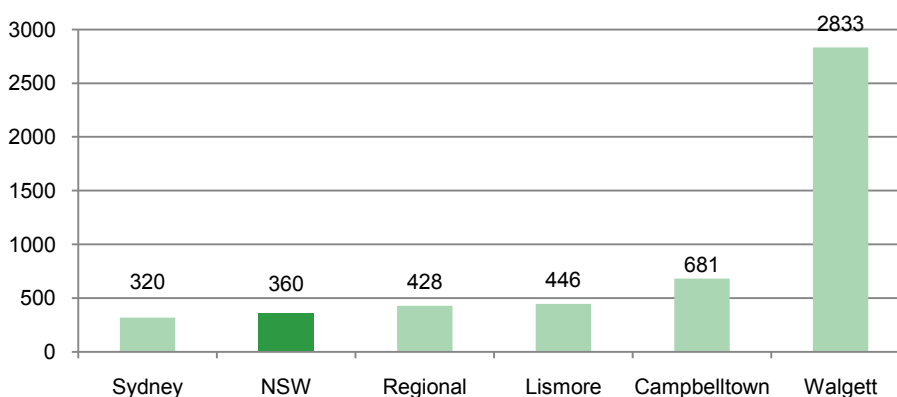
Exhibit 2: Gender and recorded domestic and family violence assaults in 2010

	Relationship	Female Offender	Male Offender
Female Victims	Partner	1%	48%
	Non-partner	9%	13%
	Total	10%	61%
Male Victims	Partner	9%	2%
	Non-partner	3%	15%
	Total	12%	17%
Grand Total		22%	78%

Source: Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2011.

The 26,006 recorded assaults represent 360 assaults for every 100,000 people in New South Wales. The rate of recorded domestic and family violence assaults is higher in non-metropolitan communities and highest in the north west and far west of the State. It is also higher in the three communities visited by the audit: Campbelltown, Lismore and Walgett. The rates of domestic and family violence assaults across New South Wales can be found in Appendix 4.

Exhibit 3: Recorded domestic and family violence assaults for every 100,000 people in 2010



Source: Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research 2011.

According to Police statistics, Aboriginal women are six times more likely to suffer domestic and family violence than non-Aboriginal women. Government and non-government staff in the three communities also advised that young mothers, older women and disadvantaged women were more likely to report domestic and family violence. Women with disabilities and women from certain cultures were less likely to report domestic and family violence, but research indicates that they are vulnerable. Women who have been abused are much more likely to have mental health, drug and alcohol problems. Women with mental health, drug and alcohol problems disclose more repeat victimisation.

Most of the
violence is
directed at
women

Coordination
 is needed

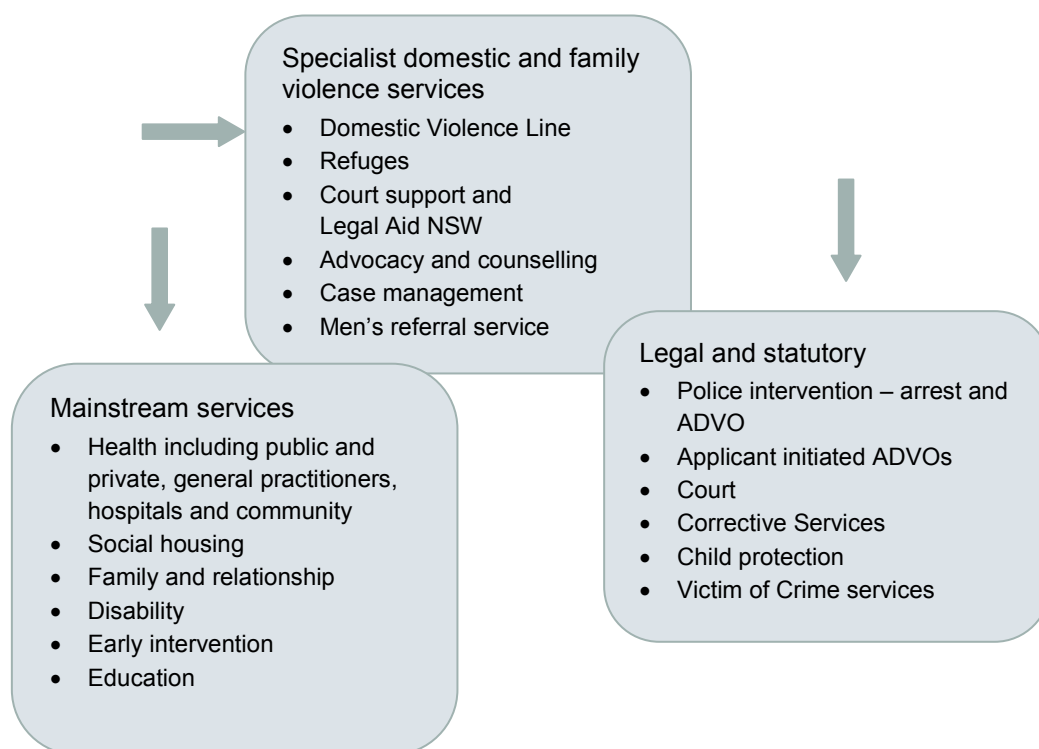
1.3 What is government's role in respect of domestic and family violence?

Fifty years ago domestic and family violence was a private matter that happened behind closed doors. That attitude has changed gradually as shown in Appendix 2. Domestic and family violence is now a crime. All individuals have a right to be free of fear and violence. The community and the government have a responsibility to protect that right.

Society has many opportunities to recognise and respond to domestic and family violence. Many victims and perpetrators come to the attention of the Police and other justice agencies when there is a breach of the peace. Police can arrest and charge perpetrators. Courts may restrict the perpetrator's contact with the victim through Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (ADVO), good behaviour bonds or prison.

Violence that has gone unnoticed for years often comes to light when its impact on children is recognised by teachers and people who work with children. Doctors and health staff get many opportunities to intervene as victims of sustained violence are frequent users of health services, not just for injury but also for many illnesses related to stress. Victims fleeing violence are also heavy users of accommodation services. In addition, there are specialist services including women's refuges, the Domestic Violence Line and men's programs which are contacted by people seeking help.

Exhibit 4: Possible ways to enter the domestic and family violence 'system'



Source: Audit Office research based on Department for Victorian Communities model.

To be effective, legal, specialist and mainstream services must provide a coordinated response regardless of where victims, perpetrators and children seek help.

1.4 What happens in other Australian states?

During the last three decades all jurisdictions have taken action to criminalise, prevent and reduce domestic and family violence. They have taken a range of approaches to coordinate the response to violence.

Victoria has implemented a whole-of-government response led by five ministers over the last decade. Its approach has been marked by strong leadership, regional and local partnerships between government and non-government organisations, improved data collection, proactive policing, common risk assessment, streamlined referral and information sharing. Victorian

police have the power to issue temporary orders (similar to ADVOs) that prohibit the perpetrator from approaching the victim. In contrast NSW Police cannot directly issue temporary orders. In urgent cases police need to send an online application to DAGJ authorised officers for a provisional order to be issued. This can at times delay such orders coming into effect.

Western Australia's response is planned, managed and monitored by a Senior Officers' Group of representatives from State, Commonwealth and non-government organisations. In July 2011, Western Australia adapted the Victorian framework and imposed common practice standards for family and domestic violence screening, risk assessment and risk management for all services (mainstream and specialist, government and non-government) in the Western Australian service sector.

Tasmania has focused on local case coordination to integrate the response of government and non-government services. Weekly meetings discuss all case activity in the locality and develop collaborative strategies to ensure domestic and family violence victims are safe. These meetings are attended by police, prosecutors and government and non-government staff from child protection, court support, counselling, health, education and specialist family violence services. This approach is similar to that in Cardiff and other parts of Britain.

1.5 What did this audit look at?

This performance audit assessed how well NSW Government organisations work with each other and with non-government organisations to respond to domestic and family violence.

We sought to answer the following question: at a State and a local level do organisations have domestic and family violence strategies and collectively do these create a coordinated response to violence?

Specifically, we assessed at a State and local level whether:

- each government organisation knows how domestic and family violence affects its services, operations and clients [section 2.1 awareness]
- each government organisation has a strategy for responding to domestic and family violence [section 2.2 strategy]
- organisations have a shared understanding of their respective roles in dealing with domestic and family violence [section 2.3 shared understanding]
- organisations work together to protect victims and children and hold perpetrators accountable [section 2.4 work together]
- organisations use service information to collaboratively plan further responses to domestic and family violence [section 2.5 plan together].

To get a local picture we visited three communities, metropolitan Campbelltown, regional Lismore and remote Walgett. Campbelltown has a number of special projects that promote integrated responses by government and non-government services. We chose communities in consultation with government and community stakeholders. The communities may not be representative of New South Wales as a whole and have higher rates of reported domestic and family violence than the State average.

The audit did not include detailed evaluations of:

- the quality of services
- child protection issues including the *Keep Them Safe Reforms* and the Child Wellbeing Units
- regional initiatives
- educational campaigns.

We may undertake further work on these topics in future.

Key findings

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NSW Auditor-General's Report
Responding to domestic and
family violence
KEY FINDINGS

Most agencies do not know how much their workload is generated by the violence

2. Is the response to domestic and family violence effective?

2.1 Are government organisations aware of the impact of domestic and family violence?

We found that while government organisations recognise that domestic and family violence creates a lot of work, most do not know how much. A greater awareness of the impact of domestic and family violence could inform a considered and strategic response to domestic and family violence and the allocation of resources to core activities.

Police and components of Department of the Attorney General and Justice (DAGJ) including courts and corrective services have some awareness of the impact of domestic and family violence on their operations.

Domestic and family violence accounts for nine per cent of Police call-outs across the State. Police estimate that it takes around 625,000 hours of Police time to investigate these call-outs. Police detect an offence in around 50 per cent of domestic and family violence call-outs. Even where no offence is detected, Police should apply for an ADVO if they are concerned for the victim's safety. In the three communities we visited, frontline Police officers told us they spend 50 to 70 per cent of night shifts responding to domestic and family violence.

Domestic and family violence accounts for 13 per cent of listed court matters across the State. The courts at Lismore, Campbelltown, and Walgett told us they spent 25, 45, and 60 per cent of their time respectively hearing domestic and family violence matters.

Domestic and family violence offenders make up the largest group (22 per cent or 3,990) of offenders on supervised probation in New South Wales and took up 20 to 30 per cent of the time of the probation we spoke to.

The Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) provides and funds a range of human services for indigenous people, children and young people, families, people who are homeless, people with a disability, their families and carers, women and older people. FaCS reports on the activity of specific domestic and family violence programs:

- Staying Home Leaving Violence assisted 268 households in 2009–10
- Start Safely subsidised the rent of 291 clients in 2010–11
- Domestic Violence Line took 23,029 calls in 2009–10.

FaCS does not have a clear picture of the effect that domestic and family violence has on its operations. FaCS finds it difficult to isolate the extent to which violence causes people to seek help. They may not disclose domestic and family violence and may have other issues as well, such as a disability or mental health, drug and alcohol problems. Over 30 per cent of child protection and early intervention services and significant amounts of homelessness and housing resources are used to respond to people affected by domestic and family violence.

Exhibit 5: Indicative data on how domestic and family violence affects human services

In 2009–10 over 17 per cent (11,000) of support periods provided by specialist homelessness services, such as refuges, were provided to clients who gave domestic and family violence as their main reason for seeking help. Nearly 5,000 of these support periods were provided to clients accompanied by children. The number of clients for whom domestic and family violence was present is likely to be higher.

FaCS estimated that domestic and family violence was also present for:

- over half of the clients who were provided with temporary accommodation. In 2009–10 this amounted to 91,760 nights of accommodation for 6,708 households. There are an average of 2.6 persons per household
- one-third (766) of households on the priority waiting list for social housing at 30 June 2011. On average, clients on the priority list wait over a year before getting housing
- 14 per cent (825) of households provided with social housing in 2009–10
- over half (3,274) of the families who used the early intervention program, Brighter Futures, between 2005 and 2009
- over 50 per cent of children reported to be at serious risk of harm.

The violence contributes to illness, injury, homelessness and child abuse

Source: FaCS 2011.

FaCS has not estimated the impact of domestic and family violence on its Ageing, Disability and Home Care clients, though it recognises this is a significant issue for them.

Local staff in homelessness, disability, social housing, early intervention and child protection services told us many of their clients have experienced domestic and family violence. FaCS staff in Lismore and Walgett advised that most of the child protection reports and applications for housing involved families where domestic and family violence was present. Many of these families also have mental health, drug, alcohol and disability problems.

As in many jurisdictions, health resources are largely directed at treating illness and injury rather than causes. NSW Health does not know how much emergency, hospital, general practice and community health care is required because of domestic and family violence.

Exhibit 6: Indicative data on how domestic and family violence affects health services

NSW Health accepts 2004 VicHealth research showing that domestic and family violence caused more poor health, disability and death to women under 45 years than any other single risk factor including obesity or smoking. The violence causes stress-related disease and mental illness as well as physical injury.

National data in 2010 indicates that 58 per cent of domestic violence assault victims said they were 'hurt' by the last assault and one-third of these were admitted to hospital or saw a doctor. VicHealth estimates that a five per cent reduction of domestic and family violence across Australia would avoid 74 deaths and 6,000 illnesses.

NSW Health estimates that each year over 10,000 (six per cent) women screened by antenatal, early childhood, drug and alcohol and mental health services disclose that they have experienced intimate partner violence in the past 12 months. Disclosure rates are higher for women using drug and alcohol (21 per cent) and mental health (15 per cent) services.

Source: Victorian Health 2004, Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010 and NSW Health 2011.

While NSW Health recognises that domestic and family violence is a significant public health issue, we found no evidence that it is part of its State Plan priorities.

A 2010 NSW Health review found that counselling services across the State for domestic and family violence were fragmented and hard to find. Hospital social workers, community health and non-government staff provide crisis intervention but there is little follow-up.

There is no
adequate
framework for
organisations
to work
together

In the three communities we visited, NSW Health did not employ or fund any domestic and family violence specialists to provide case management or counselling. Social workers and other health staff told us they provide crisis support to many patients who are victims of domestic and family violence.

Research also indicates that children exposed to violence are adversely affected in many ways. Schools do not know the extent to which domestic and family violence generates the need for additional teaching and counselling resources.

Recommendation

We recommend that by December 2012, the Chief Executives of the NSW Police Force, FaCS, NSW Health and DAGJ report on:

- the impact and estimated cost of domestic and family violence on their operations
- what they are doing, or funding other organisations to do, to respond to domestic and family violence and what this is achieving.

2.2 Are there strategies to respond to domestic and family violence?

In its current form the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan (Action Plan) does not provide an adequate framework for organisations to work together to respond to domestic and family violence.

Government organisations are not required to have documented strategies and many are not clear about their objectives in relation to domestic and family violence.

While Police and courts are enforcing the laws more vigorously, the amount of domestic and family violence reported has remained stable. Most violence is not reported to Police.

Government wide strategies

The Government aims to reduce violent crime, reoffending, child abuse and avoidable health admissions and to support the most vulnerable. The NSW State Plan issued in 2006 set targets around these objectives but it was not always clear what these meant in relation to domestic and family violence. Some staff told us they were unsure whether they should address the significant under-reporting of domestic and family violence by encouraging more victims and perpetrators to come forward, or whether they should aim to reduce the amount of reported domestic and family violence. Appendix 3 summarises the relevant NSW State Plan targets which were in effect at the time of the audit fieldwork and the NSW 2021 targets which were announced in September 2011.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet issued the Action Plan in June 2010 following consultation with organisations and the Justice and Human Services Chief Executive Officers.

The Action Plan was developed in the context of the:

- National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children
- National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, which aims (amongst other things) to support women, children and young people at risk of homelessness to escape violence, to live in secure housing and to receive the health and community services needed to build confidence and safety.

In its current form, the Action Plan does not provide an adequate framework for improving the response to domestic and family violence. It has no implementation plan or performance indicators to monitor its progress. There are no concrete steps for mainstreaming a government and community wide approach to consistently identify domestic and family violence, assess risk and refer people to the services they need. The Action plan was not informed by a comprehensive mapping of services available to respond to domestic and family violence.

The Action Plan requires regional plans to integrate the government and non-government response to domestic and family violence. It is not clear how these regional plans will be resourced and implemented. They are being prepared by Regional Domestic and Family Violence Coordinators within Police, whose own function is under review. The additional \$7 million provided over five years by the Action Plan has already been committed.

Recommendation

We recommend that by December 2012, the Chief Executives of the NSW Police Force, FaCS, NSW Health and DAGJ should agree, in consultation with the non-government sector, on how to respond to domestic and family violence. This framework should be signed off by the four Chief Executives.

Organisational strategies

Government organisations are not required to have documented strategies, plans or targets for responding to domestic and family violence. Many are not clear about their objectives in relation to domestic and family violence.

Police, NSW Health, FaCS Housing and DAGJ (Attorney General's Division, Legal Aid NSW and Corrective Services) have specific policies and procedures for responding to domestic and family violence. Other government services do not, including FaCS Ageing Disability and Homecare, whose clients are known to be highly vulnerable to violence and control.

Government organisations have sought to improve their response to domestic and family violence. For example:

- since 2008, Police procedures require officers to be more assertive in investigating domestic and family violence, pressing charges and initiating ADVOs. All three Commands visited were improving their response within existing budgets and had dedicated arrest teams to investigate domestic and family violence. Lismore and Walgett Police visit victims as part of their normal duties to ensure that high risk repeat offenders comply with bond, bail and ADVO conditions
- local courts have reduced the time taken to finalise domestic and family violence matters involving a criminal charge by 18 per cent following the introduction of new procedures in 2008
- DAGJ's victim support services provide a 24 hour telephone support line, counselling and access to victims' compensation. Between 25 and 44 per cent of the users of these services are victims of family and domestic violence
- in 2010 the Legal Aid NSW Domestic Violence Practitioner Scheme was expanded to cover 32 local courts, providing private lawyers to assist victims in relation to ADVOs and other legal issues
- FaCS has provided safe accommodation to more victims by extending the Staying Home Leaving Violence and rental assistance programs to more locations
- NSW Health screens around 170,000 women using antenatal, early childhood, drug, alcohol and mental health services providing them with the opportunity to identify intimate partner violence and seek help.

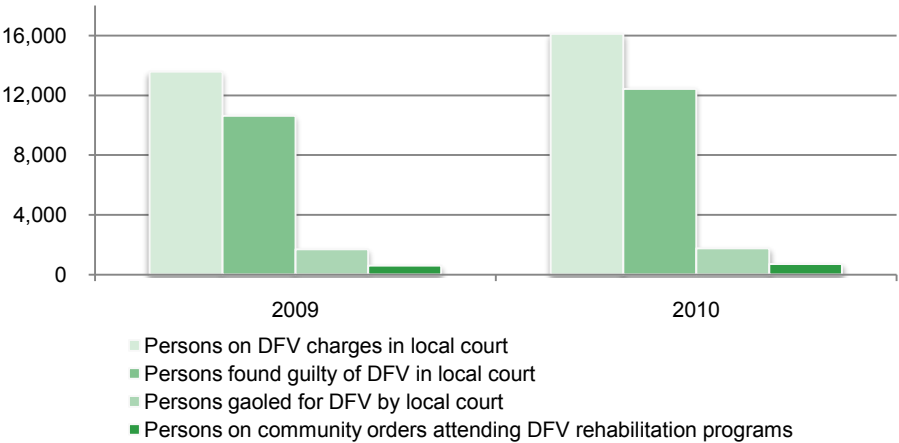
At a local level, only Police have targets for responding. The first of these is to charge a given number of perpetrators for domestic and family violence assaults. This monthly target is based upon the number of assaults reported and the number of charges laid a year ago. The second is to reduce the number of domestic and family violence perpetrators who reoffend within two years.

Exhibit 7 shows that increased effort by Police and DAGJ to hold perpetrators accountable has had an effect. Between 2009 and 2010, 19 per cent more offenders were charged in local courts, 17 per cent more were found guilty and four per cent more were imprisoned. The average sentence has increased from 4.7 to 5.4 months. Corrective Services established a rehabilitative program for convicted domestic abuse offenders in 2007. By June 2011, 2,698 offenders had commenced the program, 143 in prison and 2,555 in the community.

Police and courts are enforcing the law more rigorously

Most violence continues to go unreported

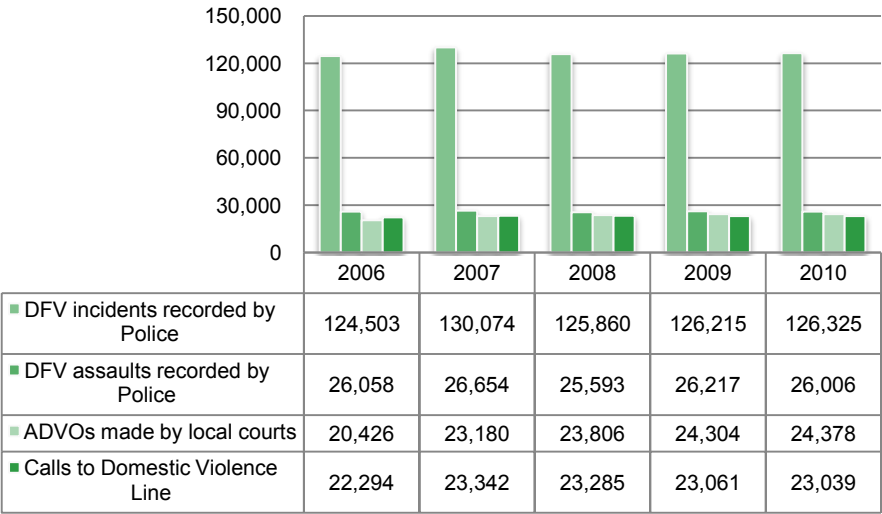
Exhibit 7: Domestic and family violence law enforcement 2009 to 2010



Source: Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, DAGJ.

Organisations cannot determine what effect the increased enforcement activity has had on the incidence of domestic and family violence. Exhibit 8 shows there has been no discernable increase in the number of people reporting domestic and family violence to Police and the Domestic Violence Line. Human and health services do not report the amount of domestic and family violence that they identify.

Exhibit 8: Reported domestic and family violence in NSW 2006 to 2010



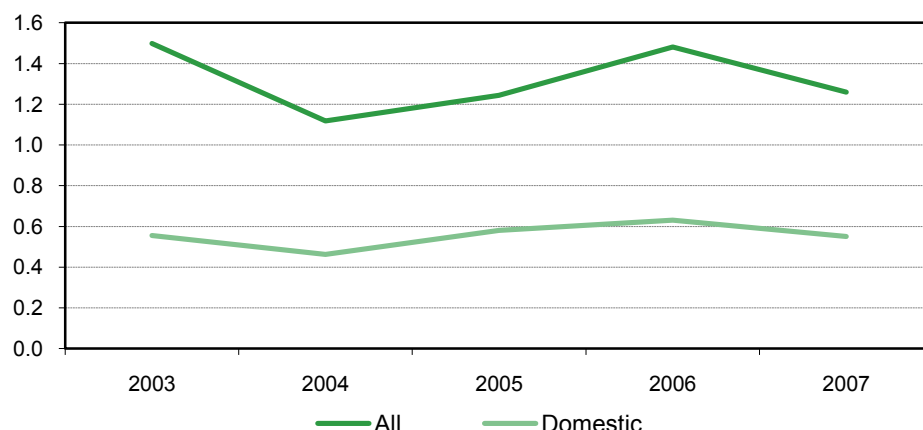
Source: NSW Police, BoCSAR and FaCS.

It is worrying that so much violence goes unreported. Nationally only one-third of all interpersonal violence and 17 per cent of current partner violence was reported to police in 2006. There is no reason to think that this is not representative of New South Wales where the number of incidents reported has remained stable.

In the most extreme cases the abuse results in death. In over one-third of unlawful deaths the offender and the perpetrator were in a domestic or family relationship. This accounts for an average of 36 deaths a year.

Domestic
and family
violence
kills around
36 people a
year

Exhibit 9: Number of total and domestic NSW homicide victims per 100,000 population



Source: BoCSAR 2009

Only one in ten domestic homicide victims were known by Police to be in an abusive relationship in the twelve months before their deaths. So it is important that when victims contact other organisations such as health and housing, they are helped to identify violence and provided with coordinated support.

Like other Australian jurisdictions, New South Wales has established a Domestic Violence Death Review Team. The Team, convened by the State Coroner, will review domestic deaths with the aim of identifying systemic issues that impede an effective response, improve how services work together and ensure that future victims do not fall through the cracks.

Locally, organisations work together to promote awareness that domestic and family violence is a crime and that help and support is available. This is discussed in section 2.5.

Recommendation

We recommend that by December 2012, the Chief Executives of the NSW Police Force, FaCS, NSW Health and DAGJ publish their strategies including output or outcome measures that can be used to monitor their impact on domestic and family violence over the following five years (2013 to 2018).

2.3 Is there a shared understanding about dealing with domestic and family violence?

Government and non-government organisations lack a shared understanding of each other's roles in providing an integrated response to domestic and family violence. Unlike some jurisdictions, New South Wales has no minimum standards across organisations for identifying domestic and family violence, assessing risk, prioritising the provision of services, sharing information and for making referrals. There are also no minimum standards for working with victims. Even when victims and perpetrators want help, some organisations create unnecessary barriers that prevent the timely exchange of information that could help them get the support they need.

Organisations are aware of each other's traditional roles and core activities. However, they are not aware of how they should work together to provide an integrated response to domestic and family violence.

There has
been a lack of
leadership to
drive change

Lack of leadership

There has been a lack of leadership to drive reform for some time.

The 2003 Interagency Guidelines provide no details on governance arrangements.

The Domestic and Family Violence Senior Officers Group was established in 2009 to coordinate the response of government organisations, resolve interagency issues and advise the Government's Justice and Human Services Chief Executives.

The NSW Government takes advice from the non-government sector through the Premier's Council on Preventing Violence Against Women. The Council's members have expertise in domestic, family and sexual violence and women's health, refuges and court support services.

However, we saw little evidence of an integrated strategic approach across the State as a whole because:

- there is no mechanism or regular forum for representatives of government and non-government organisations to work together
- the scope given to the non-government sector to contribute is limited. For example, the Council was not provided with a draft of the Action Plan to comment on before its release
- the Council has no members from non-specialist organisations who receive significant funding to provide generalist health, housing and family services to people who have experienced domestic and family violence.

The Action Plan released in 2010 acknowledged that domestic and family violence is a whole of government and whole of community problem that needs a collaborative and integrated response, but was not clear on what an integrated response would look like. When the Senior Officers Group met after the launch of the Action Plan, they noted the 'need to develop a vision that sets out what we are seeking to achieve in terms of an integrated approach to domestic and family violence'.

The Action Plan requires regional managers from government organisations to engage with the community sector and implement the Plan regionally. A year after the launch of the Action Plan, we found little evidence that much had been achieved. It is difficult to drive local and regional reform without a clear vision across the sector.

Recommendation

We recommend that by December 2012, the Chief Executives of NSW Police, FaCS, NSW Health, and DAGJ agree, in consultation with the non-government sector, on how to respond to domestic and family violence. This framework should revise governance structures to ensure that government and non-government organisations are accountable for working together to deliver domestic and family violence services at the State and local level.

No common approach to identify and assess the risk of domestic and family violence

There is no common understanding or minimum standard around how organisations identify, and assess the risk of, domestic and family violence.

Police responding to a domestic and family violence call-out must make two separate decisions using professional judgement. The first is a question of law – has an offence occurred and if so who did it? The second question is an assessment of risk – is it likely that future violence will be committed? If officers suspect that it will be, they must apply for an Apprehended Domestic Violence order (ADVO). An ADVO is not a criminal charge, but once in place it is a criminal offence to breach its terms which are aimed at preventing future violence. An ADVO may prohibit the person from approaching the victim or it may impose conditions such as not approaching the victim whilst under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Organisations
don't share a
common
understanding

FaCS staff working in its Community Services Division across the State use a structured decision-making tool to identify children at risk of significant harm including the presence of domestic and family violence. A simplified version is available to people working with children to help them determine whether they need to make a child protection report. These tools are not used to identify domestic and family violence where children are not present and do not focus on assessing the risk to people other than children.

Staff working in other human services for FaCS and non-government organisations have no standard tools to identify or assess the risk of domestic and family violence.

Staff working in NSW Health antenatal, early childhood, mental health, drug and alcohol services are required to screen all female clients for intimate partner violence. This consists of asking whether she has been hit, slapped or hurt by her partner or ex-partner during the last 12 months and whether she is frightened of that person. If she answers yes to either question, staff then ask her if she is safe to go home and whether she would like some help. Around 250,000 women attend these services each year. On average 67 per cent are screened, six per cent of whom disclose intimate partner violence.

Other health and medical services are not required to have standard procedures for identifying domestic and family violence. Of the three hospitals visited, only Walgett assessed whether emergency department patients had suffered domestic and family violence as part of its standard admission procedure.

Exhibit 10: Better practice around identifying violence and assessing risk

Other jurisdictions including Victoria, Western Australia and parts of England have minimum standards and common tools for identifying domestic and family violence, assessing risk and prioritising the delivery of services. The standards and tools promote a uniform approach across sectors and encourage organisations to share and use each other's assessments. They consider factors known to be associated with a heightened risk of domestic and family violence including jealousy, pregnancy, recent separation and controlling behaviours.

Source: Audit Office research 2011.

New South Wales has attempted a similar approach. In 2006 the Chief Executives of NSW Justice and Human Services agencies approved the Cross Agency Risk Assessment and Management (CARAM) project to facilitate a common approach for responding to domestic and family violence. In 2010 a three month trial of CARAM was conducted at Sutherland and Wagga Wagga. The results were not encouraging. Many organisations did not make initial assessments of whether domestic and family violence was present. Those that did, did not assess the risk in a standardised way that could support referrals and the prioritisation of cases by other organisations.

Recommendation

We recommend that by December 2012, the Chief Executives of NSW Police, FaCS, NSW Health, and DAGJ agree, in consultation with the non-government sector, on how to respond to domestic and family violence. This framework should establish minimum standards for identifying domestic and family violence and assessing and prioritising risk.

There are barriers to information sharing

The failure of organisations to share information impairs their ability to work together to keep victims safe and perpetrators accountable. When information is not shared, organisations lack a full picture of the issues, responses are uncoordinated and delayed, and victims have to retell personal and painful stories over and over.

The *Keep Them Safe* reforms clarified the roles and responsibilities of organisations to share information and respond when children are at risk of significant harm. There is widespread agreement that where there are grave concerns about the safety of children, the need to protect them overrides considerations of privacy and confidentiality.

It is not easy
 to share
 information to
 help people

The rules
around
privacy need
to be clearer

The situation is less clear around the safety of adults, who live in a wide range of relationships that may not be easily understood by outsiders. Adults have rights to privacy and autonomy. People working with adults need to earn their trust. What information can be shared, with whom and for what purposes varies greatly depending on the organisations, individuals and programs involved.

Many staff interviewed during the audit said the law around privacy was a major impediment to sharing information around domestic and family violence.

In a number of communities, the Government has reduced the barriers to information sharing. For example, the Attorney General and the Minister of Health issued privacy codes of practice to support integrated case management at Campbelltown. This allows organisations participating in the Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model to share information for the purpose of keeping victims safe and perpetrators accountable. Such codes take many months to introduce and only apply to specific organisations and circumstances.

Other jurisdictions, including Victoria and Western Australia, have adopted a more strategic approach and clarified the law around privacy to protect staff and to promote the sharing of information for appropriate purposes.

Organisational factors also contribute to the reluctance to share information.

Most organisations require that an individual sign a consent form before staff can pass on information about that person to another organisation. Each organisation has its own consent form and the sharing of information and the provision of support can be delayed as victims travel between services to sign multiple forms. This adds to the hardship faced by vulnerable victims who have fled home with few resources and no transport. The Privacy Commission told us that informed verbal consent is sufficient to enable organisations to share information for appropriate purposes.

Different approaches to policy around information sharing also cause problems. For example, NSW Health requires emergency departments to contact Police when they admit patients who have had serious injuries inflicted, such as broken bones, stab or gunshot wounds. In the absence of these injuries, staff are not to contact Police unless requested by the victim. A narrow interpretation of the policy can create problems for nurses. Emergency staff told us of one woman with severe internal injuries who had been kicked and jumped on. The staff made several enquiries to Police and further medical examination before they decided that they could report to Police without the victim's consent.

Barriers to information sharing also exist within organisations.

Information about a client held by one health service is usually unavailable to health workers in other services. Unless there has been a direct referral between the services, emergency departments, mental health, drug, alcohol, maternity, acute and community-based units do not know what each other knows about a client's exposure to violence or what support is being provided.

Until recently, housing, disability, ageing, home care, community and child protection services operated as separate organisations. These services are now aggregated within FaCS, but each still has its own database, procedures and forms regarding the exchange of information. Victims can be required to sign several consent forms before FaCS units share information with each other. FaCS recognises its ability to support victims is restricted by red tape and advises that it is streamlining consent procedures. FaCS told us that reforms including *One Place, One Plan* will break down barriers, streamline processes, make client data available across its services and integrate efforts to support individual clients. We observed that the co-location of FaCS units in Walgett and Campbelltown was breaking down barriers and improving integration and the flow of information.

Recommendation

We recommend that by June 2012, the Chief Executives of NSW Police, FaCS, NSW Health, and DAGJ establish domestic and family violence protocols that:

- clarify what, and how, information can be shared between organisations within the existing law around privacy
- implement privacy codes of practice, or promote legislative reform, for the appropriate exchange of information to keep victims safe and perpetrators accountable.

There are no standard referral pathways

There is no common approach across organisations for referring victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence. The referral process varies from organisation to organisation and place to place. There are few feedback mechanisms to inform staff about the outcome of referrals that they make.

Referral pathways are somewhat better when children are at risk of significant harm or where special arrangements are in place to support projects that are trialling different ways of working together. Most of these projects have been in place for over several years and are discussed in section 2.4.

Since 2009, Police officers are required to refer domestic and family violence victims to support services. In an emergency the Police may organise transport to hospital or a refuge. If the victim gives written consent, the investigating officer will forward a yellow card with the victim's contact details to a non-government women's domestic violence court support service.

We found weaknesses in the Police referral process.

Firstly, few referrals were made at two of the sites visited. Lismore and Walgett Police provided yellow cards to the support services for less than five per cent of all domestic and family violence victims. There were no arrangements to refer male victims to support services.

Secondly, there were no arrangements for referring perpetrators to support services. The NSW Police Force advises that this is primarily because there are few programs for perpetrators of either gender.

Thirdly, the quality of referral was inadequate. A card with contact details does not give the recipient the information needed to assess risk and prioritise the need for services. Also, many of the referrals at Lismore and Walgett were received too late to provide support for the court hearing.

Campbelltown's Police referral is more robust, due in large part to a pilot project funded by the DAGJ since 2005. Special privacy codes of practice clarify information sharing. Police are not required to get the victim's written consent before sharing information. Campbelltown Police give the Domestic and Family Violence Intervention Service (DaFVIS) information about all victims with domestic and family violence matters coming to court. We discuss how DaFVIS supports integrated service delivery in section 2.4. Campbelltown Police can also refer victims without impending court cases to early intervention services using yellow cards.

Exhibit 11: Yellow card

Domestic Violence Pro-Active Support Service
CONSENT FORM FOR SUPPORT

Please tick one box: ☐ I give my permission
☐ I do not give my permission

For my name and contact details to be given to the Domestic Violence Support Worker for follow up and support.

Name:

Address for support kit:

Are there children residing in the home? ☐ YES ☐ NO

Phone Number:

Mobile Number:

Preferred time to call:

Gender: ☐ FEMALE ☐ MALE ☐ TRANSGENDER

Interpreter required: ☐ YES ☐ NO

Language spoken:

ATSI:

Signed:

Date:

Source: NSW Police Force 2011

It is not easy
to make
referrals

There are few
programs for
perpetrators or
male victims

'It's up to
victims to
help
themselves'

Referral practices by health and human services varied greatly. Some staff make appointments for victims with other services and even help them get there. Other staff simply provide information about available services because they believe victims need to be autonomous: 'It's up to victims to help themselves'.

Police and other local staff consistently told us that they get few referrals from health and medical services. A recent University of NSW survey of women six months after they had disclosed intimate partner violence during routine NSW Health screening, found that 35 per cent of women had been referred to and attended other services. Nine per cent of women disclosing violence had reported it to Police. If these results are representative, we estimate that 905 women across the State reported their victimisation to Police after disclosing it to NSW Health staff during routine screening.

Unpublished NSW Health data indicates that, of the women who disclosed intimate partner violence and said that they felt unsafe to go home, 40 per cent were not given referrals to support services. This is partly about referral practice and partly about the willingness of victims to accept help at that moment.

There is little agreement between organisations over who has the lead responsibility for providing services, particularly case management and counselling. This undermines the capacity of New South Wales to respond to domestic and family violence. There are exceptions to this where government funds integrated services in particular locations. These are discussed in section 2.4.

Exhibit 12: Better practice around information sharing and referrals

Victoria has arrangements for sharing information to support a whole of community response. Police give their report describing the incident and the identified risk factors to a referral panel representing service providers. The police report informs the panel's decision about which cases to prioritise and which services to provide. Victoria allows this sharing of information provided:

- the information is shared to protect the victim
- the victim has given implied consent
- the name and contact details of the perpetrator and other third parties are removed from the report.

Similar arrangements exist for police referrals of perpetrators in Victoria. Provided the perpetrator has given implied consent, the police give the referral panel a copy of the incident report, with the name and contact details of the victim and other third parties removed.

The local panel also takes referrals from other organisations that become aware of domestic and family violence victims and perpetrators.

Victorian organisations that get referrals are responsible for contacting the victim (or perpetrator) within 72 hours and determining what services they need and who is best placed to provide them. This may involve referrals to other organisations. Organisations are funded to work in partnership.

Source: NSW Audit Office research 2011.

Recommendation

We recommend that by December 2012, the Chief Executives of NSW Police, FaCS, NSW Health and DAGJ agree, in consultation with the non-government sector, on how to respond to domestic and family violence. This framework should spell out the responsibilities of each service in respect of domestic and family violence and the referral pathways between services.

There are few standards for services responding to domestic and family violence

Women's refuges have standards for the provision of their services. In addition, DAGJ recently released minimum standards for behaviour change programs for male perpetrators, which are to be implemented in 2012.

There are few other common standards for organisations responding to domestic and family violence.

It is generally acknowledged that it is inappropriate and potentially dangerous to counsel a family together when violence is present. Unlike some jurisdictions, New South Wales has no standards around this.

The Brighter Futures program illustrates the problem. Under this program FaCS funds early intervention, support and counselling to vulnerable children and their families. Over half of the 6,400 families that used Brighter Futures between 2005 and 2009 had issues around domestic and family violence but Brighter Futures was not designed to address violence. FaCS has issued guidelines for Brighter Future providers, but there are no minimum standards.

Recommendation

We recommend that by December 2012, the Chief Executives of NSW Police, FaCS, NSW Health, and DAGJ:

- agree, in consultation with the non-government sector, on how to respond to domestic and family violence. This framework should establish minimum standards for working with victims and perpetrators
- should ensure that their services and funded non-government services comply with the framework (established per recommendation 5).

There is a lack of training for services responding to domestic and family violence

At a state level, the Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV), which is part of NSW Health, has developed cross-sectoral training for staff dealing with domestic and family violence. Such training could bring together staff from different organisations and foster a shared understanding of domestic and family violence.

In 2010 an ECAV review found little cross-sectoral training was occurring. ECAV also found a lack of standards around training. Some organisations, including schools and ageing disability and homecare services, gave staff no specific training in domestic and family violence.

Organisations rely heavily on 'on-the-job' training to inform staff about domestic and family violence. Such training is rarely done in conjunction with organisations with whom they are required to provide an integrated response.

The Police College includes domestic and family violence in the training given to all new recruits. Police give further training to all Domestic Violence Liaison Officers.

Human services and health staff told us that college and university education does not prepare new entrants for dealing with domestic and family violence. Induction training by NSW Health and FaCS focuses on child protection. NSW Health also trains staff who routinely screen for domestic and family violence in the conduct of such screening. Staff get little training in how to work with victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence.

Government organisations do not monitor or impose standards on the training of non-government staff.

In the three communities we visited, the Police provided ongoing refresher training in domestic and family violence to frontline officers. During 2010–11, ECAV trained Lismore NSW Health staff in routine screening for intimate partner violence. ECAV also trained community and health staff in Lismore and Walgett about responding to Aboriginal family violence.

There are few minimum standards for dealing with domestic and family violence

There is little training across organisations

There has
been no
comprehensive
mapping of
available
services

Government and non-government staff in all three communities told us that domestic and family violence training is a priority for them, but that it was difficult to find time to attend.

Recommendation

We recommend that by December 2012, the Chief Executives of NSW Police, FaCS, NSW Health, and DAGJ agree, in consultation with the non-government sector, on how to respond to domestic and family violence. This framework should require organisations to provide cross-sectoral training to their staff responding to domestic and family violence services.

There is a lack of information about services available to respond to domestic and family violence

There has been no comprehensive mapping of services available to respond to domestic and family violence across New South Wales. In our view this should have occurred along with an analysis of service gaps before an action plan was finalised.

Partial directories of domestic and family violence services are maintained by various organisations including the Domestic Violence Line, the Office for Women's Policy, Human Services Net and the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearing House.

In each of the three communities visited, some workers were unaware of available services or how to access them. Comprehensive directories of available services were not available.

Appendix 5 lists the non-government services we found in Campbelltown, Lismore and Walgett. There are a range of services available but, with the exception of refuges, court support and Staying Home Leaving Violence, few that specialise in domestic and family violence. There were no specialist domestic and family violence counsellors for victims, perpetrators or children.

Recommendation

We recommend that the Chief Executives of Police, FaCS, NSW Health, and DAGJ should:

- by June 2012, ensure that their organisations build on existing resources to develop and maintain an integrated online directory of specialist and mainstream services for victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence
- by December 2012, agree, in consultation with the non-government sector, on how to respond to domestic and family violence. This framework should be based upon a comprehensive service gap analysis.

2.4 Are organisations working together?

Generally Police, refuges, health and welfare organisations work together to improve the immediate safety of victims when there is an overt and serious crisis, particularly when children are involved. In such situations the justice agencies also work together to hold perpetrators accountable.

Unless there are special arrangements, this cooperation is short-lived and crisis driven. There is no common approach for providing referrals to other services for on-going support that might help prevent repeat domestic and family violence. This is of great concern because 44 per cent of victims and 49 per cent of perpetrators reported to Police in 2010 had a police history of such incidents in the preceding five years.

Organisations work together in crisis

Organisations work together in crisis

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

Police have formal protocols with FaCS to work together to ensure the safety of children. Most Police Commands also have partnerships of some kind with local non-government organisations. The most common partnerships are with court support services, which help victims get ADVOs and referrals to other organisations to meet their immediate social and welfare needs. In 2010-11 the Legal Aid Division of DAGJ funded 28 Women's Domestic Violence and Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS) in 108 Local Courts. The WDVCAS helped 21,219 women across the State.

In 2010, FaCS established Regional Executive Directors across New South Wales to better integrate its services and to coordinate support for individuals in crisis, who had multiple and complex needs that were not being met.

Exhibit 13: Case study of organisations working together in crisis

Glen had been abusing his partner Maria for a number of years but they have never come to the attention of others. His violence escalated when she fell pregnant and he injured her severely. Neighbours called Police, who arrested Glen. An ambulance took Maria to hospital. Her injuries were treated and a social worker arranged temporary accommodation at a refuge.

The court support worker (who was given Maria's details by Police) contacted her and helped her prepare for the court hearing. The Police prosecuted Glen for assault and applied for an ADVO. Maria gave evidence. The magistrate made an ADVO prohibiting Glen from approaching Maria, found Glen guilty and sentenced him to a two year good behaviour bond.

Source: NSW Audit Office research 2011 – this is a composite case and the names have been changed.

This cooperation tends to be ad hoc and short term. Government services usually disengage once children are out of imminent danger, the victim's immediate safety has improved or the perpetrator has gone to court. Organisations do little to monitor referrals.

Organisations work together where special arrangements are in place

Over the last decade the Government has trialled a range of projects to improve the way that organisations work together to support vulnerable people in particular communities. Many of these projects have been evaluated, found to improve integration and continue to be funded over several years. Some have been expanded to other communities, but the current Action Plan does not provide a framework for consolidating and mainstreaming these different approaches to integrated services. The response to domestic and family violence remains fragmented, and access to help and support depends upon where you live.

The most important of these special arrangements to integrate organisational responses are described in the following exhibit.

There are a
growing
number of
coordination
projects

Exhibit 14: initiatives to integrate domestic and family violence responses

Six integrated domestic and family violence services (IDFVS) were established at ten sites several years ago to provide long-term coordinated case management to families experiencing domestic and family violence and child protection issues. The IDFVS can combine the resources of Police, courts, community services, health, housing and relevant non-government organisations. Each of these programs has a different model of case management.

Since 2005, the Anti-Social Behaviour Pilot Project has provided extended integrated case management for 220 young people at risk and their families at 14 locations. Domestic and family violence was an issue for many of these families. In June 2011, the Department of Premier and Cabinet transferred responsibility for this project to FaCS. The project is now known as the Supporting Children Supporting Families program.

FaCS is reviewing a range of integrated case management models with the intention of developing a consistent response to clients with multiple and complex issues including domestic and family violence. This is an important step forward.

The Staying Home Leaving Violence model, which was first trialled in 2004 in Bega, supports domestic and family violence victims who want to remain in their own home. The program funds alterations to make the house more secure. It also involves Police, who ensure that the perpetrator stays away, and a non-government organisation to provide long-term case work and referrals to other services. FaCS has extended the program to 17 locations.

Since 2005, DAGJ has funded the Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model (DVICM) at Wagga Wagga and Campbelltown. DVICM is described below.

The Office for Women's Policy funds non-government organisations to provide Domestic Violence Proactive Support Services in eleven locations to coordinate the delivery of services to meet the welfare, safety, legal, social, housing and financial needs of women and children experiencing domestic and family violence.

Source: Office for Women's Policy 2011.

In Campbelltown, Lismore and Walgett, the picture was mixed.

The DVICM project at Campbelltown supports weekly meetings of staff from Police, prosecution, juvenile justice, probation and parole and child protection and the non-government DaFVIS. The meetings review the domestic and family violence cases going to the local court. Ministerially approved Privacy Codes of Practice support the exchange of information between these staff. The meeting provides integrated case management that ensures that the victim and children are safe, the court process is on track and the perpetrator is held accountable. It also supports referrals to other services. Cases are closed two weeks after the court action is finalised.

Local efforts in Walgett and Lismore to establish integrated case management have failed. For example, Lismore Police established a Domestic Violence Care Committee with other organisations in 2009 to case manage victims of repeat violence. The Committee was discontinued in 2010. Some organisations were excluded from the Committee because of barriers to sharing information, others were too busy to attend.

FaCS funds Staying Home Leaving Violence in Campbelltown and Walgett. The Walgett program was not operating when we visited in May 2011. A response based on excluding perpetrators from the victim's home is difficult when the residence is shared with several families because of a housing shortage.

In 2011, NSW Health and child protection staff in Campbelltown established a team that works with non-government organisations to support expectant mothers with complex problems. In the first three months this project assisted 12 victims of intimate partner violence. All but two of these women also had complex problems around mental health, drugs, alcohol or disability. The team helped them access other health services to address these issues.

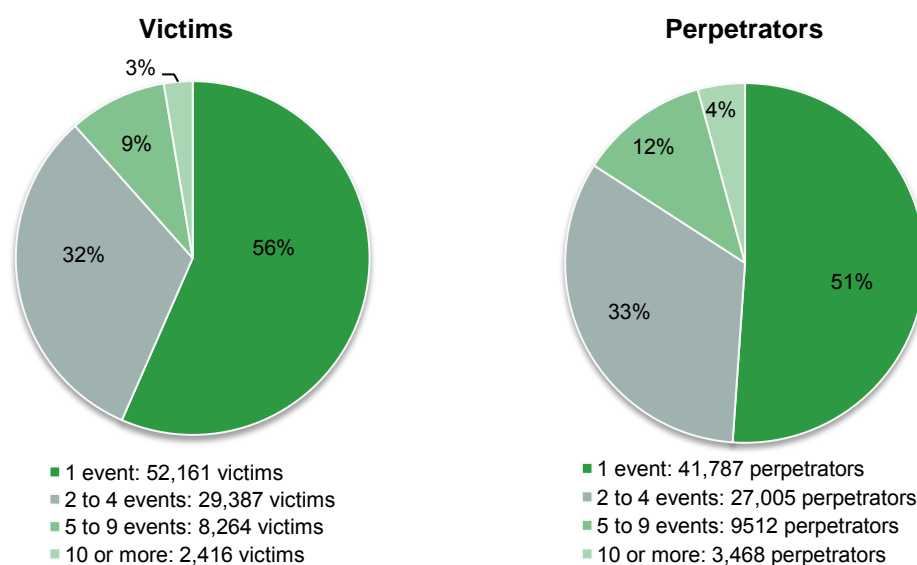
FaCS Regional Executive Directors also organised case management for a small number of domestic and family violence victims in Campbelltown and Lismore.

Organisations are not dealing effectively with repeat domestic and family violence

The lack of commitment to a consistent approach and ongoing support is of particular concern because it fails to address ongoing violence.

Exhibit 14 shows that nearly half of the 92,228 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. Twelve per cent (10,680) of victims had been victimised five or more times and 16 per cent (12,980) of perpetrators had been identified as perpetrators five or more times.

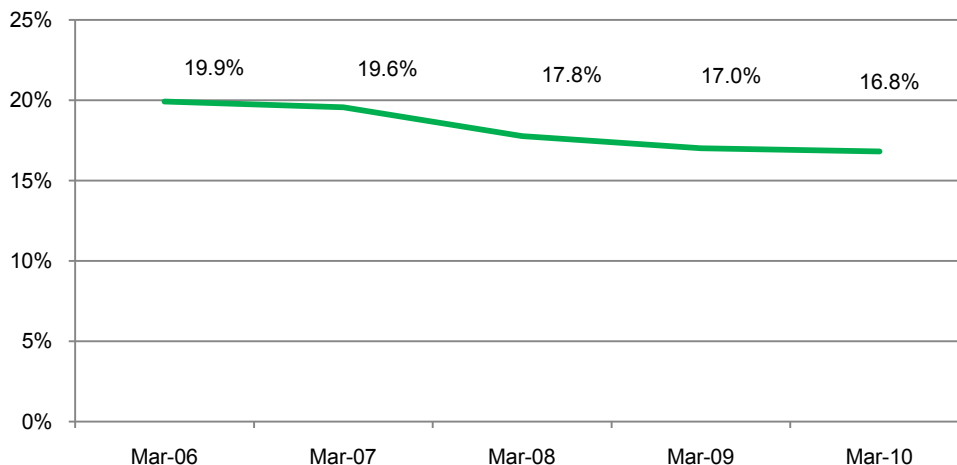
Exhibit 14: Revictimisation and reoffending amongst people reported to Police in 2010



Source: NSW Police Force 2011.

Police have a target to reduce the proportion of perpetrators who reoffend within two years. They have reduced the proportion of victims who were re-assaulted within a two year period from 19.9 per cent in 2006 to 16.8 per cent in 2010.

Exhibit 15: Frequency of revictimisation 2006 to 2010



Source: NSW Police Force 2011.

New South Wales does not deal with repeat violence effectively

Victims are re-assaulted less frequently

The role of
drug, alcohol
and mental
health
services is
unclear

Despite this progress, the high level of repeat domestic and family violence indicates that the current approach often fails to break the cycle of violence.

Local police told us that many victims return to their violent partners or enter new relationships that also became abusive. Victims often fail to attend court to provide evidence against perpetrators and sometimes apply to have existing ADVOs withdrawn. Many perpetrators continue to inflict violence over many years in existing or new relationships.

Repeat victims and perpetrators often have mental health, drug and alcohol problems, but we found few clear referral pathways between health and other organisations at a State level or in the communities we visited. There was no agreement over what the role of NSW Health's mental health, drug and alcohol services should be in respect to domestic and family violence beyond routine screening. Local staff from Police, probation and parole, courts, housing and non-government organisations consistently told us that it was very difficult to refer domestic and family violence victims, children and perpetrators to drug, alcohol, community and mental health services.

Exhibit 16: Challenge of repeat domestic and family violence

Bonny is a 37-year-old woman who has been repeatedly abused by her partner David. Police have recorded 50 incidents of abuse since 1995. Around half of these were verbal arguments, but there were also several sexual assaults, 12 assaults and 22 breaches of ADVOs. David has been charged and convicted for several of these offences and imprisoned twice. Bonny still holds strong feelings for David and often refuses to cooperate with Police or attend court. Both she and David have severe alcohol problems and Police and DAGJ find them difficult to deal with. The Police do not have any information about whether other organisations have come into contact or are working with Bonny and David.

Source: NSW Police Force 2011. This is a composite case and the names have been changed.

The Victorian response to domestic and family violence extends beyond managing the immediate crisis. Both victims and perpetrators are referred to non-government organisations that can provide ongoing support to help with their underlying issues so they can become free of violence. Children who have witnessed violence are referred to services that can support their recovery and reduce the risk that they may become offenders and victims themselves. The provision of these services is underpinned by common standards across organisations in Victoria.

FaCS and NSW Health advised that 'a one size fits all' approach may not be appropriate given the diversity of communities' needs and the availability of service providers. They also advised that a number of organisations already participate in integrated case coordination initiatives for clients with multiple and complex needs at particular locations across the State. These include the Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Services, Staying Home Leaving Violence, Regional Executive Directors, the Anti-Social Behaviour Pilot Project and the Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model. In this context, FaCS and NSW Health are concerned that it could be counterproductive to establish another integrated case management process.

We recognise the legitimacy of these concerns. Nevertheless, organisations need to ensure that their local staff work collaboratively to address domestic and family violence amongst the most vulnerable in communities where none of these special arrangements exist.

Recommendation

We recommend that by June 2012, the Chief Executives of the Police, FaCS, NSW Health and DAGJ ensure that local staff from police, prosecutors, child protection, probation, health, housing and appropriate non-government organisations meet regularly. These meetings should use existing forums where available and should:

- identify victims and perpetrators most at risk, share information and agree on a plan of response
- monitor whether these plans are keeping victims safe and perpetrators accountable and revise as things change
- provide feedback to senior management about opportunities to improve coordination between services.

We recommend that by December 2012, the Chief Executives of the Police, FaCS, NSW Health and DAGJ agree, in consultation with the non-government sector, on how to respond to domestic and family violence. This framework should establish mechanisms to continuously address the barriers to victims reporting violence and the barriers to victims and perpetrators seeking and being provided with help.

2.5 Are organisations planning together?

Organisations do not have the service information needed to inform collaborative planning to reduce the level of domestic and family violence. There is a lack of mechanisms and authority to bring organisations together to make such plans.

There is a lack
of coordinated
planning

As discussed above, there is a lack of information about the impact of domestic and family violence that could inform planning to reduce it. In addition, there is little evidence that the Domestic and Family Violence Senior Officers Group or local committees bring government and non-government organisations together to plan effectively to reduce domestic and family violence.

The Senior Officers Group has little authority to make decisions around service delivery and tends to maintain divisions between government and non-government sectors.

Each of the communities visited had a local Domestic and Family Violence Committee, but these also lack authority. Some organisations do not participate, particularly busy child protection and health services and large non-government organisations providing early intervention and family support services. Nevertheless, the committees provide an important forum for organisations to exchange information about their activities and to raise community awareness about violence through campaigns including Reclaim the Night and White Ribbon Day. In Campbelltown, for example, Police and non-government organisations run regular pamper days for women from specific communities that have been historically reluctant to acknowledge domestic and family violence. These pamper days inform vulnerable women that they are entitled to be free from violence.

With the exception of two large services in Walgett and Campbelltown, non-government organisations told us that government did not consult them when allocating funding and planning new services. For their part, government staff told us that funding decisions were made centrally and, they believed, with limited knowledge of local factors.

Organisations do not always consult with each other when allocating resources. There has been no comprehensive inventory of available services or an analysis of service gaps to inform decisions around resource allocation. It is not uncommon for local staff to be unaware of new services and providers until they open their doors for business. We found multiple court support, emergency housing, early intervention and other services responding to domestic and family violence in the same community with little evidence that the services were working and planning together.

Government and non-government staff at the state and local level told us the biggest challenges they faced were:

- a lack of coordination between services
- safe accommodation for victims and children
- an effective way to refer people
- programs for perpetrators
- appropriate training.

Recommendation

We recommend that by December 2012, the Chief Executives of Police, FaCS, NSW Health, and DAGJ agree, in consultation with the non-government sector, on how to respond to domestic and family violence. This framework should:

- be based on a comprehensive service gap analysis
- ensure joint planning with each other and with non-government representatives
- require organisations attend intersectoral committees for the reduction of domestic and family violence.

We recommend that by December 2012, the Chief Executives of Police, FaCS, NSW Health, and DAGJ should publish their strategies with indicators to address domestic and family violence over the following five years (2013 to 2018).

Appendices

Appendix 1: Glossary

Action Plan	NSW Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan (2010)
ADVO	Apprehended Domestic and Family Violence order
BoCSAR	Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
CARAM	Cross Agency Risk Assessment and Management
Cross-sectoral	Programs, responses, services or training that extend across government and non-government organisations and across health, human service and justice sectors
DAGJ	Department of Attorney General and Justice
DFV	Domestic and Family Violence
DaFVIS	Domestic and Family Violence Intervention Service – a non-government court support service operating in Campbelltown and Wagga Wagga as part of the Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model
DV	Domestic Violence. Often used interchangeably with domestic and family violence
DVICM	Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model – a program in Wagga Wagga that brings organisations together around people with upcoming court hearings related to domestic and family violence
DVLO	Domestic Violence Liaison officer – a uniformed NSW police officer in each Area Command
ECAV	Education Centre Against Violence
FaCS	Department of Family and Community Services
IDFVS	Integrated Domestic And Family Violence Services – six different programs at ten sites that can bring organisations together to provide coordinated long-term case management
Keep Them Safe	NSW Government cross-agency response to child protection issues identified by the Woods inquiry
NSW Health	Health services operated by the NSW Government
<i>One Place, One Plan</i>	FaCS plan to integrate its various programs and divisions and give them a client-based focus
Police	NSW Police Force
Privacy code of conduct	Regulations issued by Ministers to govern the exchange and use of information otherwise constrained by privacy legislation
WDVCAS	Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Service

Appendix 2: Timeline of domestic and family violence reform in New South Wales

Services in NSW	Year	Law, Strategies and Reviews
First women's refuge and women's health centre opened	1974	
	1981	NSW Taskforce on Domestic Violence established
	1982	Amendments to the <i>Crimes Act 1900</i> introduced Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders in NSW
	1987	Amendments to the <i>Crimes Act 1900</i> extended definition of 'domestic violence offence' to provide protection to a wider range of relationships, including people living in the same household, current and past relatives and intimate partners
	1991	NSW Premier's statement on domestic violence <i>NSW Domestic Violence Strategy</i> NSW Domestic Violence Advisory Council established to support 75 local domestic violence committees
During the 1990s the DV Court Assistance Program was established at 47 courts and Domestic Violence Liaison Officers at each local Police Command	1996	<i>NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women</i> stressed the need for a coordinated approach response by government and community services and established: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Management Group • Non-government representation on the NSW Council on Violence against Women • Violence Against Women Unit in the Attorney General's Department (AGD) • 18 Regional Violence Specialists to promote a coordinated local response, service mapping, training, program development and monitoring
Integrated case management projects established in seven communities (now at ten sites)	2003	Seven NSW Government agencies signed Memorandum of Understanding for working together – 'violence against women is a complex issue requiring a cross-agency approach. No single agency can provide an effective response to the complex needs of victims, or tackle the task preventing violence against women without the collaboration of other agencies'
Staying Home Leaving Violence set up as pilot in Bega (now at 17 sites)	2004	
DV Intervention Court Model pilot set up in Wagga Wagga and Campbelltown Anti-Social Behaviour Pilot project established (now at 17 sites)	2005	Violence Against Women Unit moved from AGD to Department of Community Services with the rationale that many victims were vulnerable with complex needs and needed the support of whole-of-government programs
Legal Aid established Women's DV Court Advocacy Service (now at 108 Local Courts)	2006	Local Court Practice Note to expedite domestic and family matters NSW Government accepts most recommendations arising from NSW Law Reform Commission's 2003 report into AVOs, and introduces suite of amendments. These include requiring Police to seek ADVO if they hold objective concerns for the safety of a person

Services in NSW	Year	Law, Strategies and Reviews
	2007	<p><i>Crimes (Domestic and Personal) Violence Act 2007</i> consolidated domestic and personal violence laws and provided for the recording of domestic violence offences to assist with tracking of repeat offenders</p> <p>Report to Justice and Human Services CEOs identified the lack of progress in achieving a coordinated response</p> <p>Department of Premier and Cabinet establishes Violence Prevention Coordination Unit within the Office for Women's Policy</p>
<p>Specialist domestic and family violence training project established in Education Centre Against Violence</p> <p>Network of nine DFV Regional Coordinators established within Police connect local service delivery with state-wide strategic initiatives</p>	2008	<p><i>Discussion paper on NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Framework</i> characterised the NSW response to domestic and family violence as fragmented and uncoordinated, difficult to access and lacking quality data</p>
Safe Start established to provide private rental subsidy for domestic violence victims	2009	Domestic Violence Senior Officers Group established
<p>Corrective Services established Domestic Abuse Program for offenders (now in 32 communities and six prisons)</p> <p>DAGJ established 24-hour Victims Access Line</p> <p>DPC established DV Proactive Support Services (now at 11 sites)</p>	2010	<p>NSW Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan launched. Plan repeats call for whole-of-government approach, partnership with NGOs, improved information, service mapping and training</p> <p>Legislation establishes Domestic Violence Death Review Team</p> <p>The Charter of Victims Rights amended. The charter outlines how victims of crime (including DFV) are to be treated and assisted by government departments, non-government agencies and private contractors (eg counsellors)</p>
	2011	<p>Responsibility for violence strategies moved to the Department for Family and Community Services (FaCS)</p> <p>DAGJ issued minimum standards for behaviour change programs for male perpetrators of domestic and family violence</p>

Source: Audit Office research 2011.

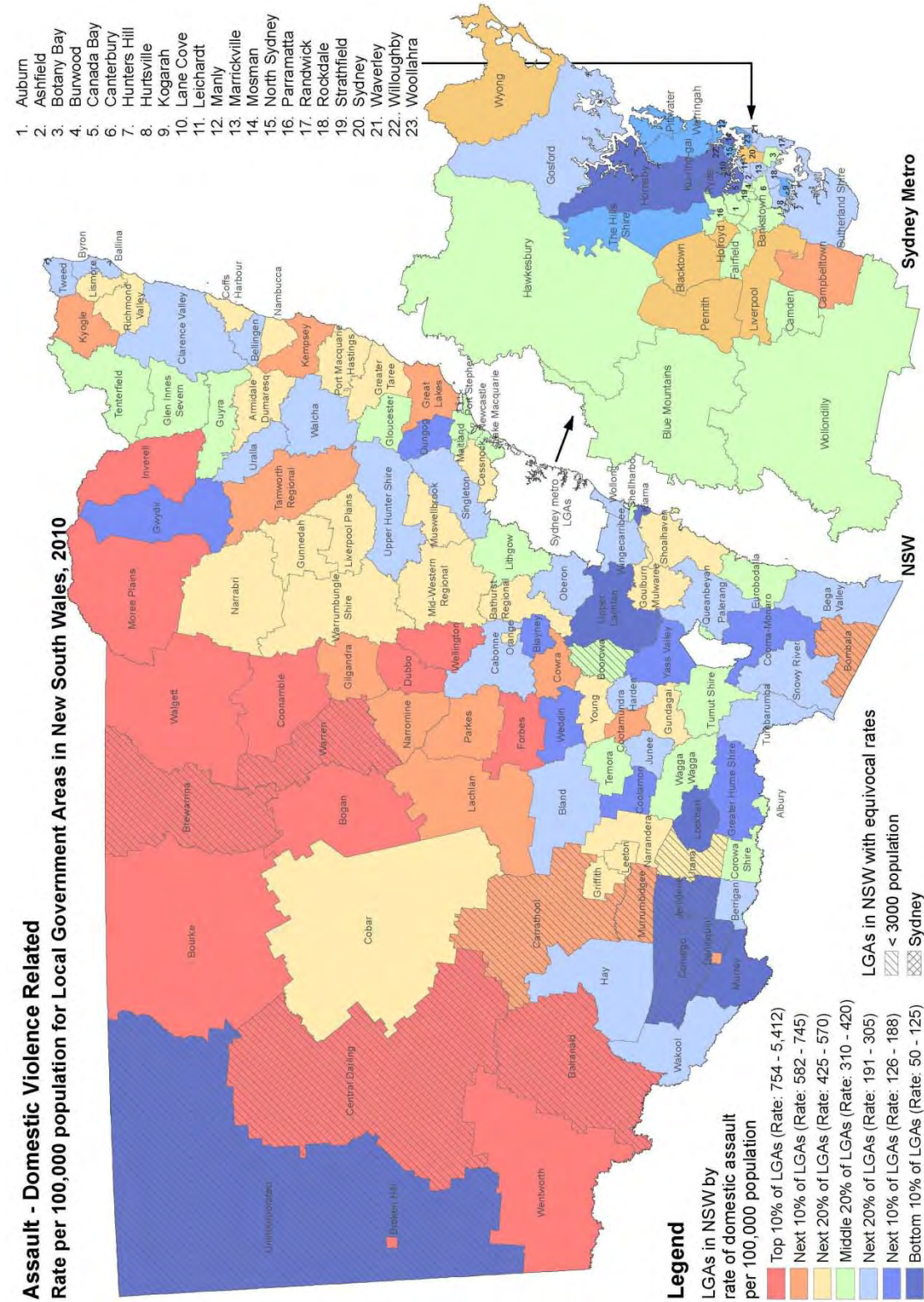
Appendix 3: State priorities with a domestic and family violence dimension

Pre September 20112010 State Plan			Post September 2011NSW 2021 a plan to make NSW number one			Audit observation
Aim	Target	Aim	Target	Priority action relevant to domestic and family violence		
Reduce rates of crime, particularly violent crime	Reduce personal crime, particularly violent crime by 10% by 2016	Reduce crime levels	Reduce domestic violence	Significantly reduce domestic and sexual violence against women and their children. Initiatives include providing long term accommodation and support, expanding the availability of legal advice and support, delivering a more coordinated police and service response and ensuring appropriate court support is available to victims		Agencies need to address under-reporting of domestic and family violence related crime
Reduce re-offending	Reduce the proportion of offenders who re-offend within 24 months by 10% by 2016	Reduce re-offending	Reduce juvenile and adult reoffending by 5% by 2016	Our goal is to reduce the NSW recidivism rate to below the national average within 10 years. Actions to prevent and reduce re-offending		Police currently monitor re-victimisation, but not re-offending in respect of domestic and family violence
			Increase completion rates for intervention programs	Encourage greater use of non-custodial punishment for less serious offenders and create availability and access to diversionary programs Review treatment and intervention programs to identify ways to increase completion rates Improve the way government agencies share information to deliver integrated services and management of offenders		
Improve child wellbeing, health and safety	Increase the proportion of children who have a safe and healthy start to life	Child wellbeing	Reduce rate of children and young people reported at risk of significant harm by 1.5% per year	Focused and responsive family support and case management. Work collaboratively with families who frequently come into contact with multiple government and non-government agencies to strengthen overall family function and reduce the risk of harm to children.		

Pre September 2011 2010 State Plan		Post September 2011 NSW 2021 a plan to make NSW number one		Audit observation
Aim	Target	Aim	Target	Priority action relevant to domestic and family violence
Reduce the number of people who are homeless	A 7% reduction in the overall level of homelessness in NSW by 2013	Reduce the number of people who are homeless	A 7% reduction in the overall level of homelessness in NSW by 2013	Reducing homelessness will require significant housing assistance (and) comprehensive, and integrated mental health, drug and alcohol and domestic violence services. (Including) integrated housing and support initiatives for women and children escaping domestic violence who are homeless or at risk of homelessness
	A 25% reduction in the number of people sleeping rough in NSW by 2013		A 25% reduction in the number of people sleeping rough in NSW by 2013	
	A 33% reduction in the number of Aboriginal people that are homeless in NSW by 2013		A 33% reduction in the number of Aboriginal people that are homeless in NSW by 2013	
			Reduction in the number and rate of people experiencing repeat homelessness	
Strengthen Aboriginal Communities	Reduce the level of domestic violence for Aboriginal children and young people			
Reduce potentially preventable hospital admissions	By 2014–15 reduce the proportion of potentially preventable hospital admissions by 7.6% over the 2006–07 baseline to 8.5% of total hospital admissions	Keep people out of hospital	Reduce the age-standardised rate of potentially preventable hospitalisations by 1%, and by 25% for Aboriginal people by 2014–15	NSW Health does not monitor hospital admissions that may be due to domestic or family violence.

Source: NSW State Plan 2010; NSW 2021 A plan to make NSW number one; Audit Office research 2011

Appendix 4: Domestic and family violence assaults rates across New South
Wales



Source BoCSAR 2011

Appendix 5: Non-government services in Campbelltown, Walgett and Lismore

	Campbelltown	Walgett	Lismore
Domestic and family violence specialist services			
Women's refuge for women leaving violence	✓		✓
Staying Home Leaving Violence	20 women assisted in 2009–10	Funding approved Nil assistance	
Court support	2 services		✓
Non-specialist services			
Over 50 per cent of clients estimated to have domestic and family violence issues			
Women's refuge	✓	✓	✓
Brighter Futures Early Intervention	✓		✓
Long-term accommodation for people exiting refuges	✓		✓
Male counselling	✓		✓
Voluntary perpetrator programs			✓
Over 20 per cent of clients estimated to have domestic and family violence issues			
Women's and Aboriginal family health	✓	✓	✓
Drug and alcohol medium-term accommodation	✓		✓
Mental health medium-term accommodation	✓		✓
Family support services	✓	✓	✓
Counselling and referral	✓	✓	✓
Long-term social housing	✓	✓	✓

Source: Audit Office research 2011.

Appendix 6: About the audit

Audit objective

This performance audit assessed how well NSW Government organisations work with each other and with non-government organisations to respond to domestic and family violence.

Lines of inquiry

We sought to answer the following question: at a State and a local level organisations have domestic and family violence strategies and collectively do these create a coordinated response to reduce violence.

Audit scope

This audit examined how organisations responded to domestic and family violence. It focused on how organisations work together to:

- identify domestic and family violence
- assess the risk of domestic and family violence
- keep people safe and perpetrators accountable.

Audit criteria

In answering the lines of inquiry, we used the following audit criteria (the 'what should be') to judge performance. We based these standards on our research of current thinking and guidance on better practice. They have been discussed, and wherever possible, agreed with those we are auditing.

Specifically we assessed at a State level and local level whether:

- each government organisation knows how domestic and family violence affects its services, operations and clients
- each government organisation has a strategy for responding to domestic and family violence
- organisations have a shared understanding of their respective roles in dealing with domestic and family violence
- organisations work together to protect victims and children and hold perpetrators accountable
- organisations use service information to collaboratively plan further responses to domestic and family violence.

Audit exclusions

The audit did not include detailed evaluations of: the services provided by the different organisations; child protection issues including the *Keep Them Safe* reforms and the Child Wellbeing Units; and regional initiatives.

Audit approach

We acquired subject matter expertise by:

- interviewing staff from the Office for Women's Policy, NSW Police, FaCS, NSW Health, DAGJ and non-government organisations responsible for developing policy around domestic and family violence, and working with victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence in Lismore, Walgett and Campbelltown
- interviewing other stakeholders including the NSW Ombudsman, NSW Privacy Commissioner, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Department of Education and Communities, Chief Magistrate, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, Domestic Violence Clearing House, Women's Refuge Resource Centre, Domestic Violence Coalition and Walgett Aboriginal Medical Services

- visiting Victoria and interviewing the former Police Commissioner and staff from Victoria Justice, Victorian Police, Women's Health West and McAuley Community Services for Women
- reviewing policies, procedures, reviews and data relating to domestic and family violence.

Audit sample

To see what was happening at the local level we visited three communities: Lismore, Walgett and Campbelltown. These communities are not necessarily reflective of New South Wales as a whole and their rates of reported domestic and family violence are higher than the state average.

We chose the sites in consultation with government and community stakeholders to provide communities that face a range of challenges. Walgett is a remote town in western New South Wales with no regular air services and a large indigenous population. Campbelltown is large community on the outskirts of metropolitan Sydney that has a number of special domestic and family violence projects which promote integrated responses by government and non-government services. Lismore is a regional community in the hinterland of the north coast.

Audit selection

We use a strategic approach to selecting performance audits which balances our performance audit program to reflect issues of interest to the NSW Parliament and the community. Details of our approach to selecting topics and our forward program are available on our website.

Audit methodology

Our performance audit methodology is designed to satisfy Australian Audit Standards ASAE 3500 on performance auditing, and to reflect current thinking on performance auditing practices. We produce our audits under a quality management system certified to International Standard ISO 9001. Our processes have also been designed to comply with the auditing requirements specified in the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*.

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the cooperation and assistance provided by staff from the Office for Women's Policy, NSW Police Force, NSW Health, FaCS, DAGJ and the numerous stakeholders we spoke to.

Audit team

Our team for the performance audit was Michael Johnston and Gordon Eastwood. Giulia Vitetta and Rob Mathie provided direction and quality assurance.

Audit cost

Including staff costs, printing costs and overheads, the estimated cost of the audit is \$267,000.

Performance auditing

What are performance audits?

Performance audits determine whether an agency is carrying out its activities effectively, and doing so economically and efficiently and in compliance with all relevant laws.

The activities examined by a performance audit may include a government program, all or part of a government agency or consider particular issues which affect the whole public sector. They cannot question the merits of government policy objectives.

The Auditor-General's mandate to undertake performance audits is set out in the *Public Finance and Audit Act 1983*.

Why do we conduct performance audits?

Performance audits provide independent assurance to parliament and the public that government funds are being spent efficiently, economically or effectively and in accordance with the law.

Through their recommendations, performance audits seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government agencies so that the community receives value for money from government services.

Performance audits also focus on assisting accountability processes by holding managers to account for agency performance.

Performance audits are selected at the discretion of the Auditor-General who seeks input from parliamentarians, the public, agencies and Audit Office research.

What happens during the phases of a performance audit?

Performance audits have three key phases: planning, fieldwork and report writing. They can take up to nine months to complete, depending on the audit's scope.

During the planning phase the audit team develops an understanding of agency activities and defines the objective and scope of the audit.

The planning phase also identifies the audit criteria. These are standards of performance against which the agency or program activities are assessed. Criteria may be based on best practice, government targets, benchmarks or published guidelines.

At the completion of fieldwork the audit team meets with agency management to discuss all significant matters arising out of the audit. Following this, a draft performance audit report is prepared.

The audit team then meets with agency management to check that facts presented in the draft report are accurate and that recommendations are practical and appropriate.

A final report is then provided to the CEO for comment. The relevant minister and the Treasurer are also provided with a copy of the final report. The report tabled in Parliament includes a response from the CEO on the report's conclusion and recommendations. In multiple agency performance audits there may be responses from more than one agency or from a nominated coordinating agency.

Do we check to see if recommendations have been implemented?

Following the tabling of the report in parliament, agencies are requested to advise the Audit Office on action taken, or proposed, against each of the report's recommendations. It is usual for agency audit committees to monitor progress with the implementation of recommendations.

In addition, it is the practice of Parliament's Public Accounts Committee (PAC) to conduct reviews or hold inquiries into matters raised in performance audit reports. The reviews and inquiries are usually held 12 months after the report is tabled. These reports are available on the parliamentary website.

Who audits the auditors?

Our performance audits are subject to internal and external quality reviews against relevant Australian and international standards.

Internal quality control review of each audit ensures compliance with Australian assurance standards. Periodic review by other Audit Offices tests our activities against best practice. We are also subject to independent audits of our quality management system to maintain certification under ISO 9001.

The PAC is also responsible for overseeing the performance of the Audit Office and conducts a review of our operations every three years. The review's report is tabled in parliament and available on its website.

Who pays for performance audits?

No fee is charged for performance audits. Our performance audit services are funded by the NSW Parliament.

Further information and copies of reports

For further information, including copies of performance audit reports and a list of audits currently in-progress, please see our website www.audit.nsw.gov.au or contact us on 9275 7100.

Performance audit reports

No	Agency or Issues Examined	Title of performance Audit Report or Publication	Date Tabled in Parliament or Published
218	Department of Family and Community Services Department of Attorney General and Justice Ministry of Health NSW Police Force	<i>Responding to Domestic and Family Violence</i>	8 November 2011
217	Roads and Traffic Authority	<i>Improving Road Safety: Young Drivers</i>	19 October 2011
216	Department of Premier and Cabinet Department of Finance and Services	<i>Prequalification Scheme: Performance and Management Services</i>	25 September 2011
215	Roads and Traffic Authority	<i>Improving Road Safety: Speed Cameras</i>	27 July 2011
214	Barangaroo Delivery Authority Department of Transport NSW Treasury	<i>Government Expenditure and Transport Planning in relation to implementing Barangaroo</i>	15 June 2011
213	Aboriginal Affairs NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet	<i>Two Ways Together - NSW Aboriginal Affairs Plan</i>	18 May 2011
212	Office of Environment and Heritage WorkCover NSW	<i>Transport of Dangerous Goods</i>	10 May 2011
211	NSW Police Force NSW Health	<i>The Effectiveness of Cautioning for Minor Cannabis Offences</i>	7 April 2011
210	NSW Health	<i>Mental Health Workforce</i>	16 December 2010
209	Department of Premier and Cabinet	<i>Sick leave</i>	8 December 2010
208	Department of Industry and Investment	<i>Coal Mining Royalties</i>	30 November 2010
207	Whole of Government electronic information security	<i>Electronic Information Security</i>	20 October 2010
206	NSW Health NSW Ambulance Service	<i>Helicopter Emergency Medical Service Contract</i>	22 September 2010
205	Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water	<i>Protecting the Environment: Pollution Incidents</i>	15 September 2010
204	Corrective Services NSW	<i>Home Detention</i>	8 September 2010
203	Australian Museum	<i>Knowing the Collections</i>	1 September 2010
202	Industry & Investment NSW Homebush Motor Racing Authority Events NSW	<i>Government Investment in V8 Supercar Races at Sydney Olympic Park</i>	23 June 2010
201	Department of Premier and Cabinet	<i>Severance Payments to Special Temporary Employees</i>	16 June 2010
200	Department of Human Services - Ageing, Disability and Home Care	<i>Access to Overnight Centre-Based Disability Respite</i>	5 May 2010
199	Department of Premier and Cabinet NSW Treasury WorkCover NSW	<i>Injury Management in the NSW Public Sector</i>	31 March 2010
198	NSW Transport and Infrastructure	<i>Improving the performance of Metropolitan Bus Services</i>	10 March 2010
197	Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW	<i>Improving Road Safety: School Zones</i>	25 February 2010
196	NSW Commission for Children and Young People	<i>Working with Children Check</i>	24 February 2010

No	Agency or Issues Examined	Title of performance Audit Report or Publication	Date Tabled in Parliament or Published
195	NSW Police Force NSW Department of Health	<i>Managing Forensic Analysis – Fingerprints and DNA</i>	10 February 2010
194	Department of Premier and Cabinet Department of Services, Technology and Administration NSW Treasury	<i>Government Advertising</i>	10 December 2009
193	Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW	<i>Handback of the M4 Tollway</i>	27 October 2009
192	Department of Services, Technology and Administration	<i>Government Licensing Project</i>	7 October 2009
191	Land and Property Management Authority Maritime Authority of NSW	<i>Administering Domestic Waterfront Tenancies</i>	23 September 2009
190	Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW Environmental Trust	<i>Environmental Grants Administration</i>	26 August 2009
189	NSW Attorney General's Department NSW Department of Health NSW Police Force	<i>Helping Aboriginal Defendants through MERIT</i>	5 August 2009
187	Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW	<i>Improving Road Safety – Heavy Vehicles</i>	13 May 2009
186	Grants	<i>Grants Administration</i>	6 May 2009
185	Forests NSW	<i>Sustaining Native Forest Operations</i>	29 April 2009
184	NSW Police Force	<i>Managing Injured Police</i>	10 December 2008
183	Department of Education and Training	<i>Improving Literacy and Numeracy in NSW Public Schools</i>	22 October 2008
182	Department of Health	<i>Delivering Health Care out of Hospitals</i>	24 September 2008

Performance audits on our website

A list of performance audits tabled or published since March 1997, as well as those currently in progress, can be found on our website www.audit.nsw.gov.au.

Our vision

To make the people of New South Wales
proud of the work we do.

Our mission

To perform high quality independent audits
of government in New South Wales.

Our values

Purpose – we have an impact, are
accountable, and work as a team.

People – we trust and respect others
and have a balanced approach to work.

Professionalism – we are recognised
for our independence and integrity
and the value we deliver.

Professional people with purpose

Making the people of New South Wales
proud of the work we do.

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