

Staying Home

Leaving Violence

*Promoting choices
for women leaving
abusive partners*

Robyn Edwards 2004

Staying Home

Leaving Violence

*Promoting choices
for women leaving
abusive partners*

Acknowledgments

The Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse would like to gratefully acknowledge:

The twenty-nine women who were interviewed for the study, for sharing their stories, knowledge and insights.

The fourteen community based services who nominated women for interviews and participated in the research: The Deli Women & Children's Centre, Backstop Family Support Service, Sutherland Family Support Service, Bondi Beach Cottage, Dolores Women's Refuge, Killara Women's Refuge, Western Sydney Sole Women's Accommodation Outreach Service, Immigrant Women's Speakout, Westmead Hospital Sexual Assault Service, Cumberland Women's Health Service, Bega Women's Refuge, Bega Women's Resource Centre, Far South Coast Family Support Service and the Southern Women's Housing Company.

The members of the Research Steering Committee: Lesley Laing, Jane Mulroney, Nancy Smythe, Allan Raisin, Silvia Piazza, Dace Abolins, Tracey Hales, Carole Ruthchild, Joy Goodsell, Rugmini Venkatraman, Karen Walsh, Behiye Murat, Cat Gander and Elena Katrakis.

Researchers and advisors from the Centre for Gender-Related Violence Studies, UNSW School of Social Work, Dr Jan Breckenridge and Dr Eileen Baldry.

Marta Ponti for her insightful and powerful cartoons which have brought women's stories to life.

The ***Staying Home Leaving Violence*** Research Officer, and author of this report, Robyn Edwards.

Design: Anthouse (anthouse@acay.com.au)

Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse
University of New South Wales
Sydney NSW 2052
Ph: (02) 9385 2990
Fax: 02) 9385 2993
Email: clearinghouse@unsw.edu.au
Website: www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au

Suggested citation:

Edwards, R., 2004, *Staying Home Leaving Violence: Promoting Choices for Women Leaving Abusive Partners*, Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, Sydney.

ISBN 0-9581536-4-7



The Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse is funded by Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, a Commonwealth Government initiative.

| | | |
|----|---|----|
| 1 | Executive summary | 4 |
| 2 | Introduction | 8 |
| 3 | Aims of the research | 9 |
| 4 | Background information | 10 |
| 5 | Methodology | 13 |
| 6 | Description of women in the study | 16 |
| | > Demographic data..... | 16 |
| | > Description of the violence | 18 |
| 7 | Research findings..... | 25 |
| | > The women who claimed their home..... | 25 |
| | > The women who left their home..... | 38 |
| 8 | Conclusions..... | 52 |
| 9 | Recommendations..... | 56 |
| 10 | References..... | 60 |



STAYING HOME LEAVING VIOLENCE is the report of a research study conducted by the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, in partnership with the UNSW Centre for Gender-Related Violence. Funding for the study was provided by the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS), through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP).

The aim of the research is to explore how women leaving a domestic violence relationship could remain safely in their own homes with their children, with the violent partner being removed. This is the first study of its kind in NSW, and contributes to the growing national interest in this area of public policy.

The research is based firmly on the principle of providing choices for women. It does not promote the pathway of women remaining in their own homes on leaving a domestic violence relationship as the only option for women to be free from domestic violence, especially if it is unsafe to do so. The study acknowledges that there are some women who do want to stay safely in their own homes with their children. The aim of this study is to identify how this may occur.

The study was conducted over a 15-month period from October 2002 to December 2003. Twenty-nine women from South East Sydney, Western Sydney and the Far South Coast of New South Wales participated in face-to-face 'in depth' interviews. All the women had left a relationship involving domestic violence. Fourteen of the women were from Anglo-Australian backgrounds, nine from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, five women were Aboriginal, and one woman was Maori. Twenty-seven of the women had a total of seventy-eight children between them.

On leaving a domestic violence relationship, of the total twenty-nine women, nine remained in their home and twenty left their home.

Women who remained in their home

Three factors were identified as being critical in enabling the nine women to remain in their homes:

- > The women had a strong attachment to their homes and felt they had a right to remain in the home;
- > The violent partner was removed by the authorities (police and/or courts), or went voluntarily because he had other housing options; and,
- > While the women had concerns for their safety, they were not overwhelmed by fear, and had developed a range of safety measures to help them feel safer at home.

An additional fourth factor, related to the characteristics of the perpetrator, was critical in some, but not all, of the nine cases. The perpetrator was intimidated by the police and courts and/or felt a duty to abide by legal rulings.

The nine women adopted a number of safety strategies, summarised as follows:

- > Taking out Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs), including those with exclusion conditions;
- > Making the house more secure, by changing the locks and installing security doors;
- > Making changes to the house to counter the memories of violence;
- > Use of technologies such as phone tracers and mobile phones;

- > Contacting the police for advice; and,
- > Reporting breaches of Apprehended Violence Orders.
- > Ensuring contact arrangements with children included the partner visiting his children at a location away from the home.

An important finding of the research is that none of the women who remained in their home reported an incident where her ex-partner had returned to her home and was physically violent to her. This is significant because the potential for further violence is often given as the main reason for the woman leaving the home. However, in a number of cases the ex-partner did make unwelcome visits to the woman's home, for the stated purpose of visiting their children. Safety protocols are needed, whereby the man has visitation rights at a location away from the woman's home.

Remaining in their home brought considerable benefits to the women and her children including:

- > Stability of accommodation;
- > Stability and security for the children;
- > Women are able to continue on with their lives, with less disruption;
- > A sense that justice has prevailed – the innocent party has been able to remain in her home and the violent party has had to leave; and,
- > A possible shift in the power relations between the victim and perpetrator, where the woman is empowered by reclaiming her own home.

Enabling women and children to remain in their home also brings a number of wider social and economic benefits to the whole community, such as reducing women's homelessness, keeping children out of the child protection system, and placing accountability for the violence with the perpetrator. Seen from this perspective, supporting women and their children to remain in their homes is a cost effective strategy.

Women who left their home

Most of the twenty women who left their homes did so because they considered it was their only option. Many said that they would have preferred to remain, if this had been possible. Their responses to the research question, 'What would have made it possible to remain safely in your own home?' are summarised as follows:

Remove the man from the home

For example, where the legal provisions allow, police removal of the offender following an incident of domestic violence;

Keep the man out of the home over time

For example, by means of an AVO with an exclusion order condition;

Only if my home was safe

Safety strategies included installing security doors and an alarm system, use of panic alarms and a phone tracer, reporting AVO breaches to the police, bail and reporting conditions being placed on the offender, court exclusion of the offender not only from the woman's home but from the whole town;

Charging the violent offender with assault or an AVO breach

This not only underscores the criminality of domestic violence, but also may be one of the most effective ways of removing the violent partner from the home;

Improved police and court responses

For example, responses to breaches of AVOs;

Housing for perpetrators

Providing alternative housing for the perpetrator may be one of the more effective strategies to enable a woman and her children to remain in their own home; and,

Removing blame and shame for the violence from the woman

Holding the perpetrator accountable for the violence, by ensuring that he, not the woman, bears the consequences and leaves the home. The research raises the question: Do men who use violence in the home against their partner and children forfeit the right to live in their home?

Many of the twenty women who fled their homes did so in order to be safe. But the research findings indicate that women were not always safe after they left their homes. Moreover the research demonstrates all too clearly that there can be no guarantees against further violence, whether the woman remains in her home or leaves it. Therefore, service delivery responses must be maximised regardless of her choice, but it is proposed that women should have the choice to stay in their home if safe to do so.

Women's longer-term safety needs should also be considered, as many of the twenty women who left their homes, suffered housing and financial disadvantage. Nearly half found that their housing situation had deteriorated, in relation to security of tenure and quality of housing. The women's socio-economic status was in all cases pushed significantly downwards, as a result of the violent relationship and leaving their homes. The women lost many of their material possessions; some lost all they owned.

In addition, tremendous social and emotional costs to the woman and her children are apparent in these circumstances. Three of the nine CALD women lost their children while other children experienced significant disruption. The women were blamed for leaving the home, and often internalised the blame. These effects impede recovery processes and also raise the risk of women returning to the violent relationship.

A small but significant number of women who left were positive about leaving their home behind, and said in strong terms that this is what they wanted to do. They had clear and articulate reasons for leaving their homes, including seeking a safe refuge, leaving memories of abuse and establishing their independence.

The women in the study who were especially disadvantaged were the five Aboriginal women and two CALD new arrivals. None of these women were able to remain in their homes. Some of the Aboriginal women did not have a home, in the white Australian sense of that word as they were living with relatives or living a transient lifestyle. The idea of being able to remain in their home was not only unattainable, but had little meaning for these women.

The two CALD new arrivals were similarly disadvantaged. They were thrown out of their homes by violent and abusive men, and found themselves wandering the streets of a strange city, homeless. They had no knowledge of their rights (however limited these may be), no permanent residency, no money, no family and no knowledge of any services in Sydney which could assist them. In many ways the two women had no home, and no country.

This report highlights the consequences for women and children forced to leave their homes because of violence. The wider losses to society include the significant social and economic costs of women's homelessness, the costs involved in re-establishing new housing and the disruption to the lives of many children. There is also the longer-term social consequence of not holding the offender accountable for using violence. This accountability is the first step in a strategy to prevent violence against women.

The research indicates that one of the critical factors surrounding a woman leaving

her home is her partner's attitude and behaviour towards the law. Many of the twenty women spoke about how their partners did not respect the police or the courts. Some of the perpetrators disregarded Apprehended Violence Orders and were not scared of going to gaol.

The research also showed that some of the perpetrators had a multitude of addictions. Of the ex-partners of the twenty women who left their homes, only four did not have drug, alcohol and/or gambling problems. At the same time, only three were working and were the 'breadwinner'.

Framework, change and choice

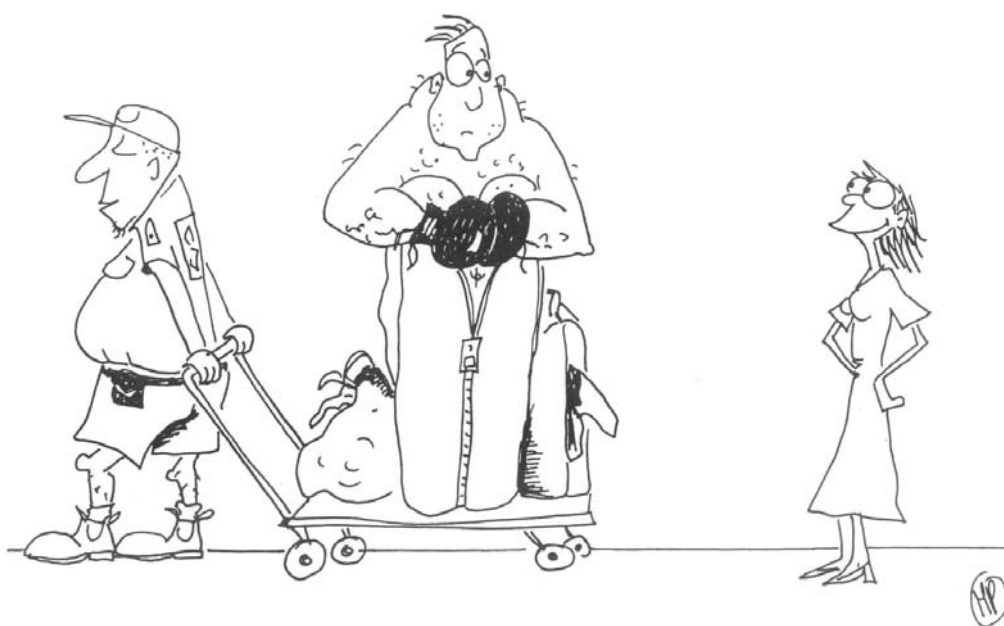
The research findings support the adoption of a framework that enables women and their children to remain safely in their homes on leaving a domestic violence relationship. The four key elements of the framework are:

- > Removal of the violent partner from the home;
- > Keeping the violent partner out of the home over time;
- > Provision of immediate and longer term safety for the woman and her children;
- > Longer term support for the woman and children, and prevention of further violence.

Service pilots based on an outreach and advocacy model are recommended in each of the three research locations, South East Sydney, Western Sydney and the Far South Coast, in order to put the framework into practice.

Systemic change is recommended in key NSW government agencies with the aim of promoting a whole of government policy and practice framework, which seeks to remove the violent and abusive partner from the home, and enables and supports women who are experiencing violence and abuse to maintain their housing.

The framework, pilots and systems change are all predicated on the principle that the resulting systemic responses will enhance women and children's safety and improve choices for women, including the choice to leave or remain in one's home.



Take him away officer, there's no room in my home for violence.

2 Introduction

THIS REPORT SPEAKS to issues of justice, the prevention of women's homelessness and improving choices and outcomes for women when they leave a relationship involving domestic violence.

Leaving a domestic violence relationship has often meant women and children leaving their own homes to escape violence. For some women, the act of escaping the violence precipitates homelessness and poverty. Women are rarely presented with any choices; leaving violence was synonymous with leaving home. Domestic violence is the main reason given by single women over 25 years, and women with children, for using the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services (AIHW 2003, 23).

The report is based on the principle of providing choices to women when they are leaving domestic violence, including the choice of remaining in their own home.



This report outlines the findings of primary and original research, ***Staying Home Leaving Violence***, a study conducted by the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, in partnership with the UNSW Centre for Gender-Related Violence. It is also intended as a document to encourage wider discussion about the issues and barriers that prevent women and their children from being able to stay in their own homes when ending a violent relationship. The report gives priority to the voices of women and their perspec-

tives about their experiences in leaving violence.

Staying Home Leaving Violence examines the decision-making process of leaving a domestic violence situation. The study is based on women's own experiences when they left the violence and identifies actions which facilitate women staying in their own home.

The study's findings provide us with a framework that places the accountability and consequences for the violence with the perpetrator, through removal of the violent party from the home. The framework addresses the immediate and longer-term safety needs of women and their children, along with the prevention of further violence.

The research findings build on earlier research that supports a new policy direction aimed at enabling women and children leaving domestic violence to retain their housing, social and economic well being, and physical safety.

The study, conducted in NSW over a 15-month period from October 2002 – December 2003, was made possible with a grant provided by the NSW Department of Community Services, through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP).

3 Aims of the research

THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH was to explore the question of how women leaving a domestic violence relationship could remain safely in their own homes with their children, with the violent partner being removed.

This is the first study in NSW that asks women who have left a domestic violence relationship how they view the subject of the research: *remaining safely with their children in their own homes, and removing the violent partner.*

The study contributes to an emerging area of public policy interest in Australia, which focuses on enabling women to remain in their homes when leaving a relationship involving domestic violence. It complements the recent national *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* (PADV) studies, which similarly focus on this area of interest (HOI 2004, 2002).

The research is based firmly on the principle of providing choices for women. It does not promote the choice of women remaining in their own homes as being the right or only option. This choice can only be decided by women themselves in their endeavours to pursue options that enhance their safety. Importantly, this research acknowledges that there are some women who do want to remain safely in their own homes, with their children, on leaving a domestic violence relationship. The research aims to identify how this may be able to occur.



Why should I leave with my kids, and let him stay, when he's committed the crime? I'm the victim, it would be a lot easier for him to go.

4 Background information

Policy setting

It is important to consider current government policies and directions in women's homelessness and violence against women, to locate the research within a wider policy context.

Eight current policy directions have been identified as being relevant to the research:

- > The national Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) policy emphasises a greater diversity of models, services and pathways for women at risk of homelessness who are leaving a domestic violence relationship.
- > NSW Police Service Standing Operating Procedures for domestic violence highlights the importance of detection, investigation and prevention of domestic violence, along with a proactive approach to charging and prosecution of domestic violence matters.
- > The NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women promotes a whole-of-government response to violence against women, through raising awareness and understanding, implementing prevention strategies and improving women's access to services.
- > NSW Health policy details prevention, risk identification and early intervention, including routine screening for domestic violence in targeted health services as critical to responding effectively to women experiencing domestic violence.
- > The NSW Partnership Against Homelessness (PAH) encourages the development of innovative project initiatives that respond to the causes of homelessness and provide assistance to homeless people or people at risk of falling homeless.
- > The Aboriginal Family Health Strategy emphasises a holistic approach to family violence that encompasses cultural well being, physical, emotional, spiritual, social and economic health and seeks to develop community-controlled and culturally-specific solutions, based on the right to self-determination and working partnerships.
- > The Community Solutions and Crime Prevention Strategy in NSW prioritises early intervention, interagency collaboration and integrated case management of families affected by domestic violence as strategies to prevent further violence.
- > The Australian Government *Partnerships Against Domestic Violence* (PADV) funding initiative has sought to identify effective policy and practice in the areas of community education, working with perpetrators, Indigenous family violence and children and young people at risk.

Emerging practice directions

It is important to understand and acknowledge the pivotal role (past, present and future) of women's refuges in shaping societal responses to domestic violence. 1974 saw the establishment of the first women's refuge in NSW, Elsie Refuge in the inner Sydney suburb of Glebe, marking the beginning of the NSW Women's Refuge Movement. Thirty years on, in 2004, there are 55 women's refuges in NSW funded under the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP). In 2002 a total of 7,900 women escaping domestic violence were housed by SAAP services in NSW (AIHW 2003, p.18).

Historically women's refuges focused on the provision of crisis support and safe accommodation for women and children escaping domestic violence. Over recent years women's refuges have embraced innovation and diversification, as demonstrated by IMPACT 21, a project of the NSW Women's Refuge and Resource Centre (WRRRC), 2003. The aim of IMPACT 21 (Innovative Models Promoting Advanced Concepts Through the 21st Century) was to identify, document and promote the range of strategies and models of service provision in women's refuges. An emerging trend in refuge service development is the establishment of outreach services attached to the refuge. As stated in the project's report, 'Seventy per cent of NSW women's refuges run an outreach service for women and children not accessing the refuge' (Smyth 2003, p. 32).

Outreach services are also examined in the 2003-04 WESNET research, 'Examining Progress in Accommodation, outreach and support for women experiencing and escaping violence'. The research has identified a diversification of models within the women's refuge movement, and argues that refuges are no longer 'just a house' but rather 'complex, well-organised service delivery systems' (Weeks 2003, p. 12).

Relevant research and literature

Very little has been written on the issue of women and their children remaining in their own homes, when they leave a domestic violence relationship. However, increasingly, the issue is being identified as an important and emerging policy area, for consideration by government agencies and service providers. As a result, over the last three years, some important research reports on the issue have been completed. They include:

- > The PADV *Home Safe Home* (2000), *Improving Women's Safety: Literature Review* (2002) and *Improving Women's Safety report* (2004).
While the *Home Safe Home* study provided a broad ranging review of issues relating to women remaining in their own homes, the *Improving Women's Safety* study moved on to develop broad service models. Importantly, it proposed that in domestic violence relationships, there should be a presumption of removing the violent partner from the home.
- > *Family Violence and Homelessness, Removing the Perpetrator from the Home*, Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre (DVIRC), Melbourne 2002.
The report identifies five strategies which may assist women to remain in their own homes, namely, improving police responses to breaches of Apprehended Violence Orders, court-based advocacy services, accommodating perpetrators, domestic violence courts and law reform.
- > *Violence Excluded, a study of exclusion orders in South East Sydney*, NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women, 2003.
The study analysed AVO matters involving exclusion order conditions coming before two large Sydney metropolitan local courts. It recommended that the safety needs of women and children be given primary attention, over and above the accommodation needs of the male defendant, when considering an application for an exclusion order.

This study, ***Staying Home Leaving Violence***, has been informed by the results of these recent studies.

Barriers to leaving domestic violence

Staying Home Leaving Violence is based on interviews with women who have left a domestic violence relationship. In order to understand how difficult it may be for the woman and her children to remain in her own home (with the violent partner leaving), it is critical to understand and appreciate the many barriers which a woman faces in leaving a relationship involving domestic violence.

Here, the study draws on barriers to leaving violence identified in previous research, in particular; 'Against the Odds: How Women Survive Domestic Violence: the Needs of Women Experiencing Domestic Violence who do not use Domestic Violence and Crisis Related Services' (Keys Young, 1998) and 'Pathways: how women leave violent men' (Patton, 2003). Both reports highlighted the significant barriers experienced by women and are summarised as follows:

- > Women's fear for their safety, including fear of being killed, if they leave the relationship.
- > Women's beliefs and feelings, including shame, denial, disbelief, emotional bonds to the partner, commitment to the marriage, waiting for change to occur.
- > Structural barriers, including lack of access to an adequate income, affordable housing, legal rights and information on support services.
- > Ineffective responses from informal and formal supports, including a judgemental response, blaming the woman and normalisation of violence.

Many women leave the relationship, and then return, several times before leaving for good. This is, in some ways, the nature and dynamics of domestic violence. It is also reflective of the woman's hope that the violence will stop and the relationship will improve. Women learn from their early attempts at leaving the violence. These first attempts will often assist their resolve to finally leave.

Use of language

Our use of language around women leaving a domestic violence situation often constrains us to assume that a woman will leave her home, in order to leave the violence. 'Why doesn't she just leave?' is a common question asked of women in domestic violence situations. It conjures up a picture of women fleeing their homes. Similarly, women's 'escape plans' promoted by refuges and other services assumes a woman is leaving her home.

This study challenges the assumption that leaving a violent relationship means the woman also needs to leave her home. Hence the study's name: **Staying Home Leaving Violence**.

Domestic violence as gendered violence

Most studies indicate that around 90-95% of victims of domestic violence are women, and the perpetrators are their male partners or ex-partners (NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 1991). While it is recognised that a small number of victims of domestic violence are men, and a small number are men or women in gay relationships, this study focuses on women as the victims, within an intimate heterosexual relationship.

THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY was developed by the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, in consultation with researchers in the UNSW School of Social Work and Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies. The Research Steering Committee, established to oversee the research process, provided advice and guidance on the methodology over the course of the study. Approval to conduct the research was sought and given by the University of New South Wales (UNSW) Ethics Committee.

Qualitative research

Staying Home Leaving Violence used a qualitative research method, based on ‘in-depth’ interviews with women who have left a domestic violence relationship. Qualitative research was chosen as the method best able to give prominence to the voices and experiences of the women themselves, and to facilitate exploration of the research questions.

The women were nominated for interviews by key community based services, which work with victims of domestic violence, including women’s refuges, family support services and women’s resource centres. A total of fourteen services nominated twenty-nine women for interviews.

There were two criteria for interview participants: First, that the woman had left a relationship involving domestic violence; and second, that she was a genuine volunteer and gave her consent to being part of the research.

The geographic areas in NSW chosen for inclusion in the study were South East Sydney, Western Sydney and the Far South Coast. Both South East Sydney and the Far South Coast had expressed an interest in the research, and had conducted some work locally on the issue of women remaining in their homes. Western Sydney was chosen because of its ethnic diversity, which would assist the research to be inclusive of women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Information relating to the research was sent to select community services from these regions, seeking their cooperation and nomination of interviewees. Services were aware that the research was exploring how women may be able to remain safely in their own homes, and took this into account when they chose women for the study. Where possible, services nominated women who had remained in their home.

The research design aimed to minimise any risks to the women’s safety arising from her participation in the research. This was achieved by: only interviewing women who had left their partner (who may have been hostile to her involvement in the research), not conducting follow-up interviews as the woman may have returned to her partner, and in most cases interviewing the woman at the community organisation which nominated her and with which she was connected. Interviewing the woman at the community centre rather than her home was also a safety precaution for the researcher.

Pilot for study

The first round of interviews with four women began in South East Sydney in November 2002, and served as the pilot for the study. Interviews ran for approximately one-and-a-half hours, and were taped. The schedule of questions covered the following subject areas: women’s experiences of domestic violence, how she left the violence, issues relating to her children, strategies for remaining safely in her own home, removal of the perpetrator, issues relating to her housing, the use of services and women’s hopes for the future. The questions were used as a guide only.

Interviews were semi-structured and consisted of allowing the woman to tell her own story of how she left the violence, at her own pace.

The researcher was a woman who had previously worked with women victims of domestic violence. She had a commitment to ensuring that the interview with each woman was not only useful for the research, but also empowering and positive for the woman. Her understanding of the dynamics and effects of domestic violence on women brought an appreciation of the women's stories of struggle and survival. It also brought recognition of the difficulties and emotions involved for the woman in retelling her story one more time. The researcher interviewed each of the 29 women in the study, providing consistency and cohesiveness to the research.

The researcher's former position as Regional Violence Prevention Specialist in South East Sydney served to facilitate the research in that area. The equivalent Regional Violence Prevention Specialists in Western Sydney and Southern NSW assisted in identifying local services willing and able to nominate women for interviews.

Criteria for interviewees

Apart from the essential criterion that the woman had left a domestic violence relationship, the researcher allowed the service to decide which woman/women to nominate for an interview. This was generally an effective strategy as too many criteria may have been a deterrent for services to nominate women. Services were cognisant of the aims of the research, and were able to nominate women who had remained in their own homes, or women who would have liked to remain, had this been possible.

There was a considerable variation in relation to length of time that had passed since the woman left the violent relationship. Women nominated by refuges had recently left a domestic violence relationship, anything from four to twelve weeks ago. A number of services preferred to nominate women who were past the crisis stage, and had left the violence one or two years ago. There was a small group of women (four out of twenty-nine) who had left the violence a long time ago (8-20 years).

It was decided that the benefits of interviewing the four women outweighed any disadvantages relating to lapse of time. These benefits included hindsight the women brought to their experiences of domestic violence, their ability to discuss the long term effects of violence and views about the research question, namely remaining in one's home or leaving it. The women all had good recollection of the events surrounding their leaving the violence. To the researcher's comment regarding one woman's excellent memory of events twenty years earlier, she replied, *'you always remember the big events in your life'*.

Aboriginal communities

While the research had a commitment to be open to include Aboriginal women, and to scope some of the issues relating to Aboriginal communities and the research questions, it was recognised that this small piece of research was unable to do justice to the range and complexity of Aboriginal women's concerns. The Steering Committee resolved that an additional piece of research, focusing on Aboriginal women remaining in their own homes and/or communities, and conducted by an Aboriginal women's organisation, is required to complement this study.

Cultural and linguistic diversity

The first round of interview participants from South East Sydney and the Far South Coast were primarily women from Anglo-Australian backgrounds. Consequently an invitation was made to a number of selected services in Western Sydney to nominate

women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The Far South Coast offered to nominate women from Aboriginal backgrounds in their second round of interviews. In this way, the sample of women was able to reflect the diversity of women living in that region.

Feedback to women and services

Feedback to services was provided at the halfway mark, with the production of an interim report detailing emerging research findings. Some services provided feedback on the report, and passed it on to the women nominated for interviews. The interim report was also presented at the National Homelessness Conference held in Brisbane, April 2003.

Additional feedback in the form of a short report was provided to services and other interested parties, following the completion of the twenty-nine interviews in September 2003. The researcher used this short report as a 'taster', which she presented at local forums and seminars, to provide feedback on the research findings. Meetings were held in each of the research locations to consult on the final report and recommendations.

Taping of interviews

The interview tapes were transcribed by a secretarial service, and checked by the researcher. While the intention was to tape each of the interviews, in four cases this was not possible, either because the women did not consent to being taped, or for practical reasons. Directly following these interviews, the researcher made notes of each interview, marking down the key milestones in the women's story, and her responses relating to the research question.

Analysis of interviews

The major task of the research, after interviews were conducted and tapes transcribed was detailed analysis of each of the interview transcripts. Demographic data were identified, along with key themes and issues relating to women leaving the violence and their perspectives on remaining in their own homes.

In order to focus clearly on the research question of critical factors which enable, or prevent, a woman remaining in her home, two groups of women and data were isolated. The first group was women who were able to remain in their own homes on leaving a domestic violence relationship, and the second group was women who left their homes. By dividing the women in this way, it became possible to identify the critical factors working to enable a woman to remain in her own home, and those factors which meant the woman left her home.

While it was outside the scope and ethics approval of the research to interview the many children affected by the violence, children's voices have been included through the stories of the women. Women spoke at length of how their children had been affected by the violence.

All women interviewed were given a small gift voucher, as a gesture of thanks, and in recognition of the woman's time and her contribution to the research. Women were encouraged to talk with the service worker/s she was connected with, if she needed to debrief after the interview. Each woman was given the researcher's business card and invited to make contact if she had any issues, concerns or questions about the interview or the wider research. Women were also given the Clearinghouse web address, which posted feedback about the research findings.

6 Description of women in the study

THIS SECTION PROVIDES A DESCRIPTION of the twenty-nine women who participated in the study. The women exhibited a very broad range of characteristics, in terms of their ethnicity, age, employment, housing tenure and legal protection. Perhaps the only common factor was that they had all left a domestic violence relationship. This diversity has served to make the research inclusive, and has allowed a wide range of factors to be uncovered and explored in the research process.

Demographic data

A total of twenty-nine women were interviewed.

Ethnicity

- > fourteen women were from Anglo-Australian backgrounds;
- > nine were from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds;
- > five were Aboriginal women; and,
- > one woman was Maori.

The nine CALD women came from the following backgrounds: Filipino, Indian, Israeli, Lebanese, Malay, Russian, Tongan, South American and Sri Lankan.

Three of the CALD women did not have permanent residency at the time they left the violent relationship. Two of these women had since gained permanency through the domestic violence provisions; the other woman was on a temporary visa.

Women's ages

There was a spread of ages, with the youngest being in their early twenties and the oldest in their early sixties. The majority of women, 19, were in their twenties or thirties, while the remaining ten women were aged from forty to sixty years. Three women were in their early sixties at the time of interview.

Geographic location

The women were living in the following areas of NSW:

- > thirteen from South East Sydney (eastern suburbs, inner city, St George and Sutherland Shire);
- > six from Western Sydney (Parramatta to Mt Druitt); and,
- > ten from the Far South Coast of NSW.

Children

Twenty-seven of the women had children, ranging in ages from a newborn baby to adults. While a small number of women had one child, other women had four children or more. The twenty-seven women had a total of seventy-eight children between them. Only two women in the study did not have children.

Employment

At the time of interview, 10 women were in paid employment, either part-time or full-time. The remaining women were in receipt of a Centrelink pension, benefit or allowance. A number of women were actively looking for work, and/or had worked in the past.

Socio-economic status

It is difficult to ascribe a socio-economic status to the women in the study. This is because generally the women's status has been pushed significantly downwards by the effects of long-term violence and leaving a violent relationship, which for the majority meant leaving their housing.

Housing and employment status deteriorated markedly on leaving the violent relationship. For example, the educated Malay professional was living in a women's refuge, the university-educated Sri Lankan was living in substandard housing with a part-time retail job, and the woman with a printing trade had to take leave from her job, after she left a comfortable, middle-class home in exchange for Department of Housing (DOH) accommodation.

At the time of interview, most women could be described as being of low socio-economic status. The majority of the women were in receipt of a Centrelink pension, benefit or allowance, though many of the women combined this with part-time work, TAFE studies and seeking employment.

The women's often-disadvantaged socio-economic status is also reflective of the women who access community organisations, which nominated women for interviews.

Housing tenure

Before leaving the violent relationship, the woman's housing situation with her partner was as follows:

- > seven women were living in a home they jointly owned or were buying;
- > six were in DOH accommodation;
- > twelve were in private rental accommodation;
- > one woman was in her mother's home;
- > one lived in a room above a hotel;
- > one lived on a farm, and,
- > one lived in her mother-in-law's home.

After the woman left her violent partner, her housing situation at the time of the interview was as follows:

- > seven women were living in a refuge;
- > four women were living in a home they owned or were buying;
- > six were in DOH accommodation;
- > six were in private rental accommodation;
- > three were in Community Tenancy Scheme (CTS) accommodation;
- > one lived in her mother's home;
- > one lived in informal share housing; and,
- > one lived in her mother-in-law's home.

Length of relationship

The majority of women, 20 of the 29, had long-term relationships with their violent partner (longer than five years). It was not uncommon for a woman to be married for more than twenty years before deciding to leave the violent relationship. The younger women in their mid-twenties had often been with their partners longer than five years.

Involvement with the criminal justice system

Women had varying contact with the criminal justice system, from none at all through to a combination of police involvement, AVO with an exclusion condition, charge and custodial sentence for the perpetrator. The following provides a breakdown for the 29 women at the time of interview:

- > 20 women had some level of police involvement;
- > fourteen women had an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) or the equivalent DVO from Queensland;
- > four women had an exclusion order, as a condition of the AVO;
- > five cases involved a charge of assault being laid;
- > two cases involved a charge of AVO breach; and,
- > two cases involved a custodial sentence for the perpetrator.

There were seven cases where the women had no legal protection, or contact with the criminal justice system.

Description of the violence

THE EXPERIENCES OF THE TWENTY-NINE WOMEN demonstrates that violence against women, perpetrated by male partners, comes in many forms. The types of violence ranged from physical, sexual, psychological, stalking, verbal and social isolation. Many of the women experienced more than one form of violence, though often one form appeared more dominant and presented as the main method by which the perpetrator exercised control over the woman. The majority of women spoke about the potential lethality of the violence, believing that their partner was capable of killing them. In some cases, the woman believed her partner was also capable of killing her children.

Rather than providing the standard definition of domestic violence, encompassing its different types, women's own descriptions of the violence they experienced are presented here for the reader. These descriptions offer an important context to the study. They provide information about how the women themselves perceived the violence. They also underline the gendered nature of domestic violence, issues of power and control, and the manipulation of a range of abusive behaviours by the man to perpetrate violence against his female partner.

To protect confidentiality and the woman's safety, all names have been changed and identifying features removed. Minor edits of quotes have been made for ease of reading; however the words and meanings have not been changed.

Physical violence

Aroha is a Maori woman in her early twenties, with two young children.

She had been with her partner for seven years, living in poor-quality and transient private rental housing. She recounted two violent incidents, which were a turning

point in her decision to leave the relationship. In the first incident the violence occurred in public, at a railway station, witnessed by their children. In her own words:

'We went to (the beach) for a day out and I saw two people that I met at the TAFE enrolment who happened to be males and I was talking to them at the beach and (partner) got very upset and when we got to the train station he was kicking me in front of my children and I just looked at him and I said to him why are you kicking me and then my kids were crying and he said cause you're a slut and I said to him I'm not a slut I said I am the mother of these two children you shouldn't treat me like that.'

The second incident occurred in their home. This time Aroha rang the police on her mobile: *'I called the police, he had a knife and he had beaten me up, he had thrown water on me, he had pissed on me...my kids were hiding under the TV unit.'*

Remarkably, the woman said her biggest fear was not her partner's physical violence, or even the effects of violence on her children. Her biggest fear was not being believed by the police.

'My biggest fear was that they wouldn't believe what had happened, that they were not going to believe me, and they said can you come into the room and so I went into the room with the kids and I was crying and I said please I am not lying I am telling the truth that's all I was scared about...'

The police did believe her; they removed her partner, charged him and placed him in custody.

'My biggest fear was that they (the police) wouldn't believe what had happened'

Aroha

Sexual violence

Several of the women spoke about incidents of sexual violence, underlining the connection and dynamic between domestic violence and sexual assault.

Leila is a young Lebanese woman living in western Sydney, a mother of three children.

Her husband sexually assaulted her. The assault devastated her, and was the turning point for leaving her husband who had been physically violent to her over the course of their eight-year marriage.

The sexual assault demonstrated to the woman the man's potentially lethal violence. In her own words, *'if he's capable of doing sexual assault, to be able to force your own wife, mother of three, what else are you capable of doing... so he is capable of killing me'*.

Social isolation

Leah is an Israeli woman in her early 40s, with two children, living in Sydney's eastern suburbs. She was married to a chronic gambler. While her husband had hit her in the past, he was concerned she would report him to the police if he used physical violence. He turned to a cocktail of psychological abuse and social isolation to exert power over her, and gain her consent to go deeper into debt to feed his gambling addiction.

This was how she described the social isolation:

'Oh my family is far away in Israel but even when they are on the phone I could see him trying to isolate me from them. I mean every time I speak about them he will just put them down... and he always brags that my family is better than yours and in many ways I felt like the guilt is just pushing me away and that he is right in many ways and yeah that's true your family is better than mine and I will stick to your family and from now on I don't have a family, my family is your family and that's how I looked at it, but deep down I felt it's not right...'

Stalking

Jennifer is an Anglo-Australian woman in her late 30s, with three children, living in DOH accommodation in western Sydney.

She left the father of her two younger children due to his gambling problems, only to find that he became violent towards her, in the form of stalking. He had been stalking her for three long years, and in her own words, the stalking is *'playing havoc with my life'*. She has been unable to take control of her life or make any plans for the future.

This was how Jennifer describes her ex-partner's stalking behaviour:

'He's like a little Spiderman, he jumps, never walks through my front gate always jumps the fences... I might go to the shopping centre and I'll go to reverse out and he has parked his car behind me. I've been followed... he will ring up and say things in reference to where I have been that day or what time I've got home he seems to know everything that I have done...'

Verbal abuse

Many of the women interviewed spoke about the verbal abuse they were subjected to; constant put-downs, humiliations and blows to their sense of self-worth.

Aida is a young educated Malay Muslim, with a professional job, living in Sydney.

She was married to an Australian man who was verbally abusive to her. Describing the verbal abuse, she spoke about *'the bruise inside'*. She recounted the following incident as a turning point for her in the relationship:

'An incident happened where he swore at me, constantly over the last two years I have been coping a lot of verbal abuse from him... I'm Muslim and as a Muslim wife I see it as my duty to respect my husband but there are limits.... the time came and he swore at me told me to F...off and I said, if you're going to swear at me don't call me wife anymore... that's it you get out...'

The research has highlighted that all women experience and perceive violence in different ways. What is perceived as violence and abuse by one woman may not be seen as such by another woman from a different generation or cultural background. What is critical is how the woman herself perceives the violence, and the effect it has on her – for example, the fear she may experience.

Many women spoke about the debilitating and fearful effects of verbal abuse. Some women who experienced both physical and verbal violence spoke about how it was the verbal abuse they found the most difficult to deal with.

Marilyn is an Anglo-Australian woman staying in a woman's refuge on the Far South Coast, following an incident where she was thrown off the balcony of her home.

She gives a compelling account of how men use different weapons against their partners:

Interviewer: *Did he have a weapon at all?*

Marilyn: *No just his fists.*

Interviewer: *That's a weapon isn't it?*

Marilyn: *Yeah, and their mouths are weapons, they're out to hurt you and they'll do it.*

Psychological violence

Many of the women experienced psychological violence, as a constant feeling of terror, where the woman was fearful not only for her physical but also her emotional safety. This form of violence is sometimes called emotional or mental abuse.

In the words of Megan, a young mother of two children, living in a privately-rented house in a small isolated town on the Far South Coast:

Megan: *...and this misconception that you have to have black eyes and broken ribs and stuff.*

Interviewer: *What do you think it is, what have you experienced?*

Megan: *It's the terrorising it's the emotional side of it, that was continual, I'd be so terrified, my nerves were completely shot.*

The psychological violence often manifested itself in acts of cruelty against the woman, where the man knew how to hurt her.

An Anglo-Australian woman in her early 40s living on the Far South Coast experienced a physically violent marriage spanning 20 years. As a devout Christian, she was committed to the marriage, believing she was *'married for life, for better or for worse...I know what worse is.'* She did everything she could to hold the marriage together.

The end for her, and turning point, was when her husband burned her bibles. She says: *'He burned my bibles, yes, 'cause he was taking that last thing away, last bit of faith that I had, that got me through all those years, and he was trying to take that last bit of life away from me.'*

Kerry is a young Aboriginal woman who was living in a DOH flat with her partner of eight years, and their two young children.

While she was subjected to a lot of physical violence, which she referred to as *'hidings'*, it was the psychological abuse which caused the damage. In her own words:

'...that was when I started to get really traumatised because that's when it started to get really, really bad, it wasn't just him giving me a hiding every now and then, it started to get really weird he started to put cigarettes out on me and he was making me lay under the bed, locking me in cupboards he'd make me, he'd make me for hours on end in the middle of the night he'd make me sit there and repeat telling myself I was a dog and I was a dirty slut and it was horrible really it was horrible...'

Violence to children

While not generally classified or defined as a type of violence against women, violence against children can be seen as part of a continuum of family violence.

Each of the twenty-seven women who were mothers spoke about how their children had been adversely affected by the violence. For many women, having their children witness the violence was a motivating factor, and turning point, for the women to leave the relationship.

Some of the perpetrators used the children as another way to perpetrate violence against the mother, as can be seen in the case of Cher, a working class woman from Sydney's inner city, married to a man physically violent to her for 26 years. The man was a boxer, and while she was terrified of his physical strength, she intervened to protect her young children.



My child just pretends to smile, the violence has hurt her too.

In her own words:

'It was really bad and he'd tell me to shut the kids up because he'd be doing the scratchings on a Saturday morning for the race horses and he'd say shut those bloody kids up and you shut up and I can't hear the bloody wireless and stuff like that and if the kids make one little sound he used to grab them and he'd take them up the garden and he'd put them in the toilet and he'd lock them in the toilet and I'd just say no please don't, I'll do anything I'll do anything for you, I've got to go and get my kids you know and I'd go up there and get my kids out of the toilet and he'd say well put them to bed and put them in their bloody rooms and all this stuff and I used to go into the kids bedroom and I'd put them in their beds and I'd say just stay there and give them a book or whatever ...and of course the little one's still in his pram you know... it was really bad, my kids have suffered.'

Many of the women spoke of concerns that their violent partner was, or would become, violent to their children.

Liz is a farmer on the Far South Coast, and led a hard-working life on a dairy farm with five young children and a violent husband.

This is how she described the stepfather's violence:

'...he'd make (five year old daughter) like touch up the fence to see if it's on or not, like an electric fence. Yeah he did things like that, of course while I wasn't there.'

'Another time (10 year old son) came up from the dairy cause (seven year old daughter) fed the calves and she had her hands behind her back and (my son) said, 'you've got to check (her) hands he's burnt em', and I said, 'what do you mean', she made the milk too hot for the calves so he put her hands in it, and I remember going down there and ripping into him and saying now wouldn't it be easier to teach your child that they have to wait another extra ten minutes or something for the milk to cool down than to put her hands in it and burn it, yeah very cruel he was.'

Years later when Liz had left the violent relationship, and changed her life around through a career in nursing, the children told her how their stepfather had abused them sexually, something which the mother had sensed and suspected, but felt unable to deal with. Typically, it was the mother who felt enormous guilt about her children being the victims of violence and abuse, while the stepfather pleaded his innocence in a court of law.

Some of the women spoke about how, as children, they had grown up in a violent home. Witnessing their parent's violence sometimes had a profound and long-lasting effect on the women, as shown in the story of Dawn, an Aboriginal woman living on the Far South Coast. In her own words:

'...my brother and my sister and I come home from the movies one night or the pictures as we used to call it and we walked into the lounge room and here's mum laying in a pool of blood by the fire and dad was in bed... what we come home to is dad being violent towards mum, he went to bed and left mum laying there in the pool of blood and I was probably only about eight or so when I had seen this.'

Animal abuse

Increasingly a link is being recognised between domestic violence and animal abuse. Just as a violent partner can abuse his children as a way to perpetrate violence against the mother, so can he abuse the family pets.

The same man who was cruel to his children on the farm, was also cruel to the family's pets, as a strategy to harm the woman. Liz recounts the following incident:

'...he did a lot of terrible things like, his dog had a heap of pups and they kept getting into the laundry they were pulling things out they were making a mess and I said, 'for God's sake can you do something about them dogs?', meaning build them a pen, do something like that, the kids and I have gone out up the shop to do something and the kids get out of the car and I can hear them screaming and screaming and he's bludgeoned them (the pups) all over the yard and said, 'your mother told me to do that', did things like that, yeah very cruel man, he'd go through me kids more, did a lot of things, I found out much, much later years later when we came here, the kids came out with a lot more that I never saw.'

As stated earlier in the report, many of the women experienced a number of forms of violence from their partner. The violence was never a one-off occurrence; instead it was part of a pattern of control and abuse spanning a number of years. What all the women have in common is that they took the often difficult path of leaving the domestic violence relationship, even though this in itself sometimes brought the risk of further violence. Women spoke about turning points, which helped them to leave the violence.

Women's turning points

The twenty-nine women in this study identified a number of key turning points, which helped them reach the decision to leave the violent relationship. Turning points are 'those events that most influenced the decisions that contributed to a woman being able to leave violence and establish a new life, as well as the points at which women made their life changing decisions' (Patton, 2003, p4).

Turning points can be seen as incidents, motivators, and a process, over time, which the woman goes through. The turning points of the twenty-nine women are summarised as follows:

- > Women's motivation to protect their children from violence, following incidents where children witnessed violence.
- > Women's realisation that the partner will not change, the violence will not stop; rather, the violence may escalate.
- > Severe incidents of abuse, involving physical violence.
- > The accumulation of many years, sometimes decades, of abuse, and the loss of all hope that the situation will improve.
- > Women's own strength and agency in standing up to the partner.

- > Women's search for love, leaving for a new relationship.
- > Effective and timely responses from community based services with which the women were connected.
- > Proactive responses from police officers and chamber magistrates.
- > Women gaining employment and a new career.
- > Women's ageing, not being prepared to put up with violence anymore.
- > Children having grown up and women feeling freer to leave the relationship.
- > Perpetrator's chronic behaviours; for example, gambling and alcohol abuse.

The services women accessed

Each of the twenty-nine women had received support and assistance from at least one community based organisation, usually the organisation which referred the woman to the research. Out of the total of twenty-nine women:

- > ten women were referred by family support services;
- > five women by refuges;
- > four by a women's housing organisation;
- > three women by refuge outreach services;
- > three by a Women's Resource Centre;
- > two by an immigrant women's advocacy organisation;
- > one by a Sexual Assault Service, and,
- > one by a Women's Health Centre.

Other services which women used included: the 24 hour Domestic Violence Line, Centrelink, Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Schemes, legal and advocacy organisations, counselling services, local courts and the police.

These organisations were critical in supporting and assisting women, advocating for their safety and wider needs, and enabling them to leave a violent relationship. Some of the organisations, notably family support services, were also critical in supporting and assisting the children through the crisis and trauma.



*I don't want my kids to see the violence anymore.
They're scared and having nightmares.*

THE RESEARCH FINDINGS are divided into two key sections. The first section discusses the nine women who remained in their homes, while the second section discusses the twenty women who left their homes.

The women who claimed their home

THIS SECTION PLACES THE SPOTLIGHT on the women who remained in their own homes. It asks the key question, for the women who remained in their own home, *what were the critical factors which made it possible?* It examines the key differences between the group of women who remained in their homes, and the group where the women left.

Nine women from the twenty-nine interviewed remained in their own home. An additional two women who experienced two domestic violence relationships both left and stayed in their home. However, their dominant story was that of leaving their home. For the sake of clarity and to avoid double counting, the two women are not included in this section.

Of the nine women:

- > seven were from Anglo-Australian backgrounds and two from CALD backgrounds (Lebanese and Israeli);
- > four were living in homes they jointly owned or were buying, one was living in her mother's home, two in privately-rented accommodation and two in DOH accommodation;
- > Their ages ranged from mid-twenties to early sixties;
- > seven were from metropolitan Sydney and two from the Far South Coast;
- > All of the women had children;
- > Length of the relationship was from three years to 26 years. Four of the women were married for 20 years or more, before leaving the violence; and,
- > Types of violence included physical, sexual, social isolation, stalking, verbal abuse, psychological violence and violence to children.

It is important to note that at least six of the nine women experienced extreme levels of physical violence from their partner. While it was suggested prior to the research that only women who experienced non-physical forms of violence would remain in their home (presumably for reasons of fear and safety), this assumption was not borne out by the research findings. Indeed some of the women with the most violent partners did remain in their home.

The research has identified the following three factors as being critical in what made the difference for the nine women to be able to remain in their own homes:

- 1 The women had a strong attachment to their homes and felt they had a right to remain in the home.
- 2 The violent partner was removed by the authorities, or went voluntarily because he had other housing options.
- 3 While the women had concerns for their safety, they were not overwhelmed by fear, and had developed a range of safety measures to help them feel safer at home.

Each of the three critical factors is considered below.

1 Women's attachment and rights to her home

In direct contrast to many of the women who fled their home, each of the nine women who remained spoke about an attachment to their home.

This was sometimes expressed in terms of the length of time they had lived there, in the words of one woman, *'this was my home forever.'* Seven of the nine women had lived in their home for a considerable period of time, anything from eight to 30 years. The two remaining women were both living in private rental accommodation, for approximately three years.

Other women spoke about the importance of material possessions and the comfort afforded by their home. For example, whereas one woman's partner liked living rough, *'all his possessions fit into a backpack'*, she saw her home with its belongings as a place which reflected her sense of self and place in the world, *'I like homes whereas he doesn't care'*.

Women's lives and their children's lives are often contained within their homes. Leila had lived in her Sydney home for eight years, giving birth to three children in that time, bringing each of the babies home and fulfilling the role of 'homemaker'. In her own words, *'You've got your whole life here'*.

For Cher, the working-class battler from South Sydney, her home was a roof over her head. It was also something she had worked hard to buy. In her own words, *'It's only a little old joint that I bought, it was a home for me and my kids to live in that's all I wanted was a roof over our heads'*.

A number of women in the study left their homes because they considered it was not safe to stay. In contrast, Alexandra, a woman from the Far South Coast renting on the private market, was attached to her home not because it was physically attractive, or even her home, but because *'it was really safe and small and stable'*.

Another woman from the Far South Coast had survived a violent marriage spanning 20 years. She saw her DOH home as providing her with much needed security for the future. In negotiating for the DOH tenancy to be transferred from her husband to herself, she said, *'I really need that security... 'cause I didn't want to be running around lost. That was the family home and I must try and do something to keep it'*.

Another woman's attachment to her home was related to her children, and the needs of her physically disabled son. Her DOH home had been modified, and was located near the specialist school he was attending. In this sense her home met both the housing and schooling needs of her disabled son, and she was not willing to place these in jeopardy by moving.

Women's right to remain

Closely related to the women's attachment to the home was their sense that they had the right to remain there.

The nine women spoke about how they felt they had the right to remain in the home, because they were the innocent party. In the words of Jennifer, *'You make it your home and he shouldn't be able to force me out, he shouldn't be able to make me leave something that I've had in my life for eight years just because he can't control himself'*.

This right was keenly felt in those cases where the woman had been the main contributor to the mortgage/rent payments. In some cases, the woman was the sole contributor.

Traditional family life may once have seen the woman as the homemaker and man as

'You make it your home and he shouldn't be able to force me out...'
Jennifer

the breadwinner, with certain rights over his home and family, and a notion that a 'man's home is his castle'. However, for a number of women in the study, this situation was starkly reversed. The woman was the breadwinner, while he gambled his money and/or spent it on drugs and alcohol.

Of the nine ex-partners of the women who remained, only one did not have gambling and/or drug and alcohol problems, the sole partner who conformed to the role of 'breadwinner'. Of the remaining eight, four had chronic gambling problems and six had drug and alcohol problems. Some of the perpetrators were *both* gamblers and drug and alcohol abusers.

In at least four of the cases, it was primarily the woman who paid the mortgage or the rent. For example, Cher paid the rent, and then the mortgage in a marriage spanning 26 years. The only time her husband (a gambler and alcoholic) contributed was a six-month period when he paid the rent. Cher went back to work after giving birth to three children, and, while her mother-in-law cared for the children, Cher earned a wage and purchased the family home. It is little wonder she had a strong sense of entitlement to her home. She had paid for it, 'every *hard-working cent*'.

In another case, the man's gambling addiction almost cost the woman their family home. Again it is not surprising the woman felt she had the right to remain in the home, something affirmed for her in the court's property settlement, which went in her favour. She was able to refinance the home and place the mortgage in her own name.

A young Lebanese woman, Leila, who participated in the study, had led a traditional life as mother and homemaker. Her husband had not given his permission for her to work, or to pursue her TAFE studies. While the husband was paying the mortgage, Leila had an overriding belief in her right to remain in the home with her three children, and for her violent husband to be removed. She had a strong sense of what was right and wrong, and, by her standards, it was wrong for her (and her children) to have to leave the home. In her own words: *'I don't believe that a woman has to be chunked out of her own home and she's the one that's the victim, she's the victim'*.

It is interesting here to note that despite Leila's protected married life as a homemaker (*'I've never been out for a coffee in my life'*), at the time of interview she was negotiating with the local court system for an exclusion order contested by her husband.



It was like David and Goliath, I told him get out of my home and don't come back.

2 The man was removed by the authorities, or went voluntarily because he had other housing options

Many of the twenty-nine women in the study were unable to remain in their home, despite having an attachment to it and believing they had the right to remain. They had to flee their home because the man had every intention of staying. For some of the women, this is how they saw the natural order of things, or the status quo – the woman leaves and the man stays. It can also be seen that our service pathways often maintain these relations, with the woman fleeing to a refuge and the man remaining in his home.

Removal of the violent partner from the home, either by the authorities or through his leaving voluntarily, is a critical factor enabling the woman and her children to remain.

Of the nine women who remained:

- > five of their partners left voluntarily; and,
- > four were removed by the police, and/or by order of the court (family and local court).

Partner left voluntarily

In the cases where the perpetrator left voluntarily, the woman stood her ground and through sheer force of will got the man out of the house. It helped the woman's case if she had some leverage over him, and if he had somewhere else to go, even if this was only to the local pub, as shown in Cher's story.



I told him go and get a room in the pub. 'Cause he's always up there, he might as well live there.

'It all started after 26 years of our marriage, I began to try to shift my husband away out of the house because I'd just had enough of his abuse and my children, my two boys were well and truly grown up, they were 26 and 24 and my daughter was just turning 16 and I thought well now he can't kill my kids because they are too big, he wouldn't be able to kill my boys anymore and certainly won't get near my daughter to hurt her because I just won't let him so I said to him, 'you get out and don't come back'... been hanging around all these years threatening our lives and whatever, anyway he went which was very much surprising to me...'

Interviewer: He must have known that you meant it when you said that.

'Yeah I just threatened him you know if you don't get going I'd be going to the authorities and you'll be in big trouble. Anyway he went and he took a room in the pub where

he drank cause I said to him, you know you're always up there why don't you just go and live there so he got a room in the pub'

Even though it was Cher who ordered him out on this occasion, on previous occasions the police had been to their home and removed her husband overnight. As leverage to get him out Cher used the threat of going to the police and reporting his criminal activities.

Another woman's leverage to get her partner to leave their privately rented flat was her demand he pay her the bond money if he wanted to stay. As the manager of the household and finances, she had paid the bond when they moved into the flat. The man was a gambler and, unable to pay her back the bond, he left the flat voluntarily to live in a boarding house. In her own words, *'he's just as happy as larry in his moth-eaten boarding house'*.

On the other hand, Jill's case indicates just how hard it can be for the woman to get the man to leave. Jill was living in her own mother's home, the family home, with her partner. He had no entitlement to the home and had never paid any rent. However it took the woman and her mother about a year to get him to move out, and when he did move out he took the two young children with him, to pay her back. She related what she said to her partner: *'I said I think it's best if you move out and he said I'm not going anywhere my kids are here, and I said yeah but it's my home what do you want me to do, pack up, me and the kids move out, and give you my family home, it doesn't work like that...and this went on for months and months and I would get the paper and circle places and say look, look, no I'm not going anywhere...'*

Despite the difficulties involved, it is important to recognise women's ability and strength, in some cases, to force the man to leave, and also to recognise that some men will leave voluntarily.

Some men move on to other women and other relationships, as occurred with Denise. Her husband threw her out of their DOH home on the Far South Coast; he re-partnered and attempted to transfer the tenancy to the NSW north coast. However Denise successfully negotiated with DOH to move back into her home, maintain the tenancy and transfer the lease into her name.

For many women, it will not be an option to remove the violent partner by themselves. It may be very unsafe for the woman to tell the man to leave, and the man may ignore her demands. In such cases, police removal of the violent partner is critical.

Police removal of violent partner

The following two cases demonstrate the significance of the police removing the violent partner, as the first step in a legal process which will enable the woman and her children to remain in her home.

In the first case, Leila wanted her violent husband out of the home after he sexually assaulted her. In her own words, *'I told him to pack his bags and leave and he took it as if it was a big joke and I was shaking like hell, I was devastated'*. Then Leila rang the police and had the police remove her husband.

In the second case, Alexandra, a young heavily pregnant woman living on the Far South Coast, rang the police after a series of violent incidents. The police removed the violent partner, charged him, placed him in custody, and the court gave him a custodial sentence.

It is important to clarify that, while only two of the nine women got the man to leave by having the police remove him, other women (including women who fled the home) recounted incidents where they rang the police and the police removed the violent party. However the removal was often only fleeting, with the perpetrator returning the following day. Strategies need to be put into place to keep the violent partner out of the home over time.

'It wouldn't be right...to leave a man in his home and chuck out the mother of three.' Leila

Court removal of the violent partner

The importance of the court in making orders which prevent the violent partner from residing in, or returning to, the family home can be seen in the case of Leila, discussed above. Following police removal of the violent partner, the local court ruled the man was unable to return to the home.

On removing the perpetrator, police also took out a Telephone Interim Order (TIO) with an exclusion condition, which prevented the man from returning to the home. Leila went to the local court to first gain an interim AVO and then a final AVO, both with an exclusion condition. At the time of interview, the order had been effective in keeping the husband away from her home, even though he was contesting the order.

The perpetrators' attitude to the law was a critical factor in some, but not all, of the nine cases considered in this section. Leila's intimate knowledge of her partner led her to believe he would abide by police and court rulings. She said that he was threatened by the authorities. When she contacted the police he put his jeans and bum bag on to go peacefully with the police to the station. He did not attempt to 'do a runner' as do other perpetrators when police are called. The research has highlighted that interventions by the police and courts may be most effective for perpetrators who are either (apart from the domestic violence) law abiding, or who feel cowed and intimidated by the law.

It is interesting to note that Leila was bemused by the research, and was stunned to find out that not all women stay in their own homes, like she had – that in fact the more common response is to leave the home. She says, *'I understand the research and everything but I don't understand why would they take the mother out and take her to a refuge'*.

In responding to the question about what made her decide to stay in her own home: *'Well I've got nowhere else to go, and I mean it's easier in my opinion for him to leave than me with three kids to be chucked out and not knowing where to go.'*

The researcher asked her if she had considered going to a refuge.

'Didn't even think about that, didn't even think about that, I never would think that a magistrate would order a mother of three to leave the house, that wouldn't be civil at all, it wouldn't be the right thing to do to leave a man in his own home and chuck out the mother of three, I don't think a magistrate would do that but if he did for any stupid reason....'

And while it is true that a magistrate will not order the victim of violence to leave her home, if a court allows the man to remain or return by denying an exclusion order, this may effectively make the woman leave, or, in Leila's words, 'chuck her out'. Certainly Leila felt that she would have to leave home immediately with her three children if the magistrate did not grant the final order excluding her husband.

Leila's response to the research gives meaning to the legislation relating to exclusion orders (Crimes Act Part 15A Section 562D). The legislation specifies that, in deciding whether or not to make an order which prohibits or restricts access to the defendant's residence, the court is to consider:

- > the accommodation needs of all relevant parties;
- > the effect of making an order on any children living or ordinarily living at the residence; and,
- > the consequences for the person for whose protection the order would be made, and any children living or ordinarily living at the residence, if an order restricting access by the defendant to the residence is not made.

The consequences for Leila if the exclusion order is not made is that she, and her three children, will all be forced to leave their family home, because of her husband's violence.

This case has demonstrated that the combination of police removal, Telephone Interim Order (with an exclusion condition), and then Apprehended Violence Order (with exclusion condition) can ensure the violent partner is not only removed from the premises, but that he is also kept away from the home over time.

Another woman, Eileen, gained the critical assistance of a local court Chamber Magistrate in Sydney. She had an AVO with the standard conditions, and both parties were living under the same roof. This situation was untenable for the woman, who felt fearful for herself and her three children. She recounts an incident which occurred late in the night:

'...he was throwing things at the walls at about two o'clock in the morning, as I said he didn't have to have a drink in him to get a bad temper, he'd be smashing things galore throwing things at the walls, I said ssshhh, you'll wake up the children I said stop it, I ran and shut my son's door I ran and shut my two daughters they had double bunks and I was at the door I looked in the bottom bunk and my little seven-year-old she was a timid one she wasn't in her bed and I said where are you and the wardrobe was just opened a tiny bit and I thought where is she I said where are you, I opened the wardrobe door and there she was she was shaking with fear just crying and I said what are you doing in the wardrobe she said mum I am frightened she said daddy's gonna kill you and then daddy's gonna kill me....'

The next morning Eileen went to see the Chamber Magistrate, who was familiar with her case and had assisted her to get an AVO. The Chamber Magistrate told her he was going to get the man out of the house, for the woman's sake but also for the sake of the children. Her case was listed at the local court that week, and the man was removed by order of the court.

Significantly the perpetrator was cowed and intimidated by the authorities, in the woman's words, *'he went to jelly'*. She describes her husband's behaviour in court:

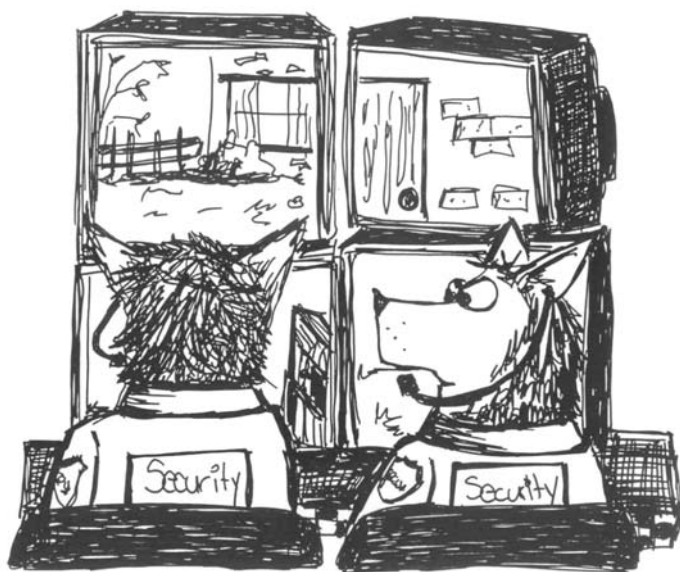
'and the magistrate said speak up Mr XXX I can't hear you, do you know he went to jelly he had to hang on to a chair and his voice went he couldn't speak when he saw police there and he went to jelly...'

Having the protection of the court order, the man did not return to the woman's home and visits with his children were conducted away from the home.

3 *The woman has developed a range of safety measures to help her feel safer at home*

The nine women who remained in their homes all adopted some measures to enhance their safety at home. Denise was living in her DOH home on the Far South Coast. Her ex-husband made threats to kill her; these threats escalated after she took possession of the family vintage car. The man was in possession of a gun. Denise's comments about safety strategies indicate the range of strategies used by women in the study.

'Taking out an AVO, that has made me feel secure, you know, and just to make sure that they do act on it, you know the police, and just be persistent with it that it does get presented to the other partner, because sometimes it can drag on, they can have files, oh yes we're slowly getting there, just make sure that you keep on... I was on the phone all the time to make sure, I wasn't secure until I knew they'd actually



My German Shepherds help me feel safe at home; they always let me know if someone's coming!

served that interim on him. And then I felt at ease, but until then you've got to just make sure they do serve it, because otherwise you're still living in fear, you know cause he still can come on the premises until that interim is actually served to him in person.'

Interviewer: How did the police respond, how did you find them?

Denise: Good. If you just tell them the circumstances and that you've been threatened and that you've got the fear of your husband coming near the premises, that you don't want to live in fear of your ex, that you want to live in peace. I'm sure they would understand...Especially if he is a violent person. Also it's good to have a dog. (laughs) For security, I've got two German Shepherds. They always let me know if someone's coming to the door, coming into the front yard...you can leave your premises and know that nobody's just

going to go through your backyard or touch anything that they shouldn't. Yes, and also a phone...a hands free. I really think it's essential to have a phone on. Because you just never know when you might need to contact someone...you know in an emergency. Oh yes, and also change your locks on your house, that was the first thing that I did when I moved back into the house.

Summary of safety strategies employed by the nine women

The safety strategies fall into the following categories:

- > Taking out AVOs with exclusion conditions.
- > Making the house more secure, for example changing the locks and installing security doors.
- > Making changes to the house to counter the memories of violence; for example, removing the man's belongings.
- > Use of technologies such as phone tracers and mobile phones.
- > Contacting the police for advice.
- > Reporting breaches of Apprehended Violence Orders.
- > Contact arrangements with children; for example, ensuring that the man visits his children at a location away from the home.

The research has demonstrated how women's increasing empowerment, as they leave the violent relationship behind them, means that the woman experiences fear and safety differently than when she was enmeshed in the domestic violence relationship. For example, one woman spoke about how she had moved 'beyond fear'. The perpetrator may have lost the power he once held over her when she was the victim

of his violence. One woman referred to her ex-partner as a 'silly boy', another as 'a puny man'. These women were not frightened of the men any more. Their fear had shifted.

On occasions, the researcher witnessed this transformation in the women first-hand, during the course of the interview. While the woman spoke about her experiences of being *in* the domestic violence situation, she often presented as passive, scared and tentative. In contrast when she spoke about how she left the relationship and rebuilt her life, and her children's lives, she presented as strong, insightful, articulate and often humorous.

Did the man return to the woman's home?

In at least four of the nine cases the man had returned to the woman's home, not to live but to visit. Generally this was for the (stated) purpose of visiting their children. Women spoke about how family law contact arrangements were often an open invitation for the man to continue harassing and abusing the woman. Safety protocols are needed here, whereby the man has visitation rights at a location away from the woman's home.

Significantly, not one of the women recounted an incident where the man returned to the home and was physically violent towards her. This is an important finding of the research, as it is often assumed that the man will return and use physical violence. This assumption is often the reason for women's flight.

'Not one of the women recounted an incident where the man returned to the home and was physically violent towards her.'

Critical factors – Case studies

Two western Sydney cases are compared, to identify the critical factors which enable and support a woman and her children to remain in her home, if this is what she wishes to do. The cases highlight what services and agencies may be able to do to improve the outcomes for women. In the first case, the outcomes have been positive for the woman; in the second, outcomes have been negative (at the time of interviews).

Case study *Leila*

Leila is the young Lebanese woman referred to earlier in this report. Her reasons for wanting to remain in her own home were clear: she did not have anywhere else to go, it was easier for him to move out than her with three children, she was the innocent party, she had links with the local area and moving would have been devastating for her older children.

The following critical factors have resulted in positive outcomes for Leila.

Legal actions

- > Police removal of perpetrator at the time of the violent incident.
- > Police take out a Telephone Interim Order (TIO), with an exclusion condition.
- > Woman goes to the local court and an Interim Order is made, with exclusion conditions continued. He is contesting the Order, a date for hearing is set.
- > Final AVO is made in court, with exclusion condition. On the day prior to the hearing, he agrees to consent to the Order.
- > She has a good relationship with the local police station, and with officers who have assisted her and provided advice.

Emotional and practical support

- > Her parents give her unqualified support, both practical and emotional. Her sister also supports her emotionally.
- > Her father and male members of the family negotiate with her husband that he continue paying the mortgage, at least until the final court outcome.
- > She receives counselling and support from a Sexual Assault Service, her caseworker from the service attends court with her.
- > She has sought professional assistance for her son from the local Community Health Centre, regarding the effects of his witnessing violence in the home.

Perpetrator characteristics

- > The man feels threatened by the authorities, and apart from his violence to his wife, is law abiding and keeps to the conditions of the AVO.

Women's safety strategies

- > She has developed a range of safety strategies to help her feel safer in her own home.
- > One important safety protocol is that the father's contact visits with his children occur on a regular basis away from the home, on neutral ground.
- > This woman, unlike so many of the women in the study, did not feel guilt or shame. She located the blame outside of herself, with her violent husband, and also with failed legal systems which allow violent partners to return to their home.

Note: There is no suggestion here that all these factors need to be in place before a woman can successfully remain in her home. However, some of these critical factors may assist other women.

Case study

Jennifer

In the second case, where the outcomes have been negative, Jennifer is an Anglo-Australian woman in her late 30s, with three young children. She is living in Department of Housing (DOH) accommodation in Western Sydney. The housing has been modified for her disabled son. She has been living in the house for eight years and the lease is in her name. Three years ago she left the father of her two younger children due to his problem gambling. He became violent towards her, in the form of stalking and harassment. He has been stalking her now for three years, resulting in charges of breaching an AVO, which have incurred minor penalties. In her own words, the stalking is '*playing havoc with my life*'. She has been unable to get on with her life and feels she cannot make any plans for her future.

One of the reasons Jennifer does not wish to leave her own home, and, for example, go to a women's refuge, is because her housing is suitable for her disabled son and his school is nearby. She is very happy with the specialist schooling offered and said it is the best possible school for him.

However, the main reason for not leaving her home is the woman's belief that it doesn't matter where she flees to, he will be able to find her. In her own words, '*What's the point of leaving, he would find me anywhere and I would be back to square one*'.

The following interventions may assist and support this woman to remain safely in her own home:

- > Police charging the offender with stalking, which is a more serious charge than breaching an AVO.
- > Introduction of safety protocols for the offender's contact with his two young children; for example, visits to occur away from the woman's home.
- > Use of technologies to better respond to stalking scenarios; for example, sensor lamps which light up when someone comes within 10 metres.
- > Use of improved technologies to provide hard evidence of the man's stalking.
- > An improvement in police response times to reported breaches of AVOs.
- > Police referral of woman to a local community health centre or family support service, for counselling, emotional support and a review of her options.
- > Local court magistrates to treat stalking as a serious and life-threatening crime, on a par with physical violence.
- > Issuing the woman with a panic alarm linked up to the local police station, which she can activate if offender breaches AVO.

Support from services

The research has highlighted two key factors relating to support from community organisations. Firstly, despite the range of services which the women accessed, not one service focused specifically on enabling the women and her children to remain safely in her home, with the violent partner being removed. Secondly, many of the women accessed support services many years after leaving the violence, to address the long-term and often traumatising effects of violence on themselves, and on their children.

Services which the women accessed

- > Legal Aid services provided assistance with property settlements;
- > Family support services provided practical and emotional support to women, and assistance with parenting issues and the effects of violence on children;
- > Domestic Violence Crisis Line offered counselling and referral to other organisations; and,
- > A Sexual Assault Service offered counselling and assistance with court, a Women's Resource Centre offered domestic violence support groups, and a family doctor provided supporting evidence for a court case.

Sometimes the women benefited from the existence of a strong service network in their local area, as was evidenced on the Far South Coast in the Bega Valley and the Sutherland Shire.

Each of the nine women spoke positively about the support and assistance they had received from community based organisations. The women often saw this support in terms of a lifesaver for herself and her children. In some cases, the support was intensive, and included advocacy for the woman in dealing with issues relating to court, housing and children.

Women also received varying levels of support from their family and friends. Some women spoke about the importance of religious beliefs, as a support during difficult times.

Change in the men

It is important here to state clearly that removing the violent man was never the primary goal of the nine women. The woman's main hope, and something she held on to for many years, was that the man would change. The man would stop his violence. He would seek some help to stop the violence. *'I always thought there was a chance that he might change'*, was a typical comment from the women in the study.

This is very much reflected in the long-term relationships which the women had with their partners. Four of the nine women had been married to their violent partners for 20 years or longer. The remaining five women were in relationships spanning three to eight years. All women had given birth to their partner's children. They wanted their relationship to continue, but the violence to stop.

It is inaccurate to draw a picture of the woman who reclaims her home as having won a victory, or triumphed over a man who was thrown out of his home. The women in this study desperately wanted their partner to stop the violence, violence which has damaged and traumatised them. The women's stories highlight that they often have a very long way to go before they recover and rebuild their lives. There was no sense of victory for these women, but rather a determination to survive and put their lives and their children's lives back on track.

Summary of benefits for women and their children in remaining in their own homes.

- > Stability of accommodation;
- > Stability and security for the children;
- > Women are able to continue on with their lives, with less disruption;
- > A sense that justice has prevailed — the innocent party has been able to remain in her home and the guilty party has had to leave; and,
- > A possible shift in the power relations between the victim and perpetrator, where the woman is empowered by reclaiming her own home.

This is how one woman who remained in her home speaks about her life when her partner was removed:

'The day after he left I had a party for my birthday, I was Jane of the Jungle and I invited all my girlfriends and their children and we all came in fancy dress, I was celebrating my freedom and my independence, and all my neighbours said 'I am sorry, I didn't know', and I said don't be sorry I'm not I never felt better... I was a survivor and it was the beginning of my new life and I felt wonderful.'

While not all of the nine women were able to speak in these strident tones of liberation, they were all able to do two very important things: firstly, leave the violence; and secondly, remain in their own home.

It is important to consider the wider benefits to society in supporting women and their children to remain in their homes. These include reduced women's homelessness, keeping children out of the child protection system, and placing accountability for the violence with the perpetrator. Seen from this perspective, supporting women and children to remain in their homes is a cost-effective strategy, one which deserves the focus and attention of government agencies.

In conclusion, the three critical factors enabling the nine women to remain in their own homes were women's sense of attachment and rights to her home, the removal of the violent partner and safety strategies the women had developed. The discussion has also indicated that a fourth factor was critical in some, but not all cases;

namely, that the perpetrator was intimidated by the police and courts and/or felt a duty to abide by legal rulings.

In contrast, the remaining twenty cases did not demonstrate these critical factors. The woman often had no attachment to her home and may not have even perceived she had a home. Her violent partner would not leave the home, and often paid little attention to the police and courts. The woman did not feel safe in remaining in her home.

The next section of the research findings turns to a discussion of the women who left their homes.



The women who left their home

THE REMAINING TWENTY WOMEN in the study left their home, in order to leave a relationship involving domestic violence.

It is important to clarify that while all twenty women decided to leave the violent relationship, not all decided to leave their home. They did so because they considered they had no other choice. It was the only thing they could do. No other option, such as remaining in her home, was presented as a real option for the woman.

Of the twenty women:

- > Five were Aboriginal, one was Maori, seven were from CALD backgrounds and seven from Anglo Australian backgrounds;
- > Before leaving the violence, three were living in a home they owned, four in DOH accommodation, 10 in private rental accommodation, one in a room above a hotel, one on a farm and one in her mother-in-law's home;
- > Their ages ranged from early twenties to early sixties;
- > twelve were from metropolitan Sydney and eight were from the Far South Coast.
- > 18 women had children;
- > Length of relationship was often five years or more; and,
- > Types of violence included physical, sexual, stalking, verbal abuse, psychological violence, violence to children and animal abuse.

Many of the women who fled their homes talked about how they would have preferred to remain, if this had been possible. A common response to the research question was *'if only women could stay'*.

To the researcher's repeated question, 'How could it be possible to remain safely in your own home?' the women gave the following responses, discussed below:

- > Remove the man from the home
- > Keep the man out of the home over time
- > Only if my home was safe
- > Charging the violent offender
- > Improved police and court responses
- > Housing for perpetrators
- > Holding the perpetrator accountable

'I think the only way is if a policeman's standing there watching him pack his bags to go' Liz

Remove the man from the home

Against a backdrop of domestic violence which includes dynamics where the perpetrator has power and control over his partner as the victim, in most cases it will not be realistic for the woman to get the man out by herself. Indeed this is most likely to put the woman's safety at risk.

To the researcher's question, 'How do you think we can go about getting the man to leave the home?' the farming woman from the Far South Coast replied, *'Well I think the only way is if a policeman's standing there watching him pack his bags and go'*.

A number of the twenty women did call the police, who then removed the man, at

least temporarily. Some of the Aboriginal women in the study spoke about how difficult it was for them to contact the police, given the resistance in their own communities towards involving police.

Keep him out of the home over time

For Aroha, the Maori woman in her early 20s, remaining in the home would not have worked for her because her partner would return to the home, even if he had been removed by the police. In her own words, *'I know him so well he would just go for a couple of hours and come back'*.

Likewise a 25 year old Aboriginal woman living in South East Sydney with two young children spoke about her partner of eight years returning to the home, *'Well he'd leave for a while and once he got bored of partying and missed a good feed or missed something you know like someone washing his clothes, he'd then hound me, oh he got real possessive there at one stage'*.

Another young Aboriginal woman living on the Far South Coast who initially said that she didn't involve the police, later spoke about ringing the police when her partner came home drunk and violent. In her own words, *'Sure the police removed him from the home, but he was back in five minutes'*.

The older woman living on the mid-north coast who fled to Sydney to escape her abusive husband spoke about how she would have loved to stay in her own home. She had lost a lot in leaving it behind. However she believed there was no way of keeping her husband away from the house, especially when he was in one of his uncontrollable drunken rages.

The twenty women who left their homes generally had little knowledge or information about exclusion orders, as a condition of an AVO. While some of the women had heard about them (often in the course of being selected for the interview, or through the local court's Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme), none of the women had applied for an exclusion order. In the words of Sally from the Far South Coast: *'I just knew that he would never, ever leave and like he'd have to be forcibly removed and at the time I had no idea that you could even do that...see I had never heard of them (exclusion orders)'*.

Out of the twenty women, nine had been granted AVOs in the local court. One of these women, living in a women's refuge for her safety, was granted an AVO at a local court on the Far South Coast. She was actually asked by the magistrate whether she wanted to return to her home, and hence needed an exclusion condition on the AVO. This must surely represent an example of best practice in local courts. She did not wish to return, for reasons of her own safety, fearing that her ex-partner would return to the home and abuse her.

Only if my home was safe

Many of the twenty women referred to their own safety, and that of her children, as being the reason for leaving her home. She would only remain if she felt her home was safe.

Some women put into place a number of safety strategies within their new homes. This was critical if the ex-partner found out where she was living, as was so often the case.

'I know him so well he would just go for a couple of hours and come back'
Aroha

Case study

Christine is a woman in her early 40s, at the time of interview. She left her violent partner nine years ago, when her four children were young, from 2-12 years of age. After a difficult six-month period, living under the same roof (with an AVO) while she waited for rehousing, Christine left the DOH tenancy where her partner held the lease and moved into her own DOH home with her four children. Christine's case raises the significance of whose name is on the lease. She considered she had no rights over their house, because it was her partner's name on the DOH lease. In her own words, *'My right was I was the first one to be put on the street'*. The case also raises the difficulties for a woman when both parties to an AVO are living under the same roof. She says, *'It was very hard for both of us to live there I had to have a lock on my bedroom door because I did not want him in, I didn't want my life to be violated...I didn't want to come near him'*.

When Christine was re-housed, her ex-partner found out where her new housing was, because he helped her to move. He believed he had the right to enter her house whenever he pleased, and obtained a copy of the key from one of her children. Christine built up a range of safety strategies to prevent further violence in her new home, including:

- > standing her ground and telling him to leave the house;
- > amending her AVO to prevent her ex-partner from coming to the house;
- > reporting breaches of the AVO to the police;
- > placing a tracer on her phone; and,
- > installing security doors and an alarm system, and changing the locks.

Women's changed perceptions after leaving the violence, and how they experienced safety and fear, were also significant, as it was for some of the women who remained in their homes. This is how Christine talks about fear, now she has left the violent relationship: *'...to be able to stand up and say no without fear that you're gonna be hurt and when you can do that you know your gonna survive...that any threats that he makes I don't have to worry about because I know that I am capable of taking the right action, take the necessary steps, if he does harm me in any way he's the one that this time is going to have to suffer the consequences, not me...'*

Other safety measures put into place which served to provide some protection for women were:

- > bail and reporting conditions placed on the offender; and,
- > the court excluding the offender not only from the woman's home but from the whole town. One offender from the Far South Coast was given a 100 kilometres exclusion from the town where the victim was living.

'In the Pacific Islander community... you marry into his whole family, and the family can be dangerous to the woman too' Lavinia

The research demonstrated that women often carry out their own risk assessment of their partner's violence and their own safety, on leaving the relationship. The assessment is based on the women's intimate knowledge of their partner, something which services, the police and courts are not privy to.

Women from CALD backgrounds often had to consider their wider family and community when considering their own safety, as the woman was not just leaving her partner, but also her partner's family and community. In the words of Lavinia, a young Tongan woman, *'In the Pacific Islander community you don't just marry the man, you marry into his whole family, and the family can be dangerous to the woman too'*.

Women in the study, both those who left and those who stayed in their homes, responded very positively to the researcher's question regarding whether a panic alarm was an effective safety tool for women. Such an alarm could be hidden in a bracelet or pendant worn by the woman, which she is able to activate if her ex-

partner approaches. The alarm would be linked up to the local police station with the understanding that a prompt response would ensue.

Charging the violent offender

Perhaps one of the best ways to remove the violent partner is by the police charging the offender and taking him to the police station.

The case of Megan, a young woman living on the Far South Coast, demonstrates the significance of the police charging the violent partner with assault. Following a violent incident involving a knife and death threats, Megan rang the police. She informed one of the officers what had happened, and the officer suggested an assault charge. In her own words, *'he (the police officer) said let's charge him with assault...and one of the key words I remember is 'let's' charge him and he said it as in like joining him and me together, it wasn't ok are you going to charge him with assault putting it all on me...'*

In a number of other cases where the police were called, police officers typically asked the woman if she wanted to press charges. If the woman said 'no', this was the end of the matter, the offender was not charged.

Later in the interview Megan speaks about how her encounter with the police officer was a turning point for her in taking action against her violent partner. She says, *'It's amazing the difference that one good copper can make to your life...that copper changed my life'*. Megan said that she would not have charged her partner on her own, and that if the officer had asked her if she wanted to press charges she would have said 'no'.

Of the twenty women who left their homes, there were a total of four charge matters, three for assault and one for breach of an AVO.

Improved police and court responses

Many of the women spoke about the need for faster police responses to breaches of AVOs. Police response times relate directly to a woman's sense of safety. If she does not believe the police will respond quickly to a breach of an AVO she may not feel safe to remain in her own home, even with an AVO. One woman who fled to a refuge for safety did not believe that the police could provide her with protection. In her own words, *'I'll be dead by the time the police arrive'*. Some of the Aboriginal women interviewed spoke about how their men often *'took off'* before the police arrived.

Police response times are a key issue in country towns, where local stations may not have 24-hour coverage. This was raised by the women living on the Far South Coast, and influenced their attitudes regarding police assistance.

Believing the woman was considered to be an important part of an improved police and court response, especially in those cases where there was no evidence of physical violence. Many of the women referred to an attitude of *'it's your word against his'* as working against the woman getting a fair hearing and the police doing their job of evidence collection.

Shanti is an Indian woman in her early forties. Her case shows that not being believed can place the woman in further danger of violence, and without the protection of an AVO. At the time of interview this woman had no AVO, even though she was in fear for her safety. She was involved in a long court process and was waiting for charges against the perpetrator to be resolved. She was a woman with a mental illness, and spoke at length about how the police and courts did not believe her.

Women also spoke about the leniency of local courts to domestic violence offenders, and the need for more appropriate penalties.

As the victim of the violence, some women clearly felt they had not received the justice they should. In the words of Megan, *'as a teenager I've had the side of being the criminal, and being the victim as an adult now it's just amazing I really got treated better as a criminal than I did as a victim'*.

Housing for perpetrators

Providing alternative housing options for the violent partner may be one of the most effective strategies to enable a woman and her children to remain in their own home.

A number of women who would have preferred to stay had this been possible, responded positively to the researcher's question relating to the provision of alternate accommodation for the violent partner. Many of the women supported the idea of providing some short-term accommodation and counselling so that their violent partner could begin to take responsibility for their violence and abuse.

Support for the need for alternate accommodation options for the violent partner is demonstrated by Aida's situation. Aida did not intend to remove her partner from the home because *'he had nowhere to go'*. This was despite the fact that she paid *all* the rent. In her own words, *'There is no way for me to kick him out because he is not working, he hasn't got a cent, where is he going to go ...I just cannot have him out of the house just like that to just live in the gutter I cannot do that'*.

Other women, however, pointed out that there is often somewhere the violent partner can go for a roof over his head. Speaking of her Aboriginal brothers, Dawn says *'If the woman doesn't want them there make sure they move on get them out of there, no I am sure you've got plenty of mates where you can bloody stay, which men do they've always got mates where they can go and stay'*.

Holding the perpetrator accountable

According to the twenty-nine women in the study, not one of the partners who were violent and abusive considered they were the guilty party. His perception was that he had done nothing wrong and instead placed the blame for the violence on the woman. Not one of the men admitted to the woman that he had a problem with violence. It was all her fault.

'Whoever leaves is the person who'll get blamed.'

Shanti

Woman blaming and shaming were themes woven through so many of the interviews. In the words of Shanti, *'Whoever leaves is the person who'll get blamed...no matter that my husband did twenty years of bashing, but because I left, nobody's even looking at that....I blame myself for everything'*. Wider cultural issues around reputation and family worked against this woman. She spoke about how she was bad-mouthed, backstabbed and ostracised within her community.

None of the men expressed any remorse for their actions. This lack of remorse was sometimes a turning point for the woman in her decision to leave the violence, as she realised there was no possibility he would change his behaviour and stop the violence. Rose speaks about her partner having no remorse for his violence, *'...that was the scary thing for me is that right after we'd had the baby and one morning he was in a particularly foul mood about something and he'd hit me...and he said to me no I'm not going to say sorry, I don't have anything to apologise for, and that made me think he really believes that he's justified in what he's doing, so therefore there is no hope'*.

Amy considered her partner's problems with violence could be addressed by counselling. This is her story: *'...and all I kept saying is it's so simple just get violence counselling you've got a problem, and then he'd turn it around and say no you've got the problem you're the violent one, you're the one that made me be a gambler, you're*

the one, I've never hit a woman in my life except you and then yeah you're the one with the problem cause you get me so angry...'

Some men who are violent to their partners will plead innocent until the bitter end, before the evidence speaks for itself in a court of law. Olga was a young Russian woman with a newborn baby who fled from her violent husband and stayed with friends. She describes her experience in court as she seeks an AVO which is being contested by her husband:

'I was very nervous because I can see my husband very close and his body language was like oh I can't believe what she is saying....he said on the bible that he will tell the truth and he said I never laid a hand on her, can you believe that, never laid a hand on her...'

The woman then goes on to explain that she had taken a video of her bruised and swollen face after her husband had bashed her, and she presented this in court as hard evidence. The magistrate granted Olga the AVO.

This issue of blame and responsibility is central to the research question, which is asking who needs to bear the consequences for the violence and leave their family home, the victim or the perpetrator?

Woman blaming and shaming is one of the factors forcing the woman to remain in the role of victim, to dismiss her rights and to flee her home. This is highlighted in the words of Liz, who talks about how the police offered to help her collect her belongings from her home after she fled a domestic violence situation. The researcher asks her the following question regarding the possibility of police removing the perpetrator from the home:

Interviewer: *'But they (police) didn't say to you we'll let you stay there and get him out, they didn't say that, did you ever expect that they might say that?'*

Liz: *'No, for some reason, no, you always think it's you that's got to go...and I think too why we think like that is because it's drummed into us it's our fault why the blues are happening, I think that's why that it's just automatically that the woman leaves...'*

The women's movement, government agencies and the community sector have been talking for a very long time about the perpetrator being held accountable for the violence. Despite this, women are still blamed for the violence and bear many of the consequences of the violence, including having to leave their own homes.

Safety for the woman and her children

It has been accepted wisdom for at least 30 years that women experiencing domestic violence need to flee their home, in order to be safe.

The results of this study suggest that this notion needs to be examined more closely. Can we assure women's safety if they flee their home? The evidence suggests that we cannot. A number of women in the study who fled their homes experienced further violence from their partners, who found out where they were living.

In Kerry's situation, her partner went to prison, so you might assume that she would be safe, at least while he served his prison term. However, while Kerry was living in a halfway house, he found out her address from a friend and sent someone around to terrorise her in the middle of the night. In Kerry's own words:

'Well I had to leave, he got my address, a friend of mine who I'm close friends with decided to tell him where I was and one night I was at home then and he had been ringing me all week but I was pretty much leaving anyway because you know he got my phone number and stuff so the staff said it's probably best that you leave so I

'I had to leave, he got my address, a friend of mine who I'm close friends with decided to tell him where I was' Kerry

was ready to leave anyway and one night I was there and there was a knock at the door and this man was standing there because it didn't have a screen door and I opened it, it didn't have a peep hole, when I opened it he kicked the door in ...'

Kerry goes on to say how he trashed the place, and she had to leave, again.

Sally was a woman who moved towns to get away from her abusive partner. However, he simply found out which school the children were going to, he moved right next door to the school, and proceeded to stalk and harass his ex-partner.

Aroha's ex-partner walked right into her home. He simply knocked on her door and was let in by their young son.

Megan's case indicates that women living in small country towns may have particular difficulties remaining anonymous, and keeping their location secret. Megan says that her ex-partner knows the area she is living in, and that *'if he wants to find me, he will find me'*.

To the researcher's question of how he would find her, Megan responds *'I mean if I wanted to find someone I'd just drive around asking a few people, I know what sort of stuff that I have out the front of my house, just checking around, eventually you would recognise my son's toys'*.

The question that needs to be considered is: If the ex-partner ends up finding out where the woman is living, how is she any safer in her new home? Furthermore, was her flight to safety worth it? Was it necessary? How many times does she want to run?

Sadly there can be no guarantees that the woman will not be the victim of further violence from her ex-partner, whether she remains in her home or leaves it.

In the words of Kerry, the reality of domestic violence is that he could always come back one day, especially if there are children involved:

'Women that are in domestic violence are going to live with that, especially if you have their children...like they could come back...whether they do or whether they don't you're still going to always have it in the back of your mind like are they going to come back, I don't think anything's going to change that...'

The argument put forward here is that woman's lack of safety is related to the often relentless nature of domestic violence, regardless of where she is living. Her safety, or lack of it, is not tied to whether she has left her home or remained in it.

It is also important to consider women's wider safety needs, especially if she falls into poverty and homelessness as a result of leaving the violent relationship. Such situations are anything but safe for the woman, even if it is not her ex-partner who now poses the threat.

For the 20 women who left their homes, did the man know where she was?

In eleven of the cases the man knew where the woman was living. In some of these cases the woman had told the man; in others he found out through a variety of means including family law arrangements, his friends and children.

In nine of the cases, at the time of interview, the violent ex-partner did not know where the woman was living. It is important to clarify that a number of these women had only recently left the violence and were staying in a women's refuge. Anecdotal experience indicates that it is more than likely that when a woman moves out of the refuge their partner may find them.

It is also important to note that some men do not pursue the woman. This is despite preconceptions and stereotypes that the perpetrator will hunt a victim down. In at

least two of the cases within this study, the ex-partner had made no attempts to contact the women, even though they were not living in refuges, they would have been quite easy to locate, and one of the women had recently given birth to a baby. The men did not pursue the women, making their situation considerably safer.

There are some men who believe that they have a right to have a presence in their partner's lives, or use their presence as a further tactic of harassment and intimidation. In some women's words, *'they just don't get the message they are not welcome any more'*. In Christine's case, even though she had a new and positive relationship, her ex-partner was still coming to her home uninvited, nine years after she left him.

Housing outcomes of the women who left

For the twenty women who left their homes, nearly one-half found their housing situation had deteriorated, in relation to security of tenure and quality of the housing.

Of these nine women whose housing deteriorated, three had left a home which they owned and went to a refuge to escape the violence. One older woman fled her spacious and comfortable family home on the NSW mid-north coast, to find herself first in a room in an old hotel alongside Central Station, and then in a refuge. At the time of interview she was living in a substandard converted garage in outer Sydney. Ironically she says her own home on the mid-north coast came complete with a double garage.

A South American woman, Theresa, who left a home she owned in western Sydney and went to a refuge, spoke about her loss, and how she was not welcome in her home anymore: *'Once I stepped foot out of the house it's not my house anymore'*. In leaving her home she also had to leave her two older sons, who stayed with their father. Theresa expressed great sorrow at having to leave her sons behind and remarked on the consequences that this has had on her relationships with them.

Many of the remaining women whose housing improved or remained, on balance, fairly equal, experienced periods of overcrowding, homelessness and staying in refuges before their housing stabilised.

Five women's housing improved after leaving the violence. It is important to qualify that this improvement often took anything from one to two years, during which time the woman was homeless and/or living in a refuge. Only one of the five women was able to go straight from her violent home into a Community Tenancy Scheme (CTS) on the NSW Far South Coast.

Women's housing improvement was often only relative. One young woman, for example, was living with her violent partner and newborn baby in a room above a hotel. While her move to a comfortable women's refuge in Sydney's eastern suburbs could be considered an improvement, she still did not have housing which could be considered adequate by any stretch of the imagination.

Of the six women whose housing remained fairly equal on balance, two sustained long and traumatic periods of homelessness, before their housing stabilised through a DOH or private rental tenancy.

This is Kerry's story, the young Aboriginal woman living in South East Sydney. She fled her DOH home with two young children, first to stay with her mother, and then to join the refuge circuit over a two-year period, during which she stayed in six different refuges and medium-term places. She recounts both positive and negative experiences of refuge living, and how she left one of her children with her mother. She came close to having a nervous breakdown. In her own words, *'It was mainly when I was in (name of refuge) that things fell apart for me. I just couldn't handle it anymore...I wanted my own home. I wanted my own security again because I've lived*

*'Once I stepped
foot out of the
house it's not
my house
anymore'*
Theresa

out of home since I was 14, I'd just had enough, I was coming towards a nervous breakdown or something'.

Private rental accommodation

Women living in private rental accommodation were presented with a number of challenges, one of which was TICA (Tenancy Information Centre Australasia). Three of the 20 women said they were on the TICA list. TICA is a central register of tenants who have defaulted under their private rental tenancy. To the surprise of the researcher (who was unfamiliar with TICA) the database is legal, and used by real estate agents to prevent persons on the list from securing another tenancy. In this sense TICA is a tenant blacklist.

All three women were on the TICA list because of damage their violent partners had done to the rental property. The women were living in refuges at the time of interview, and certainly their housing options were slim.

At the time of the study, the NSW Office of Fair Trading was reviewing private databases of tenants. It is critical that the Review develop guidelines to ensure that women who are victims of domestic violence are not placed on TICA due to any damage to property caused by violent partners.

Case study

Lavinia, a young Tongan woman was, able to get her violent husband to leave the home, only to have other factors conspire to render her and her two young children homeless. The woman got the man out by packing up all his belongings, putting them by the front door and telling him to go, which he did. He was a Pacific Islander and went to stay with his extended family, coming back to the flat only to visit his children. However when the woman tried to change the lease of the privately rented flat into her name, the real estate agent conducted an inspection and discovered extensive damage done to the flat by the violent man. As a result the tenancy was not renewed and the woman found she was placed on the TICA 'bad tenants' list, which may prevent her from renting other properties on the private market.

Public Housing

Four women in the study left their DOH tenancy, despite the Department's policy to support women to retain their housing and rehouse the violent partner. In at least two of the cases the violent partner also moved out soon after, indicating that the woman could have stayed after all.

In one of the cases the woman had four children under twelve years of age, and during the six months' wait to be rehoused by DOH, she was living with an AVO under the same roof as her violent partner. It would have made a lot more sense for the Department of Housing to allow the five of them to remain in the home (mother and four children), and rehouse the one man elsewhere. As it turned out, DOH ended up rehousing everyone elsewhere, in two new tenancies.

It is important that the policy of enabling victims of violence to retain their tenancy be actively translated into practice, for example through the Department's casework specialists.

The research has highlighted issues regarding the attitudes of some DOH staff towards domestic violence and women victims. For example, Theresa, the South American woman, was living in a refuge after fleeing a marriage of 14 years involving constant abuse. She described the abuse in terms of mental abuse, verbal abuse, threats and continual put-downs. She had been physically abused earlier in the

relationship. The DOH officer questioned the mental abuse, making the woman feel that she was not being believed.

In her own words, *'The lady that interviewed me she was really worried about my personal life more than finding me a place to live, and in some of her questions she asked me what did I mean with mental abuse, what does that mean, she even said what did I do to provoke him you know....ah I just wouldn't like anyone to go through that, if I was told you have to go to another interview I would say no....'*

Again, being believed by services and agencies is critical to the woman's ability to move forward and rebuild her life.

Financial issues

A number of the twenty women said one of the reasons they left their homes was because they were unable to afford the housing costs by themselves. This was particularly the case for women living in the Sydney metropolitan area who were renting on the private market.

The research demonstrates how Sydney's lack of housing affordability has worked against each of the women who left their homes. All of the women who left struggled to afford new housing, the only exception being the woman living on the Far South Coast who was able to move directly into a CTS tenancy. The women living in a refuge at the time of interview spoke about the high cost of housing as a barrier to their moving on. Other women sacrificed the quality of housing in order to be able to afford their independence.

Some women, in particular the CALD women, had no money at all when they fled their homes. For example, when the Russian woman's husband suspected that she was leaving, he withdrew all the money from their account, leaving only \$5. She, along with two other women in the study who were new arrivals, had no permanent residency, and consequently were prevented from accessing most Centrelink payments and benefits.

Women who wanted to leave their homes

It is very difficult to answer the question, *did the women who left their homes want to do so*, because generally the women in this study felt they had no choice; there was nothing else they could do but leave their homes.

However a small number of women who left were positive about leaving their home behind, and spoke strongly in terms that this is what they wanted to do. They had clear and articulate reasons for leaving their homes. The research acknowledges these women's choices as being the right ones for them.

This group of women left their homes because they wanted:

- > to seek a safe refuge away from the violence;
- > to leave the memories of violence and abuse held in the home; and,
- > to establish their independence away from their partner.

A number of women spoke about the life-saving and nurturing approach of the women's refuge. At the time of interview, seven women were living in refuge accommodation.

In the words of Rose, a young woman living in a refuge in Sydney, whose partner pursued her when she fled interstate with her baby, *'As long as he was aware of where I was living I never would've been safe'*. This woman did not believe that the police and courts could provide her with protection. In her own words *'I'll be dead by the time the police arrive'*.

Shanti, the Indian woman, wanted to leave her violent and unhappy home for the security and emotional support offered by a refuge. She was suffering from a mental illness, and suicidal, after sustaining 24 years of violence and abuse in two domestic violence relationships. In leaving the first violent home she had also left her three adult children, and at the time of interview was devastated by loss and grief. She was fearful if she had stayed alone in her second home that *'I might just kill myself'*.

Dawn was an Aboriginal woman who fled a life of drug abuse and addiction in Campbelltown and went to a women's refuge on the Far South Coast. In her own words, *'They (the refuge) were my initial break and I really have them to thank for where I am today because I honestly don't know where I'd be, if I didn't have a refuge I think I'd have probably ended up back in Campbelltown... I'd really hate to think of where my kids would be now if we still lived in Campbelltown I can honestly say I wouldn't have them, DCS would have them'*.

One important issue raised in an interview was the view that the woman felt it would have been harder for her to leave her husband if she had remained in the home, and that she would probably have taken him back if she had stayed. Other women spoke about the benefits of leaving the home behind, and the relief they experienced. Setting up new housing was empowering and symbolic of a new life without violence and abuse. This is how Sally spoke about her escape from her violent home on the Far South Coast, with her three children:

'It was so relieving like I'll never forget that feeling as I was driving down the driveway, I was petrified that he was going to hear the car start up and he was going to come running out so I was really concentrating on just getting the car started and getting it going because I thought once the car's going he can't catch us, but I'll never forget getting to the bottom of the driveway and it was just so relieving to just go, like I'm gone, I'm out of there, like a big breath of fresh air.'

Some women had very negative feelings about their home, even seeing it like a gaol. It is little wonder that these women wanted to re-establish housing elsewhere. In the words of Christine, *'I wanted to begin my independence...it felt like I was in gaol...I felt like I had been restricted I felt like I had no rights, so for me moving from there and into a place it gave me a little bit more independence I think which was something that was taken away.... I think a new start and a new beginning is far more beneficial than remaining in an old environment'*.

Interestingly, the women who did choose to leave their homes and who were happy about their decision were also adamant that other women be given the right to remain in their own home, if this is what they wanted to do.

Women who were disadvantaged

The women in the study who were particularly disadvantaged were the five Aboriginal women and the two CALD new arrivals. In listening to these women's stories it becomes clear what a long way Australian society has to go before women's rights become a reality for all. Not one of the seven women was able to remain in her own home. Generally they did not 'see' they had a home in which they could remain.

Three of the Aboriginal women interviewed did not have a home, in the white Australian sense of that word. They were living with relatives, or living a transient lifestyle, so the idea of being able to remain in their own home did not make a lot of sense. One Aboriginal woman was living with her partner's mother, so the question of removing her violent partner from the home was not a viable option. For one woman remaining in a home has probably never been an option, more a matter of always moving on.

The remaining two Aboriginal women were living in Department of Housing accommodation, following periods of homelessness, overcrowding and living in refuges.

Similarly, the idea of leaving violence did not make sense to some of the Aboriginal women interviewed, in the words of one woman, *'You don't really ever leave the violence, because it's all around you, if you know what I mean'*. The violence was occurring in the woman's extended family, at her neighbours' place, down the road, at the pub, in her community, in racist encounters...the list goes on. Violence was all around her, and the thought of 'leaving violence' was difficult to imagine.

However, it is important not to create stereotypes around the acceptance of violence in Aboriginal communities. Dawn did not accept violence was the norm, and she did not accept it in her own life, especially after witnessing domestic violence as a young girl. To the interviewer's question, 'What about blokes that are violent to their women, what's your experience been?' she replies:

'No that's why I am single because I refuse to be hit and I've been hit...the first time he hit me was the last time. I thought no stuff this I ain't going to put my children through what I had seen cause I'd seen domestic violence as a kid you know my mum laying in pools of blood.'

The interviews with Aboriginal women revealed other significant problems in their lives, apart from the violence. The violence was often interwoven with drug and alcohol addictions, child sexual assault, and loss of custody of children.

The two CALD new arrivals (a woman from Sri Lanka and a Filipino woman who had been living in Lebanon) were similarly disadvantaged. Both these women were thrown out of their homes by violent and abusive men. They found themselves wandering the streets of a strange city, homeless. They had no knowledge of their rights (however limited these may be), no permanent residency, no money, no family and no knowledge of any services in Sydney which could assist them. In many ways the two women had no home, and no country.

Case study

Marisa was a Filipino woman in her early thirties. She left the Philippines when she was 15, went to Lebanon, and got married. Marisa reared three young children by herself in Lebanon, when her Lebanese husband walked out on her and came to Australia. After seven years of absence, during which her husband made no contact with his wife or children, nor provided any financial assistance, the woman decided to come to Australia with her three children to find out what had happened. She stayed with her husband for one short month in Sydney, only to flee his violence and abuse and end up on the street with nowhere to go. In her own words, *'I run, I leave him, I leave my children with him because I am new in Australia I don't know somewhere to go and I don't know anyone'*.

At the time of the interview she was living in refuge accommodation, while her three girls were living with her husband. The man did not allow the children to visit their mother at the refuge, permitting a visit two hours every fortnight at a local shopping centre. When the woman sought housing in order to allow her children to be reunited with her, an officer's response from the local DOH agency was that they could not house her if she did not have her children currently living with her.

If it were not for the considerable care and attention provided by the refuge outreach workers, this woman might well have taken her own life.

Case study

Yasmin, the Sri Lankan woman whose arranged marriage broke down after six months, was given notice to leave the house by her husband, who acted more like a landlord than a newly-wed. She sought help at a western Sydney railway station. In her own words, *'I don't know from where I got the courage, somehow I think God helped me, I met this lady at the station and she said I have a room and she was happy to keep me...yeah this Chinese lady she told me she has a room actually I don't know how I went and asked, I said I am looking for a room and she said come I'll show you I have a room and she took me home and that's how I found a place to live...'*

Characteristics of the perpetrators

The research has highlighted that one of the critical factors in considering a woman's safety if she remains in her home is her partner's attitude and behaviour towards the law. Many of the twenty women spoke about how their partners did not respect the police or the courts. Some of the men thumbed their noses at authorities, they were not scared of the police and were not scared of going to gaol. Some women spoke about how their partner disregarded Apprehended Violence Orders. In the words of Kerry, *'The police just won't stop him, just won't stop him, you know he has hit me in front of the police...'* Other women, however, were convinced that their partner would have stayed away from the home, if he had been forced to by law.

One violent partner demonstrated his open hostility to women seeking help with a domestic violence relationship by tearing down a 'Family Harmony' poster at his own Sikh Temple.

Of the ex-partners of the twenty women who left their homes:

- > only four did not have drug, alcohol and/or gambling problems;
- > only three were working, and the 'breadwinner';
- > 14 had drug and/or alcohol problems, a number of women referred to their partners as alcoholics; and,
- > two were gamblers.

Some perpetrators had a multitude of addictions, but they did not acknowledge this. For example, one partner was an alcoholic, a gambler, physically violent, sexually dysfunctional, he had financial problems, he stole from the woman and was a compulsive liar – *'you just couldn't get the truth out of him'*. Despite all of this, the ex-partner believed he had a *'good reputation'* in the small town on the Far South Coast where he lived. When his partner suggested they both attend counselling, his response was *'there's nothing wrong with me'*.

Support from services

At the time of interview, seven of the women were living in a women's refuge. They spoke very positively about the services offered by the refuge, and the importance of the support and advocacy role provided by refuge workers.

When family were absent, or unsupportive, as was the case with at least three of the women, the support offered by community organisations became critical to the woman's survival.

A number of women said the Domestic Violence Crisis Hotline and Centrelink were the first important points of contact, as they were able to refer women on to other organisations for counselling and support.

Some of the CALD women spoke of the importance of immigrant services and ethno-specific workers, for example the Immigrant Women's Speakout. However other

CALD women said they did not want to approach community workers from their own background, because of the community's patriarchal views. In the words of Theresa, the South American woman, *'When you talk to people of your own background, they think the same as him'*.

Four of the five Aboriginal women were living on the Far South Coast. They used services which had a strong Aboriginal presence, including a history of working with Aboriginal people, and Aboriginal workers.

Perhaps the most significant characteristic of community organisations working with victims of domestic violence, whether they remained in, or left, their homes, is that they are able to provide longer term support, and do not 'give up' on the woman. Hence the women in the study who had left the violence many years ago, but turned to community organisations for assistance in addressing the long-term effects of violence on themselves and their children.

Women's losses – the consequences of leaving their home

- > Three women lost their children. They were CALD women who, in leaving their violent home, for different reasons had to leave their children behind. At the time of interview the women said they had contemplated suicide and had nothing to live for;
- > Nine women's housing deteriorated, in terms of both security of tenure and quality, and many of the women experienced periods of homelessness;
- > Several women spoke about how they had lost their whole life, and had to start all over again;
- > Women who fled to a refuge spoke about how they still had to face up to their problems, and that their escape to the refuge was only short-lived;
- > Women are blamed for leaving the home, and often internalise the blame;
- > Leaving home, and the insecurity involved in establishing new housing in an often hostile housing market, sometimes had a devastating effect on the children;
- > Sometimes children had to change their schools and make new friends;
- > Women lost many of their material possessions; some women lost all they owned;
- > Women found there were high financial costs involved in re-establishing their housing; and,
- > Some women returned to their violent home, and again became the victims of violence and abuse.

In the words of Shanti, who regrets leaving her home, *'stay there if you can because you will lose too much if you walk off and you might never, never get it back again...the only way for them to have a life is stay in the house...stay there if you can and carry on with your life'*.

The wider losses to society include the significant social and economic costs of women's homelessness, the costs involved in re-establishing new housing and the disruption to the lives of many children. There is also the longer-term social consequence of not holding the offender accountable for using violence. This accountability is the first step in a strategy to prevent further violence against women.

DETAILED ANALYSIS of interviews conducted with the twenty-nine women in the study identified four overarching themes. These four themes form the components of a framework which enables women and their children to remain in their own homes on leaving a domestic violence relationship.

The four components of the framework are:

- > Removal of the violent partner from the home;
- > Keeping the violent partner out of the home, over time;
- > Immediate and longer term safety issues for the woman and her children; and,
- > Longer term support for the woman and her children, and the prevention of future violence.

Each component is discussed below.

1 *Removal of the violent partner from the home*

A small number of women in the study, through sheer force of will, were successful in having their partner leave the home. However, in most cases it will be unrealistic, and unsafe, for the woman to remove the man herself. Police removal of the violent partner at the time of the violent incident is required, where the legal provisions allow this to occur. Police are able by law to remove the violent party in situations where:

- > Police have sufficient evidence to charge the offender, for example, with assault or breach of an AVO;
- > Police take out a Telephone Interim Order (TIO) against the offender, which has an exclusion order condition; and,
- > Police charge the offender, and the bail conditions specify the offender is not to go within XX metres of his home.

The research findings demonstrate the effectiveness of taking out a Telephone Interim Order (TIO), charging the offender, and ensuring appropriate bail conditions are in place. As one woman in the study said, describing how a police officer had attended a domestic violence offence and then removed and charged the violent party, *'he (the police officer) said let's charge him with assault...it's amazing the difference that one good copper can make to your life...that copper changed my life'*.

The NSW Domestic Violence Interagency Guidelines (2003) refer to the arrest of offenders who have committed a domestic violence offence. The Guidelines state *'if police believe a domestic violence offence has occurred they are instructed to.... give strongest consideration to exercising their powers in favour of arrest'* (p. 110). Further, the Guidelines state, *'The NSW Police Policy is to act in favour of arrest when an offence has been detected'* (p. 110).

While the research indicated that victims are often asked by police officers if they wanted the offender charged, the Guidelines state clearly that *'the decision to charge is not the responsibility of the victim'*. It is the police who need to make this decision (p. 111). The Guidelines, referring to TIOs, state that if police believe the victim is in imminent danger from the defendant, police can request an exclusion condition to the TIO, *'prohibiting or restricting access by the defendant to any premises occupied by the protected person'* (p. 112).

The research indicates that provision of housing for the violent partner, even if it is only temporary accommodation options or short-term housing, can support police action to remove the violent partner from their home. If a police officer has somewhere to take the offender, removal becomes a more realistic option. Housing

options for the violent partner include family and friends, private rental accommodation, Department of Housing (DOH) rent and bond assistance, DOH Temporary Assistance (TA), and men's SAAP services.

2 *Keeping the violent partner out of the home, over time*

The research findings demonstrate the significance of exclusion orders, as a condition of an AVO, in keeping the violent partner out of the home, over time.

However there was an overall lack of information and knowledge about exclusion orders, with many of the women first hearing about them through participation in this research.

While it is sometimes assumed that men will not consent to an order excluding them from their home, *'Violence Excluded: a study of exclusion orders in South East Sydney'* 2003, showed that in more than half of the 32 cases analysed, the man did consent to the order excluding him from the home. Consent was more likely if there was a TIO already in place, together with charge matters where the offender was pleading guilty. In the contested cases the magistrate granted the exclusion order if the male defendant had somewhere else to live, and the case was considered to be serious.

Housing for the violent partner is again critical when considering effective and lasting interventions to keep the violent partner out of the home.

Legislation relating to exclusion orders requires the magistrate to consider 'the accommodation needs of all parties' (Crimes Act Part 15A Section 562D). As demonstrated in *'Violence Excluded'*, local court magistrates considering an application for an exclusion order pay particular attention to the accommodation needs of the male defendant. The accommodation needs of the victim and children are not considered, contrary to that specified in the Crimes Act.

This study supports the recommendations from *Violence Excluded* which relate to the issue of the accommodation needs of the violent partner, namely:

- > That in cases involving exclusion orders, courts give primary attention to the safety needs of women and children, rather than the accommodation needs of defendants;
- > That a resource for magistrates, prosecutors and Domestic Violence Liaison Officers (DVLOs) be prepared, that is able to be adapted for local use, detailing the various accommodation options available for defendants; and,
- > That discussions be held with the NSW Department of Housing regarding the range of existing, as well as other, possible options to accommodate defendants, such as short-term housing vouchers in a standard hotel or boarding house.

The legislation cited above also requires the magistrate to consider the consequences for the woman and her children if the court rejects an application for an exclusion order. The interviews with women for this study clearly demonstrate the consequences, namely that if the male defendant is not excluded from the home then the woman and children may have to leave the home themselves, or remain in the home with a violent partner. In the words of one woman, if she was not granted the exclusion order to keep her violent ex-husband out of the home, this would result in forcing her out with her three young children, *'to be chucked out of my own home...'*

3 *Immediate and longer-term safety for the woman and her children*

Safety for women and children was one of the central issues on which the research focused.

The research findings support the development and implementation of a 'safety package' for women and their children who remain in their own home on leaving domestic violence. The safety package would include:

- > Use of technologies such as panic alarms, sensor alarms and mobile phones.
- > Establishment of protocols with the local police station, including police monitoring of women and children's safety in the initial twelve (12) week period following leaving the violence.
- > Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Schemes supporting women's applications for exclusion orders, and where staffing allows provision of follow-up advocacy and support, especially where breaches of the order are occurring.
- > Safety protocols related to the offender's contact with his children; whereby contact visits occur at a location away from the woman's home.
- > Where possible, outreach support and advocacy for the women and children, from a local women's service.

Significantly, there are no existing services in NSW which specifically support women and their children to remain in their own homes. This research study provides both the opportunity and the rationale to initiate a safety package, including pilot outreach and advocacy services, to support women and children to remain in their homes. This package then becomes an innovative service within a diverse and responsive network of services to assist women and children leaving domestic violence. The proposed service delivery response represents innovative practice derived from evidence-based research.

The research findings demonstrate that women themselves develop a range of safety strategies when they leave a domestic violence situation, whether they remain in their own home or establish housing elsewhere. The work of the UK feminist Elizabeth Stanko, who argues that women themselves are the experts in risk management and in surviving danger, through their lifetime of daily experiences, is certainly reflected in the scope and detail of safety strategies of women interviewed for this study (Stanko 1990). Most of the women in the study carried out their own risk assessments, based on their intimate and often longstanding knowledge of their partner, to which community based services and government agencies are not privy.

The research findings serve to question many of the assumptions held regarding safety, in particular the assumption that a woman needs to flee her home in order to be safe. This is reflected in the recent Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisation's (AFHO) policy statement on domestic and family violence which states: 'At present in Australia most women and children who do not wish to live with violence in the home are forced to flee, as their safety cannot be assured within the home' (p. 24). However, the research has demonstrated that women's safety also cannot be assured if they leave their home.

In considering safety, we need to be looking at the reality of domestic violence and the knowledge base which has been built up. This tells us the following:

- > There is a heightened risk of violence for a woman when she leaves a domestic violence relationship. Women should never be encouraged to remain in a violent relationship and safety plans need to be operationalised at this time due to this heightened risk;

- > A range of tactics are used by violent partners to gain entry back into the home. Many perpetrators do not come back to the woman kicking down the door and punching their way in. In the words of one woman from the study, 'most men are sucking their way back in, with flowers, sorrys and the like'; and,
- > Many perpetrators do know, or find out, where the woman is living, after she has fled. This is particularly the case where children and family law orders are involved (Stubbs et al, 2003).

One woman's statement from the study is a stark reminder that fleeing your home does not necessarily bring safety: *What's the point of leaving (home), he will find me anywhere.*

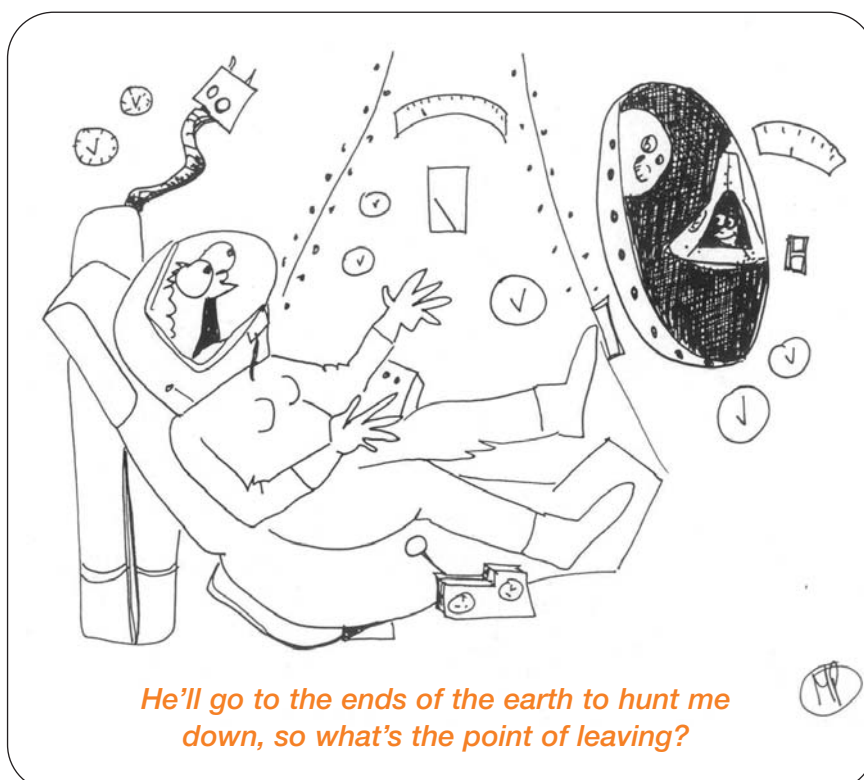
The longer-term safety needs of women and children also need to be considered. If women and children fall into homelessness and poverty as a result of leaving the violence, they will find themselves in situations that are anything but safe.

4 Longer-term support for women and children and prevention of future violence

One of the potent findings of the research was the need of women and children for often long-term emotional support and assistance following the trauma of domestic violence. All too clearly the research demonstrated the long-term legacy of domestic violence for its victims. All interviews showed that domestic violence is not a one-off isolated act of violence, but instead is a pattern of violence, abuse, control and intimidation, often spanning many years. The fact that the perpetrator is the intimate partner, and father, makes the leaving, survival and recovery problematic, tenuous and difficult.

Some community-based organisations, including those which nominated women for interviews, offer long-term support to women and children who are suffering the damaging effects of domestic violence. In the words of one woman from the study, describing a housing service which had offered her critical support and assistance over several years, *'they never give up on you'*.

The prevention of future violence needs to be at the core of any program working with victims of domestic violence. The safety package and pilot outreach and advocacy services aim to protect the women and children from further violence. They also aim to prevent women and children's homelessness by enabling them to remain in their own homes.



Improving choices and outcomes for women

- 1 That the choices and outcomes for women and children leaving a domestic violence situation be improved, by enabling women and children to remain in their own homes, if this is what they wish to do.

Further, where women do choose to remain in their own homes, that the four components of the ***Staying Home Leaving Violence*** framework be addressed, namely:

- > Removal of the violent partner from the home
- > Keeping the violent partner out of the home, over time
- > Immediate and longer-term safety issues for the woman and her children
- > Longer-term support for the woman and her children, and the prevention of future violence.

A whole-of-government systemic response to preventing women and children's homelessness as a result of leaving a domestic violence situation

- 2 That the NSW Government develop and implement a NSW government policy and practice framework, which seeks to remove the violent and abusive partner from the home, and enables and supports the victims of domestic violence to remain in their homes.

Research initiatives, putting the *Staying Home Leaving Violence* framework into practice

- 3 Three pilot services are recommended, one in each of the research locations, in order to put into practice, test and evaluate different service approaches enabling women and children to remain safely in their own homes. The pilots are:
 - > Far South Coast. Funding has been made available to Bega Women's Refuge for an outreach and advocacy worker to support women and children to remain in their own homes. This service will run hand in hand with the core service of the refuge, providing safe accommodation for women fleeing a domestic violence situation.
 - > South East Sydney. A specialist domestic violence position is to be based with the NSW Housing Department's Homelessness Action Team Support and Outreach Service (HATSOS).
 - > Western Sydney. It is proposed to pilot a service within the Community Solutions Mt Druitt Family Violence Response and Support Strategy, whereby one of the caseworker positions would work specifically with women and children remaining in their own homes.

The following recommendations are grouped under the headings of the framework.

Removal of the violent partner from the home

- 4 That NSW Police promote and adopt a proactive policing response to removing the violent partner from the home, where legal provisions make this possible. In particular that Telephone Interim Orders with an exclusion condition, and charging the violent offender, be employed by police officers where appropriate.
- 5 That NSW Police review operational guidelines regarding removal of the violent offender from the home, and develop information for victims and perpetrators about their options, especially the option of women and their children remaining in their own home.

Keeping the violent partner out of the home, over time

- 6 That women are routinely informed about exclusion orders, within all information provided about Apprehended Violence Orders, especially when making an application for an Apprehended Violence Order.
- 7 That training is incorporated into existing police training modules and programs – about exclusion order conditions within Apprehended Violence Orders and police obligations to inform victims about this option.
- 8 That there be a greater use of exclusion orders by the local courts, to provide legal grounds for keeping the violent partner out of the home, and legal protection for the woman who remains.
- 9 That local court Magistrates, in determining applications for exclusion orders, give priority to the safety needs of women and children victims of domestic violence, as opposed to the accommodation needs of male defendants.
- 10 That the recommendations of *'Violence Excluded: a study of exclusion orders in South East Sydney'* be implemented, and overseen by the NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women.
- 11 That pro-active policing responses be employed to breaches of an Apprehended Violence Order with an exclusion condition.
- 12 That the NSW Department of Housing provide a range of housing options to the domestic violence offender (where eligibility tests are met), including Temporary Assistance (TA) and Rent and Bond Assistance.
- 13 Further, that the Department of Housing develop a clear policy statement providing detail about temporary accommodation and housing options available to men removed from their homes as a result of domestic violence who have no other accommodation options.
- 14 That the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) provides housing options to the offender, including accommodation in the inner city men's crisis services.

Immediate and longer-term safety issues for women and children

- 15 As one of the initiatives of the research, the ***Staying Home Leaving Violence*** safety package is developed for women and children who remain in their homes, on leaving a domestic violence situation.
That the safety package is developed by the pilot outreach models and includes the following components:

- > Use of technologies such as panic alarms, sensor alarms and mobile phones.
- > Protocols with the local police station developed concerning victim follow-up, particularly in the initial twelve (12) week period following leaving the violence. This will include phone contact and referral to local services to enhance women and children's safety and support. Police will contact the defendant regarding the seriousness of the crime and penalties for breaching the AVO will be outlined.
- > Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Schemes supporting women's application for exclusion orders, and where staffing allows provision of follow-up advocacy and support, especially where breaches of the order are occurring.
- > Safety protocols related to the offender's contact with his children, whereby contact visits occur at a location away from the woman's home.
- > Where possible, outreach support and advocacy for the women and children, from a local women's service.
- > Brokerage funds to women's refuges to pay for enhanced security measures such as changing locks and personal safety alarms.
- > Pamphlet on exclusion orders providing information to women about this option.

Further, that each of the pilot services develop and test safety measures appropriate for their locality.

Regional training is undertaken to complement the implementation of policy and practices promoted by the pilot services.

- 16 That the needs of children for physical safety and emotional well-being be met by a combination of the safety package and support from community based organisations such as local family support services.
- 17 That the benefits for children in remaining in their own homes be documented by the pilot services, and the Commission on Young People and Children be approached by the proposed Clearinghouse Research Project to partner this documentation.
- 18 That the Women's Refuge Movement and the Women's Refuge and Resource Centre work in partnership with the proposed Clearinghouse Research Project in monitoring issues around the safety of women and children remaining in their homes.

Provision of longer-term support for women and children, and prevention of further violence

- 19 That community-based organisations be enabled to provide longer-term practical and emotional support for women and children leaving domestic violence, in order to assist their recovery from the trauma of abuse and prevent the recurrence of violence.
- 20 That we, as a society, collectively address the shame and blame that women victims of domestic violence routinely experience, and instead place the accountability for the violence with the perpetrator.

The final group of recommendations relates to the need for further research and evaluation, a resource for women victims of domestic violence, promoting the research findings to relevant organisations, the proposed specialist domestic violence court, and the role of community based services in supporting women to remain in their own homes.

Further research and evaluation

- 21 That the Clearinghouse be funded for a researcher/evaluator to collect and analyse data from the three pilots, evaluate effectiveness of the pilots, and develop a best practice service model/s able to support women and children to remain in their own homes on leaving a domestic violence relationship.
- 22 That there be collaboration with Aboriginal women's organisations regarding the development of a complementary piece of research and consultation in Aboriginal communities on the subject of **Staying Home Leaving Violence**.
- 23 That further research is undertaken to examine the nature and extent of post-separation violence experienced by women and their children.

Resource for women victims of domestic violence

- 24 That the Clearinghouse develops a resource for women leaving domestic violence, in the form of a booklet containing advice the twenty-nine women in the study wished to share with other women leaving a relationship involving domestic violence.

Promotion of research findings: information, dialogue and training

- 25 That the research report is distributed to relevant government agencies to ensure that policy and practice be considered in light of the research findings. Actions resulting from this should include the development of training materials to inform organisations about the options highlighted by this report. This should include:
 - > Material for Centrelink staff to facilitate the making of crisis payments to women who remain in their homes as well as women who flee their homes;
 - > Presentation to local court Magistrates in conjunction with the NSW Judicial Commission regarding exclusion order issues.

The proposed specialist domestic violence court

- 26 That the NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women ensures the Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model (DVICM) addresses the key issues outlined in this research report and incorporates, in the model, choices for women and children to remain in their own homes.

The role of community based services

- 27 That the current work of women's refuges, domestic violence court assistance schemes and family support services in supporting women and children to remain in their homes is acknowledged. Further, that existing outreach workers and brokerage funds be accessed to support and enable women's choices to maintain their housing, and their children's housing.
- 28 That the evolving models and innovative approaches of women's refuges incorporate a focus on supporting women and children leaving violence to remain safely in their own homes.

10 References

- Australian Federation of Homelessness Organisations (AFHO), 2002, *Summary of Policy Positions*, AFHO, Dickson, Australian Capital Territory. http://www.afho.org.au/5_policy/Summary/Summary.pdf [2/9/04]
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2003, *Homeless people in SAAP: SAAP National Data Collection Annual Report 2002–03 Australia*. AIHW cat. no. HOU 91. Canberra: AIHW, (SAAP NDCA report Series 8). <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/hou/saapndcar02-03/saapndcar02-03.pdf> [2/9/04]
- Bullen, P., 2003, *Domestic Violence Interagency Guidelines: Working With the Legal System in Responding to Domestic Violence*, Violence Against Women Specialist Unit, Attorney General's Department, Sydney. [http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd.nsf/files/DVIG%20130503.pdf/\\$FILE/DVIG%20130503.pdf](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd.nsf/files/DVIG%20130503.pdf/$FILE/DVIG%20130503.pdf) [2/9/04]
- Chung, D., 2001, 'Questioning domestic violence orthodoxies', *Women Against Violence: An Australian Feminist Journal*, no. 11, pp. 7-15
- Chung, D., Kennedy, R., O'Brien, B., Wendt, S. & Cody, S., 2000, *Home Safe Home: the Link between Domestic and Family Violence and Women's Homelessness* Social Policy Research Group, University of South Australia, Shelter SA, Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra. http://www.padv.dpmc.gov.au/projects/home_safe_home.pdf [2/9/04]
- Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre (DVIRC), 2002, *Family Violence and Homelessness, Removing the Perpetrator from the Home*, Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre (DVIRC), Melbourne
- Edwards, R., 2004, *Violence Excluded: A Study into Exclusion Orders, South East Sydney*. NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women, Attorney General's Department, Sydney.
- Foster, P., 2001, 'A move towards a more accessible service', *Out of the Fire: Domestic Violence and Homelessness, Parity* vol. 14, no. 2, Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre, NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre, Council to Homeless Persons, Victoria.
- Health Outcomes International (HOI) 2004, *Improving Women's Safety*. Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra.
- Health Outcomes International (HOI) 2002, *Improving women's safety: literature review*, Commonwealth Office of the Status of Women / Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra. [http://www.hoi.com.au/iws/PADV%20-%20IWS%20Lit%20Rev%20\(full\).pdf](http://www.hoi.com.au/iws/PADV%20-%20IWS%20Lit%20Rev%20(full).pdf) [1/9/04]
- Keys Young 1998, *Against the Odds: How Women Survive Domestic Violence: the Needs of Women Experiencing Domestic Violence who do not use Domestic Violence and Crisis Related Services*, Office of the Status of Women, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra.
- NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research 1991, *Crime & Justice Facts*, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research, Sydney.
- Patton, S., 2003, *Pathways: How Women Leave Violent Men*, Women Tasmania, Hobart.
- Smyth, N., 2003, *Impact 21: Innovative Models Promoting Advanced Concepts through the 21st Century*, NSW Women's Refuge Resource Centre, Sydney. http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au/dbtwwpd/exec/dbtwpub.dll?AC=GET_RECORD&XC=/dbtwwpd/exec/dbtwpub.dll&BU=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au%2Frr_simple.htm&TN=CATALO~1&SN=AUTO15986&SE=1571&RN=0&MR=20&RF=Brief+title,+author&DF=Record+display+3&RL=0&DL=0&NP=3&ID=&MF=MYWPMMSG.INI&MQ=&TI=0 [2/9/04]
- Stanko, B., 1990, 'When precaution is normal: a feminist critique of crime prevention', *Feminist Perspectives in Criminology*, Open University Press, United Kingdom.
- Stubbs, J., Tolmie, J., & Kaye, M., 2003, *Negotiating Child Residence and Contact Arrangements Against a background of Domestic Violence*, Families, Law and Social Policy Research Unit, Griffith University, Nathan, Queensland. http://www.criminology.law.usyd.edu.au/publicat/reports/curreps/Kaye_Stubbs_Tolmie.pdf [2/9/04].
- Weeks, W., 2003, 'From a Sydney squat to sophisticated services responding to Domestic and Family Violence: Progress in Crisis Accommodation for Women Escaping Domestic Violence', *Parity*, vol. 16, issue 10, pp. 10-14.