ROTARY SAFE FAMILIES PROGRAM

Part 1

Overview of Family Violence in Australia

Family Violence Women and children

INDEX

1.0 Background to Rotary Safe Families

2.0 Overview of Family Violence in Australia

2.1 What is Family Violence?
2.2 Who are Family?
2.3 What is abusive behaviour?
2.4 Where and to whom does family violence happen?
2.5 What's the most common form of family violence in Australia?
2.6 Are men victims of family violence?

3.0 Family Violence - Women and their children

3.1 Prevalence of violence against women in Australia
3.2 Violent crime statistics in Australia
3.3 Why is this violence happening?
3.4 What drives violence against women
3.5 What drives violence against men and other forms of family violence?
3.6 Can we prevent violence against women?
3.7 What can I do?
- Primary Prevention Activities
- Supporting victims or those at risk of family violence

3.8 Impact of family violence on children and young people

4.0 Family Violence - Elder Abuse

4.1 What is elder abuse?
4.2 Where does this abuse occur?
4.3 Who experiences it?
4.4 What drives it?
4.5 Examples of elder abuse?
4.6 What effect does this abuse have on victims?
4.7 Do victims of elder abuse seek help?
4.8 What can I do?
4.9 Are there prevention activities I can take?
4.10 Caregiver stress – you are not alone

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Where to find help/support

Appendix 2 – Frequently Asked Questions

Rotary Safe Families

1.0 Background

1.1 Rotary Club of Melbourne (RCM) Family Violence Pledge 2016

In 2016, following an increase in awareness of the prevalence of and hurt caused by family violence in our community, the Rotary Club of Melbourne established a Family Violence Committee and adopted the following pledge:

"In keeping with Rotary's focus on peace, service and supporting community values, the President, Board and Members of the Rotary Club of Melbourne recognise that Family Violence is a major social issue. As Rotarians and leaders in our community, professions and family life, WE pledge to:

- *Acknowledge that the use of control, abuse and violence against a child, young person or adult is a violation of human rights and commit to uphold the rights of all people to live free from violence.*
- *Raise awareness of the impact family violence is having on the individuals and organisations we are associated with and promote best practice responses for* ***Rotarians to be part of the solution*** *in business and the community.*
- *Support and contribute to projects that build a response to and understanding of Family Violence".*

To enable our members meet the Club's commitment "to promote best practice responses for Rotarians to be part of the solution", the Family Violence Committee has developed **Rotary Safe Families.**

1.2 What is Rotary Safe Families?

Rotary Safe Families is a program that will assist Rotarians to be part of the solution and to spread "NO" to Family Violence across the RCM, the community and throughout Rotary. It covers different aspects of family violence and addresses a number of questions raised by Rotarians including:

- What constitutes Family Violence?
- How can Rotarians be part of the solution?
- What can I do?

1.3 How do I get involved?

To participate in *Rotary Safe Families*, Rotarians and readers of this Manual may download the Rotary Safe Families Program from the Rotary Melbourne website: www.rotaryclubofmelbourne.org

2.0 Overview of Family Violence in Australia

2.1 What is Family Violence?

The United Nations defines family violence as: *"Any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual and psychological harm of suffering to a person (family member) including threats, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life".*

In day to day life, family violence occurs when a family member exercises ***power and control*** over another family member. It involves *coercive and abusive behaviours* that intimidate, humiliate, undermine and isolate the victim causing the targeted family member to feel insecure and fear for their safety or wellbeing. It causes terrible ***physical and psychological harm*** for victims (VRC p.3).

2.2 Who are family?

Family includes a number of different people and relationships including:

- **Intimate partners** (e.g. husband, wife, girlfriend, boyfriend, defacto, same sex partners)
- **Ex-partners** (e.g. divorced, separated, prior short term relationships)
- **Children, siblings, adult children**
- **Step family** (e.g. mother's or father's new partner/s, or their children)
- **A relative or extended family** such as a grandparent, father-in-law or mother-in-law, aunt, uncle, blended or cultural family member
- **A carer** who is like a family member

(Victoria Police website)

2.3 What is abusive behaviour?

While most people associate family violence with physical violence it is much broader than that. Abusive behaviour includes:

- **Physical assault** (e.g. hitting, pushing, burning, choking, punching, kicking, strangling, restraining, attempts to kill, murder)
- **Sexual Violence** (e.g. being forced to perform sexual acts, rape, sexual assault, being forced to watch or mimic pornography)
- **Financial abuse** (e.g. withholding money/credit cards, controlling all the finances, providing an allowance which is not sufficient to buy what is needed, prohibiting access bank statements, bills, or any financial transactions, making victim account for every penny she/he spends and inspecting all receipts.

- **Psychological and/or emotional abuse** (such as threats, repeated put downs, name calling, shaming/humiliating in public, nasty, hurtful sarcasm, leaving nasty messages (texts, voicemail, Facebook, Twitter, etc.), sexist, racist, ageist, ablest or homophobic abuse) and;
- other coercive controlling behaviours including the monitoring and surveillance of movements, relationships, social media and internet usage and electronic phone communications'
- **Spiritual (**e.g. using religious or spiritual beliefs to manipulate, using religious teachings or cultural tradition as an excuse for violence, preventing a person from practicing their religious or spiritual beliefs , ridiculing religious or spiritual beliefs, forced marriages).
- **Behaviour by a person that causes a child** to hear, see, witness or be exposed to the effects of abuse or violent acts (for example by hearing fights, seeing injuries or damage). (The First Step website)

2.4 Where and to whom does family violence happen?

Across Australia there are many **myths** about where and to whom family violence occurs. These include beliefs and views such as:

- It only happens in particular suburbs.
- It happens in specific ethnic communities more than any other communities.
- It is caused by religious beliefs.
- It is caused by alcohol, unemployment or from being poor.
- It does not happen in my neighbourhood, my street or among my friends and family…….

However, the reality of where and to whom family violence occurs is very different. It can and does happen to all kinds of people in all suburbs. It occurs among all ages, all income levels, all faiths, all education levels, all ethnic groups and all cultures in all suburbs.

As Rosie Batty said (following the murder of her 11 year old son by his father):
"I want to tell people that family violence happens to [anybody], no matter how nice your house is, no matter how intelligent you are."
(Rosie Batty – Australian of the year 2016, family violence survivor and advocate).

2.5 What is the most common type of Family Violence in Australia?

While both men and women can be perpetrators or victims of family violence, ***the most common form of family violence is intimate partner violence by men against women*** (VRC, p 3). However, Australian women also experience violence including sexual assault, sexual harassment or rape by someone other than a partner or family member. This can be a person known to the woman or a complete stranger.

2.6 Most Vulnerable Groups of People

Groups more vulnerable to family, domestic and sexual violence include children, young women, older people, people with a disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTIQ+ people, people in rural and remote Australia, people from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas and indigenous Australians (AIHW p.5)

2.7 Are men victims of family violence?

While women are three times more likely than men to experience violence at the hands of an intimate partner, the following statistics show that men are also victims of intimate partner and other forms of family violence, although not to the same extent as women.

- 1/16 Australian men has experienced physical or sexual violence from a partner since the age of 15
- 1/6 has experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner since the age of 15
- 1/20 has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15
- 1/9 were physically or sexually abused before age 15
- 1/4 men have been sexually harassed since age 15
- 1/15 men have experienced stalking since age 15. (AIHW, p.3)
- 32% of victims of sibling violence are men
- 37% of victims of parent-on-child violence are men
- 26% of victims of child-on-parent violence are men

From the data currently available, we know that violence against men is often perpetrated by other men; however, women can and do perpetrate violence against men (Family Free Violence P12, 17).

3.0 Family Violence - Women and their children

3.1 Prevalence of violence against women in Australia

- 1 woman a week on average dies at the hands of a current or former partner
- 1/6 women has experienced physical or sexual violence by a current/former partner
- 1/4 women has experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner.
- 1/3 women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15.
- 1/5 women has experienced sexual violence
- Australian women are nearly three times more likely than men to experience violence from an intimate partner and; almost four times more likely than men to be hospitalised after being assaulted by their spouse or partner
- Women are more than twice as likely as men to have experienced fear or anxiety due to violence from a former partner
- More than two-thirds (68%) of mothers who had children in their care when they experienced violence from their previous partner said their children had seen or heard the violence (Our Watch)

More women are being hospitalised due to family and domestic violence:

In 2016–17, there were 6,300 hospitalisations of adults aged 15 and over for assault injuries due to family and domestic violence:

- 4,600 hospitalisations for women and;
- 1,700 hospitalisations for men.

From 2014–15 to 2016–17, the rate of hospitalisation of women assaulted by a partner rose by 23%, whereas the rate for men remained relatively stable. (*Analysis of National Hospital Morbidity Database* **in** AIHW p.12).

It is very important to stress, that none of the above statements suggest that "all men are violent" or that "only women are the victims of family/domestic violence". There is far too much violence in Australia against both women and men.
We know, for example, that Australian men suffer from shockingly high rates of suicide, ill-health, gambling and alcohol and drug addiction which many organisations around the country provide help and support for men and their families. *(See Appendix 2 for further information on men as victims of family violence).*

3.2 Violent Crime Statistics in Australia

So while absolutely acknowledging that most men are not violent, police crime statistics confirm that when violent crime is committed, it is predominantly committed by men. These statistics shows that:

- Sexual crimes are predominantly committed against women.
- Both **men and women** are almost equally victims of **physical assaults**, which are almost always committed by men.
- When it comes to acts of **domestic and family violence**, the vast majority are perpetrated by men against women. (Crime Statistics Australia)
- Women in Australia usually experience violence at the hands of **men they know** – often in their own homes and often repeated, over many years if not their lifetime. This is the reality for 3 in 4 Australian women
- Australia police get called to one domestic violence matter every two minutes; that's 657 times a day.
- Australian men typically experience violence from other men, usually in public place.

In Australia today, the biggest risk factor for becoming a victim of sexual assault, domestic or family violence is being a woman. (OW website)

3.3 Why is this violence happening?

So the question for all of us has got to be why is this happening?
What drives a person to commit violence against a person they are supposed to love; or a complete stranger to rape and murder a woman? To answer this question we need look at the **drivers** of violence against women.

3.4 What are the drivers of violence against women?

While there is **no** single cause of violence against women, research continually shows that the **main drivers** of higher levels of such violence are attitudes and behaviours that:

- disrespect women
- have low support for gender equality, and
- adhere to rigid gender roles.

Some may suggest that alcohol, drugs, unemployment and poverty are the cause. However, the evidence tells us that while these factors can exacerbate violence, being poor does not cause domestic violence. Nor does drinking alcohol! Or taking drugs!

There are plenty of people to whom these characteristics apply, who are not violent and never would be.

The reality is that Gender inequality is the core of the problem. And gender equality is at the heart of the solution. *(***Change the Story***).*

3.4.2 What are the drivers of violence against men and other forms of family violence?

At this stage we do not have a good understanding of what is driving family violence against men. It is not difficult to appreciate that if unhealthy and rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity create social norms and conditions that drive violence against women, they can also drive violence against men.

When it comes to the drivers of various forms of family violence, (apart from violence against women) there is very little evidence available world-wide in terms of what drives it and what we can do to prevent it (e.g. sibling violence, same sex partner violence, violence against men).

Why and in what circumstances this type of violence happens needs to be better understood. In fact, it is critical that we better understand and directly address all the social conditions that lead to all forms of family violence in our society, or Victoria will continue to be burdened by the trauma of this violence. (Family Free Violence P12, 17).

3.5 Can we prevent violence against women?

The good news is that violence against women and their children is preventable – we **<u>can</u>** stop it before it starts! The national framework for the prevention of violence against women *Change the Story,* focuses on "primary prevention", a long-term approach which aims to prevent violence from occurring in the first place.

Rather than focusing on any one group or community, Primary Prevention works across the whole population. Its focus and aim is to change the attitudes and behaviours that drive this violence by looking at ways to increase **gender equality and respect** in all aspects of everyday life.

It challenges all of us including governments, women and men, boys and girls to change the structures, norms, practices, attitudes and behaviours that cause this violence by challenging its underlying drivers - gender inequality and disrespect for women.

To do this, we need primary prevention activities, to occur- simultaneously, where people live, learn, work and socialise. This means :

- in our schools; workplaces; sporting organisations; community groups and clubs
- through social marketing
- working with the media to better report on family violence when it occurs and;
- by developing and influencing public policy.

This multi-setting approach helps strengthen the impact of different prevention initiatives by having a mutually-reinforcing effect.

3.6 What Can I Do?

You can make a difference in two ways.

(1) The first is by participating in *Primary Prevention Activities.* These are activities that address the behavior, attitudes and practices in our everyday lives whether at home, at work, in the community or at a social setting that lead to violence against women and their children.
(2) The second way is by providing support to someone you know who may be a victim of family violence or at risk of family violence.

3.6.1 Primary Prevention Activities

To prevent family violence from occurring in the first place we must change the attitudes behaviours and practices that cause this violence.

- **What can I do?**

You can help to prevent violence from occurring in the first place by **calling out** friends, colleagues and family members when you witness actions and behaviours that lead to family violence/violence against women. (ByStander Campaign)

Sexism, sexual harassment and abuse are **not** ok and can lead to a culture where violence against women is more prevalent and acceptable. We can all make a significant difference by choosing to call out these behaviours and attitudes when we witness them and **when it's safe to do so!**

While this may seem like a daunting task it's an important one. With the right information and actions on how to call it out, it can be done!

- **How can I identify this behaviour?**

This kind of behaviour occurs across our community. It can happen in the home, on the street, in social settings, in schools, in the workplace, in sporting clubs, in social clubs – it occur where we live, learn work, and socialise.

On a day to day basis this behaviour can look like someone you know or don't know:

- making a sexist joke over a barbeque lunch or in the workplace
- making sexual/sexist comments about a person
- trying to control how their partner and/or other family members spend money
- trying to insist that their partner tells them constantly what they're doing or where they're going
- trying to stop their partner seeing friends or family
- insisting on always going to see the doctor with their partner

- **How does calling it out help?**

Safely calling out sexism, sexual harassment and abuse supports and reassures the person being targeted. It can discourage the person who did it from doing it again and it can show everyone that sexism and sexual harassment aren't on. (By Stander Campaign)

- **Would I call it out?**
  While most of us say we would do something if we saw sexism, harassment or abuse often when the moment comes, we don't. Perhaps we don't feel comfortable, we don't feel safe doing so or we are afraid that we will be accused of being a "party pooper" or "not fun to be around" – or perhaps we are experiencing the Bystander effect/apathy (See FAQs).

  Saying something **when it is safe to do** so says something, and doing nothing says something too: that you're okay with it; that you are buying into the phrase ***"the standard you walk past is the standard you accept".***

  It is important to remember that sexism, sexual harassment and abuse are all contributors to family violence and this can have significant social, health and economic costs on women, families and the community.

- **When do I call it out?**
  When a friend, a family member, a colleague, or even a stranger says something that doesn't sit right with you and it is safe, you should say something.

  Sometimes victims of these comments and/or other people who hear the comments may be afraid to ask for help and/or be afraid to speak out, and behaviours such as nervous laughter can make it seem like they're okay, even when they're not.

  Even if you're wrong and everything is okay, the damage caused by doing nothing, can be worse. As long as you're not putting yourself or someone else in a dangerous or risky situation, if you feel like you should say something, you probably should. (ByStander Campaign)

  - **Other Primary Prevention actions you can take depending on your role**
    - **As a parent:**
      As a parent you can role model behaviours that promote gender equality. Don't treat your sons and daughters differently based on their sex.

    - **As a grandparent**:
      As a grandparent you can role model behaviours that promote gender equality. Don't treat your grandsons and granddaughters differently based on their sex.

    - **As an employer or employee:**
      If you are in the workforce, as an employee, you can either implement or propose to the right people that programs and policies to prevent violence against women are implemented. If you are the boss or the business owner Just Do It!

3.6.2 Supporting victims or those at risk of Family Violence

Responses to family, domestic and sexual violence can be provided informally in the community, and/or formally through health and welfare services. However, many people do not seek advice or support after incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence.

For those who had experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a current cohabitating partner:

- Women – , 1/2 women never sought advice or support
- Men – 7/10 men never sought advice or support

For those who did seek support following violence from a previous partner:

- 65% of women and 54% of men sought advice or support from a friend or other family member (ABS 2017, in AIHW p.11)

What can I do to support someone experiencing family violence?

This section of the manual will assist Rotarians answer the following questions:

- ***What can I do if I know someone is experiencing domestic violence or at risk?***
- ***What if I suspect someone I know is experiencing domestic violence, what can I do to help?***

- ***Recognising Abuse***

Being able to recognise signs of abuse is an important first step. These signs could include a person who:

- Appears afraid of/or anxious to please their partner
- Is criticized/humiliated in public
- Feels pressured/forced to do sexual things
- Is controlled e.g. money, friends etc.
- Talks about partner's "jealousy" "bad temper" "possessiveness"
- Seems unusually quiet, anxious, loss of confidence
- Has bruises, sprains, cuts and other physical injuries
- Children seem afraid, have behavioural problems, anxious
- Is reluctant to leave partner
- After separation their partner is stalking, harassing, constantly calling or waiting outside work, outside the home the other places for the victim

- ***Should I get Involved?***

Many people worry that they will be 'interfering' or don't want to get involved as they consider it to be a 'private matter'; and/or they fear embarrassment if their support or enquiry about welfare/wellbeing of the other person is rejected and told "their suspicions are wrong". But equally worrying is if someone is being abused and you say nothing. Your support can make a difference.

- ***How do I Approach?***

If you suspect someone is experiencing violence or at risk of violence it is best to approach them sensitively without being critical. Most people will appreciate an expression of concern for their well-being, even if they are not ready to talk about their situation. It is unlikely you will make things 'worse' by expressing concern.
A suggested way to commence the conversation is to say something like:

"I'm worried about you because I've noticed you seem really unhappy lately."

The person may initially reject your concerns or defend the perpetrator:

- She/he may not be ready to admit there is a problem;
- he/she may feel uncomfortable talking about it with you or anyone else and they may feel shame, fear and/or the inability to "trust" anyone.
- The person may also feel embarrassed or weak. (DVRCV)

- ***How do I respond if they open-up?***

If the person you are speaking to opens up and tells you what they are experiencing it is important that your response is sensitive and does not make the person feel unbelieved or that this is their fault. Some suggestions on how to respond or act in this situation are as follows:

- Listen without judging – it is important not to blame the victim what happened or is happening to them
- Believe what is being told to you and don't try to work out the reasons for the abuse.
- Take the abuse seriously - but note - you do not have to "fix" the problem
- Help the person to recognise that this is abuse and its effect on children (if children are involved or present when the abuse occurs)
- Reassure the person/victim that ***"It is not your fault"*** and that no-one has the right to mistreat you.
- Encourage them to contact an appropriate service such as 1800RESPECT (See appendix 1 for list of available services). If appropriate offer to do this with them and/or stay with them while they make the call.
- Respect the person's decisions, even if you don't agree. It is important not to pressure them to leave - it has to be their decision.
- Respect cultural/religious values/beliefs
- For your own safety it is important **not** to confront the abuser. Seek other professional advice as appropriate (eg. Police, Mensline, Kidsline, Mens Referral Service etc). (DVRCV)

- **Take Care of YOURSELF**
  Supporting a friend or a relative who has been a victim of family violence can be frustrating, frightening and stressful.
  It can be difficult to fully comprehend and understand the level of control the perpetrator may have over the victim and the fear and insecurity this can inflict on the victim and where relevant the children. You must look after yourself by getting some support from friends or where appropriate a counsellor.

Be honest about the time and type of support you can offer. Don't push yourself beyond your limits. Seek assistance from the relevant agencies and support services available. At times you may need to leave it to the professionals to deal with some aspects of the situation (e.g. police, courts, professional counsellors etc.) while you continue to provide moral and emotional support to your friend or relative.

3.7 Impact of Family Violence on Children and Young People

Over 50% of women who experienced violence from an intimate or former partner had children in their care when the violence occurred.

Research has consistently found that children of all ages who have been exposed to family violence, particularly coercive and controlling behaviour, have been found to have more problems than children who have not. They have higher levels of emotional and behavioural problems and are at greater risk of physical abuse or having their physical and emotional needs neglected.

- **Emotional and psychological trauma**
  Children living with domestic violence also suffer emotional and psychological trauma from the impact of living in a household that is dominated by tension and fear. These children will overhear conflict and violence and see the aftermath of the violence such as their mother's injuries and her traumatic response to the violence. Children may also be used and manipulated by the abuser to hurt their mother.

- **Risk of physical injury**
  Children may be caught in the middle of an assault by accident or because the abuser intends it. Infants can be injured if being held by their mothers when the abuser strikes out. Children may be hurt if struck by a weapon or a thrown object and older children are frequently assaulted when they intervene to defend or protect their mothers.

- **Children as a direct victim of physical or sexual abuse**
  A child living in a violent home may also be directly targeted by the perpetrator and suffer physical abuse, sexual abuse and/or serious neglect. At least half of all abusive partners also abuse their children.

Daughters are more likely than sons to become victims. Where the mother is assaulted by the father, daughters are exposed to a risk of sexual abuse 6.5 times greater than girls in non-abusive families. Eighty percent of child fatalities within the family are attributable to fathers or father surrogates.
Younger children are more vulnerable than older children because they are with their parents more frequently, and are more dependent on their parents for care and protection.

Teenagers exposed to family violence may be more aggressive to their parents and other acquaintances and constantly be at greater risk of retaliation. (DVPC)

- **Other impacts on children**

Children exposed to family violence are also at greater risk of:

- having difficulties controlling their emotions
- developing depression or antisocial problems such as delinquency or violent behaviours, particularly as teenagers
- developing poor relationships with both parents
- developing poor reading and language skills, and
- having difficulties making and maintaining friendships.

When family violence is combined with other problems, such as drug and alcohol abuse and mental health concerns, children are at even greater risk of developing emotional, behavioural, social and educational problems.

- **Are all children impacted in the same way?**

The extent each child will be impacted varies depending on:

- The length of time the child was exposed to the domestic violence;
- The age of the child when the exposure began;
- Whether the child has also experienced child abuse with the domestic violence;
- The presence of additional stressors such as poverty, community violence, parental substance abuse or mental illness and disruptions in family life;
- Whether the child has a secure attachment to a non-abusing parent or other significant adult;
- Whether the child has a supportive social network;
- Whether the child has strong cultural identity and ethnic pride;
- The child's own positive coping skills and experience of success;
- Family access to health, education, housing, social services and employment.

Apart from the emotional, physical, social and behavioural damage abuse creates for children, statistics show that domestic violence can also become a learned behaviour. This means that children can grow up thinking it's okay to use violence to get what they want; and as adults it's okay to have violence in their relationships. (DVPC)

- **What Can I do?**

Working with children who are impacted by family or domestic violence is a highly specialised and complex practice. There are many professionals and organisations you can contact for advice or assistance if you believe that a child or young person has been impacted by family violence. These organisations have the comprehensive knowledge and skills needed to work effectively with mothers and children involved in family/domestic violence. (The Look Out)

It is important to Note: If you have a reasonable belief that sexual assault has been committed by an adult against a child, you are mandated to disclose this belief to Police. Failure to disclose this is a criminal offence.

- **Recognising when a child is impacted by family violence**

Being able to recognize signs that a child or young person may be impacted by family violence is a useful first step. Experiencing domestic and family violence can impact a child's:

- **Behaviours -** they can act out, over-react, be hostile, impulsive, aggressive or defiant. They can also withdraw or run away. This can all be normal for children who have been traumatised by family or domestic violence. It does not mean the children have 'disorders'. Drug and alcohol use can be a problem with older children
- **Development** – normal development can be impaired. They can look like they are regressing or acting younger than their age. This can be a subconscious way of trying to get to a state where they are safe and secure. It can also be a result of the harm to the brain's development caused by exposure to trauma
- **Relationships** – they may avoid closeness and push people away. Children may also attach to peers or adults who may be unsafe for them, to try to develop an alternative secure base, if home feels insecure
- **Emotions** – children often feel fearful, stressed, depressed, angry, anxious or ashamed. Emotional security is the foundation of healthy relationships later in life. This security can be damaged if attachment between the parent, guardian or primary carer and baby is disrupted by domestic violence
- **Learning** – they may not be able to concentrate at school because they are constantly on the lookout for danger. This can be subconscious. Detentions, missed school and frequent changes of schools can also affect learning
- **Cognition** - children may have low self-esteem, and think negatively about themselves or people around them. (For example, they may think, 'everyone hates me'.)
- **Physical Health -** a range of illnesses may be related to domestic and family violence.
- Headaches, stomachaches, stress reactions (for example rashes or immune system related illnesses) and sleep disturbances (for example nightmares, insomnia or bedwetting) are common) (1800RESPECT web site)

If you know a friend or have a family member who is a victim of or at risk of family violence and has children, you should tell them you're concerned about the effect the violence or abuse has on them and the children. (QLD Gov)

Depending on the child's age you can also provide support to the child or young person by referring them to a relevant website. You can assure them that it's not their fault and let them know that violence or abuse is never okay.

If you are the parent or guardian of a child growing up in an abusive household, you could also:

- ✓ **Tell them that they are loved and the violence is not their fault**
- ✓ **Encourage them to talk about their concerns/worries**
- ✓ **Make sure they know how to call for help, including how to call the police on Triple Zero (000) and how to give the address of their home**
- ✓ **Get support from a domestic violence organisation**
- ✓ **Talk to a teacher, principal or a counsellor about your concerns**
- ✓ **Take yourself and your child to a safe place if necessary. (Qld Gov)**

- **Do I have to report child abuse?**

❖ Reporting child sexual abuse is a community-wide responsibility.
❖ It is a criminal offence in Victoria (and some other States and Territories) that imposes a clear legal duty upon all adults to report information about child sexual abuse to Police.
❖ Any adult who forms a reasonable belief that a sexual offence has been committed by an adult against a child under 36 has an obligation to report that information to Police. Failure to disclose the information to Police is a criminal offence.
❖ For further information on the criminal offence and what constitutes reasonable belief visit the **Department of Justice - Failure to disclose offence.**

- **Reporting & Seeking Help**

✓ If a situation is life threatening contact Police on Triple Zero '000'
✓ For immediate concerns contact Department of Human Services Child Protection Crisis Line by telephone on 13 14 78
✓ For help or advice call 1800RESPECT
✓ To discuss concerns about child abuse contact your local Police Station

ROTARY SAFE FAMILIES PROGRAM

Part 2: Family Violence - Elder Abuse

ELDER ABUSE

The United Nations Principles for Older Persons states *'Older persons should be able to live in dignity and security and be free of exploitation and physical or mental abuse. This is supported by the Charter of Aged Care Rights which provides for the 'right to … live without abuse and neglect'.*

4.1 What is Elder Abuse?

Elder abuse, a form of family violence, is the mistreatment of an older person by someone with whom the older person has a relationship of **trust.**

This abuse can best be described as a controlling behaviour or action which frightens or intimidates its victims violating an older person's basic right to feel safe. It may be physical, social, financial, psychological or sexual and can include mistreatment and neglect. Perpetrators of this kind of abuse can include a partner, family member, friend, carer or an older person experiencing cognitive decline who exhibits abusive behaviours toward an older carer or partner. Sometimes family, friends and carers may not know that their actions amount to elder abuse.

Elder abuse should not be confused with professional misconduct by paid employees such as carers/nurses; self-neglect (which is not regarded as elder abuse in Australia); unequal consumer transactions and/or scams that target older people or criminal acts perpetrated by a stranger on an older person, all of which are **not** forms of elder abuse. (SRV)

4.2 Where does this abuse occur?

Elder abuse can occur in many contexts including the home and residential care settings. It can be perpetrated by family members, friends and non-family members **trusted** by the older person including staff and other residents in a residential care setting.

Most elder abuse occurs within the family or in a domestic setting with the most common form being 'intergenerational' which is perpetrated by an adult child against their parent. (SRV)

4.3 Who experiences it?

Any older person of any gender whether living alone, with family members, with friends or in residential care can experience elder abuse.
Lack of recognition and under-reporting means that the extent of elder abuse is difficult to estimate, but research indicates it is experienced by approximately 2–6% of older people in Australia (NARI, p3). Worldwide an estimate of 1 in 6 (16%) of adults aged 60 and over have been the victim of elder abuse in the past year (WHO, 2018 in AIHW p.7).

Similar to other forms of FV it is likely to be under reported so the actual prevalence is likely to be higher. (SRV)

Current available statistics indicate that:

- The majority of people who experience elder abuse are women - 73.5%.
- Older men comprise 30% of reported elder abuse cases
- 92% of abuse is perpetrated by persons related to the older person or in a de facto relationship
- 67% of reported abuse is perpetrated by a son or daughter (40% son, 27% daughter)
- 60% of perpetrators are male and 40% female
- Financial abuse and psychological/emotional abuse together are the most commons forms of abuse reported by older Victorians at 83.83% (National Ageing Research Institute, p14).

In 2017/2018, more than 10,900 calls were made to elder abuse helplines across Australia (excluding NT). Most perpetrators were an adult child, grandchild, sibling, spouse or partner. Female victims disproportionately outnumbered male victims in each state, ranging from 66% to 74%, and the proportion of victims rose with age. Emotional and financial abuse were the most common types of elder abuse reported (AIHW, p.7)

4.4 What Drives Elder Abuse?

The underlying social condition of elder abuse is **Ageism**, and the way people are treated differently as they age. Negative attitudes associated with ageing mean that it can be seen as a time of decline, loss and vulnerability. Ageism results in older people being marginalised and afforded less power and social status.

Adult children can feel a sense of entitlement to their parents' finances. When older people are regarded as less valuable, unable to make decisions for themselves, and a burden on resources it can result in social and cultural norms where elder abuse is tolerated.

Elder abuse is also linked to **inequality and discrimination** against people due to personal attributes such as age, gender, cultural background and sexuality and; may involve overt or subtle exploitation of power imbalances. Elder abuse may consist of isolated incidents or patterns of abuse over a period of time.

4.5 Examples of Elder Abuse

- **Financial Abuse:**
  - Forcing an older person to hand over money or an asset, or misusing their funds.
  - Using a power of attorney to withhold money or misuse finances.
  - Not allowing the person to keep or carry their own money.
  - Withholding knowledge of their bank account balance or household bills paid.
  - Inheritance impatience – the sense of entitlement to an older person's assets or resources

- **Physical abuse:**
  - Inflicting pain or injury, (e.g. for example, hitting, slapping, pushing or using restraints)

- **Sexual abuse:**
  - Any sexual activity for which the person has not consented

- **Social abuse:**
  - Preventing contact with relatives, friends or service providers
  - Restricting activities

- **Psychological/Emotional Abuse:**
  - Threatening and coercive behavior
  - Preventing contact with family and friends
  - Limiting a person's choices or placing pressure on them regarding decisions they make.
  - Denying a person the right to make decisions due to their cognitive state
  - Convincing the older person that they couldn't cope without the carer
  - Denying access to 'small pleasures'
  - Talking about 'how hard it is to provide care' in front of the older person

- **Elder Neglect:**

  Neglect can occur within the home and in residential care settings and can include:
  - Neglect of a person's care needs including inadequate provision of housing or food or being abandoned.
  - Neglecting to provide a person with appropriate health or personal care such as:
    - Poor hygiene or refusing to wash the older person
    - Withholding medication, over or under medicating
    - Withholding personal or medical care
    - Withdrawing care or equipment that immobilizes or leaves the older person without a way to call for help
    - Refusing or delaying assistance following a personal accident or spillage
    - Receiving the Carer's Pension without providing the relevant and appropriate care

4.6 What effect does this abuse have on victims?

Abuse and mistreatment of any kind can have a profound and detrimental effect on a person. As well as causing feelings of stress and anxiety, elder abuse has been shown to lead to an increased risk of depression and thoughts of suicide, and can increase the risk of ill health and early death. It can also mean an increase in hospital visits or early admittance to residential care.

When elder abuse results in homelessness and poverty, it can make it more difficult for the older person to cope with illness and disability. People who experience elder abuse often require health, legal and social support services, as well as short and long-term housing options (SRV).

4.7 Do victims of elder abuse seek help?

People who experience elder abuse may be reluctant to seek help because they:

- see the abuse as a family matter
- feel ashamed or embarrassed about the situation
- worry that others will judge them including family and community members.
- Fear consequences including:
  - Retribution from the perpetrator
  - Losing or damaging family relationships (including with the perpetrator and others)
  - Losing access to grandchildren
  - Worry about the consequences for the perpetrator

4.8 What can I do?

If you know an older family member or friend is in immediate physical danger or at risk of significant harm, you should contact the emergency services (Police and/or Ambulance) on 000.

Warning signs of Elder Abuse

Recognising signs of abuse are a good first step. If you suspect someone you know is experiencing elder abuse there are warning signs that you need to look for. These can include:

- The older person seeming fearful, worried or withdrawn or seems nervous or anxious with certain people.
- Family and or friends are denied or seem to be denied access to the person.
- The older person no longer goes out socially or gets involved in activities.
- They have unexplained injuries (e.g. bruises, broken bones, sprains, cuts etc.)
- They have unpaid bills, unusual activity in bank accounts or credit cards.
- They have made sudden or recent changes to a Will, title or other documents.
- Possessions seem to have disappeared
- They seem to be experiencing poor hygiene or personal care.
- There is an absence of needed health items such as hearing aids, dentures, medications etc. (SRV)

Actions you can take if you suspect that a friend, family member or neighbour is suffering from elder abuse:

- ✓ Talk to the person you are concerned about. Invite them to talk in a place where they are alone and safe.
- ✓ Listen to the person. Offer them your time and your support and respect their right to make their own decisions.
- ✓ Believe what the person is telling you.
- ✓ Remind them they are not to blame and that everyone has the right to live in safety and be treated with dignity and respect.
- ✓ Let them know that help is available and offer to assist them in getting the necessary support if and when they are ready to do so.
- ✓ Encourage them to call support services such as Seniors Rights Victoria (SRV) on
- ✓ 1300 368 821 for advice and assistance. If they are unable to call but you know they want to speak to SRV, you can call on their behalf and SRV will arrange a way to speak to them by phone, at the SRV office or, if necessary, at the person's home.
- ✓ Continue to offer support and encouragement even if the person is not ready to accept help at this point in time.

Be aware that the person you are seeking to help may feel "shame", be defensive and/or unwilling to engage. It is important to respond in a caring manner no matter their reaction (SRV)

Questions you could ask

- ***"Is there someone you are afraid of or don't feel safe to be around**?"* (e.g. family member, friend/acquaintance/person in the care home (staff member, visitor, other resident)
- ***"How do you think you are being treated?"***
- ***"Is this treatment what you expected at this time of your life?"***
- Where there is evidence of physical abuse – ask them in a sensitive manner how they got the injury - advise that sometimes injuries like this that can be a result of a family argument, a family member's stress or frustration, or perhaps a staff member in the home treating people a bit roughly. ***"Do you think this may have happened to you?"***

How do I respond if abuse is disclosed?

- ✓ It is important to respond with kindness and without blame or judgement for choices they have made.
- ✓ Believe the person and be willing to listen.
- ✓ Let the person know they can count on you to be supportive.
- ✓ Provide choices, not interventions — empower the person to take control of their life. Do not tell them what to do or pressure them to leave the perpetrator. They must make the decision themselves.
- ✓ Let the person know (even if they deny abuse) that it's not their fault, they are not alone (abuse can happen to anyone), and that there is help available.

It is important to remember that competent older people have the right to make their own decisions, and to be supported to do so rather than have other people take over and impose choices and decisions on them.

4.9 Are There Prevention Activities I Can Take?

Considering Australia's ageing population, violence against older people, including intergenerational abuse and intimate partner violence, is an increasing concern.

While elder abuse is a form of family violence and the reforms in this area will assist older women and men, many of the prevention and intervention measures needed to address the issue must also consider the particular context within which elder abuse occurs, and the particular needs and desires of older people.

At present, elder abuse prevention measures are mainly focused on empowering older people to protect their rights. This includes using the services of an Advocate, encouraging the use of written agreements such as Enduring Powers of Attorneys (where an individual can appoint another person to make decisions on their behalf) and Assets for Care contracts (where a person can offer their financial assets in return for care and accommodation), as well as the use of family meetings or mediation to prevent conflict from resulting in abuse.

However, care must be taken to ensure that these types of written agreements do not enable abuse of the older person. Addressing the drivers of elder abuse, including ageism and gender inequality, will further assist in prevention. (SRV)

What is Advocacy?

An advocacy service may be able to help the aged person:

- access Australian Government funded aged care services
- raise concerns about services they are receiving.

The **Older Persons Advocacy Network** (OPAN) is funded to provide free, confidential and independent advocacy support to older people, their families and representatives across Australia.

Advocacy is the process of standing beside someone and supporting them to:

- understand and exercise their rights
- have their voice heard on the issues that are important to them.
- What is an Advocate?

An **Advocate** is an impartial person, who:

- takes the time to listen and understand the person's views and wishes
- informs them of their rights and responsibilities
- assists them to explore their options and make informed decisions
- supports them to raise their concerns and work towards a resolution
- provides practical assistance eg.help to write a letter/raise concerns at a meeting
- speaks for them in situations where they don't feel able to speak for themselves
- increases their capacity to self-advocate.

Call the National Aged Care Advocacy Line on 1800 700 600 (freecall) or visit the Older Persons Advocacy Network website to find out more about advocacy services. (See OPAN in Appendix 1)

Who Can YOU Turn To for Assistance?

FINANCIAL

- Community legal services
- Public Advocate (applications for capacity; misuse of EPoA)
- Public Trustee (Public Trustees Australia; Jurisdictional agencies)
- Jurisdiction-based Administrative Tribunal
- Jurisdiction-based Guardianship agency
- Financial counselling & related community services
- Banking Ombudsman (banking related fin. abuse); Financial institution involved
- Jurisdiction-based Real Estate Institute body (real estate related issues)
- Jurisdiction-based Lands Title Registration authority
- Jurisdiction-based Consumer Protection agencies

PHYSICAL

- Police, usually via agreed liaison officer and/or victim support service
- Victim Support service
- Health services – GP, acute care
- Drug and alcohol abuse services
- Emergency accommodation service
- Family violence service
- Aged care respite service

EMOTIONAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL

- Counselling, mediation services (e.g. Relationships Australia)
- Mental health services (hospital, community)
- Mental Health Commissioner

SEXUAL

- Family violence services; Rape Crisis services; Sexual abuse services
- Women's specialist support services
- Police via specialist unit if available
- Health services – acute, primary
- Emergency accommodation services

SOCIAL

- Community Network Groups, including CALD networks, LGBTI networks, CLAN (Care Leavers),
- Aboriginal networks, Veterans', Church groups and others who can reconnect social isolated older people
- Local councils' community services
- Agencies specialising in reconnecting people (e.g. Relationships Australia)

NEGLECT

- Aged Care Complaints Commissioner (for neglect by aged care providers)
- Health and Community Services Complaints Commissioner (if neglect by a health service provider)
- Aged care services, including assessment services
- Police, if appropriate
- Public Advocate (for self or family neglect as there may an issue of capacity)

4.10 Caregiver Stress—You are Not Alone

Caring for an older person can be rewarding. It's also demanding, difficult, and often stressful work. The caregiver may need to be available around the clock to fix meals, provide nursing care, take care of laundry and cleaning, drive to doctors' appointments and pay bills. Often, family caregivers have to give up paying jobs to make time for these new responsibilities.

It may be hard to keep a positive outlook when there's little hope of the older person's physical and mental condition improving. Over time, the demands and stress of caregiving can take their toll. A caregiver might not even know he or she is being neglectful or abusive.

If you are a caregiver, make sure you have time to rest and take care of your needs. You can ask a family member or friend to help out for a weekend, or even for a few hours, so that you can take some time for yourself. Some community service organizations provide caregivers a break. This is called respite care. Eg: Carers' Victoria

Appendix 1

Rotary Safe Families

Where to get Help and Advice

Emergency Services

In an emergency call 000.

The Triple Zero (000) service is the quickest way to get the right emergency service to help you. It should be used to contact Police, Fire or Ambulance services in life-threatening or emergency situations.
If you wish to report a crime you can contact **your local police station.**

Family Violence Response, Advice & Support Services

1800RESPECT – National Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence Counselling Service
Qualified and experienced counsellors provide 34/7 phone and online counselling, information and help to access other services to all people in Australia affected by sexual assault and domestic and family violence on **1800 737 732** via the **1800RESPECT website.** Professionals are also encouraged to use 1800RESPECT for support around issues relating to working in preventing or responding to family violence and sexual assault.

Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre

safe steps Family Violence Response Centre offers confidential support and information and a 24/7 statewide family violence response service through **1800 015 188** (toll-free).

Women's Support Line

Run by Women's Information and Referral Exchange Inc. you can call this free, confidential and state-wide phone service on **1800 811 811** (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday). You can also email inforequests@wire.org.au

Kids Helpline

Kids Helpline provides private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling for children, teens, young adults and also for parents and carers on **1800 55 1800** (toll-free).
Email: **counsellor@kidshelpline.com.au** Counselling and WebChat is also available.

Australian Childhood Foundation

Counselling for children and young people affected by abuse.
Phone: 1300 381 581 Email: info@childhood.org. Website: **www.childhood.org.au**

What's OK at Home?

This website for young people has been developed by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria. It has been designed to help people understand what family violence is, why it happens, how to recognise it and how to help others who are experiencing it.
Website: www.woah.org.au Phone: Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800

The Line – Website for young people

So, 'the line': What is it, Where is it, and What happens when you cross it?
Sometimes, there's no argument about where to draw the line in our friendships and relationships. But the line can get blurry. So, we're here to talk about it.
This website talks about relationships, gender, sex, bystander action, technology and communication ; how to keep it healthy and respectful, and avoid crossing the line into behaviour that makes someone feel frightened, intimidated or diminished.
So, check out our articles, #knowseetheline, follow us on Facebook and join the conversations about where you draw the line. www.theline.org.au

Men's Referral Service

Men's Referral Service provides an anonymous and confidential phone counselling, information and referrals service on **1300 766 491** for:

- men who might be using violent and controlling behaviour towards a partner or family member
- men who have been victimised by a partner or family member
- women wishing to find information about male family violence
- friends, family or colleagues of people who are using or experiencing family violence
- professionals wishing to support a male or female client using or experiencing family violence.

MensLine

MensLine is a national phone and online support service for men with family and relationship concerns, which includes video counselling on **1300 78 99 78**

Victims Support Agency – Men

The Victims Support Agency provides support and information to help adult male victims of family violence and victims of violent crime.

The service guides victims through the legal process and helps manage the effects of crime through practical assistance and counselling.
Call the Victims of Crime helpline on **1800 819 817** or use the text service via **0427 767 891 (**8.00 am to 11.00 pm, 7 days a week).

Centres Against Sexual Assault

These are confidential, non-profit, government-funded organisations providing support and intervention for women, children and men who are victim survivors of sexual assault.
The Sexual Assault Crisis Line is **1800 806 292** (24/7). You can also email ahcasa@thewomens.org.au

Relationships Australia

Support groups and counselling on relationships, and for abusive and abused partners.
Phone: **1300 364 277**
Website: www.relationships.com.au

Aboriginal Family Domestic Violence Hotline

1800 019 123 (24 hours)
Victims Services has a dedicated contact line for Aboriginal victims of crime who would like information on victims' rights, how to access counselling and financial assistance.

Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (FVPLS)

This is an Aboriginal community-run organisation providing assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim survivors of family violence and sexual assault. You can call FVPLS on **1800 105 303**

InTouch: Multicultural Centre against Family Violence

This is a state-wide organisation specialising in services, programs and responses to family violence in migrant and refugee communities. You can call InTouch on **1800 755 988**

National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline

Visit website: hotline@workfocus.com
An Australia-wide telephone hotline for reporting abuse and neglect of people with disability. Call the free hotline on: **1800 880 052**

Our Place Online

An online forum for men and women who have suffered abuse in all its forms: psychological, verbal, physical, sexual, and spiritual abuse. The forum is run by a community of volunteers all over the world. Our Place aims to help educate and support those wishing to heal from the damage done. Website: **www.our-place-online.net**

Translating & Interpreting Service

Call the hotline for help **131 450**

Gain free access to a telephone or on-site interpreter in your own language. Immediate phone interpreting is available 24 hours every day of the year on: **131 450**

General Family Services

Maternal and Child Health Line

Qualified maternal and child health nurses provide information, support and advice to Victorian families with children from birth to school age (5 years old) 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the Maternal and Child Health Line on **13 22 29.**

Parentline

Parentline is a phone counselling service available to parents and carers of children aged from birth to 38 years throughout Victoria. You can call Parentline on **1300 30 1300** from 8am to midnight, seven days a week, on any day of the year. (Translation service available.)

LGBTI – Switchboard

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people in Victoria and Tasmania can access advice, information, counselling and referrals QLife (counselling and referral service for LGBTI people) – call **1800 184 527** or chat online

Aged Care Services:

Australian Government | myagedcare

www.myagedcare.gov.au

Website for Aged Care Services**:**
Telephone: 1800 200 422

Seniors Rights Victoria

Seniors Rights Victoria provides information, support, advice and education to help prevent elder abuse and safeguard the **rights**, dignity and independence of older people. If you, your client or someone you know is experiencing elder abuse, please contact their free, confidential Helpline: 1300 368 821.

Advocacy Services for the Aged

National Aged Care Advocacy Line on 1800 700 600 (freecall) or visit OPAN (Older Persons Advocacy Network) website to find out more about advocacy services. Website: opan.com.au

Carers' Victoria

Carers provide care and support to family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, terminal illness or who is an older person with care needs. We work closely with government and other support organisations to improve the lives of caring families throughout Victoria.
Freecall 1800 242 636 Freecall our carer advisory line from anywhere within Victoria (freecall from local phones, mobile calls at mobile rates)

Mental Health Services

beyondblue

The 24/7 beyondblue helpline on **1300 22 4636** provides information and support to help people achieve their best possible mental health.

headspace

The National Youth Mental Health Foundation's eheadspace service supports young people and their families going through a tough time.
You can call on **1800 650 890** or register to get help and support via email.

Lifeline

13 11 44
Lifeline has a national number who can help put you in contact with a crisis service in your State.
Anyone across Australia experiencing a personal crisis or thinking about suicide can call:
13 11 44

Family Violence Support Apps

Below is a list of support apps available for those experiencing family violence.

1800RESPECT

1800RESPECT has developed the Daisy app to connect women who are experiencing, or have experienced, sexual assault, domestic and family violence to support services in their state and local area. By linking you to a local service, you will get help fast, be able to read information privately and also contact family or friends through the service. Download Daisy from Google Play or App Store.

Doncare

Doncare developed the iMatter domestic violence prevention app to help identify the warning signs of abusive and controlling behaviour in relationships as well as promoting healthy self-esteem. Download iMatter from Google Play or iTunes.

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria

Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV) developed the SmartSafe+ app. This app is designed to help women collect and store evidence of family violence safely. By collecting this information it will help them get an intervention order, or to prove a breach (recommended for Victorian use only). The SmartSafe+ is available from Google Play or the App Store.

For more information or instructions on how to download the app please contact DVRCV **on 8346 5200** (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday) or via email at smartsafeplus@dvrcv.org.au

Appendix 2

Frequently Asked Questions

1.0 Women and Family Violence

1.1 Why don't women leave an abusive relationship?

When it comes to family and domestic violence this is the most commonly asked question. It is generally asked by people who do not understand the fear, intimidation and control a perpetrator has over their victim. Many people believe that victims (especially women) could leave a violent relationship if they wanted to.

The reasons women don't leave an abusive relationship are complex. However, the main reason is that they are fearful for their lives and/or the lives of their children as their partner may have threatened to:

- kill the victim if she leaves
- harm the children or the family pets
- commit suicide

According to Our Watch **t**he most extreme violence, including murder, often occurs when a woman tries to leave an abusive relationship (www.ourwatch.org.au)

When it is assumed that a victim of domestic violence stays by choice, blame is taken away from the perpetrator. This puts the responsibility for dealing with the violence on the victim, who might not be able to leave a relationship because they fear for their lives or the safety of the children (www.ourwatch.org.au).

Violence occurring during or after separation including child abduction

There is clear evidence that abusers often increase their use of violence and abuse to stop their partners from leaving, or to force their partners and children to return home following separation. The abuser may attempt to take the children away from their mother to punish the woman for leaving and in some cases children have even been killed. The risk to children during and following separation is substantial (DVPC).

Other reasons women do not leave abuse relationships include the following:

The victim still loves her partner - "Not abusive all the time!" and/or the partner has promised to change

The victim:

- believes *"It's my fault!"*
- feels they need to stay "for the children!"
- no confidence
- fear of isolation/loneliness
- under pressure from church, family, community
- geographically isolated
- no money, transport, is disabled or elderly.

1.2 Are there examples of where Primary Prevention activities have changed socially accepted norms in Australia and will this work to prevent violence against women and their children?

Violence against women is a social issue and it is deeply embedded in our culture, norms and practices. As a nation we can, and have, changed what were considered for many decades "socially accepted norms".

Cast your minds back to when smoking on planes, workplace or in the cinema was considered normal and socially acceptable; and when sunscreen was shunned in favour of baby oil.

But when Governments saw the costly death and disease statistics that were resulting from our behaviours and attitudes, they listened. Campaigns, such as *Quit* and S*lip Slop Slap* were launched challenging Australians to question and change their behaviours. And when **we** saw that particular behaviours were giving us lung cancer or melanomas, **we** also took action!

Over the past 40 years in Australia we have seen seismic change in population-level attitudes and behaviours to smoking, sun exposure and drink-driving. We are happier and healthier because of it.

1.3 In relation to prevention activities how do I call out sexist and abusive behaviour?

There isn't one perfect way to call people out, and it can be difficult if you're not used to it. You don't need to say or do a lot, but by calling these situations out, you have the ability to change the story for the better. However, it is important that you are sure that you are safe before you call it out.

- **Different ways to calling it out**
    1) Use body language – e.g. by giving a disapproving look to show you are not happy with what just happened or was said
    2) Make a light hearted comment to stop the situation
    3) Provide support to the person who was targeted afterwards
    4) Say something privately to the person about their behaviour afterwards
    5) Report the behaviour when appropriate and when there is a mechanism to do so (e.g. workplace)
    6) Say something publicly about the behaviour

However, always ensure you are confident and feel safe before taking any action.

Three Tips for calling it out?

Tip 1- Be proactive

Ask colleagues and friends if they've experienced sexism or sexual harassment recently? Find out is there anything you can do to stop it from happening again?

Tip 2- Rehearse what you'd say:

What will you do if you see sexism and sexual harassment and it is safe to intervene. When will you do it?

TIP 3 - Think of a time when you felt that you should have said something, but didn't: Can you still do something about it? If not, what will you do next time? (By Stander Campaign)

1.4 What is the Bystander effect or bystander apathy?

The bystander effect, or bystander apathy, is a social psychological phenomenon in which individuals are less likely to offer help to a victim when other people are present. The greater the number of bystanders, the less likely it is that any one of them will help. Several factors contribute to the bystander effect, including ambiguity, cohesiveness, and diffusion of responsibility that reinforces mutual denial of a situation's severity. (Wikipedia)

1.5 What role can Rotarians play in primary prevention activities?

Rotarians can play their part and help to achieve cultural change by encouraging their Club Members and family to participate in primary prevention activities that dismantle harmful attitudes towards women; promote gender equality and; encourage respectful relationships (e.g. Clubs can review existing Codes of Conduct; ensure the Club has an appropriate grievance procedure that enables members to confidently and confidentially report inappropriate behavior that may occur within the Club). Clubs can also choose to participate in Rotary Safe Families.

1.6 Are there examples of how victims of domestic violence have been assisted by a family member or friend?

Below are some examples of comments from Victims of Family Violence around the support they received from family and friends:

- **Positive, sensitive and helpful support received from a friend**

  "My best friend really helped me. She never judged me or made me feel like it was my fault. She helped me think about what to do, looked after my kids to give me a break, and was there when I needed her.

  It can't have been easy on her. But her support made a big difference." … ***Anna***

- **Unhelpful and insensitive support received from friends/family**

  My family and friends didn't think it was 'that bad' because he only physically hit me once. But the put-downs and manipulation were so much worse and the way he controlled my life. I really wish my family could have understood how horrible it was." … **Kate**

- **Culturally insensitive support from a friend – not recognising how isolated the victim was in terms of people she could trust and the challenges faced by the victim**

  "When I told her how he abused me, my friend said "but you let him do it", like it was my fault. That made me feel worse.

  She didn't understand how much pressure he put on me to go back, how he said he loved me and would kill himself rather than live without me and the children. He made me feel so guilty. I thought how important it was for the children to have a father. It was all a way of manipulating me to come back.

  My friend stopped talking to me after I went back to him, she said I was stupid. I was really upset because she was my only close friend in Australia and I really needed someone to talk to and help me to see that the way he treated me was wrong"… **Nicola** (DVRCV)

2.0 Family Violence and Children

2.1 Can Children recover from domestic and family violence?

How quickly and completely children recover from the effects of domestic and family violence depends on whether:

- They can be kept safe from violence and from reminders of previous trauma - known as "trauma triggers"
- They are supported and comforted within a 'protective cocoon' of care after they experience trauma
- Their schools, childcare centres, support services and centres provide an understanding and supportive environment to help with healing and recovery
- There is good communication between the parent, guardian or primary carer and the school, childcare centre, support service or centre that is supporting the child and family.
- They can have security, safety and care in their everyday lives
- They have access to specialised trauma-informed counselling, if they need it
- They can rebuild a safe and secure attachment with their parent, guardian, primary carer, or another adult who can act as a protective carer, if they have been exposed to violence in their early years. Support is also essential for the parent, guardian or primary carer for the secure attachment to be rebuild between them (DVPC Qld)

2.2 What other factors can affect a child's recover from family violence?

Recovery for children can also depend on a number of other factors being in place including:

- Children having access to other adults in their lives with whom they have a good relationship, such as a grandparent, an aunt, uncle or other relative; an adult family friend, who understands what is happening in the family and can provide some protective support to the child; a support worker

- Children may also have access to other social networks such as being part of an activity or sports group. This enables them to have other friends and adults who can be supportive and where they are able to experience positive ways that adults relate to each other and to children.
- Sometimes the social conditions that children are living in, such as living in poverty or where families are isolated from other networks, can have a negative impact on their ability to recover. Families living in poverty or without access to other social networks can experience greater stress levels than other families.
- Children may experience bullying or other negative behaviour in other settings that may impact on their ability to deal with and recover from domestic and family violence.
- Children may have internal strengths or cope with stress in ways that are protective. This might include accessing other forms of support, being engaged in hobbies or activities such as sports that allow them some time away from the stressful situation they're living in and to focus on other things. They may also display a positive attitude that allows them to get on with things. (**1800RESPECT**) (DVPC Qld)

3.0 Family Violence - Elder Abuse

3.1 What factors Increase the Risk of Elder Abuse?

Research has shown that there are a range of factors that can increase an older person's likelihood of experiencing elder abuse. While these factors do not on their own predict abuse, they can play a role in the frequency or severity of the violence.

Reinforcing factors that may affect an older person include:

- Social isolation and a lack of support
- Poor physical or mental health
- Cognitive impairment, including dementia
- having a disability or being reliant on others for support with daily living,
- family conflict
- Trauma or past abuse co-dependent relationship with the perpetrator, or the victim feeling they are reliant on the perpetrator for care, housing or income.

Appendix 2

3.2 What factors increase the risk of Perpetrating Elder Abuse?

There are a number of reinforcing factors that can play a role in a person perpetrating elder abuse. While these factors do not lead a person to become abusive, they can have an influence on the situation. Reinforcing factors that may affect a person choosing to perpetrate elder abuse include:

- Lack of social support
- Poor mental health
- Dependence on the older person for emotional support, financial help, housing or other assistance
- Substance abuse
- Caregiver feeling stressed and unsupported.

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