



Australia India Society of Victoria Inc

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AISV TASKFORCE AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN INDIAN AND ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

5 July 2011

Information on the Taskforce

Australia India Society of Victoria (AISV) Taskforce against Domestic Violence (DV) was formed in November 2009. The TASKFORCE is a subcommittee of Australia India Society of Victoria Inc

Mission Statement

The mission of the Taskforce is to raise awareness of DV in the Australian Indian community and other ethnic communities with education and public awareness campaigns. We aim to articulate strategies for prevention of DV in the Australian Indian community and support ethnic communities in achieving the same goals.

By understanding the nature of DV in the Australian Indian community and attitudes underlying DV in the Australian Indian community we aim to improve access to DV services by making the services more culturally appropriate and relevant for the Australian Indian community and support other ethnic communities in doing the same .

Membership

Our partners are as follows

- Indian Community represented by AISV, DISHA (ladies philanthropic organisation).
- The Punjabi Indian community of western Victoria represented by Tarneit Sikh Temple
- Professionals DV service delivery organisations such as Immigrant Women's Domestic Violence Service, (now called IN TOUCH) and Relationships Australia (Greensborough Branch).
- The University of Melbourne's Centre for International Mental Health.
- Bangladeshi Community
- Jewish Taskforce on DV
- Country Victoria – Morwell Child protection services
- The Foundations house -survivors of torture

Our Previous achievements

At our last meeting held on 7 December 2010, the Taskforce membership decided to hold a celebration of 100th International Women's Day on Tuesday 8 March. A very successful day was held at the Indian Consulate attended by 150 people. The Chief Guest Andrea Coote, MP Parliamentary Secretary was impressed enough to mention the day in the Parliament.

Our major project held between March and May 2011 was a highly successful Interactive Theatre Performance with dialogue on culturally determined barriers to acknowledging and seeking help for Domestic Violence in the Indian community. We conducted focus groups and interactive theatre in western, eastern and south-eastern Victoria. All dialogues were recorded and are currently undergoing analysis at The Centre for International Mental Health, The University of Melbourne. This data will be used to formulate prevention, treatment and educational strategies.

A second community action research project is now planned that will explore the prevention strategies in Indian community.

The project is titled 'Forum / Applied Theatre – a novel means of Preventing Domestic Violence in the Australian Indian Community'. We are seeking funding for this project.

PLANNING NOVEMBER 2011 WHITE RIBBONS DAY CAMPAIGN THEME

“Women and men united to end violence against women and girls”

Our theme is based on the statement made by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in 2008

“All of us – men and women, soldiers and peacekeepers, citizens and leaders – have a responsibility to help end violence against women. States must honour their commitments to prevent violence, bring perpetrators to justice and provide redress to victims. And each of us must speak out in our families, workplaces and communities, so that acts of violence against women cease.”

Other speakers – Premier Ted Baillieu, Magistrate Bob Kumar, Consul General of India Dr S. Behara, Dr Gurdip Aurora President AISV, North Melbourne Football Club CEO Mr Eugene Arocca and Dr Manjula O'Connor Chair AISV TASKFORCE.

Entertainment by Punjabi Male Folk Dancing group and Indian Folk singer and Bollywood songs.

OUR TESTIMONIALS.

International Women's Day



ANDREA COOTE MP

Parliamentary Hansard (Excerpt)

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International Women's Day

Mrs COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) – I rise to contribute to the 100th celebration of International Women's Day. I have had the privilege of attending many celebrations, and today I will mention two of these. One was on 4 March, and I attended the event with Jan de Kretser, the wife of the current governor, and Jeanette Hourani, chair of the Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition. Mrs de Kretser and I launched the Her Story project, which features the stories of a number of migrant women who tell how they came to be in this country and share some of the experiences they have had. It was particularly emotive, and some of the stories were poignant and touching. I congratulate all those who were able to tell their stories, and I encourage people to look at Her Story and the superlative work it contains. I hope it is the beginning of many stories to come.

The second celebration I attended was that of the Australia India Society of Victoria's task force on the prevention of domestic violence. The AISV was established in 1963 and works to address the issue of family violence within the Australian-Indian community of Victoria. It collaborates with other multicultural groups, including the Jewish community, and this event was an excellent way of celebrating International Women's Year. Rather than something that is a celebration for a day, the task force looks at ongoing projects which will influence Victorians into the future. I congratulate the group.

Source: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard/council.htm>

22 March 2010

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ANDREA COOTE MP

Parliamentary Hansard (Excerpt)

PARLIAMENT OF VICTORIA – LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

26 May 2011

Pages 45 – 48

FAMILY VIOLENCE PROTECTION AMENDMENT (SAFETY NOTICES) BILL 2011

Second reading

Mrs. COOTE (Southern Metropolitan) – I have a great deal of pleasure, in some respects, in speaking about the Family Violence Protection Amendment (Safety Notices) Bill 2011 basically because it gives us, as a chamber and as legislators, a chance yet again to alert the community to this very vexed issue of family violence. It also gives me the opportunity to put on the record my praise for the minister for bringing the bill to this stage and identifying these various areas of concern.

The bill repeals the sunset provision for family violence safety notices (FVSNs). It also clarifies the power of the Magistrates Court in relation to the adjournment of intervention order applications brought by way of FVSNs and the power of the Magistrates Court to make intervention orders where the protected person does not consent to the making of the application by police and/or the order by the court.

As has been said by other speakers this afternoon, family violence safety notices were introduced in 2008 and they allow police to impose short-term protective conditions after hours for victims of family violence, pending further hearing by a court. These police-issued FVSNs have a maximum length of 72 hours and must be returned to a court within that time. The provisions were designed to sunset so that FVSNs could be trialled and evaluated.

In his contribution Mr David O'Brien gave a very detailed summary of the implications and ramifications of the bill and a detailed response about why the Baillieu government has brought this bill to the chamber. I commend him for an excellent report, and I encourage anybody who is interested in this area to read his contribution because it will clarify a number of issues for the reader. It is very comprehensive coverage of the issues.

I would like to talk about something in a slightly different way, and I acknowledge the contributions of Ms Darveniza, Ms Hartland, Mr Pakula and other speakers who have spoken about the unacceptable nature of violence anywhere but that of family violence in particular. As Ms Hartland said, violence inflicted on children is totally and utterly unacceptable. I am fortunate to be the parliamentary secretary to Mary Wooldridge, the Minister for Community Services, the Minister for Mental Health and the Minister for Women's Affairs.

The Department of Human Services falls within those portfolio areas, and being the parliamentary secretary has given me a firsthand opportunity to examine a number of the very vexed issues involved with children who are exposed to family violence and also some of the outcomes of it.

The community at large hears about family violence and has an abhorrence of it, but when you read some of the finer details each and every one of us feels an enormous amount of compassion for those children and other people who are implicated in family violence. It is not just the people who have been abused who are affected, it has huge long-term ramifications for the wider community as well. We see this manifest itself in so many different ways – in schooling, in mental health issues, in drug-related issues, and indeed with the presentation to our hospital emergency departments of so many related injuries.

I remind the chamber and the Parliament as a whole that it was the Kennett Liberal government that brought in mandatory reporting of child abuse. It is important to remember that that has been very effective, particularly in relation to child abuse resulting from domestic violence. I commend all the professionals who have reported child abuse, whether it has been sexual or family violence, because it is a very difficult thing to do.

It is important to place some statistics on the record. VicHealth has done some excellent research into these areas and has demonstrated that for women aged between 15 and 44 intimate partner violence is responsible for more ill health and premature death than any other well-known factor, including obesity and smoking. That is a very salutary statistic. It is not something we would normally consider – we would think there would be other, greater risk factors – but that has been proven in the research done by VicHealth.

In Australia a woman is killed almost every week by a current or previous intimate partner. In 2009-10 Victoria Police submitted 35 720 family violence reports, 77 per cent of which were female and 23 per cent of which were male. That last statistic is an important one: there has been a huge increase in the number of violent acts being perpetrated by women. It is starting to be a trend, and we need to be more cognisant of these emerging statistics in the domestic violence area.

In 2009-10 women and children comprised 96 per cent of all sexual offences reported to Victoria Police, and women were at least three times more likely to be the victim of intimate partner violence than men. It is estimated that the cost of violence against women and their children across the Victorian economy was \$3.4 billion in 2009, and without any further action this sum will increase to \$3.9 billion per annum by 2021.

Clearly, therefore, anything we can do as a legislator to reverse this trend is important – hence the importance of this bill here today.

This year was the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. Much has been said about that, but I, on behalf of Minister Wooldridge, had a very good opportunity to address two particular groups. One of them was the Australia India Society of Victoria. It put on an International Women's Day event, and at that event it decided that marching in the street or banners or publicity in

newspapers did not go far enough. Therefore as a group the society took on the responsibility of looking at domestic violence in the Indian community to see what could be done to enhance recognition, prevention and a whole range of other things. I commend the extraordinary work that group has been doing in this area.

Particular praise must go to Dr Gurdip Aurora and to Dr Manjula O'Connor, vice-president of the Australia India Society of Victoria, for recognising this as a very real issue and doing something about it. They are to be highly commended, and a number of other communities could take some notice of this as well. I know they have been working very cooperatively with the Jewish community, and that is an important step forward as well. Domestic violence is not just related to the broader community, cultural issues are also a major problem.

I might add the Australia India Society of Victoria under the direction of Dr Manjula O'Connor, who is the project coordinator, has a theatre performance on domestic violence. It is a project in the Melbourne Indian community. There were three focus groups involving Indian women from Sunshine, Dandenong/Glen Waverley and Balwyn. They turned the discussions into a modified forum theatre that they called applied theatre, and have performed the theatre piece twice in the Indian community and once in the Wyndham City Council area. The group's next performance is going to be on 27 May – members will have to be quick to get to it – at 3.30p.m. in room 515 at the University of Melbourne. I said that just in case any member wanted to go.

The other group within our community that is doing something very productive against violence, and domestic violence in particular is our indigenous community. The indigenous community has embraced an approach to family violence that acknowledges it is a big and real issue in their community.

There are certain cultural issues that are absolutely relevant only to indigenous culture. They are about the way in which men are perceived within their culture. There is a whole range of sensitivities about how men approach violence and how their rapport within their families is viewed. It is quite an interesting and in-depth cultural attitude and approach which is slightly different to that found in the wider community. Nevertheless they are addressing there is as a very real issue.

I commend the Indigenous Family Violence strategy, which is a partnership strategy, the forum organisers and the work they have been doing. They have worked with the Department of Human Services in a number of areas. They are linking with the family violence coordination reform unit located in the Office of Women's Policy. The unit has provided an overall coordination and lead on the family violence reform program.

There is also the family violence and sexual assault unit in the children, youth and families division, which coordinates the operational aspects of the Indigenous Family Violence strategy through a state-wide network of indigenous family violence regional coordinators. The unit has also been dealing with homelessness and family violence support in the Office of Housing, which coordinates emergency accommodation and services, including managing the national partnership

agreement on homelessness which provides an additional two indigenous women's emergency accommodation facilities in Mildura and Morwell.

The work being done is extremely good. It is something that should be acknowledged, because it is looking at the sensitivities of family violence and the indigenous community. The bill we are dealing with today enhances that opportunity and ensures that there is another level of certainty in regard to this aspect.

In the short time I have left I remind members of the chamber of the complexities that relate to indigenous family violence. It is quite different, and it is important that we are cognisant of and understand this. Just as there are certain technicalities within the Indian and Jewish communities, there are certain technicalities in the indigenous community. I think it is important for us to understand what some of these technicalities are.

The development and implementation of the Victorian Indigenous Family Violence strategy involved a three-stage approach. A task force was established to provide the government with advice about how to effectively address family violence within indigenous communities. The second stage was the government response to the recommendations of this task force. The previous government's response was to commit to establishing an Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum. It is our intention, and the intention of the Minister for Local Government, Jeanette Powell, to support this project in an ongoing way.

The minister recognises how important this work is for the future. The third stage involved the development and implementation of the Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, and Strong Families – Towards a Safer Future for Indigenous Families and Communities, which was designed to specifically address family violence in indigenous communities. Once again, Minister Powell is supportive of that.

To conclude, the indigenous community has a good men's shed type of approach which is culturally sensitive and looks into a number of the issues. There is a case worker at the centre of this approach who is able to redirect people specifically to areas that are going to impact on and influence their lives. It may be homelessness services, the police, courts, other families or drug and alcohol services that are involved, but it is a two-way street. The person in the middle of all of this is like a gatekeeper who can redirect people to where that specific information is needed. It is a model that I think could be rolled out into other communities.

I commend all those groups I have spoken about this afternoon. In summary, I support this excellent bill. I think it is a great step forward. Hopefully as this Parliament progresses we can have more legislation that helps us all to address the unacceptable issue of family violence.

Source: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/downloadhansard/council.htm>