Addressing family violence in communities recovering from emergencies

A strategy to integrate family violence services with emergency recovery

August 2016

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1.0	June 2016	Director, Emergency Management	NA	All
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Accountability and review.

The accountability for the Department of Health and Human Services *Addressing family violence in communities recovering from emergencies: A strategy to integrate family violence services with emergency recovery* rests with the Director, Emergency Management.

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Available at: <www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/emergency>

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1. Overview

The *Addressing family violence in communities recovering from emergencies: A strategy to integrate family violence services with emergency recovery* was developed by the Department of Health and Human Services (the department), Emergency Management Branch to help reduce the risk and impact of family violence after emergencies. Implementation of this strategy is a priority for recovery programs following emergencies, but has broader application to ongoing recovery planning.

Research has demonstrated an increased risk of escalating family violence after emergencies. It is well recognised that specific vulnerabilities exist for women, men and people with diverse gender identities, and that additional vulnerabilities such as age, culture, and disability, can further impact the experience of family violence and access to support services.

The strategy will: increase awareness of local and regional family violence risk and impacts; ensure family violence issues are considered in local and regional recovery planning; and support the implementation of prevention and support initiatives, including gendered and inclusive recovery approaches.

Improved communication about family violence and support services, and the promotion of family violence training to the recovery workforce, will support this work.

2. Background

Gender, inequality and family violence

Family violence affects women disproportionately. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reveals that one in six women has experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner since the age of 15. Further, one in three women has experienced physical violence and one in five women has experienced sexual violence. The 68,134 incidents in Victoria in 2014 affected 71,146 family members during the incident. Of those affected family members, 75.4 per cent were women.

The Royal Commission into Family Violence[1] recognised that the underlying causes of family violence are complex, but there is a strong and growing body of research and evidence linking family violence to gender inequality.

Expressions of gender inequality that have been shown to be most consistently associated with higher levels of violence against women are: condoning of violence against women; men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence; rigid gender roles and identities; and male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.[2]

Gendered disaster research in Australia has highlighted the increased risk of violence against women occurring in the aftermath of an emergency, and the issues associated with this risk. Some of these issues include: inadequate responses to women by legal, community and health professionals; violence

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[1] <www.rcfv.com.au>

[2] Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth (2015) Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia.

against women linked to the level of suffering men face during and following emergencies; and that domestic violence can increase with alcohol and/or substance abuse.[34]

It is recognised that experience of family violence and access to support services may be further impacted by additional vulnerabilities, including: age (children, seniors); Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; people within culturally and linguistically diverse communities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people (LGBTI); people living in rural, regional and remote communities; and people with a disability.

Organisations, including emergency recovery committees, can work to identify and overcome gaps and barriers affecting access to support services for women experiencing family violence, and people with additional vulnerabilities. They can also contribute to the primary prevention of family violence through their recovery activities and programs.

References and resources at the back of this strategy are a source of more in-depth background information and should be used to improve understanding of family violence issues, and inform appropriate development of initiatives and service responses.

3. Aim

This strategy aims to help reduce the risk and impact of family violence after emergencies by:

- incorporating the consideration of family violence issues in recovery planning and activities
- encouraging the development of initiatives that support access to services for people experiencing family violence.

4. Scope

This strategy is applicable for implementation in emergency recovery following emergencies and in ongoing recovery planning and preparedness.

Emergency specific recovery committees

The department will coordinate implementation of the strategy through relevant municipal and/or regional committees with social recovery roles after emergencies.

Standing emergency management planning committees – whole of Victoria

All standing municipal and regional emergency management planning committees in Victoria, and recovery sub-committees, should implement this strategy to ensure family violence issues are appropriately considered in recovery planning and activity.

For the purpose of this strategy, emergency specific recovery committees and standing emergency management planning committees will be referred to as recovery committees.

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[3] Parkinson, D. (2015) Women's experience of violence in the aftermath of the Black Saturday bushfires. A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Clayton: School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts, Monash University.

[4] Gender and Emergency Management Guidelines: a Literature Review:
<www.genderanddisaster.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Final-GEM-lit-review.pdf>

5. Outcomes

The strategy will achieve the following outcomes:

1. local and regional recovery committees have an increased awareness of the risk and impact of family violence, particularly for vulnerable people, and awareness of available resources
2. family violence issues are considered in local and regional emergency recovery planning
3. local and regional recovery committees identify and implement family violence prevention and support initiatives that support access to services for people experiencing family violence during and after an emergency
4. local and regional recovery committees and relief and recovery agencies undertake core knowledge training in the department's Family Violence Assessment and Risk Management Framework, also known as the Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF)
5. improved communication of available family violence support for people affected by emergencies and most at risk.

6. Working together: Family violence specialist services and emergency management

The approach taken by this strategy is for specialist family violence services and emergency management stakeholders to come together, learn about each other, and work together to reduce the increased risk and impact of family violence after emergencies.

Family Violence Regional Integration Committees identify and prioritise local and regional family violence issues within the statewide policy reform framework and focus on regional work to achieve improved integration of family violence services and coordination with other key sector services.

Each Family Violence Regional Integration Committee has an identified auspice agency that employs the **Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator** and acts as fund holder for the Family Violence Regional Integration Committee. Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator positions are funded by the department.

Domestic Violence Victoria convenes regular meetings of the Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinators enabling good communication about statewide implementation of this strategy.

The **Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria** provides the family violence training described in this strategy.

Municipal and regional emergency management planning committees can help to address the increased risk of family violence after emergencies by engaging with their Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator and considering family violence issues in their recovery planning.

7. Initiatives

The department's Emergency Management Branch will support the implementation of initiatives through attending a central meeting with all Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinators convened by Domestic Violence Victoria.

Regular meetings of the coordinators provide an opportunity for them to share ideas regarding integration with emergency management statewide, and for emergency management staff to attend as required to facilitate ongoing coordination of the strategy.

7.1   Making connections

The department's regional emergency management staff will facilitate attendance by Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinators at regional recovery committee meetings to:

- increase the committee's awareness of local and regional family violence risk
- provide locally relevant information that will help support people experiencing family violence to access to services during and after an emergency
- provide information to the committee on how to respond to protect women and children and other vulnerable people at risk
- provide information on how perpetrators are referred to support services and behaviour change programs
- help stimulate ideas for appropriate recovery activities that are locally relevant.

The department's regional emergency management staff will also promote this initiative to local committees with responsibility for emergency recovery, and will facilitate the Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator's attendance at meetings.

The department's regional emergency management staff may also find it helpful if they attend Family Violence Regional Integration Committee meetings to engage directly with representatives from funded family violence services in the area. This will enable information about the strategy to be disseminated, and the possible role of these funded agencies in emergency recovery to be discussed. Meetings with the Family Violence Regional Integration Committee may also help to inform recovery planning.

7.2   Local and regional recovery planning

Following a committee's discussion with the Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator, the department's regional emergency management staff will facilitate the consideration of family violence issues in regional recovery plans, and inclusion of information on how community access to family violence services will be supported.

Consideration should also be given to targeted services that can support people with additional vulnerabilities. These may include the adolescent family violence service, indigenous family violence services, services that support women and children with a disability, and services for people experiencing homelessness.

The department's regional emergency management staff will also promote this initiative to local committees with responsibility for emergency recovery planning.

In some parts of Victoria, municipal and regional emergency management planning committees have already engaged with their Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator and are implementing family violence initiatives.

7.3   Local and regional prevention and support

In discussion with the Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator, recovery committees should identify and propose prevention and support initiatives that could help reduce the increased risk and impact of family violence in their community after an emergency. The department's regional emergency management staff and the Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator will work with committees to support the implementation of appropriate initiatives.

Local and regional recovery committees should proactively develop initiatives that support access to services for people experiencing family violence, including people with additional vulnerabilities. When developing initiatives, committees should be cognizant that processes do not have unintended consequences that may further perpetuate family violence.

Local and regional recovery committees can also focus on the issues associated with the increased risk of violence against women in the aftermath of an emergency. Primary prevention activities can: challenge condoning of violence against women; promote women's decision-making; challenge gender stereotypes and roles; and promote positive, equal and respectful relationships between women. Alcohol-free events for the community can help to reduce the risk of violence emerging from alcohol abuse. However challenging a drinking culture that positions men's drinking as an excuse for violence or women's drinking as a form of victim-blaming, will more sustainably help to address social norms relating to alcohol and gender.

In addition to the specialist knowledge of the Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator, engagement with workers across other areas of social practice, and familiarisation with the references and resources described in this strategy, can help guide the development of initiatives.

7.4 Family violence training

A wide range of emergency management employees, volunteers, and service providers engaged in social recovery activity should have core knowledge of the department's Family Violence Assessment and Risk Management Framework, also known as the Common Risk Assessment Framework (CRAF). CRAF training will help provide a shared understanding of family violence and a common approach to the assessment and management of risk as a critical aspect of a new, integrated approach to family violence in Victoria.

CRAF training is available through face-to-face training or an e-learning module, as outlined below.

Detailed information about CRAF training and registration can be accessed through The Lookout website at: <www.thelookout.org.au/training-events>

Face-to-face

CRAF Preliminary Risk Assessment training is a half day module delivered free-of-charge by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria. Regional department emergency management staff will work with the Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator to ensure training is provided to appropriate regional stakeholders, including members of recovery committees and service providers who may encounter and work with people experiencing family violence, including outreach workers.

The department's regional emergency management staff, with the Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator, will also promote this initiative to local recovery committees for their members, and relevant paid and volunteer workforces.

e-learning

eCRAF core knowledge training can be undertaken through an e-learning module accessed through The Lookout website.

The e-learning module covers core knowledge on the integrated family violence system, and how to identify and respond to a victim of family violence. Regional department emergency management staff will ensure that stakeholders who are unable to attend face-to-face training are encouraged to undertake the e-learning module.

Online training resources

The Gender and Disaster Pod[5] has developed a training package designed for emergency services and recovery workers which is based on the CRAF module and extends to examining family violence specifically in the context of emergencies. The package is available to download at: <www.genderanddisaster.com.au/info-hub/education-training>

7.5   Public information and resources

The department's Emergency Management Branch will coordinate initiatives to improve community access to local and regional family violence information, support services and resources during and after emergencies.

Communication and distribution

Information, as outlined below, will be made available on recovery websites and in resources for distribution at relief and recovery centres, community recovery meetings, community events and venues.

Promotion of family violence support services

The department will promote relevant telephone information and support services such as:

- safe steps Family Violence Response Centre (support services for women and children experiencing violence and abuse from a partner or ex-partner, another family member or someone close to them. Services include crisis accommodation, safety planning and referral to local specialist family violence support agencies)
- 1800RESPECT (a Commonwealth Government service including information and triage to state based services)
- Men's Referral Service (for male perpetrators and men experiencing family violence)
- Victims of Crime Helpline (information and support to help people recover from the effects of crime).

The state government website; The Lookout, will also be promoted for information on local referral and other family violence service resources.

Online links will be made between emergency management and The Lookout website at: <www.thelookout.org.au/sector-info/victorian-services>

Brochure

The department's Emergency Management Branch will develop a brochure with information about emergencies, family violence and key state-wide family violence resources for information, referral and support.

Template fact sheet

The above brochure will be available as a template fact sheet that will enable tailoring to include a local service provider list. The department's regional emergency management staff will work with the Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinator and local committees to facilitate development and communication of local service provider lists where appropriate.

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[5] The Gender and Disaster Pod is an initiative by Women's Health in the North, Women's Health Goulburn North East and Monash University Disaster Resilience Initiative 'to promote an understanding of the role played by gender in survivor responses to natural disaster, and to embed these insights into emergency management practice'.

'Postcard' with service provider list

The department's Emergency Management Branch will produce 'postcards' for distribution at relief and recovery centres, community recovery meetings, community events and venues. The postcards will include information on emergencies, family violence, and family violence support services.

The department's regional emergency management staff will ensure that postcards are distributed appropriately.

8. Timeline for implementation and review

Following emergencies

Implementation of the strategy is a priority for recovery programs following emergencies and should be implemented at the earliest possible stage to ensure family violence issues are addressed in incident specific recovery plans.

By 30 November 2016 and ongoing

Statewide implementation through standing emergency management planning committees will be ongoing however implementation should be well advanced by 30 November 2016, ahead of the 2016-17 summer season.

By 30 June 2017

The strategy will be reviewed by the department's Emergency Management Branch by 30 June 2017.

9. Governance

The department will lead implementation of this strategy through existing recovery arrangements. This includes:

•   The department's Emergency Management Branch, Strategic Policy, will coordinate implementation and reporting. The Director Emergency Management may report to the State Relief and Recovery Team on the implementation status of this strategy and any issues.

•   The department's divisional emergency management managers are responsible for ensuring implementation at the regional and local level, and for reporting on implementation of priority action identified in the strategy.

•   Municipal emergency management planning committees, sub-committees, and community recovery committees will be supported by the department to participate in implementing the strategy.

•   The department's Central and Divisional Emergency Management Directors and Managers Meeting will provide a forum for promoting consistency in regional implementation, discussing issues and considering strategic ideas.

Domestic Violence Victoria convenes regular meetings with Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinators. These meetings provide an opportunity for the department Emergency Management Branch and divisional and regional emergency management staff to liaise with Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinators when required, including introducing and outlining the strategy. The meetings will also provide Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinators with ongoing opportunities to share information about successful integration of family violence initiatives with emergency recovery.

10. Partnerships

The department's emergency management and family violence programs will work together to coordinate delivery of this strategy through local and regional emergency management committees.

The Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria will provide training as outlined in the strategy.

Community, municipal and regional stakeholders will be engaged in the delivery of this strategy through their participation in existing recovery governance.

11. Funding

This strategy will be implemented through existing emergency management and family violence regional integration program funding and recovery program funds provided by the department for social recovery activity.

12. Reporting

The department will report on implementation of *Addressing family violence in communities recovering from emergencies* as required.

The department operational divisions will report on implementation of the strategy to the department's Emergency Management Branch.

12.1 Recovery programs following emergencies

The department's divisional emergency management managers with responsibility for recovery programs following emergencies will report on implementation of the strategy for those communities. They should report on the implementation of the initiatives described in this strategy, and against the expected outcomes. Stand-alone reports will be made unless reports are integrated into recovery progress reports. The department's Emergency Management Branch will provide further guidance on reporting.

12.2 Statewide implementation

All department divisional emergency management managers will report progress on implementation of the strategy, in their regions, by 30 November 2016 (ahead of the summer season) and by 31 May 2017 (ahead of the strategy review).

Requests for reports will be coordinated by the department's Emergency Management Branch.

13. Key contacts

Contact details for Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinators, and key department emergency management staff, will be shared to facilitate implementation of the strategy.

Contact details for Family Violence Regional Integration Coordinators can also be found on online at: <www.dhs.vic.gov.au/for-service-providers/children.-youth-and-families/family-violence2/family-violence-regional-integration-coordinators-contacts>

14. References and resources for addressing family violence in recovery

Roadmaps

In 2015, Department of Health and Human Services funded Women's Health Goulburn North East to improve access to gender and disaster research and resources. The outcome of this work was development of the Roadmaps link which can be accessed from the *Gender & Disaster Pod* website at: <www.genderanddisaster.com.au/roadmaps>

Research accessible via the Roadmaps link demonstrates that the experience of emergencies can be different for people due to their vulnerabilities, such as their gender and sexual identity, and that different recovery approaches can be needed to help address their different needs. Research has also demonstrated an increased risk of escalating family violence after emergencies.

Roadmaps links to four extensive checklists, information resources, and examples for possible recovery action, to support community, agency, and government recovery planning, for improved gender outcomes after emergencies.

The *Gender & Disaster Pod* has also developed the first National Gender and Emergency Management Guidelines: <www.genderanddisaster.com.au/info-hub/national-gem-guidelines>. The guidelines, developed with the help of a National Emergency Management Project grant, are an initiative to address the growing interest in the impact of gender on emergency management (EM) and the recognised need for gender to be incorporated into national guidelines. They build on the draft Gender and Emergency Management Guidelines as conceptualised within the Victorian context, a department funded initiative.

The Lookout

The Lookout website at: <www.thelookout.org.au/resources> was developed by the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria and Domestic Violence Victoria, with funding from the Victorian Government, and provides access to a comprehensive range of family violence resources for:

- people experiencing violence, their family and friends
- the specialist family violence sector and other professions
- academics and researchers
- journalists and media workers.

The Lookout is the portal for the eCRAF e-learning module described in this strategy.

Rainbow eQuality

Rainbow e-Quality: a guide to LGBTI inclusive practice for health and community services is a new Victorian Government resource which should be used when developing initiatives and service responses for LGBTI individuals and communities.

The Rainbow eQuality Guide identifies that:

- LGBTI Australians experience higher rates of family violence than heterosexual people
- the types of violence patterns in intimate partner violence can differ in same sex relationships including malicious 'outing' of a partner
- violence can be perpetrated by family members on young and older LGBTI people
- there are several barriers to reporting violence to police and to accessing professional support
- service providers can support LGBTI victims of violence through sensitive and inclusive practice.

Service responses to LGBTI people should be cognisant of their dual vulnerability to barriers to accessing services *generally* and specifically due to their experience of family violence.

The Rainbow Equality Guide can be accessed online at:
<www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/populations/lgbti-health/rainbow-equality>

Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia

The Change the Story framework presents the evidence and a conceptual approach for preventing violence against women and their children in Australia. It presents principles of effective prevention as a guide to assist governments and other stakeholders to develop their own appropriate policies, strategies and programs.

It was developed by Our Watch in partnership with Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth), and contributes to the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-20122.

Change the Story can be accessed online at: <www.ourwatch.org.au/Media-Resources>

Preventing violence against women information sheets (MAV)

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) has produced a series of information sheets to assist councils working to prevent violence against women and promoting gender equality. The information sheets outline specific actions that can be undertaken to prevent family violence and respond to at risk populations of women.

The information sheets can be accessed online at:
<www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equity/pvaw-information-sheets/Pages/default.aspx>