

Perpetrator interventions - Key Literature

Australia

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2021). [Interventions for perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia](#) (ANROWS Insights, 02/2021). ANROWS.

Extract: This ANROWS research explores how human services agencies (particularly mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and child protection services) could be recognised as essential parts of broader perpetrator intervention systems. Human services agencies could play a pivotal role in linking men into behaviour change interventions, and could work together with the legal system and men's family violence interventions to keep perpetrators' use of violence in view. This means having agencies monitor perpetrators' risk over time, sharing information and working collaboratively to manage risk.

Improving services and systems to better respond to men's use of violence will require:

- > addressing trauma and inequality
- > providing early and holistic support for associated issues
- > supporting community-led approaches
- > integrating service systems
- > building workforce capacity.

Much work remains to be done to evaluate the effectiveness of perpetrator interventions. In undertaking this evaluation work, it is essential that the safety and wellbeing of victims and survivors remain the central focus.

The research makes 9 key policy recommendations (see p1) including the need for guidance to be developed for courts on trauma-informed ways of working, including recognising how trauma affects the capacity to give evidence.

Blagg, H et al., [Understanding the role of law and culture in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities in responding to and preventing family violence](#) (2020) Sydney: ANROWS

The project explored the roles Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Law and Culture play in prevention, intervention and healing in family violence and how they can be supported using a strengths-based approach. It was grounded in an understanding shaped by the impact of colonisation and took place in six communities which retain strong connections to Law and Culture.

It found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Law and Culture are features of everyday life in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, although the mainstream legal system and forms of governance undermine their practice. Responses to family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities should move away from the mainstream legal system and be grounded in Law and Culture, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dispute resolution processes. Healing (including addressing trauma and restoring wellbeing) is fundamental to addressing family violence. Participants recommended interventions that worked at the family, rather than individual, level.

Recommendations include: a greater focus on prevention, healing and diversion from the criminal legal system; involvement of men and women in the design and implementation of local family violence strategies; acknowledging the link between violence and issues that stem from colonisation such as alcohol misuse and intergenerational trauma, rather than focusing solely on gender inequality and male power increases the effectiveness of policy and service responses; and an improved understanding within mainstream systems and services of the nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family obligations and interconnections.

Boxall H et al. 2020. [Responding to adolescent family violence: Findings from an impact evaluation](#). *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* no. 601. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Abstract: Despite growing recognition of the prevalence of and harms associated with adolescent family violence, our knowledge of how best to respond remains underdeveloped.

This paper describes the findings from the outcome evaluation of the Adolescent Family Violence Program. The results show that the program had a positive impact on young people and their families, leading to improved parenting capacity and parent–adolescent attachment. However, there was mixed evidence of its impact on the prevalence, frequency and severity of violent behaviours.

The evaluation reaffirms the importance of dedicated responses for young people who use family violence, and the potential benefits, and limits, of community-based programs.

Centre for Innovative Justice report, [Opportunities for Early Intervention : Bringing Perpetrators of Family Violence into View](#) , (2015, RMIT University).

While this report is focussed on early interventions for perpetrators of domestic and family violence in a

very broad sense chapter two of this report titled 'Perpetrator Programs' provides a detailed literature review of current debates and evidence about the effectiveness of programs.

Chung, Donna, Damian Green, Gary Smith, and Nicole Leggett, *Breaching safety: Improving the effectiveness of Violence Restraining Orders for victims of family and domestic violence* (2014, Curtin University).

This Western Australian draws on interviews with ten men recruited from a Western Australian men's behaviour change program. The interviews were complemented with a focus group of service providers including representatives from men's and women's domestic violence services, Family Violence Court, Family Court, Legal Aid and the Department for Child Protection and Family Support. This study provides useful insights for Magistrates regarding perpetrator views of protection orders and what might be needed to increase their effectiveness. Key study findings include participants' lack of empathy or regard for the safety and wellbeing of their current or former partners. Men often perceived court processes as unfair (including protection order processes and decision making around child contact). Participants' explanations for breaches of violence restraining orders could be grouped into three categories: men who took responsibility for the breach and related consequences; describing the partner as being responsible and 'accidental breachers' where the breach occurred because the protected person and respondent were 'accidentally' in the same physical location. The issue of partner initiated contact does raise an important issue for the women who require flexibility to their protection order to enable them to remain safe and legally protected from unwanted partner contact, but allow communication and face to face contact if necessary (p3).

Chung, D., et al., *Improved accountability: The role of perpetrator intervention systems* (2020). Sydney: ANROWS.

The aim of this research was to develop a detailed understanding of Australian perpetrator intervention (PI) systems upon which the range and breadth of responses to DFV could be mapped; to ascertain the most common pathways of identification, assessment and intervention for DFV perpetrators; and to identify opportunities to further strengthen PI systems and perpetrator accountability. In developing an understanding of PI systems, it was important to acknowledge that perpetrators come into contact with government and non-government services in various capacities that may or may not address their violence, while most perpetrators do not come to the attention of any services. This research has highlighted the extent to which multiple systems are involved in responding to perpetrators, areas where there are strong and frequently used pathways, and areas where there are weak or no linkages to respond to perpetrators.

Chung, Donna et al (2020). *Prioritising women's safety in Australian perpetrator interventions: Mapping the purpose and practices of partner contact* (2020). Sydney: ANROWS.

This project documents the practices of men's behaviour change programmes (MBCPs) in contacting victims/survivors and children of participants. The project considers how partner contact is operating in Australia, its strengths and challenges, and the experiences of victim/survivors who received partner contact support.

Key findings of the report include:

- > Lack of partner contact as part of an MBCP can lead to some perpetrators using their participation in the program to perpetrate abuse towards the victim/survivor and/or other family members.
- > Partner contact is labour-intensive, under-resourced, and often a secondary priority.
- > There is currently a lack of consistency in partner contact practices and interventions, and limited awareness about existing guidelines and standards.
- > Perpetrator accountability has been a growing focus of work in Australia since the launch of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 and the subsequent National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions.
- > Men's behaviour change programs (MBCPs) are a key site of perpetrator accountability that aim to improve safety for women and children.
- > Partner contact is known and understood to be a critical element of MBCPs, however a review of literature shows that little has been documented in Australia about safety practices in this context.

The report's key recommendations are:

- > Partner contact support should be offered to all women (either directly or through organisational partnerships) through all MBCPs.
- > National minimum practice standards for partner support as a component of MBCPs should be developed, and these standards should be formally recognised within contractual arrangements and funding service agreements.
- > Partner contact services should be resourced and funded in ways that enable those national minimum practice standards to be met, and that ensure women have ongoing access to support irrespective of a perpetrator's MBCP attendance.

Fitz-Gibbon, K., Maher, J., Thomas, K., McGowan, J., McCulloch, J., Burley, J., & Pfitzner, N., *The views of Australian judicial officers on domestic and family violence perpetrator interventions* (Research report, 13/2020), Sydney: ANROWS.

Despite increasing acknowledgement of the importance of perpetrator interventions in the delivery of integrated responses to domestic and family violence (DFV) and promoting perpetrator accountability, there remains very little understanding of how Magistrates and other judicial officers view, manage and use perpetrator interventions. This research project aimed to address this gap in evidence.

IN BRIEF

- > Judicial officers hold mixed views on the effectiveness of perpetrator interventions, in particular men's behaviour change programs, in DFV matters.
- > When a DFV case is before them, judicial officers have limited access to information about which (if any) perpetrator interventions have been previously used with a perpetrator.
- > Judicial officers across Australia express a lack of knowledge about perpetrator program referral options, in relation to both the availability and nature of the programs.
- > A central register of perpetrator program referral options, where information about referrals (and perpetrators who return to court after completion of a specific program) could be recorded would build evidence on the effectiveness of specific interventions.
- > The role of judicial officers in holding perpetrators to account remains unclear, as does the place of judicial officers within the system of perpetrator interventions itself.

Key recommendations:

- > To assist in judicial decision-making, consideration should be given to developing guidance on seeking and making use of a perpetrator's history of interventions (e.g. FVIOs, prior sentences, and program attendance) in all DFV matters, including in sentencing.
- > All states and territories should consider contributing to the development and maintenance of a centralised online register of perpetrator intervention programs, to be coordinated through the relevant government departments, to ensure that information is readily available to support judicial decision-making and referral in DFV matters.
- > Courts and judicial educational bodies should consider exploring and developing guidance on the role of judicial officers in creating system accountability regarding perpetrators of DFV. Clarity on the parameters of this role will allow for the development of more consistent sentencing and other outcomes for DFV perpetrators across jurisdictions.

Fisher, C. et al. (2020). *Best practice principles for interventions with domestic and family violence perpetrators from refugee backgrounds (2020)*. Sydney: ANROWS.

This Western Australian project involved: literature review; in-depth interviews with 20 men and 20 women from refugee backgrounds, including men who had perpetrated and women who had experienced domestic and family violence (countries of birth were Burma, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iraq and Iran); and two focus groups with service providers working in men's behaviour change programs, women's services, women's health, refugee services and domestic and family violence services.

It developed a set of best practice principles for interventions with men from refugee backgrounds who use domestic and family violence.

Flood, Michael, *Working Together with Men: Final Evaluation Report* (Melbourne: HealthWest Partnership, 2018).

The Report describes the findings of an impact evaluation of the Working Together with Men project - an innovative violence prevention project based on community engagement and mobilisation. Participatory evaluation (quantitative and qualitative) was conducted to examine the impact of the project on men's engagement in the primary prevention of violence against women. Data was collected by various means, for example, surveys, and focus groups and individual interviews. Further details on the methods employed may be found on pages 12-14. The project impacted four domains: local agencies' capacity to engage men in the primary prevention of violence against women; men's awareness and understanding of violence against women; men's skills and capacity in developing community-based prevention initiatives; and men's capacity to advocate for and sustain prevention activities. Results showed that it is possible to recruit, train and mobilise men in local communities to take action to prevent violence against women. All men reported that their knowledge and understanding of violence against women was enhanced over the course of the project (page 22).

Healey, Lucy, et al., *Invisible Practices: Intervention with fathers who use violence—Final Report* (ANROWS, 2018).

This project sought to develop the workforce capacity of practitioners to intervene with fathers who use domestic and family violence (DFV).

The report argues that working with a whole-of-family approach can help to bridge the contradiction between DFV and child protection services, who encourage or expect women to leave violent partners, and the family law system, which values contact (even in cases with known DFV). It argues that a whole-of-family approach also acknowledges the well-known facts that separation is not an end to the abuse, or that non-offending parents may not be in a position to separate from an abusive partner. In this way, they may lessen the chances of mothers being held accountable for "failing to protect" their children.

From the findings of the report, the authors developed a practice guide, which can be found at <https://www.anrows.org.au/project/invisible-practices-intervention-with-fathers-who-use-violence/>

. It steps through techniques and considerations when working with fathers who use violence.

Hulme, Shann, Anthony Morgan and Hayley Boxall, *Domestic Violence Offenders, Prior Offending and Reoffending in Australia*, Research Report No 580, September 2019, Australian Institute of Criminology.

Developing effective strategies to reduce domestic violence offending requires an understanding of perpetrator characteristics, offending patterns and recidivism. This study consolidates the Australian evidence base through a systematic review of 39 quantitative studies that examined domestic violence offending and reoffending. Despite the wide range of data sources, samples and measures of violence, findings are remarkably consistent across studies. The findings further reinforce the importance of targeting male perpetrated violence, and reducing violence in Indigenous communities. Alcohol featured in a significant proportion of domestic violence incidents. Finally, the study demonstrates the importance of reducing repeat offending, particularly among prolific offenders, to reduce overall rates of violence.

Humphreys, Cathy and Monica Campo, *Fathers who use violence: Options for safe practice where there is ongoing contact with children* (CFCA Paper No. 43 – June 2017, Australian Institute of Family Studies).

The following summarises the key aspects of this paper:

Background

This paper responds to a challenge that has continued to frustrate workers attempting to intervene to support women and children living with DFV – that the DFV intervention system (in the specialist women's DFV sector and statutory child protection) is structured around women and their children separating from men who use violence. However, many women and children may not be in a position to separate from their abusive and violent partners, and some women and children's wellbeing and safety may not be enhanced by separation.

Inquiry

The paper explored these questions by conducting a review of existing literature:

- > What is the practice or evidence base for working with families where the perpetrator remains in the home?
- > Are there safe ways to work with women and children living with a perpetrator of DFV, or for women and children who still have significant contact with a perpetrator post-separation?
- > In particular, whether there are strategies for working with fathers who use violence, that engage and address the issues for children, women and men who are continuing to live with DFV.

Observations

This review demonstrates that there is a paucity of evidence for effective approaches for responding to DFV in families where the perpetrator remains in the home or in regular contact with women and children. There are, however, a number of practices developing in these areas: nurse home visits; restorative justice approaches; couple counselling; statutory child protection investigations; and interventions with vulnerable families/whole of family approaches. All urge caution and all recommend a priority on training workers, and only ever bringing men and women together under certain circumstances and with strict caveats. This is necessary if work is to be effective and not inadvertently escalate danger and/or collude with the power and controlling tactics of the perpetrator of violence.

Conclusions

There is some experimentation with interventions in these complex family situations, and some early signs of success. The challenges of working with the diverse nature of fathers who use violence are significant. Nevertheless, this may prove to be an important practice development for future DFV intervention.

Kaspiew, R., Horsfall, B., Qu, L., Nicholson, J. M., Humphreys, C., Diemer, K., ... Dunstan, J. *Domestic and family violence and parenting: Mixed method insights into impact and support needs* (ANROWS, 2017).

The Domestic and Family Violence and Parenting Research program examined the impact of domestic and family violence (DFV) on parenting capacity and parent–child relationships in Australia. It focused on three main issues:

- > parental conflict in families and impacts on the emotional health and parenting behaviours of mothers and fathers and child functioning;
- > how DFV experienced before separation, after separation, or both affects parents' emotional health and parent–child relationships; and
- > mothers' experiences of engagement with services in the domestic and family violence, child protection, and family law systems in the context of DFV.

A mixed method approach involved: literature review; analysis of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children; analysis of two (Australian Institute of Family Studies) datasets of over 16,000 separated parents; qualitative in-depth interviews with 50 women who had experienced DFV and engaged with services in the DFV sector, the child protection system, or the family law system.

The *Key findings and future directions research summary* related to this report identifies specific implications for practitioners engaging with mothers, fathers, and children against a background of DFV:

- > Women who engage with services against a background of DFV have a number of complex material

and psycho-social needs.

- > If women are not already engaged with a specialist DFV service, then such a referral is usually necessary.
- > It is likely that women and their children are experiencing ongoing abuse unless contact with the perpetrator has ceased and other safety measures to prevent abuse are available (e.g. being legally permitted to live at an undisclosed address to prevent stalking).
- > Women may need assistance and referral in relation to financial and housing needs, including being informed about the availability of Financial Wellbeing and Capability services and Financial Counselling.
- > Women and their children may be experiencing physical and emotional consequences from DFV and abuse and may need long-term therapeutic assistance.
- > Mothers may need referrals to programs and services that will support the restoration of parenting capacity from a perspective of understanding the dynamics of DFV, including programs that offer services to mothers and children together. Children may also need assistance separately.
- > Where relationships between fathers and children are being maintained, fathers may need referral to services in relation to parenting. Where this is occurring, the wellbeing and safety of children need to be monitored.
- > Service providers should be alert to the fact that their services and other types of services and agencies may be used in a pattern of systems abuse. Staff, including legal professionals, should be trained to recognise this and provide appropriate advice and referrals where this is occurring.

Liang, Lesley, *Risk Assessment in Domestic Violence* (Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, 2004).

This article presents insights into the characteristics of perpetrators and the risk factors which influence abuse and explains why they may be useful considerations for judges. The author identifies that risk assessment is an important aspect of sentencing as it can help to identify the amount and types of treatment. For example, abuse of alcohol appears in many risk assessment lists. Screening for alcohol problems may identify the need to provide treatment for alcohol abuse, in addition to perpetrator treatment. It can also help the criminal justice system to identify which offenders need closer supervision), particularly given the rise in number of domestic violence perpetrators now before the courts in jurisdictions with strong arrest and prosecution policies. (p2)

Mackay, Erin, Althea Gibson, Huette Lam, David Beecham, *Perpetrator interventions in Australia: Part one – Literature review* (ANROWS, 2015).

This extensive literature review examines both domestic violence and sexual assault perpetrator programs, including the types available and their effectiveness. This review identifies that perpetrator programs are just one form of perpetrator intervention. It notes that the majority of perpetrator programs in Australia are voluntary and often use group work and counselling (p 10).

The review identifies a number of different program approaches:

- > Psychoeducational (p11): views violence against women as a deliberate and intentional tactic used by men to control and dominate women. Psychoeducational programs require men to accept responsibility for their actions and then attempt to educate men about power, social constructions of gender and the patriarchal nature of society. The psychoeducational approach has been criticised for lacking empirical support, being ineffective at promoting authentic and self-directed change, and adopting a 'one size fits all' approach.
- > Psychotherapeutic (p11): operate on the understanding that factors such as behavioural deficits, trauma or psychopathology are the causes of family/ domestic violence. This approach is criticised for not adequately addressing the more personal and embedded aspects relating to men's use of violence and its connections with wider structural inequalities. Cognitive behaviour therapy / CBT programs maybe a subset and focus on the idea that violence is learned and so can be unlearned.
- > Families and couples counselling (p12): family therapists or couples counsellors tend to approach the issue of family/domestic violence from the perspective that domestic and family violence is a consequence of a dysfunctional relationship and that it is the role of the therapist to address this underlying dysfunction or discord in the relationship. It has been critiqued over concerns for women's safety, and the implication that the victim/survivor also bears responsibility for the violence.
- > Combined approaches (p12): A mix of psychoeducational and CBT approaches.
- > Matched interventions (p12): These programs are based on the understanding that a range of psychological, psychiatric, bio-physiological and sociological factors explain men's use of violence towards women. Because of this, matched intervention programs should be individualised to the particular perpetrator. Research has shown that matched interventions are not well established in the domestic violence sector.

The report also outlines programs for specific populations, such as:

- > Programs for Indigenous men (pp 14-15): such programs need to acknowledge Indigenous views of family/domestic violence, and the different causes of family violence in Indigenous communities (such as the impact of colonialism, loss of culture and kinship relationship, substance abuse, or geographical isolation). They must have a strong cultural foundation and be delivered as part of a holistic approach that encompasses the social, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing of individuals and the community as a whole. They must also operate with recognition of the fear and impact of involving

external agencies.

- Programs for men from CALD backgrounds (culturally and linguistically diverse) (pp 16-17): specific programs are needed, but there can be difficulty in accurately defining a cultural group.

The report covers emerging/evolving approaches to family/domestic violence, including restorative justice (which is sometimes preferred by Indigenous victims), and narrative therapy, a form of psychotherapy that sees family/domestic violence as manifesting from dominant narratives within society. Consequently, the narrative therapist tries to explore alternative narratives or stories, for example, inviting perpetrators to consider the effects of their violence or explore alternative ways of being within relationships..

The report also discusses the Risk Needs and Responsivity (RNR) Model (p18), which requires the intensity of the program to be tailored to the level of risk of re-offending posed by the offender, the nature of the intervention to respond to the offender's rehabilitative needs, and the delivery of the intervention to conform to suit the offender's ability and way of learning. The authors note that the RNR model may help reduce dropout rates as it is tailored to be responsive to the particular perpetrator.

Mackay, Erin, Althea Gibson, Huette Lam, David Beecham, *Perpetrator interventions in Australia: Part two – Perpetrator pathways and mapping* (ANROWS, 2015).

Summary at page 43: "There are ... subtle differences between jurisdictions in terms of domestic violence orders mandating perpetrators to attend a specific perpetrator intervention program. For example, in South Australia a man issued with a domestic violence order can be mandated to attend a specific program and non-attendance is considered a contravention of the order. Conversely, in some jurisdictions such as Victoria, courts can mandate a perpetrator to attend an eligibility interview under a domestic violence order; but need to issue a counselling order in order to mandate eligible perpetrators to attend programs.

"Within many jurisdictions there are few pre-sentence perpetrator intervention programs delivered by community correctional services or other government organisations[and] there are limited programs available for perpetrators on remand. Access to specific perpetrator intervention programs in custodial settings is also limited, as many perpetrators are given short sentences and programs in custody are often only available to those on sentences of more than 12 months. It is also the case that there is a shortage of programs specifically designed for Indigenous and CALD perpetrators in custody or on community-based orders in many jurisdictions.

"Perpetrators generally do have the opportunity to avail themselves of help and support from non-governmental organisations, although there is a disparity between jurisdictions in terms of the number of organisations available, with Victoria and New South Wales having more program providers than other jurisdictions... Support can also be limited for those perpetrators residing in rural and remote areas in Tasmania, South Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland."

Morgan, Anthony, Hayley Boxall and Rick Brown, *Targeting repeat domestic violence: Assessing short term risk of reoffending* (Australian Institute of Criminology Report No. 552 June 2018).

Report abstract:

Drawing on repeat victimisation studies, and analysing police data on domestic violence incidents, the current study examined the prevalence and correlates of short-term reoffending.

The results showed that a significant proportion of offenders reoffended in the weeks and months following a domestic violence incident. Individuals who reoffended more quickly were more likely to be involved in multiple incidents in a short period of time. Offenders with a history of domestic violence—particularly more frequent offending—and of breaching violence orders were more likely to reoffend. Most importantly, the risk of reoffending was cumulative, increasing with each subsequent incident.

The findings have important implications for police and other frontline agencies responding to domestic violence, demonstrating the importance of targeted, timely and graduated responses.

Morgan, A, Boxall, H, Dowling, C & Brown, R 2020, 'Policing repeat domestic violence: Would focused deterrence work in Australia?', *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* no. 593. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Abstract: Focused deterrence approaches to domestic violence have been developed in the US to increase offender accountability and ensure appropriately targeted responses to victims. While innovative, the model has strong theoretical and empirical foundations. It is based on a set of fundamental principles and detailed analysis of domestic violence patterns and responses. This paper uses recent Australian research to explore the feasibility of adapting this model to an Australian context. Arguments in favour of the model, and possible barriers to implementation, are described. Based on an extensive body of Australian research on patterns of domestic violence offending and reoffending, and in light of recent developments in responses to domestic violence, this paper recommends trialling focused deterrence and 'pulling levers' to reduce domestic violence reoffending in an Australian pilot site.

No to Violence, *Men's Behaviour Change: Minimum Standards and Quality Practice* (2017).

This paper discusses the notion of the 'web of accountability' that has been influential in policy circles. A web of accountability around a man potentially comprises strands based on:

- > attempts to hold him accountable through the formal criminal justice, civil justice and child protection systems (involving informed, consistent and coordinated actions by police, courts, corrections and child protection, where appropriate)
- > the actions of non-mandated service systems that attempt to engage him through proactive, assertive

outreach (for example, at court through a Respondent Worker, or telephone-based via men's enhanced intake or the MRS After Hours Service)

- > women's (and in some cases, a community's) own informal attempts to 'draw a line in the sand' about his behaviour, and to hold him accountable to the promises he might have made to change his behaviour, and to her and her children's needs for safety and dignity. (p5)

North West Primary Care Partnership, 'Guidelines for Identifying and Responding to People Who Cause Family Violence Harm' (April 2018).

The authors propose various guidelines that Victorian agencies may use to identify and respond to people who cause family violence harm. The guidelines are designed to assist health/mainstream services which do not have the expertise and confidence to directly engage perpetrators through roles and responsibilities, such as family violence informed coordinated case management, safety planning towards interrupting violent and abusive behaviour, or in-depth motivational enhancement towards building some readiness to change. The authors expect that the guidelines will assist agencies to develop their own protocols and processes for when a perpetrator of family violence has been identified or suspected (page 24). 'More direct responses to perpetrators' (p17) may be of particular interest to decision-makers.

Urbis, *Literature Review on Domestic Violence Perpetrators* (Urbis 2013).

This commissioned literature review into domestic violence perpetrators covers a wide range of topics. With regard to sentencing, predominately the efficacy of perpetrator programs is addressed. In discussing this, the review mainly considers international sources and research, noting Australian research on the topic is scarce. The review makes a number of general conclusions: Treatment conducted in a group format is limited in its capacity to respond to individual needs, and group dynamics may reduce the willingness to self-disclose and engage among perpetrators who are less motivated to change (p 11). Individual or individualised interventions increase the likelihood of program completion, which in turn reduces recidivism (p 11). There is no clear positive impact of court-mandated interventions (p 12). The effectiveness of intervention programs has been found to vary as a function of characteristics associated with the evaluation methodology as well as the perpetrators (p 12). Programs should be matched to offender characteristics (p 12). Court-monitoring of program attendance can improve program completion (and therefore recidivism) (p 14)

Vlais, Rodney, *Domestic violence perpetrator programs: Education, therapy, support, accountability 'or' struggle* (No to Violence, Male Family Violence Prevention Association, 2014).

This article was written on behalf of No to Violence (the peak body for those working with male perpetrators of family violence in Victoria) and presents a literature review. The article focuses on the ways in which men's attitudes and behaviour can be changed. As such, it does not primarily refer to court-ordered programs however the programs and models discussed are ones the court could consider utilising when sentencing.

The report discusses and recommends education, therapy (provided it is tailored for the individual) and 'support' (which includes programs and counselling).

The report recommends that all five 'elements' of DV perpetrator programs listed (education, therapy, support, accountability and 'solidarity and struggle' – i.e. standing in solidarity with victims and perpetrators and recognising the struggle to change) are woven together to provide the best and most effective system.

Vlais, Rodney, Sophie Ridley, Damian Green & Donna Chung, *'Family and domestic violence perpetrator programs'* (2017) Stopping Family Violence Inc.

This report provides a national perspective on trends and developments to encourage discussion and action about the steps needed to build perpetrator intervention systems which will improve existing family and domestic violence (FDV) efforts, and MBCPs (men's behaviour change programs) within that system. The report also comprehensively considers recent national and international research and innovative practice to inform and challenge ideas about the future of MBCPs in Australia. The report is divided into a discussion of several topics, such as philosophical debates, funding, the place and role of perpetrator programs within integrated/coordinated community responses, research and program evaluation, adapting interventions for different cohorts of perpetrators, responding to risk vs changing men, program provider accountabilities, supporting program providers to become compliance-ready, practice issues in a range of areas, developing a sufficiently skilled, diverse and sized workforce, and the relevance of broader community responses and primary prevention to program provision (p 8). There is a call for more diverse approaches to meet the needs of rural, Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, as well as communities living in LGBTIQ and non-nuclear family settings. The report identifies some key questions and challenges on p 6.

Wendt, S. et al. for Women's Safety. (2019). *Engaging men who use violence: Invitational narrative approaches* (2019). Sydney: ANROWS.

This project conducted a literature review and interviews with 'invitational narrative' practitioners in South Australia and engaged with men who use violence, their invitational narrative practitioners and where consent was able to be obtained, each man's partner/ex-partner. 'The aim of narrative practice is to enable people to "re-author" their stories and, in doing so, enhance their sense of agency and capacity for change.' This research explores how invitational narrative approaches work and how this approach may contribute to change.

International

Bloomfield, Sinead and Louise Dixon, 'An outcome evaluation of the integrated domestic abuse programme (IDAP) and community domestic violence programme' (National Offender Management Service, UK Gov. 2015).

This paper reports on reviews of two perpetrator programmes in the UK. Among other findings- it found that the programmes were effective in reducing domestic violence and reoffending in the two year follow up period.

Boots, Denise et al. 'A Comparison of the Batterer Intervention and Prevention Program with Alternative Court Dispositions on 12-Month Recidivism' (2015) *Violence Against Women* 1-24.

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of a 20 week Batterer Intervention and Prevention Program (BIPP) for cases assigned to a misdemeanour family court. This study focused on determining whether BIPP cases, compared with alternative sanctions, had significantly lower recidivism rates 12 months after program involvement. The study was undertaken by randomly sampling cases appearing before two county courts in Texas in 2007. The BIPP was a 20 week program with state mandated programming (Psychoeducational and psychotherapeutic combined model- includes both group work and individual counselling).

The study found that the general recidivism / arrest was significantly related to being non-White, younger in age, younger at time of first official arrest, more counts of prior arrests, having a female victim, not cohabitating with the victim, being under the influence of substances during intimate partner violence offense, receiving jail time, and living in neighbourhoods with higher disadvantage and residential mobility. Findings indicated that BIPP was more effective than jail or regular dismissal in reducing the likelihood of future arrests, but not plea deferred adjudication and conditional dismissal. Results argue toward the efficacy of some form of treatment versus simply receiving jail time.

Buzawa, E., G. Hotaling, A. Klein, and J. Byrnes. *Response to Domestic Violence in a Pro-Active Court Setting*. Final report for National Institute of Justice, Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 1999.

This study draws on a sample of 353 cases of male-to-female domestic violence cases heard during a 7 month data collection period at a US court. Drawing on a range of data this study draws on recidivism data, police reports and perpetrator / victim perspectives to determine likelihood of reabuse. (Summary of findings from p154)

The study found that the type of program does not affect re-abuse (p 65); those who complete batterer programs are less likely to re-abuse than those who fail to attend, are non-compliant or drop out (p 68); court monitoring can enhance program attendance (p 69); most victims are satisfied with their abuser's referral to a program (p 73); anger management programs on their own were found to not be effective (p 66); suggests that alcohol and drug treatment: generally effective in reducing re-abuse and should be incorporated as a standard component of batterer intervention programs (p 67)

Cordier, Reinie, Donna Chung, Sarah Wilkes-Gillan and Renée Speyer, 'The Effectiveness of Protection Orders in Reducing Recidivism in Domestic Violence: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis' (2019) *Trauma, Violence & Abuse* (advance)

This article reviews the Australian and international literature on the effectiveness of protection orders in domestic violence cases. It presents a systematic review and meta-analysis, and identifies the factors associated with an increased risk of reoffending following a protection order being issued. It also compares differences in violation rates reported by victims and police and discusses issues in how the effectiveness of a protection order is defined and measured across various studies, beyond simple recidivism. The article finds mixed evidence on their effectiveness: protection orders were not effective in completely preventing violence toward the victim but some groups do report reduced subsequent violence.

Eckhardt, Christopher et al, 'The Effectiveness of Intervention Programs for Perpetrators and Victims of Intimate Partner Violence' (2013) 4(2) *Partner Abuse* 196 – 231.

This article presents a review of studies of perpetrator programs undertaken since 1990. The article reviews:

- > 20 studies investigating the effectiveness of “traditional” forms of batterer intervention programs (BIPs) aimed at perpetrators of IPV
- > 10 studies that investigated the effectiveness of alternative formats of BIPs
- > 16 studies of brief intervention programs for IPV victim-survivors,
- > 15 studies of more extended intervention programs for IPV victim-survivors
- > Based on the results reported for all of the studies examined the authors conclude: Interventions for

perpetrators showed equivocal results regarding their ability to lower the risk of IPV; available studies had many methodological flaws; among interventions for victim-survivors of IPV, a range of therapeutic approaches have been shown to produce enhancements in emotional functioning, with the strongest support for cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) approaches in reducing negative symptomatic effects of IPV.

Fanslow, Janet, Pauline Gulliver, Robin Dixon and Irene Ayallo, 'Women's initiation of physical violence against an abusive partner outside of a violent episode' (2015) 30(15) *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 2659.

This article explores women's use of physical violence against an abusive male partner, outside of a violent episode. Data were drawn from the New Zealand Violence Against Women Study, a cross-sectional household survey. Factors associated with women initiating physical violence against their male partners were identified. Of the 845 women who had experienced physical violence perpetrated by their intimate partner, 19% reported physically mistreating their partner at least once outside of a male initiated violent episode, while 81% never initiated violence against their partner. Analyses showed that women's initiation of violence under these circumstances was strongly associated with either or both partners having alcohol problems, her recreational drug use, her number of violent partners, and her mother being hit or beaten by her father when she was a child.

Gondolf, Edward W., 'Evaluating batterer counseling programs: A difficult task showing some effects and implications' (2004) 9 *Aggression and Violent Behaviour* 605.

A US study. Abstract: Over 40 published program evaluations have attempted to address the effectiveness of "batterer programs" in preventing reassaults. Summaries and meta-analysis of these evaluations suggest little or no "program effect." Methodological shortcomings, however, compromise most of these quasi-experimental evaluations. Three recent experimental studies appear to confirm little or no effect, but implementation problems, intention-to-treat design, and sample attrition limit these results. A longitudinal 4-year follow-up evaluation in four cities poses additional considerations and evidence of at least a moderate program effect. There is a clear deescalation of reassault and other abuse, the vast majority of men do reach sustained nonviolence, and about 20% continuously reassault. The prevailing cognitive-behavioral approach appears appropriate for most of the men, but the following enhancements are warranted: swift and certain court response for violations, intensive programming for high-risk men, and ongoing monitoring of risk. Program effectiveness depends substantially on the intervention system of which the program is a part.

Harne, Lynne and Jill Radford, *Tackling Domestic Violence: theories, policies and practice* (Open University Press, 2008).

See chapter 4 (Policing, prosecution and the courts) and 5 (Preventing domestic violence). In relation to perpetrator programs the authors critique three types: (p 156)

- > Psycho-therapy models: tend to reinforce the 'poor me syndrome', where violent men redefine themselves as the main 'victims' and as the ones who need help and the focus moves away from their responsibility and the impact of their violence on women and children
- > Couples counselling: poses risks to survivors – it has almost ceased to be used in the US.
- > Social learning approaches and anger management programs: Anger management courses do not recognise domestic violence as being connected to male dominance on women in intimate relationships. May feed excuse that men have 'uncontrollable tempers.' Although they may reduce violence in the short term, they do not deal with the control element.
- > Authors observe that many women express fears of further violence once the program had ended and felt that being referred to a program was a soft option – the program was only effective when combined with the sanction of imprisonment for further violence.

Hyman, Hon. Eugene M. And Liberty Aldrich, '[Rethinking access to justice: the need for a holistic response to victims of domestic violence](#)' (2012) 33 *Women's Rights Law Reporter* 449.

Writing in the USA context the authors emphasise that a judge who has information that a particular offender previously failed to complete a mandated batterer program may be less likely to simply re-order attendance at that program (at 11).

Juodis, Marcus et al. '[What Can be Done About High-Risk Perpetrators of Domestic Violence?](#)' (2014) 29 *Journal of Family Violence* 381-390.

This article presents a useful literature review about how perpetrators who present as high risk should be dealt with. See pp2-3 where the concurrent need for safety planning for women while perpetrators attend programs must be considered. Notes that some perpetrators assessed as high-risk may be particularly resistant to treatment and so particular efforts may need to be made to ensure they remain in program. Pre-treatment is suggested. Includes a discussion of appropriate risk assessment and treatment programs for psychopathic perpetrators.

Kelly, Liz and Nicole Westmarland, [Domestic Violence Perpetrator Programmes: Steps Towards Change](#) (Project Mirabal: Final report, London Metropolitan University and Durham University, 2015).

This important UK study examines whether domestic violence perpetrator programs (DVPP) work in reducing men's violence and abuse and in increasing the freedom of women and children. The study is longitudinal (see p6) and includes program data from 11 UK base sites; 64 interviews with DVPP staff and stakeholders across four locations; survey with 100 women DVPP intervention group, 62 women comparison group (5 interviews over 6 time points); interviews 64 men on programmes (the programmes all followed the *RESPECT guidelines*) and 48 women (ex) partners at time 1 (near start) and time 2 (near end). Interviews and surveys were also undertaken with children and staff about the impact on children and there was further analysis associated with program integrity.

Results: As a result of participation in a Domestic Violence Perpetrator Program, there was found to be positive change with regard to:

- > Respectful communication (p11)
- > Space for action (p14) "This measure draws explicitly on the understanding that safety is insufficient to undo the harms of abuse, women need to have the freedom restored that abuse restricts."
- > Safety and freedom from violence and abuse for women and children (p18)
- > Shared parenting (p23) "safe, positive and shared parenting."
- > Awareness of self and others (p25) "enhanced awareness of self and others for men on programmes, including an understanding of the impact that domestic violence has had on their partner and children."
- > Safer, healthier childhoods (p30)

Identified a different way of thinking about change: "Change is better understood as a series of sparks, different for each man, and not all of which are activated." (p34)

Klein, Andrew *Practical Implications of Current Domestic Violence Research: For Law Enforcement, Prosecutors and Judges* (National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice Programs: 2009).

This is a comprehensive review of US based research on issues relevant to domestic violence and law enforcement. The recommendations are made in the US context.

See 8.3 for a discussion of couples counselling and anger management programs as a response to domestic and family violence: 'There is no evidence that couples counselling or anger management programs effectively prevent court-referred batterers from reabusing or committing new offenses after treatment. (Research basis: The limited research conducted thus far has been, at best, inconclusive regarding the effectiveness of these programs. One large state study found that court-referred batterers are less apt to commit new offenses [including both domestic and nondomestic violence offenses] if they completed batterer programs rather than anger management programs. The difference, however, may be because the batterer programs were twice as long as the anger control programs.)' (p67)

See 8.4 for a discussion of Drug and alcohol programs as a response to domestic and family violence. 'Incorporating alcohol and/or drug treatment as a standard component of batterer intervention programs adds to the likelihood of reductions in reabuse among batterers, many of whom abuse alcohol and drugs. Effective treatment should include abstinence testing to assure sobriety and no drug use. (Research basis: Extensive research in both clinical and court settings confirms the correlation between substance abuse and the increased likelihood of reabuse as well as the reduction in reabuse among offenders successfully treated for drug abuse.)' (p67)

In relation to failure to comply with conditions of perpetrator programs: 'Judges should respond to noncompliant abusers immediately to safeguard victims. (Research basis: Multiple studies have found that doing nothing with regard to noncompliant, court-referred abusers results in significantly higher rates of reabuse.)' (p72)

Miller, M; E., Drake, and M. Nafziger, *What works to reduce recidivism by domestic violence offenders?* (Document No. 13-01-1201). (Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy: 2013).

The authors present a literature review particularly examining the effectiveness of perpetrator programs from the perspective of whether they reduce recidivism. The authors found no effect on DV recidivism with the 6 Duluth like interventions reviewed although they note there may be other reasons for referring perpetrators to such programs. The authors observe that their review indicates that there may be other group based treatments for male domestic violence offenders that effectively reduce domestic violence recidivism.

See p 2 which states that the Duluth model: 'approach assumes that domestic violence "...is a gender-specific behaviour which is socially and historically constructed. Men are socialized to take control and to use physical force when necessary to maintain dominance... the model assumes that DV does not result from mental illness, substance abuse, anger, stress or dysfunctional relationships."

Rempel, Michael *Evidence based strategies for working with offenders. Centre for Court Innovation. (2014), Bureau of Justice Assistance, US Department of Justice.*

This American resource presents a succinct summary of some fundamental issues in promoting court-based perpetrator accountability.