



Submission in response to the
Discussion Paper,
Recommendation 180,
Victims Support Agency,
Victoria



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ABOUT THE ONE IN THREE CAMPAIGN

One in Three is a diverse group of male and female professionals – academics, researchers, social workers, psychologists, counsellors, lawyers, health promotion workers, trainers and survivor/advocates. The Campaign aims to raise public awareness of the existence and needs of male victims of family violence and abuse; to work with government and non-government services alike to provide assistance to everyone affected by family violence; and to reduce the incidence and impacts of family violence on Australian men, women and children. You can find out more about the Campaign by reading our [5 Year Report](#)¹ released in March 2015.

MEN AS VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

1.1 Addressing assumptions and misperceptions

What are some of the assumptions and misperceptions about male, intersex and gender diverse victims of family violence that you feel need to be addressed?

There are many common assumptions about male, intersex and gender diverse victims of family violence that need to be addressed. We outline just a few of them below:

1. **“Men aren’t victims of family violence”**. Often when people refer to victims of family violence, they refer to them as female, when the reality is that one in three victims is male and this proportion is increasing.² The term “family violence” is defined almost exclusively by the DV sector as “women and children victims of men,” and as such is not a true representation of family violence in all its forms.

¹ http://www.oneinthree.com.au/storage/pdfs/1IN3_5_Year_Report_2015.pdf

² Royal Commission into Family Violence Report Volume VII. Page 95, “Over the five years from July 2009, the proportion of male victims has increased and in 2013-14 male victims made up 31% (n=5,052) of total victims of family violence”. See also <http://www.oneinthree.com.au/stats>.



2. **“Male victims aren’t affected by family violence as much as female victims”.** While on average, women are injured more than men, men are injured too, and often seriously,³ while the overall physical and psychological effects of intimate partner violence are similar for men and women⁴. Male perpetrators, having greater strength on average, are more likely to use direct physical violence, while female perpetrators are more likely to use a weapon to compensate for their lack of strength⁵. While on average, women are more likely than men to experience fear as a result of family violence, male victims often report being fearful and men’s fear is often internalised and thus invisible to the outside observer.

Abuse of men takes many of the same forms as it does against women - physical violence, intimidation and threats; sexual, emotional, psychological, verbal and financial abuse; property damage and social isolation. Many men experience multiple forms of abuse⁶.

The impacts of family violence upon male victims can include:

- Fear and loss of feelings of safety
- Feelings of guilt and/or shame
- Difficulties in trusting others
- Anxiety and flashbacks
- Loneliness and isolation
- Low self-esteem and/or self-hatred
- Depression, suicidal ideation, self-harm and attempted suicide
- Use of alcohol or other drugs to cope with the abuse
- Physical injuries and/or illness
- Sexual dysfunction and/or impotence
- Loss of work and/or loss of home
- Loss of contact with children and/or step-children
- Concern about children post separation.

3. **“Yes men experience family violence, but mostly from other men.”** The data clearly shows that the vast majority (94%) of men who have experienced violence from an intimate partner, experienced it from a female perpetrator (448,000 males have experienced violence from a partner and 313,700 from a boyfriend, girlfriend or date since the age of 15). Men who have experienced violence from another family member are more likely to have experienced it from a male than a female perpetrator, but this type of violence is not as prevalent as intimate partner violence (less than 316,600 males have experienced violence from a male family member and less than 70,400 males have experienced violence from a female family member since the age of 15)⁷.

³ Dutton, D. G., & Nicholls, T. L. (2005). The gender paradigm in domestic violence research and theory: Part 1—the conflict of theory and data. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 10(6), 680-714.

⁴ Dutton, D. G. (2010). The gender paradigm and the architecture of antisociality. *Partner Abuse*, 1(1), 5-25. Dutton, D. G., & Nicholls, T. L. (2005). The gender paradigm in domestic violence research and theory: Part 1—the conflict of theory and data. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 10(6), 680-714. George, M. J., & Yarwood, D. J. (2004, October). *Male domestic violence victims survey 2001*. Ascot, UK: Dewar Research.

⁵ Dutton, D. G., & Nicholls, T. L. (2005). The gender paradigm in domestic violence research and theory: Part 1—the conflict of theory and data. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 10(6), 680-714

⁶ Tilbrook, Emily, Alfred Allan, and Greg Dear (2010). [Intimate Partner Abuse of Men](#). East Perth: Men’s Advisory Network.

⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013). [Personal Safety Survey, Australia, 2012](#) (Cat. No. 4906.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics. Table 6 “EXPERIENCE OF VIOLENCE SINCE THE AGE OF 15, Relationship to perpetrator by sex of perpetrator”. It is not possible to add up the different perpetrator types to reach a total figure for ‘family violence’ because, where a person has experienced violence by more than one perpetrator, they are counted separately for each perpetrator type.

While the Royal Commission found that, in family incidents recorded by police in 2013-14, only 33% of male affected family members (victims) were a current partner, it is important to note that the vast majority of male victims of partner violence never report it to the police. 94.7% of males did not contact police about violence by their current partner and 80.0% of males did not contact police about violence by their previous partner since the age of 15⁸.

4. **“When women use violence against their male partners, it is usually in self-defence.”** Although it cannot be denied that there are cases in which women and men assault their partner in self-defence, international studies have found that self-defence is cited by women as the reason for their use of intimate partner violence (including severe violence such as homicide) in a small minority of cases (from 5 to 20 per cent)⁹. One Australian study¹⁰ found that “women’s allegations of DV were proven to be false. In most cases, the initial allegations of DV were modified considerably by them during the course of the study, particularly when they were faced with the accounts of their children and mothers, admitting in the end that they were neither victims of violence nor acting in self-defence.”
5. **“Men’s violence against their female partners is more likely to be an attempt to control, coerce, humiliate or dominate than women’s violence against their male partners.”** Coercion (control and domination) is a frequently cited reason by women for their own use of intimate partner violence (IPV), and by male victims for their partner’s use of IPV¹¹. Even in research samples selected for high rates of male aggression (such as shelter samples), women sometimes report using comparative frequencies of controlling behaviour¹². After analysing for verbal aggression, fear, violence and control by each gender, husbands are found to be no more controlling than wives¹³.

⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013). [Personal Safety Survey, Australia, 2012](#) (Cat. No. 4906.0). Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics. Table 25 “EXPERIENCE OF CURRENT PARTNER VIOLENCE SINCE THE AGE OF 15, Police involvement” and Table 26 “EXPERIENCE OF PREVIOUS PARTNER VIOLENCE SINCE THE AGE OF 15, Police involvement”.

⁹ Carrado, M., George, M. J., Loxam, E., Jones, L., & Templar, D. (1996). Aggression in british heterosexual relationships: A descriptive analysis. *Aggressive Behavior*, 22(6). Dutton, D. G. (2010). The gender paradigm and the architecture of antisociality. *Partner Abuse*, 1(1), 5-25. Dutton, D. G., & Nicholls, T. L. (2005). The gender paradigm in domestic violence research and theory: Part 1—the conflict of theory and data. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 10(6), 680-714. Follingstad, D., Wright, S., Lloyd, S., & Sebastian, J. (1991). Sex differences in motivations and effects in dating violence. *Family Relations*, 40, 51-57. Hines, D. A., & Malley-Morrison, K. (2001). Psychological effects of partner abuse against men: A neglected research area. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 2(2), 75-85. Hines, D. A., Brown, J., & Dunning, E. (2007). Characteristics of callers to the domestic abuse helpline for men. *Journal of Family Violence*, 22(2), 63-72. Sarantakos, S. (1998). Husband abuse as self-defence. [Paper]Montreal: International Congress of Sociology. Sarantakos, S. (2004). Deconstructing self-defence in wife-to-husband violence. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 12(3), 277-296. Straus, M. A. (2008). Dominance and symmetry in partner violence by male and female university students in 32 nations. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30, 252-275.

¹⁰ Sarantakos, S. (2004). Deconstructing self-defence in wife-to-husband violence. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, 12(3), 277-296.

¹¹ Medeiros, R. A., & Straus, M. A. (2006). Risk factors for physical violence between dating partners: Implications for gender-inclusive prevention and treatment of family violence. In J. Hamel, & T. Nicholls (Eds.), *Family approaches to domestic violence: A practitioners guide to gender-inclusive research and treatment*. (pp. 59-85). Springer

¹² Graham-Kevan N (2007). Power and control in relationship aggression. In Hamel J and Nicholls TL (eds.): *Family Interventions in Domestic Violence*. New York: Springer Publishing Co. Medeiros, R. A., & Straus, M. A. (2006). Risk factors for physical violence between dating partners: Implications for gender-inclusive prevention and treatment of family violence. In J. Hamel, & T. Nicholls (Eds.), *Family approaches to domestic violence: A practitioners guide to gender-inclusive research and treatment*. (pp. 59-85). Springer.

¹³ Dutton, D. G. (2010). The gender paradigm and the architecture of antisociality. *Partner Abuse*, 1(1), 5-25. Dutton, D. G., & Nicholls, T. L. (2005). The gender paradigm in domestic violence research and theory: Part 1—the conflict of theory and data. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 10(6), 680-714. Graham-Kevan N (2007). Power and control in relationship aggression. In Hamel J and Nicholls TL (eds.): *Family Interventions in Domestic Violence*. New York: Springer Publishing Co. Medeiros, R. A., & Straus, M. A. (2006). Risk factors for physical violence between dating partners: Implications for gender-inclusive prevention and treatment of family violence. In J. Hamel, & T. Nicholls (Eds.), *Family approaches to domestic violence: A practitioners guide to gender-inclusive research and treatment*. (pp. 59-85). Springer. Straus, M. A. (2008). Dominance and symmetry in partner violence by male and female university students in 32 nations. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 30, 252-275.



6. **“Gay and bisexual males don’t experience family violence”**. Evidence shows that family violence is just as much a problem within male-male relationships as it is within male-female relationships¹⁴.
7. **“If you’re a male victim of family violence, you’re weak, ‘gay’, ‘girly,’ less of a man, you must have ‘caused’ the violence or you ‘let it happen’”**. Family violence can happen to anyone. It is the responsibility of the perpetrator, never the victim. You are no less of a man for being a victim of family violence.
8. **“If a male victim tells someone about the violence, they will be laughed at, ridiculed, the violence won’t be taken seriously, or they will be told to ‘man up’”**. While it is true that some services might be unaware of the unique issues faced by male victims of family violence and at worst might even blame, shame, ridicule, minimise, disbelieve or misunderstand you, don't give up! If this happens, ask to speak to another staff member or approach another service provider until you receive the support you need.

In your experience, what forms of violence (other than intimate partner violence) are prevalent amongst male, intersex and gender diverse victims?

The ABS Personal Safety Survey 2012 found the numbers of Australian men who had experienced family violence perpetrated by these different members of the family since the age of 15 were as follows¹⁵:

- Father 161,700
- Mother 33,300*
- Son 16,700*
- Brother 58,100
- Sister 17,500*
- Other male relative/in-law 80,100
- Other female relative/in-law 19,600*

* estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

Since foundation in 2009, the One in Three Campaign has always advocated for all male victims of family violence, whether the perpetrator happens to be an intimate partner or another family member. The One in Three website contains an area¹⁶ where male victims can tell their personal stories as a form of peer support for other male victims to read – to help them realise they are not alone and that many other men have been through what they are experiencing. Interestingly, only a handful of stories have been posted talking about violence perpetrated by other family members - the vast majority of stories talk about violence and abuse perpetrated by a female intimate partner.

The reason for this may be that the cultural narrative around family violence has yet to expand to cover family members as well as intimate partners (i.e. most people may still conflate ‘family violence’ with ‘intimate partner violence’). Another explanation may be that males who experience violence from other family members experience it as isolated incidents, whereas the violence from female intimate partners is part of a pattern of abuse and control (their personal stories certainly reflect this).

¹⁴ LGBTIQ Domestic and Family Violence Interagency and the Centre for Social Research in Health, University of NSW (2014). Calling it what it really is: A Report into Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Gender Diverse, Intersex & Queer Experiences of Domestic & Family Violence.

¹⁵ Where a person has experienced violence (i.e. any incident of physical or sexual assault or threat) by more than one perpetrator, they are counted separately for each perpetrator type.

¹⁶ <http://www.oneinthree.com.au/stories/>

How does intersectionality impact on the experiences of family violence for male, intersex and gender diverse victims?

Male victims from **CALD communities** can experience language barriers when seeking support, as well as problems with their immigration status should they leave their violent partner.

Male victims from **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities** can experience the multiple impacts of colonisation, including inter-generational trauma, dispossession of land, forced removal of children, interrupted cultural practices that mitigate against interpersonal violence, removal of children and economic exclusion¹⁷.

Male victims from **lower socio-economic areas** can experience increased rates of violence because of the stresses and pressures caused by economic hardship.

Male victims from **regional and rural areas** can find it much harder to access support services than victims in capital cities. They may also find it more difficult to seek support because their higher levels of traditional masculinity may increase the shame and stigma of admitting to being a victim, while confidentiality and anonymity is harder to maintain in small communities.

Male victims with **physical and mental disabilities** can find that the powerlessness they experience as a result of their disability can make it easier for the perpetrator to maintain power and control over their lives.

Gay and bisexual male victims can be reluctant to report the abuse they are suffering because they are afraid of revealing their sexual orientation. They can also suffer threats of 'outing' of their sexual preference or HIV status by the perpetrator. The perpetrator might also tell them that no one will help because the police and the justice system are homophobic.

Older men are more likely to experience violence in the form of elder abuse from carers or members of the family.

Adolescent males are likely experience violence and abuse from their dating partners but are unlikely to retaliate because of the deeply entrenched norm that 'you don't hit a girl'. The *Young People and Domestic Violence* study¹⁸ found that "there was no spontaneous recognition that verbal abuse or a female hitting her boyfriend could also constitute dating violence... However... these were among the prevalent forms of 'violence' occurring". "Acts by females of slapping, pushing or kicking their boyfriends were widespread. However, this was not described or seen as 'violence' by the majority of male or female participants. "Guys deserve it'. Both sexes supported this point of view, which was based on the idea that 'guys stuff up', 'guys can be majorly stupid', 'guys don't listen so you have to get their attention'. Males appeared to agree with the perceived wisdom of society (and certainly of females) that they are 'not as good at relationships' as the females.

¹⁷ Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. [Fast Facts - Indigenous family violence](#).

¹⁸ National Crime Prevention. [Young People and Domestic Violence](#) : National Research on Young People's Attitudes to and Experiences of Domestic Violence. Barton: Attorney-General's Dept., September 18, 2001.



1.2 Services for Male Victims

What are the barriers to accessing services for male, intersex and gender diverse victims?

Participants in the *Intimate Partner Abuse of Men*²⁰ study reported that “men are reluctant to disclose what is happening to them or to seek help. The major factors appear to be men’s denial of what is happening; their fear that they will not be believed, and their fear that even if they are believed they will not be assisted or will be blamed for the abuse.”

Male victims of family violence and abuse – like women – often face many barriers to disclosing their abuse. However, male victims face a set of unique barriers which make them much less likely to report being a victim of family violence.

Many barriers to male victims disclosing their abuse are created or amplified by the **lack of public acknowledgement** that males can also be victims of family violence, the **lack of appropriate services** for male victims and their children, and the lack of appropriate help available for male victims from existing services.

Male victims may not know where to seek help or how to seek help, as the vast majority of services are available only to women and there has been little promotion of services for men. They may feel there is nowhere to escape to. They may feel they won’t be believed or understood, or that their experiences will be minimised. They may fear they will be blamed for the violence and/or abuse. They may fear that services will be unable to offer them appropriate help. They may fear being falsely arrested because of their gender, and their children would then be left unprotected from the perpetrator.

Sadly, these fears are realised by many male victims. We have lost count of the number of male victims who have told us that when they do report family violence to the police or other services, they aren’t believed, their experiences are minimised, they are blamed for the violence, and at worst they are falsely arrested. We have received many anecdotal reports of community services not believing male victims when they call for help. E.g. a man who called the NSW DOCS hotline for domestic abuse only to be told that “only men abuse women.” If this happens once, many men won’t seek help a second time.

Many male victims face barriers to disclosing their abuse because of the challenges such disclosure brings to their **sense of manhood**.

Male victims may feel a great sense of shame or embarrassment at admitting to being a victim of family violence, especially from a female perpetrator. There is a huge social stigma preventing them from seeking help. They may feel ashamed that they have been unable to protect themselves. They may fear the loss of independence that comes from asking for help. They may fear being laughed at or ridiculed, being called ‘weak’ or ‘wimpy’, being told to ‘man up’. They may be in denial or disbelief about what is happening to them (“domestic violence only happens to women”). They may blame themselves or make excuses for their situation (“If only I hadn’t done X, she wouldn’t have done Y”).

What are the current gaps in services?

The *Intimate Partner Abuse of Men*²⁰ study found that service providers across Australia “rated themselves and their agencies as only moderately effective in (1) overcoming the barriers to men disclosing and (2) harnessing the factors that facilitate disclosure... there is a lot of work needed in terms of training and service design if agencies are to be effective in assisting men to disclose abuse.”

²⁰ Tilbrook, Emily, Alfred Allan, and Greg Dear (2010). [Intimate Partner Abuse of Men](#). East Perth: Men's Advisory Network.



Some generic (i.e. not male-specific or male-friendly) support is available but such services are often unaware of the unique issues faced by male victims of family violence and are therefore unable to offer effective and appropriate help. Some generic services do not believe male victims, minimise their experiences or even blame them for the abuse.

Another issue is that while individual workers within generic services might be aware of the issues, they often face workplace cultures and systems that aren't supportive.

The gaps in services for male victims are so huge that it is simpler to list the smattering of services that ARE currently available for male victims. It's a very short list indeed.

- **Mensline Australia** - the National, free, 24/7 counselling service for men around relationship and family issues. Mensline is often a dead end for many male victims who call, as there are so few services available for Mensline to refer them on to.
- **Individual counselling services** are available but are harder for men to find and afford.
- **Dads in Distress** - A dedicated support group of men whose immediate concern is to stem the present trend of male suicide due to the trauma of divorce or separation. This is not a specialist family violence service, but the peer-support model might still be helpful in assisting male victims where domestic violence and children are involved.
- The **One in Three Campaign** runs Australia's only website for male victims of family violence (oneinthree.com.au) providing:
 - information on the experiences of male victims and their children and barriers to disclosing
 - research and statistics about male victims
 - opportunities for men to tell their story and read over 150 personal stories from other men
 - news from around the globe
 - a comprehensive list of national and international resources.

While services like the **1800 RESPECT** helpline are supposed to help male victims, their website and marketing materials appear to only cater to women and thus would turn away many men. We have no evidence that their counsellors have been appropriately trained around the unique needs of male victims. The helpline is likely to be both better informed about and more utilised by female victims, and, like Mensline, there are very few local services available for them to refer male victims on to.

We are extremely concerned that publicly funded service providers (such as Mensline Australia and 1800 RESPECT) are being encouraged to 'screen' males who present as victims, with the assumption being that they may actually be perpetrators. This is not only sexist (no such screening is done for women), it breaches the duty of care that service providers have toward their clients. If a male victim calls up and is treated as a perpetrator, it is likely that he won't call back again. If his partner is contacted by the service provider to 'check his story', it increases his risk of experiencing further violence and abuse from her/him.

The *Intimate Partner Abuse of Men*²¹ study surveyed almost 200 service providers from around Australia and came up with 4 key recommendations:

1. That government funded public awareness campaigns be conducted to raise awareness of intimate partner violence against men. Such campaigns need to be very carefully designed so as to complement campaigns about family violence against women and children and not to damage the effectiveness of those campaigns.

²¹ Tilbrook, Emily, Alfred Allan, and Greg Dear (2010). [Intimate Partner Abuse of Men](#). East Perth: Men's Advisory Network.



2. Consideration should be given to providing publicly-funded services specifically for male victims of intimate partner abuse. A similar range of services that are currently available to women (although many would argue are insufficiently available) were identified as being required for an effective service response to the needs of men. These include counselling and support services, gender-sensitive services (specifically for men), accommodation services, helplines and crisis response, community education and prevention programmes, specialist family violence services for diverse sections of the male population (e.g. gay men, aboriginal men); financial support; court services and legal advice; improved policing responses; support groups; perpetrator programs for women; health service screening tools.

3. Consideration should be given to how services for male victims of intimate partner abuse can be integrated with services for female victims and general services for victims of family violence in all its forms. It is likely that some types of service can be effectively integrated while others will need to be gender-specific.

4. Workers in the broader health and welfare fields should be provided with training to assist them to respond effectively to male victims of intimate partner abuse. In particular, these workers need training in how to dismantle the barriers to men disclosing their abuse and strengthening the factors that facilitate men's disclosure of their abuse.

The following improvements would also help address the gaps in service provision for male victims:

- Better education of MPs and public servants about the fact that men too can be victims of family violence and have specific needs
- Inclusion of male victims in the *National Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and Their Children* and associated systemic reforms
- Better data from the ABS and other public bodies (for example, the inclusion of men's organisations on the advisory panel for the *ABS Personal Safety Survey*)
- Tertiary education courses (social work; other health and human services) to include specific training about meeting the needs of male victims of family violence and their children.

Are there any online resources for male, intersex and gender diverse victims that you believe are useful?

1. The **One in Three Campaign** website (oneinthree.com.au)
2. **Mensline Australia** have put together a good tip sheet for male victims of domestic violence, available at www.mensline.org.au/Are-you-experiencing-violence-or-abuse-in-your-relationship.html.
3. The **NSW Government's Crime Prevention Division** has produced a useful gender-neutral resource for victims of domestic violence called *Your Court, Your Safety. A guide to going to court and getting help with domestic violence*, available at <http://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/4976720>.
4. **Men Abused by Women in Intimate Relationships (Canada)** - An excellent electronic resource published by Alberta Children's Services, covering such issues as *What is abuse*, *What you can do*, and *Where to get help*. <http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/PFVB1100-men-abused-by-women-booklet.pdf>.
5. **For Men Affected by Domestic Violence (UK)** - A very good resource from the Greater London Domestic Violence Project. Covers issues such as *What is Domestic Violence?*, *Are you being abused?*, *Myth busting*, *What you can do*, and *Support information*. http://www.menshealthaustralia.net/storage/files/For_men_affected_by_DV.pdf.



6. **Men's Advice Line (UK)** - Provides advice and support for men in abusive relationships. They have a good booklet available for download from http://www.oneinthree.com.au/storage/pdfs/MAL_booklet_for_male_victims.pdf.
7. **Stop Abuse For Everyone (USA)** - A human rights organisation that provides services, publications and training to serve those who typically fall between the cracks of domestic violence services: straight men, GLBT victims, teens, and the elderly. They promote services for all victims and accountability for all perpetrators. They have good brochures available at <http://www.stopabuseforeveryone.org/brochures/SAFE%20Male%20Intimate%20Partner%20Violence%20Brochure.pdf> and <http://www.stopabuseforeveryone.org/brochures/SAFE%20LGBT%20Intimate%20Partner%20Violence%20Brochure.pdf>.

1.3 Online content

Do you think it is reasonable to link victims to external resources, programs and support services, or is it best that they are directed to contact VSA and enter into a case management setting?

Because support for male victims of family violence is so limited, it would be reasonable to link victims to external resources, programs and support services to maximise the chances of them finding the support they need. However, as personal case management could possibly provide the best support for male victims, it is recommended they be directed to contact VSA and enter into a case management setting in the first instance, then given links to other resources as secondary support.

What kind of online content do you believe is most useful?

As well as replicating the features of websites for female victims and their children listed in the Discussion Paper, we would recommend the following kinds of online content:

- content that normalises the issue for male victims, shows they are not alone (other men are in similar situations), and that there is nothing wrong with them for being in the situation they are experiencing.
- content that tells the personal stories of other male victims.
- content that provides an up-to-date list of all support services currently available to male victims in Victoria, what they can and cannot provide, and their contact details.
- content that talks about the impacts of family violence on male victims.

Would an educational component of an online resource assist people in identifying their experience as family violence, and in turn help victims to identify the types of services available to them?

The *Intimate Partner Abuse of Men*²² study found that one of the major factors that makes men reluctant to disclose what is happening to them or to seek help appears to be men's denial of what is happening to them. If male victims are able to identify their experiences as family violence, it would go a long way towards helping them reach out for assistance.

²² Tilbrook, Emily, Alfred Allan, and Greg Dear (2010). [Intimate Partner Abuse of Men](#). East Perth: Men's Advisory Network.

Are there specific services you are aware of that would be beneficial to promote on the VSA website?

See the services and online resources listed in 1.2 above.

Do certain types of family violence experiences require specific online resources?

Intersectionality affects male victims in significant ways. CALD victims, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims, victims from lower socio-economic areas or regional and rural areas, victims with physical and/or mental health issues, victims from the GLBTIQ community, older victims and adolescent victims all need specific online resources that can help them with their different issues. In the same way, male victims of family violence perpetrated by their intimate partner need different resources than male victims where the violence is perpetrated by other family members.

Are there particular or unique online resource needs for victims from diverse or intersectional groups?

See the section on intersectionality in 1.1 above.

1.4 Service Delivery

Which cohorts of family violence victims do you work with and which communication channels do they respond well to?

We are not a service provider, so we don't work directly with family violence victims. Nevertheless, because of the stigma, shame and embarrassment experienced by many male victims, those channels that are private, confidential and even anonymous where appropriate would be most likely to achieve better response rates.

How do different cohorts prefer to seek help?

See above.

What format is most practical for delivering the information needed for specific cohorts (if any)?

Websites are a practical medium for delivering information to male victims, as they can be accessed privately and confidentially.

Television and radio advertising are practical media for reaching male victims because they have a wide reach and could serve to supplement the decades of public media campaigns aimed solely at female victims. It is important not to underestimate the importance of sending the simple message to men that there are appropriate, male-friendly family violence services available to them. Many male victims still believe that all family violence services are women-only (because for decades this was actually the case).



How can the Helpline publicise and promote its services and improved online resources so that male, intersex and gender diverse victims are more likely to utilise their services?

- Advertise the fact that you are running male-friendly, respectful services
- Advertise the fact that you can provide private, confidential and even anonymous support
- Promote your services and improved online resources in areas frequented by men: male toilets, sporting venues, male dominated workplaces, etc
- Encourage male victims to tell SOMEONE about what is going on, especially for the sake of their children. If a male victim has a good experience disclosing his experience of family violence to a close friend, relative or GP, he will be more likely to take the next step and utilise your services
- Talk about the kinds of *practical* assistance you can offer to men and their children.
- DON'T talk about how “family violence is a gendered issue and most victims are women *but men...*” (even if you believe it to be true). No-one wants to be a ‘but’ – it can indicate to male victims that they won’t be taken seriously, that they won’t receive appropriate help, or that they will be treated as perpetrators. It will probably make them less likely to call you.

CONCLUSION

On behalf of all male victims of family violence and abuse, we hope the Victims Support Agency gives serious consideration to this submission. We encourage the Victorian Government to implement our recommendations to provide better support for male victims of domestic and family violence in line with the recommendations of all recent major Australian inquiries and Royal Commissions, while at the same time increasing assistance for female victims.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide input into this Discussion Paper.

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