Domestic and Dating Violence Peer Education Program

A pilot project
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Evaluation and Report
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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document presents a report on a peer education program that was designed to raise awareness about domestic and dating violence among teachers and students in two secondary schools in metro and regional Western Australia during 2007. The project was conducted in collaboration with the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA), Family and Domestic Violence Unit, and the Department of Education and Training and was funded through money raised via the Jordan Fogarty Appeal and a contribution from Family and Domestic Violence Unit.

The aims of the project were to:

- Implement an education program to raise students and teachers awareness about family and domestic violence and dating violence in two senior high schools.
- Link students and teachers with resources and supports available to individuals faced with family and domestic violence and dating violence.
- Improve student’s attitudes towards, and understanding of, healthy family and intimate partner relationships.
- Train a small group of students from each school as Peer Educators, to plan and implement activities and presentations to build on the initial awareness raising program and continue to educate the student body about family and domestic violence, and dating violence.
- Work to develop partnerships between participating schools and service providers in neighbouring suburbs who work with people dealing with family and domestic violence and dating violence.

1.1 PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

The program resulted in a number of concrete achievements.

An Education Program: A series of 50 minute awareness raising presentations with years 8, 9, 10 and 11 students and their teachers in classroom size groups.

Links between Schools and Resources and Supports: Schools were linked into the local Regional Coordinated Response to Family and Domestic Violence Groups in their school district; as key groups, incorporating a range of services and agencies, they provide a central point of contact and referral for schools.

A service guide detailing available organisations, services and contact details was developed by the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) and issued to each school.

Peer Educator Training and Peer Support Training was delivered in partnership with schools and representatives from Legal Aid, Sexual Assault Resource Centre, Peel Regional Family Violence Committee and the Women’s Refuges, the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) and Family and Domestic Violence Unit.

In addition, representatives from the Peel Regional Family Violence Committee and Armadale Domestic Violence Intervention Project played a significant role in supporting Peer Educators in the implementation of their awareness raising activities. Further collaborative work is planned with service providers participating in awareness raising events in schools.

Trained Peer Educators and Awareness Raising Activities: Eight students from Cecil Andrews Senior High School and nine from Coodanup Community College were trained as Peer Educators.

The Peer Educators in each school have held events or are planning events to raise awareness about domestic and dating violence in their schools. Other awareness raising activities include:

- Speaking at school assemblies and seminars.
- Providing information in school publications and through school libraries
- Placement of pamphlets and information in the library and school nurse area.
- Promotional and fund raising activities.
- Production of a booklet targeted at teenagers in the Armadale area about family violence and the support services available to them.
- Web-page about the project and domestic and dating violence (in planning).
- ‘DV Awareness Day’ combing fun activities, stalls; and information about domestic and dating violence (in planning).
- Fundraising for a local women’s refuge (in planning).

Trained Peer Educator Support: A modified program was developed for young people who self identified as having experienced violence. The modified program was called the Peer Educator Support Group and placed greater emphasis on safety, support, and service providers. It was offered to students who disclosed a history of violence during the ‘expression of interest’ phase of the project and also to students known to the school psychologist as
having a history of violence. In all, 15 students were trained to provide Peer Educator support.

Peer Educators and Peer Educator Support Group feedback: The feedback showed an increase in knowledge about family and domestic violence and teen dating violence among these groups. Between 68-77% of respondents ‘strongly agreed’ that the training had taught them about the importance of confidentiality; how a healthy relationship works; the use of power in relationships; the services and supports available; and the importance of looking after yourself and having someone to trust. The training also provided participants with a range of new skills including:

- Interpersonal skills
- Leadership
- Public Speaking
- Listening
- Understanding/empathy
- Knowing boundaries

Discussions with Peer Educators revealed that participation in the program had been a personally fulfilling experience and that they felt they had personally grown through being part of the project.

1.2 EVALUATION IN SUMMARY

Raised awareness

A clear shift between pre-survey responses and post-survey responses can be seen, indicating there was a considerable uptake of the information provided through the program. Particularly noteworthy is the increased understanding that family and domestic violence and teen dating violence involve more than physical violence. This was shown by the reduction of a third to a half of incorrect answers to questions relating to other types of abuse and control in post-surveys.

The findings were supported by feedback from school staff who generally viewed the value of the program was an increase in awareness about domestic and dating violence within the school and a greater knowledge about the services available.

Improved attitudes

In general the evaluation findings show some change in attitudes. However, to change attitudes established over many years is clearly complex, particularly long term attitudinal changes. As might be predicted findings indicate that those with more entrenched views around the acceptance and responsibilities of different aspects of domestic and dating violence, often show smaller shifts in attitudes.

The following graphs are used here by way of illustration. Figure 1 and Figure 2 speak to general attitudes about ‘victim blaming’ and perpetrator culpability. They demonstrate an increase in the proportion of students who believe the victim of domestic violence does not ‘cause’ it and that responsibility sits with the perpetrator of the violence. Significantly, both figures show the number of students who agreed with the statements have dropped by just under a third to a third in post-surveys.
The evaluation also highlighted that the indecision demonstrated by many students who indicated they were ‘not sure’ how to answer many questions can be seen as a ‘window of opportunity’ whereby less strongly held views and undeveloped attitudes can be shifted; as demonstrated in Figure 3 below.

**Increase in help seeking behaviour**

The awareness raising about family and domestic violence among the student body, through school presentations and the Peer Educators initiatives, resulted in a number of disclosures and requests for assistance.

- Out of 50 expressions of interest from students wishing to be Peer Educators, almost half disclosed that they had an experience of family and domestic violence.
- Approximately 15 students disclosed their experiences of family and domestic violence for the first time to staff in Students Support Services.
- At the time the evaluation was conducted 5 of the Peer Educators had been approached by students wanting information about family and domestic violence.
**Project delivery**

Much of the feedback on the delivery of the project was positive from students and teaching staff.

**Project Team:** It was felt that the team chosen to lead the project had a positive impact because they were people who students could relate to. Feedback also highlighted that the support and delivery of the project was of a ‘good quality’.

**Selection of Peer Educators:** It was noted the selection process for the Peer Educators was careful and well managed.

**Information and Content:** Positive comments were received about the appropriateness and emphasis of the program material and information.

**Issues**

More effective Communication: Improved promotion of the project and an ongoing schedule of events and communication to staff about planned events and activities could go some way to meeting any concerns staff might have about the project.

Time and resource constraints: It was evident that time and curriculum demands on teachers can impact on the priority given to initiatives such as this pilot project. To ensure the project is implemented effectively an appropriate level of support is required from project partners outside schools. A particular concern is the need to establish appropriate levels of relief for teachers who are involved in the program.

1.3 **INGREDIENTS FOR SUCCESS**

The evaluation identified a number of key factors that should be considered to guarantee success in implementing future Peer Educator programs:

- Ongoing provision of support to schools to assist with planning and implementation.
- Take a considered approach to the selection process of Peer Educators and follow it.
- Interactive and discussion based training of peer educators. Games and activities to build cohesion within the group.
- Attendance of teachers at the Peer Education Camp and participation of teachers with students in the activities.
- A formalised schedule for Peer Educator meetings to support their planning and activities.
- Don’t underestimate the peer educators – young people have phenomenal capacity to initiate and make change.
- Operate from an ethos of peer ‘expertise’ and trust that young people will know best how to engage their peers.
- Employ project officers that young people can relate to.

1.4 **SOME THOUGHTS FOR THE FUTURE**

**Extended Peer Educator training opportunities:** Student Services staff see there may be a benefit in offering the Peer Educator opportunity to more students. It was suggested that different training modules be developed with different versions for different student groups and aspects of family and domestic violence and teen dating violence.

**Incorporate Peer Educator Support Group Training:** The modified Peer Educator Support Training to students who come forward and disclosed an experience of family and domestic violence and dating violence as a result of the program is a valuable added benefit of the program and is worth considering as an ongoing element of the program in the future.

**Peer Educator resource packs:** Consider developing a ‘back to school package’ for Peer Educators after training workshops with easy to follow steps for students to create awareness activities. This would reduce the time required from teaching staff to help organise and plan awareness projects in schools.

**Promotional packs for schools:** The recruitment of a greater number of schools will be required if the program is to be extended. This could be more effectively achieved through the use of promotional packs distributed directly to schools and through the development of stronger relationships with Education Department District Offices and Project Staff.
Consideration of the impact of gender: The evaluation presents evidence that in going forward the program would benefit from taking time to consider strategies to improve the delivery of the program to male students. It was evident in the findings that gender was an underlying factor with female students more likely to show an increase in knowledge and shifts in attitude than their male counterparts. In some instance there was some evidence to suggest that a small number of male students may even have reacted negatively to some aspects of the information they were given. This points to the need for further research to gain insight into engaging boys in programs such as this.

Develop communication strategies: The feedback from school based staff made it evident that information about the project could be more effectively filtered through the school and that Peer Educators, with the assistance of the Project Team, should include a communication strategy to keep the whole school community informed about the project and what activities are planned.

Improvement in delivery of Peer Educator Training: On the whole the training programs were well received; however opportunities exist for making improvements in the delivery of the training program. A particular area for improvement may lie in developing the training program to reduce the complexity of the material being delivered to the participants. Linked to this, is a need for adequate ‘down time’, especially given the weightiness of the training content.
2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

The following sections provide background information on the origins of the project and the theoretical approach taken.

2.1 WHERE IT BEGAN

As part of the 2004/05 International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program, Year 9 Scotch College student Jordan Fogarty embarked on a campaign to raise money for the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) to develop a community awareness campaign for young people to reduce the incidence of domestic and family violence in the next generation.

At the ‘Silent Memorial’ March in April 2005 then Minister for Community Development the Hon Sheila McHale announced the Family and Domestic Violence Unit would match the funds raised by Jordan. Later that year Jordan announced that after a string of fundraisers and awareness raising campaigns he had raised $50,000.

Using the funds raised by Jordan and the contribution from Family and Domestic Violence Unit the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA), in partnership with Family and Domestic Violence Unit and the Department for Education and Training developed a peer education project to educate secondary school students about domestic and family violence and teen dating violence. The content of the project is based on the Youth Say No resources which were developed by Family and Domestic Violence Unit and the Office for Children and Youth in consultation with key sector expertise and a working group of young people that included Jordan. The Youth Say No resources can be viewed by visiting the website www.youthsayno.wa.gov.au.

2.2 WHY INCREASE YOUNG PEOPLE’S AWARENESS ABOUT FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Many young Australians are exposed to domestic and family violence on a day to day basis either personally or vicariously through friends or family members. The extent of this exposure was revealed by Indermaur (2001) who found that in a survey of 5000 12-20 year olds, 25% had witnessed or experienced violence or abuse in the home and that one in three experienced violence in their own intimate relationships.

Court and Police statistics also demonstrate the level of young people’s exposure to violence. For example, a report produced by the Joondalup Family Violence Court (2002) states that in 73% of domestic violence cases children were present in the home when the violence or abuse occurred. Further, Western Australian police figures suggest young people between the ages of 18 and 24 are at greatest risk of experiencing sexual assault and domestic and family violence within an intimate relationship (Mann, 2007).

These kinds of findings were supported by the pre-project survey carried out for this project which found that out of the 275 students who chose to answer the question 53% reported ‘knowing’ someone who had witnessed or experienced domestic or dating violence.

These findings are staggering, particularly in view of the significant negative impact of domestic and family violence on people’s health and wellbeing; such as injury, anxiety, depression, behavioural issues and impaired social skills (to name just a few) (Astbury et al, 2000; Osofsky, 1999; UNICEF, 2000). In addition we know that witnessing violence in the home often leads to young people developing inappropriate norms about violence and aggression, which in turn can make an individual more vulnerable to entering into an abusive relationship in adulthood (Osofsky, 1999). For example, Indermaur (2001) found that young people who had been exposed to violence in the home were twice as likely to have been forced to have sex and four times as likely to have admitted that they had forced a partner to have sex.

The long term and intergenerational consequences above are further compounded by low community awareness about domestic and family violence and a culture of ‘secrecy’ fuelled by the fear and shame that is commonly experienced by victims of violence and abuse (Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2006; The Body Shop, 2007). The result is that families and young people often do not receive appropriate intervention or support to deal with the related social, psychological and / or physical trauma they experience. It is the ‘secret’ nature of domestic and dating violence that makes providing information and education imperative for effective early intervention.

Given the critical juncture of adolescence, providing information and raising awareness about domestic and dating violence among adolescents is even more vital. They are at a point in time where they begin to enter into their own intimate relationships but are still prior to the age (18-24 years) when domestic and family violence is most likely to occur. Through timely information and education it is possible to provide those already witnessing or experiencing abuse with

- the resources to seek support from available services; and
- a forum that challenges ‘inappropriate’ relationship norms relating to violence; and

...
More generally, providing young people a basis upon which to recognise the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships enables them to make informed and healthier relationship decisions in the future. In turn, the aim is to reduce the incidence of relationship violence and abuse among Australia’s young people.

2.3 WHY A PEER EDUCATION APPROACH

The project adopted a peer education approach. Peer education is designed to facilitate information sharing between peers, in this case information about domestic and dating violence, support services and what constitutes healthy and unhealthy relationships. The rationale for using this approach is that

- people are more receptive to information delivered by their peers;
- people are more likely to seek support and information from peers; and
- Peer Educators will know how to best engage their peer group in terms of content and information delivery (Parkin & McKeeganey, 2000; Shiner, 1999; Varenhorst, 1992).

In Australia, peer education approaches are successfully used with youth to raise awareness about drugs and alcohol, HIV and AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, mental health and domestic and dating violence.

Research clearly supports the peer education model as an effective early intervention strategy. For example, evaluation of the Commonwealth’s Partnerships Against Domestic Violence program, which provided $50.3 million over six years for dating and domestic violence prevention projects in Australia, found that six peer education initiatives funded through the program were all successful. Common outcomes for these initiatives included increased awareness about violence against women for male and female participants and increased confidence and maturity among Peer Educators. The success of these projects in engaging and informing young people resulted in the strategy being endorsed as a priority area for action in the prevention of family and domestic violence and teen dating violence among youth.

When comparing peer education programs with adult led programs the evidence is also convincing. A meta-analysis of 12 research projects comparing peer led versus adult led school based drug prevention programs found that overall the peer led programs were more effective (Cuipers, 2002). Similarly a study conducted by Mellanby et al (2001) which compared adult versus peer delivery of a sex education curriculum found that the Peer Educators were more effective than adults in establishing conservative norms and attitudes related to sexual behaviour (i.e. Peer Educators were better able to convince their peers that most teenagers have not had sexual intercourse before 16 years of age). Further, the study found that program participants were more ‘open’ during discussions in peer led groups as opposed to adult led groups.

The effectiveness of such programs informed the decision to take a peer education approach in this school based Pilot Project. In taking this approach the Project Team adopted some key principles of ‘best practice’ for peer education programs developed by Shiner (1999) and Walker and Avis (1999). These are as follows:

- The project must have clear aims and objectives which are used as the basis of the experimental design.
- Provision of intensive training for Peer Educators to include information on the topic and training in presentation and group facilitation.
- Multi-agency support to establish shared ownership and to facilitate communication and an integrated approach.
- Clear definition and boundaries to establish the Peer Educators roles and responsibilities.
- Ongoing support, debriefing, and training for Peer Educators.
- Training for Peer Educators in the response and management of disclosures.
- Value and promote a team work approach where peer education sessions are carried out in teams of two. This has a number of advantages including the knowledge of two educators in a session, a collaborative debriefing and back up should a Peer Educator feel uncomfortable.

2.4 DEFINING THE PEER EDUCATORS ROLE

For the purpose of this project the Peer Educators role was defined as follows.

Peer Educators were to:

- Act as an information point for individuals seeking information about domestic or dating violence and support services. It is important to note that Peer Educators were not trained to act as counsellors and that their role was to provide information only.
Project Background

- Organise and implement activities and events that raise awareness about domestic and dating violence within the school community.

In each of these roles students were supported by designated staff members at the school and the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) Project Officer who met regularly with each group of students to support and facilitate their endeavors.

The roles and responsibilities of Peer Educators were clearly articulated in introductory presentations given to students and teachers at the beginning of the project and were reiterated during the selection process and training of Peer Educators.
3. **MAKING IT HAPPEN**

The peer education project proceeded in three stages:

1. Project Design and Resource Development.
2. Implementation.
3. Training and Activities.

A description of each of these stages is provided below.

### 3.1 STAGE ONE: PROJECT DESIGN AND RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Work carried out between October 2006 and January 2007

The project design phase involved consulting with stakeholders and conducting a literature review.

A Steering Group was formed and comprised of representatives from Family and Domestic Violence Unit, Department of Education and Training, and the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA).

Consultation was carried out with a range of people and agencies including potential schools across Perth Metropolitan area, Department of Child Protection (formerly known as Department for Community Development), Jordan Fogarty and other domestic violence service providers.

An extensive literature review was carried out on domestic and dating violence, existing domestic violence programs and resources targeted at young people. A key element to the literature review involved sourcing out other peer education initiatives and programs.

On the basis of this background work a number of resources were developed including

- Power-point presentations;
- brochures and handouts for student and teacher awareness raising;
- procedures for Peer Educator selection; and
- a training package for Peer Educators including a facilitators manual, a participants handbook and power-point presentations.

### 3.2 STAGE TWO: IMPLEMENTATION

Work carried out between January and April 2007 (Term One)

**Step 1:** The first step in the implementation phase involved negotiating ‘entry’ into schools. Initial discussions were held between the Project Officer, a representative from the Department of Education and Training; school Principals and a designated school Project Coordinator. The establishment of a designated school contact point was part of a commitment made by participating schools to assign a group of dedicated staff to be available to assist the Peer Educators organise activities and to provide support and debriefing.

The role of the school Project Coordinator was to facilitate a smooth rollout and coordination of the project by primarily liaising with the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) Project Officer and students.

The Project Officer and School Coordinator developed a project framework with each school including timelines and format (e.g. when and where different events would be held). Project frameworks were developed with a degree of flexibility in implementation in order to adapt to the needs and requirements of each school.

**Step 2:** The next step of the implementation phase involved facilitating links between schools and local domestic violence support services.

Principals and teachers at both schools attended at least one meeting of the Regional Coordinated Response Group to Family and Domestic Violence Groups (RCRFDV) in their school district. The RCRFDV are local service providers who meet on a regular basis to coordinate responses to family and domestic violence. This step was vitally important for consolidating referral pathways, ensuring disclosures within the school were managed effectively and communicating to service providers that there might be an increase in young people accessing their services.

As a follow up to these introductory meetings a service guide for each school detailing available organisations, their services and contact details was developed by the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA).

**NOTE:** Students were engaged in the project only after the support structures were in place and the background work was completed.

**Step 3:** This step of the implementation phase involved engaging students and teachers. This commenced prior to the beginning of term one with a presentation to all teaching staff about the project and domestic and dating violence. During this presentation the teachers were given a detailed handout about the project and domestic and dating violence and were also given the opportunity to raise concerns or ask questions about the project. At the beginning of term one the project officers (from the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services and Family
and Domestic Violence Unit) commenced a series of 50 minute awareness raising presentations about the project, family and domestic violence and teen dating violence with years 8, 9, 10 and 11 students and their teachers in classroom size groups (approximately 25 per presentation).

In addition to the presentation teachers were also provided with a handout detailing the project and information about domestic and dating violence. Student were also provided with a brochure about the project and a copy of the Youth Say No resources. During the awareness raising presentations two facilitators were always present – one to deliver the information and the other to act as a counsel to upset or distressed participants.

Note: From this point in the report project officers from the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) and Family and Domestic Violence Unit will be referred to as ‘project staff’.

Step 4: The final step to this phase was the selection of Peer Educators.

Immediately following student presentations expression of interest forms were handed out to any students who were interested in becoming a Peer Educator. Students were instructed that the forms had to be returned within one week to the school Project Coordinator.

All expressions of interest underwent a screening process. This was carried out by project staff and involved a 10 minute one-on-one interview with applicants (A copy of the screening interview and introductory letter is attached as Appendix 1.). From there a short list of potential Peer Educators was taken to Student Services (school based) and the school psychologist for further screening and the final selection of Peer Educators.

It was agreed at this time that students who had experienced domestic violence would not be selected as Peer Educators because of concerns that they may experience distress when talking to other students about domestic violence or be subject to teasing if the student body found out about their experience. However, in acknowledgement of their special needs the students in this category were offered an alternative training program (see Section 5.2 for details).

3.2.1 Motivations for being a Peer Educator

When students who had nominated to become peer educators were asked why they wanted to become involved in the Peer Education Pilot Project their responses fell within four broad categories:

1. Personal and vicarious experiences with family and domestic violence.
2. A desire to help others.
3. Interest in learning about the topic.
4. Interest in pursuing careers in related fields.
The following quotes from interviews are given here as an example of the way students explained their motivation for wanting to become a Peer Educator:

[I] often take on the carer role in the school among friends
A lot of people are affected I want to learn more to help them
A lot of my friends come to me for advice
I want to be a role model for other people
Important for people to know about issues so we can make it safe for them
It happens so often and people just don’t know how to handle it
Add to my skills and knowledge

Students who disclosed a personal experience of family and domestic violence tended to cite this as their primary motivation for becoming involved in the project. They often stated that they wanted to know more about the topic to help themselves and their siblings, or the friend/family member who they know to be witnessing or experiencing abuse.

A breakdown of responses from students who were interviewed and disclosed is given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience of Family and Domestic Violence (DV)</th>
<th>No of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Currently in a DV situation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History of DV in the family</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extended family member or friend experiencing DV</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of or exposure to teen dating violence</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 STAGE THREE: TRAINING AND ACTIVITIES

Work carried out between May and November 2007 (Terms Two, Three and Four)

At the commencement of the second term of the school year the selected students participated in a three day Peer Educator Training Camp. The purpose of the camp was to prepare students to act as Peer Educators within their school.

The training program included the following topics:

- Information about Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence including definition, forms of abuse, prevalence, and impacts upon victims, children and perpetrators.
Making it Happen

- Power and control.
- Healthy and unhealthy relationships.
- Causes of relationship violence and abuse.
- Expectations and values about relationships including gender stereotypes and how these can impact upon a relationship.
- A ‘how to’ guide for developing a healthy relationship.
- Information on support services.
- Information on Family and Domestic Violence & Teen Dating Violence and the law.

- Skill development in the areas of confidentiality, protective interrupting, referral, debriefing, presentation and facilitation skills, and evaluation.
- Leadership and teambuilding activities were also provided by TeamWorks (a company that specialises in teambuilding programs).

The training program is comprehensive and as such is not included here in detail. A full copy of the training program can be obtained from Nicole Leggett at (08) 9420 7264 or project@womenscouncil.com.au
4. **WHO GOT INVOLVED**

Two schools participated in the *Peer Education: Pilot Project*. These were

- Coodanup Community College in Mandurah, Western Australia; and
- Cecil Andrews Senior High School in Armadale, Western Australia.

Combined, these schools had 948 students enrolled during 2007.

The Department of Education and Training coordinated the recruitment of schools. School Principals were informed about the project via their District Education Office. If interested, school Principals were asked to contact the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA).

### 4.1 SCHOOL AND REGIONAL PROFILES

The following table provides statistical information on the two participating schools and details on the number of students who participated in the project as Peer Educators. The second table provides a profile of the regions in which the schools are situated from selected data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006 Census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Cecil Andrews Senior High School</th>
<th>Coodanup Community College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years taught</td>
<td>Year 8-12</td>
<td>Years 8-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of students</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students by gender</td>
<td>269 Male</td>
<td>212 Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>277 Female</td>
<td>190 Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students by year group</td>
<td>Year 8-140</td>
<td>Year 8-118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 9-123</td>
<td>Year 9-145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 10-128</td>
<td>Year 10-139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 11-94</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 12-61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of Peer Educators</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Educators by gender</td>
<td>6 Female</td>
<td>4 Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 Male</td>
<td>5 Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Educators by year group</td>
<td>Year 8-1</td>
<td>Year 9-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 9-2</td>
<td>Year 10-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 10-4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Year 11-1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Armadale sits 29 kms to the south east of the Perth metropolitan area. Major industries include commercial and manufacturing. Mandurah sits on the coast approximately 74 kms south of Perth and is the centre of the Peel region of Western Australia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Armadale</th>
<th>Mandurah</th>
<th>Perth</th>
<th>Western Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>50,535</td>
<td>55,814</td>
<td>1,445,078</td>
<td>1,959,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous population</td>
<td>1,427 (2.8%)</td>
<td>827 (1.5%)</td>
<td>21,325 (1.5%)</td>
<td>58,711 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of children (0-14 years)</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median age</td>
<td>36 years</td>
<td>43 years</td>
<td>36 years</td>
<td>36 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of residents born overseas</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>27.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of people who speak a language other than English at home</td>
<td>Approx. 11% of population</td>
<td>Approx. 9.8% of population</td>
<td>Approx. 20.1% of population</td>
<td>Approx. 18.2% of population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple families with children</td>
<td>6,096 (44.2%)</td>
<td>5,478 (35.6%)</td>
<td>174,793 (45.8%)</td>
<td>230,740 (45.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One parent families</td>
<td>2,487 (18.1%)</td>
<td>2,250 (14.6%)</td>
<td>58,000 (15.2%)</td>
<td>76,001 (14.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in home fully owned or being purchased</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>67.2%</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median weekly household income</td>
<td>$989.00</td>
<td>$810.00</td>
<td>$1,086.00</td>
<td>$1,066.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. WHAT WAS ACHIEVED

This section outlines the activities and outputs from the project.

5.1 SCHOOL BASED AWARENESS RAISING INITIATIVES

The program was established differently in each school. To encourage ownership, Peer Educators and Peer Educator Support students were encouraged to develop their own initiatives and to work through the logistics and practicalities of implementing them.

The following provides a brief overview of how the program was instigated at the school level in the two participating schools.

Cecil Andrews Senior High School
At Cecil Andrews Senior High School the Peer Educators met weekly for 50 minutes with the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) Project Officer and one school staff member. This time was used to brainstorm about potential awareness raising ideas and to plan and develop activities and events.

Awareness raising events coordinated by the Peer Educators included:

• Speaking at a school assembly about their experiences on the training camp and about their role as Peer Educators.
• Adding information in daily school notices to reinforce the role of the Peer Educator and to remind students and teachers that they were there to provide information to anyone who needed it.
• Placement of pamphlets and information in the library and school nurse area.
• Development and distribution of posters on different topics, including — Dating Violence; — Family Violence; — ‘We are here to help’; and — Supporting a mate.
• The sale of coloured wristbands stating ‘SPEAK OUT against domestic and sexual violence’.
• Conducting 50 minute seminars for all year ten and eleven students about Dating Violence;
• Production of a booklet targeted at teenagers in the Armadale area about family violence and the support services available to them.

Further, two of the Peer Educators and the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) Project Officer co-presented a presentation on the project at the Children and Young People are Key Stakeholders conference.
Through the remainder of the school year the students have continued to work towards other ideas and have several more activities planned that have yet to come to fruition. These include:

- printing t-shirts with anti-violence slogans on them;
- including information about Domestic Violence in the coming year’s school diary; and
- developing a web-page about the project and domestic and dating violence which links to the school’s web site.

Coodanup Community College

The Peer Educators at Coodanup Community College do not have a formalised meeting schedule. However they usually meet fortnightly with a staff member. The Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) Project Officer also meets with them sporadically.

The Peer Educators at Coodanup have chosen to plan for one major event rather than to organise several smaller activities.

The event ‘DV Awareness Day’ will be held at the school in the fourth term and will be a combination of

- fun activities and games;
- stalls; and
- information about domestic and dating violence.

On the day the school has agreed to release all students from classes for two periods.

The Peer Educators have also organised for local service providers to attend the event to provide information.

All funds raised on the day will be donated to the local women’s refuge Pat Thomas Community House.

In addition to the coordination of this event the Peer Educators have distributed domestic and dating violence information through the library and the school nurse’s office. They have also added information about their role in the school morning notices advising students about contact points for information about domestic and dating violence.

It should be noted that the event had not occurred at the time of writing this report.

5.2 PEER EDUCATOR SUPPORT GROUP

The project found that the number of students wishing to participate in the project as Peer Educators was greater than had been expected with 50 young people expressing an interest during the Peer Educator selection process (described in Section 3.2).

Of the 50 applications almost half disclosed a current or past experience with domestic and family violence.

Given concerns about placing students at risk of re-traumatisation, it had been decided by school support teams and project staff that students who had experienced domestic and family violence should not be given the role of Peer Educator. However, to offer nothing to those students was also viewed to be inappropriate. Moreover, it was felt the insights they could bring to the project offered an opportunity to tease out which family and domestic violence related messages might be considered most important to convey to other young people.

As such a modified program was developed for young people who identified as having experienced violence. The aim was to provide them with information and education in a supportive environment as part of a ‘healing’ process.

The modified program was called the Peer Educator Support Group and placed greater emphasis on safety, support, and service providers. It was offered to students who disclosed a history of violence during the ‘expression of interest’ phase of the project and also to students known to the school psychologist as having a history of violence.

In total 15 students participated in the support group, of which 14 were from Coodanup Community College.

The program was conducted as three full day seminars at Coodanup Community College. On completion of the training these students formed a ‘behind the scenes expert group’ to advice Peer Educators on the kind of messages and information that might be most important to people who have experienced violence in their lives.
6. EVALUATION METHODS AND FINDINGS

The aim of the evaluation was to measure the effectiveness of the project in meeting the aims as set out in Section 0 of the report. As a pilot project the evaluation also aimed to provide information that could be used to inform future program development and improvements.

The evaluation was based on mixed methods and utilised both qualitative and quantitative techniques including survey questionnaires, focus groups and interviews.

- Evaluation surveys were distributed by schools to students and teachers and forwarded to the independent evaluator for analysis.
- Focus group discussions with Peer Educators were conducted by the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) Project Officer.
- Interviews with key staff were conducted by the independent evaluator.

Surveys included questions on levels of awareness and understanding and questions aimed at capturing attitudes to domestic and dating violence (see Appendix 2 for a copy of the student survey). The content of the survey questionnaires was based on the pilot program content which was informed by the Youth Says No resources developed by the Family and Domestic Violence Unit and Office for Children and Youth (2006) (www.youthsayno.wa.gov.au) (2006). Questions were also developed through a selective use and adaptation of other resources including:

- Program materials targeted towards young people including Keep Safe and Stay Cool (http://www.softcon.com.au/kssc/);
  Dating Violence, It is a Big Deal (www.michigan.gov/domesticviolence);
  When Love Hurts (http://www.dvirc.org.au/whenlove/)

Research reports including Young People and Domestic Violence Report (Crime Research Centre, 2001) and, Community attitudes to violence against women survey 2006: full technical report (Taylor & Mouzos).

The table on the following page sets out the project evaluation framework and categorises the aims of the project under 3 key goal areas.

**Goal 1.** Raise awareness about family and domestic violence and dating violence

**Goal 2.** Train a group of students at each school as Peer Educators, to plan and implement activities and presentations; building on the initial awareness raising presentations.

**Goal 3.** Develop links and partnerships between participating schools and service providers in neighbouring suburbs whom deal with family and domestic violence and dating violence.

Overall the pilot program achieved many of the outcomes it had aimed for. However, due to the scope and schedule of the pilot project the post-evaluation was conducted in Term 3, before the end of the school year. It should be noted that this may impact on the findings as both schools were still initiating awareness raising activities. In particular, the major event planned for Coodanup Community College described in Section 5.1, had still not been held.
## Evaluation Methods and Findings

### Goal 1. Raise awareness about family and domestic violence and dating violence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Raise students and teachers awareness about family and domestic violence and dating violence</td>
<td>Pre and post surveys of pupils to measure knowledge and understanding about family / domestic and dating violence.</td>
<td>Measurable change between pre and post surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link schools with resources and supports that are available for individuals faced with family and domestic violence and dating violence;</td>
<td>Pre and post surveys of pupils and teachers to measure knowledge about services / agencies and attitudes on the use of such services. Discussions with school staff to identify the kinds of links made through the project.</td>
<td>Measurable change between pre and post surveys. Number and type of new links and partnerships made between schools and service providers and other agencies. Note: Gain some insight into teachers’ views on their role in educating pupils about family / domestic and dating violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dispel myths and improve attitudes about the occurrence of family / domestic and dating violence.</td>
<td>Pre and post surveys of pupils to measure attitudes and beliefs about family / domestic and dating violence.</td>
<td>Measurable change between pre and post surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve student's attitudes towards, and understanding of, healthy family and intimate partner relationships.</td>
<td>Pre and post surveys of pupils to measure attitudes and beliefs about healthy relationships.</td>
<td>Measurable change between pre and post surveys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An increase in help seeking behaviour by individuals experiencing family / domestic and dating violence.</td>
<td>Discussions with school support staff and peer educators to gain insights into levels of self reporting (disclosures) and referrals to school psychologists and nurses.</td>
<td>Any reported disclosures and/or referrals to school support staff and / or Peer Educators. Reports from Peer Educators on discussions and enquiries among pupils.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Evaluation Methods and Findings

**Goal 2. Train a group of students at each school as Peer Educators, to plan and implement activities and presentations; building on initial awareness raising presentations.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of a student led program in each high school.</td>
<td>Information on the school based initiatives and how they were implemented.</td>
<td>Number and type of awareness raising activities implemented (Note: see Section 5.1 for details on school based activities).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A group of trained and confident Peer Educators.</td>
<td>Post-survey/targeted focus groups of Peer Educators to measure levels of satisfaction, concerns, issue and views on the activities and their effectiveness. Satisfaction surveys post training to Peer Educators. Focus group discussions with Peer Educators to gain a more detailed understanding of the impact of participating in the program.</td>
<td>Measure pupils satisfaction with training components and level of knowledge gained; depth of information and time allowed; planning and organisation; perceptions on the value of participating in the program (e.g. self esteem) what they feel they got from participating in the project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A program that can be implemented within the resources available to each school</td>
<td>Information from participating teachers to gain insight into levels of activity and impact on workloads and weaknesses and strengths of the program.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Goal 3. Develop links and partnerships between participating schools and service providers in neighbouring suburbs whom deal with family and domestic violence and dating violence.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New links and / or partnerships between participating schools and local services</td>
<td>Discussions with schools and service providers on links and shared activities and the impact of the program on these.</td>
<td>Increase in knowledge within schools on local services working with people experiencing family and domestic violence. Increase in links / partnerships Types of activities and joint ventures.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1 UNDERSTANDINGS OF FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND DATING VIOLENCE PRE-PROJECT

The pre-survey started with two open questions asking for respondents’ views on the meaning of family and domestic violence and teen dating violence. This was to gain some insight into students’ understandings prior to the structured questions. It was evident in responses that for some it was difficult to articulate in writing or that they did not know. However, many were able to provide an answer. Before talking further to the evaluation framework and findings it is worth taking a brief look at the response to these questions.

Almost a half of the students described family and domestic violence in terms of physical violence, yelling, ‘bashing’, swearing and screaming. About 18% used the term ‘fighting’ to convey that it involved several parties hitting, yelling etc. Of these many described it as fighting among or in the family. It was considered more serious than ordinary family fighting – ‘real fighting – with fists’. Anger was also a word that was often used by students. A few also referred to parents abusing children.

The following are examples of some student’s responses:

- **Hitting each other, verbal abusing, threatening, smashing stuff, fighting** (Female, 13 yrs)
- **Trying to harm other family members... really angry... Start smashing things** (Female, 14 yrs)
- **Fighting, screaming, bashing over petty shit** (Female, 14 yrs)
- **Dumping and going crazy** (Male, 12 yrs)
- **In an angry family** (Female, no age given)
- **Taking anger out on family** (Male, no age given)
- **When family members fight, yell, throw things at each other and stuff like that.** (Female, 14 yrs)

Only 10 respondents linked family and domestic violence with bullying or threatening behaviours.

In relationship to teen dating violence, overall the responses were similar. However, more described it in terms of physical violence, being pressured and sexual violence. There were 44 responses using terms such as ‘pressure to have sex’, rape and ‘using’ or non-consensual sex. Linked to this, were 35 respondents who described dating violence in terms of threatening behaviour, ‘being harassed’, ‘being mean’, ‘pushed to do things’, ‘pushing you into things by force’.

6.2 INCREASED KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS ABOUT DOMESTIC AND DATING VIOLENCE

Results show a general increase in awareness and understanding among the students about what family and domestic violence means. This is illustrated by the following graphs which give the pre-project and post project responses to survey questions.

There were over 380 student respondents to the pre-survey and just over 400 student respondents to the post-survey. Total numbers of responses varied slightly between questions with some students choosing not to answer all questions. However, it is safe to estimate that all graphs are based on responses from between 300-420 students.

In the following Figures 4 to 7, it can be seen that there is a clear shift between pre-survey responses and post-survey responses of 10-12% indicating there was a considerable uptake of the information provided through the program. Particularly noteworthy is the increased understanding that Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence involves more than physical violence.
Evaluation Methods and Findings

Figure 4

Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence only involve physical abuse.

Figure 5

Continually yelling at a partner is a form of Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence.
Evaluation Methods and Findings

Figure 6

Name calling and put downs are a form of Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence.

Figure 7

Family and Domestic Violence only occur in male/female relationships.
The significant increase in understanding was demonstrated more clearly in Figure 8 and Figure 9. In Figure 8, initially 45% of respondents viewed that telling a partner what to wear and who they could see was not a form of domestic or dating violence. In post surveys this decreased to 29%.

In Figure 9, we also see a major shift in responses to the statement on controlling money in the home. The 16% increase in respondents indicating that such behaviours are a form of domestic and dating violence suggests a growing awareness of the place of controlling behaviour in relationship violence.

However, with a significant number of respondents still believing the statements to be ‘false’ it could point to a need to give greater focus to these aspects in future program development. This may be particularly important around issues of personal control over one’s body and social relations given young people’s concepts of ‘romantic love’ and the role it plays in dating relationships (for example, see Crime Research Centre (2001); Chung (2005)).
Figures 10 and 11 again show a positive outcome with a shift of 7-9% between pre-survey and post-survey responses. Notably, the findings indicate that a number of students who did not previously see a link between dating and domestic violence now do.

In some instances although the findings show a shift in understanding it was not as convincing; as demonstrated in Figures 1 to 8. For example, the figures 12 and 13 on the following page, and Figure 14 on page 28, show only a 4-5% movement between pre-surveys and post-surveys. Whilst this is the case, it needs to be acknowledged that there was a high level of preexisting understanding with pre-survey responses showing a large number of participants correctly understood the statements to be ‘false’ prior to participating in the program.
Evaluation Methods and Findings

Figure 12

A woman cannot be raped by someone she is married to or living with.

Figure 13

Violence hardly ever occurs between teenagers who are dating.
Evaluation Methods and Findings

The findings above could suggest greater levels of information and education on these aspects of family and domestic violence and teen dating violence may be usefully included in further programs. However, due to the high levels of understanding generally, they also indicate that the information may need to be targeted more specifically. For example, in Figure 15 the percentage of male respondents who viewed the statement to be ‘true’ showed no change between pre and post-surveys. However there were a large number of male students who did not respond in the pre-survey and an increase of over 10% who viewed the statement to be false in the post-survey.

Note: Total percentages do not equal 100% as some students did not answer the question.
In Figure 16 below, we actually see an increase in male respondents who view that violence between teenagers who are dating hardly ever occurs. On the other hand, in both cases the findings show an increased awareness among female respondents.

Note: Total percentages do not equal 100% as some students did not answer the question.

6.3 IMPROVED ATTITUDES AND UNDERSTANDING ABOUT DOMESTIC AND DATING VIOLENCE

By increasing levels of knowledge and understanding, the project also aimed to improve attitudes and dispel myths about domestic violence and teen dating violence. As outlined above, the project was successful in raising levels of awareness with significant shifts in understanding shown. The degree to which increased knowledge alters personally held beliefs and values is of course a different question.

In general the evaluation findings show some change in attitudes. However, it is well known that to change attitudes established over many years is a more difficult prospect. As such, the findings also indicate that those with more entrenched views around the acceptance and responsibilities of different aspects of domestic and dating violence, show smaller movements in their attitudes.

On the other hand, as depicted the figures following, the number of respondents sitting midway of the polarised views or stating they are ‘not sure’ provides some encouragement. Indecision can be a ‘window of opportunity’ whereby less strongly held views and undeveloped attitudes can be shifted.

![Figure 16](image-url)
The first set of graphs speaks to general attitudes about ‘victim blaming’ and perpetrator culpability. Figures 17 to 20 show an increase in the proportion of students who believe the victim of domestic violence does not ‘cause’ it and that responsibility sits with the perpetrator of the violence.

In particular, Figure 19 on the following page, shows a decrease of almost 10% in respondents who were ‘unsure’ in pre-surveys about whether ‘saying sorry’ was enough to excuse violent behaviour. This was matched with an increase of 5% stating they ‘disagreed’ and 6% who ‘strongly disagreed’.

![Graph 17](image)

**Figure 17**

A person being abused by their partner must have done something to cause it.

![Graph 18](image)

**Figure 18**

Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence are justified when a person argues or refuses to obey their partner.
The most significant change is in attitudes about the role of drugs and alcohol in questions of accountability. As depicted in Figure 20 where there was an increase of 15% in the proportion of students who ‘strongly disagreed’ that being under the influence of drugs and alcohol relieves a person’s responsibility for violent behaviour.
The findings also suggest some increasing empathy with women living in circumstances of domestic violence. As illustrated in Figures 21 and 22 following.

In particular, Figure 21 shows a substantial increase of 16% in post-survey respondents who ‘strongly disagreed’ that a woman who stays in a violent relationship deserves ‘what she gets’. There was also a decrease of 6% between pre and post-survey responses who ‘strongly agreed’ to the statement.

The evaluation findings also intimate a growing appreciation among participants of the role of power in relationships and its place in relationship violence. As Figure 23, 24 and 25 on the following page show, a smaller proportion of students in post-surveys stated they were ‘not sure’ or a greater proportion indicated they ‘strongly disagreed’ that males have the right to control a partner and demand that a partner ‘sleep with them’ and that a woman who flirts is ‘asking for trouble’.

![Figure 21](image1.png)

**Figure 21**

![Figure 22](image2.png)

**Figure 22**
The most significant shift in attitudes is demonstrated above with a 16% increase in respondents who ‘strongly disagree’ that males have the right to control a partner.

Whilst there is a smaller shift in attitudes in Figures 23 and 24, this may be explained by the complexities surrounding emotions, intimate relationships and sex. Incorporating aspects on relationship etiquette and the display of honest emotions versus control might be something to consider going forward in future program development. Further, examining the findings by gender also highlights that a more targeted delivery to male participants would be of value (see Figure 26).
When looking at these findings by gender we see a marked shift among female respondents towards ‘disagreeing’ and ‘strongly disagreeing’ that a woman flirting is ‘asking for trouble’ from her partner. However, male respondents generally remain either in ‘agreement’ or ‘strong agreement’ to the statement.

It should be noted that there may be a question of interpretation here also. The question possibly leaves too much room for interpretation; ‘trouble’ may be read to mean annoyance rather than anger or violence.

Note: Total percentages do not equal 100% as some students did not answer the question.
Whilst the findings show an improved level of knowledge, they also highlight the complexities around attitudes and behaviours. This is well demonstrated below in Figure 27 where post-surveys show a 10% increase in the proportion of respondents who ‘agree’ violence is justified when a person is ‘nagging, name-calling or annoying their partner’. This shift in views seems to suggest a less positive result with students feeling violence is justified in these circumstances. However, they could be as much to do with increases in understanding of the nonphysical types of domestic and dating violence and that to constantly ‘nag, name call and annoy a partner’ could in itself be considered a form of domestic and dating violence.

### 6.4 IMPROVED ATTITUDES AND UNDERSTANDING ABOUT HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

The pilot project aimed to improve students’ understanding of the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships with a longer term intention that students would have the ability to make more informed choices in their own relationships.

On a positive note, pre-survey findings show that most students comprehend what a healthy relationship ‘looks like’ and ‘feels like’, as illustrated in Figure 28. As such, in this instances post-survey results, although showing a small increase in understanding, do not show a dramatic shift.
It is also important to note that the results suggest that there appears to be a small group of students who lack a ‘relationship compass’ and who show no shift in levels of awareness. Gender may be one explanation for this. For example, Figure 29 shows female students are far less unsure in post-surveys and to view that feeling pressured to have sex is a sign of an ‘unhealthy’ relationship. On the other hand, the proportion of male students who view it as a sign of a ‘healthy’ relationship has in fact increased and the proportion that were ‘unsure’ remains unchanged.

Note: Total percentages do not equal 100% as some students did not answer the question.

The gender differences once again provide evidence that in going forward the program could benefit from consideration of ways to improve the delivery towards male students.

Notwithstanding some of the complexities around delivering a program such as this to male students, findings on the whole show a positive result. As Figures 30 to 33 demonstrate, there were many instances where post-survey findings show a substantial decrease (between 8-12%) in the proportion of students who indicated they were ‘not sure’ if the statements presented to them reflected a healthy or unhealthy relationship.

---

**Figure 29**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhealthy</td>
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<td></td>
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</table>

**Figure 30**

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healthy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhealthy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Evaluation Methods and Findings**
These findings are particularly significant when we consider that in Figure 30, the number of respondents who were unsure has dropped by almost a quarter and in Figure 31 above, the number of respondents who were unsure has reduced by approximately 40%.

In Figures 32, and 33 on the following page, we see a reduction of about a third in the number of students who were ‘not sure’ if the statements reflected an ‘unhealthy’ relationship.
The following Figures provide some insight into the success of the project in shifting student attitudes on ‘healthy’ relationships. The findings in Figure 34 show once again a decrease in the proportion of students who were ‘unsure’ and an increase of 12%, or a third, in the number of respondents who ‘strongly agree’ that in a healthy relationship you don’t feel frightened to disagree.

The findings in Figure 35 once again highlight the complexities that exist around intimate relationships. Whilst the number of respondents who ‘disagree’ has doubled and there is an increase of 80% in students who ‘strongly disagree’ that jealousy equates to love. Moreover of those not sure there has been a 12% reduction in those that are ‘not sure’.
When looked at by gender post-survey results show there is in fact a small increase of 3% in female students who are ‘not sure’. It is not possible to draw definitive conclusions here but the results may be because those who ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ in pre-surveys are now less certain.

### 6.5 INCREASED HELP SEEKING BEHAVIOURS

Help seeking behaviour implicitly involves an individual coming forward to tell their story and describe to someone else their experience of violence. The significance in doing so cannot be overstated. In disclosing a personal experience of violence the person can gain a sense of validation, acceptance and relief that they no longer have to deal with it alone. Disclosure also presents an opportunity to provide information on the services and supports available to people experiencing family and domestic violence and dating violence.

The awareness raising about family and domestic violence among the student body, through school presentations and the Peer Educators initiatives, resulted in a number of disclosures.

As described in the previous section, out of the 50 expressions of interest from students wishing to be Peer Educators, almost half disclosed an experience of family and domestic violence.

Staff from the student support team of Coodanup Community College also reported an increase in disclosures, with approximately 15 students disclosing for the first time. In some instances these included students who were already receiving individual support and counseling for other issues such as eating disorders and self harming.

At the time the evaluation was conducted 5 of the Peer Educators (3 from one school and 2 from the other) had been approached by students wanting information about family and domestic violence.

Linked to disclosure are attitudes about the ‘private’ nature of family and domestic violence and the ‘shame’ that victims of violence can feel. In raising awareness about family and domestic violence and teen dating violence, a key aspect of the project was to encourage students that it is alright to ‘speak up’ and to dispel the belief that it should remain a private issue.
The findings in Figure 36 above show the project was generally successful in changing student’s views with just under 50% increase in the number of the students indicating they ‘disagree’ and over 50% in those who ‘strongly disagree’ that family and domestic violence are private family matters.

### 6.6 Peer Educator and Peer Educator Support Feedback

**I think that the camp was a great opportunity to realise the different types of violence and abuse that actually goes on. I understand better now the role of being a Peer Educator and I think it will be fun doing the creative side of the project.** (Peer Educator)

**This was a great camp and they should do this again. I feel confident to become a Peer Educator.** (Peer Educator)

The training was great. Thank you, so much... have another camp to discuss what we have done and stuff since this camp. (Peer Educator)

Peer Educators and Peer Educator Support students provided feedback on the training they received through surveys. Findings from the 31 feedback surveys received are very positive.

**Increased knowledge**

There were 87% of respondents indicating that they ‘strongly agreed’ and the remainder ‘agreeing’ to the statement that the training ‘really helped them understand the issues around domestic and dating violence’.

All the participants indicated that they had increased their knowledge about family and domestic violence and teen dating violence through the training. Between 68-77% of respondents ‘strongly agreed’ that the training had taught them about the importance of confidentiality; how a healthy relationship works; the use of power in relationships; the services and supports available; and the importance of looking after yourself and having someone to trust. Once again the remaining respondents indicated they ‘agreed’ to those statements.

The findings show participants felt they understood their role and were confident in terms of the roles and activities they would be undertaking as Peer Educators and Peer Educator Support teams. However, unsurprisingly the findings also show that continued and ongoing work on this aspect of training is beneficial as fewer respondents (63% and 58% respectively) stated that they ‘strongly agreed’ the training gave them a clear idea about what their role entailed and that the training made them completely clear about the need to set boundaries and to know their own limits. While only 57% stated they ‘strongly agreed’ that they felt confident about their respective roles. One student indicated ambivalence to the latter two questions.

Comments from the Peer Educator Support students who had had experiences of domestic or dating violence illustrate on a personal level the real value they received from the training.

... learnt so much. Thank you.

I am really glad I got to participate in this. It has really opened my eyes and I realise how many people do get affected by this. Thank you very much.
Thank you. This helped to understand I have been through a lot and this made me understand what to do.

**New Skills**

The camp was great, I had a lot of fun and learnt a lot of new skills and made a lot of new friends. (Peer Educator)

Skills development was also an aim of the training of Peer Educators. Comments and survey responses give a clear indication that the training met this aim with 71% ‘strongly agreeing’ and 24% ‘agreeing’ that the training also provided them with the skills needed to talk with people. Focus groups with Peer Educators reinforce these findings with groups identifying that they had gained skills in

- Leadership
- Public Speaking
- Listening
- Understanding/ empathy
- Knowing boundaries

**Training Content and Delivery**

I think we should have more fun activities and finish the lectures at 9.00pm. And have at least 1 1/2 hours of free time a day... (Peer Educator)

The camp was good and I learnt a lot but I think there should be more physical activity. (Peer Educator)

I think this camp was very successful... But the talks got a bit boring... but we all learnt a lot. I think they can put more breaks in. But I had a lot of fun. (Peer Educator)

Participants’ responses to the survey show although the training programs were well received, opportunities exist for making improvements in the delivery of the training program. With just 50% and 58% respectively indicating they ‘strongly agree’ the information was ‘easy to understand’ and that instructions were clear and made it easy to participate. All other responses showed they ‘agreed’ to the statements.

Whilst the responses remain positive, a particular area for improvement may lie in developing the training program to reduce the complexity of the material being delivered to the participants. Linked to this, the quotes given above suggest that adequate ‘down time’ must be incorporated into the camps especially given the weightiness of the training content.

**Personal Development**

You feel good about yourself because you know that you are helping other people. (Peer Educator)

Confidence to speak with other people... putting information out there and feeling more confident personally. (Peer Educator)

That you have choices in a relationship. (Peer Educator)

Discussions with Peer Educators revealed that participation in the program had been a personally fulfilling experience and that they felt they had personally grown through being part of the project.

Many simply stated it had been fun and that they had enjoyed it. However, some were able to express they had gained a deeper value from the project as shown in the quotes above.

### 6.7 LINKS AND PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

The project aimed to link students and teachers with supports and services and to form effective partnerships between schools and service providers working with people who are or have experienced domestic or dating violence.

Students and Teachers were asked in the pre-survey to name the services and supports they knew of that could assist people experiencing domestic and/or dating violence. Almost half of the student respondents did not answer the question or indicated that they did not know any. The most common service identified by students and teaching staff was the police followed by telephone help lines; students particularly noted the Kids Helpline. About half of the teachers also named a range of community services in their area including Red Cross, Anglicare, Relationships Australia mediation services, Crisis Care, women’s refuges and youth centers. In the case of students who responded, many said they would go to family and friends.

The responses above highlight the benefit of increasing links with services that specifically work in the area of family and domestic violence and dating violence.

The project worked successfully to begin developing links and partnerships between participating schools and locally based support services for family and domestic violence and dating violence. The formation of better links is a step towards increasing knowledge about the support that is available among staff and students, consolidating referral pathways and sharing the expertise of service providers with school staff.
Initial meetings were held with school staff and the Regional Coordinated Response to Family and Domestic Violence Groups in their school district; as key groups, incorporating a range of services and agencies working in the sector, they provide the benefit of a central point of contact for schools.

As a follow up to the introductory meetings a service guide for each school detailing available organisations, their services and contact details was developed by the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) and issued to each school.

Service providers, namely representatives from Legal Aid, Sexual Assault Resource Centre, Peel Regional Family Violence Committee and the Women’s Refuges collaborated with the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) and Family and Domestic Violence Unit in the delivery of the Peer Educator Training and the Peer Support Training. In addition, representatives from the Peel Regional Family Violence Committee and Armadale Domestic Violence Intervention Project also played a significant role in supporting Peer Educators in the implementation of their awareness raising activities. Further collaborative work is planned with service providers participating in awareness raising events in schools.

Whilst linking into services is important, improving student’s knowledge about the types of support available and their confidence in seeking them out is vital. The evaluation therefore aimed to gain some small insight into students’ attitudes about seeking assistance from service providers. In Figure 37 following, it is interesting to note that around 20% of students in pre-surveys ‘agreed’ that going to service providers would not help and 50% felt ‘unsure’. In post-surveys there was a reduction of 20% in the number who were ‘unsure’. Significantly those indicating they ‘strongly disagreed’ more than doubled as such showing more students are more receptive to seeking support through service providers than previously.

Figure 37
6.8 FEEDBACK FROM SCHOOL STAFF

To commence the project school staff were issued with a comprehensive survey, similar to the student survey to fill in. The findings from the survey show that on the whole staff have a good grasp of the issues and are well informed around the issues surrounding family and domestic violence and dating violence. Generally there was also strong support in favour of schools being an appropriate place to educate young people about domestic and dating violence. As depicted in the Figure below where approximately 70% of respondents ‘disagree’ or ‘strongly disagree’ with the statement that ‘school is not the place to be dealing’ with such issues.

To gain feedback from participating schools, general teaching staff were invited to provide feedback on the pilot project through surveys. Staff from School Support Services, who worked more closely with the projects in the schools, were invited to provide input through email or interviews. Feedback from the 15 surveys returned and three interviews / emails with Student Services generally showed a positive response to the program.

Project delivery

Feedback on delivery of the project was positive. Those who provided feedback commented on the following:

- The positive impact of having people who students could relate to involved in the school presentations.
- The careful and well managed selection of Peer Educators.
- The appropriateness of the information and emphasis of the material.
- The good quality of support and delivery of the project.

Value of the project

Views on what overall value the school gained from the project included an increase in awareness about domestic and dating violence among the whole school and a greater knowledge about the services available. The following quotes from surveys provide examples of some of the responses:

- *The students are more aware of the issues related to DV.*
- *The staff know the organisations to go for help.*
- *Strengthening and promoting the issues... Awareness with the students which will hopefully prevent domestic violence and dating violence.*
- *Bringing the issue to the attention to all... students involved in the project will provide a valued service to the students in our school... Students [are] often more inclined to talk to other students rather than teachers.*
Feedback on what students gained from being part of the project also identified the main impact was a raising in awareness; although a few did not feel there had been any value or were unsure. Some comments from teachers are given below.

They have been sensitised to the fact that teenage and DV is widespread and is best resolved by peers – students influence and talk to each other.

Moderate awareness

Empowerment to help peers; knowing that domestic violence is not O.K.

I believe the students involved in this project now realise how lucky they are to have been given this responsibility and that some people aren’t as lucky...

Issues
It was evident that time and curriculum demands on teachers can impact on the priority given to initiatives such as this pilot project. To ensure the project is implemented effectively a strong level of support is required from project partners outside schools.

One suggestion to improve support in schools would be to provide a ‘back to school package’ for Peer Educators after training workshops with easy to follow steps for students to create awareness activities. This would reduce the time required from teaching staff to help organise and plan awareness projects in schools.

Areas for Improvement
Feedback from staff indicates that there is room to improve the implementation of the project in schools. This was clearly shown in the following response to what the weaknesses and strengths of the project are.

S = increased awareness
W = Inadequate application

Communication: A number of comments speak directly to a lack of information and communication about the project across the school. For example, one staff member commented that they could not identify weaknesses or strengths because

I can't tell if I can't actually know what the kids did on the camp or are actually doing at school?

Other comments included

Most the students and staff don't know it exists. Despite a brief announcement at an assembly.

I think it is a valuable idea but all it consists of at the moment is some kids hanging out in an empty room. No counselling or help is going on.

As already stated the evaluation was conducted before the end of the project, in particular in Coodanup Community College, and as such may have some bearing on the sentiments expressed above. However improved promotion of the project and an ongoing schedule of events and communication to staff about planned events and activities could go some way to meeting any concerns staff might have about the project.

Extended Peer Educator training opportunities:
Student Services staff see there may be a benefit in offering the Peer Educator opportunity to more students. It was suggested that different training modules be developed with different versions for different student groups and aspects of family and domestic violence and teen dating violence. It was noted that it would need to be done in a manner that reduces the disruption to the school schedule.

It was suggested that there could be some benefit in integrating the training into other programs and areas of the curriculum.

6.9 PROJECT STAFF REFLECTIONS

The project officers from the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) and Family and Domestic Violence Unit referred to as ‘Project Staff’ were invited to give feedback on the program and to add their thoughts on the process. The following offers a summary of this input to the evaluation.

Contacting schools
It was first envisaged that more than two schools would participate in the pilot project. Reflecting on the limited number of schools that eventually participated in the program, the Project Staff viewed there is a need to think more strategically about the recruitment of schools in future projects.

This pilot project relied on the Department of Education to make the initial contact with the schools via District Offices; which then emailed the information to schools. As such Project Staff did not have an opportunity to actively promote the program to schools or to introduce themselves. If this had been done schools may have gained a better understanding of who would be conducting the program and what it would cover. This more ‘hands on’ approach may have put any concerns to rest and encouraged more schools to become involved.
The Project Staff believe that building a stronger relationship between themselves and District Offices from the outset would be of benefit to the recruitment stages of the program. Further strategies might include the distribution of an Education Department approved ‘promotional pack’ to schools by the Project Staff.

**Working with schools**

Ongoing contact with the schools during the life of the program relied on the liaison between the Project Staff and one nominated contact person at each school. The Project Staff believe this presents limits in relation to the communication of the program across the wider school community. They felt that communication could be improved by building more formal communication lines with a team of designated school staff such as school Education Support Teams. This would provide a number of benefits including:

- an increase in the number of people directly involved in the program;
- a greater sharing of the work load associated with program; and
- a wider base upon which to develop more effective school wide communication.

**Supporting schools**

The Project Staff report that the different approaches taken by the participating schools in relation to the manner in which meetings for Peer Educators were arranged had an impact on the capacity to offer support to the schools.

The Project Staff aim to provide ongoing support and sustained motivation to the Peer Educators through attendance at their regular meetings. How effectively this works relies on the schools ability to set up a scheduled calendar of meetings.

One school made the decision to allow the Peer Educators to meet during designated non-core class time. This meant that meetings were held regularly and that the Project Staff were able to plan ahead to be there. The other school left it to the students to meet during lunch hour and as such meetings were often ‘impromptu’ and less regular. The result meant they did not get the same level of support from the Project Staff.

**Tailoring the program to students**

School feedback to Project Staff highlighted that the pre-evaluation survey was not easy to complete for some students due to variations in literacy levels. In response the post-evaluation survey was shortened however, the language remained largely unchanged. It was felt that it would be beneficial to discuss this with schools at the outset in order to develop surveys which take into account literacy levels.

**Camp strengths**

The Project Staff felt that the camps were made more effective because the teachers involved participated at the same levels as students. They feel this was important to the students and to the team building work that was carried out in the camp. Full participation also added to the teachers’ experience of the camp.

The camp benefited from the diversity of specialists in family and domestic violence and dating violence that joined as partners in the program at camp.

**Peer Educator support Group**

Project Staff found a strength of the program was the ability to be flexible enough to alter the Peer Educator program to provide and information and education to people who had experience of family and domestic violence. This was seen to be an invaluable, unexpected addition to the pilot project.
At the time of reporting the pilot project was still in progress in the schools. Schools were asked if they had any plans for continuing with the program and how they might do so.

Cecil Andrews Senior High School reports they are very interested in continuing the Peer Education Project next year. Using the Peer Educators they intend to carry on raising awareness about domestic and dating violence. At the centre of next year’s awareness raising activities will be a booklet that the Peer Educators are currently working on which is about domestic and dating violence and its impact on young people in the Gosnells/Armadale area. This booklet will be published early next year. It will then be promoted within the school and perhaps to other schools and be used as a resource to raise awareness about domestic and dating violence.

Coodanup Community College have also indicated that they are interested in continuing to expand upon the Peer Education approach and to incorporate information about bullying into the domestic and dating violence awareness raising.
8. **BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Appendix 1

Dear student,

The Domestic and Dating Violence Peer Education Project will be running in your school this year. The project involves students from years 9, 10, and 11 being trained as Peer Educators to conduct activities that raise awareness about family and domestic violence and teen dating violence to the rest of the school body. Peer Educators will be trained in the following areas during a free three day camp at the end of first term.

- Family and domestic violence and teen dating violence
- Presentation and facilitation skills
- How to support your peers – dealing with disclosures
- Importance of confidentiality
- Leadership and working in teams
- Evaluation

Some of the benefits of this project for Peer Educators include improvements in self-confidence, communication and presentation skills, advanced knowledge in the area of family and domestic violence and teen dating violence, the development of leadership skills and demonstrated ability to work in teams (all of which look great on a resume!!).

Benefits of this project to your peer group and the community are an increased awareness of family and domestic violence and teen dating violence, the impacts that it can have upon an individual and their family, and knowledge of available support services for victims. This is important as it will provide young people with the knowledge and skills to make informed and healthy choices about their relationships and dating partners. Similarly, for people already experiencing violence the project will provide them with information about support services and resources that can help them exit an unhealthy relationship.

If you have any questions about the project you can contact Nicole at the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) on 9420 7264 or project@womenscouncil.com.au

If you think that you might like to become a Peer Educator in this project please complete the section below and hand it to [fill in blank] in the [department name].

Name: ____________________________________________

Age: ____________________________________________

Year: ____________________________________________

Form group: ______________________________________

Contact phone number/s: ___________________________

Email address: ___________________________________
Interview/screening outline

Values/Qualities we are looking for:

- Communications skills
- Enthusiasm in the project (commitment)
- Recognition of the importance of prevention
- Recognition of the importance of eliminating family and domestic violence
- Team work skills
- Creativity/innovation
- Confidence

Interview schedule:

Why do you want to be involved in the project?

How do you feel about public speaking?

Can you tell me about an example of when you have had to work in a team or group?

Have you told your parents about this project? How supportive do you think they will be?

Why do you think awareness raising about Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence is important?

As a Peer Educator what do you think would be some ways that you could inform your peers about Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence?

Interviewer comments:

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Appendix 1

Adapted from the Keep Safe Stay Cool project in South Australia and the Respect, Protect, Connect Program in Victoria.
Appendix 2

Student Survey

1. Age _________
2. Gender: Female / Male (Circle the correct answer)
3. In your words can you tell us what you think Family and Domestic Violence mean?
   ___________________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________________
4. In your words can you tell us what you think Dating Violence means?
   ___________________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________________________________
Could you please indicate if you think the following statements are ‘True’ or ‘False’ by putting a circle around the answer you think is correct.

5. Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence only involve physical abuse. True False
6. Destroying personal possessions and property is a form of Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence. True False
7. Threatening to physically hurt a partner or family member is a form of Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence. True False
8. Continually yelling at a partner is a form of Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence. True False
9. Name calling and put downs are a form of Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence. True False
10. Controlling the money in the home and not sharing it with a partner is a form of Family and Domestic Violence. True False
11. Telling a partner who they can see and what they should wear are forms of Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence. True False
12. A woman cannot be raped by someone she is married to or going out with. True False
13. Teen Dating Violence and Family and Domestic Violence have a lot in common. True False
14. Family and Domestic Violence only happen when people live together. True False
15. Family and Domestic Violence only occur in male/female relationships. True False
16. Violence hardly ever occurs between teenagers who are dating. True False
17. Only females are victims of Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence. True False
Would you consider the following behaviours to be a sign of a healthy or unhealthy relationship? Please circle your answer.

18. You feel pressured by them to have sex.
   - Healthy Relationship
   - Not Sure
   - Unhealthy Relationship

19. Their jealousy stops you from spending time with your friends and family.
   - Healthy Relationship
   - Not Sure
   - Unhealthy Relationship

20. They make you feel that nothing you do is ever good enough.
   - Healthy Relationship
   - Not Sure
   - Unhealthy Relationship

21. You feel safe with them.
   - Healthy Relationship
   - Not Sure
   - Unhealthy Relationship

22. You feel that if you break up with them they may hurt themselves.
   - Healthy Relationship
   - Not Sure
   - Unhealthy Relationship

Rate how much you agree or disagree with the statements listed below on a scale of 1-5 by circling the answer that best describes your views.

23. Women who flirt with other people when they are out with their partner are asking for trouble from their partner.
   - 1 Strongly Agree
   - 2 Agree
   - 3 Not Sure
   - 4 Disagree
   - 5 Strongly Disagree

24. A person being abused by their partner must have done something to cause it.
   - 1 Strongly Agree
   - 2 Agree
   - 3 Not Sure
   - 4 Disagree
   - 5 Strongly Disagree

25. When a man gets really jealous it is really showing how much he loves his partner.
   - 1 Strongly Agree
   - 2 Agree
   - 3 Not Sure
   - 4 Disagree
   - 5 Strongly Disagree

26. A person on drugs and alcohol is not really responsible when they abuse their partner.
   - 1 Strongly Agree
   - 2 Agree
   - 3 Not Sure
   - 4 Disagree
   - 5 Strongly Disagree

27. I hate to say it, if you stay with someone who abuses you, you basically deserve what you get.
   - 1 Strongly Agree
   - 2 Agree
   - 3 Not Sure
   - 4 Disagree
   - 5 Strongly Disagree

28. It’s understandable when a man gets angry if their partner refuses to sleep with them.
   - 1 Strongly Agree
   - 2 Agree
   - 3 Not Sure
   - 4 Disagree
   - 5 Strongly Disagree
29. It's easy for the victim of Family and Domestic Violence to leave a relationship.

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30. Males have the right to keep their partner under control.

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31. Family and Domestic Violence are private family matters.

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32. I can't see how community services can help people experiencing Family and Domestic Violence or Teen Dating Violence.

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33. Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence are justified when a person argues or refuses to obey their partner.

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34. Family and Domestic Violence and Teen Dating Violence are justified when a person is constantly nagging, name calling or annoying their partner.

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35. If the violent person is sorry for what they have done then they should be excused.

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36. In a healthy relationship you don't feel frightened when you disagree with your partner.

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37. In a healthy relationship there is always one person who should be the decision maker.

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38. Can you name any services or places (in your local area or outside it) where people can get help if they have experienced Family and Domestic Violence, Dating Violence or Rape?