



**Men's
Referral
Service**
A service of NTV

*Service Hours: 12 Midday to 9pm Monday to Friday
Service Line: 9428 2899 (Metro Melbourne)
or 1800 065 973 (Regional Victoria)*

NTV - NO TO VIOLENCE

Male Family Violence Prevention Association Inc.

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DB:MC

Ms Jackie Morris
Committee Secretary
Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee
Department of the Senate
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Via email: legcon.sen@aph.gov.au

10 August, 2007

Dear Ms Morris

NTV – No To Violence, the Male Family Violence Prevention Association, is the Victorian statewide peak body of organisations and individuals working with men to end their violence and abuse against family members.

NTV members come from a wide range of professional and community backgrounds and work in a range of settings including government, community based settings as well as private practice.

Activities of members include providing male family violence men's behaviour change programs, counselling services to men and their families, as well as educational activities within the broader community directed at preventing male family violence.

In working to prevent male family violence, NTV resources service providers through training and professional development services, service and educational resources, research and policy development and sector advocacy.

NTV also provides a statewide male family violence telephone counselling, information and referral service – the Men's Referral Service. The Men's Referral Service operates as the central point of contact for men in Victoria who are making their first moves towards taking responsibility for their violent and abusive behaviour. The service also receives calls from women seeking assistance on behalf of their partners, male family members or friends, as well as from agencies seeking assistance for their male clients.

No To Violence Male Family Violence Prevention Association supports a proactive response to the prevention of violence, abuse and neglect, and a focus on the historically neglected and hidden disadvantage of Indigenous Australians. However, NTV is concerned that responses to violence and abuse in Indigenous communities must be in keeping with best practice and direction from experts in the field. Any response to family violence including child abuse must be aligned with recognised human rights obligations.

NTV is most concerned that the lack of consultation with members of the Indigenous communities and represents an approach that describes a people who are unable to help or support themselves without others' intervention. As has been demonstrated time and again, Indigenous people have always been at a distinct disadvantage in comparison with mainstream society in terms of access to opportunity, education, health care, employment and support services.

NTV does not believe that measures contained in the Northern Territory Emergency Response Bills Package will ultimately reduce – or end – violence towards Indigenous family members, including children. Research and evidence clearly demonstrates that men who use violence towards family members require a sophisticated response that invites them to consider the impact of their behaviour and support to change. Importantly, it is superfluous to use power to stop others using power. The plan to use force has, historically, not ultimately stopped others using force.

NTV recommends consultation with workers and academics who demonstrate clear, evidence-based and principled responses to these issues. Furthermore, NTV recommends significant consultation and adherence to the recommendations of the *Little Children Are Sacred* report – the first recommendation of which was for law makers and Indigenous leaders to work together to address violence and abuse.

NTV is currently repackaging our primary training program, the Graduate Certificate in Social Science (Male Family Violence), in partnership with Swinburne University of Technology, specifically for workers in Indigenous communities. The training, including principles, philosophies and approaches, are gleaned from a range of workers and academics who demonstrate significant expertise in this very field. The program uses the foundations of community development approaches to empower and provide skills for members of communities, rather than imposing responses from outside. It is vital that members of Indigenous communities across Australia have access to training and support so that they can then in turn support their own communities in a proactive, safe and responsible manner.

NTV would be pleased to provide more advice regarding training and program development for workers in Indigenous communities.

Yours sincerely,

Danny Blay
Manager