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DISCUSSION PAPER
Family Violence and Social Security Law Issues Paper Submission

To Whom It May Concern:

We are pleased to have the opportunity to make comment on the Discussion Paper released by the Australian Law Reform Commission on Family Violence and Social Security.

WEAVE (Inc) Convenor, Dr Elspeth McInnes AM, would be available to provide oral evidence or offer any other information as requested.

Yours sincerely,

Marie Hume
Secretary
WEAVE Inc



Women Everywhere Advocating Violence Elimination Inc (Australia)

Women Everywhere Advocating Violence Elimination Inc (WEAVE Inc), formed in 2009, is a National Women's Alliance that aims to eliminate gendered violence (including sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation and trafficking). As a non-partisan coalition WEAVE Inc brings together groupings that have sometimes worked separately from one another, such as sexual assault services, women's health services, women's legal services, domestic and family violence services, and organisations working against trafficking. In drawing together key stakeholders that make up the 'violence against women sector' as well as survivors, and activist and interest groups, WEAVE embeds a wealth and diversity of experience and expertise within a single body.

WEAVE Inc Vision

To ensure that all women and children are able to live free from all forms of violence and abuse.

WEAVE Inc Values and Principles

HUMAN RIGHTS

WEAVE Inc employs a human rights framework that recognises that gendered violence is one of the most serious and widespread violations of fundamental human rights, in particular, the right not to be treated in an inhuman and degrading way, the rights to respect, physical, sexual and psychological integrity.

FEMINIST FRAMEWORK

WEAVE Inc works within a feminist framework that recognises that gendered violence is both a consequence and cause of gender inequity, embedded deeply within all levels of our society, and that efforts to end such violence must be accountable to women and promote women's empowerment and gender equality.

EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSIVITY

WEAVE Inc is committed to representing and working respectfully with the diversity of women in Australia. WEAVE Inc recognises, and seeks to advocate and lobby for, the particular and urgent needs of Indigenous women, women from immigrant, refugee and/or non-English speaking backgrounds, women with disabilities, as well

as the challenges faced by young women, older women and women in rural and remote areas.

WEAVE Objectives

- (a) To provide leadership and advocacy at state and national levels in relation to all aspects of gendered violence.
- (b) To bring together in a single body the key stakeholders concerned with all aspects of gendered violence in order to access and disseminate the wealth and diversity of knowledge within the sector as a whole.
- (c) To contribute to and monitor policies, legislation and programs which impact on women and children experiencing gendered violence.
- (d) To promote and prioritise equity of access to services for all women including Aboriginal women, Torres Strait Islander women, women from immigrant, refugee and/or non-English speaking background, women in rural and isolated areas, older women, young women and women with disabilities.
- (e) To promote greater community awareness of gendered violence and its personal and social consequences using community development and educational strategies.
- (f) To build and promote alliances and collaborative relationships with other key stakeholders and networks.
- (g) To promote, further develop and disseminate 'cutting edge' knowledge of gendered violence arising from practice, research, community and activism.
- (h) To connect with international developments in advocacy, research and practice concerning gendered violence.

Question 1 Should the *Social Security Act 1991* (Cth) and/or the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* (Cth) be amended to insert a definition of ‘family violence’ consistent with that recommended by the ALRC/NSWLRC in *Family Violence—A National Legal Response* (ALRC Report 114)?

Yes.

Question 2 In what circumstances should Centrelink staff be required to inquire about the existence of family violence when dealing with Centrelink customers?

Question 3 Should Centrelink application forms (including electronic forms), correspondence and telephone prompts directly seek information about family violence? For example, should a question about family violence be included on all forms?

Question 4 Where family violence is disclosed or identified, do Centrelink staff notify victims effectively about eligibility criteria for payments and exemptions, including any corresponding exemptions and requirements for child support?

There should be

- (a) clear legible information provided to all Centrelink clients about domestic and family violence relating to (1) exemption from income support activity requirements arising from family and domestic violence (Section 502 C of the Social Security Act 1991) (2) Crisis payment eligibility (3) exemption from Maintenance Action Test arising from family and domestic violence.
- (b) Information relating to domestic and family violence should also clearly describe any adverse consequences of disclosure of family violence such as becoming subject to involuntary income management. The application of involuntary income management to people who disclose domestic and family violence will deter many victims from disclosing, however victims must be given clear information of the consequences of disclosing before they disclose. Asking people to disclose domestic and family violence and then imposing involuntary income management is entrapment and a violation of natural justice processes. Currently clients are routinely given NO information about family and domestic violence. Many victims are treated with skepticism and trivialization when they do disclose.
- (c) All interaction with Centrelink should include a routinized question about whether the person has any current concerns for their own safety or the safety of members of their household. If a person expresses a concern the Centrelink staff person should (1) ask if they would like them to notify any agency such as Police that they need help (2) offer to provide specific information about how family and domestic violence circumstances potentially affects their interaction with Centrelink and the Child Support Agency (3) offer to arrange appointments with a Centrelink social worker to arrange exemptions and other needs.

Question 5 In what circumstances, if any, should information about family violence be shared between Centrelink and other government agencies, such as the Child Support Agency? Information should only be shared between government agencies with the informed consent of the victim. Part of properly engaging with a victim of domestic and family violence should be to determine whether child support is relevant and to offer to provide the information to the Child Support Agency on the client’s behalf. There is a risk that clients’ domestic and family violence

experience may become a matter of 'office gossip' if there are no limits around information sharing.

Question 6 How does Centrelink collect information about family violence when it is identified?

Centrelink staff routinely display a high level of skepticism and discounting of family violence. Best practice responses to domestic and family violence are to accept the disclosure of the victim as the primary record of what is occurring. The normal response of Centrelink is to demand 'proof'. This means that disbelief is the default response of Centrelink. Disbelief of victim disclosure has been shown to be a highly significant adverse factor in the help-seeking behavior and recovery of victims. Victims are often told by their perpetrator that nobody will believe them. Centrelink responses verify the perpetrator's claim to the victim.

The Personal Safety Survey (ABS 2006) found that only 36% of women who experienced physical assault by a male perpetrator reported it to the police in 2005. This means that reliance on Police reports and domestic violence orders is likely to exclude two-thirds of victims from being believed by Centrelink. Some victims have taken their domestic violence case worker with them to Centrelink to verify their situation where the worker is available and willing to attend. Most do not have this luxury. The best form of verification is for Centrelink to take careful records of the victim's disclosures and to work with the victim to identify possible sources of verification. Where there is no independent verification, the victim must be given the benefit of the doubt.

Another important aspect is to provide clear information to clients about the types of verification needed to support claims of family and domestic violence. If Centrelink requires a victim to have a domestic violence order before they can seek help and be believed then this should be widely publicized so that victims know what they have to do to access help.

Question 7 Are Centrelink staff and social workers able to access information about persons who have identified themselves as a victim of family violence as to whether they have obtained a protection order or similar? Should Centrelink staff and social workers be able to access the national register recommended in *Family Violence—A National Legal Response*, Report 114 (2010)?

Where a person has obtained a protection order, and it is recorded on a national register, Centrelink staff should be able to access those details with the informed consent of the victim.

Question 8 In practice, is the possibility of family violence considered by Centrelink staff before deciding to interview a partner or a parent?

No.

Question 9 When contact with a partner or a parent is not appropriate due to the possibility of family violence, on what information should family violence be assessed?

The best source of information about family and domestic violence is from the victim. Family violence normally takes place behind closed doors and away from the public gaze. Perpetrators normally lie about their violence and deny, trivialize and/or blame the victim for it. Police, health and social work professionals who work with the victim rely on the victim for information about what has happened so engaging with a third party serves only to (1) provide another source to repeat what the victim has said (2) disempower the victim as a potential liar who is not an adequate source of information about what has happened to them. It should be noted that fantasists who are inventing stories are rarely able to be consistent over time in their account whereas people's accounts of traumatic events are consistent over time. A simple verification process may be to ask the victim to again detail what has happened at another point in time – say 2 weeks after the original disclosure. If there are major inconsistencies in the account, the person may be required to attend an interview to provide further information. It is also worth noting that there is no evidence that family and domestic violence fraud is a

widespread Centrelink rort. In other words there is no evidentiary basis to believe that Centrelink clients or members of the public sit about planning how to engage in domestic and family violence fraud against Centrelink. This being the case, the inability of Centrelink to accept a victim's account of violence against them at face value, points to a systemic gendered abuse of victims of violence, given that the vast majority of victims are women.

Question 10 Are Centrelink customers aware that Centrelink may decide not to contact partners or parents if the customer is a victim of family violence?

Centrelink customers are routinely given no information about domestic and family violence or information about what Centrelink does with their disclosures.

Question 11 In practice, do decision makers adequately consider the existence of family violence when making determinations about eligibility criteria or exemptions for certain social security payments? No. There is no evidence of any routinized attention to domestic or family violence. Some pre-existing assumptions which may be wrongly made include:

- Victims invent domestic and family violence
- Men and women are equally violent
- Victims provoke attacks upon themselves
- The violence stops once a couple separates
- Violence is 'normal' at separation
- Victims recover quickly from violence and abuse
- Men who are violent to women are not violent to their children

These wrong assumptions are partially due to the limit of 26 weeks as the supposed statutory duration of the effects of violence in Centrelink eligibility criteria, the requirement that the couple have separated, the social acceptance of 'shared parenting' by violence perpetrators and the routine disbelief applied to domestic violence disclosures.

Question 12 Should the criteria in s 4 of *Social Security Act 1991* (Cth) for determining whether a person is a 'member of a couple' be amended clearly to take into account the existence and effect of family violence?

Yes.

Question 13 Should further guidance be provided in the *Guide to Social Security Law* about the implications of family violence under the criteria in s 4 of the *Social Security Act 1991* (Cth)?

Yes.

Question 14 In practice, is family violence adequately considered in determining separation under one roof? If not, how should family violence be taken into consideration?

If violence is considered at all, wrong assumptions may be applied as per question 11. The clearest guide to the existence and scope of violence is the victim. The victim's account should be accepted in the absence of contradiction.

Question 15 When contact with a partner is not appropriate due to family violence, how should family violence be assessed?

The victim's account is the best guide to what has been occurring. Family violence should be assessed on the victim's disclosures and on the accounts of service providers or witnesses nominated by the victim.

Question 16 In practice, is family violence adequately taken into consideration in the exercise of the discretion under s 24 of the *Social Security Act* not to treat a person as a member of a couple?

No. This should be made explicit.

Question 17 Should the ‘special reason’ discretion in s 24 of the *Social Security Act* be amended expressly to require the existence and effects of family violence to be taken into account? Would this amendment be required if s 4 is amended in this way?

Yes. Make it explicit in both sections.

Question 18 What, if any, further guidance should be provided in the *Guide to Social Security Law* in relation to exercising the discretion under s 24 to take into account the existence and effect of family violence?

The decision-maker should have direction to give safety the highest value in competing considerations and to directly take account of the victim’s specific circumstances and expressed needs.

Question 19 In what ways might access to Youth Allowance, Disability Support Pension and Pensioner Education Supplement be improved for victims who have left their home because of family violence? For example, does the criterion for a person to be considered ‘independent’ adequately take into account the existence of family violence? Should family violence be expressly referred to in this context?

Yes family violence and child abuse should both be specifically named in the context of family breakdown.

Question 20 In practice, is the possibility of family violence considered by Centrelink staff before deciding to contact a parent?

The Centrelink staff response is highly variable depending on whether the staff member carries a belief that young people make up family conflict to rot the system, or a belief that young people can be victims of violent parents. There is no systemic approach.

Question 21 When contact with a young person’s parent is not appropriate, due to the possibility of family violence, how should claims about family violence be assessed?

The victim’s account always provides the best guide to what has occurred. The victim may be able to nominate witnesses or corroborating records, however their statements and disclosures about their circumstances need to be accepted at face value.

Question 22 In what ways, if any, should the *Guide to Social Security Law* be amended in relation to the ‘continuous support’ criteria to improve the safety of victims of family violence? For example, should specific provisions be made for victims of family violence who need to supply asset and income details from a parent?

It has always been unreasonable for young people to provide details of their parents’ asset and income details as these can only be accessed with the consent of the parent. The young person cannot independently verify their parents’ information and yet they will be financially responsible for any discrepancy. The system should ordinarily inform the parents that a claim has been made and that they will need to provide income and assets information to support that claim. Young people subject to parental violence or abuse should be deemed independent. Parents’ income and asset details provision should be the responsibility of parents. The term ‘continuous support’ should be qualified as ‘continuous financial support exceeding the weekly payment rate’.

Question 23 Should the requirement of parental consent for a person under 18 years of age to be paid directly be waived for victims who have left home because of family violence?

Yes.

Question 24 Do the provisions regarding the requirement for original proof of identity documents and tax file numbers create barriers for victims of family violence? Should further measures be put in place to ensure that victims of family violence who have had to leave their homes because of family violence are not required to return to the home or have contact with an abusive family member?

Yes they do create barriers where people have had to abandon possessions.

Alternative proof of identity processes should be widely promulgated. Access to duplicate copies of documents should be available at a token cost for family violence victims to enable them to replace their documentation more easily and cheaply.

Where a person may experience difficulties due to language, culture, health, literacy, income, location, computer access to replace proof of identity documents, Centrelink should be required to actively facilitate that process.

Question 25 What reforms, if any, should be considered in relation to the qualifying residence periods or newly arrived residents' waiting period, for victims of family violence? For example:

(a) is the 10 year waiting period for the Age Pension and the Disability Support Pension unreasonable or impractical for victims of family violence; and

(b) should the *Social Security Act 1991* (Cth) be amended so that there is an exemption from waiting periods for newly arrived residents for victims of family violence?

Family violence isolates victims from wider society. Where the victim is an immigrant she has often left her own circle of support in her country of origin. Where the perpetrator is also an immigrant, he is also isolated from familial constraints and supports in his country of origin. This can intensify family violence in the new country. In a minority immigrant community there are also consequences for disclosing violence. Male violence towards women may be culturally expected or tolerated (much as it is in Australia), so disclosing violence and separation can mean cultural isolation and community exclusion for the victim. This means that victims cannot share in the pool of community resources to cope with waiting periods. Where the woman victim is an immigrant and her partner is an Australian resident who uses violence, disclosure of violence and loss of relationship can also result in loss of residency. Waiting periods for social security payments should be waived for newly arrived residents who are victims of family violence.

Question 26 What measures, if any, might be taken to address any difficulties faced by victims of family violence when they must comply with activity and participation tests, Employment Pathway Plans and/or administrative requirements? For example, are the current exemption periods reasonable for victims of family violence?

Training of Centrelink staff is imperative along with a cultural shift in attitudes towards victims of domestic and family violence. There are false beliefs which are widespread about the relationship between paid work and domestic violence. Paid work in no way prevents domestic violence from occurring, although it may affect where the violence occurs. Paid work does not 'cure' domestic violence- only holding perpetrators accountable for their violence can reduce violence. Compliance with Centrelink activity tests can be onerous for victims who are trying to find housing, shift their children's schooling and care, liaise with family lawyers, criminal

lawyers and DV proceedings, manage ongoing violence and abuse, cope with health impacts on themselves and their children and friends and family.

The protective provisions which currently exist are routinely ignored by Centrelink staff. Victims are pathologized as mentally ill or seen as trying to get out of work. Section 502c of the Social Security Act is rarely applied with most Centrelink responses opting to refer victims for Job Capacity Assessments. Sometimes victims are given a 'special circumstances' exemption of a couple of weeks and told to see a doctor and get anti-depressants – not the 16 week exemption available under 502C. There appears to be a systemic problem in Centrelink training whereby women victims report having to take copies of the legislation and a support worker AND argue with Centrelink staff about implementing the Social Security Act 1991. If this was an accidental outcome there would be more variation in Centrelink actions – instead it is systemic and raises the question – Why don't Centrelink implement the legislated protections for domestic violence victims and why is this allowed to continue?

Question 27 In practice, are Centrelink customers aware of the exemptions—including 'reasonable excuse'—available in circumstances of family violence? If so, are victims of family violence likely to use the exemptions?

In practice clients of Centrelink are given very little information about provisions to help them in circumstances of domestic violence. The government's Participation Review Taskforce report of August 2008 recommended that clients be given more information about their rights and protections in circumstances of violence. This has never occurred. Why not? Why has the government not implemented the recommendations it has received and accepted from its Taskforce? Family violence victims will use what supports are available to them if (a) they are informed of them (b) Centrelink is willing to implement the Social Security Act 1991.

Question 28 Should the *Social Security Act 1991* (Cth) be amended expressly to provide for waiver of debt in situations where a person is subject to duress, undue influence or economic abuse? What processes should be in place to determine whether such circumstances exist?

Yes. If a person claims they were a victim of violence in circumstances giving rise to a debt there should be a waiver. The process of determination should rely on the civil standard of proof and the victim invited to provide supporting evidence or witness statements.

Question 29 Should social security law or practice be amended in relation to nominee arrangements to minimise the potential for financial abuse by people holding nominee authority? For example, should the *Social Security Act 1991* (Cth) be amended to recognise other legal authorities of a person nominated by the social security recipient, such as under powers of attorney or enduring guardianship?

The process for granting nominee authority needs to verify the informed consent of the payee where possible. Where another person has power of attorney or enduring guardianship they should be informed of the nominee arrangement.

Question 30 In what ways, if any, can information about and access to Crisis Payment be improved for victims of family violence? For example, should Crisis Payment be 'wrapped up' with Special Benefit?

There is a serious and ongoing gap in the information available to victims of violence about the types of assistance available to them, the eligibility criteria and how to access these. There is also a massive training and attitude gulf in the Centrelink staff knowledge of domestic and family violence provisions and the impacts of violence and judgments about victims. Victims report being seen as being in some way responsible for provoking or not stopping the violence against them or for inventing or exaggerating their circumstances to gain a benefit. Crisis Payment should not be wrapped up in Special Benefit. It should be widely promulgated and accessible to victims.

Question 31 Should Crisis Payment be available to those who are otherwise ineligible for a social security pension or benefit but due to extreme circumstances of family violence are placed in financial hardship?

Yes.

Question 32 Do claim periods and eligibility criteria for Crisis Payments adequately reflect the breadth and nature of family violence?

No. The impacts of domestic violence can be long term as identified by Ilsa Evans in her research 'Battlescars' (2007). Residence requirements, periods since the violence occurred and limits on the number of claims can work to exclude victims from getting help.

Question 33 What evidence is, or should, be necessary to determine whether family violence amounts to an extreme circumstance for the purpose of Crisis Payment?

Family violence should be accepted as an extreme circumstance. The categorization of degrees of violence is a bureaucratic luxury which is not available to victims. The victim's statements and disclosures of violence should be the face value account on which to base assessment. The victim may be able to nominate records held by police and health services or courts or other witnesses or not, bearing in mind that only 36% of women victims report male violence to the Police (ABS 2006).

Question 34 Do the provisions for Rent Assistance in the *Social Security Act 1991* (Cth) adequately address the situation where a person using family violence defaults on mortgage repayments on the house in which the victim is living? Should the definition of 'rent' in s 13(2) of the *Social Security Act 1991* (Cth) expressly include mortgage repayments where family violence is an issue?

Yes. Victims should be able to receive rent assistance when the perpetrator defaults on mortgage payments on the house in which the victim is living and this needs to be legally documented to reduce the perpetrator's equity in the home. Another problem for victims arises when they are excluded from the home they jointly own with the perpetrator and are deemed ineligible therefore for rent assistance (and legal aid).

Question 35 In practice, are Centrelink customers aware of, and do Centrelink customers make use of, the option to have their payments made weekly? In practice, if requested, are victims of family violence provided with weekly payments?

Weekly payments may or may not be an issue for victims. Information about weekly payments is not widely publicized and few victims report using this option.

Question 36 Should victims of family violence who are receiving weekly payments be eligible to receive Crisis Payment?

Yes.

Question 37 Should family violence be an example of ‘exceptional and unforeseen circumstances’ in the *Guide to Social Security Law* when considering whether to make an urgent payment? Are the current payment arrangements—such as weekly payments—available to victims of family violence sufficient?

Yes family violence should be an example of exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Urgent payments should be disbursed as needed.

Question 38 Should family violence be included as an indicator of vulnerability for the purposes of administering the ‘vulnerable welfare payment recipients’ income management provisions?

Family violence victimization should NOT be a trigger for compulsory income management. This would give perpetrators an additional weapon to hold over their victims, inhibit victims’ disclosures of violence and constrain them taking action to protect themselves. Income Management should only ever be a financial management tool for voluntary use in circumstances where a person has a demonstrated history of being unable to manage their income. It should not be a method of punishing and controlling social security recipients.

Question 39 If so, what definition of family violence should apply? What additional decision-making principles or guidelines may be desirable—in particular, taking into account that a person may be a victim or person using family violence (or both)?

Income management should be a voluntary tool to assist people to manage their income where they have ongoing difficulties with managing their income.

Question 40 Should the income management regime include provision for people experiencing family violence to be exempted from income management in specified circumstances, where to do so would assist them to take steps to prevent or reduce violence?

People experiencing family violence should not be subjected to involuntary income management. Holding perpetrators accountable is the best way to stop family violence. It is unreasonable to force victims into income management and only allow them to have some money back if they promise to really try to help themselves. Such an approach presumes that victims cannot be trusted with money and they only deserve to have money if they promise an agency they will try to help themselves rather than go on ‘agreeing’ to be in a violent relationship. It is a disgusting presumption showing a patronizing contempt for women victims of violence. Compulsory Income management is a patronizing violation of human rights which causes greater degradation and disempowerment of its targets.

Question 41 What changes could be made to law or practice relating to the administration of income management accounts to assist welfare recipients who are victims of family violence? For example, are there alternatives to stored value cards that might provide additional flexibility or portability, such as food stamps or a streamlined access to cash in periods of crisis?

Compulsory Income management is a patronizing abomination which should not exist. Voluntary income management can be a useful tool for some people whose circumstances benefit from it. All of the problems of the Basics Card reveal it to be an expensive disaster which soaks up valuable public funds to force some unfortunate people to shop in stores the government tells them to, to buy what the

government tells them, when the government tells them. There is a currency in Australia which is widely exchangeable for goods and services – called money.

Q. Why can't people use money?

A. Then we couldn't control them.

Q. Why do we want to control people on Social Security?

A. Because we can.

Withholding survival money from vulnerable people is an abuse of them. It targets low income people and ignores the conduct of higher income earners. Why is it ok for higher income earners to get drunk and consume pornography but not low income earners? If the government wants to reduce alcohol addiction and pornography consumption it should direct its attention to providers of those goods instead of punishing low income earners and making them scapegoats for social problems across the spectrum of society.

Question 41 Should travel or other crisis needs, where a person needs to escape family violence, be included in the definition of 'priority needs' for the purposes of the income management regime?

Yes. The freedom of movement of Australians should be valued. All Australians should be able to move where ever they need to be without having to ask the government for permission. Prior to the Australian referendum in 1967 which admitted Aborigines as citizens, Indigenous people had to ask government permission to move location, to marry, to mix with 'white' people and to get paid cash instead of rations. Income management has turned policy thinking back to the times when Aboriginal people were counted as part of the flora and fauna of the country. Now they have to ask government permission to shop, to buy particular goods, to move location. Compulsory Income management is a nasty stigmatizing disempowering policy which history will judge harshly.

Question 43 Should voluntary income management of people experiencing family violence be adopted more broadly and, if so, how should this done? For example, what amendments to the compulsory income management provisions would be required?

Voluntary income management is an acceptable tool to assist people who choose to use it. Scrap all compulsory income management provisions except in cases where a person is certified by an appropriately accredited and qualified professional to be incapable of managing their own income. Conditions such as intellectual disability, chronic substance or gambling addiction might be such circumstances in some cases. Race is irrelevant.

Question 44 Is there any evidence that income management has improved the safety of people experiencing family violence?

No. Women who have been subject to income management have complained that it reduces their choices about spending, forces them to spend money in particular shops which are expensive and far away, prevents them travelling as needed, stigmatizes them and makes them feel ashamed. Victims have also stated that they are scared to disclose violence in case it affects their payments.

Question 45 Are there any other ways in which Commonwealth social security law and practice could be improved to better protect the safety of people experiencing family violence?

There need to be unequivocal messages internally and externally that the government has zero tolerance of domestic and family violence. This needs to be demonstrated by:

- Ensuring that all Commonwealth employees who have a decision-making or intervention role with adults, children and families have ongoing training in domestic and family violence and child abuse.
- Ensuring that all violent and abusive threats and actions against Commonwealth employees or other members of the public are reported to police and treated as criminal conduct by the perpetrator.
- Adopting best practice in relation to domestic violence disclosure by (1) believing the victim (2) offering support for the victim.
- Implementing and publicizing domestic and family violence protections and supports which already exist.
- Funding family and domestic violence services to provide adequate women and children centred shelters, counseling and recovery separately from homelessness services. Most of the people turned away from homelessness services due to lack of space are women and children leaving domestic violence. Generic homelessness services which provide services for men and male staff are inappropriate to women who have been traumatized by male violence.
- Ensuring that Indigenous communities with high rates of family violence have access to safe houses for victims; community policing; cultural healing and recovery programs for perpetrators and victims and accessible health services.