



Two Queensland Initiatives

Two recent Queensland initiatives are the project *Kids & DV*, which aims to develop best practice for working with children and young people affected by domestic violence, and *Project Axis*, a new proactive multidisciplinary approach to investigating paedophilia.

Kids and Domestic Violence

Leslie Gevers

The Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care is undertaking a national project to develop best practice documents and tools for working with children and young people affected by domestic violence. This project, titled 'Kids & DV', is funded under the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Funding Initiative.

Leslie Gevers Community Management Services, a Perth-based consultancy group, has been contracted to implement the project over a twelve-month period from July 1998.

This is an important project for all services working with children and young people affected by domestic violence as it will provide much-needed resources to support services in their work. These will include:

- an Internet home-page for information about the project and for exchanging information with other service providers;
- an online database of Australian services and programs for children and young people affected by domestic violence;
- an online bibliography of articles, books and Web-sites;
- proposed minimum and best practice standards for service providers;
- a booklet describing up to twenty examples of best practice in services working with children and young people affected by domestic violence;
- tools for evaluating the effectiveness of programs and services;

- identification of the training needs of workers, training resources and broad training strategies for this specialised area;
- a model for an ongoing network of services working in this important area.

Leslie Gevers Community Management Services is inviting services in all states and territories that assist children and young people affected by domestic violence to provide details of their work for inclusion in the database. They are also seeking nominations for best practice examples of services working with the target group.

If you would like more information about this project or would like to include your service in the database, contact Leslie or Sue on (08) 9336 7717.

You can visit the internet site for this project at <http://www.lgcms.com.au/kids&dv>

What Is Safety House?

SUSAN FOOKS

Safety House Australia is a nationally organised child protection program providing a network of safe places where children can go in their local community. Established in 1993, it is a non-profit umbrella organisation of the various autonomous Safety House associations operating in each Australian state or territory. A Safety House can be a house, shop or a business that offers assistance to children primarily when travelling to and from school should they feel unsafe, threatened, or harassed. The purpose of the program is to enable children to gain the skills and confidence to feel safe. The program also aims to play a preventative role in community safety, providing safer neighbourhoods for children.

Educating Children about the Safety House Program

The Safety House Program is taught in schools and by members of the police on school visits. Safety House education equips children with self-protection strategies, with particular emphasis on their safety when travelling to and from school. Parents can be involved by reinforcing the program and pointing out local Safety Houses to their children.

Internet Access

The Child Safety Network of Australia Internet site, comprising Safety House Australia, the National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and

Neglect, Kids Help Line, the Scout Association of Australia, and the National Child Protection Clearing House, aims to provide families, children, teachers and other professionals with information that helps to prevent child abuse and neglect. The site draws together community organisations concerned with the safety of children and the special needs of children.

As the site becomes known as a useful resource, it is hoped that other organisations committed to the safety of children will become involved and help to develop an Internet directory of children's services, which in turn will provide help and information, particularly in relation to the prevention of child abuse.

Project Axis

Extracted from Queensland Crime Commission press release

Project Axis is a joint Queensland Crime Commission–Queensland Police Service initiative. It represents a new proactive and intelligence-driven multidisciplinary approach in the discharge of investigative functions in relation to criminal paedophilia; that is, alleged or suspected offences of a sexual nature committed in relation to children.

The principal purpose of the project is to identify the nature and extent of criminal paedophilia in this state; its historical, sociological, cultural and other causes; the defining characteristics of offenders and their victims; and the past, present and likely future impact on Queensland society.

Its aim is to assess and prioritise relevant risks and develop better ways and means of dealing with them so that overall investigative outcomes, especially in relation to organised, serial or systematic offending, are significantly improved, and the incidence and impact of child sex offending within the state is minimised.

An important subsidiary purpose of the project is to increase the level of community awareness about who

paedophiles are and how they operate. Accordingly, the project team will be taking a close look at and trying to answer some important questions:

- What is the proportion of child sex offences committed inside the family by parents or close relatives compared with serial or systematic offending by extra-familial adults?
- How can legislation and regulations be developed changed or rationalised to minimise the risks posed by the offender and to maximise the protection of children against their activities?
- What are the most effective and efficient law enforcement methods and techniques for identifying offenders and bringing them to justice?
- What are the options for, and the prospects of, offender rehabilitation?
- What role, if any, does child pornography play in the sexual abuse of children and to what extent are computers used by paedophiles to communicate with each other for paedophilic purposes?
- Are there organised paedophile groups or networks operating in Queensland and, if so, what are

their size, aims, structure and membership?

- What is the relationship, if any, between child sex offences and other forms of criminal activity?
- How adequate are the existing oversight and accountability systems within institutions, whether state, church or private enterprise, for preventing, or at least encouraging the reporting of, sexual abuse of children under care?
- What are the relevant environmental or contextual factors, including structural defects, systemic deficiencies and social attitudes or policies, that facilitate or fail to inhibit paedophile activity?
- What needs to be done to create a state environment appropriately and sufficiently hostile towards and disruptive of child sex offending?
- What role should the Crime Commission play in the law-enforcement response to criminal paedophilia, and in what circumstances should its intrusive or coercive powers be used to target those who offend, whether on an individual or organised basis?

At the completion of its inquiries, the Crime Commission will publish a comprehensive report and recommendations on the above matters.

This Web-site is an initiative of the Australian Scout Association, and can be found at the following internet address: <http://www.childsafe.net.au/index.html>

New Proposal

Safety House Australia proposes that personal safety and community security would be enhanced by an informal and voluntary network of national organisations that are involved in community development and security. Safety House is prepared to act as a clearing house for information about these organisations, and material sent to the Safety House office (125 Bathurst Street, Sydney NSW 2000, tel. 02 9262 3185) will be duplicated and forwarded to kindred organisations under the banner of 'Community Safety Network'.

Safety House publishes the following booklets on the Safety House Program, as well as a pamphlet for parents on the subject of bullying:

- *The Safety House Program in Australia* provides a history of the program,

outlines its aims and objectives and describes the program in each of the states and territories of Australia.

- *Safety House Australia Inc.* offers a brief description of the Safety House Program, the aims and objectives of Safety House Australia and the activities organised by the program.
- *Safety House: Keeping Our Children Safe* describes how children learn about the program, how to become involved in it, and safety tips for children.
- *Safety House: Keeping Our Community Safe – Multilingual* outlines the Safety House Program, and explains what parents can do, in the following languages: Indonesian, Bosnian, Chinese, Filipino, Arabic, Vietnamese, Khmer, Spanish and Turkish, as well as English.
- *Safety House: The Role of Police* discusses the role the police play in the Safety House Program and how children can learn about the program.
- *Safety House: Feeling Unsure? Knock on a Safety House Door* describes in

cartoon form when a child may need to use a Safety House.

- *Safety House Information for Teachers* outlines how the program operates and where teachers can obtain more information and resources.
- *Bullying: Information for Parents* discusses what constitutes bullying, where it occurs, how both victims and bullies behave, how to determine if a child is being bullied, how parents can help both the victim and the bully, how parents and teachers can work together, the role of the Safety House Program, and how children and adults learn about the program.

These booklets, as well as further information on the program, are available from Safety House Australia. For the addresses of Safety Houses around Australia, try the Web-site: <http://www.childsafe.net.au/SAFEHOUSE/shcontac.htm#contactname>

You can find the Safety House homepage at: <http://www.childsafe.net.au/SAFEHOUSE/shhomep.htm>