

COORDINATING NSW GOVERNMENT ACTION AGAINST DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

Final Report

Prepared for the Human Service & Criminal Justice CEOs Cluster

8 November 2007

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Synopsis

Significant government resources have been applied over the last 10 years in responding to and addressing domestic and family violence in NSW. A key part of this response has been through the Violence Against Women (VAW) Strategy.

Compared to the environment prior to the VAW Strategy, the government response to domestic and family violence in 2007 can be characterised by:

- strong recognition by CEOs of human service and criminal justice agencies of the social and economic cost of domestic and family violence, and the need for changes to core business activities to better address the causes and consequences of this violence
- an emerging agenda of state-wide coordinated action that is being progressed by human service and criminal justice agency Senior Officers focussed around five key interventions that evidence and experience suggest are most likely to address the causes and consequences of domestic and family violence
- support for an extensive range of local and regional activities across the full spectrum of issues related to violence against women - primarily focussed on community awareness raising, advocacy and community activism, facilitation of partnerships and support for small-scale initiatives.

Further, there is now a strong mandate from the State Plan and the March 2007 election commitments to build on these foundations to progress a more strategic approach to tackle the complex issue of domestic and family violence, through coordinated government action linked to state-wide, results-orientated priorities which are translated into action at the local level.

To build on the work commenced under the VAW Strategy, there is a need to:

- finalise a strategic policy framework for domestic and family violence that defines the state-wide priorities for coordinated action
- identify results-based accountability measures to ensure that government action remains closely aligned to the agreed priorities and is contributing to the achievement of measurable results
- establish a central coordination function within the Department of Premier and Cabinet (in line with the election commitment)
- ensure a stronger focus on systemic changes to state-wide service systems linked to the priorities for coordinated action
- gain greater leverage from regional staffing and planning arrangements to avoid the risk of diffuse regional responses which are not aligned to state-wide priorities
- strengthen opportunities for NGO partner agencies and community input into setting strategic directions and implementation of the priorities for coordinated action
- better align domestic and family violence strategies with the governance arrangements and broader responses for addressing all forms of violence against women under the R1 Priority Delivery Plan

To implement this agenda, the following approaches are recommended:

1. State-wide priorities for coordinated action

As a starting point for the development of the strategic policy framework for domestic and family violence, five priorities are proposed to drive systemic changes to state-wide service systems:

- *Integrated case management*– multi-agency, coordinated casework to prevent escalation of domestic violence among high-risk target groups and in targeted communities
- *Risk assessment and information sharing protocols where domestic violence is already identified* - common approach to assessing risk of further violence, and identifying existing interventions and service options to reduce risk and address the needs of victims
- *Training of practitioners around issues of domestic violence* – consistent and streamlined delivery of training to front-line staff in all key agencies
- *Standardised criminal justice response* - standard operating procedures for policing and prosecution, including victim support, court assistance and programs for perpetrators
- *Staying Home Leaving Violence* - consistent, proactive approach to supporting victims who want to remain at home or require supported accommodation or housing assistance

Finalising the list of priority areas would be an initial task for the new central coordination function within DPC (see below), in consultation with partner agencies and community stakeholders. Community stakeholders have highlighted the need for ongoing consultation to support the detailed development of the priority elements of a strategic domestic and family violence framework, including linkages to related strategies for other forms of violence against women, the role of alcohol in violence against women (R1 Strategy 3), the importance community education, and addressing the specific needs of women from Indigenous, CALD and rural and remote communities.

2. Central coordination function within DPC

To meet the commitment for a central coordination function within DPC, it is recommended that this function have responsibility for:

- leading long-term priority setting and addressing barriers to coordinated government action (including supporting the finalisation of the strategic policy framework)
- facilitating alignment of state-wide and regional service systems with the domestic and family violence strategic policy framework (through providing high-level, strategic support to Project Groups for each of the state-wide priorities for coordinated action)
- monitoring progress against intended results and evaluating the costs and benefits of different cross-agency responses and existing pilots.

3. DFV state-wide project groups

To ensure a stronger focus on systemic changes to state-wide service systems, it is recommended that senior project officers be appointed to lead Project Groups across the five priority areas of action. Project officers currently working on these priorities would be linked to these project groups.

The senior project officers would support line agencies and their NGO partners to make changes to service systems in line with the state-wide priorities by developing and documenting agreed procedures, tools and change strategies, and then supporting agencies to integrate these into their core activities.

It is proposed that each priority area be led by a line agency, with the senior project officer(s) located within that agency. Milestones and accountability arrangements would be documented in an agreed work plan, including internal agency accountabilities and accountability to the broader coordination arrangements.

Ideally, senior project officers would be regionally-based to ensure their work is grounded in the day-to-day issues of delivering 'front-line' services. Senior project officers would be expected to closely liaise with the central DPC function, and develop strong links with project officers in other priority areas and with regional coordination officers (see below).

4. DFV regional coordination

To gain greater leverage from regional staffing and planning arrangements, it is recommended that the focus of regional coordination shift to embedding changes in regional service systems in line with the state-wide priorities. This could be achieved through:

- ensuring priorities for coordinated action are incorporated into Regional Delivery Plans endorsed by the Regional Coordination Management Groups. Human service and criminal justice agency Regional Senior Officers will need a strong mandate and support from their CEOs to ensure consistent and strategic participation in the RCMGs, with clear procedures for raising, escalating and resolving issues where there are barriers to changing regional service systems
- appointing a small number of regional coordination officers in domestic and family violence 'hotspots' - aligned to the hotspot locations where NSW Police are rolling out the new Domestic Violence Liaison Officer positions. These regional coordinators would be located in NSW Police to build on the new resources for strong place-based responses to domestic and family violence (eg roll out of the 35 Domestic Violence Liaison Officers). It is also relevant to consider areas where new initiatives are being implemented (such as Integrated Case Management models and new Domestic Violence Intervention Court Models) in deciding on the location of regional staff.

There is an opportunity to use the regional coordination officers to assist in the rollout of key priority projects, mainstreaming of existing pilot projects, and linking justice and human services responses in local communities.

5. Governance arrangements

It is recommended that specific governance arrangements be established to support the development and implementation of the new DFV strategic policy framework. These arrangements would be reviewed in the future with a longer-term view of fully integrating them into the governance arrangements that are being developed under the R1/R3 Priority Delivery Plan. In particular, the DFV arrangements could be achieved through:

- a Senior Officers Group, reporting to human services and justice agency CEOs, with responsibility for cross-agency decision-making and raising, escalating and resolving issues related to the implementation of the DFV strategic policy framework. This function could be fulfilled by the existing Human Service and Justice Cluster Senior Officers Group. In line with the arrangements for the R1/R3 Priority Delivery Plan, clear reporting arrangements would be established with the Commissioner of Police's Priority Delivery Committee. In particular, the Senior Officers Group would ensure each of the DFV state-wide Project Groups has clear reporting arrangements with other R1 / R3 Project Management Groups led by NSW Police

- DPC having the lead responsibility for Initiative 4.1 in the R1 Priority Delivery Plan (Proposal 2), with clear reporting arrangements between the DFV coordination function within DPC and the R1 / R3 State Plan coordination function within the NSW Police Force
- The DPC coordination function having directly accountability to their Director-General, with cross-agency accountability for delivery of the DFV components of R1 through the human services and justice agency CEOs.

6. Working with NGO partners and local communities

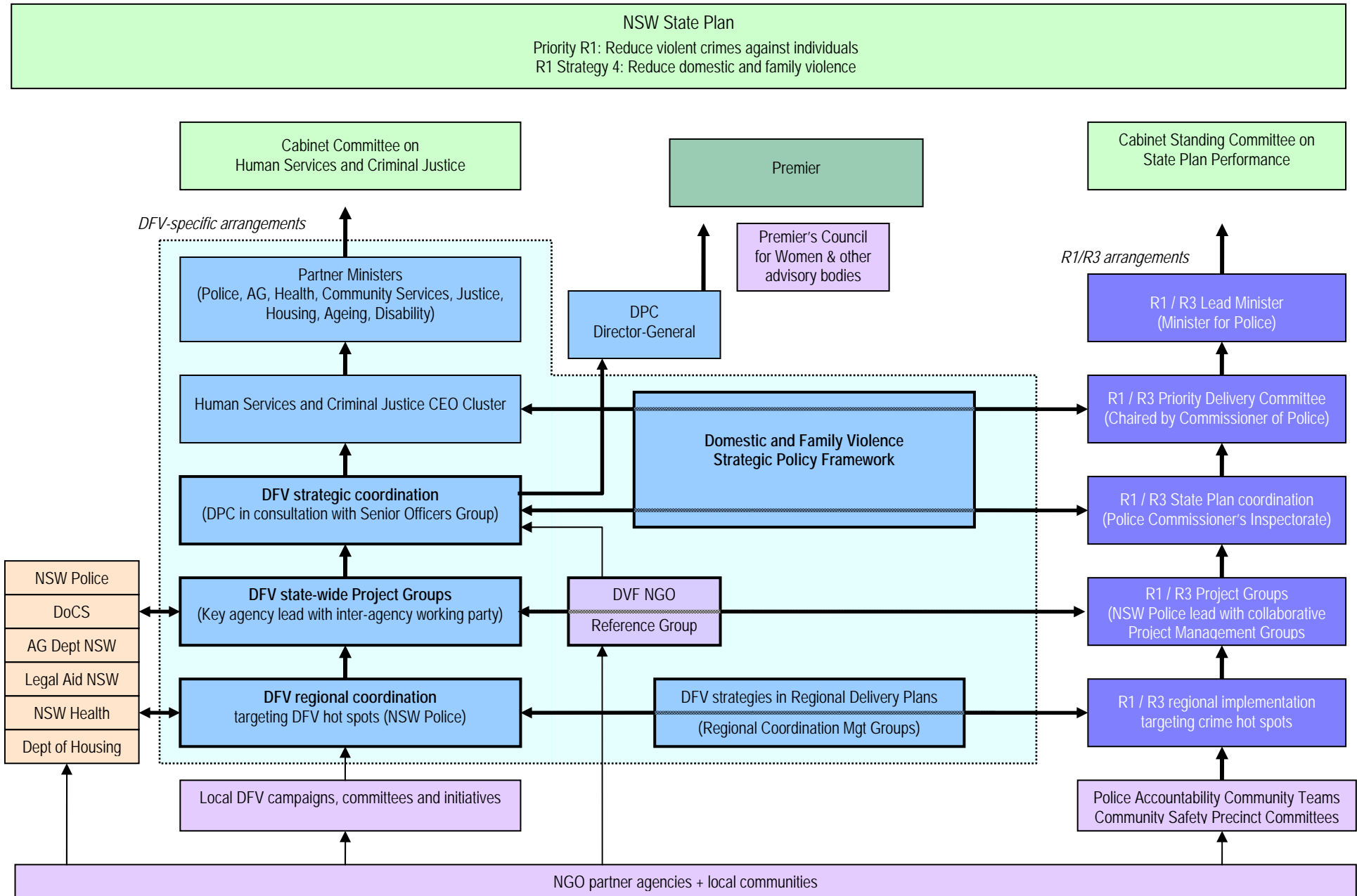
It is recommended that partnership arrangements be strengthened to improve opportunities for NGO partner agency and community input into setting strategic directions and implementing the priorities for coordinated action. This could be achieved through:

- existing consultative mechanisms (such as the Premier’s Council for Women and other suitable advisory bodies) advising the NSW Government on facilitating and promoting government and non-government partnerships to support the DFV strategic policy framework
- establishing a Domestic and Family Violence NGO Reference Group that provides advice to the Senior Officers Group and facilitates NGO input into the DFV state-wide Project Groups
- exploring opportunities for line agencies to use existing grant programs to support local DFV campaigns, committees and initiatives linked to the state-wide priorities.

The review findings have highlighted the need for changes to current co-ordination arrangements (summarised in Figure 1), to better respond to the priorities in the State Plan and to maximise the impacts of existing and additional resources committed by the NSW Government. The benefits of the recommended directions arising from this review, compared to existing arrangements, are considered to include:

- Delivery of whole-of-government strategic co-ordination directly accountable to the Premier through his Department
- A stronger focus on systemic changes to state-wide service systems by placing resources strategically within line agencies and linking with other State Plan priorities
- A clearer strategy to underpin coordinated action linked to the five priority areas that evidence and experience suggest are most likely to address the causes and consequences of domestic and family violence
- A direct link between NSW Police and other criminal justice responses to domestic violence at with early intervention and case management supports being delivered by human service agencies
- Greater leverage from regional staffing and planning arrangements by ensuring priorities for coordinated action are incorporated into Regional Delivery Plans endorsed by the Regional Coordination Management Groups
- A focus of effort on the areas of greatest need
- More formal arrangements for NGO partner agency and community input into setting strategic directions and implementation of the priorities for coordinated action.

Figure 1: Coordinating NSW Government Action against Domestic and Family Violence



1 Background

1.1 Government action against domestic and family violence

New South Wales has established clear priorities for tackling domestic and family violence - these priorities are set out in the State Plan.

In March 2007, the NSW Government announced a suite of new or enhanced domestic and family violence initiatives to be rolled out by the NSW Police Force, other criminal justice departments and human service agencies, building on the achievements of the NSW Violence Against Women (VAW) Strategy.

Recognising the complexity of this issue and the diversity of programs and initiatives to address it, the Government has given a commitment to develop and implement a state-wide strategy to deal with the causes and consequences of domestic violence. In doing so, it is acknowledged that that domestic and family violence is only one aspect of violence against women and that any strategies in this area will need to be mindful of the broader context.

The Government has also given a commitment to establish a central co-ordination function for policies, programs and services aimed at reducing violence against women, and tackling domestic and family violence. Prior to implementing this commitment, the Government has decided that a review is necessary to determine the best approach to fulfilling the commitment for a central co-ordination function.

1.2 Review

The Terms of Reference for the review are to determine:

1. How efforts across Government can be best coordinated to achieve the NSW Government's various policy priorities on domestic and family violence (including centralised policy development, law reform and service delivery)
2. What should be the responsibilities of the Prevention of Violence against Women Unit?
3. What regional coordination and implementation tasks are there, and how can they be achieved?
4. What is a suitable governance structure both at a central and a regional level to support the operations of this Unit, and improve collaboration across Government agencies responsible for leading the delivery of priorities in this area?
5. How should the relationship with community partners be established, including an appropriate level of community input into setting strategic directions?
6. What structure might the Unit need to fulfil its responsibilities, taking into account the requirement that the Unit be funded from within existing agency budgets?
7. What have been the achievements of the current NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women?
8. What elements of the current practices to co-ordinate effort around prevention of violence against women could transition to the new Unit, and what aspects of that work could be undertaken by line agencies as a complement to existing programs and services?
9. Determine whether the current funding commitment to co-ordinate prevention of violence against women initiatives represents the best use of resources for a strategy of this type.

In August 2007, ARTD Consultants was engaged to undertake the review. In addressing the Terms of Reference, the review was structured around a number of focus areas (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1: Key review questions and methods

Focus areas	Key review questions	Methods
Strengths and gaps in current approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What approaches are currently used in NSW to achieve better results? • What are the strengths of these current approaches? • What are the gaps in the current approaches? • What have been the achievements of the current NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk-top review of key documents - policy context; VAW strategy; coordinated action; evaluations
Options for achieving better results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What options exist for better coordinating government efforts? • What options exist for building on current strengths and addressing gaps, within existing agency budgets, in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – roles and responsibilities of a central co-ordination function – roles and responsibilities of line agencies – roles and responsibilities of non-government partners • What options exist for ensuring an appropriate level of community input into setting strategic directions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews with Executives and Senior Officers from government agencies - DoCS; Attorney-General's; Health; Police; Housing; Legal Aid • Workshop with DoCS Communities Division regional stakeholders • Teleconference with Indigenous staff from DoCS Communities Division
Governance and resourcing for the preferred option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What governance arrangements are needed at a central, regional and local level to implement the preferred option? • How can the current funding commitments for coordinating prevention of violence against women initiatives be best used to implement the preferred option? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of 41 written submissions from community stakeholders

The review is being overseen by a Steering Committee of NSW Government Chief Executive Officers from the Human Service and Criminal Justice CEOs Cluster.

1.3 Review report

This report summarises the findings from the review, highlighting the strategic policy context (Section 2), achievements and challenges in addressing domestic and family violence since the introduction in 1996 of the NSW VAW Strategy (Section 3), and opportunities for achieving better results from existing budget allocations and the new government commitments (Section 4).

The report also contains an attachment summarising the feedback from community stakeholders, highlighting a broad alignment between the key issues raised by the community and the opportunities for improvement proposed in this report.

However, it is important to note that a number of stakeholders expressed concerns about the community consultation process - highlighting that:

- the timeframe for consultations was inadequate
- the sole reliance on written submissions limited appropriate engagement with the community sector
- the scope of issues covered by the consultation was too narrowly focused on government and bureaucratic structures without appropriate recognition of the important role of the community sector.

2 Strategic context

This section describes the strategic policy context for action against domestic and family violence - highlighting the changes in the policy environment over the last three decades. It is intended to provide the context for analysing the achievements and challenges of coordinated government action, described in Section 3.

While the focus is on NSW Government action against domestic and family violence, the analysis is situated within the broader context of action to address all forms of violence against women and the range of other initiatives at the national level designed to tackle violence against women.

2.1 Historical policy context

Over the past three decades, there have been a number of major NSW Government strategies for improving responses to domestic and family violence, supported by initiatives at the national level.

1980s'

NSW Taskforce on Domestic Violence

Australian Government National Agenda for Women public education campaigns

In 1981, the then NSW Premier appointed a NSW Taskforce on Domestic Violence to examine the existing NSW laws in relation to domestic violence. In response to the Taskforce report, a number of legislative changes were made regarding domestic violence offences:

- In 1982, the NSW legal system introduced Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (ADVOs) under s547AA of the Crimes Act 1900. This allowed courts to make ADVOs that restricted or prohibited behaviour where there was a reasonable apprehension that a domestic violence offence may be committed by a spouse (either married or de facto). Failure to comply with an order was constituted as an offence.
- In 1987, s547AA of the Crimes Act 1900 was replaced with a new Part 15A, which extended the definition of domestic violence as a personal violence offence committed against another person with whom the offender has, or has had a domestic relationship. Personal violence covered specific offences including physical violence, sexual abuse, destroying or threatening to damage property and threats of violence. The definition of domestic relationships was extended to include intimate personal relationships, carers, and extended family or kin according to Indigenous kinship.

This response was consistent with the focus of other States and Territories that pursued legal reforms to make the criminal law more effective in dealing with criminal assaults occurring within the privacy of the home, to give police expanded powers to investigate complaints of domestic violence and to change bail legislation to better address the safety of victims¹.

During this period, the Australian Government's role in addressing domestic violence commenced formally with the National Agenda for Women consultations in 1986. In 1987, the Office of the Status of Women (OSW) commenced a three year public education campaign, along with a national survey to gauge community attitudes to violence against women.

¹ Laing L (2000), Progress, trends and challenges in Australian responses to domestic violence (Issues Paper 1 2000), Australian Domestic & Family Violence Clearinghouse.

Early 1990s'

NSW Premier's Statement on Domestic Violence

NSW Domestic Violence Strategic Plan

NSW Domestic Violence Advisory Council

National Strategy on Violence Against Women

In 1991, the then NSW Premier endorsed a statement containing facts and principles to underpin the Government's response to domestic violence. The Statement on Domestic Violence was distributed to all Ministers, with the stated intention of ensuring that "any policies, programs or procedures relating to domestic violence within your portfolio are in line with this statement" (Premier's Memorandum No. 91-10). In parallel, a NSW Domestic Violence Strategic Plan was developed "to establish the framework in which legislation, procedures and services will be provided in NSW to:

- ensure immediate safety to women and children who are, or are at risk of becoming, victims of domestic violence
- ensure long-term positive outcomes for women and children who are, or are at risk of becoming, victims of domestic violence
- prevent the occurrence of domestic violence".

The focus of the Plan was on improved coordination of government services.

Oversight of the Plan was the responsibility of a four-member domestic violence unit within the Women's Co-ordination Unit of the Premier's Department, reporting to the Minister assisting the Premier on the Status of Women.

As part of the Plan, the Government established a Domestic Violence Advisory Council to deal with issues of domestic violence and to co-ordinate the Government's response to it. In 1992, the Minister assisting the Premier on the Status of Women advised Parliament that the new Council "will have a vital role in monitoring the continued implementation of the Strategic Plan, as well as in acting as a watchdog body to ensure that the Government's initiatives in combating domestic violence are properly co-ordinated and long lasting. The Council also will have the task of supporting community initiatives in tackling this problem, disseminating information to the community, advising the Government on service provision and establishing much needed data collection systems". It was intended that the Advisory Council provide support to 75 local domestic violence committees.

During this period, the Australian Government launched the 1992 National Strategy on Violence Against Women. Under this strategy, NSW and other State Governments were asked to report against five national objectives - namely:

- To ensure that all women escaping violence have immediate access to police intervention and legal protection which prioritises safety for the woman, safe shelter, confidential services and the longer-term resources needed to live independently and free from violence.
- To work towards a universal intolerance of the use of violence in Australian society generally and, in particular, to achieve full acknowledgement by all Australians that violence towards women is a crime, regardless of circumstances, the background or the culture of the violent person or the victim.
- To achieve more just and equitable responses by the criminal justice system, which highlight the seriousness of the offences, and to strengthen the authority of the law in its effective and important role of influencing community attitudes and supporting social change.

- To build on the significant reforms, policy and program work of all levels of government and the community, towards improving the status of women, including the elimination of violence against all women.
- To develop mechanisms and processes which allow for a co-ordinated approach to the implementation of Objectives 1 to 4, and which are effective in monitoring the progress and achievements of Governments in the elimination of violence against women.

Mid-late 1990s'

***NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women
Australian Government Partnerships Against Domestic Violence***

A number of reports leading up to the mid-1990s stressed the un-coordinated and under-designed nature of the mix of services that respond to violence against women in general, and domestic violence in particular. A 1996 report by the NSW Department for Women and the Premier's Council for Women (*New Directions in Reducing Violence Against Women*) stressed the need for local, regional and central structures to work together, and to address a gap in available regional structures.

In July 1996, the then Premier announced the NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women to provide a whole-of-government approach to improve service responses to all forms of violence against women, including domestic violence. The Strategy was characterised by ²:

- a partnership approach between government departments, community-based services active in issues of violence against women, and broader stakeholders with an interest in crime prevention (including local government, criminologists, and health promotion specialists)
- a preventative approach focused on responses at the regional and local level to address the causes of violence against women, as well as strategies to provide services to women experiencing and escaping violence
- a systematic approach with a broad focus on all forms of violence, including domestic violence; sexual assault; psychological, emotional and social abuse; physical violence; sexual harassment; intimidation, threats and stalking; and hate crimes.

The Strategy aimed to prevent and respond to violence against women, through:

- raising awareness of, and understanding about, violence against women
- developing and promoting effective crime prevention strategies
- improving women's access to support services
- improving interagency co-ordination
- improving the criminal justice response to violence.

The Strategy was funded from existing Departmental resources of NSW Health, NSW Police Service, NSW Department of Community Services and the NSW Attorney General's Department, with an indicative total budget of \$2.3 million (in 2007 dollars).

Rather than defined actions or activities, the Strategy was established as a set of structures - namely:

² Vernon, C (1998) NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women, Paper presented at the Partnerships in Crime Prevention conference (Australian Institute of Criminology, February 1998).

- a State Management Group, including senior representatives of the NSW Government agencies
- the NSW Council on Violence Against Women, comprising community members
- the creation of a Violence Against Women Specialist Unit located in the Crime Prevention Division of the Attorney General's Department
- a network of 18 Regional Violence Prevention Specialist positions - funded and hosted within NSW Health, DoCS, and NSW Police, with the initial understanding that one-third of the positions would be placed in each agency. The 18 regions were defined by the boundaries of the NSW Health Service's regions. The regional staff reported to a Sydney-based manager in the Violence Against Women Specialist Unit

As part of the management framework to support the Strategy (NSW Premier's Department, November 1996), it was identified that the core functions of the Regional Violence Prevention Specialists were to:

- promote a coordinated response by government and non-government service providers to all forms of violence against women
- facilitate coordinated planning and action, including:
 - service mapping
 - assessment of service needs, gaps, issues and priorities
 - development and monitoring of projects
 - development of regional protocols, guidelines and training material.

The position description for the Regional Specialists emphasised that the position "needs to be both an advocate for women, influencing the development of new policies and protocols, and an implementer of policies by managing the translation of existing and new policies to service providers". It also emphasised that "in some regions previous attempts at local coordination have been hampered by staff attempting this role in addition to providing services. It is critical that the position maintains a strategic focus on achieving a cooperative, coordinated approach ... and not be captured as a service provider".

The work of the Regional Specialists was supported by Regional Reference groups - with representatives from funding agencies and community service providers.

During this same period, the Australian Government launched the Partnerships Against Domestic Violence (PADV), committing \$50.3 million over the six years from 1998 to 2004. This initiative was designed to encourage the Australian Government and States to work together on various priority themes relating to domestic violence. A total of \$25.3 million was committed by the Australian Government for the first phase of Partnerships between 1998 and 2002. Over 100 projects were conducted across Australia, focusing on six priority themes:

- working with children and young people to break the cycle of violence between generations
- working with adults to break patterns of violence, working with victims and violent men
- working with the community, educating against violence
- protecting people at risk- through legislative reform and improving responses by police and courts, especially in regards to cross-border issues
- information and best practice
- helping people in rural and remote communities - exploring approaches to overcoming barriers to obtaining assistance - such as community attitudes and lack of access to services.

2000 - 2006

**NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women
Australian Government Women's Safety Agenda
Australian Government Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault
Initiative**

An evaluation of the early implementation of the *NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women* highlighted that the Strategy provided structures that facilitated cooperative responses to violence against women across state and regional levels of government and across government agencies, and the location of the central unit within the Crime Prevention Division of the Attorney General's Department remained the most appropriate choice to support these structures.³

Between 2001 and 2003, the Strategy structures were expanded to seven NSW Government agencies:

- Attorney General's Department
- Department for Women
- Department of Community Services
- NSW Health
- NSW Police
- Department of Housing
- Department of Education and Training.

The partner agencies signed a Memorandum of Understanding for working together, which states "the NSW Government Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women recognises that violence against women is a complex issue requiring a cross-agency approach. No single agency can provide an effective response to the complex needs of victims, or tackle the task of preventing violence against women, without the collaboration of other agencies."

The 2003 report⁴ on achievements of the Strategy between 2001 and 2003 promoted a new vision statement of ensuring "all women and their families in NSW are free from fear and violence inside and outside the home". Four key areas of focus were identified:

- the promotion of integrated responses to domestic violence
- working with Aboriginal communities to prevent family violence
- the prevention of sexual assault, with a focus on criminal justice issues and service provision
- the development of awareness campaigns targeting young people and men.

The Council on Violence against Women operated for six years until 2002, at which point they made a decision to disband.

In February 2005, the administration of the VAW Strategy moved from the Attorney-General's Department to the Communities Division of the Department of Community Services. The rationale for this move was linked to improving the alignment with other whole-of-government programs working with vulnerable women, children, young people and families, and to build the capacity and leadership of communities to improve their health and wellbeing.⁵

³ Attorney General's Department (2001), Evaluation of the NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women: Summary Report.

⁴ Attorney General's Department (2003), NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women: 2001-2003 Achievements.

⁵ DoCS (2007), NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women: 2003-2006 Achievements.

It was envisioned that the VAW Strategy's placement in a Division dedicated to the co-ordination of whole-of-government work would ensure that actions to address violence against women would be reflected in the planning processes of other whole-of-government programs.

As part of the change, the positions of Regional Violence Prevention Specialist were re-named as Senior Regional Strategies Officers, Violence Prevention (SRSO). The job descriptions of the SRSO's emphasised their role in:

- facilitating the achievement of improved outcomes in the prevention of violence against women by fostering a coordinated community response to identified issues related to violence against women
- being both an advocate for women and influencing the development of policies and practices of service providers
- negotiating and liaising with key stakeholders in situations where joint action is achieved.

Reporting lines were changed so that regional staff reported to Communities Division regional managers (SO1). These managers worked on linking VAW planning and activities into regional service networks through their senior roles with regional officer groups, and by endeavouring to make connections with other strategies such as Families NSW, Better Futures and the Aboriginal Child Youth and Family Strategy. For example, the recently developed Regional Priorities Statements incorporated family and domestic violence priorities.

The Violence Against Women Specialist Unit continued to undertake policy development work and provide advice to government regarding the prevention of violence against women. The 2007 report⁶ on achievements of the Strategy between 2003 and 2006 emphasised that the role of the central unit in progress strategic policy coordination as well as providing project management support to the regional program. In particular, the Unit led the work on the development of a whole of government family and domestic violence strategy which was considered by the Human Services Cabinet Committee in early 2006, and acted as a catalyst for a number of state-wide initiatives (see Section 3.2).

During this period, the Australian Government announced that the Partnership Against Domestic Violence was to be replaced by the *Women's Safety Agenda* program at a cost of \$75.7 million from 2005 to 2009. The Women's Safety Agenda addresses four broad themes - prevention, health, justice and services. Measures include:

- re-running the national *Violence Against Women: Australia Say No* campaign
- grant funding under the Domestic and Family Violence and Sexual Assault Initiative to deliver projects aimed at decreasing the impact of sexual assault and domestic violence by trialling and evaluating new preventative and response mechanisms
- continued funding for the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault
- research projects on domestic violence and sexual assault
- training for nurses in regional and rural areas
- training for the criminal justice sector on sexual assault.

⁶ DoCS (2007), NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women: 2003-2006 Achievements.

Major strategies for coordinated actions were also introduced during this period in other state and territory jurisdictions. In particular:

- **Victoria** - The Women's Safety Strategy was released by the Victorian Government in October 2002 and set the principles and policy directions for addressing violence against women in Victoria for five years. Eleven Ministers signed up to the Strategy and its focus on four key areas - protection and justice; options for women; violence prevention and education; community action and coordination.
Key initiatives under the Strategy include:
 - the launch in August 2004 of a Police Code of Practice for the Investigation of family violence. Since this time, the number of intervention orders taken out by the police has increased by 72%
 - announcement of \$35.1 million over four years in the 2004-05 State budget to reform the family violence system to improve safety for women and children and increase accountability of perpetrators.
- **Tasmania** - the *Safe at Home* strategy commenced in September 2004 as a whole-of-government criminal justice response to family violence. Safe at Home is enabled by the Family Violence Act 2004, and delivered through an integrated service delivery system designed to manage the safety of the person experiencing violence and the risk that offenders might repeat or escalate their violent behaviour.

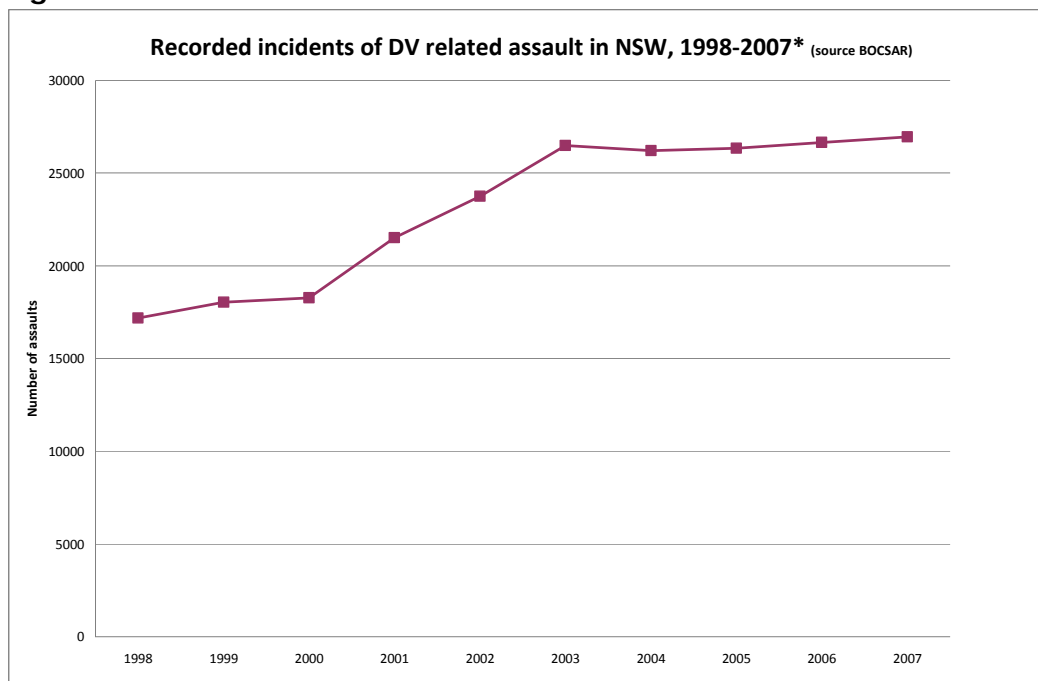
The focus on coordinated action in NSW and other states and territories mirrored international developments. For example, during this period the **UK Government** published the consultation paper *Safety and Justice: the Government's Proposal on Domestic Violence*. This approach led to the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004, and the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Group on Domestic Violence. In March 2005, the UK Government published an outline of the National Domestic Violence Delivery Plan, focused on five identified outcomes:

- reducing the prevalence of domestic violence, particularly in high incidence areas and communities
- increasing the rate that domestic violence is reported, particularly in high incidence areas and communities
- increasing the rate of reported domestic violence offences that are brought to justice, particularly in high incidence areas and communities
- ensuring victims of domestic violence are adequately protected and supported nation-wide
- reducing the number of domestic violence-related homicides.

2.2 Trends in domestic and family violence

The number and rate per population of reported incidents of domestic violence assault increased steadily from 1997 to 2003, but has remained stable since that time (Figure 3.1). According to the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research⁷, the increase from 1997 until 2003 does not appear to have resulted from an increased willingness to report the offence to the police or an increased willingness of the police to record the offence.

Figure 3.1



The best indicators available about the level of violence against women in Australia are from the 1996 ABS Women's Safety Survey and the more recent 2005 ABS Personal Safety Survey⁸. The surveys asked women about their experiences of violence, and found that 5.8% of women had experienced violence in the 12 months preceding the survey in 2005, compared with 7.1% in 1996.

There are also some positive indicators from research on community attitudes to domestic violence. A survey of Victorians in 1995, which was repeated in 2006, found that:⁹

- 97% of respondents in 2006 agreed that domestic violence is an offence compared with 93% in 1995
- 14% of respondents in 2006 agreed that domestic violence is a private matter to be handled in the family, compared with 18% in 1995
- 6% of respondents in 2006 agreed that women who are raped often 'ask for it', compared with 15% in 1995.

⁷ People, J, October 2005, Trends and patterns in domestic violence assaults, Crime and Justice Bulletin No 89.

⁸ Carrington K and Phillips J (2006), Domestic Violence in Australia - an overview of the issues, Parliamentary Library E-brief.

⁹ Taylor N & Mouzos M (2006) Community attitudes to violence against women survey 2006 Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra.

2.3 Current NSW policy context

2.3.1 State Plan

The current NSW policy context is defined by clear commitments in Priority R1 of the State Plan to address domestic and family violence. The State Plan emphasises that:

“Domestic and family violence is a crime and is a priority areas for government. Our responses need to support the victim, ensure the legal processes are timely and responsive to the causes of domestic and family violence. To achieve this, we will develop and implement a State-wide strategy to deal with the causes and consequences of domestic violence.

The strategy will include programs to facilitate early intervention in high risk situations, provide more options for victims and their children to escape domestic violence, and coordinate services so victims receive integrated police, legal and social assistance. Families at risk of, or suffering from, domestic violence will be able to seek help earlier and be supported through fast-tracked legal proceedings and other support services.”

The State Plan has set a target of reducing the incidence of violent crime against individuals by 10% by 2016, to be achieved through the intermediate results of:

- earlier intervention in high risk situations
- more (and better coordinated) options for victims to escape domestic and family violence
- greater support through timely legal processes.

The achievement of these results is closely linked to a number of other State Plan priorities, including reducing re-offending (R2), increasing participation and integration in community services (R4), prevention and early intervention (F4) and reducing avoidable hospital admissions (F6).

2.3.2 Election commitments

In March 2007, the NSW Government announced a suite of new or enhanced domestic and family violence initiatives to be rolled out by the NSW Police Force, other criminal justice departments and human service agencies, including a commitment to establish a central function in the Department of Premier and Cabinet to coordinate policies and service responses aimed at reducing violence against women and tackling domestic and family violence.

A number of these initiatives relate to increased powers, training and resources for NSW Police, reflecting their responsibility as the Lead Agency for Priority R1 of the State Plan. NSW Police have commenced work on a Priority Delivery Plan for R1 which will inform the development of a state-wide, inter-agency response to deal with the causes and consequences of domestic violence.

2.3.3 Regional coordination

To be successful, the State Plan must deliver right across NSW. There are a number of program responses to regional whole-of-government coordination including the Department of Premier and Cabinet Regional Coordination Program (RCP) and the DoCS Community Division Regional Strategy.

The RCP, which began in 1994, has a focus on “coordinating service delivery in a way that meets the needs of regional communities and makes the best use of government resources”. As part of the Program, the Premier and the Director-General have directed all government agencies to invest in the regional coordination network and to prioritise specific issues, services and communities that require strategic and collaborative interventions to leverage better outcomes.

Under the RCP, Regional Coordination Management Groups (RCMG) have been established for 11 regions¹⁰ around the State, with membership drawn from state government agencies. The RCMGs provide a forum for agencies to address local problems and issues that require a multi-agency response, including the development of regional plans to deliver State Plan priorities. The Human Service Senior Officers region sub-committees have also proven to be an effective forum for managing place based issues which require the joint intervention of human service and justice agencies.

As highlighted in Section 3.3, Communities Division Regional Managers have acted as a catalyst for linking planning and activities under the Violence Against Women strategy into regional service networks through their roles on human services regional officer groups and other local cross-agency forums.

Regional Delivery Plans linked to the State Plan priorities are currently being prepared by RCMGs. Communities Division Regional Managers and other senior regional officers have sought to incorporate family and domestic violence priorities into these plans and will lead the delivery of regional coordinated action related to family and domestic violence against current commitments.

2.4 Implications

Since the early 1990s, NSW has had in place policy responses to domestic and family violence that have emphasised the need for coordinated action of government services. However, the current strategic context for addressing domestic and family violence is very different to that of the early 1990s. In particular:

- there is a strong mandate from the State Plan and the March 2007 election commitments to develop results-orientated strategies linked to three clearly articulated priorities
- the NSW Police Force has clear responsibility for leading the delivery of these priorities, in cooperation with partner government agencies, the non-government sector and local communities
- the Department of Premier and Cabinet has clear responsibility for ensuring that government action remains closely aligned to the agreed priorities, and is contributing to the achievement of the State Plan results
- the Premier and the Director-General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet have directed all agencies to invest in regional coordination around priority issues (such as domestic and family violence) that require multi-agency collaborative interventions.

More broadly, the development of strategic responses in 2007 will need to take account of:

- opportunities to reduce duplication and maximise leverage from ongoing Australian Government initiatives, particularly the significant resources being applied to community education, research, and trialling new preventative and response mechanisms
- the need to progress domestic and family violence strategies within existing agency resources
- progress that has been made over the last decade in changing community attitudes and the rate of domestic violence assaults
- the achievements and limitations of previous strategies, particularly the Violence Against Women Strategy, that can be built-on to ensure measurable progress against the three State Plan priorities (see Section 3).

¹⁰ In October 2007 Human Service and Justice CEOs will consider advice on how the absence of an RCMG structure in the coastal metropolitan Sydney region and the subsequent gap in planning and co-ordination might best be managed.

3 Achievements & challenges

This section describes the state-wide and regional achievements in addressing domestic and family violence since the introduction in 1996 of the *NSW Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women*, and the challenges in moving forward from 2007 to fulfil the priorities in the State Plan.

The first three sub-sections describe the range of government actions, covering:

- government agency core business activities that respond to domestic and family violence (Section 3.1)
- state-wide coordinated action between government agencies to address domestic and family violence (Section 3.2)
- regional coordinated action between government agencies (Section 3.3).

3.1 Government agency core business

The majority of government action to respond to domestic and family violence is undertaken as part of agency's core business. In 2006/07, it was estimated that agency costs as a result of domestic and family violence were of the order of \$300 million per annum (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Agency costs as a result of domestic and family violence

Government agency	Estimated 2004-05 agency costs [1]
NSW Department of Corrective Services	\$79.7 m
NSW Department of Community Services	\$71.7 m
NSW Department of Housing	\$45.8 m
Attorney-General's Department of NSW	\$42.9 m
NSW Health	\$29.3 m
NSW Police	\$25.7 m
Legal Aid NSW	\$13.0 m
NSW Department of Education and Training	\$1.0 m
TOTAL	\$309.1 m

1: Agency estimates as reported to Human Services CEOs (NSW DoCS Review of NSW Government Domestic and Family Violence Services and Funding, 18 August 2005). Updated estimates were prepared by agencies as part of this review, but have not been presented because of the wide variations in the costing assumptions used by different agencies.

As highlighted below, much of this expenditure is associated with agencies having to deal with the 'downstream' costs that result from domestic violence, rather than allocations targeted to domestic and family violence services

3.1.1 NSW Department of Corrective Services

The major cost for the Department of Corrective Services is for perpetrator incarceration, based on an estimated 400,000 new and existing incarceration days per annum related to domestic violence offences¹¹.

The Department also allocates funding to a range of targeted domestic and family violence services, including:

- perpetrator programs (\$0.17m in 2004-05)
- prevention programs, including Yindyama LA (Dubbo), Rekindling the Spirit (Lismore) and Walking Together (Newtown/ Redfern)
- support for state-wide and regional inter-agency coordinated action (e.g. Domestic Violence Court Intervention Model - see Sections 3.2 and 3.3).

3.1.2 NSW Department of Community Services

The Department of Community Services faces significant costs associated with dealing with the consequences of domestic and family violence for children and families. The major program responses cover:

- Community Service Centres - estimated to cost \$54m per annum, with domestic violence a factor in around 32% of cases reported to DoCS
- Joint Investigation Response Teams (JIRTs) - estimated to cost \$1.8m pa for joint investigation by DoCS, NSW Police and NSW Health of child protection matters where domestic violence is a factor
- Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) - with over \$30m per annum allocated to supported accommodation services, including services for women and their children escaping domestic violence. Additional funds have been allocated to Staying Home Leaving Violence pilots (Section 3.2)
- DoCS HelpLine - estimated at around \$6.7m per annum, with around 32% of child at risk cases reported to DoCS involving domestic violence
- DV Line - \$1.4 million per annum allocated to a state-wide 24/7 free-call number that provides telephone counselling, information and referrals for people who are experiencing, or have experienced domestic violence

Rather than being purely reactive, the first three of these components include a range of early intervention and prevention strategies to address the causes and consequences of domestic violence. For example, the New England DoCS' Community Service Centre has partnered with local organisations to deliver the Tamworth Children and Domestic Violence Group Work Program - an eight week program where both mothers and children are supported through two complementary groups. SAAP initiatives include the development of support mechanisms for women as mothers in a child protection context.

The Department also allocates funding to a range of targeted domestic and family violence services, including training and education campaigns and projects funded under the:

- Area Assistance Scheme
- Integrated Case Management (see Section 3.2)
- Community Services Grants Program for families under stress or in crisis, including targeted domestic and family violence projects
- Intensive Family Based Services.

The Department of Community Services contributes 23% of the \$2.2m annual funding for the VAW Strategy, as well as support for state-wide inter-agency coordinated action such as the Domestic Violence Court Intervention Model and the Staying Home Leaving Violence pilots (see Section 3.2).

¹¹ Access Economics (2004), The Cost of Domestic Violence to the Australian Economy (Partnerships Against Domestic Violence, FaCS).

3.1.3 NSW Department of Housing

The NSW Department of Housing's core program response to domestic violence is through the provision of housing assistance, including priority public housing to applicants and current tenants escaping domestic violence (\$38m per annum), capital funding for the Crisis Accommodation Program (\$2m per annum), emergency temporary accommodation for clients referred as a result of domestic violence (\$1m per annum), as well as the provision of subsidised public and community housing for eligible clients.

More broadly, the Department is leading improved responses to the provision of housing assistance to those with greatest need under the Reshaping Public Housing reforms, including through the Housing and Human Services Accord and the Partnership Against Homelessness.

The Accord is a formal agreement between NSW Government agencies that provides an overarching framework for human service agencies – both government and non-government – to work in partnership to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our community. Currently, Shared Access arrangements are being trialled whereby other human services agencies can nominate clients for housing with a formal commitment of support. One of the priority target groups under the Accord is families with children who require support.

Under the Accord, the Department is also working with other agencies in priority locations to implement community regeneration strategies, including capacity building projects to prevent violence.

The Partnership Against Homelessness brings together a network of 13 NSW Government agencies that fund or administer programs for homeless people, including a focus on women and children escaping domestic violence.

The Department of Housing contributes 3% of the \$2.2m annual funding for the VAW Strategy, as well as support for state-wide inter-agency coordinated action such as the Staying Home Leaving Violence pilots (see Section 3.2).

3.1.4 NSW Health

NSW Health faces significant costs associated with dealing with the health consequences of domestic and family violence, including hospital emergency treatment and the strong link with drug and alcohol and mental health problems. It has been estimated that the total NSW health costs for victims, perpetrators and children affected by domestic violence is about \$132m per annum, of which around 20% is directly borne by the State Government.

A key Department response to domestic and family violence is through universal routine screening for domestic violence in services where significant numbers of women have been found to be at risk, including women attending antenatal and early childhood health services and women over 16 years attending mental health and drug and alcohol services.

The Department also allocates funding to a range of targeted domestic and family violence services, including:

- domestic and family violence training through the Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV) (see Section 3.2) [\$1.62m pa]
- Aboriginal Family Health Strategy targeting Aboriginal family violence, sexual assault and child protection (see Section 3.2) [\$1.9m pa]
- designated domestic violence counselling services in two community health centres as an initiative of Area Health Services (\$0.29m pa)

- coordination and community education initiatives funded under Public Health Outcomes Agreements with Area Health Services (e.g. Domestic Violence Coordinator in South East Sydney) (\$0.51m).

From 2007/08 onwards. \$4.1m recurrent has been allocated from the NSW health budget to the Department of Community Services (\$2.0m for integrated case management) and to Attorney-Generals Department (\$2.1m for the Court Intervention Model). In addition, from 2007-08 onwards, NSW Health will retain \$2.9 million recurrent funding for NGO Counselling and Support (\$2.0m) and other domestic violence projects (\$0.9m).

NSW Health contributes 29% of the \$2.2m annual funding for the VAW Strategy, as well as support for state-wide inter-agency coordinated action such as the Cross-Agency Domestic Violence Risk Assessment Tool (see Section 3.2).

3.1.5 NSW Police

NSW Police responded to 116,000 domestic and family violence related calls in 2004, with 33,000 of these cases reported to the DoCS Helpline, at a combined cost of around \$7.5m per annum.

A further estimated cost of \$1.4m pa is spent on police prosecutors involved in listing and prosecuting defended matters.

The Police Force also allocates funding to a range of targeted domestic and family violence services, including:

- Domestic Violence Liaison Officers - the DVLO is a specialist police officer trained in family and domestic violence, child protection procedures, victim support and court AVO processes required for the protection of victims of family violence. The role of the DVLO is:
 - to provide advice to police and victims
 - assist in referral to appropriate support agencies
 - maintain close working relationships with all support agencies
 - review and oversight all family and domestic violence reports and cases
 - assist victims through the court process for Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (ADVOs)
 - monitor repeat victims and perpetrators.

Each of the 80 Local Area Commands in NSW has one or more DVLO's. In 1994, there were 115 DVLOs.

- Commissioner's Inspectorate Family & Domestic Violence Unit - the Unit is located at Police Headquarters and provides expertise, professional development and support to Local Area Commands and Domestic Violence Liaison Officers (DVLOs) within NSW Police.

NSW Police contributes 31% of the \$2.2m annual funding for the VAW Strategy, as well as support for state-wide inter-agency coordinated action (see Section 3.2), and a wide range of regional coordinated action initiatives (see Section 3.3).

3.1.6 Attorney-General's Department of NSW

The major cost for the Attorney-General's Department is for the local court administration, operations and judiciary on Apprehended Domestic Violence Order matters [\$7.2m pa], and domestic violence victims' compensation claims [\$6.5m pa]. The Department has the lead role in legislative reforms around domestic violence, and managed the Violence Against Women Strategy up until 2005, including the development of Domestic Violence Interagency Guidelines (see Section 3.2).

The Department also allocates funding to a range of targeted domestic and family violence services, including:

- domestic violence counselling services (\$0.84m)
- domestic violence specialist project (e.g. Mt Druitt Family Violence Support Service (\$0.3m); Sutherland Court Assistance Scheme and Research Project (\$0.11m); Apprehended Violence Legal Issues Coordinating Committee)
- Crime Prevention Division grants and activities targeting domestic violence (\$0.11m).

The Attorney-General's Department contributes 15% of the \$2.2m annual funding for the VAW Strategy, as well as support for state-wide inter-agency coordinated action such as the lead role for the Domestic Violence Court Intervention Model (see Section 3.2).

3.1.7 Legal Aid NSW

An estimated \$6.5m pa of core Legal Aid NSW criminal and family law funding was spent on providing services to applicants and defendants in Apprehended Domestic Violence Order matters, breached orders (criminal) matters, and family law matters involving domestic/ family violence. A further \$10.8m was spent on care and protection matters, many of which involve domestic and family violence as a factor.

It is not possible to estimate the costs to Legal Aid NSW for the provision of legal services in other domestic and family violence-related criminal matters, however it is likely that funding for legal services to defendants exceeds that provided to women and children who have experienced domestic or family violence.

Legal Aid NSW also allocates funding to a range of targeted domestic and family violence services, including:

- the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program which provides court assistance services to women victims of domestic violence and their children [\$4.3m pa] (see Section 3.2)
- funding to the Community Legal Centres Program for the Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (DVAS), and domestic violence services provided through the Women's Legal Services NSW and Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Service [\$0.97m pa]. DVAS and Wirringa Baiya are funded specifically to provide legal services to women and children in domestic violence matters, whereas Women's Legal Services NSW is funded to provide women in NSW with legal assistance services across a range of legal issues affecting women (for example, family law, credit and debt).

3.1.8 NSW Department of Education and Training

The NSW Department of Education and Training provides a range of generalist programs and services that respond to, or are impacted by domestic and family violence, including:

- Personal Development, Health and Physical Education programs in schools (\$77.8m pa)
- school behaviour programs (\$13.0m pa)
- school counselling service (\$3.4m pa)
- mentoring programs for school students (\$0.3m pa).

In addition, there are a number of specific initiatives targeting domestic and family violence, including training programs and resources for delivery by TAFE NSW colleges to people who may work with domestic violence victims, and education programs such as the Machismo program for boys.

3.2 State-wide coordinated action

As part of the NSW Violence Against Women Strategy, government agencies have been involved in the development and implementation of a range of state-wide coordinated actions.

Funding for the VAW strategy (Table 3.2) has supported the development of a number of these initiatives, as well as regional and local responses coordinated by the network of 18 Regional Violence Prevention Specialist positions (see Section 3.3).

Table 3.2: Violence Against Women Strategy funding

Agencies	2005-06	
DoCS (Lead)	\$487,268	23%
NSW Police	\$668,272	31%
NSW Health	\$630,031	29%
Attorney-General's	\$315,881	15%
Housing	\$61,650	3%
TOTAL	\$2,163,102	100%

At the state-wide level, the major initiatives for coordinated action have been concentrated in the last four years of the VAW strategy. These include:

- **Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model (Lead: Attorney-General's Department)**
The Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model (DVICM) was developed to improve the efficiency and quality of the criminal justice response to domestic violence, through agreed protocols and services for:
 - improved policing (evidence collection, application for an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order, proactive arrest and charge policy with strict bail conditions, next day contact with the victim for crisis support and proactive case management)
 - improved court assistance support (ensuring victim safety and support through Victims Advocate services, providing for witness preparation)
 - improved management of local court activities (prosecution of domestic violence matters by specially-trained police prosecutors, establishing a benchmark for resolution of cases within 12 weeks from the initial hearing to sentencing)
 - reduce re-offending (ensuring where a matter gets to sentencing, offenders are required to participate in Corrective Services domestic violence perpetrator programs (not in lieu of sentence).

The two-year trial of the DVICM began in Wagga Wagga and Campbelltown in September 2005, with funding of around \$2.1m per annum. Funding was originally provided by NSW Police, Attorney-General's, DoCS and the NSW Department of Corrective Services, although it now funded by NSW Treasury.

The Crime Prevention Division of the Attorney-General's Department is currently establishing a project to investigate the options and implications of mainstreaming the DVICM protocols and services as part of the core business of partner government agencies, including the links to the Police Standard Operating Procedures, the Legal Aid Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program and the Department of Corrective Services Perpetrator Program.

While a full evaluation of the DVICM by BOCSAR is not due to be completed until December 2007, early indications from police and court data are very positive:

- since July 2006, the percentage of defendants entering early guilty pleas (at their second appearance) has risen from 17% to 40%
- delays in the court list at Campbelltown court have been reduced from 23 weeks to 14 weeks.

- **Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) framework (Lead: DoCS/ NSW Housing)**

SHLV is an approach that helps women and children stay safely in their homes without their violent partner. The framework entails:

- the removal of the violent partner from the home
- keeping the violent partner out of the home, over time
- addressing the immediate and longer-term safety issues for the woman and her children
- longer-term support for the woman and her children, and the prevention of future violence.

The framework is based on research funded in 2004 by DoCS through the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse, to find out from women who had left a domestic violence relationship what would enable them and other women to remain in their homes. The specific practices that underpin the framework are:

- protocols between key agencies to ensure a coordinated response to the removal of the violent partner, and addressing safety issues for the woman and her children
- a local community campaign to increase awareness of, and support for the option of staying home safely
- the provision of outreach support by all agencies
- safety plans for the women and children which may include enhanced home security: the changing of locks, installation of a phone alarm linked to key agencies, and security doors.

Three pilots have been established to put the key elements of the framework into practice, and to test and evaluate different service approaches to implementing this framework:

- Bega, commenced in October 2004, auspiced by Bega Women's Refuge and funded through the Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP)
- South Eastern Sydney, commenced in May 2005, auspiced by the Department of Housing, and funded through SAAP
- Western Sydney, has just received funding from the National Crime Prevention Program (NCPP) and will be operational by the end of the year, auspiced by the WASH House in Mt Druitt.

An evaluation is in progress for Bega and South Eastern Sydney, with a more detailed evaluation of SHLV in development, to inform the development of a best practice service framework.

NSW Housing is currently investigating options for Shared Access arrangements under the Housing and Human Services Accord, whereby other government agencies and their NGO partners could have nomination rights for public housing properties for domestic violence clients where support arrangements were in place, underpinned by the SHLV framework.

- **Risk assessment and information sharing (Lead: NSW Health)**
In August 2005, a domestic and family violence planning workshop with Senior Officers was convened by the Communities Division of DoCS to identify priority state-wide government actions. One of the key priorities identified was the lack of a tool that appropriately identified the full range of domestic violence risk factors and the consequent interventions that might be required to break the cycle of violence within families.

In March 2006 the Government decided to commence the development of a cross-agency tool within current agency resources. The tool is intended to be used by service providers in NSW Health, NSW Police, DoCS, and the Attorney-General's Department and other agencies at appropriate points where domestic violence is already identified, in order to:

- assess the risk of further violence
- assess the needs of the victims, including children
- identify existing interventions and service options designed to reduce the risk of violence and address the needs of victims
- provide appropriate referrals and/or reports
- liaise with other agencies to develop a clearer picture of the risks (including documentation of decision-making processes, sharing information between agencies and a standard format for data).

A detailed project plan has been prepared by the partner agencies, with a target date for trialling the tool, of May 2008.

- **Integrated Case Management (Lead: DoCS)**
Integrated Case Management (previously funded under the Community Solutions and Crime Prevention Strategy), aims to provide an innovative multi-agency response to social issues, particularly crime prevention, affecting targeted priority communities in NSW. After 2006, the original time limited Community Solutions projects that had been funded as part of the Strategy either ended, or were handed over to be sustained by local organisations. DoCS continues to provide funding of around \$3m pa for new Integrated Case Management projects targeting domestic and family violence, at nine locations across NSW (Green Valley, Wyong, Canterbury/ Bankstown, Bourke, Mt Druitt, Wollongong/ Shellharbour, Brisbane Waters, Manning/ Great Lakes and Bellambi/ Corrimal).

A number of different approaches have been adopted to integrated case management reflecting regional partnership arrangements and local service systems. For example, the Wyong Domestic Assault Response Team (DART) involves both DoCS and Police working with both the victim and the perpetrator of violence, leading to a significant reduction in the number of incidents in families with a chronic history of domestic violence. For example, the number of domestic violence incidents in one family dropped from 44 to one incident after DART involvement, while the number of incidents in another family dropped from 24 to zero. There has also been a reduction in the rate at which victims withdraw their applications to court for Apprehended Violence Orders, suggesting families are gaining a better understanding of the impact domestic violence has on their children and are acting to protect them.

The Mt Druitt Family Violence Service provides integrated case management through a partnership between DoCS, Mt Druitt Police and Western Sydney Area Health. The Service was established from the need for a coordinated response to address family violence in Mt Druitt. The service currently averages around 120 referrals per month, mostly from NSW Police.

- **Workforce development**

A number of NSW Government agencies are involved in providing training for practitioners - both within their agency and with partner government and non-government agencies. For example, NSW Health funds the Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV), administered by Sydney West Area Health Service. ECAV provides state-wide specialised training, consultancy and resource development for NSW Health and interagency workers who provide services to children and adults who have experienced sexual assault, domestic/ family violence and/or physical and emotional abuse and neglect. NSW Police and DoCS also provide specialist training for officers and case workers in recognising and responding to domestic violence.

Senior Officers of government agencies have discussed the need for a more consistent, coordinated approach to training of practitioners, although there is no current state-wide interagency action plan for DFV training.

- **Community education**

The Violence Against Women Specialist Unit, both within the Attorney-General's Department and DoCS, coordinated a number of state-wide community education campaigns focused on domestic and family violence.

The successful "Violence Against Women: Its Against All the Rules" campaign used prominent sporting identities on posters, billboards and resources to promote the unacceptability of violence against women.

During 2005/06, DoCS coordinated a state-wide campaign to stop violence against women which involved around 100 events across NSW, the NSW Violence Against Women Prevention Awards and grants to 87 local domestic violence committees.

- **Domestic Violence Interagency Guidelines**

The Domestic Violence Interagency Guidelines were developed by the VAW Specialist Unit as a web-based resource on the processes, procedures and responsibilities of agencies involved in addressing domestic violence. The Guidelines are intended "to provide workers in the domestic violence field with information about the various policies and guidelines of key agencies".

- **Aboriginal Family Violence**

A number of NSW Government agencies have specific strategies for responding to Aboriginal family violence. NSW Health continues to provide annual funding of \$1.9m for initiatives in Area Health Services under the Aboriginal Family Health Strategy to address family violence, sexual assault and child protection.

In 2006, the VAW Strategy received Australian Government funding under the Indigenous Family Violence Partnerships Program to develop and implement three programs across NSW, focussed on building the capacity of Aboriginal women and young people to address issues of violence in their communities.

More broadly, the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs is focussed on the regional roll-out of *Two Ways Together* and has lead responsibly for the F1 Priority Delivery Plan to improve health, education and social outcomes for Aboriginal people. A key objective under F1 is to improve responses to Aboriginal family violence - recognising that the reported domestic violence assault rate among Aboriginal women is six times the State average.

3.3 Regional coordinated action

Over the ten years of the VAW Strategy, an extensive range of local and regional activities have been undertaken across the full spectrum of issues related to violence against women - primarily focussed on community awareness raising, advocacy and community activism, facilitation of local partnerships and support for small-scale initiatives. These achievements have been extensively documented in a series of reports of the VAW achievements (2000-2001; 2001-2003; and 2003-2006).

The network of 18 Senior Regional Strategy Officers funded under the VAW Strategy has acted as a catalyst for many of these activities. Examples include:

- **Community education**

The VAW Strategy has contributed to a range of community education initiatives, often in partnership with NGOs and community members through local domestic violence committees.

The descriptions of these regional activities on the VAW Strategy website highlight that most community education activities are conducted as local campaigns - targeting specific local issues or events. For example, in the Northern Rivers the VAW Strategy worked with local stakeholders to develop a 'Sexual Assault Prevention and Community Awareness Campaign' in response to reports of drink spiking and sexual assault against school-aged girls and backpackers.

- **Community activism**

The VAW Unit and SRSOs have coordinated annual activities as part of the *NSW 16 Days of Activism to Stop Violence Against Women*. The campaign brings together a number of activities, commencing on 25 November on International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and ending on 10 December, World Human Rights Day. The *16 days* also includes Stop Domestic Violence Day and the Violence Against Women Prevention Awards.

The campaign showcased the high volume of local community activities and received good media coverage, particularly in regional areas.

- **Capacity building with communities**

The VAW Strategy has supported a wide range of local initiatives with targeted populations to increase their understanding and capacity to respond to domestic and family violence. Examples include:

- volunteer court support programs in remote towns
- development of new educational resources using puppets to raise awareness of family violence issues in local Aboriginal communities
- creative arts projects that provide a forum for women to come together to discuss issues of family violence
- information resources for women from CALD backgrounds
- forums and seminars to identify and raise issues related to abuse of older women.

To varying degrees, Senior Regional Strategy Officers have also led projects to promote integrated regional responses to domestic violence. In particular:

- The Hunter Domestic Violence Taskforce Project, which has the endorsement of the Regional Co-ordination Management Group, involves working with Police and other government departments to develop a whole-of-

government integrated framework for responding to domestic violence in the Hunter.

- The Integrated Case Response Engagement (Domestic Violence) Model for the Illawarra involves working in partnership with the Lake Illawarra Area Police Command, the Illawarra Women's Health Centre and Wollongong City Council to develop and implement an integrated domestic violence case management and response model. The model will involve whole of community strategies to address domestic violence, particularly amongst those families with repeat incidents.
- The Western Sydney Integrated Response to Domestic Violence project, which started in August 2005, is a partnership with the Cumberland Women's Health Centre and Police and involves a support worker being based at the Women's Health Centre as a central point of referral for domestic violence cases.

More broadly, the Communities Division Managers, Regional Strategy have worked effectively with other senior regional managers through regional human services senior officer groups and the RCMGs to adopt a more systemic approach to regional coordination. This has been most successful in relation to:

- funded pilots of integration models (eg ICM, DVICM, SHLV - see Section 3.2)
- place coordination initiatives
- incorporating family and domestic violence priorities into Regional Priorities Statements and as a standing item on some RCMG / HSSOG agendas

At the same time, a number of challenges remain including¹²:

- variability in the necessary strategic representation on VAW Regional Reference Groups to progress a uniform regional coordination agenda
- variability among RCMGs and HSSOGs in prioritising domestic violence
- a lack of sub-regional coordination structures to consistently engage with operational managers eg Police local area commanders, DoCS Community Service Centre managers, DET School Education Directors.

Numerous evaluations have been undertaken of regional initiatives, including:

- Evaluation of the Dubbo Domestic Violence Project (2004)
- Evaluation of the Penrith Pilot Program for Perpetrators of Domestic Violence (2004)
- Evaluation of the Brisbane Waters DVIRT (Domestic Violence Intervention Response Team) (2003)
- Evaluation Report of the NSW Police Northern Region Domestic Violence Referral Project (DVRP) (2003)
- Evaluation of the Tamworth Domestic Violence Project (2003)
- Evaluation of the Lismore Community Co-ordinated Response to Domestic Abuse Pilot Project (2002)
- Evaluation of the Canterbury DVPASS (Domestic Violence Proactive Support Service) (2003)
- Evaluation of the Green Valley Domestic Violence pilot program (2004).

All of these evaluations highlighted the potential for improved responses to domestic and family violence where regional coordinated action is undertaken between government agencies. Most of these local evaluations were reviewed by

¹² Communities Division Regional Managers Group (unpublished), Notes from 17/9/07 workshop

the NSW Ombudsman, as part of its report on improving police practice to respond to domestic violence¹³. In relation to the need for an effective interagency response, the Ombudsman recommended that:

“The Commissioner of Police provides a copy of this report to the Human Services Chief Executive Officers Forum, and that the Forum considers the benefits of implementing specific domestic violence interagency models and/or practice in NSW, particularly in locations identified as high-risk, such as:

- integrated case management and/or case-tracking*
- wider implementation of the Domestic Violence Proactive Support Service (DVPASS) mechanism*
- co-location of police officers, child protection workers and domestic violence victim support workers.”*

However, we are not aware of any meta-evaluations or cost-benefit analysis to guide decision-making about which of the wide range of regionally-developed models should be adopted. It is also not clear from the existing evidence, how the wide range of local community education, activism and capacity building activities undertaken as part of the VAW Strategy are meant to support a clear, uniform agenda for coordinated action at the regional level.

3.4 Achievements

The descriptions of agency core business and coordinated action presented in Sections 3.1 to 3.3 highlight that significant resources have been applied in responding to, and addressing domestic and family violence in NSW, often as part of the Violence Against Women Strategy.

However, it is difficult to quantify many of the achievements of the current VAW Strategy, particularly at the regional level. In fact, much of the evidence is piecemeal and anecdotal, and where systematic evidence does exist, it relates to evaluations of specific initiatives or components of the Strategy.

In part, this reflects the fact that there are no measurable objectives for the current Strategy beyond the high-level aims, and we are not aware of any monitoring and evaluation framework against which progress and achievements can be assessed. A draft evaluation framework was developed by the Premier’s Department in 1996 based on a broad results logic - however, it does not appear to have been finalised or used.

Despite the limitations with evidence, the earlier evaluations of the VAW Strategy (1998, 2001), and the published reports on the achievements of the Strategy (2002, 2003 and 2007), clearly highlight that the structures put in place and the activities undertaken were appropriate to the challenges faced over the last 10 years - namely getting issues of domestic violence integrated into the core business of government agencies and facilitating locally-developed activities to inform the development of state-wide coordinated action.

Compared to the environment prior to the VAW Strategy, the government response to domestic and family violence in 2007 can be characterised by:

- strong recognition by CEOs of human service and criminal justice agencies of the social and economic cost of domestic and family violence, and the need

¹³ NSW Ombudsman (December 2006), Domestic Violence - Improving Police Practice.

for changes to core business activities to better address the causes and consequences of this violence (see Section 3.1)

- an emerging agenda of state-wide coordinated action that is being progressed by human service and criminal justice agency Senior Officers focussed around a small number of key interventions that evidence and experience suggest are most likely to address the causes and consequences of domestic and family violence (see Section 3.2) – covering:
 - *Risk assessment and information sharing protocols where violence is already identified* - common approaches to assessing risk of further violence and identifying existing interventions and service options to reduce risk and address the needs of victims
 - *Integrated case management* – multi-agency, coordinated, early intervention case work to prevent escalation of domestic violence among identified high-risk target groups and in targeted high-risk communities
 - *Criminal justice interventions* - standard operating procedures for policing and prosecution of domestic violence crimes, including appropriate victim support during the criminal justice process and programs for perpetrators
 - *Staying Home Leaving Violence* - a consistent, proactive approach to supporting domestic violence victims who require interventions to allow them to remain in their home or access other housing assistance
 - *Workforce development* - a consistent, coordinated approach to training of practitioners around issues of domestic violence
- support for an extensive range of local and regional activities across the full spectrum of issues related to violence against women - primarily focussed on community awareness raising, advocacy and community activism, facilitation of partnerships and support for small-scale initiatives.

In recognising these achievements, the key question for the future is how well placed the current VAW Strategy and structures are to meet the challenges in moving forward from 2007 to fulfil the priorities in the State Plan.

3.5 Challenges

As highlighted in Section 2.4, the current policy context raises a number of specific challenges in moving forward from 2007 - in particular the need to:

- progress coordinated action within existing agency resources in ways that can best deliver the State Plan commitments related to domestic violence
- align this coordinated action with the broader R1 Priority Delivery Plan for reducing the incidence of violent crime against individuals, and the NSW Police responsibility for leading the delivery of this Plan in cooperation with partner government agencies, the non-government sector and local communities
- introduce a centralised function in the Department of Premier and Cabinet to ensure that government action remains closely aligned to the agreed priorities, and is contributing to the achievement of the State Plan results

- leverage off the existing regional coordination structures (such as the DPCs Regional Coordination Program and the DoCS Communities Division Regional Strategy) to drive cross-agency collaborative interventions at the regional level.

Based on the evidence reviewed to date, there appear to be a number of areas where the current VAW strategy and structures are not well placed to meet these challenges. In particular:

- There is no strategic policy framework that defines the priorities for coordinated action to deal with domestic violence. While an emerging agenda of state-wide coordinated action has been progressed by human service and criminal justice agency Senior Officers, the absence of a strategic policy framework is increasingly likely to contribute to the inefficient use of scarce resources, a proliferation of local pilots and missed opportunities for joined-up solutions. Potential risks areas include:
 - a lack of integration between the different components of criminal justice responses, e.g. the Domestic Violence Court Intervention Model and the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Program
 - a lack of integration between the integrated case management approaches focused on early intervention and the victim support approaches used in criminal justice responses
 - a lack of consistency and coordination in different agency approaches to training of practitioners around issues of domestic violence.
- There is currently no results-based accountability framework to ensure that government action remains closely aligned to the agreed priorities and is contributing to the achievement of measurable results
- The governance structure provided by the existing VAW State Management Group has supported accountability for output-based regional plans, but has had a limited focus on accountability for state-wide results.
- The central VAW Unit, both within the Communities Division of DoCS and the previous Unit within Attorney-General's Department, has undertaken valuable policy development work and provided project management support to the regional program. However, there is currently no clear mandate or mechanism for linking a central coordination function to either the State Plan or the R1 Priority Delivery Plan.
- There is a risk that the current regional staffing and planning arrangements for the VAW Strategy perpetuate diffuse regional responses, which are not aligned to state-wide, strategic priorities.

3.6 Priorities for community stakeholders

As part of the Review, community stakeholders were invited to prepare written submissions on:

- the role of a central co-ordination function in the Department of Premier and Cabinet and its relationship to government service delivery agencies
- improving collaboration across Government and non-government agencies responsible for the delivery of priorities and services in this area
- options for ongoing community input into setting strategic directions and building the relationship between the central co-ordination function and community partners

In total, 41 written submissions were received from a wide spectrum of peak bodies involved in domestic and family violence and individual community members (see Attachment 1).

The written submissions highlighted:

- Strong support for the development of a strategic policy framework for addressing domestic and family violence situated within a broader approach to the elimination of all forms of violence against women. Community respondents highlighted:
 - that many women experience multiple forms of violence and a broad focus is needed not just on domestic and family violence, but sexual assault, violence in public spaces and violence in the workplace
 - the need for a more strategic, evidence-based policy framework to address violence against women. Some respondents expressed concern that the State Plan (and the current Review) appeared to have a narrow focus on just one form of violence against women - namely domestic and family violence. Community stakeholders want to ensure that improved coordinated action to address domestic and family violence does not take resources away from existing action to address other forms of violence against women.
- Strong support for the establishment of a central co-ordination function within the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Community respondents highlighted:
 - that DPC should have a mandate to develop a strategic policy framework linked to clear performance measures, prepare an action plan to develop policies and practice guidelines to implement the framework, and to coordinate the rollout of priority interventions (eg Staying Home Leaving Violence). This does not mean that the DPC would manage all domestic violence programs - instead it could be mandated to ensure that there are consistent principles and good practices across all programs.
 - DPC must have oversight responsibilities across all government departments. There is a perception among a number of respondents that NSW government line agencies have been given this responsibility in the past even though they do not have expertise in violence against women, and have not demonstrated adequate leadership.
 - a range of specific suggestions about how this function should be administered - including links to the Office for Women, Ministerial accountability, staff grades and the establishment of separate Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Task Forces.
- Strong support for the 18 regional violence prevention specialist positions who are perceived as providing a key role in co-ordination of campaigns (e.g. 16 Days of Activism), events, seminars, training and specific projects. Respondents highlighted that:
 - the VAW regional specialist positions are vital in authentically translating the commitment of a whole of government response to the community level
 - the current number and grading of regional specialists is inadequate to facilitate a statewide whole of government response
 - there is a need for an increased number of Indigenous-specific positions

- VAW regional specialists need clear links to the central coordination function
- there is a need to embed any state-wide domestic and family violence strategy into regional planning and reporting processes.
- The importance of ensuring that the community sector is an equal partner in coordinated action. Respondents highlighted that:
 - non-government agencies are key service providers for women who experience violence
 - the community sector has developed considerable expertise which must be included in all levels of policy development and co-ordination – from high level co-ordinating and advisory functions to local initiatives
 - an integrated response to domestic and family violence requires commitment and input for all agencies - government and non-government
- The need to establish better community consultation mechanisms. While respondents highlighted the need for further community consultation about the most appropriate mechanisms, suggestions included:
 - establishment of a ministerial council with membership from government and non-government agencies (eg establishing a Premier's Consultative Council on Violence Against Women)
 - establishment of an NGO Reference Group to facilitate input from community service providers into a ministerial council
 - greater support for Regional Reference Groups
- Consideration should be given to state-wide coordinated action models adopted in Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT. There is a perception among respondents that NSW has slipped behind other jurisdictions after having been a leader in the field in the 1980s.
- The importance of ensuring that coordinated action appropriately responds to diversity. Respondents highlighted that:
 - Government action must acknowledge and respond to the different experiences of Indigenous women in communities across NSW who face higher and more serious levels of violence than non-Indigenous women.
 - Culturally and linguistically diverse women and women with disability also have different experiences and needs which must also be taken into account in a meaningful and respectful way.
 - Women in regional, rural and remote areas have different experiences and needs to those in metropolitan areas
- The need for adequate funding & resources. Respondents highlighted that:
 - The current budget for coordinated action was inadequate to be able to research, develop, implement, or evaluate innovative approaches to responding to and preventing a problem of such as scale as violence against women
 - There is a need for increased funding and resourcing of local Domestic Violence Liaison Committees and access to small grants to support local initiatives.

4 Achieving better results

This section describes opportunities for achieving better results in addressing family and domestic violence, building on the foundations provided by the Violence Against Women Strategy, existing regional coordination arrangements and new government commitments, whilst addressing the challenges facing government and the priorities of community stakeholders outlined in the previous section.

4.1 Core components of future options

The evidence from the review has highlighted six core components that need to form the basis of any future approach to coordinating NSW Government action to address domestic and family violence. These components are:

- **Domestic and Family Violence Strategic Policy Framework** – that defines the priorities for coordinated action to deal with domestic and family violence.
- **Central coordination function** – located within the Department of Premier and Cabinet with responsibility for ensuring that government action remains closely aligned to the agreed priorities, and is contributing to the achievement of the State Plan results.
- **State-wide service systems** – establishment of the mandate, policies, procedures and resourcing arrangements for delivery of priority actions through state-wide changes to line agency service systems (including Police, DoCS, Health, Attorney-General's, Legal Aid, Housing, Corrective Services and Education and Training).
- **Regional service system** – delivery of priority actions at the regional level through adoption and implementation of state-wide policies and procedures within government agencies, and through their service arrangements with NGO partners.
- **Governance arrangements** - establishment of mechanisms for ongoing cross-agency decision-making, including state-wide, regional and local mechanisms for raising, escalating and resolving issues.
- **NGO and community inputs** – establishment and ongoing resourcing of relationships with community partners to deliver priority actions, including an appropriate level of community input into setting and reviewing strategic priorities.

Conceptually, these six components are illustrated in Figure 4.1. Issues associated with each of these components are presented in Section 4.2, with proposals for improvement presented in Section 4.3.

NSW Government's results

Reduced violent crimes against individuals (R1)

Reduced domestic and family violence

Links to related strategies to reduce violence against women

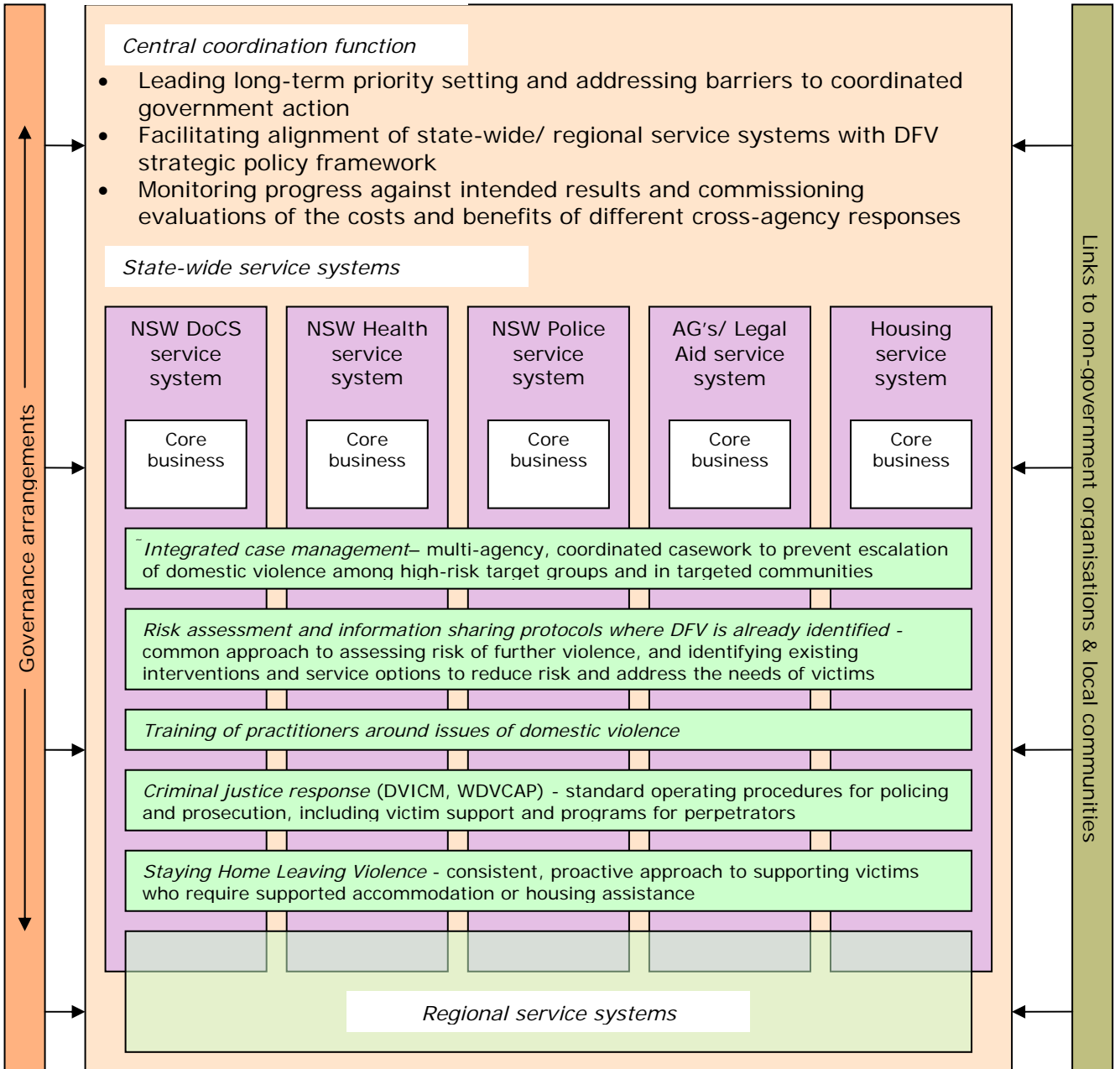
Intermediate results - linked to DFV strategic policy framework + R1 Priority Delivery Plan

Earlier intervention in high risk situations

More (and better coordinated) options for victims to escape DFV

Greater support through timely legal processes

Coordinated government action



4.2 Issues

Within each of the core components, the review identified a number of issues that need to be considered before selecting a preferred option for future coordinated government action.

4.2.1 Strategic policy framework

There is a broad consensus among stakeholders that coordinated government action to address family and domestic violence needs to be underpinned by a strategic policy framework that includes:

- core principles that underpin coordinated government action to address domestic and family violence
- a small set of priority interagency actions that evidence and experience suggest are most likely to address the causes and consequences of domestic and family violence (for example, the five areas highlighted in Section 3.3)
- a results-based accountability framework that makes explicit the indicators and targets that will be used to assess the success of coordinated government action - overall, and for each of the priority interagency action areas.

However, there are divergent views from stakeholders in different sectors about the core principles, and the interpretation of the evidence about 'what works'. In practice, this leads to different views about:

- whether the strategic policy framework should focus solely on domestic and family violence, or whether it should be part of a broader policy framework to address all forms of violence against women
- whether the principles for the strategic policy framework should primarily be drawn from criminal justice practice, or the broader intervention focus associated with integrated case management
- how the principles for the strategic policy framework align with the principles underpinning the broader policy framework for addressing violence against individuals (as part of the State Plan R1 priority delivery plan).

While it is not part of this review to examine the appropriate, evidence-based response to these issues, it is clear that the continuation of different 'agendas' will undermine coordinated government action and waste scarce government resources.

In our opinion, the current lack of a robust evidence-base highlights that the current debates are predominately philosophical in nature. In such a context, less attention should be given to the principles in the strategic policy framework, and more to negotiated agreement about results-based accountability for the small set of priority interagency actions. Ongoing debates about principles and approaches can then be re-focused to just two central questions:

- are the available resources being appropriately aligned with the agreed priority areas for interagency action
- are these actions delivering the intended results.

4.2.2 Central coordination function within DPC

There is a broad consensus among stakeholders that the central coordination function within the Department of Premier and Cabinet should operate at the strategic level, with responsibility for service delivery remaining within line agencies.

A key issue for the establishment of this function is to ensure alignment with the governance arrangements and broader responses to addressing all forms of violence against women under the R1 Priority Delivery Plan covering strategies to:

- Better coordinate resources dedicated to crime prevention (R1 Strategy 1)
- Improve capability to respond to crime (R1 Strategy 2)
- Reduce alcohol and drug related crime (R1 Strategy 3)
- Reduce domestic and family violence (R1 Strategy 4)

In particular, the NSW Police Force, as the lead agency for R1, has allocated 5 dedicated officers to form a Strategic Domestic Violence Unit to target repeat offenders (R1-4.2.2). The focus of this unit will be on improving policing practice (R1 Initiative 4.2) and has an operational focus, as distinct from the whole-of-government coordination function that the Government has committed to establishing within the DPC.

To avoid confusion and potential duplication of effort, it is essential that the new central coordination function within the Department of Premier and Cabinet is referenced in future updates of the R1 Priority Delivery Plan, particularly in relation to Initiative R1 - 4.1 which is focused on ensuring a coordinated, integrated interagency response to domestic and family violence.

4.2.3 State-wide service systems

There is a broad consensus among stakeholders that the delivery of coordinated government action should occur within the service systems of line agencies, whose core business includes responses to domestic and family violence - namely:

- NSW Police Service
- NSW Department of Community Services
- NSW Health
- Attorney-General's Department of NSW
- Legal Aid NSW
- NSW Department of Housing
- NSW Department of Corrective Services
- NSW Department of Education and Training.

Key responsibilities of these line agencies could include:

- incorporating state-wide priorities into core business activities, in line with agreed responsibilities and available resources
- facilitating partnerships with the community sector to support the agency's delivery of the state-wide priorities
- monitoring progress and troubleshooting barriers and gaps with the agency's delivery of the state-wide priorities, including escalating issues that can not be resolved bilaterally
- reporting agency results and highlighting options for improvements that could be adopted state-wide.

Within the currently allocated resources, stakeholders highlighted a number of options for supporting line agencies to meet these responsibilities. These included:

- Mainstreaming - utilising the resources that are already available for core business activities. Issues with this approach include:

- a number of the proposed state-wide priorities are currently based on pilots or fixed-budget programs that would be difficult to replicate without additional resources
 - the implications of mainstreaming the proposed state-wide priorities is currently unknown. As a starting point, the Attorney-General's Department has commenced a project to look at options and implications of mainstreaming the Domestic Violence Court Intervention model into the core business activities of local courts. NSW Housing has undertaken preliminary investigations into options for linking Staying Home Leaving Violence into Shared Access arrangements, under the Housing and Human Services Accord
 - the policies, procedures and resource arrangements for each of the proposed state-wide priorities is currently not systematically documented in a way that would allow line agencies to readily adopt them.
- employing Senior Project Officers for state-wide priorities – re-directing current resources to support a teams of Senior Project Officers linked to or each of the state-wide priorities. The Project Officers would support line agencies to meet these responsibilities by developing and documenting the agreed policies, procedures, tools and resourcing arrangements for each priority, and then supporting line agencies to integrate these into their business. NSW Health currently has a Project Officer progressing the development of the common risk assessment tool (see Section 3.2) and the Attorney-General's Department has a Project Officer progressing the development of the criminal justice responses linked to the DV Court Intervention model. Issues with this approach include:
 - whether the Project Officers should be located within the line agency with lead responsibility for each priority area, to maximise access to specialist expertise – e.g. NSW Health (Risk assessment); AG's (criminal justice responses); DoCS (Integrated Case Management); NSW Housing (Staying Home Leaving Violence), NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence (Workforce training)
 - whether the Project Officers should be located within NSW Police to maximise alignment with the broader R1 Priority Delivery Plan, and to promote consistency in the approaches across the state-wide priorities.

4.2.4 Regional service systems

Most stakeholders agree that changes are needed to the current regional activities under the VAW Strategy to ensure a greater emphasis on regional coordination activities explicitly linked to agreed state-wide results - including:

- facilitating cross-agency adoption of the state-wide priorities across the region, including leveraging additional resources
- promoting links with the community sector to support the implementation of the state-wide priorities across the region
- monitoring progress and troubleshooting barriers and gaps, including escalating issues to the Regional Coordination Management Group or human services regional officer groups where issues can not be resolved locally
- reporting results and highlighting options for improvements that could be adopted state-wide.

However, there are divergent views about the preferred arrangements for ensuring appropriate regional coordination. Within the currently allocated resources, stakeholders highlighted a number of options for supporting regional coordination. These included:

- Mainstreaming regional coordination through Senior Officer participation in the existing 11 Regional Coordination Management Groups. Issues with this approach include:
 - the capacity of regional Senior Officers in line agencies to give sufficient time to the implementation of the state-wide priorities at the regional level, in the absence of Project Officer support
 - different views about the appropriate regional boundaries - which vary between line agencies.

- employing Regional Coordination Officers – re-directing current VAW Strategy resources to support a team of Regional Coordination Officers. The officers would support regional Senior Officers in line agencies to ensure regional practices are aligned with the state-wide priorities. Issues with this approach include:
 - whether the Regional Coordination Officers should be located within NSW Police, to maximise alignment with the broader R1 Priority Delivery Plan
 - whether the Regional Coordination Officers should be located within the regional structure of the Communities Division of DoCS, to build on their mandate and experience for progressing whole-of-community responses to complex social issues
 - whether the Regional Coordination Officers should be located within the Department of Premier and Cabinet’s Regional Coordination Program to build on their mandate and experience for progressing regional coordination of issues that require strategic and collaborative interventions
 - whether the Regional Coordination Officers should be spread evenly across the state or concentrated around domestic violence hotspots - potentially corresponding to the hotspots identified by NSW Police for the roll-out of the 35 additional Domestic Violence Liaison Officers.

Stakeholders highlighted a range of strengths and limitations of the mainstreaming option, as well as the various options for regional coordination - although there is not a clear evidence base that has led to a consensus option.

4.2.5 Governance

While the governance structure provided by the existing VAW Strategy State Management Group has supported accountability for output-based regional plans, there is a need to better align future governance arrangements to the core components outlined in Section 4.1.

As highlighted in Section 4.2.2, a key issue for the success of future coordinated action is balancing the need for alignment with the governance arrangements under the R1 Priority Delivery Plan, and maximising the benefits from a new central coordination function in DPC. In particular:

- NSW Police will convene collaborative Project Management Groups with relevant partner agencies to deliver the specific strategies outlined in the R1 Priority Delivery Plan. In relation to domestic and family violence (R1 Strategy 4), it would be possible for working parties established for state-wide priorities to either operate under the umbrella of Project Management Groups within the NSW Police Force, or as project groups linked to the DPC central coordination function.

- The Commissioner of Police will chair a State Plan Priority Delivery Committee for Priorities R1 and R3. The Committee will meet quarterly to discuss progress against the key milestones and involve the Leaders of Project Management Groups as well as senior officers from key partner

agencies. The Commissioner will advise the Criminal Justice and Human Services CEO Forums on proposed strategies and developments and report to the Cabinet Standing Committee on State Plan Performance.

In the context of the DFV strategic policy framework, governance arrangements could operate as part of the State Plan Priority Delivery Committee, or a separate Senior Officers Group, reporting to human services and justice agency CEOs.

The preferred approach should be chosen on the basis of being most likely to facilitate cross-agency decision-making and raising, escalating and resolving issues related to the implementation of the new DFV strategic policy framework. To avoid duplication, clear reporting arrangements will need to be established between the Commissioner of Police's Priority Delivery Committee and the Human Service & Criminal Justice CEOs Cluster.

4.2.6 Community input

Community stakeholders highlighted the importance of establishing stronger community consultation mechanisms to improve opportunities for NGO partner agencies and community input into setting strategic directions and implementation of the priorities for coordinated action.

While community stakeholders highlighted the need for further consultation about the most appropriate mechanisms, suggestions included:

- establishment of a ministerial council with membership from government and non-government agencies, such as a new Premier's Consultative Council on Violence Against Women.

Currently, NSW has in place the Premier's Council for Women. The Council is an expert independent committee that advises and reports to the NSW Premier and Minister for Women by:

- advising the NSW government on issues of concern to women
 - working closely with the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, Office for Women to ensure relevant policies, programs and initiatives reflect the needs of women in NSW
 - providing an avenue for women to communicate with government on issues affecting women. this is achieved through consultation with the community and peak women's organisations, including in rural and regional areas and with non-English speaking and Indigenous communities.
 - facilitating and promoting government and non government partnerships on issues affecting women's well being
- establishment of an NGO Reference Group to facilitate input from community service providers into a ministerial council. In particular, community stakeholders highlighted the importance of recognising that non-government agencies are key service providers for women who experience violence and that the community sector has developed considerable expertise which must be included in all levels of policy development and co-ordination – from high level co-ordinating and advisory functions to local initiatives

4.3 Proposals for improvement

To build on the work commenced under the VAW Strategy, there is a need to:

- finalise a strategic policy framework for domestic and family violence that defines the state-wide priorities for coordinated action
- identify results-based accountability measures to ensure that government action remains closely aligned to the agreed priorities and is contributing to the achievement of measurable results
- establish a central coordination function within the Department of Premier and Cabinet (in line with the election commitment)
- ensure a stronger focus on systemic changes to state-wide service systems linked to the priorities for coordinated action
- gain greater leverage from regional staffing and planning arrangements to avoid the risk of diffuse regional responses which are not aligned to state-wide priorities
- strengthen opportunities for NGO partner agencies and community input into setting strategic directions and implementation of the priorities for coordinated action
- better align domestic and family violence strategies with the governance arrangements and broader responses for addressing all forms of violence against women under the R1 Priority Delivery Plan

To implement this agenda, the following approaches are recommended:

1. State-wide priorities for coordinated action

As a starting point for the development of the strategic policy framework for domestic and family violence, five priorities are recommended to drive systemic changes to state-wide service systems:

- *Integrated case management*– multi-agency, coordinated casework to prevent escalation of domestic violence among high-risk target groups and in targeted communities
- *Risk assessment and information sharing protocols where domestic violence is already identified* - common approach to assessing risk of further violence, and identifying existing interventions and service options to reduce risk and address the needs of victims
- *Training of practitioners around issues of domestic violence* – consistent and streamlined delivery of training to front-line staff in all key agencies
- *Standardised criminal justice response* - standard operating procedures for policing and prosecution, including victim support, court assistance and programs for perpetrators
- *Staying Home Leaving Violence* - consistent, proactive approach to supporting victims who want to remain at home or require supported accommodation or housing assistance

Finalising the list of priority areas would be an initial task for the new central coordination function within DPC (see below), in consultation with partner agencies and community stakeholders. In particular, consideration will need to be given to other priorities such as the development and funding of NGO support and counselling services (with \$2.1 million per annum allocated in the election commitments).

Community stakeholders have highlighted the need for ongoing consultation to support the detailed development of the priority elements of the

framework, including linkages to related strategies for other forms of violence against women, the role of alcohol in violence against women (R1 Strategy 3), the importance of community education, and ensuring appropriate strategies for women from Indigenous, CALD and rural and remote communities.

2. Central coordination function within DPC

To meet the commitment for a central coordination function within DPC, the Review recommended that this function have responsibility for:

- leading long-term priority setting and addressing barriers to coordinated government action
- facilitating alignment of state-wide and regional service systems with the domestic and family violence strategic policy framework
- monitoring progress against intended results and evaluating the costs and benefits of different cross-agency responses and existing pilots.

Operationally, these functions would be delivered through:

- consulting with government and community stakeholders to finalise a domestic and family violence strategic policy framework - within the parameters agreed to by government (Proposal 1)
- providing high-level, strategic support to Project Groups for each of the state-wide priorities for coordinated action (Proposal 3)
- providing secretariat services to the Senior Officers Group who will have responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the strategic policy framework (Proposal 5), including:
 - supporting the communication process for timely resolution of issues escalated through regional coordination mechanisms (Proposal 4)
 - supporting the communication process with NGOs and community stakeholders (Proposal 6)
- monitoring and reporting progress against intended results to state-wide and regional stakeholders
- commissioning evaluations and research studies to assess the costs and benefits of different cross-agency responses. In particular, there is a need to evaluate the range of existing pilots to determine which models are most effective and how the various pilots relate to one another on the ground.

In undertaking these functions, it would be appropriate for DPC to have the lead responsibility for Initiative 4.1 in the R1 Priority Delivery Plan (coordinated, integrated interagency response to domestic and family violence).

3. DFV state-wide project groups

To ensure a stronger focus on systemic changes to state-wide service systems, it is recommended that senior project officers be appointed to lead Project Groups for each of the five priorities. Project officers currently working on these priorities would be linked to these project groups.

The senior project officers would support line agencies and their NGO partners to make changes to service systems in line with the state-wide priorities by developing and documenting agreed procedures, tools and change strategies, and then supporting agencies to integrate these into their core activities.

It is proposed that each priority area be led by a line agency, with the senior project officer(s) located within that agency. Milestones and accountability arrangements would be documented in an agreed work plan, including internal agency accountabilities and accountability to the broader coordination arrangements.

Ideally, senior project officers would be regionally-based to ensure their work is grounded in the day-to-day issues of delivering 'front-line' services. Senior project officers would be expected to closely liaise with the central DPC function, and develop strong links with project officers in other priority areas and with regional coordination officers (see below).

4. DFV regional coordination

To gain greater leverage from regional staffing and planning arrangements, it is recommended that the focus of regional coordination shift to embedding changes in regional service systems in line with the state-wide priorities. This could be achieved through:

- ensuring priorities for coordinated action are incorporated into Regional Delivery Plans endorsed by the Regional Coordination Management Groups. Human service and criminal justice agency Regional Senior Officers will need a strong mandate and support from their CEOs to ensure consistent and strategic participation in the RCMGs, with clear procedures for raising, escalating and resolving issues where there are barriers to changing regional service systems
- appointing a small number of regional coordination officers in domestic and family violence 'hotspots' - aligned to the hotspot locations where NSW Police are rolling out the new Domestic Violence Liaison Officer positions. These regional coordinators would be located in NSW Police to build on the new resources for strong place-based responses to domestic and family violence (eg roll out of the 35 Domestic Violence Liaison Officers). It is also relevant to consider areas where new initiatives are being implemented (such as Integrated Case Management models and new Domestic Violence Intervention Court Models) in deciding on the location of regional staff.

There is an opportunity to use the regional coordination officers to assist in the rollout of key priority projects, mainstreaming of existing pilot projects, and linking justice and human services responses in local communities.

5. Governance arrangements

It is recommended that specific governance arrangements be established to support the development and implementation of the new DFV strategic policy framework. These arrangements would be reviewed in the future with a longer-term view of fully integrating them into the new governance arrangements that are being developed under the R1/R3 Priority Delivery Plan. In particular, the DFV arrangements could be achieved through:

- a Senior Officers Group, reporting to human services and justice agency CEOs, with responsibility for cross-agency decision-making and raising, escalating and resolving issues related to the implementation of the DFV strategic policy framework. This function could be fulfilled by the existing Human Service and Justice Cluster Senior Officers Group. In line with the arrangements for the R1/R3 Priority Delivery Plan, clear reporting arrangements would be established between the Commissioner of Police's Priority Delivery Committee and the Human Service & Criminal Justice CEOs Cluster. In particular, the Senior Officers Group would ensure each of the DFV state-wide Project Groups has clear reporting arrangements with other R1 / R3 Project Management Groups led by NSW Police

- DPC having the lead responsibility for Initiative 4.1 in the R1 Priority Delivery Plan (Proposal 2), with clear reporting arrangements between the DFV coordination function within DPC and the R1 / R3 State Plan coordination function within the NSW Police Force.
- The DPC coordination function having directly accountability to their Director-General, with cross-agency accountability for delivery of the DFV components of R1 through the human services and justice agency CEOs.

6. Working with NGO partners and local communities

It is proposed that partnership arrangements be strengthened to improve opportunities for NGO partner agency and community input into setting strategic directions and implementing the priorities for coordinated action. This could be achieved through:

- existing consultative mechanisms (such as the Premier’s Council for Women and other suitable advisory bodies) advising the NSW Government on facilitating and promoting government and non-government partnerships to support the DFV strategic policy framework
- establishing a Domestic and Family Violence NGO Reference Group that provides advice to the Senior Officers Group and facilitates NGO input into the DFV state-wide Project Groups
- exploring opportunities for line agencies to use existing grant programs to support local DFV campaigns, committees and initiatives linked to the state-wide priorities.

4.4 Benefits of the recommended approach

The review findings have highlighted the need for changes to current co-ordination arrangements, to better respond to the priorities in the State Plan and to maximise the impacts of existing and additional resources committed by the NSW Government. The benefits of the recommended directions arising from this review, compared to existing arrangements, are considered to include:

- Delivery of whole-of-government strategic co-ordination directly accountable to the Premier through his Department
- A stronger focus on systemic changes to state-wide service systems by placing resources strategically within line agencies and linking with other State Plan priorities
- A clearer strategy to underpin coordinated action linked to the five priority areas that evidence and experience suggest are most likely to address the causes and consequences of domestic and family violence
- A direct link between NSW Police and other criminal justice responses to domestic violence at with early intervention and case management supports being delivered by human service agencies
- Greater leverage from regional staffing and planning arrangements by ensuring priorities for coordinated action are incorporated into Regional Delivery Plans endorsed by the Regional Coordination Management Groups
- A focus of effort on the areas of greatest need
- More formal arrangements for NGO partner agency and community input into setting strategic directions and implementation of the priorities for coordinated action.

Attachment 1: Matrix of community issues and review recommendations

This section analyses the alignment between key issues raised by community stakeholders and the review proposals. In general, there is strong alignment although in a number of cases community stakeholders promoted options that would be difficult to fund from within existing agency budgets.

Community issues	Review recommendations
<p>Need to develop a new strategic policy framework for addressing violence against women, including domestic and family violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need to recognise that many women experience multiple forms of violence - with policy responses covering not just domestic and family violence, but sexual assault, violence in public spaces and violence in the workplace • concern that the State Plan (and the current Review) appears to have a narrow focus on domestic and family violence 	<p>The review recommended the development of a new strategic policy framework for domestic and family violence, highlighting the need for ongoing community consultation to support the detailed development of the priority elements of the framework, including linkages to related strategies for other forms of violence against women, the role of alcohol in violence against women (R1 Strategy 3), and the importance of community education.</p> <p>The review also highlighted that consideration should be given to coordinated action models adopted in Victoria, Tasmania and the ACT as part of the development of a new framework.</p>
<p>Strong support for the establishment of a central co-ordination function within the Department of Premier and Cabinet.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • importance of DPC oversight across all government departments, linked to clear accountability measures for improved performance • need for the DPC function to be staffed by officers with expertise in violence against women • specific suggestions about how this function should be administered - including links to the Office for Women, Ministerial accountability, staff grades and the establishment of separate Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Task Forces. 	<p>To meet the commitment for a central coordination function within DPC, the Review recommended that this function have responsibility for leading long-term priority setting; facilitating the development and implementation of the domestic and family violence strategic policy framework and monitoring progress against clear results (in close alignment with the community feedback).</p> <p>Specific recommendations were not made about administrative arrangements within DPC. A separate report which collates the detailed feedback from community stakeholders has been prepared, so that DPC can consider the full range of suggestions made.</p>
<p>Strong support for the 18 regional violence prevention specialist positions funded under the VAW Strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the VAW regional specialists are vital in authentically translating the commitment of a whole of government response to the community level • the current number and grading of regional specialists is inadequate to facilitate a statewide whole of government response • there is a need for an increased number of Indigenous-specific positions • VAW regional specialists need clear links to the central coordination function • there is a need to embed the state-wide strategy into regional planning and reporting processes 	<p>The review recommended a more strategic focus for work at the regional level by ensuring priorities for state-wide coordinated action are incorporated into Regional Delivery Plans endorsed by the Regional Coordination Management Groups.</p> <p>The review recommended that the delivery of these plans be supported by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regionally-based Senior Project Officers working on DFV state-wide project aligned to the five priorities for coordinated action • regional coordination officers targeting domestic and family violence 'hotspots' - located in NSW Police to build on the new resources for strong place-based responses to domestic and family violence (eg roll out of the 35 Domestic Violence Liaison Officers)

Community issues	Review recommendations
<p>Need to establish better NGO and community consultation mechanisms that ensures community sector partnerships and expertise inform all levels of policy development and coordinated action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establishment of a ministerial council to advise the Premier on issues related to violence against women • establishment of an NGO Reference Group to facilitate input from community service providers into a ministerial council • greater support for Regional Reference Groups 	<p>The review recommended that community input could be strengthened using the existing mechanism of the Premier's Council for Women. The review also recommended establishing a Domestic and Family Violence NGO Reference Group to provide advise to the Senior Officers Group and to facilitate NGO input into the DFV state-wide Project Groups.</p> <p>Specific recommendations were not made about local and regional consultative mechanisms (such as Regional Reference Groups), but the review recommended that line agencies explore opportunities to use existing grant programs to support local DFV campaigns, committees and initiatives linked to the state-wide priorities.</p>
<p>Importance of ensuring that coordinated action appropriately responds to diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordinated action must acknowledge and respond to the different experiences of Indigenous women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and women in rural and remote areas 	<p>The review highlighting the need for ongoing community consultation to support the detailed development of the priority elements of the DFV strategic policy framework, including addressing the specific needs of women from Indigenous, CALD and rural and remote communities</p>
<p>Need for adequate funding & resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the current budget for coordinated action was perceived to be inadequate to research, develop, implement, and evaluate innovative approaches to responding to and preventing a problem of such as scale as violence against women • There is a need for increased funding and resourcing of local Domestic Violence Liaison Committees and access to small grants to support local initiatives 	<p>The review recommendations were framed so that they could be funded within existing agency budgets.</p> <p>However the review recommended that line agencies explore opportunities to use existing grant programs to support local DFV campaigns, committees and initiatives linked to the state-wide priorities.</p>