



## Pets in Crisis

For most people pets are a great source of comfort and joy, they enrich the lives of their owners and are thought to reduce stress. However for many pet owners living in Domestic Violence they're one more device of control, one more shackle to a destructive relationship.

The connection between Animal Abuse and violence towards humans has long been known of, with studies being done as far back as 1806. So it comes as no surprise to find it's also very much present in Domestic Violence. In *The Relationship between Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse: An Australian Study* a recent study carried out by Monash University on pet owners affected by Domestic Violence in Victoria, it was found that Animal Abuse existed in 53% of the relationships while 46% reported threats of Animal Abuse. The abuse of animals in DV can either be direct as in physical violence against the animal such as punching, beheading, shooting or it can be indirect. Indirect abuse covers neglect or threats either to harm the animal or take it away if the victim does not comply. Either way they are effective means of control.

Where children are also present in the relationship the abuse of their pets has a deep effect on them. In the study it was found 29% of children had witnessed abuse of their pets. 19% of the children in the study were found to have committed some form of abuse against the pet themselves. This raises concerns that they have an increased likelihood of becoming abusive adults. Children regularly copy the behaviour of the adults in their lives. They see the abuse against their pets or mother and imitate it. For other children they may become the target of the abuse when attempting to protect a cherished pet, or they may refuse to leave the home without the pet.

Women's Shelters make it possible for women to leave abusive relationships however they are usually communal, and very few have the facilities to accommodate pets. This means the animal is often left in the hands of the perpetrator. For many women this will delay their decision to leave the relationship. They fear that their beloved pet may be subjected to abuse in retaliation for their actions. Friends and family may not be in a position to help and the expense of private kennels can be prohibitive. The study found in some cases women have suffered a further 8 weeks in a relationship rather than leave their pets behind. Others have had to put their pets down to avoid potential torture.

Given that pets are such a major barrier to leaving a Domestic Violence relationship various groups across Australia have been looking at ways in which this problem can be addressed. In Queensland the RSPCA and DV Connect have joined forces to develop the Pets in Crisis program. This program provides shelter

# Newsletter

## Issue 8, October 2008

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## Pets in Crisis

to the pet for a month at just \$1 a day. This gives the woman time to make essential changes in her life with the knowledge that her pet is safe and in good hands. She also has the freedom to visit with the pet as often as she wants. As the \$1 a day doesn't begin to cover costs corporate sponsorship was required and this has been provided by Credit Union Australia who have committed to a 3 year funding package. This program covers most domestic animals though cats and dogs are more common. In some cases special arrangements can be made for larger animals such as horses.

As anyone working in DV knows things are rarely as simple as leaving and living happily ever after. For many women they may choose to stay in the relationship or in some cases the children may continue to abuse the animal. When the animal is at risk the RSPCA do encourage owners to surrender their pets for the pet's safety and well-being. Another problem is that for some women leaving may necessitate their disappearance. This places the RSPCA in some difficulty as they don't want to re-home the pets without the owner's approval but it's also unfair on the animal to live indefinitely at the shelter. For this reason they encourage owners to keep in regular touch.

Despite the difficulties programs such as Pets in Crisis have made great progress in removing barriers and have provided many women with the support they need to make a positive change in their life.

## Children See, Children Do

Across Australia children see over 450,000 women being abused by their partner, they're present in 88% of violent households and are abused in 68% of the same.

We have to ask ourselves, is this the future we want for our children? Is this the sort of behaviour we want them to learn is normal and acceptable?

Children See, Children Do is the theme of this year's Child Protection Week. It's a reminder to all of the importance of being a good role model to our children and to lead by example.

Domestic Violence has a devastating effect on children. It breaks up families, introduces a sense of insecurity into their lives, puts them in physical danger, and has long term emotional and psychological effects. Growing up in this type of environment teaches children that violence is an acceptable way of expressing themselves and that it is an effective means of getting what they want. They take these lessons learnt at home with them as they grow and as they go out into the community.

Children are very perceptive, they are aware of what happens around them. Even if they don't witness the violence they are painfully aware that something is not right at home.

From September 7th to 13th events were once again held across Australia in order to raise public awareness to this and other unacceptable behaviours that our children may be exposed to. It was also a good opportunity to celebrate Australia's Children, and to support their parents and caregivers.

In Cairns the weather didn't quite cooperate but the annual Family Fun Day still went ahead. For the brave few who ventured out to Foggarty Park they were treated to fantastic performances by local schools, as well as lots of activities, information and giveaways put on by local community and government support services available to families in need.

She was such a pretty child, as pretty as could be.  
 The blondest hair and bluest eyes, this little girl of three.  
 She lived next door and I would often see her play outside.  
 Putting all her dollies in a wagon for a ride.  
 I often thought how beautiful she would be when she's grown.  
 She was just the cutest thing as she played there alone.  
 I only knew her parents from a passing wave or "hi."  
 They did not want to socialize each time that I would try.

I sometimes heard them arguing when I was in my yard.  
 I know the problems people have can sometimes make life hard.  
 I thought they were just loners because they kept to them self.  
 They might think I am nosy if I try to offer help.  
 They never bother anyone, the other neighbors say.  
 And the little girl can only go out back to play.  
 You only see them come and go, they never stay outside.  
 You wonder when they act like that, have they something to hide?

One day I heard them arguing, much louder than before.  
 As I looked out, the little girl was standing by her door.  
 Her little face was bruised and tears were running down her cheek.  
 I wanted to go over there, but I was scared and meek.  
 Finally when the screaming stopped, and everything was calm  
 I saw the little girl was being held close to her mom.  
 Her mother rocked her back and forth, and she was crying too.  
 Just standing in the back yard, there was nothing I could do.

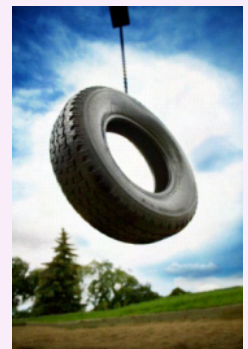
Nothing I could ever do, would be of any use.  
 This mother and this little girl were suffering abuse.  
 She had better call someone and get this thing resolved.  
 But, it is not my business and I cannot get involved.  
 As I spoke with neighbors, about what went on next door  
 They all agreed, that it was sad, it's something we abhor.  
 It's something we must overlook, we cannot interfere.  
 But, now we sing a different tune, as we are gathered here.

The neighborhood feels guilty,  
 for we looked the other way.  
 Are we all responsible for being here today?  
 We feel the anger and the shame, because we all stood by  
 Knowing now we could have helped, but didn't even try.  
 And now this little three year old, so beautiful to me  
 Surrounded by her dollies, just the way she loved to be  
 Is in a little casket, with her body limp and frail.  
 Her mom is in intensive care, her dad is now in jail.

The funeral home is quiet, because we all realize  
 The reason you must get involved is right before our eyes.  
 Abuse in any form is something we must all resent.  
 And fight with every tool we have to save our innocent.

Author Unknown

Sourced <http://thelaststraw.wordpress.com/2008/02/20/poetry-about-children-and-domestic-violence-domestic-abuse-poetry/>



# Domestic Violence Month Report

As part of a wide campaign the Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service held its annual Domestic & Family Violence Awareness Month throughout May 2008. As part of the campaign my position was to co-ordinate the information stalls which were held at Raintrees Shopping Centre, Stocklands Shopping Centre, Smithfield Shopping Centre and Mt. Sheridan Plaza. The information booths were well visited and a variety of free items were handed out. The lollipops in particular were a huge success with the kids, along with pencil cases, pens, wrist bands, badges and stickers. It was encouraging to speak with a number of teenagers who visited the stall, and who were genuinely concerned about domestic violence.

Information stalls are beneficial in that they allow people the opportunity to ask various questions, and to obtain an understanding of the legislation and legalities of domestic and family violence. There was a lot of interest from women in general however very few men showed an interest in the stalls.

The stall at Mt. Sheridan had a visit from the local Fire and Rescue Team, and we would like to thank them for taking time out of their busy schedules to support Domestic and Family Violence Awareness Month. These men are looked upon as role models within society and their support was well received by the general public.

No information stall would be a success without its volunteers and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Women's Centre, Warringu, Queensland Police -Volunteers in Policing, FPQ – Sexual Assault Service, Seniors Legal and Support Service, Ruths, and Relationships Australia. May I say that you have all done a sterling job and from Amanda and staff at CRDVS thank you very much for the time and effort that you have all put into the shopping centre information stalls. Without your help these stalls would not have been a success.



## Need to talk right now?



Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service

After Hours Service

Ph: 0409 950 487

Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service is offering an after hours crisis counselling service

5pm – 1am Friday, Saturday and Sunday

someone is available to talk to right now!

Low on credit? No problem - text or call leaving your name and number and a worker will call you back immediately.

In an emergency please call: 000

If you need assistance outside of operating hours please call

DV Connect 1800 811 811

or Monday – Friday 9am to 5pm please call

Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service:  
4033 6100



## Drum Out Violence

Witnessing the increasingly disruptive behaviour in younger students and wanting to make a difference has led to the existence of a number of peer leadership programs at Woree State High School.

These student driven programs with the help of dedicated teachers and various community groups has made a significant difference in the lives of many students. There has been a staggering turn around in discipline needed for students in the target group the same period as last year.

Research has proven Peer Education to be an effective means of education. It helps older students to develop leadership skills, social responsibility, and increases their interest in the skills and content being taught. For younger students they can more closely identify with the educators and this can provide them with strong role models, as well as an interest in what is being taught. It is thought to be particularly effective as an intervention strategy in a number of community welfare areas. However it is a very intensive process that requires a lot of time, resources and dedication from all participants

The Woree State High School groups are focussed around traditional cultural activities with the two main groups being Pacific Island and Indigenous Dance and Drumming Groups. With the help of Cairns Regional Council drums were purchased, and skills developed under the guidance of Paul Sampson, sponsored by Centacare.

In addition to their cultural activities the boys participated in anti-violence workshops run with the help of Wuchopperen, CRDVS, QLD Health, QLD Police, and Nintiringanyi. These workshops encouraged the group to think about the impact of their behaviour on others, and looked at things such as communication skills, respect, dealing with conflict, and their role in building healthy relationships.

They have then taken these skills and knowledge, and used them as they worked with younger students at play groups and primary schools in a variety of way from reading programs to performances.

Though their impact hasn't been confined to schools, highly energetic and entertaining performances have been given at the Cairns Show, the Parade of Lights, Child Protection Week Family Day and for a host of other events.

The success of this project has been undeniable. It has generated a lot of interest and support from the community and even attracted students from other schools. Although it is a very demanding endeavor the support of groups such as Parent School Partnership Initiative (PSPI), Indigenous School Support Unit (ISSU), Pacific Communities Council and Woree Community Learning Centre has ensured its success.



## Help for Seniors

The Seniors Legal and Support Service is a pilot project funded by the Department of Communities. It provides free legal advice and social support to seniors who are at risk of and/or experiencing elder abuse or financial exploitation, enhancing their security, safety and well-being. Through community education, the service also aims to increase the awareness of other service providers to prevent, identify and respond to elder abuse and financial exploitation.

The Seniors Legal and Support Service is staffed by a solicitor and a social worker. Combining the skills from the two different professions provides a more holistic response that is tailored around the needs of the individual. This approach recognizes and addresses the social issues often underlying the legal issues.

The Seniors Legal and Support Service focuses on empowering clients to make their own decisions by providing them with the necessary information and support. The type of assistance that can be received includes legal information and advice, individual advocacy, short-term counseling, court support and being linked in with other services where appropriate.

The prevalence of elder abuse in our society is increasing yet it is thought a lot of it still goes unreported. This is for a variety of reasons including shame, guilt, fear of retaliation from the abuser, fear of being institutionalized, etc. We urge people who are experiencing elder abuse or financial exploitation to seek the help that is now available.

The service is operated by the Cairns Community Legal Centre in Main Street Arcade, First Floor, 85 Lake Street, Cairns. For further information or to make an appointment phone 4031 7179.

## Community Announcements



**Make a stand on November 25, Contact Relationships Australia for more information about how you can get involved ph 4041 3393**

## Out of the Frying Pan...

At Gambling Help it is not uncommon for us to provide counselling to survivors of domestic violence who turn to gambling as a way of coping. Sometimes Poker Machines are seen as a way of switching off or escaping life stresses. However with extended play it is not possible to win on Poker Machines and players leave the venue feeling worse than when they walked in.

Not only is their life affected by domestic violence but the situation becomes worse due to a lack of money, a whole pile of bills that increases stress and also concern that the abusive partner will find out about the excessive gambling losses increasing the level of risk in the abusive home.

People in this situation can feel helpless and sometimes aren't sure where to turn for support. Gambling Help Cairns Region can provide a non-judgemental and confidential service and we always consider the client's safety as our first priority.

Clients often report how difficult it is to ask for help but after contacting Gambling Help they feel relieved and can realise that their situation is not so helpless after all. The Gambling Help Service is willing to work collaboratively with other services such as the Domestic Violence Service in order to assist clients through difficult times.

Gambling Help Lifeline provides counselling and community education from Cairns to Croyden, Cardwell to Cow-bay and anywhere in between. To book an appointment contact Gambling Help Lifeline on 4050 4955.

## MYTH BUSTERS

**Perpetrators of domestic and family violence often blame other people and other things for their own violent behaviour. Attempts to justify and excuse violent behaviour have led to the formation of myths in society. For example:**

**Myth:** If a woman doesn't like it she can leave

**Reality:** There are many factors that stop her from leaving such as fear, values, family, economic dependence, religious values, lack of knowledge, lack of help

**Myth:** Violence happens only among the poor or in certain cultures

**Reality:** Domestic Violence knows no socio-economic boundaries. It can happen to anyone regardless of race, class, religion, education and background.

**The reality is that using abusive behaviour is a matter of personal choice. It's important to dispel these harmful myths as they play down the perpetrator's responsibility to do something positive about their violence and change their behaviour.**

**THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR ABUSE**



# Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service

## Services We Provide

**Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service provides confidential and free services for family members suffering from domestic violence. There are many issues that you can discuss with our staff members such as:**

- Information about your rights and the rights of your children
- Steps that may help you to protect yourself from further domestic violence
- Information and assistance in making an application for a Domestic Violence Protection Order
- Support services that are available through our organisation, including Court support
- Counselling for you or your children to overcome the effects of domestic violence

Our Domestic Violence Workers can also refer you to other support services for financial assistance, crisis accommodation, relationship counselling, legal advice on matters of family law, parenting education and many other issues.

One member of our team is a Child Counsellor, who can provide face to face counselling for children and young people aged 4 to 16 years who are affected by domestic violence.

We can also provide information about programs for perpetrators of domestic violence.

Our service regularly conducts and participates in workshops, seminars, conferences, lectures and training sessions in Cairns and surrounding areas. If you are not sure that we can help with your needs, then please telephone on (07) 4033 6100 and ask us.

We're open Mon-Fri 9am - 5pm



Phone: (07) 4033 6100



Email: office@dvcairns.org



Fax: (07) 4033 5863



CRDVS, PO Box 12103, Cairns 4870

Room 19  
600 Bruce Highway  
Woree 4868  
(Behind Calanna Pharmacy)



## Useful contacts

### Telephone Contact Numbers

If you're in immediate danger call the POLICE **000**

If you want to access safe accommodation (refuge for women and children who are in danger), or you need help and support dealing with a violent relationship you can call **dvconnect**, the Queensland 24hr domestic and family violence telephone service on:

**1800 811 811**

**Cairns Police 4030 7000**

**Lifeline Telephone Counselling  
13 11 14**

**Alternatives to Violence**  
A 12 week education course for men  
4050 4955

**Go Forward For Men**  
A service for men to help men overcome domestic and family violence behaviours  
1300 364 277

**dvconnect Men's Information Line**  
1800 600 636

**We're on the Web**  
**www.dvcairns.org**

Would you like to subscribe to receive forthcoming issues of the CRDVS newsletter?

Have you an interesting article about domestic or family violence you'd like to contribute to the next issue of this newsletter?

Please let us know by contacting Bernadette at CRDVS — Tel: (07) 4033 6100

**Look out for the next  
issue in  
April 2009**

### Websites with information about domestic and family violence

[www.noviolence.com.au](http://www.noviolence.com.au)

[www.dvirc.org.au](http://www.dvirc.org.au)

[www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au](http://www.austdvclearinghouse.unsw.edu.au)

[www.ofw.facs.gov.au](http://www.ofw.facs.gov.au)

[www.communities.qld.gov.au/violenceprevention](http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/violenceprevention)

[www.ntv.net.au](http://www.ntv.net.au)