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Male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence: Service needs and experiences in court

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Foreword

The discipline of victimology emerged to address the perceived exclusion of the 'voice' or views of victims of crime from criminological research. However, victimology research has also appeared to focus on specific victim populations with less attention to others. In particular, there has been an emphasis on the experiences of female victims of violence, often to the exclusion of male victims. Yet crime and victimisation statistics have consistently demonstrated that it is men, not women, who are more at risk of experiencing violence in Australia (excluding domestic violence, kidnapping and sexual assault where females are more likely to be the victim).

The paucity of male-focused victimology research undertaken in Australia and internationally means it is currently unclear what the support needs of male victims are and if these support needs are being met by the currently available support services, programs and schemes. In this report, findings are presented from a study commissioned by the NSW Department of Attorney General and Justice Victims Services that sought to address this knowledge gap by exploring the experiences and support needs of male victims of violence (excluding sexual assault and domestic violence) living in New South Wales. The study involved a comprehensive review of the currently available literature and interviews and focus groups with criminal justice and support service representatives who have contact with male victims of violence as part of their everyday work.

While the focus of the research was not to understand men's experience of victimisation, there was a view among stakeholders that men often experience feelings of shame as a result of the offence, or at the other end of the spectrum, perceive their victimisation as a 'rite of passage'. Stakeholders also noted that, at time of interview,

male victims of violence generally comprised a much smaller proportion of formal support agencies caseloads and there was no support service operating in New South Wales that specifically targeted male victims of crime (with the exception of MensLine). Many of the stakeholders found it difficult to articulate how a male-specific service would differ from the programs and schemes already available in New South Wales, although it was highlighted that such a service would provide clients with the option of working with male support workers and may deliver emotional support through structured activities. While there are a range of barriers that minimise the accessibility of some services to male victims, there was a general consensus that male victims of violence were not prioritised by formal support services unless they presented with high levels of emotional distress.

The study described in this report is one of the first of its kind conducted in Australia and highlights a number of issues relating to the accessibility and appropriateness of the support services currently available in Australia to male victims of violence. However, to better understand the impact of the offence on male victims, why some men choose to engage with formal support services and others do not and the experiences of those men who do engage with these services, the views of male victims themselves need to be sought. The Australian Institute of Criminology has developed a comprehensive methodology to elicit the views of male victims of violence and hopes to explore these issues with male victims in a proposed second phase of this research.

Dr Adam Tomison
Director

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Acknowledgements

Acronyms

ABI	acquired brain injury
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACSS	Aboriginal Client Service Specialists
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
CALD	culturally and linguistically diverse
CSS	Court Support Service
DPP	Director of Public Prosecutions
DPP WAS	Director of Public Prosecutions Witness Assistance Service
HVSG	Homicide Victims' Support Group
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder
VACP	Victims Assistance and Counselling Program
VAL	Victims Access Line
VWCCS	Victims and Witnesses of Crime Court Service

Executive summary

Reported crime and crime victimisation data from Australia shows that, with the exception of sexual assault and kidnapping/abduction, men are more likely than women to be victims of violent offences (ABS 2013a, 2013b). However, a review of the victimology literature revealed that adult male victims of violence were largely missing from broader discussions around the impact of violent offences on victims and their subsequent support needs. In response to this apparent omission, the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) was funded under the Victims of Crime Research Fund (administered by Victims Services, NSW Department of Attorney General and Justice), to undertake a small exploratory study examining the:

- support needs and experiences of adult male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence, including when they participate in the trial of perpetrators; and

- accessibility and appropriateness of existing formal victim support services in New South Wales for this group of victims.

For the purposes of the research, the victim population was defined as adult males (aged 18 years and over) who had experienced some form of non-sexual/non-domestic violence (eg aggravated or non-aggravated physical assault, armed robbery or stalking) that was committed in New South Wales.

The focus of the research project was to explore the:

- availability and appropriateness of support services in New South Wales for male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence;

- perceived barriers for male victims in accessing support services; and

- impact of participating in the court process on these victims.

The project involved two interrelated research methods—a comprehensive literature review and interviews, and focus groups with representatives from victim support and criminal justice agencies who had contact with male victims of violence as part of their everyday work. The AIC conducted nine focus groups and six interviews involving a total of 33 stakeholders during the research period. Key findings from the research are outlined below.

Support services for male victims of violence—A snapshot

In New South Wales, there are currently a number of support agencies and programs that male victims may choose to engage with following a violent offence. These programs and agencies differ from one another on a number of points, including their location, service delivery model, identified priority areas and types of support provided. None of these programs, however, were specifically targeted at men.

A review of these victim support programs and organisations indicated that support services were best placed to engage with male victims at a number of points—immediately following the incident, prior to attending court and during court proceedings. Some service providers acknowledged that they had experienced difficulty engaging with some male clients and a number said they used different engagement techniques when approaching men. While there was variability between programs in the proportion of their caseload that comprised male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence, male victims tended to represent only a small proportion of clients.

Stakeholder perceptions of the experiences of male victims of violence

To assist in understanding the factors that influence a male victim's decision to engage with a formal support service, stakeholders were asked to comment (based on their experiences working with male victims of violence) on how this victim group respond to both their victimisation and participation in court as victim/witnesses. Stakeholders admitted their reticence in making general statements about male responses to victimisation, noting that other factors besides gender (eg prior victimisation and the circumstances, and level of the harm inflicted) influenced the way that men and women respond to experiences of victimisation. However, some noted that male victims were likely to experience feelings of shame as a result of the offence, which was attributed to feelings of failure and emasculation. Further, there was general consensus that male victims experiencing distress as a result of the offence often 'presented' differently to women (at least publicly) and were more likely to display emotions such as anger than were their female counterparts. Some of the more belligerent responses displayed by *some* men were particularly pronounced when they were attending court as a victim/witness. In these situations, stakeholders attributed victim behaviour to feelings of fear and frustration, and a lack of knowledge about the court process and the role of the victim/witness in the proceedings.

Of particular significance were stakeholder observations that some men normalise certain types of violence (notably 'pub brawls' and their ilk). In these circumstances, men may not acknowledge the impact of the victimisation nor see any reason to report the matter or seek assistance, other than from medical services to treat injuries sustained.

Groups of men who were identified by stakeholders as potentially vulnerable included:

- young men (ie 18–25 years);
- homosexual men;
- Indigenous men;
- men from culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD);
- men with a mental illness and/or an acquired brain injury (ABI);
- drug-affected men;
- refugees; and
- victim–offenders.

Some of these victim groups were identified as being particularly vulnerable because they were constrained by social or cultural influences that affected acknowledgement of their victim status (eg Indigenous men and young men). Other groups were identified on the basis that their previous experiences with the criminal justice system (either domestically or in their country of origin) meant they did not believe the offence would be responded to appropriately and so were less likely to report the offence and/or engage with services (eg victim–offenders and refugees). Finally, some groups were identified as potentially more vulnerable because the support services that were available did not meet their specific needs (eg men with ABI and homosexual men).

The pathway of contact

The process through which victims of crime negotiate the criminal justice system and are presented with opportunities to engage with formal support services, may be likened to a pathway where points of contact take place, or preferably should take place, between victims and formal support services. The 'pathway of contact' described by stakeholders suggests that services for male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence were more readily available when males were formally linked into the criminal justice system. However, access to these services in the first instance and their likelihood of remaining engaged with the service, appears to be dependent on a range of factors. These include:

- the nature of first contact between the victim and attending police officer;
- service provider identification of the victim as requiring support;
- service provider priorities;
- appropriateness and accessibility of services, and referral options;

- service provider formal follow-up processes; and
- victim self-initiative.

The way in which programs came into contact with clients is similarly variable, but all program representatives were consistent in their view that the quality and content of the first contact with male clients was particularly crucial. Further, most of the stakeholders observed that male victims were much more receptive to an offer of assistance if it focused on guidance and information, with underlying emotional support.

Male victims were less likely to engage with formal support services if they did not report the matter to the police and if they were unable to establish rapport with the attending police officer (or the support worker). The support services that are available to male victims also appear to decrease significantly following finalisation of court proceedings. While these trends are not necessarily unique to male victims, the identified points of disconnection were potentially more acute among male victims and particularly male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence.

Barriers to male victims accessing formal support services

Barriers to formal victim support were described by stakeholders as comprising a mix of personal, social and structural factors. Personal and social barriers included:

- the shame of the victimisation and being seen as 'weak' and unmasculine;
- lack of knowledge about the availability and accessibility of support services;
- privacy concerns and fear of reprisal for reporting the offence (particularly among men living in small communities);
- prior negative experiences when dealing with the police and/or support services; and/or
- transient lifestyles.

Structural and systematic barriers included criminal justice partners failing to identify male victims as

requiring assistance, support service eligibility criteria and priority areas, and the location of services. It was also suggested that some male victims may choose not to engage with services if they were not seen as appropriate or meeting their needs. In particular, the lack of male support workers was seen as a potential barrier for male victims who wanted to talk to a man rather than a woman.

Some of these barriers were quite specific to men, whereas others were more generic yet potentially more potent in combination with other recognised obstacles. Some groups of men were confronted with multiple barriers that acted to foster self-denial regarding the need for support and/or gave few options to the victim or referring service provider in providing support services. It is the combination of these barriers that may be perceived as potentially 'discriminating' against this group of victims from obtaining support where needed.

Male victims were described by one stakeholder as a 'hidden group' in that they were not being recognised as requiring the assistance of formal support services and hence resources were not being allocated to them. This 'non-recognition' may represent the most profound barrier for male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence, as the violence they experience, unless perceived as being particularly 'serious' (eg homicide), is infrequently identified by service providers as a priority for assistance. This is not to suggest that male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence are overlooked, but rather that services may not be as accessible to them as other victim groups.

Conclusion

The findings from this research suggest:

- violent offences and participating in the trials of perpetrators can have a significant impact on male victims;
- while many male victims of violence will obtain the support they require from informal sources, some would benefit from engaging with formal support services;
- there were, at time of writing, a range of victim support services operating in New South Wales that had some capacity to assist male victims of

violence, particularly when they were participating in court proceedings; and

- there were a range of barriers that could influence whether a male victim engaged with formal support services, including social and personal factors (eg privacy concerns among men living in small communities) and structural barriers (eg support service eligibility criteria).

However, while the stakeholders who were interviewed as part of this research have considerable experience working with victims of crime as part of their everyday duties, to present a more complete discussion, the thoughts and experiences of the victims themselves should be compared and coalesced with the perceptions and experiences of service providers. It is recommended that further research, which incorporates the observations of male victims, be pursued to develop a better understanding of the experiences and support needs of this under-researched victim group, as well as indicating where support options may be expanded or adapted to meet the needs of men.

Introduction

Male victims are a hidden group…people are not identifying them as needing services which means that male victims are overlooked and the resources aren't there (Service provider personal communication September 2012)

Victims of crime are a heterogeneous group. As a result, their needs are both disparate and complex, and dependent on a range of factors (Davis, Lurigio & Skogan 1999; Green & Pomeroy 2007). Individuals' reaction to victimisation often serves as an indicator of the type of assistance and support they require as a victim of crime. Although it may be perceived that reactions to victimisation are dependent on the severity or type of crime committed, research suggests that this is often not the case (Lamet & Wittebrood cited in Averdijk 2010). Rather, a range of factors can have an impact on the way an individual reacts to the crime committed against them, including age, socioeconomic status, pre-existing coping mechanisms, as well as the nature of the particular criminal incident (eg McCart, Smith & Sawyer 2010; Shapland & Hall 2007; Tontodonato & Erez 1994). This then influences the type of support and services that an individual victim of crime may seek to access.

Reported crime and crime victimisation data from Australia shows that, with the exception of sexual assault and kidnapping/abduction, men are more likely to experience violent crime victimisation than women (ABS 2013a, 2013b). Yet there has been very little research attention on the experiences and needs of male victims of violent crime, with the majority focusing on female victims of sexual assault and family and domestic violence (for a review, see McCart, Smith & Sawyer 2010). There is similarly limited research examining the experiences of men as victim/witnesses in court proceedings. What (albeit limited) literature is available demonstrates that male victims can be just as affected emotionally, physically and financially by their victimisation as their female counterparts (Mayhew & Reilly 2008; McCart, Smith & Sawyer; Riggs, Rothbaum & Foa 1995; Shapland & Hall 2007; Stanko & Hobdell 1993; Willis 2008).

Despite experiencing higher rates of victimisation, criminal justice agencies and victim support services more specifically, may be failing to recognise men as victims in need of support (Mayhew & Reilly 2008; Ringham & Salisbury 2004). As a consequence, there may be a deficit in the availability of appropriate services that, if not specifically targeted at male victims of violence, are of a form that promotes engagement.

Purpose of the research

A review of the victimology literature revealed that adult male victims of violence and more specifically adult male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence, were largely missing from any broader discussion around the effects of violent offences on victims and their subsequent support needs. As a response to this apparent omission, the AIC applied for funding under the Victims of Crime Research Grant Program administered by Victims Services, NSW Department of Attorney General and Justice to undertake a small exploratory study examining:

- the support needs and experiences of adult male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence, including when they participate in the trial of perpetrators; and
- the accessibility and appropriateness of existing victim support services in New South Wales for this group of victims.

In addressing these themes, the study proposed to answer the following questions:

- What victim support services are currently available to men who have been victims of non-sexual/domestic violence in New South Wales?
- Are there existing services in New South Wales that are accessible and appropriate for male victims of non-sexual/domestic violence?
- What level of knowledge do stakeholders perceive male victims of crime have about support services?
- What barriers are there for men who have been victims of non-sexual/domestic violence in accessing these services?
- Are the existing services in New South Wales appropriate for male victims of non-sexual/domestic violence?
- What are the experiences of male victims of non-sexual/domestic violence in New South Wales who appear as witnesses in court?
- What support do male victims of non-sexual/domestic violence in New South Wales require when attending court?
- What support do male victims of non-sexual/domestic violence in New South Wales require more generally?

For the purposes of the research, the victim population was defined as adult males (aged 18 years and over) who had experienced some form of non-sexual/non-domestic violence (eg aggravated or non-aggravated physical assault, armed robbery or stalking). The decision to exclude victims of sexual and domestic violence was informed by a preliminary review of the literature and anecdotal evidence which suggested that this group of victims tended to be better 'recognised' in the criminal justice system, due to the seriousness of their victimisation and hence to have a broader range of support options available to them.

Method

To address the research questions identified above, the project focused on eliciting the views of key stakeholders regarding the:

- availability and appropriateness of support services in New South Wales for male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence;
- perceived barriers for male victims in accessing support services; and
- impact of participating in the court process on these victims.

The first phase of the research project was approved by the AIC Human Research Ethics Committee on 1 August 2012.

The two primary research methods that were used as part of this project were a comprehensive literature review, and interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders.

Literature review

A review of Australian and international literature was undertaken to gather the available information on the experiences and support needs of victims of violence more generally and of male victims specifically, as well as male victim/witnesses experiences in the court process. Particular attention was paid to research looking at the impact of violence on victims and their support needs, as well as the literature examining factors that influence help seeking behaviour and the barriers that men may confront in accessing formal victim support. The

purpose of the review was to support the rationale for the research, guide the topic structure for the consultations and provide confirmation (or otherwise) for the findings from the stakeholder interviews.

Interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders

An important component of the research methodology involved interviews and focus groups conducted with a broad range of stakeholders either involved in, or associated with, the provision of victim support services in New South Wales. A list of relevant stakeholders was compiled with assistance from Victims Services.

Nine focus groups (involving a maximum of 4 people) and six interviews were conducted by AIC research staff in September and October 2012. A total of 33 participants from three government agencies (including 3 separate sections/programs within the one government agency) and five non-government organisations that engaged with male victims of violent crime at different points in the criminal justice system were involved in this consultation process. The interviews and focus groups were conducted face-to-face (where possible) or using telephone or video-conference facilities. The majority of respondents (n=25) who were involved in this consultation process were female. This was not unexpected for reasons identified throughout this report.

Interviews and focus groups were undertaken with the informed consent of all participants. Prior to attending the interview or focus group, participants were provided with a plain language information sheet describing the purpose of the project and the scope of the interview, and a consent and revocation of consent form. Stakeholders were asked to provide the research team with a signed copy of the consent form prior to participating in an interview or focus group. Interviews were conducted in accordance with a semi-structured interview schedule (see *Appendix A*) that was suitably flexible so it could be modified to suit the experiences and knowledge of different participants. The interviews and focus groups were conducted on the basis that no comments would be directly attributed to either the individual or their organisation.

Information shared during the interviews and focus groups was recorded by the research team using notes. These notes were then ordered into broad themes that 'emerged' from the data. Research team members analysed their consultation notes individually and then collaboratively to ensure that preliminary hypotheses and explanations were confirmed, challenged and developed further. The findings from this thematic analysis are presented throughout this report.

Male victimisation, help seeking behaviours and experiences in the court process: A review of the literature

Most of the research examining the experiences of victims of violence, particularly when they participate in the trials of perpetrators, has focused on female victims of sexual and domestic violence (McCart, Smith & Sawyer 2010). This trend is reflected in the wider victimology literature, which for the most part focuses on the needs and experiences of female victims of crime, often to the exclusion of men. As a consequence, very little is known about the support needs and experiences of male victims, particularly when they are involved in court processes as victims/witnesses.

This section presents the findings from a review of the small body of literature that has explored the experiences and support needs of male victims of violence. However, considering the dearth of male-specific victim research, this review has also drawn on the findings of non-gender specific research where relevant and appropriate.

Victim rights in New South Wales

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, NSW legislation has recognised the concept of a 'victim of crime'. However, legal definitions of 'victim of crime' have evolved over the last decade, as have the kinds of support and compensation victims may be eligible to receive. Currently in New South Wales, 'victim of crime' is defined under s 5 of the *Victims Rights Act 1996* as a person who 'suffers harm as a direct result of an act committed, or apparently committed, by another person in the course of a criminal offence'. The families of persons who are fatally wounded as a result of a criminal offence also fall within this definition. The Act's definition of harm is sufficiently broad to include physical, psychological and/or psychiatric harm, and the harm resulting from a person's property being deliberately taken, destroyed or damaged.

All persons who satisfy the Act's definition of a victim of crime are protected by the Charter of Victims Rights (see Table 1). The Charter stipulates that victims of crime have a number of rights, which all NSW government and non-government agencies funded by the state to provide support and assistance to victims, are expected to act in accordance with. Of particular relevance to the current research are the rights numbered two, three and six, which state that victims of crime should be:

- provided with information about the services and remedies available to them;
- provided with access to services that are responsive to the victim's needs; and

- provided with information about the trial process and their role as witnesses in the court process.

As such, when interacting with government agencies such as the police, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and government-funded victim support agencies, it is expected that victims of crime will be provided with information about the types of support services available to them and assisted in engaging with support services and that these support services will be responsive to the needs of victims. Also, victims of crime who report the offence to the police and choose to participate in the subsequent trial of the perpetrator should be provided with information about their role in the proceedings and the court process more generally.

Table 1 NSW Charter of Victims Rights	
1. Courtesy, compassion and respect	A victim will be treated with courtesy, compassion, cultural sensitivity and respect for the victim's rights and dignity
2. Information about services and remedies	A victim will be informed at the earliest practical opportunity, by relevant agencies and officials, of the services and remedies available to the victim
3. Access to services	A victim will have access where necessary to available welfare, health, counselling and legal assistance responsive to the victim's needs
4. Information about investigation of the crime	A victim will, on request, be informed of the progress of the investigation of the crime, unless the disclosure might jeopardise the investigation. In that case, the victim will be informed accordingly
5. Information about prosecution of accused	1. A victim will be informed in a timely manner of the following: • the charges laid against the accused or the reasons for not laying charges; • any decision of the prosecution to modify or not to proceed with charges laid against the accused, including any decision for the accused to accept a plea of guilty to a less serious charge in return for a full discharge with respect to the other charges; • the date and place of hearing of any charge laid against the accused; • the outcome of the criminal proceedings against the accused (including proceedings on appeal) and the sentence (if any) imposed. 2. A victim will be consulted before a decision referred to in paragraph (1)(b) is taken if the accused has been charged with a serious crime that involves sexual violence or that results in actual bodily harm or psychological or psychiatric harm to the victim, unless: • the victim has indicated that he or she does not wish to be so consulted; or • the whereabouts of the victim cannot be ascertained after reasonable inquiry
6. Information about trial process and role as witness	A victim who is a witness in the trial for the crime will be informed about the trial process and the role of the victim as a witness in the prosecution of the accused
7. Protection from contact with accused	A victim will be protected from unnecessary contact with the accused and the defence witnesses during the course of court proceedings
8. Protection of identity of victim	A victim's residential address and telephone number will not be disclosed unless a court otherwise directs
9. Attendance at preliminary hearings	A victim will be relieved from appearing at preliminary hearings or committal hearings unless the court otherwise directs
10. Return of property of victim held by the state	If any property of a victim is held by the state for the purpose of investigation or evidence, the inconvenience to the victim will be minimised and the property returned promptly
11. Protection from accused	A victim's need or perceived need for protection will be put before a bail authority by the prosecutor in any bail application by the accused
12. Information about special bail conditions	A victim will be informed about any special bail conditions imposed on the accused that are designed to protect the victim or the victim's family

Table 1 (Continued)

13. Information about outcome of bail application	A victim will be informed of the outcome of a bail application if the accused has been charged with sexual assault or other serious personal violence
14. Victim impact statement	A relevant victim will have access to information and assistance for the preparation of any victim impact statement authorised by law to ensure that the full effect of the crime on the victim is placed before the court
15. Information about impending release, escape or eligibility for absence from custody	A victim will, on request, be kept informed of the offender's impending release, or escape from custody, or of any change in security classification that results in the offender being eligible for unescorted absence from custody
16. Submissions on parole and eligibility for absence from custody of serious offenders	A victim will, on request, be provided with the opportunity to make submissions concerning the granting of parole to a serious offender or any change in security classification that would result in a serious offender being eligible for unescorted absence from custody
17. Compensation for victims of personal violence	A victim of a crime involving sexual or other serious personal violence is entitled to make a claim under a statutory scheme for victims compensation
18. Information about complaint procedure where Charter is breached	A victim may make a complaint about a breach of the Charter and will, on request, be provided with information on the procedure for making such a complaint

Source: Victims Services 2003

Male victimisation: Prevalence and trends in Australia

With the exception of sexual assault and kidnapping/abduction, Australian crime statistics suggest that men are more likely to be victims of violent crime than women (ABS 2013a). More specifically, recorded crime data collated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) indicates that when compared with women, men were approximately three times more likely to be the victim of an armed robbery (51% *cf* 16%) and were nearly twice as likely to be the victim of homicide and related offences (70% *cf* 30%; ABS 2013a). The same recorded crime statistics also indicate that rates of victimisation for physical assault were greater for men in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, although not in the Northern Territory or Western Australia (ABS 2013a).

Research also suggests that not only are men more likely to be victims of violent crime than women, but that they also have different victimisation profiles (Kaukinen 2002; Riggs, Rothbaum & Foa 1995;

Table 2 Key differences between male and female victimisation profiles

Male victims	Female victims
More likely to be victimised by a male non-intimate partner or stranger	More likely to be victimised by a male intimate partner
Victimisation more likely to occur in a public place	Victimisation more likely to occur in the home
Isolated incidents rather than ongoing	Victimisation often ongoing
Often normalised and socially accepted	Violence used as a means of control
More likely that alcohol is a contributing factor to the offence	

Source: ABS 2013b; Kaukinen 2002; Riggs, Rothbaum & Foa 1995; Sundaram et al. 2004

Sundaram et al. 2004). For example, ABS *Crime Victimisation Survey* data from the 2010–11 period found that:

- men were twice as likely as women to report being physically assaulted by a stranger (47% *cf* 23%);
- men were more likely than women to report that alcohol or other substances was a contributing factor in a physical assault (63% *cf* 54%); and
- men were more likely than women to report being physically assaulted in the street or open land (21% *cf* 8%), or place of entertainment/recreation space (13% *cf* 7%; ABS 2013b).

Key differences between the victimisation profile of men and women are described in Table 2.

The impact of victimisation

It is well established that violent crime can have a significant impact on victims, witnesses and their family and friends (Mayhew & Reilly 2008; McCart, Smith & Sawyer 2010; Shapland & Hall 2007). Although it appears that men are more likely than women to be victims of violence, little is known about their reactions to and the impact of this violence.

Physical impact

Unsurprisingly, many male victims of violence experience physical injuries as a result of the offence, which can range from the minor (eg scratches and bruising) to the severe (eg broken bones, head injuries and open wounds). Analysis of data collected as part of the *British Crime Survey* found that 16 percent of violent crime victims (male and female) required some form of medical attention as a result of the offence (Shapland & Hall 2007). Further, Stanko and Hobdell's (1993) interviews with a sample of male assault victims found that a small proportion had been in intensive care as a result of their injuries, with a few stating their injuries had long-term consequences, such as muscle wastage and partial paralysis.

There is also evidence that some men who were victims of violent offences that did not actually involve physical contact between the perpetrator

and victim (eg stalking and intimidation) still experienced symptoms of poor physical health during and after the event. For example, one study found that male stalking victims who said they were very afraid of the perpetrator were almost four times more likely to report experiencing symptoms of poor health than men who had not been stalked (Davis, Coker & Sanderson 2002). The same research also found that stalking victims (male and female) were more likely to report the development of a chronic disorder and injury.

Psychological impact

A growing body of literature suggests that criminal offences can have a significant impact on the mental health and wellbeing of victims (New & Berliner 2000; Shapland & Hall 2007; Tontodonato & Erez 1994). However, generally speaking, when compared with victims of non-confrontational crimes (eg theft), it appears that victims of violent offences are more likely to experience a range of mental health issues (eg depression and social isolation; Shapland & Hall 2007; Tontodonato & Erez 1994).

It has been found that a significant proportion of male victims of violence experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the months and years following the offence (Jaycox, Marshall & Schnell 2004; Riggs, Rothbaum & Foa 1995; Stanko & Hobdell 1993; Willis 2008). For example, Riggs, Rothbaum and Foa (1995) found that 50 percent of a sample (n=31) of male victims of non-sexual/non-domestic assault who participated in a psychiatric assessment within one month of the offence had diagnosable PTSD. Although at the end of the three month evaluation period none of the men met the criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD, many were still experiencing symptoms of the disorder—41 percent were experiencing emotional reactions to reminders of the event and approximately 23 percent were experiencing concentration and/or memory difficulties (Riggs, Rothbaum & Foa 1995).

A similar study conducted by Jaycox, Marshall and Schnell (2004) found that 27 percent of a sample (n=231) of male victims of community violence had diagnosable PTSD three months after the offence. However, this figure decreased to approximately 13 percent nine months later. The majority of male

victims of assault who were interviewed as part of Stanko and Hobdell's (1993) study experienced symptoms of PTSD (eg fear, phobias, disruptions to sleep patterns, hyper-vigilance and start responses), while a small proportion self-reported experiencing severe psychological disturbances for which a few were admitted to a mental health facility.

Other research that did not look specifically at the issue of PTSD also found evidence that violent crime victimisation can have a significant impact on the mental health of victims. For example, a study focusing on the experiences of a sample of stalking victims (male and female) found that being stalked was associated with subsequent feelings of depression and recreational drug use among male victims (Davis, Coker & Sanderson 2002). Further, Elkit (2002) found that 63 percent of a sample (n=65) of men and women who had experienced or witnessed a violent crime at their workplace (eg robbery) had acute stress disorder, while 87 percent exhibited symptoms of the condition. Similarly, Shapland and Hall (2007) found that of *British Crime Survey* respondents who self-reported being the victim of violence during the 2001–02 period, 23 percent reported difficulty sleeping and 15 percent reported having anxiety problems.

Although the literature suggests that a significant proportion of male victims of crime are affected by experiencing a violent offence, a recurring theme is that their victimisation has a less significant or more short-lived impact than women. Women, it appears, take longer to recover from their experiences and are more likely to self-report feelings of fear, stress, anxiety, depression and hyper-vigilance as a result of the offence. However, it is important to note that many of the studies reviewed here were based on self-report data; specifically, victims of crime self-reporting the financial, social, physical and psychological impact of the offence. Some commentators have suggested that male victims may have difficulty admitting to experiencing 'un-masculine' feelings like fear and vulnerability (Davis, Coker & Sanderson 2002; Stanko & Hobdell 1993). Many male victims who were interviewed as part of a number of studies reviewed here responded to questions about their victimisation with a denial of harm and a denial that they were affected by it (Burcar & Akerstrom 2009;

Stanko & Hobdell 1993). While this is not to suggest that men and women respond in similar ways to their victimisation, it does highlight that an understanding of male experiences of crime is complicated by traditional notions of masculinity, which may in turn influence decisions to engage in the criminal justice system and support services.

Social impact

Some research suggests that violent crime victimisation can have a detrimental impact on victims' social and intimate relationships (Shapland & Hall 2007; Stanko & Hobdell 1993; Willis 2008). Willis (2008) interviewed seven homosexual men who had been the victim of a hate crime and found that a very small number were unable to engage in intimate relationships as a result of the assault. The participants attributed this to the trauma they had experienced and their subsequent unwillingness to trust other people and to appear vulnerable in front of other men (Willis 2008). The same study (and other research) also found that some men, particularly those who had been assaulted in a place they had previously felt safe, were reluctant to leave their house, were fearful of certain venues and areas and isolated themselves socially (Stanko & Hobdell 1993; Willis 2008).

Financial impact

Finally, there can be a range of immediate and long-term financial costs associated with violent crime victimisation (Tontodonato & Erez 1994). Crimes involving the removal of someone's property (eg mugging) have an immediate and obvious financial impact on the victim, as they have been deprived of their property and unless they have insurance, usually have to cover the costs associated with replacing the item. Other short-term costs include having to take time off work to make a report to the police, or to recover from the immediate physical and/or mental harm incurred as a result of the offence. Longer term costs associated with victimisation include the costs associated with attending court to give evidence (eg transport and child care) and taking time off work over an extended period of time to attend physical

rehabilitation or counselling sessions, as well as the cost of treatment itself (Stanko & Hobdell 1993).

Impact of participating in the court process

Victims who participate in the trials of perpetrators report a range of experiences when they attend court. On the one hand, some victims find the process beneficial and have said that the proceedings:

- enhanced their feelings of power and control;
- provided them with a public acknowledgement of their pain and that they were victimised;
- provided them with an opportunity for restitution and for a few, an apology;
- addressed their fear of repeated victimisation; and
- restored their faith in the community (Herman 2003; Orth & Maercker 2004).

However, there is a strong body of evidence that participating in the trial of perpetrators can have a negative impact on victims and witnesses (Fielding 2013; Herman 2003; NISRA 2004; Orth 2002; Stanko & Hobdell 1993; Tontodonato & Erez 1994). Eighty-five percent of a sample of victims who participated in research conducted by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2004; n=26) said they were concerned and/or worried prior to their attendance, with another two-thirds admitting they felt very anxious about giving evidence in court. Similarly, 60 percent of the male assault victims that were interviewed as part of Stanko and Hobdell's (1993) research and who participated in the trial of the perpetrator said that the experience had been stressful, disturbing and disappointing.

That victims and witnesses find the court process confronting and distressing is not unexpected, particularly in light of the suggestion that at their core, adversarial legal processes (such as those embodied in the Australian criminal justice system) are inherently unsupportive of victims and witnesses:

> Victims need social acknowledgement and support; the court requires them to endure a public challenge to their credibility. Victims need

to establish a sense of power and control over their lives; the court requires them to submit to a complex set of rules and procedures they may not understand, and over which they have no control. Victims need an opportunity to tell their stories in their own way, in a setting of their choice; the court requires them to respond to a set of yes–no questions that break down any personal attempt to construct a coherent and meaningful narrative. Victims often need to control or limit their exposure to specific reminders of the trauma; the court requires them to relive the experience by directly confronting the perpetrator (Herman 2003: 159–160).

As such, it is not unsurprising that there is evidence that some victims who participate in the trials of perpetrators experience symptoms of re-traumatisation and emotional distress (Herman 2003; Orth & Maercker 2004).

Stressor factors associated with appearing in court

There are a range of factors associated with attending court that may contribute to victims and witnesses (male and female) feelings of anxiety, fear and stress. The main stressors include:

- *Intimidation*—Victims and witnesses often report being nervous about attending court because they are afraid of being seen by the perpetrator (MORI 2003; NISRA 2004). For example, research conducted in Northern Ireland found that approximately three-quarters of victim/witnesses had felt some form of intimidation during the court proceedings, which many said had had a profound impact on their mental and physical health, and social relationships (NISRA 2004).
- *Delays*—Victims and witnesses attending court consistently reported that the delays associated with the court proceedings was a source of stress and anxiety (Fielding 2013; MORI 2003; Orth 2002; Orth & Maerckler 2004). In particular, multiple adjournments can be emotionally distressing for victims and witnesses, especially when they are not provided with an explanation for the delay (MORI 2003; Orth & Maerckler 2004).
- *Cross-examination*—Some victims and witnesses find the process of cross-examination stressful,

humiliating and intimidating, particularly when there is some level of 'victim-blaming' involved (MORI 2003; NISRA 2004; Orth 2002; Orth & Maerckler 2004). Similarly, victims and witnesses have expressed frustration with, and become emotionally distressed as a result of, encountering specific legal conventions while giving evidence. For example, Fielding (2013) observed 65 trials conducted in the United Kingdom and found that a number of victims and witnesses became confused when they were informed that certain parts of their testimony were inadmissible due to hearsay conventions.

- *Guilty pleas*—Although it might appear that a plea of guilty would be beneficial for victims and witnesses as it means they are not required to give evidence, some victims and witnesses experience distress, deflation and disappointment, while others report feeling that they have been denied 'closure' (MORI 2003).

- *Sidelining victims*—Some research indicates that victims attending court may experience feelings of powerlessness because many adversarial court processes do not recognise their status as the 'victim'. Rather, in court proceedings, victims are defined as a witness to a crime perpetrated against the state (Erez & Tontodonato 1992; Fielding 2013). One study that looked at the experiences of victims and non-expert witnesses that participated in Northern Ireland court proceedings found that some victims and witnesses

  felt powerless over the management of their case. This feeling, which some interviewees reported was accentuated by the overall court environment, perpetuated the overall sense of intimidation felt by some witnesses (NISRA 2004: 76).

- *Unsatisfactory outcomes*—Victims attending court often have expectations of what the court process will give them—revenge against the offender, security in the knowledge that the offender cannot harm them again and recognition of their status as a victim (Erez & Tontodanato 1992; Herman 2003; Orth 2002; Orth & Maerckler 2004). If these expectations are not met because the defendant is found not guilty or receives a sentence that the victim thinks is lenient, this can also be a source of distress and potential re-traumatisation. For example, Orth and Maerckler's (2004) study found

that satisfaction with the outcome of the perpetrator's trial predicted reduced anxiety and anxiety-related symptoms among victims that attended court.

Support needs of victims

The research presented thus far suggests that violent crime victimisation and participation in the subsequent trial of perpetrators, are significant events that can have a range of financial, health (mental and physical) and social consequences for victims. Further, many victims of violence may subsequently require support (eg financial, social and emotional) during the period following the offence. However, research exploring victim post-offence behaviour has primarily focused on their reporting habits rather than their help-seeking patterns (Kaukinen 2002). Very little is known about the support needs of victims of violence, particularly those of men.

The limited research that is available suggests that some victims of violence (including men) would have benefitted from receiving additional support (Mayhew & Reilly 2008; Ringham & Salisbury 2004). More specifically, victims of crime (male and female) who participated in the *New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey* said they would have benefited from:

- more information/feedback from police (32%);
- emotional support (31%);
- someone to talk to (28%);
- counselling (22%);
- legal advice (17%); and
- financial assistance (11%; Mayhew & Reilly 2008).

Similarly, a small proportion of mugging victims and persons assaulted by a stranger or acquaintance who participated in the *British Crime Survey* reported that they would have benefitted from additional support and assistance during the period following the offence. In particular, eight to 19 percent wanted more information from the police, nine to 14 percent wanted someone to talk to and five to 12 percent wanted information about how they could avoid future victimisation (Ringham & Salisbury 2004).

Table 3 Victims and witness typologies and their support needs		
Victim group	**Description**	**Support needs**
Vulnerable	Significant levels of emotional distress and physical health problems. Usually victims of serious crime and may be experiencing intimidation outside of court	High-needs group. Require significant support and guidance prior to and during court proceedings
Nervous	Concerned, anxious or worried about attending court. Unlikely to have had any prior experience with the court process, so do not know what to expect. Can be emotionally affected by their victimisation experience, but not as much as very vulnerable group	Require some support and guidance prior to and during court proceedings
Unconcerned	More likely to have been involved in a minor incident that did not cause them personal harm	Minimal support requirements
Confident	More likely to be involved in a minor incident and have prior experience in the criminal justice system as a juror, victim, offender etc. Have a good understanding of what to expect from the court process	Least likely group to ask for support from police or victim support agencies

Source: Adapted from MORI 2003

The literature also indicated that many male victims of violence participating in the trials of perpetrators may require emotional and legal support throughout the proceedings, to not only ensure they have an understanding of the legal process and their place within them, but also to help them emotionally prepare for the proceedings (Orth 2002; Tontodonato & Erez 1994). Research conducted by the MORI Social Research Institute (2003) on behalf of the Audit Commission of England suggests that victims and witnesses participating in court processes can be categorised into four groups—vulnerable, nervous, unconcerned and confident. As shown in Table 3, the allocation of a victim to any of these four groups is helpful in identifying the kinds of support they may require while attending court. However, victims and witnesses can move between these groups before and during court proceedings. For example, an unconcerned victim whose case is adjourned on multiple occasions may become a nervous victim.

Sources of victim support

During the period following the offence, victims of crime may access support from a range of people and agencies. These sources of support can be categorised into three main groups—the police, informal support networks (eg family and friends) and formal support networks (eg mental health services).

The police

If a victim chooses to report the offence, the police are typically their first point of contact with the criminal justice system and potentially, the first source of support (Kaukinen 2002). As a result of a number of legislative changes, many Australian police departments, including the NSW Police Force, have become more victim focused. In particular, as previously mentioned, NSW police officers are expected to respond in accordance with the Charter of Victims Rights.

Research examining victim satisfaction with the police suggests that overall, victims are positive about their experiences, although rates of satisfaction among victims appear to be lower than non-victims (Mayhew & Reilly 2008; OESR 2012; Skogan 2005). For example, approximately four out of five victims of crime (male and female) who participated in research conducted for the Audit Commission of England (MORI 2003; n=1,759) said they had been satisfied with the support they had received from the police. However, male assault victims who were interviewed as part of Stanko and Hobdell's (1993) study appeared to have mixed feelings about their interactions with the police, with some saying they had been dissatisfied and disappointed by the police response. The authors suggested that some police officers (particularly men), may have brought their own perceptions of male-to-male violence into their work and this

influenced how they responded to male victims. Findings from the *Queensland Crime Victimisation Survey* indicated that when compared with women, a lower proportion of male victims said they were satisfied with the service provided by the police (71.8% *cf* 76.3%; OESR 2012). Finally, the *New Zealand Crime and Safety Survey* found that, when compared with women, a lower proportion of male victim respondents said the police had provided them with information about support services (24% *cf* 34%; Mayhew & Reilly 2008).

Informal sources of victim support

The most common sources of support accessed by victims during the period following the offence are often informal (eg family, friends, spouses, neighbours, colleagues and religious representatives; Mayhew & Reilly 2008; Norris, Kaniasty & Scheer 1990; Sims, Yost & Abbott 2005). As Kaukinen (2002: 451) notes:

> Although help from family and friends does not necessarily bring about justice-based solutions to criminal victimisation, help from informal networks provides social support, comfort and other tangible resources to crime victims.

For example, many of the men who were interviewed as part of Stanko and Hobdell's (1993) study indicated that emotional support from friends and families, particularly their mothers and spouses, had been very important in their recovery.

However, there is evidence that male victims often experience more difficulty engaging with informal support networks than women (Kaukinen 2002; Norris, Kaniasty & Scheer 1990). Norris, Kaniasty and Scheer (1990) suggest that generally, women have larger social networks than men and spend more time developing and maintaining their relationships. Men may not have or may not believe they have strong social networks to draw upon for support. Further, it has been suggested that some male victims are more reluctant than women to talk about their feelings with their family and friends because they are worried about losing their status as a protector and having their masculinity challenged (Norris, Kaniasty & Scheer 1990; Stanko & Hobdell 1993). A reluctance to talk about the offence may also relate to concerns

about making family and friends uncomfortable or upset (Shapland & Hall 2007).

Formal sources of victim support

Research consistently demonstrates that victims of crime rarely access formal support services that are offered to them and this is particularly the case for men (Jaycox, Marshall & Schnell 2004; McCart, Smith & Sawyer 2010; New & Berliner 2000; Sims, Yost & Abbott 2005). For example, although 34 percent of a sample of male victims of community violence who participated in Jaycox, Marshall and Schnell's (2004) study were diagnosed with PTSD in the 12 months following their victimisation, only 15 percent of the sample made contact with formal support services after the offence. Further, Sims, Yost and Abbott's (2005) analysis of the experiences of 654 randomly selected victims of crime found that only three percent had accessed formal support services.

It is also found that rates of satisfaction among victims who choose to access formal support services are mixed. For example, Norris, Kaniasty and Scheer (1990) found that only 27 percent of violent crime victims who utilised the services of a mental health professional shortly after the offence reported the encounter as being helpful. By contrast, other research has found that victims and witnesses attending court who engaged with a victim support agency were overwhelmingly positive about the assistance they received (MORI 2003, NISRA 2004). This support included transport to and from the court, information about the court process and advice on compensation.

Factors associated with formal help-seeking behaviours

The literature that has attempted to understand the impact of gender on formal help-seeking behaviours is inconsistent. While some research suggests that women are more likely than men to seek formal support following an offence (Kaukinen 2002, New & Berliner 2000), other research, after controlling for a range of socio-demographic factors (including gender and age), found women are no more likely than men to seek formal support after they are victimised (Norris, Kaniasty & Scheer 1990).

The research suggests there are a range of factors (other than gender) that influence formal help-seeking patterns. These include:

- race/ethnicity;
- culture;
- age;
- knowledge about treatment;
- relationship between the offender and victim;
- level of distress;
- type of crime;
- prior victimisation where they coped with their victimisation poorly; and
- whether or not the victim is eligible for compensation and state support (Kaukinen 2002; McCart, Smith & Sawyer 2010; New & Berliner 2000; Norris, Kaniasty & Scheer 1990; Sims, Yost & Abbott 2005; Winkel & Vrji 1998).

The perceived criminality of the offence is another factor that is thought to influence help-seeking behaviours and the initial decision to report the offence to the police. It has been suggested that if the offence does not align with the victim's own definition of a criminal act, they are less likely to report the crime in the first instance and in turn, may be less likely to engage with formal support services (Clare & Morgan 2009). Analysis of data collected as part of the *2005 Personal Safety Survey* administered by the ABS found that:

- men under the age of 25 years were less likely to say that assault was a criminal offence;
- men who reported getting drunk regularly were less likely to say that assault was a criminal offence;
- victims who knew the perpetrator were less likely to say that their assault was a criminal offence;
- an assault committed within licensed premises was less likely to be seen as a criminal offence by males than females; and
- men were less likely than women to believe threats of violence to be criminal offences (Clare & Morgan 2009).

The authors interpreted the results as indicating an:

unwillingness of male victims to criminalise incidents in these settings [licensed premises, alcohol involvement or the perpetrator was known to them] unless victimization involves multiple offenders, or if there are other serious incident characteristics…it points to the acceptance of some violent incidents as fights and as things to be left outside of the criminal justice system (Clare & Morgan 2009: 23).

Barriers to engaging with formal support services

As mentioned previously in this review, research has consistently demonstrated that only a small proportion of victims of crime (male and female) engage with formal victim support services after the offence (Jaycox, Marshall & Schnell 2004; McCart, Smith & Sawyer 2010; New & Berliner 2000; Sims, Yost & Abbott 2005). However, some commentators suggest that this finding is not necessarily cause for overt concern. Winkel and Vrij (1998: 23) argue that 'not all victims are in need of support' and suggest that support services should only be offered and provided to victims of violence who genuinely require such assistance.

However, despite the fact that many victims may not require the assistance of formal support agencies, it is also the case that some victims that may benefit from this support are not engaging with support services (Jaycox, Marshall & Schnell 2004; Mayhew & Reilly 2008, MORI 2003; NISRA 2004). There is only limited research on why these victims of violence do not engage with formal support services. Jaycox, Marshall and Schnell (2004) asked a sample of male victims of community violence who did not access mental health support following the offence why they had made this decision. The main reasons provided by respondents included:

- I thought I could deal with it by myself (55%);
- I didn't know where to go for help (52%);
- It wasn't convenient (49%);
- I didn't think they would help (42%);
- I was worried about costs (42%);
- I was afraid of what others would think (33%); and
- I was embarrassed (30%;Jaycox, Marshall & Schnell 2004).

Some of these identified issues are explored in more depth below.

Knowledge of services

A lack of victim knowledge around the nature and availability of victim support services can also act as a significant barrier to accessing services (NISRA 2004). Research conducted by Sims, Yost and Abbott (2005) found that 43 percent of a sample of crime victims (male and female) who did not access support services (n=822), did not because they were unaware of the services. The same study also found that surveyed victims had a limited understanding of the kinds of support they could access. Importantly, approximately three-quarters of respondents said that formal victim support services only provided assistance to people with mental health issues and had discounted the availability of other services, such as legal advocacy or information about compensation (Sims, Yost & Abbott 2005).

A victim's decision not to report the offence to police may also have an impact on the level of knowledge the victim will have of the types of support services available to them. Police are one of the primary (and earliest) sources of information about victim support services and if victims choose not to report the crime, then their knowledge about these services may be limited. This hypothesis is supported by findings from research conducted by Sims, Yost and Abbott (2005) and Langton (2011), which found that victims of crime that reported the incident to the police were more likely to be aware of victim support services.

However, although being aware of the nature and availability of formal victim support services is an important factor for engaging victims with these services, some research indicates that even when people are provided with the necessary information, engagement rates remain low. While this may indicate that some victims do not require the services of a formal support agency, it may also be because of how the information was communicated in the first instance. For example, a study from Northern Ireland found that a significant proportion of surveyed victims and witnesses who attended court and acknowledged receiving a leaflet that provided them with information about giving

evidence in court subsequently indicated in the same survey that they had not been provided with the information included in the leaflet. The researchers attempted to explain this finding by suggesting that the information included in the leaflet may have been 'unengaging' and/or victims had not actually read it (NISRA 2004).

Availability and accessibility

Occasionally, the demand for formal support services can be greater than the available supply. For example, an audit of the Victorian Victims Assistance and Counselling Program (VACP) found that four of the VACP providers had a client waiting list, with one reportedly requiring clients to wait between six weeks and five months before being seen (VAGO 2011). Further, a quarter of respondents who completed the VACP client satisfaction survey said they had been placed on a waiting list, with a small proportion reporting they had waited longer than a month before receiving support.

Further, whether a victim chooses to report the offence to the police or not may have implications for the accessibility of formal support services. Some support services may have eligibility criteria that require clients to report the crime to the police before assistance can be provided. Although this does not appear to be the case in New South Wales where the definition of 'victim' is purposefully broad, if victims are unaware of this fact, they may believe that because they choose not to report the crime, they are not eligible for assistance and in turn will not make contact with formal support services (New & Berliner 2000).

Appropriateness

Very few victim support services are targeted specifically at men. While this issue will be explored from a NSW context later in this report, this trend appears to be consistent both in Australia and internationally (Burcar & Akerstrom 2009; Sims, Yost & Abbott 2005; Stanko & Hobdell 1993). For example, a Swedish study involving in-depth interviews with 10 male victims of physical assault found that most of the participants, while denying they needed support in the first place, were disappointed by the lack of appropriate support

services that were offered to them by the police and other agencies. One participant specifically recalled being provided with a brochure that listed a number of victim services, the majority of which were specifically targeted at female victims of sexual assault (Burcar & Akerstrom 2009). The authors of this study and others have argued that the perceived and actual lack of services that are specifically targeted at male victims of violence may influence a victim's decision to engage with services following the offence—'If victims do not believe that victim service programs offer services they need, they will not use them' (Sims, Yost & Abbott 2005: 364).

Masculine identities

While acknowledging that some male victims of violence choose not to engage with formal support services because of the issues described above, some commentators suggest that the decision not to engage with services may also be sociological. It has been argued that social definitions of 'victim' are described in terms that are generally perceived as feminine (eg vulnerability, physical and emotional weakness), which contrast with traits associated with culturally defined notions of masculinity, such as strength, 'holding your own' and control (Burcar & Akerstrom 2009; Sundaram et al. 2004). As such, it has been argued that

> if men are expected to be masculine and thereby powerful, dominant, and in control, they cannot be discursively produced as victims—the antithesis of masculinity (Sundaram et al. 2004: 66).

To some extent, this theory appears to be supported by the literature. For example, some male victims of assault that participated in Stanko and Hobdell's (1993) study openly acknowledged that their reluctance to talk about the impact of their victimisation was in part caused by their unwillingness to reject stereotypical masculine identities. Further, a Swedish narrative study found that many male victims of physical assault were reluctant to self-identify as being a victim of violence. In the event they acknowledged that they had been victimised, they also emphasised the insignificance of the event and said it had not affected them (Burcar & Akerstrom 2009). Finally, there is some research that suggests that men who ascribe to traditional notions of masculinity have more negative attitudes towards mental health services (Good, Thomson & Brathwaite 2005).

Support services for male victims of violence in New South Wales: A snapshot

A review of the available literature suggested that a substantial proportion of male victims are significantly and negatively affected by their victimisation experiences and consequently may benefit from engaging with formal support services following the offence. In New South Wales, there are currently a number of support agencies and programs that male victims may choose to engage with following a violent offence (see Table 4). These programs and agencies differ from one another on a number of points:

- *Service delivery model*—Some programs provide services over the telephone (eg Lifeline, MensLine and the Victims Access Line (VAL)), whereas others provide face-to-face assistance and support (eg Victims and Witnesses of Crime Court Service (VWCCS) and Mission Australia's Court Support Service (CSS)). Further, many of the identified programs also provide support and assistance services in an online environment. For example, MensLine clients can take part in online and video counselling sessions; a number of services provide referral information on their websites (eg Lifeline, Victims Services), while others have online resources such as leaflets and booklets that can be used by victims with Internet access (eg the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions Witness Assistance Service (DPP WAS).

- *Identified priority areas*—Some services focus their resources on identified priority crime types and/or victim groups (DPP WAS and the Aboriginal Client Service Specialists (ACSS) program), whereas others are 'generalist' services that do not explicitly identify priority areas (eg VWCCS, MensLine and Mission Australia's CSS).

- *Location*—Most of the programs operate in selected sites across New South Wales (VWCCS, Salvation Army court chaplains and the ACSS program), while others are available statewide (eg the VAL, MensLine and Lifeline). Whether a program is available throughout New South Wales or in selected locations appears to be influenced by the service delivery model—most telephone services are available throughout the state, whereas face-to-face support may only be provided in specific locations.

- *Types of support provided*—Services may focus their resources on providing emotional and/or spiritual support to victims in crisis (eg Salvation Army court chaplains), information about the different services available to victims (eg VAL), information about the court process (eg VWCCS, the ACSS program and Mission Australia's CSS) or a combination of all three.

- *Eligibility criteria*—While the majority of programs did not have clear eligibility criteria, some services

did. For example, only victims of violence whose allegations are substantiated can access support under the Financial Compensation or Approved Counsellor Schemes, which are both managed by Victims Services.

Another point of differentiation between programs is the juncture at which they engage with victims. Some services provide assistance immediately after the incident or when victims attend court, whereas others are underpinned by a continuation of care model. This means that they engage with victims as early as possible and provide case management for the period of their treatment and recovery.

Further, while all of the support agencies that participated in the consultations said they had male victims on their current client lists, there did appear to be significant variation between programs in relation to the proportion of their caseload that was comprised of male victims. Some services reported that less than 10 percent of their clients were male victims of non-domestic and non-sexual assault, while others suggested that it was higher, at around 40 percent. In general, male victims appeared to only comprise a small proportion of formal support agencies caseloads.

Points of contact

The following describes the points at which male victims of violence may make contact and engage with formal support services during the period following the incident. This section prefaces further discussion later in the report about how these points of contact are maintained and where disconnection may occur.

Following the incident

For the purposes of this discussion, initial contact with the police represents the first point, outside of contact with medical services and the like, where victims are first formally provided with information about services that are available to victims of crime.

In New South Wales, every victim who reports a matter to the police is to be given a Victims' Card by one of the attending officers. At a minimum, the Victims' Card includes:

- the name and contact details of the investigating officer;
- the COPS event number (incident reference number);
- contact details for the VAL, operated by Victims Services of the NSW Department of Attorney General and Justice;
- the contact number for the Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit; and
- information regarding police responsibilities as to The Charter of Victims Rights.

Victims who report a crime to the police using the NSW Police Assistance Line will not necessarily be given this information by the customer service representative. However, unless a matter is considered to be very minor, face-to-face engagement with a police officer will invariably ensue where the victim will be provided with a Victims' Card. Some victims may receive SMS notification of their report but this notice only includes information such as the COPS event number.

Where a homicide has occurred, one of the investigating officers assumes the role of family liaison officer with the victim's family. The family liaison officer has dual responsibilities in (a) providing support to the family and updating them on progress and (b) playing an active role in the investigation of the homicide. Considering that it can take a significant period of time to finalise homicide matters, family liaison officers and victims can potentially have a lengthy period of engagement with one another.

Family victims of homicide receive automatic referral to the Homicide Victims' Support Group (HVSG). The NSW Police Force has established a Memorandum of Understanding with Victims Services and the HVSG, with arrangements being considered or almost in place with other service providers to provide family members and friends of homicide victims with a wider choice of support options. The HVSG, which is a non-government organisation, makes contact with victims within 24 hours of notification. It provides grief counselling services (for Sydney residents) and referrals to counsellors (for other NSW residents), support meetings (where members can meet with one another to talk) and court support. It also liaises

Table 4 New South Wales-based formal support services available to male victims of crime					
Program/service	Availability	Service delivery model	Priority areas	Supports provided	Male specific?
MensLine	Statewide	Telephone Online	Men experiencing familial and relationship issues	Counselling Referral information	Yes
Lifeline	Statewide—Telephone Crisis Support and Crisis Support Chat lines Selected locations—counselling services	Telephone Face-to-face Online	n/a	Counselling Emotional support Referral information	No
DPP WAS	Selected locations—there is a WAS Officer at all offices of the DPP Statewide—online resources	Face-to-face Online	Child victims Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence and child abuse	Emotional support Information about court processes Referral information	No
Salvation Army court chaplains	Selected locations	Face-to-face	n/a	Emotional support Information about the court process	No
VWCCS	Selected Local, District and Children's Courts	Face-to-face Online	n/a	Emotional support Information about court processes Referral information	No
Victims Services	Statewide—VAL and the online resources Selected Locations—face-to-face contact with Client Service Officers or Referral & Support Officers	Telephone Face-to-face Online	n/a	Financial compensation Referral information Information about court processes	No
Mission Australia Court Support Service	Selected Local, District and Supreme Courts	Face-to-face	n/a	Emotional support Information about court processes Referral information	No
Enough is Enough	Statewide—counselling may be provided over the telephone Selected locations—group therapies and counselling	Telephone Face-to-face	Offender reform	Counselling Information about court processes Referral information	No
VOCAL (Victims of Crime Assistance League)	Statewide—referral information Selected locations—counselling	Face-to-face Online	n/a	Emotional support Information about court processes Referral information	No
ACSS	Selected Local Courts	Face-to-face Telephone	Indigenous persons (victims and offenders)	Emotional support Information about court processes Referral information	No

with other relevant service providers (such as the DPP WAS) on the family's behalf. The HVSG is closely aligned with Victims' Services to facilitate other services, such as compensation claims.

For incidents that do not involve a homicide, the lead investigating officer takes on a liaison role with the victim, which involves providing a reference to available services (ie through those listed on the Victims' Card) and follow up regarding progress in the case. The designated officer must follow up with the victim within seven days, but not within 12 hours, of receipt of the report and every 28 days from therein for the duration of the case. The officer in charge is, where possible, a senior member of the investigation team but for high-volume crime, the officer who takes the report generally adopts this role. In the latter's absence, victims can request to speak to the officer's supervising sergeant.

In addition to the previously outlined victim support roles and duties, the NSW Police Force Local Area Commands have specialist officers that can assist victims of crime. These include:

- Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, whose responsibilities include providing an avenue for community members to report crime and to encourage Indigenous persons to work with police to develop programs to address crime and violence in their communities;

- Crime Prevention Officers, who support victims of crime in developing strategies to avoid becoming repeat victims and to lessen fear of crime;

- Domestic Violence Liaison Officers, who provide support and referral for victims of domestic violence;

- Multicultural Liaison Officers, whose duties include victim support and follow up, basic language assistance, network referrals and assisting victims to report crime; and

- Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officers, who provide assistance to victims of anti-gay/lesbian violence (including domestic violence) and harassment, as well as working with the gay and lesbian community to develop programs to reduce and prevent anti-gay/lesbian violence and to encourage reporting of such crimes.

The responsibilities of the police towards a victim of crime must ultimately be managed alongside their equivalent responsibility to investigate and resolve the criminal matter. It was suggested that by virtue of their role as law enforcement officers, the police service does not have the resources or capacity to provide ongoing support to victims of crime outside of what they are currently mandated to undertake.

Pre-court support

The most widely available formal support service available at the pre-court stage (and continuing through and after the court process) is the DPP WAS. The DPP WAS provides assistance to victims and witnesses involved in DPP prosecutions, including:

- court preparation and *in situ* support;

- information about and referral to counselling and other support services; and

- information regarding Victim Impact Statements and Victims Registers.

Referrals to the DPP WAS are internally generated. DPP administrative staff review matters registered by the NSW Police Force and forward relevant matters to the WAS. These matters are then screened and prioritised based on:

- matter type, with a firm focus on sexual assault (including historical and present-day cases of child sexual assault), domestic violence, homicide and other incidents involving death (eg driving causing death) but also including incidents where the victim experienced severe trauma or injury;

- age of the victim/witness, where all children victims receive support; and

- vulnerability of the victim/witness, including Indigenous or CALD victims or victims with a mental health condition, intellectual disability or an acquired brain injury.

The priority areas of support identified by the DPP WAS have meant that the great majority of their clients are women and children. Adult male clients were predominantly victims of historic cases of child sexual abuse.

Stakeholders said that it was 'rare' for the DPP WAS to receive direct referrals from police or solicitors but where they did occur, it was usually when the victim had been assessed as high needs or experiencing difficulties coping with their victimisation and/or the

court case. Referrals from solicitors regarding male victims sometimes came relatively late in the court process, usually after the solicitor has read the victim impact statement and (belatedly) realised the effect of the crime on the victim. Even in these situations it was unlikely the DPP WAS would be in a position to assist other than providing the solicitor with information to pass on to the victim about the kinds of services that might be available to the victim should they require it.

Pre-court support is also provided by a small group of non-government organisations. Clients may be referred to the organisation from the DPP (or the DPP WAS), the police or other support agencies or they may be referred internally (ie from chapters providing other forms of assistance). Walk-in clients do occur but they were much less common.

Court support

Male victims who are either ineligible for support from the DPP WAS or not connected with other service providers during the pre-court phase, may seek or receive offers of assistance from (mostly non-government) organisations that make first contact with clients in the court setting. Court support workers from these organisations are located in select local, district and/or supreme courts, mainly in metropolitan Sydney but with some regional coverage from the ACSS program and DPP WAS.

Court support workers employ a mix of approaches in identifying potential clients—reviewing court listings, talking to police prosecutors and literally walking around the courthouse to locate persons who may need assistance. Some service providers claimed they did not necessarily differentiate who they approached, whereas others preferentially

selected clients based on their assessment of need. Potential male clients identified by court support workers were generally described as those looking 'anxious or scared', 'typically not sitting with a solicitor' or on their own with no apparent companions (Service providers personal communication September – October 2012). Clients may also initiate contact with support workers themselves, but this appeared to be an infrequent occurrence. For example, it was considered 'very rare' for an Indigenous man to approach a support worker, instead it was more likely that a female family member would contact the support worker or the agency on behalf of the male victim/witness.

Broader service provision— referral and follow up

At each point of contact, male victims may be referred to a broader range of services outside court support and related assistance, including counselling, group therapy, compensation and welfare matters such as housing. In this instance, victims may be encouraged or recommended to seek some form of additional support before, during and/or after court proceedings, and are provided with information about options for support. In some cases, re-referral may occur. Referrals were offered where services were 'available or appropriate' and/or where the service provider 'deemed (it) necessary', usually based on an assessment that the victim/witness was having difficulties coping (Service providers personal communication September 2012). Issues around the availability and appropriateness of services for male victims will be described in later chapters.

Stakeholder perceptions of the experiences of male victims of violence

One of the aims of this project was to gain a better understanding of the experiences of male victims of violence, particularly when they participate in court processes. While this key research question is best answered by talking to and engaging directly with male victims of violence, stakeholders who participated in interviews and focus groups conducted as part of this project were also asked for their views and observations. This section provides an overview of stakeholder views in relation to the experiences of male victims of violence, which are drawn from their first-hand experience interacting with male victims in a range of capacities, most commonly as victim support workers.

It is important to acknowledge from the outset that the majority of stakeholders who were consulted as part of this research said it was difficult and potentially unhelpful to make generalisations about a 'typical' male victim response to violent offences. Many of the stakeholders emphasised that victimisation is a personal experience and an individual's response to these traumatic events are influenced by a range of factors (eg prior experiences of victimisation and the relationship between the victim and perpetrator), not just their gender.

Male victim experiences

While many stakeholders emphasised that victim responses were not only influenced by gender but by a range of factors, some were able to draw upon their experiences working with male victims of violence to identify a series of 'common' male responses to victimisation. These included:

- feeling angry;
- feeling anxious and nervous;
- being afraid (of re-victimisation and the court process);
- increased consumption of alcohol and illicit drugs;
- becoming non-responsive and withdrawn;
- becoming agitated and impatient;
- feeling ashamed and 'useless'; and
- isolating themselves from friends and family.

Importantly, these issues were similarly identified in the literature as common responses to victimisation, albeit regardless of the victim's gender.

Feelings of shame were seen as being particularly acute among male victims of violence. Some service providers observed that male clients often felt they had let their families down and failed in their perceived roles of protecting and providing for their loved ones. It was also observed that men from specific cultural and social backgrounds (particularly

Indigenous men and men from Middle Eastern backgrounds) may be more likely to experience feelings of shame. Stakeholders attributed this trend in part to strong social interpretations of masculinity within some cultural groups.

> The [Indigenous] man is supposed to protect his woman and kids and when they can't do that and they're hurt, they can be really messed up from that (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

> If you've been a victim of assault…I guess that's a challenge to his masculinity. There's a lot of pride at stake for some of these blokes. They might lose standing in the community. They might be more inclined to say it happened in football match. It would be so hard to get them to own up to it (Service provider personal communication October 2012).

A small number of stakeholders suggested that when compared with women, male victims of violence were more likely to believe their victimisation was 'normal' or unproblematic. It was suggested that some men (particularly young men) normalise certain types of violence (eg violence between friends, violence committed during a sporting event and violence where alcohol is a contributing factor). These men may not see themselves as victims, or even that the incident was out of the ordinary or concerning. One service provider even suggested that some men may perceive certain violent acts as a 'rite of passage' and therefore as a positive event. This feedback appears to be supported by Clare and Morgan's (2009) study, which found evidence that some men are less likely than women to believe that assaults committed in certain locations and under certain circumstances are criminal offences.

Further, some stakeholders suggested that emotional distress may manifest or 'present' in men and women in different ways. In particular, a small number of service providers observed that female victims were more likely to be nervous, emotional and 'weepy' while men may be angry, aggressive and confrontational. As one stakeholder commented—'A lot of [masculine] emotional distress presents as anger' (Service provider personal communication September 2012). Similarly, while both male and female victims may become

defensive and combative when they are on the witness stand (particularly when being cross-examined), some stakeholders observed that it appeared to be more common among men. This feedback is supported by research that suggests that, generally speaking, men 'exernalise' feelings of anxiety, fear and distress, whereas women are more likely to internalise their emotions (Good, Thomson & Brathwaite 2005).

Vulnerable groups

The stakeholder interviews and focus groups suggested that some men may be more likely to respond to their experiences of victimisation and/or attendance at court in a negative way than other groups. Groups of men who were identified by stakeholders included:

- homosexual men;
- young men;
- Indigenous men;
- men from CALD communities;
- men with a mental illness and/or an ABI;
- drug-affected men;
- refugees; and
- victim/offenders.

These groups were described as being vulnerable to negative consequences as a result of their victimisation for at least one of two reasons:

- they were less likely to engage with victim support services and therefore were not receiving the support and assistance they might need to recover and progress; and/or
- they had a pre-existing condition, which meant they were more likely to find it difficult to cope with their victimisation and/or the court process.

Fear or suspicion of authority (eg the police) and/or social and cultural constraints on seeking assistance may make some Indigenous men and men from particular CALD or refugee backgrounds reluctant to engage with support services. Similarly, some service providers indicated that they had experienced difficultly building rapport with young men and therefore engaging them in support services.

Further, male victims suffering from a mental health disorder and/or ABI often experienced significant negative consequences as a result of their victimisation and were particularly vulnerable to mental health issues such as PTSD, substance misuse and anxiety. Consequently, these men often required higher levels of support and assistance, particularly when they were attending court. For example, in one situation described to the research team, a male victim of violence who had been diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome required the support of two service providers when he attended court because of his high levels of emotional distress and anxiety issues, which were exacerbated by regular adjournments to the trial.

The pathway of contact

The process by which victims of crime negotiate the criminal justice system and are presented with opportunities to engage with formal support services during this process, may be likened to a pathway where points of contact take place, or preferably should take place, between male victims of violence and formal support services. As described earlier, the three most identifiable points of contact occur when the matter is reported to the police, at the pre-court stage and while attending court. Victim support services, however, may be sought these points of contact and formal engagement with the criminal justice system.

Victimisation not reported to the police

Even before the first contact with police, many male victims of violent crime may be lost to formal support. The pervasiveness of non or under-reporting is well documented (eg crime victimisation surveys from Australia (ABS 2012b), Canada (Perreault & Brennan 2010), England and Wales (Chaplin, Flatley & Smith 2011), New Zealand (NZMoJ 2010) and United States (Berzofsky et al. 2012)). The most recent national data on reporting rates in Australia comes from the ABS' 2010–11

Crime Victimisation Survey, although a breakdown of rates by gender is only available for incidents of physical and threatened assault. Of the estimated 283,600 male victims of physical assault (aged 15 years and over), 52 percent stated they did not report the most recent incident to the police (ABS 2012b; see Table 5). Among female victims of physical assault (n=203,000), 45 percent responded similarly. For incidents of threatened assault, non-reporting rates were greater still and again, more so for men—71 percent of the estimated 313,600 male victims of threatened assault did not report the matter to police, compared with 59 percent of the 230,100 female victims. Data from the US *National Crime Victimization Survey* also shows a greater (albeit not overly marked) propensity among males to not report violent victimisations (ie defined as including rape/sexual assault, robbery, aggravated and simple assault) to the police. Between 2006 and 2010, an average 55 percent of males aged 12 years and older did not report the incident to the police, compared with 49 percent for females (Berzofsky et al. 2012).

The reasons why victims of violence choose not to report incident(s) include individual comprehension of the seriousness of the event experienced, particularly whether the event was believed to have constituted a crime, the likelihood of a (satisfactory) response from the police (and the criminal justice

Table 5 Non-reporting of incidents of violent victimisation to police and reasons for non-reporting

	Male		Female	
	n	%	n	%
Australia[a]				
Did not report	148,700	52.4	91,000	44.9
Too trivial/unimportant	46,700	16.5	23,700	11.7
Thought there was nothing police could do	23,700	8.4	8,400	4.2
Thought the police would have been unwilling to do anything	7,000	2.5	1,900	0.9
Personal matter	28,100	9.9	25,400	12.5
Told somebody else instead	12,600	4.4	8,500	4.2
Other	30,600	10.8	23,200	11.4
United States[b]				
Did not report	1,859,800	55	1,522,400	49
Not important enough to victim to report	n/a	22	n/a	14
Police would not or could not help	n/a	16	n/a	15
Dealt with in another way/personal matter	n/a	36	n/a	32
Fear of reprisal or getting offender in trouble	n/a	8	n/a	20
Other reason	n/a	18	n/a	18

a: Victims of physical assault aged 16 years and older. Weighted estimates from responses to the 2010–11 *Crime Victimisation Survey*

b: Victims of rape/sexual assault, robbery, aggravated and simple assault aged 12 years and older. Weighted estimates from responses to the 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 *National Crime Victimization Survey*. These percentages refer to the annual average

n/a=not available

Source: ABS 2012b; Berzofsky et al. 2012

system more broadly) and perceived impacts on privacy. Other factors cited, although largely drawn from studies of female victims of sexual assault/intimate partner violence, include shame and fear of reprisal (Logan et al. 2005; Wolf et al. 2003).

Crime victimisation surveys usually find the perceived triviality of the incident or its treatment as a personal matter as the most common explanations for not reporting incidents of violence to the police, as well as assumptions that the police cannot, or are unwilling, to do anything about the matter (ABS 2012b; Berzofsky et al. 2012; Chaplin, Flatley & Smith 2011; Perreault & Brennan 2010). Crime victimisation surveys from Australia and the United States show some gender difference in reasoning but these are not consistent nor directly comparable. Australian male victims of physical assault who were respondents to the 2010–11 *Crime Victimisation Survey* were slightly more likely than female victims to state that they did not report the victimisation to the police because the matter was too trivial or because the police could do nothing or would be unwilling to assist, while female victims were more likely to indicate it was because it was seen as a personal matter (see Table 5). Among victims of serious violence surveyed in the United States, the main distinction between gender responses was that males were more likely than females to consider their victimisation as 'not important enough…to report' and females were more concerned than male victims of 'fear of reprisal or getting [the] offender in trouble' (Berzofsky et al. 2012: 7).

In the absence of knowing what individual victimisation experiences constituted, these data could be interpreted as suggesting that men are less inclined to report matters to the police. It is certainly implied in the literature that men are more likely to refrain from reporting to the police than women.

However, where it exists, this evidence is not conclusive (eg Kaukinen 2002) and is often inferred from studies largely focused on help seeking strategies among female victims of sexual assault and/or intimate partner violence.

The importance of context (both historical and in the present setting), establishment of trust, the social environment and customary notions around gender responses (and masculinity) were all noted by stakeholders as influencing non-reporting decisions. While some of these factors are not necessarily gender specific, their effect may be more intense among men, or men from particular backgrounds. These factors are explored in the next section.

Another factor that could potentially influence non-reporting decisions is the circumstances and location of the victimisation. Clare and Morgan (2009) found that male perceptions around criminality of physical and threatened assaults were lessened if the incident experienced was characterised by heavy alcohol consumption and occurred in a licenced venue setting.

Stakeholders suggested such events were more likely to be viewed by male victims as personal, private and 'normal' rather than criminal. This may be particularly so for younger men, a supposition supported by Clare and Morgan's (2009) analysis, which showed that men under 25 years tended to be less clear on the criminal nature of a recently experienced assault. One stakeholder surmised the 'non-criminalisation' of physical assaults, such as those between 'mates' and/or around drinking settings, were a potential consequence of the 'normalisation' of violence (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

Making contact

The following describes how contact between male victims and formal support services are established and maintained.

Following the incident

A victim's decision to report the offence to the police does not necessarily represent the starting point from which support and other kinds of services

immediately become available or are sought. Victims who choose not to report an incident, or defer reporting, may still independently seek support from both informal and formal sources. Langton (2011), however, found that while nine in 10 violent crime victim respondents to the *National Crime Victimization Survey* did not receive 'direct assistance' from a victim service agency from 1993 to 2009, those who did report the crime to police were more likely to receive assistance (14%) compared with those who did not report the matter (4%). For the purposes of this discussion, initial contact with the police represents the first point, outside of contact with medical services and the like, where victims are first formally provided with information about services that are available to victims of crime.

For many male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence, police responsibility to the victim is largely formed during the initial series of contacts between them and the attending officer(s). It was observed by one stakeholder that contact with a 'good police officer has a huge positive effect' on the victim (Service provider personal communication September 2012) and many stakeholders agreed that the importance of these early interactions with the police could not be underestimated. The establishment of rapport was seen as vital for the victim's continued engagement with the criminal justice system and may also influence their decision to engage with formal support services.

For the most part, stakeholders considered police as 'very empathetic and supportive' when interacting with male victims of violence (Service provider personal communication September 2012). Nonetheless, there was an undercurrent of thought from a few stakeholders that *individual* officers may respond less empathetically to male victims or not treat certain matters of violent victimisation 'seriously'. It was also suggested that male victims were at greater risk of not being believed or being perceived to have in some way been responsible for their victimisation. This was considered to be especially apparent for victims of 'pub brawls' and similar physical assaults, and offender/victims who may be stigmatised by their previous or current contact with the criminal justice system as a perpetrator of violent (or other) crime.

Police do not habitually refer victims of crime to formal service providers, outside the provision of Victims' Cards or where engaged as a specialist officer as outlined above. Victims with high support needs, however, can be referred to government and non-government service providers (often court support workers). One stakeholder remarked that where referrals were received, they tended to be for female rather than male victims. Whether this pattern of referral reflects genuine bias cannot be substantiated, yet the same stakeholder suggested that remarks such as 'we've got a couple of blokes (here) but they'll be alright' inferred some preconceptions (among *some* police officers) about male coping and the need for support (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

Pre-court and court support

A review of the victims support services that were (at time of writing) operating in New South Wales indicates that services for male victims of violence are more readily available from this point forward. Once a victim has been listed as a witness to a matter being heard in court, they become eligible for a number of support services with which they may choose to engage. By choosing to engage with the criminal justice system and participate in the trial of perpetrators, male victims may be more likely to receive support and assistance.

As described earlier, the DPP WAS is the most widely available formal support service at the pre-court stage; however, the priority areas of support identified by the DPP WAS finds few adult male clients, other than those who are victims of historic cases of child sexual abuse, homicide or dangerous driving. One WAS officer calculated that of the 100 matters or so they had dealt with in the previous 12 months, only four involved male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence. Other WAS personnel interviewed indicated similarly low numbers of adult male clients who were victims of these forms of violence.

Court support available to male victims ineligible for assistance from the DPP WAS is usually more readily available once the victim/witness is attending court. These often followed offers of assistance from

court-based officers who use a mix of identification techniques to recognise potential clients in need (see earlier).

It was suggested that, similar to engagement with the police, first contact between clients and court support workers was crucial, and particularly so when approaching male clients. One stakeholder observed that 'the hardest part is getting them to engage…men do tend to really appreciate the support once they agree to receive it' (Service provider personal communication September 2012). There was consensus among stakeholders that men were more receptive to an offer of assistance if that offer was couched in language accentuating the provision of information rather than emotional support.

> By giving them information they get back some control (Service provider personal communication September 2012)

> Guys are not going to identify they need counselling, but they might want information (Service provider personal communication September 2012)

Men, more so than women, wanted information that would enable them to understand the process they were experiencing. This point was also made by service providers who first interacted with male clients in the pre-court phase. Experience had shown that establishing a connection with male clients had 'gone over better' if service providers focused their assistance on the provision of guidance. Adopting this approach was usually received favourably.

Service providers, however, were emphatic that it should not be construed that adult male victim/witnesses were resistant to emotional support, rather that its acceptance may be delayed until its suggestion did not offend or threaten sensibilities. Some men, typically those referred by their solicitors or were receiving support from elsewhere, were usually open to 'emotional' conversations. For other men, some caution had to be applied—'thoughts' rather than 'feelings' were often referred to when the topic of support (outside the provision of information) was broached and some support workers said they typically avoided using the word 'victim' (Service providers personal communication September

2012). One service provider explained that they assessed the needs of male victims by talking to them and avoided asking them directly what their support needs might be. Therefore, they gained a sense of the client's needs from what the client was saying and how they were saying it. Other service providers said that rather than working with the client directly, they occasionally would approach the 'significant others' of the victim/witness. This allowed the provision of indirect emotional support, but was also used to gauge how well their client was coping through the perspective of a loved one.

An interesting observation looked at the willingness of male victims of sexual violence to discuss their emotions with court support workers, compared with the willingness of male victims of other forms of violence. The former group of victims were more receptive to discussing the emotional impact of their victimisation because the specifics of the case were already well understood by the court support worker and hence the victim did not need to disclose again. Other male victims, particularly those who were approached in the court setting, were likelier to have to revisit their victimisation with the court support worker and hence may be less inclined to talk about their emotional response.

However, representatives from one of the consulted support agencies said that from their experience, men were receptive to emotional support from the outset—'once the conversation has got to the situation at hand, men are quite willing to talk' (Service provider personal communication September 2012). It was agreed among stakeholders that this difference in response may be influenced by the nature of the organisation the support workers were representing. In particular, it was suggested that services and programs that were easily identifiable as having a religious focus may be perceived by potential clients as providing spiritual and emotional support to victims of crime. Potential clients who either approach or accept offers of assistance from such agencies may have a greater willingness to accept emotional support at an earlier stage than others.

Another factor that may override issues of non-receptivity for support was familiarity. One court support worker, in describing their experience that men were 'usually very open to talking with a

support worker', further reflected that their having been 'in the game for more than 10 years' had allowed them to establish relationships with some of these men. While not explicitly stated, the client's trust had partly been fostered by familiarity with the support worker they were in contact with.

Women comprised the majority of professional and volunteer court support workers. The female-dominated volunteer base was attributed in part by stakeholders to difficulties finding men who were interested in support work, although one organisation mentioned they had experienced more recent success in obtaining male volunteers. A female bias among court support workers was generally not seen as an impediment to connecting with male victim/witnesses, although it was acknowledged that male court support workers may be better at validating the experiences of male victim/witnesses. As one stakeholder commented 'Men [ie male service providers] may be good at normalising their [the client's] reaction and reinstating their feelings of masculinity' (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

Broader service provision— referral and follow up

Male victims may be referred to a broader range of services that include counselling, group therapy, compensation and welfare matters such as housing. Many service providers interviewed for the study acknowledged there were potential and actual problems with connecting male clients who were not a victim of sexual assault, domestic violence or homicide with additional support services. They also emphasised that they could only suggest, not compel, victims to act on referrals and the agencies, irrespective of the sector they represented, had limited means to apply formal follow up. The uptake of support, where recommended, ultimately rested with the individual.

> I can't make them go to services but they're happy to have a yarn with me (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

> (Men) may make all the right noises…but they may just not follow through (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

Male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence who do not report their victimisation to the police, for whom there is no subsequent court hearing or who do not come into contact with a support worker prior to or during the court hearing, must effectively rely on their own initiative to seek and locate support services. For some men, that initiative may be tempered by a lack of knowledge or guidance as to where that support might be available, or by men's apparently greater reluctance to admit they need assistance, not just to others but themselves. It was suggested that the ability of victims to seek wider support is possibly more acute among men from CALD backgrounds, which stakeholders attributed in part to language barriers and general unfamiliarity with what is available (Service provider personal communication September 2012). Individual barriers to seeking support will be explored in more depth in the next section of this report.

Points of disconnection

Disconnection refers to stages where individual decision making, experience, eligibility, identification and happenstance, independently or in concert, channel men who need assistance into or away from formal support. Personal and systemic barriers also influence what occurs along the pathway of contact and these factors are described in the next section.

The consultations indicated that male victims who do not engage with the criminal justice system (either because they do not make an initial report to the police and/or there is no subsequent court hearing) have fewer opportunities to be referred to and engage with formal victim support services. The first potential point of disconnect occurs with the decision to not report the incident to police. As mentioned previously, data from crime victimisation surveys described earlier show that men are less inclined than women to report incidents of violent crime to the police. Importantly, many of the programs listed in Table 4 do not require the victim to report the crime to be eligible for support. However, if a male victim chooses not to report the incident, the initiative is on them to contact victim support services and without ready information, they may experience difficulty in doing so.

Service providers noted that a composite list of victim support services is generally not available or easily locatable, although two provider had plans to produce service directories for men, or specific communities of men (eg homosexual men) in the future (Service provider personal communication September 2012). At least one victim support service indicated they did receive clients who had independently sought assistance after finding information about the organisation from their website, although this tended to be a small percentage of their overall client caseload. However, most stakeholders also stated that male victims, perhaps more so than women, were less likely to admit to themselves (or others) they required assistance and in turn, seek to engage with services of their own volition. In the absence of direct 'prompting' about support options, men were potentially more likely than women not to seek assistance and hence come to the attention of victim support services.

The second point of disconnect may follow contact with police. As described, NSW police are expected to provide all victims of crime with Victims' Cards so they have, as a minimum, contact details for the Victims Services-operated VAL (and the Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit), information about the Charter of Victims Rights and the name and contact details of the investigating officer. It was noted by many of the service providers interviewed that the initial contact between the police and victims was vital for the victim's continued engagement with the criminal justice system and may influence their decision to engage with formal support services. While the majority of stakeholders were very positive about police interaction with victims, there was still the risk, according to some, that a proportion of male victims might not receive that initial empathy reserved for other victims of violence. Among male victims where there were trust issues with the police or the potential for misunderstandings on both sides about the 'genuineness' or seriousness of the victimisation, the first exchange was particularly vital. If rapport or a sense of being supported by the police was lost, men (in particular young, Indigenous and CALD men) may not see the point in continuing and withdraw at this juncture.

Disconnect appears to be least likely when a matter proceeds to a court hearing. However, the male victim population group considered for this study will have more chance of accessing support at the court rather than the pre-court stage. The prioritisation of matters used by the NSW DPP WAS to select their clients—primarily victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, homicide, driving causing death—effectively screens out the great majority of male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence from receiving court preparation assistance and potential referral to support services at the pre-court stage. Only where the male victim had experienced severe trauma or injury, or they had been assessed by the solicitor or the police as high needs, do they possibly become eligible for assistance from the DPP WAS.

Court support and options for referral were more broadly available once the victim/witness was attending court. Receiving an offer of assistance depends upon the male victim/witness being identified by, or less commonly notified to, the court support worker. Identification is based on some form of assessment, including the matter being heard (when court lists were used to select potential clients) and the demeanour of the victim/witness as observed by the support worker. Stakeholders indicated they had reasonably good success with getting men to consider or accept referral to other service providers but informal

follow-up processes prevented them from being able to continue contact or know whether their client initiate or continue with the support service to which they were referred.

What is not as clear is how many men who need support are being lost before this pathway point is reached or who might have benefited from earlier support intervention. Service providers who engage with victims along the pathway continuum obviously did come into contact with male victims before and after the court hearing stage, and depending on the service, the contact was made autonomously or with a referral. However, from observations made by these stakeholders, many of the men they encountered had apparently taken a long time to make the decision to seek support or used the pretext of enquiring about information more generally (or their complaint about the process) before eventually getting to the topic of the impact of their victimisation and the support they might require. The point was made that a large proportion of men (more than might be realised) do need to talk but do not know where to go or how to broach the subject. The reality that men have 'never been seen as a "target" for victim support' (Service providers personal communication September 2012) has likely, along with personal and systemic barriers discussed in the next section, contributed to their potential disengagement.

Barriers to male victims accessing formal support services

While some male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence may experience a range of significant and negative consequences as a result of their victimisation, the literature and findings from stakeholder consultations suggest a large proportion of male victims may not be accessing formal support services following an incidence of violence. For many men, this is probably because they do not actually need formal support. Others, however, who may benefit from contact with formal support services, do not do so. The perceived and actual barriers to men engaging with formal support services that were raised by stakeholders and/or suggested in the literature are discussed here. Some of these barriers are quite specific to men, whereas others are more generic yet potentially more potent for men in combination with other, recognised obstacles.

Personal and social barriers to male victims engaging with formal support services

> Men set up their own barriers and boundaries (Service provider personal communication September 2012)

In describing the personal and social barriers that may inhibit male victims from seeking formal support, it is important that generalisations about male responses are not liberally applied. Nonetheless (and while stakeholders were hesitant about supporting generalities), there was agreement that social norms about what it means to be a man, privacy concerns and knowledge about the availability of victim support contributed as much as systematic barriers in discouraging contact with formal support.

Social norms and the concept of shame

Men, as observed by one stakeholder, were 'victims of endemic machismo' (Service provider personal communication September 2012). The effect was an unwillingness by some men to show any weakness, a default response of putting on a 'tough front' and a consequent denial of need for support, either informal or formal. Stakeholders attributed this trend in part to strong social interpretations of masculinity within some cultural groups. However, it should not be assumed that gender constructs only apply to men from backgrounds with acknowledged or overt cultural norms about masculinity, as they were just as valid for men (eg young men) from other social or cultural backgrounds.

Tied to male reticence about seeking support is the concept of shame. Again, the effect that shame can

elicit on both male responses to victimisation and their help-seeking behaviour was largely identified as being more acute among Indigenous or CALD (eg Pacific, Middle Eastern, Sudanese) men but certainly not absent among other adult male victims. This shame originated from the experience of victimisation (ie being in circumstances where they were 'helpless' and unable to 'protect themselves' or others (Service providers personal communication September 2012)), compounded by self, family and/ or social disapproval about perceived inability to cope and possible need for assistance. Indeed, shame was almost universally cited among the stakeholders interviewed as a highly influential constraint.

Help-seeking behaviour

The literature on help-seeking behaviour was shown in an earlier section of this report to be limited and the findings inconsistent. What emerged from the consultations, however, was a view that *some* men were less inclined to look for victim support and were less likely to know where to look.

> Men don't know where to turn to (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

Indeed, it was suggested that men's denial of need for support required the use of external prompting to encourage contact with victim support services. As one (male) service provider observed:

> This macho bullshit…means that men won't go and find services themselves, they need to be referred (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

Men may deflect attention away from their support needs by focusing the service provider's efforts towards their family members. As one stakeholder observed '[a] bloke feels obliged to put himself in the backseat and focus attention on everyone else' (Service provider personal communication October 2012). One of a few examples provided by stakeholders was that of an elderly man whose relative had been a victim of a homicide. This man, who saw his position as the 'protector' of the family and contended that any support should be provided to the sister of the deceased, in spite of the service provider's opinion that the man was the one more

in need of support (Service provider personal communication September 2012). It was mentioned in the previous section that female relatives sometimes take it on upon themselves to enquire about services for male victims, often because they know their male relative will not make that step.

Interestingly, a few service providers suggested that male victims may be more willing to engage in support services if they came in the guise of structured and purposeful activity, such as Men's Sheds and other forms of male cooperatives. Some men may be disinclined to seek or respond to support services if it is provided in conventional formats (eg one-to-one counselling) but more willing in situations where support is an outcome rather than the focus of the activity. These cooperatives were likened to 'group therapy over a cup of tea' (Service provider personal communication October 2012) and in a sense, represent an alternate way for male victims to respond to and cope with the effects of their victimisation. This feedback is supported by the literature, which suggested that

> many men define themselves via their work, often feeling more comfortable in the workplace than in health oriented settings such as community health centres, hospitals, maternal and child health centres and general practices (Malcher 2009: 92).

This observation sheds some light on why men may be more comfortable undertaking structured activities that are underpinned by therapeutic principles and aims, rather than engaging with services that are easily identifiable as having a health or support focus.

Past experience and trust

Past experience and trust was nominated by stakeholders as a possible contributory factor in low reporting rates to police for male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence, and were suggested again when explaining disconnection from formal support. The consequence of past experience with Australian victim support services, unfortunately, was not raised and hence cannot be expanded upon here.

Stakeholder discussion of the effect of previous experience and trust generally referred to what

individuals had been exposed to outside of Australia, which translated into fear or suspicion of local authority, such as law enforcement and potentially government-sponsored support services. This was potentially more potent among refugees and persons from countries characterised by civil unrest or where law enforcement operated less ethically. In some cases, one stakeholder explained, the professionals or service providers who had worked with refugees in their country of birth or while in transit had been involved in that person's mistreatment (Service provider personal communication September 2012). The mistreatment, and its impact on other traumas experienced, sometimes meant male refugee clients withdrew or did not engage with the support services being offered to them in Australia.

More locally based trust issues, particularly with the police and other government services, were suggested as potentially affecting Indigenous male victims' willingness to engage with victim support. If the support offered was perceived as being in some way connected to the police, however tenuous the link, then men were potentially less likely to engage with the service. Yet stakeholders also highlighted the importance of this first contact between the victim and police, suggesting that it was critical for the establishment of trust in the broader criminal justice system and in turn, victim engagement with formal support services. In situations where male victims *felt* the police did not take the matter seriously or assumed they were in some way responsible for their victimisation, trust may be irrevocably broken and formal engagement lost.

Small community and cultural effects

The small community effect is not exclusive to men but may interact with other more recognisably male-specific barriers to influence choice about engaging with support services. 'Small communities' is used here to refer to small population groups resident in regional and remote areas of New South Wales (eg 'small country towns') and/or members of specific community groups (typically but not exclusively Indigenous and CALD communities).

The protection of privacy and confidentiality is a significant factor in whether victims of violent crime

(be they men or women) choose to report the incident to police and if they choose to consult with support services, either independently or where referred. Fears about a breach of privacy may be considerable when victims are experiencing shame, there is the risk of reprisal or social condemnation for reporting the matter and/or there is the risk of misunderstanding from the family or peer group about using victim support services. Stakeholders who worked in regional settings or who had contact with male victims from regional and remote parts of New South Wales noted that the limited number of services available outside of Sydney almost certainly added to concerns among some male victims that the nature of their victimisation or their use of formal support, even from General Practitioners, could become more widely known. In other words, 'your business inevitably became everyone else's business'.

Fear of exposure was similarly recognised for men from communities in which the acceptance of support *per se* and support from outside the immediate family or peer group was an 'unfamiliar way of doing things' (Service provider personal communication September 2012). Such social/cultural pressures have already been discussed in shaping men's responses to victimisation. In this context, men may be worried about the judgement they will receive from the family and possibly the community if they acknowledge their victim status (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

Often contiguous with fear or distrust of police described above is community censure. These social effects are not unique to men but cultural constructs around solidarity could enact stronger pressures to comply with what the community expects.

It was observed that members of some communities are fearful of reporting because community mores, be they broadly held or stipulated by a smaller group of influential elements, make it 'highly dangerous' for them to interact with the police. These scenarios generally refer to the risk of reprisal from the offender(s) or their associates and family members if contact with the police is made. Community censure also encompasses disapproval of making a complaint (in this case, reporting a matter to the

police) against another member of the community. It was acknowledged, for example, that among Indigenous communities 'you don't go to the police and "dog" another Indigenous person' (Service provider personal communication September 2012). This maxim was felt so strongly in the community this stakeholder worked with that the majority of male victim witnesses they encountered only rarely were providing evidence against an Indigenous defendant. In other words, there was an apparent and significant reticence to report a violent offence committed by another Indigenous person, particularly if they were from among the victim's immediate community.

Transient lifestyle

A small number of stakeholders highlighted the effect of transient lifestyles on retention rates with support services among men. Young Indigenous men, for example, often travel back and forth between different parts of the state, making it difficult for them to stay connected with formal support services. In such situations, services may have to eventually disengage with the client. For men leading transient lifestyles who wish to access or maintain some form of formal support, flexible options of service provision may be difficult to find. One service provider recounted their experience trying to organise counselling for one male victim who was moving around the state. The client wanted to access counselling over the phone, but did not want to call a service such as Lifeline. The service provider attempted to locate a counsellor who would be willing to provide their services over the phone but was unsuccessful.

Structural/systematic barriers to engaging male victims in formal support services

Structural and systematic barriers encompass broader issues of availability, accessibility and appropriateness which are common themes when discussing service provision.

Non-identification

It was suggested that generally speaking, men have not been seen as a priority for victim support services. This has led, according to a number of stakeholders, to unevenness in the focus of service provision and a prevailing belief among some court partners and service providers that male victims are more capable of coping with their victimisation than women. Consequently, male victims of violence who potentially would have benefitted from being referred to a formal support service may not be. This oversight prompted one service provider to produce a pamphlet specifically for male victims after an assessment that there was little information available to this group of victims (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

In particular, a number of service providers observed that the kinds of support and assistance they could offer victims attending court were in part influenced by the gender of the victim. As one court-based service provider argued:

> If you're a female victim of violence I can put you in a safe room, offer you a cup of tea and a biscuit and three support workers will be there. You don't even have to be a victim of actual violence as long as you have an AVO [Apprehended Violence Order] you are protected from seeing the offender and their family. If you're a male victim I've got nothing for you. I can give you a newspaper and that's about it…There's a huge difference between the services that are there for women and men (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

The main example provided by stakeholders in relation to this issue concerned the use of 'safe rooms'. Safe rooms are areas situated within court facilities that have been allocated to victims and witnesses of crime so they do not have to sit in the court or the general waiting area. A number of stakeholders noted that being asked to sit in court or the general waiting area could be stressful for victims, particularly if they were afraid or nervous about seeing the perpetrator and their family. Although the availability of safe rooms differs between courts, it appears that most safe rooms are for the exclusive use of women. Consequently, male victims have little option but to sit in the court or the waiting area.

That being said, a number of stakeholders argued that court partners, service providers and the police are adept at identifying high-needs male victims when they came into contact with them. Victims often identified as requiring assistance were characterised as showing signs of emotional distress and agitation, needing constant reassurance and not appearing to have informal support such as family and friends. Service providers noted that court partners had demonstrated a willingness to refer these high-needs victims to formal support services. This suggests, however, that male victims who do not exhibit these behaviours may not be identified by court partners and service providers and therefore referred. In these circumstances, it may be difficult for the court partner or service provider to recognise need for additional support, unless interaction with the victim after the initial contact is for some reason continued and/or evidence of need for support is demonstrated through some other means.

Service provider priority areas

As noted in previous sections of this report, some of the victim support services that are currently available in New South Wales focus their resources on a small number of priority crime types and victim groups. This means that in practice, male victims who do not fall into these priority areas may not be referred to specific formal support programs. For example, one program operating in New South Wales focuses on male and female victims of sexual and domestic violence, and children victim/ witnesses. Thus, this service usually had few male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence on its client lists.

Resource issues and a high demand for services are common factors in the establishment of provider priority areas and violent crimes that are collectively seen as particularly serious will justifiably be the focus of support attention. However, it does mean that in practice male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence are often not prioritised by these services and may have fewer options to receive formal support and assistance.

Limitations of support services currently available

While there are a range of services that male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence may engage with, there are a number of limitations associated with these programs that may act as specific barriers to this group of victims. First, as presented in Table 4, not all NSW services are available across the state, with most operating in metropolitan Sydney and larger regional centres. Male victims attending court or residing in areas not covered by these services have fewer options for engaging with services. Stakeholders said this was a particular issue in regional and remote areas. Men living in these areas often had only one of two options—their General Practitioner or telephone-based referral and support. Similarly, many court support services are only located in one level of court, typically the local courts. While there are notable exceptions to this rule (eg Mission Australia Court Support Service and the DPP WAS), some male victims attending district or higher courts may not have access to similar levels of support.

Of the victim support services operating in New South Wales, there is currently a lack of services that address the needs of men and specific groups of male victims. MensLine is the only male-specific service available, but its focus is on men experiencing familial and relationship issues, rather than victim support *per se*. Male victims of sexual assault have some options open to them but services for other male victims of violence were described as 'generally lacking' in the state (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

Finally, there appears to be a shortage of services for specific groups of men who are perceived as being particularly vulnerable, either because of their victimisation or because they may sit outside mainstream service provision. For example, the lack of targeted services for homosexual men was highlighted by a number of stakeholders, who noted that this may act as a barrier to homosexual male victims engaging with formal support services. Communication barriers for victims who do not have English as their first language, combined with identified problems about the availability and

proficiency of translators, was raised too, although as an issue for CALD communities more generally rather than men specifically.

The scarcity of culturally appropriate services for Indigenous victims in New South Wales, particularly in regional areas, was another concern. One of the reasons for this shortage was the emphasis of attention on offenders and 'getting them back on track' (Service provider personal communication September 2012). Hence, the bulk of culturally appropriate support services for Indigenous victims in New South Wales are undertaken by a relatively small group of support workers. Where appropriate services were not available, support workers had to refer their clients to mainstream services, which were not necessarily suitable for some of their male clients. For example, one service provider attributed their clients' reluctance to accept referrals to the reason that 'black men do not want to talk about how they feel with white women' (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

The experiences of this service provider and others referred to throughout this report, is supported by a broader body of literature that has found that many health services currently operating in Indigenous communities are not culturally appropriate for their target population. One of the most common explanations for this gap is that Western understandings and conceptions of health issues, particularly mental illness, are at odds with those held by Indigenous communities (see Vicary & Bishop 2005, Vicary & Westerman 2004; Ypinazar et al. 2007 for an overview of these differences). For example, many Indigenous communities believe that feelings of distress, depression and anxiety are caused by a 'spiritual or law transgression' (Vicary & Bishop 2005: 11), or spending too much time away from country, rather than a discrete disease or traumatic event (eg experiencing violence). As a result of this gap, many Indigenous persons prefer traditional methods of healing and will only approach Western services when they have exhausted all other options (Vicary & Bishop 2005).

In light of the disparities, commentators have increasingly emphasised the importance of Indigenous services being culturally competent—services that integrate the 'practitioner's cultural

awareness and knowledge into the clinical context' (Berry & Crowe 2009: 7). Culturally appropriate practices that have been identified in relation to the Australian Indigenous population include the use of cultural consultants (Indigenous persons who are willing to vouch for non-Indigenous practitioners), non-direct questioning of patients by practitioners, assessing patients within the context of their culture, family and community, and encouraging practitioners to develop a thorough understanding of the family, tribal and skin groups living in the area (Berry & Crowe 2009; Westerman 2004).

Another culturally competent practice that is relevant to the current research concerns the gender of practitioners and service providers. Research indicates that Indigenous persons are raised to relate to and interact with other people of their own gender (Westerman 2004). Indigenous men may not engage with services staffed predominantly by women. However, the suggestion that Indigenous men may prefer to engage with male practitioners was not unique to this group.

As mentioned earlier, all of the support services consulted as part of this project were staffed predominantly by women. Many stakeholders did not perceive the female-dominated support workforce as being a particular barrier for male victims seeking assistance, yet a small number acknowledged that it had caused some issues. Occasionally, male victims specifically asked to speak to a man, a request they sometimes found logistically difficult to accommodate. Further, some service providers said that from time to time they had difficulty interacting with male clients and had wondered whether a male support worker would have been more appropriate. In debating the relative merits of male and female support persons' responses to male victims of violence, it was suggested that male support workers may be better at normalising victims' feelings of fear and shame and reinstating their perceived masculinity. Conversely, some stakeholders argued that men may be able to approach women with an expectation of support and emotional comfort. Men may be reluctant to appear vulnerable in front of another man.

Conclusion

Men experience higher rates of victimisation from violent offences than women (with the exception of sexual assault and kidnapping/abduction) but there has been less attention given to their responses and support needs following victimisation, their experience as victim/witnesses while attending court and of particular relevance to this report, the availability and suitability of support options open to them. Among the research that has been completed, male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence are noticeably absent. While it is not the objective here to speculate why male victims (and particularly those who have been the victim of non-sexual or non-domestic violence) have received less research attention, the contemporary focus on victims of extremely serious violence, such as sexual assault, domestic/family violence and homicide is a likely contributing factor. Another potential factor is men's perceived reluctance to recount their experiences. One stakeholder observed that men tended to be underrepresented in victims' surveys and often failed to attend focus groups (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

The range of victim support services available in New South Wales ostensibly provides victims of crime with multiple options for formal support. In practice, however, these options may be limited for some victims of crime and for male victims of

crime this may be particularly true. The following summarises where male victims may be connected with formal support and the reasons why that connection may not be made. However, it is acknowledged that these signposts of disengagement are at present suggested by the findings and further research (see below) is necessary to establish where disengagement is genuinely occurring.

Avenues for receipt of support

> It takes time for men to talk…about what they need (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

Male victims can notionally access formal support at any time following the incidence of violence but it is at several stages—initial contact with the police, at the pre-court stage and at the time of court proceedings—where support is formally extended. Each stage represents potential capture points but also points were disconnection can occur. When a matter is reported to the police, victims are provided with a select list of support options but the onus is ultimately on them to initiate contact with support services, unless they are a victim of homicide or the member of a community to which specialist liaison

officers (eg Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, Domestic Violence Liaison Officers) may be available. A vital ingredient in encouraging men to make that first step towards formal support was the nature of the contact they had with police when the matter was first reported. If rapport was established and a sense of empathy conveyed, male victims were more inclined to continue their engagement with the criminal justice system and potentially to approach support services if they felt they needed them. For the most part, stakeholders considered police as being dependably empathetic and supportive of male victims, but there were occasional circumstances where the nature of the interaction or preconceptions about the legitimacy of victim status could undermine a positive outcome. Male victims with trust issues with the police, such as young men from disadvantaged backgrounds, were also at risk of disengagement if rapport or a sense of feeling unsupported was not established.

It was acknowledged that substantial gains had been achieved in establishing rapport between the police and both the general population and CALD communities, such as the Chinese and Vietnamese communities, which has seen a genuine improvement in reporting rates. In recent years, there have been focused efforts to enhance community engagement and encourage reporting through the media, CrimeStoppers, Facebook and Project eyeWatch—the latter a NSW Police Force Initiative to connect communities with Local Area Command through social media (eg Facebook) with the purpose of facilitating the exchange of information and encourage participation in crime prevention. Relationship building with members of other communities, such as those from Middle Eastern backgrounds, and where fearfulness of reporting was believed to be particularly apparent was, however, still to be achieved (Stakeholder personal communication September 2012).

The likelihood for more 'targeted' engagement with formal support occurred when male victims decided to proceed to a court hearing. The prioritisation of matters used by the DPP WAS, with a focus on sexual assault, domestic violence, homicide and other incidents involving death, however, excluded the majority of male victims considered in this research, unless they had experienced severe trauma or injury and/or the matter was deemed

to be of a particularly serious nature. Court support and options for referral were more commonly available once court proceedings had begun, provided by a small group of government and non-government programs based in selected local, district and/or supreme courts. As for police, establishing rapport was crucial, since men were, at times, harder to engage with than women. Men were typically process-focused and hence successful interactions with male victims were based on approaching prospective clients with an offer of support that emphasised the provision of information, such as what to expect when participating in court as a victim/witness. Stakeholders noted that men were not necessarily resistant to offers of other forms of support and when rapport was established, referrals were mostly accepted.

Contact with a court support worker represented an important capture point for male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence, but was dependent on whether such court support programs were operating in the court where the victim/ witnesses' case was being heard (see below) and to some extent, whether the male victim was identified as possibly needing assistance. In court settings where multiple programs were represented, stakeholders were confident that support coverage was adequate, although aware that they had to be careful to avoid competing with other programs already involved with the victim. Stakeholders were also confident of their ability to identify male victims who might need support, an aptitude developed following years of experience. Nonetheless, there was concern from a few stakeholders about inadvertent inconsistencies in the types of support that could be provided to victims *in situ*. An important example was the lack of availability of safe rooms for even exceptionally vulnerable male victims, which can and has resulted in them having to sit in the court or waiting area. Such exposure could be particularly confronting for male victim/witnesses who personally knew or were afraid of the offender and their family.

Research has shown that victims, and in particular male victims, who are not formally linked into the criminal justice system, are less likely to engage with formal victim support. For male victims who do not report the matter to police and therefore do not have

a court hearing, or even those who do go through the criminal justice system but for some reason are not identified as needing support, will invariably have to rely on self-initiative to make contact. Stakeholders described male victims, however, as often needing impetus to seek or follow through with formal support, with a tendency to delay the first approach. They were also described as possibly less clear about where to look for support services if they felt they needed assistance. These observations, combined with the recognition there were no service directories catering specifically for male victims led a number of victim support agencies to compile and advertise listings specifically for male victims. Nonetheless, these men probably represent the victim group at greatest risk of being lost to formal support, although a group recognisably difficult to reach.

The appropriateness and accessibility of formal support

They don't feel empowered to do something (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

…some men feel very unsupported (Service provider personal communication September 2012).

Male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence were variably represented in the caseloads managed by stakeholders interviewed for this project, from none at the time of consultation to just under half. This variation in representation was largely influenced by the prioritisation of matters adopted by the agency but also affected by the point of contact with the client and the type of service delivery model.

The likelihood of a male victim of non-sexual or non-domestic violence accepting formal victim support (where and if needed) is dependent upon a broad range of factors that, for different individuals, will exert a greater or lesser effect on their decision to engage with support services. These factors include:

- self-acknowledgement of the harm inflicted (and the physical, psychological, social and financial consequences of that harm);
- self-initiative;
- social and cultural constraints;
- receipt of informal support;
- previous and current contact and experience with the criminal justice system and other government authorities;
- eligibility and identification;
- availability and appropriateness of support service options;
- rapport with the police and support workers; and
- prioritisation of matters.

Personal and social barriers were perceived by stakeholders to be as acute as structural and systematic barriers to men engaging with victim support, if not more so. Shame, the challenge to masculine identity, the normalisation of violence, and negative experience and trust issues with various forms of authority (notably, the police) each and collectively have the potential to dissuade men from accepting formal support where it might be needed. Strong informal support from family and friends, however, could neutralise some of these more immediate barriers.

Structural and systematic barriers were equally problematic but more compliant to change. In any discussion of the appropriateness of service delivery, the focus is often trained on specific clusters of the client population. Reservations were raised about the suitability of support options for men from certain cultural backgrounds that had strictly defined notions not just about seeking support, but where and from whom that support may be sought. A consistent, although debated, theme was male reactions to engaging with female support workers. Women play a predominant role in victim support provision but for some men it may not be personally or culturally acceptable to engage with a woman in this context. Stakeholders did not perceive male victims as showing any overt preference for male or female support workers, although on occasion, some clients did request they speak to a man. If a preference was demonstrated, it was usually raised when being referred to a counsellor.

Indigenous men, while seemingly comfortable engaging with a female court support worker, were, for example, described as inherently reluctant to undergo counselling if the therapist was a woman. It should be added, though, that part of this reluctance also related to the cultural background of the counsellor.

The cultural appropriateness of victim support services in New South Wales was not largely discussed, although there was an acknowledgment that there was a lack of Indigenous-specific services and a need for further investment in working with victims from CALD backgrounds. Indeed, it seemed that much of the work with victims of violence in CALD communities defaulted to community advocacy or welfare groups. Men from Middle Eastern cultures were, on occasion, particularly disinclined to commit to formal support and while some of this disinclination was possibly the product of personal and social barriers, stakeholders argued that better relationships and retention rates would be secured if culturally appropriate programs were in place.

For male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence more broadly, there was the matter of there being no male-specific victim support services available in New South Wales. MensLine serves as a telephone and online counselling and referral service for men but its priority is men experiencing family and relationship issues. The relative benefits of providing male-specific services needs to be explored in more detail, yet it was suggested by more than one stakeholder that in responding to customary interpretations about the object of victim support, men and their needs may not have been as well recognised. This is not to imply that current models of support provision are not catering for male victims, but rather a wider group of clients may identify themselves as needing support if service(s) tailored or opened exclusively to male victims were delivered. This may potentially benefit the group of male victims considered in this project, since services for male victims of sexual assault, according to stakeholders, are more readily available.

Accessibility invariably impacts on the reach of support services. Accessibility encompasses more than what is available and where it is available but these two aspects were commonly identified by stakeholders. Face-to-face support is mostly available only in metropolitan Sydney and a number of regional centres in New South Wales; telephone (and online) counselling and referral is provided by some support services and has observably a wider span of reach. The 'pronounced' lack of services in regional and rural areas is of consequence for all victims of violence but for male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence potentially afflicted by other help seeking constraints (see below), the scarcity of options or the extra effort required to obtain support might act as a further obstacle. Older men, for instance, were recognised by some stakeholders as being 'quite isolated' in relation to their capacity to engage with services and especially so for individuals living in regional and rural New South Wales. For some of these men, the VAL was their main or only reliable option.

One discussion with stakeholders about the availability and appropriateness of victim support services recommended an approach to improve engagement with CALD communities, which could be of equal applicability to male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence. This approach centred on three, interrelated principles of better messaging, targeted interaction and greater flexibility. Practically, it would involve the use of different mediums of information delivery, 'taking (ie advertising) the service' to the potential audience and coordinated promotion and delivery of services. Of particular value is improved or concerted messaging and interaction to attract men's attention to the availability and benefit of victim support services. Prompting men in this way may offset reticence to seek support following the effects of past or future victimisation and to improve their knowledge about options.

Completing the narrative

The findings from this research indicate that many male victims of non-sexual and non-domestic violence are receiving notice of or having direct contact with formal victim support services. The findings also suggest, however, that some male victims may not be aware of the victim support services that are available, are choosing not to

contact victim support despite needing assistance, or do not have appropriate or accessible options available to them that encourages or permits contact. As a group that may be less of a priority for services and resources, the proportion of male victims who are not getting the support they need is of issue.

To present a more complete discussion and to gauge more conclusively where disengagement is occurring, the thoughts and experiences of the victims themselves should be compared and coalesced with the perceptions and experiences of service providers. In recommending a second component to this research, which proposes speaking directly to and collecting information from male victims themselves, it is acknowledged that recruiting victims of crime to research studies is a complicated and sensitive undertaking. Male

victims may require additional encouragement to participate. The AIC proposes a mixed-methods approach that uses generalist and targeted streams to promote a higher response rate and wider involvement of participants, and to collect both quantitative and qualitative information from surveys and follow-up interviews (see *Appendix B* for a detailed overview of the proposed methodology for the second phase of this research). The research would be undertaken in partnership with interested agencies to assist in recruitment to the research project. Documenting the experiences of male victims will provide a better understanding of the experiences and support needs of this under-researched victim group, as well as indicating where support options may be expanded or adapted to meet the needs of men.

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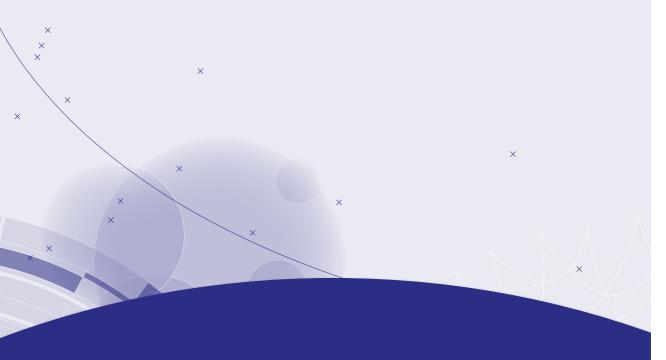
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Appendices

Appendix A: Schedule for interviews and focus groups

First off I would like to ask you a few questions about the kinds of services that your agency provides victims of crime, and the types of support needs that male victims of crime have.

1. Could you give us a brief overview of the services your agency provides victims of crime (prompts—counselling, court support, financial aid)? How do victims of crime come into contact with your service (prompts—referrals from the police)?

2. From your experience, how do the men who engage with your service respond to being victimised (prompts—bravado, denial of harm, aggression).

3. Do you think that men react differently to women when they have been victimised? How so?

4. In your view, are there groups of men that are more likely to be significantly affected by their experiences of victimisation than others (prompts—Indigenous, CALD, young men, mentally ill, homeless)?

5. From your experiences, what support do male victims need? Do male victims have different support needs to women? How so?

6. I'd like you to consider a hypothetical situation. Say you had a female client and a male client. Both were victims of a mugging and they had contacted your service looking for help. Would you respond to the male victim differently to the female victim? In what ways?

7. From your perspective, does your agency cater to male victims? How so (prompts—specific training for support workers, male victim liaison officers)?

8. What do you think are the main barriers for male victims of crime seeking to engage with support services (prompts—lack of knowledge about available services, eligibility, feelings of shame)?

9. What do you think are the main barriers for support services seeking to engage with male victims of crime (prompts—resistance from victims, victim bravado)?

10. Do you believe that the needs of male victim of crime are being met by the support services that are currently available in NSW? What are the gaps (prompts—migrant populations, young men)

Now I'd like to ask you a few questions about the experiences of male victims of crime that participate in the trial of the offender.

11. From your experiences, what impact does participating in the court process have on victims (prompts—emotional, psychological, social, financial). Do male victims have different support needs from women when they attend court? What are they?

12. Do you think that male victim/witnesses pose specific issues for court proceedings that women do not (prompts—non-attendance, defensiveness and aggressiveness during cross-examination).

13. That's all the questions we had for you today. Was there anything you think we didn't cover that you would like to discuss now?

Thankyou [everyone] for participating today. We will be conducting interviews for all of September so if anyone has any additional thoughts, or thinks of someone else that we should be talking to as part of this research, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Appendix B: Proposed methodology for the second phase

The second phase of the project, which is subject to additional funding, will involve speaking to and collecting information from male victims of violence directly. The aim of the second project phase is to elicit the views of male victims of violence regarding:

- the impact of the offence and participating in the trials of offenders on them;
- their experiences engaging in support services following the offence;
- the appropriateness of the support services they chose to engage with after the offence; and
- the type of support services that they wanted to have access to after the offence.

The findings from the second phase of the project will be used to confirm and/or challenge the findings from the first phase. While the views of stakeholders involved in the delivery of support services to male victims of violence are highly valuable, particularly in relation to identifying possible barriers to engaging with male victims, it is the victims themselves who are best placed to talk about the impact of the offence and/or attending court, their experiences attending court and the kinds of services they would have liked to engage with after the offence.

The proposed second phase of this research aims to understand the views and experiences of a range of male victims, including those who did not engage with formal support services and/or report the offence to the police. Gaining a better understanding of the factors that influence whether a male victim of violence will engage with formal support services (and their satisfaction with the support provided) requires sampling men who did and did not engage with such agencies.

The AIC have developed a methodological model for collecting primary data from male victims of violence, with the intention that the model will inform the proposed second phase of the project. The development of the methodological model was informed by a review of the relevant victimology/trauma literature, the stakeholder interviews and focus groups undertaken as part of Phase 1, and consultations with a representative of the AIC Human Research Ethics Committee.

Proposed methodological model

The AIC proposes to use both quantitative and qualitative research methods to collect primary data from male victims of violence. By using a mixed methods approach, the AIC will:

- maximise participant response rates;

- ensure that a broad range of male victims (including those who do not engage with formal victim support agencies and/or report the offence to the police) have an opportunity to participate in the project; and
- facilitate the use of methodological triangulation measures (one research method is cross-referenced with the data collected through another method to ensure the reliability of the research findings).

Sample parameters

To be eligible for inclusion in the second phase of this project, participants will have to be:

- male;
- a victim of a non-sexual or non-domestic violence offence committed in New South Wales;
- have high levels of English proficiency (so they can participate in the research without assistance); and
- aged 18 years or older.

Importantly, respondents will not be excluded from the research if they did not report the offence to the police or engage with a formal victim support agency.

Survey of male victims of violence

The AIC will develop a brief survey that asks eligible respondents a series of questions about their victimisation experiences (particularly when they attend court), their help-seeking behaviours and the factors that influenced their decision to make or not make contact with formal victim support services. Respondents will also be asked a series of questions relating to their socio-demographic characteristics (eg age, Indigenous and marital status, sexuality and incarceration history) so that the research team is able to determine whether such factors influence victimisation experiences and help-seeking behaviours.

Respondents will be provided with three options for completing the survey—online, pen and paper or over the telephone. In the latter method, the questionnaire will be administered to respondents by a member of the research team over the telephone.

Survey respondents will be recruited through two means—an advertising campaign or via an invitation to participate in the project. Both recruitment methods require the AIC to work in partnership with a range of agencies and services operating in New South Wales.

To facilitate this partnership building process, prior to commencing data collection, the AIC will conduct a series of information sessions with the participating agencies so that they:

- understand the purpose and importance of the research;
- can approach potential respondents in a way that satisfies the ethical requirements of the project while also maximising response rates;
- have enough information about the project that they can answer potential respondent questions; and
- are supportive of and committed to the research.

Follow-up interviews

The AIC will conduct a series of semi-structured interviews with male victims of violence who completed the survey and consent to further consultation (see above). Interviews will consist of a series of questions that will, like the survey, focus on the respondent's experiences of victimisation and their help-seeking behaviours. However, the semi-structured nature of the interview process will provide participants with the opportunity to elaborate on responses they provided in the survey and will allow the research team to ask follow-up questions and investigate unexpected lines of inquiry. Interviews will be conducted either face-to-face or via teleconferencing/videoconferencing facilities.

Interview respondents will be identified from the survey. At the end of the survey, respondents will be asked whether they consent to participate in a follow-up interview conducted by a member of the research team. If they provide their consent, they will also be asked to provide their contact details and to state whether they would prefer to speak to a male or female research team member. The AIC suggests including the latter question in light of the findings from the stakeholder consultations which suggested that some men prefer speaking to women about their victimisation experiences while others respond better to other men.

Structured activity/focus group

When stakeholders were asked for their views regarding the best methods for engaging male victims of violence in research, a small number suggested that men are most comfortable discussing potentially sensitive information in group settings, ideally while taking part in a structured activity. Examples of suitable structured activities ranged from group counselling sessions (such as those provided by the Salvation Army and Enough is Enough), through to woodworking and small DIY projects (eg Men's Sheds).

In light of this feedback, the AIC proposes to work with Victims' Services to identify a suitable agency that already conducts such activities with male victims of crime and seek the consent of the agency and group participants to attend one of their sessions. The attending research team member will ask the group a series of questions that everyone will be encouraged to answer. The aim of this stage in the data collection process is to better understand and identify the factors that influenced these men's decision to engage with the group.

Maximising response rates

Engaging victims of crime and other forms of trauma to participate in research is a difficult and sensitive undertaking. As such, many studies have involved the direct participation of victims of crime have been limited by low response rates and/or small sample sizes (Burcar & Ackerstrom 2009; Erez & Tontondonato 1992; NISRA 2004; Orth & Maerckler 2004; VAGO 2011; Willis 2008). To ensure that awareness of the project is widespread, the AIC will work in consultation with a range of stakeholder groups (including Victims' Services) to develop and implement a targeted advertising campaign that will run in a number of locations in metropolitan and regional areas of New South Wales. The AIC will also work with a number of agencies to identify eligible male victims of violence who will be specifically invited to participate in the study. During the first phase of this project, the research team received in-principal support from a number of stakeholders to assist in recruiting participants for the second phase of the study.

The AIC has also identified a number of measures that could be integrated into the proposed research methods to maximise participant response rates. Identified measures included:

- providing research participants with three options for completing the survey (online, telephone and hardcopy) so that identified logistical issues are minimised while also providing respondents with different options for providing sensitive information;

- conducting comprehensive consultation with stakeholder agencies to ensure that the recruitment strategies are appropriate for the target audience;

- asking respondents to encourage their friends |and family who meet the eligibility criteria to participate in the research (snowball sampling);

- developing broad eligibility criteria for the study to increase the number of men who can participate in the study;

- providing participants with information about the study's aims and purpose and in particular, how their information will be used;

- assuring respondents that the research team are not affiliated with the police or any other law enforcement agency and that their information will not be provided to any other agency;

- informing respondents that the experiences and help-seeking behaviours of male victims of violence is an under-researched area and that the study will be used to inform policy and practice and could help others (thus appealing to altruistic motives);

- making the survey and interview as brief as possible to decrease the perceived onerousness of participating in the study;

- in the case of follow-up interviews, providing respondents with the opportunity to identify whether they want to talk to a male or female research team member; and

- providing participating agencies with information to help them to identify and recruit eligible male victims of violence in a manner that satisfies the ethical requirements of the project as well as maximising response rates.

While a great deal of research has been undertaken into female victims of violence, male-focused victimology research undertaken in Australia and internationally is scant. This means it is currently unclear what the support needs of male victims are and if these support needs are being met by the currently available services and programs.

The findings of this report derive from a study commissioned by the NSW Department of Attorney General and Justice Victims Services that sought to address this knowledge gap by exploring the experiences and support needs of male victims of violence (excluding sexual assault and domestic violence) living in New South Wales.

The study involved a comprehensive review of the currently available literature and interviews and focus groups with criminal justice and support service representatives who have contact with male victims of violence as part of their everyday work.

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