

New research finds men's behaviour change programs should aim to do more than reducing re-offending rates

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Reducing re-offending rates should not be the only goal for men's behaviour change programs, according to new research from Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS).

Researchers have cautioned the use of, or reliance on, recidivism rates to measure the effectiveness of perpetrator interventions, because it is a narrow, and often unreliable, measure of success.

The finding reflects those from a comprehensive research project on perpetrator programs in the UK. *Project Mirabal* identified six measures for successful programs which took into account what success meant to women and children who had experienced violence. The outcomes of this project are considered in the ANROWS report.

The ANROWS report will be launched today by Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash at a Women's Safety Package Community Forum in Mandurah, WA. An Australian first, the report maps the pathways and interventions for perpetrators of DFV and sexual assault through civil and criminal legal systems; and examines the responses and service systems currently available to DFV and sexual assault perpetrators in each jurisdiction.

ANROWS CEO Heather Nancarrow says the report is an important step in building the evidence on perpetrator interventions.

"Perpetrator interventions are essential in holding men accountable for their violence. Last week we saw incredible footage of men attending behaviour change programs as part of two documentaries on the ABC. Programs like these operate across Australia, but we need to know more about how we hold men accountable and what success looks like."

"By improving the evidence base on perpetrator interventions we'll increase confidence in decision-making for policy-makers and practitioners as they fund and build interventions that are effective in creating the change we need."

According to current literature, men's behaviour change programs must be considered within the wider system of holding men accountable and increasing the safety of women and children.

The paper identified four key areas for further investigation: 1) effectiveness of civil, criminal, child protection, family law and other systems; 2) effectiveness of perpetrator interventions; 3) models to address diversity of perpetrators; and 4) interventions developed by, with and for Indigenous communities.

Following the announcement of the National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions (NOSPI) by the Council of Australian Governments, ANROWS will call for applications for research grants as part of a perpetrator interventions research program. The research program, and this initial report, form a \$3 million investment in perpetrator intervention research funded by the Commonwealth Government.

About ANROWS:

ANROWS is a national research body that produces evidence to guide policy and practice aimed at addressing violence against women and their children. Its \$3.5 million research program spans 20 projects (including this report) that look at “what works for whom” in addressing domestic, family and sexual violence. ANROWS has also been commissioned by the Commonwealth Government to deliver research on perpetrator interventions.

ANROWS CEO Heather Nancarrow is available for comment. To arrange an interview please call: [Jess Gregory](mailto:Jess.Gregory@anrows.org.au), 0408 800 699

*If you cover this story, or any story regarding violence against women and children, please include the following tagline:

“If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault, family or domestic violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit www.1800RESPECT.org.au. In an emergency, call 000”

Project Mirabal:

Project Mirabal, completed in the UK by Professors Liz Kelly, Nicole Westmarland, and Charlotte Watts, aims to investigate the extent to which perpetrator programs reduce violence and increase safety for women and children, the routes by which they do or not produce effects alongside the overall contribution programs make to coordinated community responses to domestic violence.

More information is available here: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/criva/projectmirabal/>