

# Fathering in the Context of Family Violence

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*Wednesday 13 January*

## Abstract

In the area of fathering in the context of domestic and family violence (D/FV), where knowledge is partial, the topic is controversial, and the evidence of effectiveness limited, the ultimate aim of this project is to improve the parenting experience of children whose fathers have used D/FV (Featherstone and Fraser, 2012). We have brought together a consortium of NGOs and Governments from three states across three different program areas: (i) Men's Behaviour Change (MBC); (ii) Culturally specific programs for Indigenous men who have perpetrated family violence (Indigenous); and (iii) Fathering/parenting programs that address abuse (Fathering). The project has a sequential method in which each new stage builds upon evidence in the previous stage.

There is limited documented knowledge about how MBC programs and fathering / parenting programs are addressing the complex issues of fathering, family violence and abuse. Furthermore, little is known about the parenting relationship the men attending the programs have with their children in the context of family violence, mental health, and substance abuse (Guille, 2004; Bromfield et al, 2010).

This project will seek to triangulate knowledge and document the way in which programs are addressing the complex issues of fathering, family violence and abuse. The project has a sequential method in which each new stage builds upon evidence in the previous stage, starting first with literature reviews, followed by interviews with program managers and facilitators and finally interviews with program participants as well as partners of program participants.

This ARC-funded linkage grant involves a national collaboration including the University of Melbourne, Curtin University, and the University of South Australia with 23 government and non-government organisations. The project has been funded to March 2017.

## Embedded projects:

There are two embedded sub-projects to complete the coverage of the research topic.

Very little is known or has been documented about programs for men in the Aboriginal community and therefore a major strand of work forms the Aboriginal Fathering Project (a separate abstract entry).

The lives of children are profoundly affected by living with the fear, abuse and the disabling effects on their family life (Holt et al, 2008). A PhD project is supported to seek the views of young people who live with violent fathers.

## Progress thus far:

### Literature Reviews

Literature reviews covering the MBC programs and fathering / parenting programs and including young people's voices have been completed.

### Interview Data

We have completed interviews with program managers from MBC and Fathering / parenting programs in Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, New South Wales and Queensland. The Aboriginal strand of research also covered the Northern Territory and Tasmania. Interviews with young people have been

completed in the PhD project along with construction of their stories through a digital storytelling method.

### Survey Data

Outputs from the above research have been used to formulate questionnaires for men who attend the programs and partners of men who attend programs (not paired partners). Survey data collection is currently commencing and planned to be completed by mid 2016.

### Research theme

1. Service responses and interventions

### Key Words

2. Perpetrator Interventions,
3. Children
4. Research informing practice

### References

Bromfield, L., Lamont, A., Parker, R. and Horsfall, B. (2010) *Issues for the safety and wellbeing for children in families with multiple and complex problems*. National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Issues Paper no33. 1-23.

Featherstone, B. and C. Fraser (2012). "Working with Fathers around Domestic Violence: Contemporary Debates." *Child Abuse Review* 21(4): 255–263.

Guille, L. (2004) Men who batter and their children: An integrated review. *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 9, 129-163.

Holt, S., Buckley, H. and Whelan, S. (2008) The impact of exposure to family violence on children and young people: A review of the literature. *Child Abuse and Neglect* 32, 797-810.

### Learning Objectives

1. Bring together previously separate bodies of expertise on MBC, Fathering, Aboriginal, and children / young people to share knowledge to improve the way each are working separately.
2. Build foundational knowledge about how and under what circumstances fathers who have used D/FV are parenting.
3. Develop standards and guidance for practice in working with men where there is D/FV to improve the parenting experience of children and the safety of women.