

SHINE! PROJECT

BACKGROUND

In May 2004, Noosa Council and Zonta held a Forum on Domestic and Family Violence in Noosa Shire. More than 80 people attended the Forum, including a large number of men, and other ordinary residents who were concerned about the impact of violence on the community in general. Past experience indicates that in this type of event, it is usual for the audience to be largely made up of funded service providers.

In response to the indicated level of community concern, Council formed a Domestic and Family Violence Working Group. This group consists of around 30 representatives from government, and community agencies, and business, including representatives from specialist domestic violence services on the Sunshine Coast Region and the Department of Communities Sunshine Coast Office. Noosa Police and the Court Registrar are also members of this Working Group. The mission of the Working Group is to provide a *"whole of community response to the issue of domestic and family violence in Noosa Shire"*.

EXISTING SERVICES IN NOOSA SHIRE

The Working Group undertook to scope what services actually are available in Noosa Shire, with particular attention to identifying duplications, gaps and best practice for replication. The Working Group was surprised by the level of services that were actually available across the community, and in particular the range of agencies that undertook either direct support or education and prevention activities. Of significance was the fact that service representatives in our group were unaware of the scope of activities within the Shire, and given this our realization that ordinary people who need to use the services would never manage to negotiate the service system maze.

SERVICE GAPS AND PRIORITIES FOR NOOSA SHIRE

The results of the scoping exercise also revealed there was a need for accommodation in the Shire for those persons who need alternative accommodation because of domestic violence, but do not necessarily have a need for the high level of security and support services provided by a traditional refuge. A need for more education about nurturing effective relationships, resolving conflict, parenting skills was also identified, as well as a range of life skills training. There was also a need for additional programs for perpetrators.

OUTCOMES

The Working Group has decided to take responsibility for their own outcomes and experience by combining our collective resources to attempt to improve services on the ground in Noosa. We have adopted the **SHINE !** emblem- being Safe Homes In Noosa Everyday. Under the SHINE ! banner a range of strategies will be developed. Noosa Council will issue an anti-violence statement and service contact details as part of their welcome pack to new residents. The Christian Outreach Centre, Ivory Palms Resort and Noosa Council have combined resources to facilitate a series of four free **Relationship Seminars** in the Shire. The first of these Seminars was held on 27 April 2005 on Positive Parenting, and was attended by 85 residents. In fact, people had to be turned away, as there was no space to accommodate them. The reports from attendees were

overwhelmingly positive. Future Seminars will be held in venues that can accommodate a larger audience.

Further opportunities for **life skills training** will also be available to the community through the combined resources of business, the Christian Outreach Centre and Noosa Council. All training will be facilitated by qualified staff. The first workshop on Building Positive Relationships (men only) will commence in May 2005 at Pomona Community House.

The big news, however, is that the Christian Outreach Centre, Council, ZONTA and Noosa Shire businesses have combined resources to build a **safety house complex** providing accommodation for people who need time out because of violence in families. At this stage the plan is to build three two bedroom villas on Council land next to the Noosa Police Station and Barracks. The Senior Sergeant of Police is a member of the Domestic and family Violence Working Group. The accommodation will be completed by June 2005, and the builder is an award winning Noosa designer, Paul Croft, and he has donated his time and skills. Already the response from business has been overwhelming, with offers to donate materials and labor, including white goods and furniture. Volunteer labor under the direction of qualified tradesmen will erect the building over two weekends. The Department of Employment and Training is demonstrating their support for the project through the provision of Community Jobs Program workers.

Neither Council nor the Christian Outreach Centre has the expertise to manage the accommodation on a day-to-day basis, and the Working Group plans to tender its management to a domestic and family violence service in the near future. This project has the best chance of success if recurrent funds can be found for a half time worker to coordinate the existing service system to meet the needs of residents. We intend to approach the Department of Communities for assistance in this regard.

This project presents an opportunity to publicly demonstrate how government at different levels, business and community can work together to take collective responsibility to address the issues that are important to them. This project has the potential to be replicated in other communities and for other topic areas. The project has not hit the press as yet, but will receive considerable attention when it becomes public knowledge. We ask that everyone in this community gets behind this initiative, and that government publicly supports this endeavor, and demonstrates their faith in the ability of people to find solutions that are meaningful to their own community.

“Building Partnerships – Addressing Domestic & Family Violence in the Noosa Shire”

Background

Each May, during Domestic and Family Violence Month (and previously D & FV Week) the Zonta Club of Noosa has undertaken activities aimed at raising awareness of this issue. In keeping with this policy, on 17th May 2004, Zonta co-hosted a Forum on Domestic and Family Violence with Noosa Council attended by more than 70 people. Almost half subsequently volunteered to form a D&FV Working Group, representing a broad cross section of the Noosa population including D & FV service providers, community groups, churches, local and State Government and several Zonta representatives.

The Working Group identified five key response areas; education; support programs for women; as well as for children; education and counselling for perpetrators; and innovative ways of addressing accommodation.

Teams were formed to address each of these areas and Team Leaders formed a Coordinating Committee. A consultant was employed and each Team conducted a needs assessment survey within its area of interest to: identify currently available services and service gaps; recommend key initiatives to better coordinate existing services; and to form the basis for planning to meet identified community service needs.

Coordinating Committee membership comprises representatives from the Salvation Army, Noosa Council and the Zonta Club of Noosa and is chaired by Pastor Michael Clift of the Christian Outreach Church. This committee has met weekly since November 2004, reporting on an approximately bi-monthly basis to the larger Working Group.

Project Goal

The overall project has recently adopted the name “Safe Homes in Noosa Everyday!” or S.H.I.N.E! The mission statement is *“to develop a whole of community response to domestic and family violence in Noosa Shire”*, with the underlying principal of maintaining social connections and support for people accessing the services

Outcomes to Date

Accommodation

An announcement regarding the construction of a “safe house” has recently been made. On land donated by Noosa Council and coordinated by the Christian Outreach Church, three two-bedroom cottages will be built using materials, skills and labour, donated by local businesses, tradespeople and community members. The units will provide short term emergency accommodation for people escaping domestic and family violence. Noosa Council will provide ongoing maintenance for the buildings and expressions of interest will be called in the near future from suitably qualified community organisations to manage the service.

Education Programs

A series of relationship seminars will commence in the near future presented by Dr Robi Sonderegger a renowned Clinical Psychologist. Dr. Sonderegger has donated his time; Noosa Council is covering the venue costs which have been provided at reduced rates. A gold coin donation will contribute toward catering costs. In addition, a 6 week perpetrator’s course is to be held in Pomona. Various other initiatives have been implemented within local schools.

Service Coordination

Funds are currently being sought for a half-time Coordinator. This role is a key element in the overall plan for services within the Shire. It is envisaged that the appointee would work with the successful tenderer for the management of the service and assist in developing a coordinated service model ensuring linkages with existing service networks.

Additional Services

Part of the ongoing development of the SHINE! Project will be to bring online additional services as appropriate and as funding permits. The initial needs-assessment and planning phase highlighted that several services do indeed exist in the area, but that they have developed in an ad hoc way, often under the umbrella of other services not directly associated with the provision of domestic and family violence services. It is possible that these services could be accessed as part of a coordinated model.

Conclusion

From the outset this project has aimed at raising community awareness of the issues surrounding Domestic and Family Violence and, through provision of appropriate educational, support and counselling services, to provide early interventions to prevent domestic & Family Violence and in time 'break the cycle' of violence. It is a true community partnership, with cooperation between groups at a level unprecedented in this area. The initial impetus from the Zonta Club of Noosa was supported in the first instance by the Noosa Council to host the 2004 forum. Both of these parties have remained intrinsically involved throughout the process, with Noosa Council providing Secretarial and logistical support. Local Church Leaders have played an important role and indeed have taken on leadership of the project drawing in additional assistance from their congregations, while existing service providers have given their time to assist and advise in the initial and continuing phases of the project.

The planned 2005 Forum aims to build upon these partnerships to progress the SHINE! Project.