



FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings,

Welcome to our third newsletter.

What's news at Taskforce? Recently we have observed the Three Weeks and are now only a few weeks away from the New Year, and so we reflect on the truly awful things that have befallen our people over the years and marvel again at our strength and survival. It is timely as we have experienced turmoil in the community regarding allegations of sexual abuse which may have taken place in Jewish Day Schools a number of years ago.

It is a time for the community to reflect and to give strength and support to the victims to come forward and make disclosures to the appropriate authorities, should they wish to. We at Taskforce stand by the victims and endorse their right to do whatever is best for them.

Useful Contacts

Jewish Taskforce Support Line	9523 2100
Jewish Taskforce Admin Line	9523 6850
Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service	
24 hour assistance	1800 015 188
Police	000
Sexual Assault Service	1800 806 292
Men's Referral Service	1800 065 973

Upcoming Events

We will very soon be launching the Rabbinic Protocols. This has been developed with the Rabbinic Council of Victoria and is a ground-breaking endeavour in what we believe is a world wide first. The protocols provide a detailed guide for Rabbis on how to respond to disclosures of family violence.

White Ribbon Day: The JTAFV is planning a joint function with the Indian Taskforce Against Family Violence - 'Bollywood comes to Caulfield'. This will be a fun brunch featuring both Indian and Jewish music and culture. This will be a great event so mark it in your calendars now: Sunday 13 November at the Langham, Melbourne, One Southgate Avenue, Southbank.



New Rabbi Training: While Debbie Gross was here, Taskforce started our second training course for Rabbis. As with the first group, when this select group of Rabbis have completed their course they will receive a certificate of participation, giving us a large number of trained Rabbis who form a knowledge

Kosher Care Baskets

We are very proud to announce the launch of our sealed Kosher Care Baskets. We have an arrangement with all refuges that if an orthodox woman goes to a refuge she can be provided with kosher food and other necessities such as Shabbat candles, benchers, a kosher guide, cutlery and crockery. We are very grateful to the donors who made these baskets possible.



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JCCV AWARDS NIGHT 2010

Andrea Bliss was awarded a community volunteer award by the JCCV in December 2010. Andrea has been a long time community worker as well as being an invaluable member of the Taskforce family. She also works tirelessly for the Jewish museum.



Andrea receiving her award



Andrea Bliss, Lorraine Gold, Sheiny New, Marianne Cooklin, Ann Lewin

What have we done lately?

enCOURAGE Forum

Arranged by JTAfV

Presented by **Debbie Gross**

Founder and Director of the Jerusalem Crisis Centre for Women; Member of the Committee for the Status of Women, Knesset and an expert in the field of Family Violence, Sexual Assault and the Prevention of Child Sexual Assault.

In keeping with its commitment to further improve the safety and security of families in our community, JTAfV organized a two and a half week forum in March this year where Debbie Gross shared current professional strategies surrounding the issues of Family Violence and the prevention of Child Sexual Assault.

During this time, 21 professional seminars were led and facilitated by the charismatic and inspirational Debbie. Her programs were based on the same programs which have been and continue to be successfully implemented by Debbie and her team in schools in Israel.

Debbie captivated a wide range of listeners over 16 days, including Rabbis, teachers, maternal and child health workers, parents of school children, youth leaders, Hatzolah and mainstream service providers, to name just a few of the audiences she addressed.

Debbie transmitted her message in clear and unambiguous language.

Taskforce brought her to Melbourne to educate the community on how to make our children safer. Rabbis, teachers and youth leaders now understand the complex issues surrounding both family violence and child sexual abuse. By virtue of these seminars, we can say that we have a substantially more knowledgeable and safer community. If our community and our children are safe, then we have a richer community. We are thrilled to report that two schools have facilitated Ms. Gross's safety program to the children - this is a great move and we hope that other schools will do likewise shortly. We are already planning follow-ups with the educators who attended her sessions to assess what went well and how best to implement the message in each particular school.

An important component of the forum was cultural sensitivity training for non-Jewish service providers. Thus, a considerable number of mainstream service providers now have a clearer understanding of Jewish culture and traditions, which will enable them to better serve their Jewish clients. We intend to continue this training and expand on it.

Family violence and child sexual abuse are not topics that people want to talk about, but we must, and we have. We know that our community is not immune, that no community is immune. Therefore the JTAfV works diligently to train our community leadership to ensure an appropriate response to disclosures and a better understanding of the issues in general.

An awareness workshop was presented to concerned members of the community and we are looking at training another group of volunteers to assist us in our vital work.

The seminars were made possible due to the support of all of our major sponsors: Sunraysia Foundation, Bendigo Bank, Besen Family Foundation, Bachrach Foundation, Focus Metals, The Hermal Group, Victorian Multicultural Commission and Jewish Care. We thank them for their support. It would also not have been possible without the enormous amount of work done by our volunteer team. Kol hakavod and yasher koach.

And thanks to the community who supported us by attending the events.

As knowledge creates power, so we create an empowered and educated community.

White Ribbon Day Initiative 2010

Recent research from the United States shows that when asked why they did not approach their Rabbi about their situation of family violence, women responded that they were less likely to approach a Rabbi whom they hadn't previously heard speak of family violence. If they had heard him mention family violence in a drasha, shiur or from the pulpit, this would have increased their chances of appealing for help to this Rabbi. In the words of one woman interviewed as part of the research: "If I had heard him say something, then I would have known that what I was experiencing was not right. It would have validated what I was feeling. As it was, I felt so alone. I just knew I didn't feel good" (Sins of Omission: The Jewish Community's Reaction to Domestic Violence by Carol Kaufman, p. 12.)

With these research findings in mind, the Jewish Taskforce decided to undertake a project to endeavor to reach out to every Rabbi in Melbourne and request that they devote one Shabbat morning sermon to addressing the terrible sin that is family violence. We believed that this would be even more powerful if the Shabbat chosen

was done in a unified manner to correspond with the week of November 25th, "White Ribbon Day" ("Say No to Violence Against Women").

A resource kit containing various references and useful referrals was prepared for the Rabbis, together with a possible text to read out in shul. It is hoped that this project will form just one more branch of the vital work we do in developing greater awareness and education around the issues of family violence.

We are delighted to report that many Rabbis utilized the kit and indeed spoke from the pulpit, some using their own wording and some using the prepared text.

This initiative has the support of the Rabbinical Council of Victoria and will be repeated annually.

Taskforce and the Victorian Multicultural Commission



Debbie Wiener, Chairperson of JTAfV Inc., Ruth Raitman, Treasurer, and Jennifer Huppert, former MHR, presenting a cheque from the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

We are very fortunate to have been in receipt of many grants from the VMC. The previous government was a great supporter of our initiatives and we hope that this will continue with the new Baillieu government.

JCCV POLICE COCKTAIL PARTY

Sheiny New was the keynote speaker at the Annual JCCV-POLICE cocktail party in July. As always, Sheiny gave an insightful and informative presentation, outlining the history and work of the taskforce and its involvement in educating and supporting the community in our most recent program such as 'Keeping our Children Safe'. She acknowledged the strong connections and invaluable support between the taskforce and Victoria Police.

Sheiny speaks frequently in a wide range of forums including parents evenings, and is finely attuned to the issues of cultural sensitivities, especially in the Jewish community.

The Taskforce wishes to acknowledge the tremendous dedication, preparation, energy and input Sheiny brings to each presentation.



Sheiny New (JTAfV), Sylvia Drever (Lifestyle Coordinator, Jewish Care), Bruce Colcott OAM (Multicultural Advisory Unit, Victoria Police)

Men and family violence

The issue of family violence has come to the attention of a range of organisations and individuals in recent years, with an increasing focus on the scope, impact and responsibility for many outside the standard service or welfare sector needing to respond.

In Victoria, family violence or 'intimate partner violence' costs the economy \$3.4 billion. Police and courts are now far more active, and in much more appropriate ways. Agencies once considered outside the family violence sector are now more effectively screening for family violence through statewide risk assessment processes, and local and state governments are turning their eyes to primary prevention activities that not only seek to engage with women who are experiencing violence, and their children, but men as well.

One in three women experience violence from a male partner or former partner - a proportion that extends across all cultures, regions and socioeconomic status. It is important to reflect on this statistic. These are the mothers, sisters, daughters, nieces, neighbours, work colleagues, friends and, yes, wives and partners in our lives and in our community. The vast majority of family violence towards women and children is usually by men known to them - more often than not partners, former partners or other male family members, and upwards of seventy percent of all women who experience violence do not report it.

In recent times, not only have services responded to women and children who experience violence, but agencies have begun to provide co-ordinated responses to the men who use violence towards family members. In Victoria, men's

programs began twenty years ago, and now boasts 39 programs across the state. Programs are informed by government endorsed standards of practice and play a crucial role in the integrated family violence prevention system. This systemic approach brings together service providers, government departments, courts and police who work together with an aim to end family violence and violence against women.

Importantly, though, the role of family violence prevention should not be limited to these and similar organisations. Indeed, we all have a role to play.

And crucially, this particularly means that men must not only declare their opposition to male family violence, but be active in its prevention.

Of course, this can make many of us rather anxious. We live in a community and society that embraces a 'don't get involved in private matters' culture. Indeed, recent research by the Australia's National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect found that a disturbing 42 per cent of people would not take action if they thought a child was suffering abuse because they "just don't think it is their business".



But we need to make family violence prevention our business. Without actively responding to concerns about family violence we are tacitly colluding with it, and thereby allowing the violence to continue and to worsen, as it most usually does.

This does not mean, as a past unfortunate White Ribbon Day television campaign suggested, we grab a baseball bat and go next door to teach someone a lesson. Instead, there are numerous, productive and non-violent things we can do.

One of the most effective interventions can simply be raising concerns with someone who may be experiencing violence or is using violence. A simple inquiry as to 'how are things going at home' might just provide an opportunity for someone to begin to consider and discuss what their life is really like, perhaps disclose that things aren't all that good, and they may feel emboldened that someone is taking an interest. We don't all need to become family violence counsellors, but simply posing the question, actively listening, providing empathy and suggesting that help is available can make a world of difference.

As men, we can also take a stand by virtue of not condoning sexism or misogyny in its myriad and all-pervasive guises. As the underlying basis of men's violence against women, it is vital that we as men understand the ways in which women can sometimes be objectified and vilified by virtue of their gender. To circumvent this we need to, for example, consider rejecting emails, texts and jokes that disparage women, or even calling to attention a male friend or relative who has belittled or ridiculed a woman. The responses must be respectful and address the behaviour, not the person, but the subtext is that inappropriate references and

behaviour towards women are no longer appropriate or tolerated.

Of course, there are others in positions of authority who can take extra steps to ensure the safety of women and children. As fathers, grandfathers, friends and employers we have an obligation to respectfully challenge violence and abuse towards women and take action. This might extend from the quiet personal conversation to thinking about what else should happen. We are a nation who despises 'dobbers', and we are a community that does not willingly like to bring ourselves into disrepute or ridicule. However, the safety of women and children is paramount, and this sometimes might mean taking more immediate action such as calling the police.

I was pleased to be able to provide some training recently for a number of Melbourne's Rabbis. Most Rabbis have experienced members of their congregations making contact with them and disclosing issues of great concern. However, like most members of the broader community, the Rabbis were sometimes conflicted as to how to respond. However, it was agreed that there can never be a justification for women and children experiencing violence. Indeed, from an ethical perspective, we can no longer provide benign responses that continue to put women and children in danger for fear of 'dividing the family' or even the notion of depriving children of their father.

A Rabbi once asked me how he should respond to a woman who claimed that her husband behaved abusively towards her, but she also said he was a good father. Embracing a different Jewish custom, I answered with a question: "Is it possible to be a good father and use violence and abuse towards your children's mother?" In this sense, it is

vital that we understand what appropriate behaviour is, and who is responsible for inappropriate behaviour.

Men's violence is always their own responsibility. Nobody makes men use violence. Whilst many men can espouse a range of 'reasons' for their use of violence (upbringing, stress, blaming their partner) the fact is that the vast majority of men who use violence towards family members do not use violence towards anyone else. Therefore, they are making a choice, and deciding what the consequences might be. A man generally won't use violence towards his employer or a police officer due to the inherent consequences - but what are the consequences to his violent and abusive behaviour towards his partner or children behind closed doors?

Family violence is insidious, pervasive, damaging and the antithesis of the notion of human rights. By virtue of being members of a community and being concerned about the safety and wellbeing of its members, we are all responsible for addressing it. In particular, given that the vast majority of family violence is perpetrated by men, we men must take a stand and act accordingly.

Danny Blay is the Executive Officer of No To Violence, the Male Family Violence Prevention Association of Victoria, incorporating the Men's Referral Service. He has wide experience in Male Family Violence Telephone Counselling, Men's Behaviour Change Group Facilitation and male family violence prevention training. His position included representation on state government family violence policy advisory committees, providing policy advice regarding responses to men who use violence and service integration across the state.

Notes from Sydney



At the kind invitation of JTAFV, the Jewish Alliance Against Family Violence (JAAFV), Sydney, was pleased to host Debbie Gross for a number of speaking engagements in late February.

Debbie addressed a diverse range of audiences including an informal gathering of youth leaders, the mikvah attendants, an in camera meeting with a couple of rabbis discussing issues of concern to them, and an informal drawing room meeting with psychologists and therapists.

And that was just on day one!!

One of the main events on the schedule was a workshop with rabbis and rebbetzins and the final presentation was to school principals and counsellors.

Debbie's engaging style and personality meant that she was able to adapt to the sensitivities of the various audiences, imparting her knowledge and equipping the audience with skills which, we have since been informed, have been implemented in many subsequent instances.

We were overwhelmed by the consistently positive feedback following each of the events. It seems that the more Debbie presented, we could see the need for further presentations. We thank JTAFV for assistance in enabling us to be part of this project.

The Jewish Alliance Against Family Violence has been in existence in Sydney for over two years. Our inaugural function at Hakoah was a sellout featuring Melbourne's Sheiny New from the JTAFV, with not enough seats, and this despite there being three other similar events on the same Monday night.

This response, if nothing else, indicated that there was a great need for our presence in Sydney. We have subsequently organised several drawing room meetings for women needing to talk about violence with each other and professional members of our committee. We have had training sessions for rebbetzins. We have been to Jewish schools to teach about healthy relationships. In 2009, we brought out psychologist Dr Clara Zylberstein from USA to give a series of seminars and workshops.

Clara had lived in Sydney for several years and was well-known by many who came. The final event of her visit was an evening at Central Shule with Rabbi Gourarie, and the two of them made an excellent team with some good questions fielded.

JAAFV has been a presence at the N'shei Chabad weekends for women. We have partnered both Jewish Care and Wolper Hospital in events and appeared at Limmud Oz in Melbourne and Sydney.

After every event we have experienced women coming to committee members to discuss privately, matters of concern in their lives.

One of our committee was directly involved in helping a woman in a desperate situation escape to her homeland.

We are constantly made aware of how important it is to move forward to keep faith with those who need our help.



The Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence wishes all our readers a Shana Tova - a Happy, Healthy, Safe Year

Rachel's Story

I was no one's and everyone's. I was someone's daughter, sister and wife . But I was no one. At least that is what he kept telling me. Of course he didn't say that at the beginning. He told me I was beautiful and how lucky he was to have me, but because I was beautiful he thought every man would want me so he started to wait for me after work, to phone me at all hours-when I was out with girlfriends, or shopping, or even at the gym. I was flattered by the attention. At first. Then I began to feel possessed and smothered. When I expressed my concerns, people said not to worry. It was part of new love, they said, he's just really keen, they said. So I tried to put my uneasiness aside. When we decided to marry I spoke to the Rabbi about it but he said that I was worrying unnecessarily: that he was such a mensch, he was on all the shul committees. He studied Torah, he donated to charity. So I believed the feel-good line: that I was just being silly and had pre wedding nerves.

After the wedding we moved into my flat while we looked for something bigger to buy. He said that he would pay all the bills as he was an accountant and better at it than I. He then put all our expenses on a spreadsheet, and then he began to question me about my purchases-what was this for, what was that....the questioning made me feel uneasy .After all, I had been working for many years and was used to making my own financial decisions. The flat was almost paid off. I knew I wasn't profligate with money, but he made me feel as if I were and as if I couldn't manage it. He then said that he thought the flat should go into joint names, as after all, we were married now, and everything should be equal, I balked at that and said that no, we agreed that that wouldn't happen, as it came in part from my inheritance. He became very angry at this and it was after that we had our first really

major row. He said I didn't trust him, said that I was too stupid to really understand money and why did he marry me....He stormed out and returned hours later, clearly having had a lot to drink. He wanted to have sex, which I didn't, but he insisted and the easiest thing was just to acquiesce...

In the morning he apologized, and said it wouldn't happen again. But of course it did. It was usually over money - "what was this for?", "what was that for?"...and the this and the that were never much, perhaps a CD or a book or a leg wax. He of course could spend whatever he liked on whatever he liked. And too, there were the constant interrogations-where had I been, where was I going...this is before or after a coffee with a girlfriend or a trip to the supermarket.

After yet another argument, I decided to try to hide some money away from him, only I didn't know how to do it without him finding out.

Then I had to go away on a work trip. I returned late on a Thursday night, and he was sitting in the lounge, watching a dvd and drinking whisky from the bottle. When I asked him what he was doing, he said that he could do that as his wife had not been around for the week. Instead of asking how my trip went, he berated me for going, and then, without any warning, pushed me against a wall, hit me and then raped me. I lay there, not able to believe that this had happened to me.

The next day, when he had gone to work, I went to the Rabbi and told him what had happened. Initially, he didn't want to believe what I said, but when I showed him the bruises he did. I told him then about what had been going on, about the controlling behavior, about the constant questioning and demands. I was

perpetually on edge and fearful. I had indigestion and trouble sleeping and my skin was blotchy and spotty, which had never happened before.

The Rabbi was very thoughtful. He said to me that he felt personally responsible, as, unbeknown to me, there had been some complaints about my husband previously, by an ex fiancé. I was horrified - when I had discussed my initial concerns, the rabbi had told me, in essence, that I was over-reacting. The Rabbi said that he had not said anything negative as he had felt that perhaps the previous complaints had been malicious and he had not wanted to engage in loshen hora. However, he went on to counsel me, this is different. I cannot tell you to leave your husband, he said, that must be your decision, but if you do, you will have my support. What he is doing is against halacha .

When my husband returned that night, I told him that the marriage was over and that he had to leave.

He didn't want to, we argued and I ended up calling the police. He did leave then, and I arranged for all his belongings to be delivered to his parents' house.

In the end, the nobody became a somebody.



The past doesn't live here any more

There has been publicity in the press, both mainstream and Jewish, about events that allegedly occurred at a Jewish Day School over 15 years ago.

It has been suggested that the school behaved wrongly by failing to act in relation matters reported to it, and that it essentially turned a blind eye to things it should have seen, and a deaf ear to those it failed to hear and who were in need.

We cannot, without knowing all the facts, dissect what took place, or allegedly took place all those years ago. We cannot comment on any individual case unless and until it has been through the courts. We can however discuss generalities and we can also say this: that times have very much changed and what was done then would not-or we hope it would not-be done now.

In times past, people thought, naively, that shipping a perpetrator out of the place they were in and staying quiet was the best way to solve the problem. What they failed to realise of course was that such a course of action only meant that the problem, if there were one, would materialise somewhere else, and possibly in a far more sinister form. For paedophiles do not stop and once is never enough for them-they suffer from an addiction and they will continue to abuse until they are stopped.

It was thought that the shame should be born in silence. It was thought that doing nothing was better than remembering, but of course what they failed to appreciate was that the victims never forgot.

I think it is fair to say that today the majority of institutions, both secular and religious, in all aspects of our community, would take a different view.

The Taskforce has fought long and hard to encourage victims to speak out and to seek support.

We no longer live in a place where silence is the modus operandi. We no longer live in a place where to stay mute is best practice. We no longer live in a place where to remain deaf is an appropriate response.

It is no longer acceptable to be blind to the abuse, to be deaf to the cries of the abused and not speak out.

We are proud to say that the past doesn't live here any more.

Debbie Wiener

The logo for Peerless Foods features the word "Peerless" in a large, green, serif font. Below it, the word "foods" is written in a smaller, orange, lowercase sans-serif font, with a stylized orange flourish that starts under the 'f' and loops under the 's'.

JTAFV thanks Peerless Foods for their generous sponsorship of this newsletter.

Donations

Thank you to all of our supporters who have been most generous in their donations to The Jewish Taskforce Against Family Violence Inc. Support has been both financial and through volunteering. Without this vital assistance, our crucial work of education, awareness raising, support and numerous other projects would not be possible.

We would like to encourage our readers who would like to support us to do so by visiting our website and clicking on 'donate now'. You can also make a donation by filling out the enclosed donation form.