



## AFPPD Focus Group on HIV and Domestic Violence Ho Chi Minh City 17-18 December 2005

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### Participants

- Hon Dr Meredith Burgmann MLC, President of the NSW Legislative Council
- Hon Louise Pratt MLC, WA Legislative Council
- Rachel Ingwersen (Secretariat)

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### Meeting report

The meeting brought together some 20 participants from ten countries in Asia, to discuss the issues of HIV/AIDS and domestic violence.

Experts from UNFPA, UNIFEM, the Vietnam Government and parliamentarians addressed the meeting, covering issues of current trends in HIV, lessons learned in policy and programs, harm reduction, and factors contributing to domestic violence.

Participants also had the opportunity to visit the Community Counselling and Support Centre (CCSC) for People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) at the District 8 Health Centre. The CCSC was opened in 2003 with the support of international organisations and the community. The CCSC aims to create a comprehensive care and treatment model for PLWHA, including infection prevention, and to engage all levels of community from government to PLWHA. Following the field visit, participants discussed the work of the CCSC and similar programs.

UNFPA showed participants the Spanish film "Take my eyes" which explores the issue of domestic violence. UNFPA had shown the film in Hanoi in conjunction with the launch of the *State of World Population Report 2005*.



Meredith Burgmann, Louise Pratt and  
Nguyen Thi Hoai Thu MP, VAPPD Chair  
and AFPPD Vice-Chair



Louise Pratt chairing a session



Ian Howie, UNFPA Representative to  
Vietnam, with Meredith Burgmann and  
Louise Pratt

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## Presentations by PGPD participants

Louise Pratt chaired the session on “Harm Reduction”.

Meredith Burgmann represented Australia on the panel “What parliamentarians can do or are doing?”. The parliamentarians on this panel discussed their experiences and roles as legislators in the areas of domestic violence and HIV/AIDS.

Below are the key points from Dr Burgmann’s speech, an audio file of which can be downloaded from the conferences section of the PGPD website.

*Although there is greater economic equality in Australia, domestic violence is still an issue. Australian parliamentarians can be active on domestic violence in a number of ways: through our parties, through the media, and through general campaigning.*

- Parliamentarians as resource mobilisers: *Parliamentarians are most effective as resource mobilisers – they make decisions on where money is spent. They can make decisions on funding education programs, television campaigns. In Australia we have run television campaigns using male sports stars to speak out against DV. Money must also be spent on police education and setting up special units in the police to deal with domestic violence. Money must be available for refuges so women have somewhere safe to go when they leave a violent situation*
- Use of your political party: *the women parliamentarians in our party went to see the Premier as a group – some 20-30 of us – to lobby for changes in gun laws, so guns would no longer be allowed to be kept in homes, as this exacerbates domestic violence situation and leads to murders of women.*
- As individual parliamentarians: *you can talk constantly about domestic violence, include it in statements about the aims of your society. Remind your leaders that your country has signed CEDAW and has obligations*
- Get more women into parliament: *this is an obligation of all parliamentarians, not just women parliamentarians. Issues such as domestic violence get neglected if women aren’t there to speak about them. Our party has a quota system to get more equal representation in parliament*
- Individual leadership:
  - *a parliamentarian in Australia spoke about her own personal experience of domestic violence. Having a leader speak personally lets other women know it is OK to talk about it, and it reduces stigma*



Meredith Burgmann



Louise Pratt with Dr Ruquiyia Saeed MP (Pakistan) at the Community Counselling and Support Centre for PLWHA



Louise Pratt chairing a session with presenter Le Van Dieu MP, VAPPD Vice-Chair



Louise Pratt at the Community Counselling and Support Centre for PLWHA

- Australian women parliamentarians march in the annual “Reclaim the Night” march
  - You can personally support the refuge movement and other programs to support women who have left a domestic violence situation
  - You can support White Ribbon Day by wearing a white ribbon. Male MPs can be ambassadors for White Ribbon Day
- Ridicule men who make outrageous statements: I have set up an annual award for this. Some judges were making statement such as “no does not always mean no”, so we gave him an award of a pig on a stick. There are fewer outrageous statements from the judiciary now.

“We as legislators must continue to fight for money for girls’ education. Girls’ education is an indicator of the health of a society. Evidently the GNP can be directly related to the status of girls’ education in a country. Girls education gives them status and respect, but most of all the chance for economic independence, and the ability to realise they don’t have to stay in a violent relationship.”

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### Personal commitments by Australian participants

Hon Dr. Meredith Anne Burgmann MLC

- Get involved in a strategy to prevent domestic violence in indigenous communities.
- Help the East Timorese set up their Parliamentary Group for Population and Development.
- Work towards getting RU486 available to Australian women.

Hon Louise Pratt MLC

- I make a commitment to working to address violence in indigenous communities.
- There is also a need to further develop programmes to prevent sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV in these communities.
- I will further work to support the work of East Timorese MPs to establish an AFPPD secretariat.
- Work to make RU486 available.
- Work to improve resources for the Western Australian AIDS Council.



Louise Pratt with Dr Vallabhbai Kathiria MP (India)



Meredith Burgmann speaking on the parliamentarians panel



Parliamentarians visiting the Community Counselling and Support Centre for PLWHA