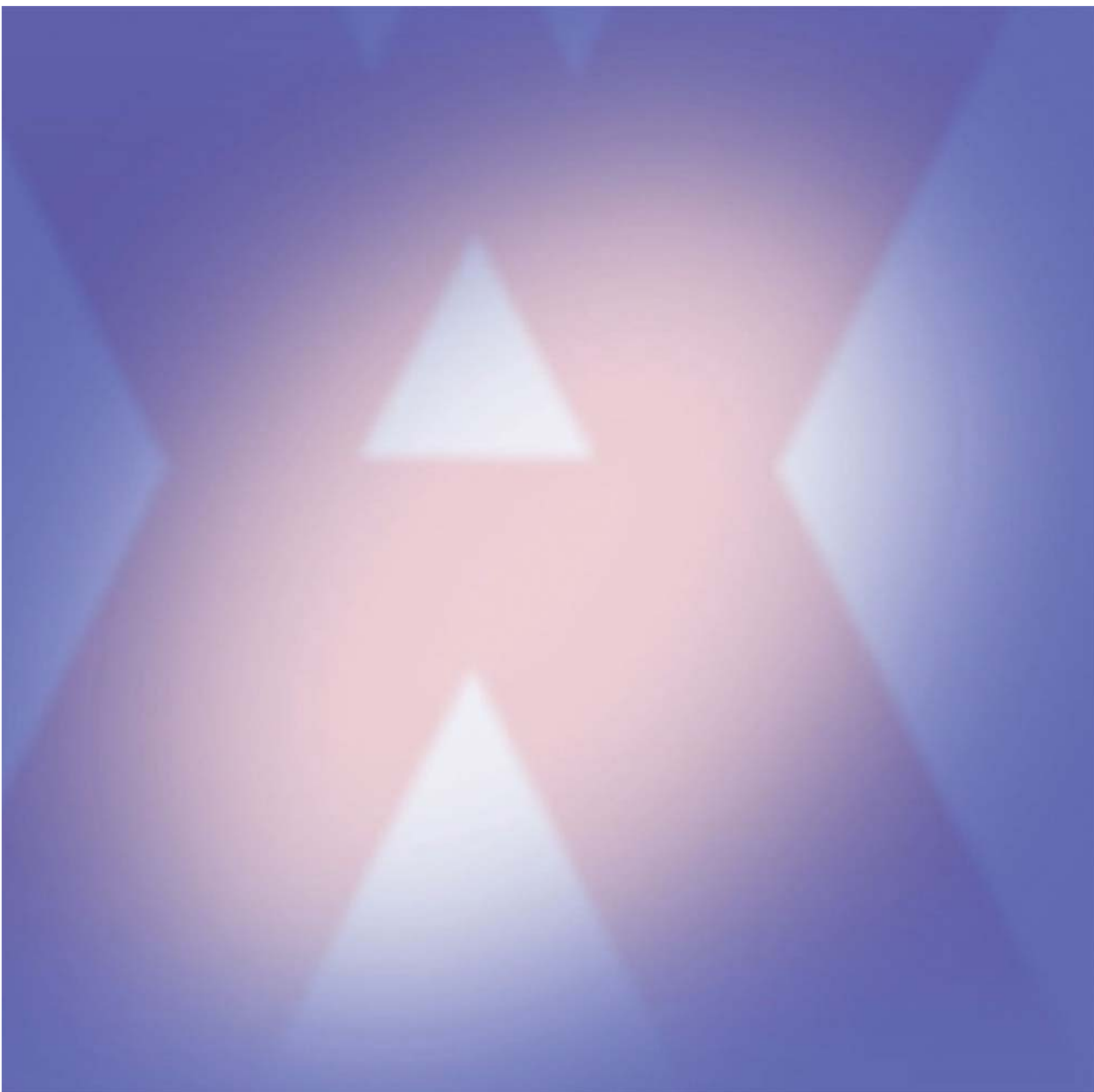




WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

NOVEMBER 2002



WorkCover. **Watching out for you.**

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

INTRODUCTION

This presentation attempts to define, identify and expand our understanding of the various types of workplace violence some of which have not been recognised and others overlooked or put in the 'too hard basket'. It also stresses the interrelationship between the various types of workplace violence and the integral role organisational management and structures play in escalating or decreasing such violence within the workplace.

The presentation also identifies the limitations of current violence management strategies in order to provide a basis for a comprehensive framework for improving work place safety for staff and those in their care through non-violent prevention and management practices.

I hope this information will allow WorkCover accredited trainers to be able to provide the most up to date and relevant training on this topic.

WHAT IS WORKPLACE VIOLENCE?

Diamond (1997) summarizes some of the varied historical, individual, contextual, and organisational factors that need to be faced in defining workplace aggression and violence:

"Workplace aggression is a dialectical and inter subjective phenomenon in which external realities such as social class, unemployment, organizational downsizing, organizational structure, work processes, roles and culture, and internal worlds of emotions, fantasies, motives, wishes, perceptions, anxieties, and the like collide. Economy meets psychology." p.232

In order to address many of these issues raised in trying to define workplace violence I have defined it as 'a perceived or actual verbal, emotional threat or physical attack on an individual's person or property by another individual, group or organisation' (Bowie 1996 p. xvi) while undertaking work related duties. This definition incorporates a number of the issues previously mentioned. These include both perceived and real violence of both verbal and a physical nature as well as including 'damage' to individuals as well as their property. A crucial aspect of this definition is the recognition that violence may also come from a group or an organisation.

WHAT TYPES OF WORKPLACE VIOLENCE ARE THERE?

A widely used classification of workplace violence is the typology developed by the Californian Occupational Safety and Health Administration (1995). This model is probably the most generally accepted one in current legal, occupational health and safety, criminology and security circles.

This original schema identifies three types of workplace violence that I have titled intrusive, consumer related and relationship violence. Leather et al (1999) outline this typology as follows.

"Here, three broad categories of workplace violence are identified: Type I, planned robberies, where the assailant has no legitimate relationship to the workplace and the main object of the attack is cash or valuable property; Type II, events involving assault by someone who is either the recipient of the object of a service provided by the affected workplace or the victim; and Type III, incidents involving assault by another employee, a supervisor, or an acquaintance of the worker". p.4

To these already identified sub categories should be added, I believe, a number of types that so far have been omitted from existing typologies. Thus such a new expanded typology based on the existing OSHA classifications should be developed (See table 1) including the following categories

TABLE 1. EXPANDED WORKPLACE VIOLENCE TYPOLOGY

Type 1 External/Intrusive violence

- Criminal intent by strangers
- Terrorist acts
- Protest violence
- Mentally illness or drug related aggression

Type 2 Consumer/Client related violence

- Consumer/clients/patients (& family) violence against staff
- Vicarious trauma to staff
- Staff violence to clients/consumers

Type 3 Relationship violence

- Staff on staff violence & bullying
- Domestic violence at work

Type 4 organisational violence

- Organisational violence against staff
- Organisational violence against consumers / clients / patients.

More details about these additional categories within this typology are outlined below.

TYPE 1. EXTERNAL/INTRUSIVE VIOLENCE

Originally type 1 was largely considered to be violence used in the committing of a crime within a workplace such as robbery or sexual assault. These involve external perpetrators who have no legitimate relationship to the workplace. The early stages of awareness of this type came from staff working in a variety of settings subject to external violence from assaults and robberies especially in banks and other cash handling business.

Thus the initial common perception of workplace violence was mainly around high profile incidents of staff traumatised by external robberies and assaults by strangers. However there are other less frequent but equally important types of this violence which also need to be part of a comprehensive awareness of intrusive violence. These include:

- Those pursuing acts of sabotage, kidnapping or terrorism using violence. This may occur in incidents of plane highjackings, assassinations or bombing of embassies. The recent terrorist attacks in New York and Washington DC clearly illustrate the possibility of such violence occurring within a workplace.
- Those protesting in a violent way against an organisations policies or practices such as multi nationals which pollute the environment or exploit third world countries. Recent anti globalisation rallies and protest have illustrated the possibility of such violence impacting on people at work or on their way to and from work.

Wardlaw (1996) identifies such groups as single issue terrorist groups.

- Mentally ill, homeless or drug effected people who may find shelter within an organisation such as a public library or a cafe and who may strongly resist being moved on and may intentionally or unintentionally intimidate others. Such types of people are being increasingly found in public places partly as a result of the failed process of deinstitutionalisation of large publicly owned care facilities. This is another example of type 1 external violence that staff may have to deal with.

Thus this first existing type 1 category needs to incorporate these additional aspects of workplace violence.

WorkCover. Watching out for you.

TYPE 2. CONSUMER/CLIENT RELATED VIOLENCE

The most widely recognised aspect of type 2 violence involves aggressive acts by customers / clients / patients (or their relatives and friends) against staff of a service or a business.

However type 2 violence should also be expanded to include at least two other types of violence. These are vicarious trauma and staff violence against others they are supposed to be 'serving'.

• VICARIOUS TRAUMA

This is another type of client/consumer related violence which can occur to those in the 'care and control' professions such as police, lawyers, judges, social workers, rape counsellors, child protection specialists. Journalists and international peace keepers may also be exposed to such trauma. (International Federation of Journalists 2001) These staff may have to deal with a 'double dose' of both direct violence from their clients as well as the 'horror' of helping their clients face what they have done to others or have experienced themselves. Such experiences by staff are now referred to by various terms such as secondary trauma or vicarious traumatisation.

This indirect violence can also be experienced by those teaching or training workers (McMammon 1995) or undertaking research in prisons or amongst certain types of offenders such as murders, paedophiles or rapists.(Lawrinson and Harris 1994)

The effects of this trauma can sometimes be quite subtle and denied by staff and largely unnoticed by managers and supervisors. Thus any risk assessment needs to factor in the possibility of such trauma occurring and taking steps to manage or prevent it.

• VIOLENCE BY STAFF AGAINST CONSUMERS/CLIENTS

There is another kind of type 2 violence, that of violence by staff against consumers / clients/ patients that is largely denied or overlooked. This can range from neglect and withholding of services to verbal abuse by staff through to sexual assault and even homicide. Some specific subgroups of clients may be especially vulnerable to violence including state wards such as children, the mentally ill and those with physical and intellectual impairments, prisoners, refugees and the aged.

Conlin Shaw (1998) sheds further light on this phenomena by her categorisation of abusers into reactive and sadistic subtypes in the context of staff caring for aggressive nursing home (NH) residents.

Sadistic abusers are those "who methodically and repeatedly abuse residents. These people are incapable of developing immunity, deny or blame others for their abusive behaviours, and feel no remorse. Reactive abusers, on the other hand are "unable to control their impulses, lose their immunity suddenly and without thinking. They react negatively towards the resident with impulsive, almost instinctive reactions, often related to invasion of their personal body space." pp. 8 & 9 There are clear differences in the dynamics and motivation for these two different types of abusers.

A key factor as to whether staff become sadistic or reactive abusers is their ability to develop psychology immunity "from the impact of abuse by residents that allows staff to resist responding to abuse in ways detrimental to the residents or themselves. It is a self-protecting mind-set that permits them to continue to work ... staff members who develop and sustain immunity tend to feel good about outcomes of their work, realize their value as human beings, maintain resiliency and patience, and give of themselves to others. Staff members' background and current family life influence their ability to sustain immunity" p. 6

Conlin Shaw (1998) lays much of the blame for abuse and neglect by staff on the financially driven medical model with productivity and efficiency as its primary goals rather than caring and human relationships.

Similar observations are made by Rylance (2001) based on a survey of 454 mainly social workers, counsellors and psychologists, she comments about the survey results that ... 'they highlight that, in addition to clients being abusive to workers, service users can experience similar behaviours by workers.' p. 31.

Rylance also notes that staff who are abusive of clients are also often abusive of their colleagues.

The existing typologies have not generally as yet identified such a staff initiated source of workplace violence. The lack of recognition of such an issue has partially occurred because of denial or disbelief that staff based violence is a potential reality. The lack of understanding of this phenomena is further obscured by difficulties at times of differentiating between staff who are sadistic or reactive abusers. Quite different responses are needed to these two types of work based aggression and violence by staff. For sadistic abusers a zero tolerance approach may be required while with reactive abusers a more supportive approach is desirable.

Thus current typologies should be expanded to include two other aspects of client related violence type 2, that of vicarious trauma to staff and violence and abuse by staff against those in their care or for whom they are supplying a service.

TYPE 3. RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

It was first recognised during the 70s and 80s that in some situations staff themselves were the instigators of aggression and violence against other staff through bullying and harassment. This phenomena was probably first investigated systematically amongst nurses and was referred to as horizontal violence. (Smythe 1984)

In this historical context there has been a growing interest and concern about workplace bullying (Macarthy 1998) or mobbing as it is called in the European context. Such individual and group violence is not particularly new but seems to be growing in the current economic rationalist climate of decreasing job security, individual work contracts, massive retrenchments and expanding unemployment that pits workers and unions against employers and other workers.

Such type 3 relationship violence can also involve aggressive acts by former employees or other persons with an employment based relationship with an organisation. These could include an employee's current or former spouse, defacto, family or significant others. It could also include cases of stalking, domestic violence occurring at work or former employees seeking justice for perceived previous wrongs against them by the organisation.

Regardless of where it is placed as a category domestic violence spilling over into the workplace it is an increasing concern that needs to be built into any comprehensive workplace violence typology.

A related key issue is the relationship between gender and the experience of types of workplace violence. As Santana and Fisher (in Gill, Fisher and Bowie 2002) clearly demonstrate there is a relationship between gender and the types of workplace violence experienced by women and men. This gender relationship could extend to types 1, 2, and 3 workplace violence.

Thus there is a need then for workplace bullying and its various manifestations to be taken much more seriously and for the gendered nature of this interaction to be more closely researched. Thus any comprehensive response to workplace violence and bullying needs to incorporate insights about its gendered nature gained from such current and future investigation into the type 3 category .

TYPE 4. ORGANISATIONAL VIOLENCE

Type 4 violence involves organisations knowingly placing their workers or clients in dangerous or violent situations or allowing a climate of abuse, bullying or harassment to thrive in the workplace. Such a climate can also include the threat or reality of downsizing or layoffs.

This phenomena, which I call type 4 organisational violence, is referred to in the research literature by a number of names including 'structural violence', 'systemic violence or abuse', 'institutional abuse' Such terminology tends to refer to 'closed' institutions such as psychiatric hospitals, prisons and children's homes however they could equally apply in some senses to supposedly 'open' institutions such as the public services, business and multi national corporations

Research on such situational determinants, including type 4 organisational violence, has been hindered by the still current focus on the personality or pathology of the individual worker, client or intruder as the main contributor to workplace violence. On the other hand it could be argued that to varying extents the organisational culture and management style can have a direct contributory effect on the types of violence experienced by workers. So it is important that types 1-3 workplace violence be carefully examined to identify the possible contribution of organisational factors to such incidents. Such 'direct' links may be hard to identify and even more difficult to resolve however it is not sufficient to 'blame' intruders, clients/customers or staff solely for the levels of violence experienced within organisations.

In this next section we will attempt to identify more clearly the links between organisational type 4 violence and other types of workplace violence.

POSSIBLE LINKS BETWEEN TYPES 1-3 AND ORGANISATIONAL VIOLENCE

• TYPE 1 AND TYPE 4 INTERACTION

Gill (2000) marshals some interesting evidence to support the proposition that crime committed within the workplace (Type 1) may be stimulated by a poor or abusive organisational culture (Type 4). Thus inappropriate or oppressive management techniques may influence the extent of external violence experienced by organisations. Therefore there may be a possible relationship between type 1 and type 4 violence.

This can be seen in the case of staff who are themselves poorly trained, under stress and feeling devalued due to type 4 organisational violence creating an environment that makes it easier for external assailants to gain access to the organisation or to capitalise on perceived 'weaknesses' in the organisation's security. Devalued staff may also collude directly or indirectly with such external assailants in type 1 violence. Thus an increase in intruders committing type 1 violent crimes within the workplace may not just be the result of an organisation being hit by a crime wave but also could partly be the result of devalued staff being less safety conscious or even colluding with outsiders to commit crimes if they feel no longer committed to their organisation.

• TYPE 2 AND TYPE 4 INTERACTION

As previously indicated Conlin Shaw (1998) in the context of the UK nursing homes (NH) lays much of the blame for abuse and neglect by staff on the financially driven medical model with productivity and efficiency as its primary goals that makes it difficult for staff to develop and maintain the necessary immunity.

In the same vein Winfield (2000) commenting on sources of stress for social services staff in a large state welfare organisation in South Australia note that the major sources of stress for front line staff are not violent, handicapped or disadvantaged clients but arise from organisational issues including lack of supervisor support.

With type 2 violence it is easy to focus on the clients/customers as being the source of the violence but the factors that have triggered off worker violence such as staff cuts, longer waiting times or decreased services may be the result of organisational decisions. Such organisational decisions may directly effect work satisfaction, financial stress, physical and emotional fatigue which in turn contribute to substance abuse and domestic problems. All these in turn influence the development, maintenance or loss of psychological immunity and staff responses to clients and others. Thus with reactive abusers their aggression and neglect of clients may be at least in part due to organisational decisions and practices that decrease workers' immunity not just individual personality 'flaws'.

• TYPE 3 AND TYPE 4 INTERACTION

A similar argument to those above could be put that type 3 workplace violence especially bullying and domestic violence spilling over to the workplace could also be linked with organisational culture and management styles and not just the results of 'nasty individuals' wielding power. The organisations may in fact provide the incentive and arena for the misuse of power as indicated in some of the research below.

Hoel and Cooper (2001) illustrate this link between staff behaviour and organisational culture and practice when their research ... "figures suggest that bullying is predominantly linked to managerial behaviour. The onus can, therefore, be seen to be on management with respect to starting to deal with the problem". pg 9

They found that bullying was found to be closely associated with major organisational change, a high workload, negative work-climate and unsatisfactory relationships at work.

Rafferty (2001) argues even more strongly that bullying may be a tool chosen by employers to control their staff.

WorkCover. Watching out for you.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

What is particularly concerning is that many of the organisations in which this type 4 violence is rife are part of the so called 'caring professions' such as health, education, and social welfare. Legal, OH & S and regulatory bodies may also be guilty of such excesses. Often organisations where you would expect as an employee or service user to be treated with dignity and respect are in fact the opposite and hide an economic rationalist agenda under a veneer of service.

Now let us look at some of the negatives of past and current responses by employers to workplace violence in the light of the growing realisation of the role of organisational factors in creating a violent workplace. Most of these strategies are still based on a pathology model of 'mad, bad or sad' employees or clients and patients who are seen as individually responsible for the violence occurring at work.

PAST & CURRENT EMPLOYER RESPONSES TO WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Many earlier responses to workplace violence by employers attempted to deflect attention from a potential key contributor to workplace violence, that is, the ways organisations are structured and managed. Such attempts included 'target hardening', 'psychological profiling' to identify remove potentially violent staff and clients, the provision of violence management training as well as critical incident debriefing (CISD) to help staff.

Table2 lists a number of these management responses and summarises some of the dangers and shortcomings of such approaches

| |
|--|
| <p>Table 2 Management Responses to Workplace Violence</p> <p>"Target hardening" (CPTED)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May cause displacement of violence elsewhere• May make aggressor more determined• Systems may fail• Staff may feel trapped <p>'Psychological' profiling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not based on normal populations• Impact of organisational climate not accounted for• May infringe civil liberties / human rights / discrimination legislation <p>Provision of violence management training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training may shift blame to workers• May be ineffectual (one size does not fit all)• Organisation may sabotage training impacts <p>Critical incident debriefing (CISD)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Growth industry• Debate over its effectiveness <p>Risk management procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mechanical approach to human issues• Zero tolerance used to stifle genuine complaint• May be ineffective with 'internal' violence <p>Conflict resolution /stress management techniques.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May identify the worker as the 'problem' |
|--|

Also in many instances the employers' moves towards aggression management policies and procedures were fuelled by the fear of massive fines or criminal proceedings or a bad public image of an unsafe workplace. All this was happening in a growing economic rationalist climate of decreasing job security, massive retrenchments and expanding unemployment that pitted workers and unions against employers.

Therefore this most important category not specifically noted in the OSHA classification should include organisational violence against both workers and clients. Thus to types 1,2,3, I have suggested (Bowie 1998) that a new category, type 4 organisational violence, should be added emphasising the role that an organisation can play in triggering or condoning workplace violence.

WorkCover. **Watching out for you.**

SUMMARY

This presentation has identified the various types of workplace violence some of which have not been recognised and others overlooked or put in the 'to hard basket'. It also stressed the interrelationship between the various types of workplace violence and the integral role organisational management and structures play in escalating or decreasing such violence within the workplace.

At the same time it provides a comprehensive framework for developing ways to improve work place safety for staff and those in their care through non-violent prevention and management practices.

Such an overall expanded typology is challenging and confronting to all the parties involved in workplace violence. Its implications are that all can potentially contribute to the problem as well as to its solutions. such issues though difficult ones should be faced and not denied by staff, unions and employers.

Vaughan Bowie
University of Western Sydney

v.bowie@uws.edu.au

REFERENCES

- Bowie, V. 1996 *Coping with Violence: a guide for the human services*. Whiting and Birch London.
- Bowie, V. June 1998 *Workplace Violence*. A paper presented at the Australian Institute of Criminology Conference Crime Against Business, Melbourne Australia.
- California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) 1995 *Cal/OSHA Guidelines for Workplace Security*, San Francisco CA, State of California Department of Industrial Relations, Californian Division of Occupational Safety and Health.
- Conlin Shaw, M. 1998 *Nursing Home Resident Abuse by Staff* Journal of Elder Abuse and Neglect Vol 9 (4) pp. 1-21
- Diamond, M (Sept 1997) *Administrative Assault: A contemporary psychoanalytic view of violence in the workplace*. *American Review of Public Administration*. 27 (3): pp. 228-247.
- Gill, M. 2000 *Commercial Robbery*. Blackstone Press Ltd, London.
- Hoel, H, and Cooper, CL. 2001 *Destructive Conflict and Bullying at Work*. Manchester School of Management UMIST
- International Federation of Journalists 2001: *International Code of Practice for the Safe Conduct of Journalists* www.ifj.org/publications/press/newsline
- Lawrinson, S. and Harris, J 1994 *Violence in Research Settings: Experiences from the Front Line* Applied Community Studies Vol 2 no. 1 pp. 52 – 68
- Leather, P., Brady, C., Lawrence, C., Beale, D. and Cox, T. 1999 *Work-Related Violence: Assessment and Intervention* Routledge, London
- Macarthy, P (1998) '*Strategies: Between Managementality and Victim-Mentality in the Pressures of Continuous Change*.' A paper presented at the conference Conflict & Violence in the Workplace. Canberra Australia and also Barron in this book.
- McMammon S. L., 1995 *Painful Pedagogy: Teaching About Trauma in Academic and Training Settings*. In Stamm, B. H. (ed) *Secondary Traumatic Stress: Self Care Issues for Clinicians, Researchers and Educators*, Sidran Press Maryland USA.
- Moran-Ellis, J. 1995 *Close to home: the experience of researching child sexual abuse* in Hester, M., Kelly, L. and Radford, J. *Women, violence and male power: Feminist activism, research and practice*. Open University Press Buckingham
- Rafferty 2001 *Bullying at Work* in McCarthy, P., Rylance, J., Bennett, R. and Zimmerman, H. (eds) *Bullying from Backyard to Boardroom*, Federation Press Sydney
- Rylance, J. 2001 *Bullying in the Helping Professions* in McCarthy, P., Rylance, J, Bennett, R. & Zimmerman, H. *Bullying from Backyard to Boardroom*. The Federation Press Sydney.
- Smythe, E 1984 *Surviving Nursing*, Addison Wesley California, and Farrell G. 2000 *Danger! Nurses at Work* Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing vol 18, no 2, pp. 6-7.
- Wardlaw 1996 *Chapter 2 The Nature and Purpose of Terrorism and Politically Motivated violence in Targeting, Tactics and Likely Future Trends* in Thompson, A. (ed.) *Terrorism and the 2000 Olympics* Australian Defence Studies Centre ACT Australia
- Winefield, H, Dollard, M, Winefield, A. 2000 *The Role of Supervisors in managing Occupational stress for service professionals*. J Occup health Safety- Aust NZ, 16 (4): 343-349

WorkCover. **Watching out for you.**

OTHER RESOURCES

Chappell, D. and Di Martino, V. *Violence at Work*. International Labour Office Geneva Switzerland 1998.

Gill, M., Fisher, B. and Bowie, V. 2002 *Violence at Work* Federation Press/Willan Publishing Uffculme UK.

Mullen, E. *Workplace Violence: Cause for Concern or the Construction of a next Category of Fear?* Journal of Industrial Relations, 1997, vol 39, no 1, March, pp. 21 - 23.

Perone, S. 1999 *Violence in the Workplace* Australian Institute of Criminology Research and Public Policy Series, No. 22. Canberra Australia.

Standing, H. and Nicolini, D. (1997) *Review of Workplace-Related Violence*. Health and Safety Executive, London England p. 6.

Williams, L. 1994 *Organisational Violence: Creating a Prescription for Change*. Quorum Books Connecticut USA