

Police policy assisting family violence victims

VICTIMS of domestic violence in Manningham are beginning to find a voice, thanks to the introduction of an innovative police policy 12 months ago.

Victoria Police's family violence code of practice has encouraged domestic violence victims to report assaults and seek professional counselling for themselves and their partners.

Doncaster Sergeant Gerry Brady said Manningham police now took a "pro-intervention" and "pro-prosecution" approach to domestic violence, rather than providing short-term, "bandaid" solutions.

"[The police department] want us to tailor a solution for the particular crisis that we get called to," said Sergeant Brady, who is also a member of the Manningham Family Violence Reference Group.

Doncare counselling and family violence program manager Carmel O'Brien said the latest police policy was "excellent" and had led to the development of a referral protocol between Doncare and the police.

However, she said Doncare's services were limited because of a lack of funding.

Sergeant Brady said the new procedure should lead to more funding

CRISIS SUPPORT

- Doncaster police: 8841 3999.
- Warrandyte police: 9844 3231.
- Doncare: 9848 4433.
- Eastern Domestic Violence Outreach Service: 9870 5939.
- Crisis Hotline: 1800 015 188.
- Women's Legal Services Victoria: 1800 133 302.

for support services such as Doncare.

"Before [the introduction of the code] we never knew what the actual number of assaults were, there was an under-reporting . . . So with an under-reporting you've got an under-servicing as well."

Crime statistics for the area, published in the *Manningham Weekly* last week, showed a jump in reported assault cases by 18.3 per cent since the code was introduced a year ago.

The number of harassment cases also increased by an alarming 107.4 per cent. Sergeant Brady said the "spike" in reports was linked to the new police approach to combating domestic violence.