



McAuley Community  
Services for Women  
a ministry of the Sisters of Mercy

### **Children and Family Violence**

#### **Family Violence Protection Act 2008**

**Family violence is behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour is:**

physically, sexually, emotionally, psychologically, economically abusive;  
threatening, coercive;

in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing;

**by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, behaviour referred to above.**

In providing crisis accommodation to women and children, McAuley Community Services for Women has gained specific insights, experience and knowledge of the impact of Family Violence on children. In 2008 -09, the **Mercy Care Program** supported 535 children; more than 300 children were aged newborn to 5 years. The unique encounters with the children, particularly within the **Children's program**, impel workers to be compassionate and offer children the space to be happy and safe. Children need to know that they are cared for and that violence is never acceptable.

The Children's program provides a space solely for the children; a space to 'just be a child'; while their mothers have their own space. The children are full of surprise as they explore the room and discover the many possibilities and delights that await them. This is vital as children can develop behavioural difficulties from being exposed to Family Violence, directly or indirectly. **Family Violence and its effects on Children**

[http://www.chatfirst.com.au/parents/04\\_4\\_effectsoffv.php](http://www.chatfirst.com.au/parents/04_4_effectsoffv.php)

Parents are responsible for their children and when experiencing Family Violence life can seem overwhelming. It is important to take time to support your children.

**Support your Children**

[http://www.chatfirst.com.au/parents/04\\_5\\_helpchildren.php](http://www.chatfirst.com.au/parents/04_5_helpchildren.php)