

Government Response to the *Domestic Violence Death Review and Advisory Board Annual Report 2021-22*

The Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board (the Board) was established in 2016 as part of the Queensland Government's implementation of recommendations from the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence Final Report - *'Not Now, Not Ever' Putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland (2015)* (Not Now, Not Ever Report).

The Board is established under the *Coroners Act 2003* to review domestic and family violence (DFV) deaths to identify common systemic failures, gaps or issues; and make recommendations to improve systems, practices and procedures to prevent future DFV deaths. The 2021-22 Annual Report is the Board's sixth report and was tabled in Parliament by the then Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence on 31 October 2022.

The report contains ten recommendations which are accepted by Government. The recommendations were made in the context of significant reforms underway in response to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce's (the Taskforce) *Hear Her Voice* Reports (referred to in this response as Report One and Report Two). The Board noted that the 277 Taskforce recommendations comprehensively cover legislative, policy, program and practice changes aimed at improving system responses to domestic and family violence. The Board 'commends and is encouraged by the Queensland Government's ongoing commitment to address and reduce DFV in our communities' as reflected in the Queensland Government's response to the Taskforce recommendations.

The Board's 2021-22 Annual Report reflects the Board's focused review on the identification of common systemic failures, gaps or issues within the context of High Risk Teams and Integrated Service Responses. The Board's review of cases led to findings that focus on:

- Developing knowledge and awareness of DFV, including building understanding of key indicators of potentially lethal risk, and the intersections between DFV and suicide, to better respond to underlying patterns of risk and harm.
- Developing practice and responses to DFV, through improving safety planning and management, supported by effective record-keeping and strong information sharing. This will ensure that the system can better identify patterns of violence perpetration across relationships and over time.
- Developing workforce, systems, and evidence about DFV, including embedding specialisation into practice, focusing on the person using violence disruption and management, and protecting children.



Integration is critical across different services and systems that respond to DFV such as police, courts, child protection, alcohol and other drug services, mental health and suicide prevention as well as specialist DFV services. The Government's response to the Board's 2021-22 Annual Report recommendations will enhance implementation of significant reforms already underway across these services and systems.

Government's Response to the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board 2021-22 Annual Report

Recommendations	Lead Agency	Government Response
<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>That the Queensland Government commission research in relation to formal and informal help-seeking behaviours by people affected by domestic and family violence in intimate partner relationships, and the key influences in decisions to contact particular services, including perceptions about which services are the most helpful.</p>	<p>Department of Justice and Attorney-General</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) released the second report from their project "<i>Transforming responses to intimate partner and sexual violence: Listening to the voices of victims, perpetrators and services</i>" in December 2022.</p> <p>This research is a comprehensive overview of help-seeking behaviours and barriers to help-seeking across Australia. The Queensland Government will utilise this research to inform future policy and program development and consider whether additional research is required.</p>

Government's Response to the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board 2021-22 Annual Report

Recommendations	Lead Agency	Government Response
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>That the Queensland Government, in implementing recommendation 9 from the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce relating to the plan for the primary prevention of violence against women, provide visible resources for family and friends to obtain information and support. This might be modelled on Ontario's Neighbours, Friends and Families campaign, recognising that many victims of domestic violence tell someone in their informal network about the violence before approaching service providers.</p>	<p>Department of Justice and Attorney-General</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>Informed by the development of the primary prevention plan in response to recommendation 9 of the Taskforce's Report One, the Queensland Government will identify and pursue opportunities to develop and distribute resources to support bystanders such as family members and friends to appropriately respond to disclosures of domestic and family violence. This will include consideration of opportunities to build on existing resources aimed at supporting members of the community to respond safely and appropriately to people experiencing domestic and family violence.</p>

Government's Response to the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board 2021-22 Annual Report

Recommendations	Lead Agency	Government Response
<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>That in the roll out of High-Risk Teams and Integrated Service Responses, practice guidelines and protocols emphasise the need for safety planning based on the specific role that each agency can play in supporting effective safety planning, rather than locating responsibility for safety planning solely with victim-survivors.</p>	<p>Department of Justice and Attorney-General</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>The Queensland Government will continue to strengthen safety management. This includes ensuring agencies are working across the integrated service response to provide wrap-around, holistic services to protect the victim-survivor and enact interventions to prevent the person using violence from further perpetrating violence. Government and sector stakeholders will be guided on good practice safety management through ongoing implementation of the revised Common Risk and Safety Framework. Good practice approaches will be embedded in the Integrated Service System Training Strategy.</p> <p>The development of a new perpetrator-centric risk assessment tool (in response to recommendations 21 and 29 of the Taskforce Report One) will help to ensure the perpetrator is held accountable for their behaviour.</p>

Government’s Response to the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board 2021-22 Annual Report

Recommendations	Lead Agency	Government Response
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>That in implementing recommendation 64 from the Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce relating to the admissibility of expert evidence about domestic and family violence, the Queensland Government give consideration to the need for the accreditation of private practitioners, such as psychologists, working within the domestic and family violence system, particularly those completing reports for court proceedings.</p>	<p>Department of Justice and Attorney-General</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>Legislative amendments to the <i>Evidence Act 1977</i> (Evidence Act) to allow for relevant expert evidence of DFV in criminal proceedings were included in the Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combatting Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023 (DFVP Amendment Act). The DFVP Amendment Act was passed by Queensland Parliament on 22 February 2023 and commenced on 1 August 2023.</p> <p>The relevant section of the DFVP Amendment Act states that “<i>For this section, an expert on the subject of domestic violence includes a person who can demonstrate specialised knowledge, gained by training, study or experience, of a matter that may constitute evidence of domestic violence</i>”. This is consistent with the common law position on the admissibility of expert evidence. It is noted that, as part of criminal proceedings, there is scope for parties to cross-examine an expert witness, including the ability to submit that a particular expert does not have the necessary level of knowledge, training, study or experience.</p> <p>The Queensland Government will monitor whether there is a need for accreditation, after the amendments have been operationalised.</p>

Recommendation 5

That in implementing recommendation 22 from the Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce relating to the practice framework and tools for Child Safety staff to work to support victims of domestic and family violence to care protectively for their children and to hold perpetrators to account, the Queensland Government notes that the Board has identified that a significant onus can be placed on mothers to protect their children from domestic and family violence. The Board recommends that the Queensland Government prioritises research on how services can safely intervene when children are identified as high risk, particularly where they have ongoing contact with perpetrators, and that this research informs the Strengthening Families Protecting Children Framework for Practice and the Safe and Together Program.

Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services

Accept

The Queensland Government will continue to implement and embed the Safe and Together model, which aims to address domestic and family violence in the child protection context, and the Strengthening Families Protecting Children Framework for Practice (Framework for Practice) across the state. This will include providing staff with improved and ongoing training and tools to support adult victims of domestic and family violence to care protectively for their children, enhance recognition of children as victims of domestic and family violence in their own right, and increased emphasis on holding perpetrators accountable for their use of violence.

Future work to implement recommendation 22 of the Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce includes reviewing existing practice support, tools and resources, with a view to ensuring adequate consideration for:

- Ensuring children are safe and supported
- Perpetrator accountability
- Victim safety
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inclusion and leadership
- Intersections between mental health and drug and alcohol misuse

The Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services will also work with Leneen Forde Chair of Child Protection Research at Griffith

Government’s Response to the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board 2021-22 Annual Report

Recommendations	Lead Agency	Government Response
		<p>University, Dr Silke Meyer, a recognised DFV expert, to ensure contemporary understanding of DFV and perpetrator behaviour is influencing child protection policy, procedures and practice.</p>
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>That in implementing recommendation 24 from the Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce relating to evidence based and trauma-informed ongoing training and education, the Queensland Government considers the establishment of an independent funded training body to develop and deliver ongoing training and education.</p>	<p>Department of Justice and Attorney-General</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>The Queensland Government is developing an evidence-based and trauma-informed DFV training and change management framework in response to recommendation 23 of the Taskforce Report One.</p> <p>The Queensland Government is also exploring options to best implement and embed training and education for all frontline and other relevant staff across government, as well as funded non-government agency staff effectively and efficiently in response to recommendation 24 of the Taskforce Report One.</p> <p>In exploring implementation options, the Queensland Government will explore if an independent funded training body is required and appropriate to develop and deliver ongoing training and education in line with the Framework, once it has been finalised.</p>

Government's Response to the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board 2021-22 Annual Report

Recommendations	Lead Agency	Government Response
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>That in implementing recommendation 23 from the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce relating to the development of a consistent, evidence-based and trauma informed framework to support training and education, the Queensland Government considers the importance of understanding, recognising and responding to escalation in risk.</p>	<p>Department of Justice and Attorney-General</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>The Queensland Government commits to including guidance around understanding, recognising and responding to escalation of risk for victim-survivors of domestic and family violence, including children and young people, in the Domestic and Family Violence Training and Change Management Framework.</p> <p>The development of a whole of system Domestic and Family Violence Training and Change Management Framework relates to Taskforce Recommendation 23 Report One. In response to this recommendation, the Queensland Government is developing an evidence informed, culturally appropriate Training Framework to promote consistency in content and delivery of domestic and family violence training across government and community agencies. The Training Framework will address the issue of coercive control and support trauma informed service delivery.</p>
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>That the Queensland Government review the implementation of the Suicide Prevention Framework for working with people impacted by domestic and family violence with a view to strengthening and enhancing its use across specialist domestic and family violence services.</p>	<p>Department of Justice and Attorney-General</p> <p>Supporting Agency: Queensland Health</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>The Queensland Government will work with DFV sector stakeholders to strengthen and enhance a whole of system approach to addressing suicide risk in DFV responses. The implementation of the Suicide Prevention Framework will be reviewed with a view to exploring options for increasing its awareness and consistent use.</p>

Government's Response to the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board 2021-22 Annual Report

Recommendations	Lead Agency	Government Response
<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>That in implementing recommendation 18 of the from the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce relating to the further rollout of High-Risk Teams, the Queensland Government ensure High-Risk Teams are able to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including by considering an enhanced and formal role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.</p>	<p>Department of Justice and Attorney-General</p> <p>Supporting Agency: Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>The Queensland Government supports the need to improve the cultural capability of High Risk Teams (HRTs) to ensure they better serve the needs of diverse communities. In implementing Recommendation 18 of the Taskforce's Report One, the Queensland Government continues to roll out integrated service system responses and will establish new HRTs in three locations.</p> <p>A key element of all new HRTs will be the addition of a First Nations Cultural Advisor role to provide culturally informed and culturally appropriate responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by DFV. The First Nations Cultural Advisors will work closely with the Positive Relationship Cultural Connectors (employed by Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts) to enhance the cultural capability of the HRT and integrated service responses more broadly.</p>

Government's Response to the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board 2021-22 Annual Report

Recommendations	Lead Agency	Government Response
<p>Recommendation 10</p> <p>That the Queensland Government continue to support and establish High-Risk Teams (HRTs) across the State, and that agencies involved in the HRTs continue to enhance integration, protocols, assessments and responses to hold perpetrators to account and to support victim-survivors.</p>	<p>Department of Justice and Attorney-General</p> <p>Supporting agency: Queensland Police Service</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>The Queensland Government has committed to establishing three new HRTs over four years from 2022-23 to 2025-26. The Integrated Service Systems Oversight Committee (ISSOC), the multi-agency governance group responsible for overseeing and strengthening integrated service responses, will continue to explore and enact options for enhancing integration, protocols, assessments and responses to hold persons using violence to account and to better support victim-survivors.</p>