

Government Response to the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board 2019-20 Annual Report

Established under the *Coroners Act 2003*, the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board (the Board) plays an important role in reviewing domestic and family violence (DFV)-related deaths (including suicides) to identify patterns, trends and risk factors and make recommendations to improve legislation, policies, practices and services to prevent, or reduce the likelihood of, future DFV-related deaths.

The Board was established 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*).

Since 2015-16 the Queensland Government has committed more than \$600 million towards ending domestic and family violence. While much has been achieved as a result of the reforms undertaken since 2015, deaths that occur in the context of DFV continue in Queensland, and we must do all we can to learn from the systemic reviews undertaken by the Board.

The 2019-20 Annual Report is the Board's fourth report and was provided to Government on 30 December 2020, with a three-month extension granted due to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this report, the Board has made **nine recommendations** based on the collation of all 87 reviews of DFV related homicides and suicides undertaken during the first three years of the Board's operation, and highlights the primary issues that it has identified over that time, such as:

- recognising and responding to primary victims of DFV, and identifying the person most in need of protection;
- the impact of DFV on children and young people as victims in their own right; and
- patterns of abuse, risk and harm with a particular focus on identifying high risk perpetrators.

The Government supports the Board's recommendations to support system responses to DFV through extending current and planned activities, which have been identified as part of two broad themes: training and knowledge building and perpetrator responses.

Queensland Government agencies are already progressing new training and reviews of existing training for frontline services including health workers and clinicians, police, and domestic and family violence sector workers. This work will be reviewed to include the Board's findings and recommendations.

The Queensland Government will engage with peak professional bodies whose members may come into contact with people who experience or perpetrate DFV, to promote resources and training and encourage them to communicate these and support their members in building the knowledge base of these professionals (such as psychologists, GPs and allied health workers).

Similarly, the Queensland Government has already commenced work on an Integrated Service Response Multi-agency work plan which will strengthen the implementation and application of the DFV information



sharing provisions amongst government and non-government agencies permitted to share information under Part 5A of the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012*.

Perpetrator interventions are a focus of the Board's recommendations and the Queensland Government notes that there is still much work to do to build the capacity and capability of this sector, and strengthen responses to perpetrators of DFV, holding them to account and helping them to change their abusive behaviour. The Government accepts the Board's calls for the development of a comprehensive system-wide strategy for addressing all perpetrators of DFV and will work to develop a long-term framework to guide Queensland's response to perpetrators over coming years.

The Queensland Government will also review and evaluate a new online perpetrator intervention program to consider its effectiveness and broader application, particularly in terms of service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, and in terms of improving the reach of such programs into rural and remote parts of Queensland.

Queensland Corrective Services will also review its existing policies that minimise the risk of perpetrators in Queensland correctional centres further perpetrating against their victims, and consider what additional measures may be required to protect victim survivors.

The Queensland Government notes that the Board's report was released prior to the announcement of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce in March 2022. This Taskforce, led by the Honourable Margaret McMurdo AC, has two primary points of focus:

- Consideration of how best to legislate against coercive control as a form of domestic and family violence and the need for a new offence of "commit domestic violence" – report due by October 2021; and
- Review of other areas of women's experience in the criminal justice system – report due by March 2022.

The Taskforce's work may have implications for the implementation of the Governments' response to the Board's recommendations. It is not yet known what the broader impact of the Taskforce's findings may be on other recommendations.

The Queensland Government continues to acknowledge the important work of the Board and its important role in supporting Government's commitment to ending the cycle of violence. The ultimate goal is to prevent these senseless, tragic deaths.

The Queensland Government acknowledges the victims, families and other loved ones who continue to live with domestic and family violence and the long-term impacts of domestic and family violence-related deaths.

We continue to be committed to working with the community to end domestic and family violence in Queensland.

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<p>Recommendation 1</p> <p>That the Queensland Government review all domestic and family violence training delivered to frontline services who may come into contact with victims and their children or perpetrators of domestic and family violence, with a focus on identifying opportunities to embed trauma-awareness and trauma-informed service delivery. This review should be informed by the learnings from the Board's systemic report of the deaths of 'George' and 'Jack' and contain dedicated modules on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> trauma-awareness and trauma-informed practice; the gendered nature of domestic and family violence; common tactics used by perpetrators; and culturally appropriate service delivery. 	<p>Department of Justice and Attorney-General</p> <p>Queensland Police Service</p> <p>Queensland Corrective Services</p> <p>Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (Child Safety, Youth Justice)</p> <p>Queensland Health (including Queensland Ambulance Service)</p> <p>Department of Education</p> <p>Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>Significant work has been undertaken and remains ongoing in training Queensland Government staff across frontline service delivery agencies that routinely come into contact with victims and/or perpetrators of domestic and family violence and their children to recognise, respond and make appropriate referrals.</p> <p>This recommendation asks the Queensland Government to take this training further, by ensuring that training incorporates trauma-awareness and trauma-informed practice, the gendered nature of DFV, common tactics used by perpetrators, and culturally appropriate service delivery.</p> <p>The Queensland Government agencies named as lead agencies against this recommendation will ensure the elements outlined in this recommendation are included in any new or revised domestic and family violence training delivered to frontline Queensland Government staff.</p> <p>Agencies will consider opportunities for joint training and sharing best practice across services (for example, through integrated service responses and high risk teams).</p> <p>Consideration will be given to ensuring these elements are also incorporated in policies and practice standards wherever appropriate.</p> <p>WorkUp Queensland, the domestic, family, sexual and women's health and wellbeing capacity and capability building service, delivers trauma-informed domestic and family violence training and professional development</p>

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		<p>opportunities to funded domestic and family violence specialist services on an ongoing basis. This includes training concerning the gendered nature of domestic and family violence, perpetrator behaviors and culturally appropriate service delivery. The resources and training developed through WorkUP Queensland may be able to be used to inform the review and development of training for government frontline staff.</p> <p>The Department of Justice and Attorney-General, and other agencies as appropriate, will liaise with peak professional bodies for generalist services who may come into contact with victims and their children or perpetrators of domestic and family violence to request they support staff to undertake domestic and family violence training, inclusive of the elements of this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2</p> <p>That the Queensland Government consider, as a matter of priority, how domestic and family violence training can be delivered to all frontline Queensland Health workers, to effectively and sustainably build and maintain domestic and family violence literacy across the secondary and tertiary healthcare systems.</p>	Queensland Health	<p>Accept</p> <p>Queensland Health is rolling out the Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Specialist Health Workforce Program (the Program) across the state. The primary functions of the Program are to build capacity within Hospitals and Health Services to respond safely and appropriately to DFV suspicions and disclosures. Capacity building will occur through the development and delivery of locally-tailored training opportunities that are accessible by frontline health clinicians across facilities and clinical streams. The Program will be externally evaluated and supported by a Central Coordinator and a Community of Practice.</p>

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<p>Recommendation 3</p> <p>That the Queensland Government, as a matter of priority, review and enhance domestic and family violence training and resources to ensure that all frontline Queensland Health workers, particularly those in the areas of sexual health, mental health and alcohol and other drug services, understand domestic and family violence perpetrator tactics, complex trauma presentations, and the link between suicidality and experiences of domestic and family violence.</p>	Queensland Health	<p>Accept</p> <p>Queensland Health will review and update its DFV Toolkit of training resources to include information to support understanding of perpetrator tactics, the impacts of relational trauma and the links between suicidality and experiences of DFV.</p> <p>During 2021-22 and 2022-23, Hospitals and Health Services will prioritise the delivery of the DFV Toolkit of training resources to the frontline workforce within their sexual health, mental health and alcohol and drug services.</p>
<p>Recommendation 4</p> <p>That the Queensland Government request that universities and peak professional bodies incorporate evidence-based domestic and family violence education into professional undergraduate courses in key frontline areas, such as psychology, social work, law, criminology and health.</p>	Department of Justice and Attorney-General (OFWVP)	<p>Accept</p> <p>In response to the Board's Recommendation 9 from their 2016-17 Annual Report, the Queensland Government liaised with relevant peak bodies to recommend ongoing domestic and family violence awareness training for registered practitioners.</p> <p>This recommendation seeks to take that work to the next stage, by ensuring that students receive relevant education before they commence practice in areas such as psychology, social work, law, criminology and health.</p> <p>In response to this recommendation, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General will liaise with Queensland universities to request they review their undergraduate courses in areas such as psychology, social work, law, criminology and health to determine the extent to which</p>

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		these courses incorporate evidence-based domestic and family violence education, and consider introducing these elements into courses where they are not already in place.
<p>Recommendation 5</p> <p>That the Queensland Government increase the awareness and consistent use of the existing information sharing provisions in Part 5A of the <i>Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012</i> by all agencies empowered to share or receive information under the Act. The Queensland Government should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that all prescribed entities under the Act have internal guidelines, processes and procedures in place regarding the existing information sharing provisions to support and promote their use in relevant circumstances, and that the information sharing provisions are incorporated into existing training for frontline officers. explore opportunities to ensure that non-government organisations who are empowered to share or receive information under Part 5A of the Act have processes and procedures in place regarding information sharing; develop standardised processes and procedures that can be provided to organisations as a template for adoption within their organisation and supported by relevant training; and liaise with the relevant peak professional bodies of services who are empowered to share information under Part 5A of the Act, such as family lawyers, psychologists and GPs, and ask that they promote the use of these provisions to their membership, in appropriate circumstances. 	Department of Justice and Attorney-General (OFWVP)	<p>Accept</p> <p>The Domestic and Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines were developed and published in 2017 as required by section 169M of the <i>Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012</i> (the DFVP Act). Significant training was rolled from 2017, particularly to agencies involved in High Risk Teams and integrated service responses, to embed the use of the information sharing provisions.</p> <p>Following the completion of the Integrated Service Response Trial Evaluation Report in 2019, a Multi-agency work plan was developed to guide implementation of the evaluation's recommendations.</p> <p>This work plan includes an action for all agencies (government and funded specialist domestic and family violence services) involved in the integrated service response model in funded locations to align their internal information sharing policies, procedures and practices to ensure consistency with the DFVP Act. This also includes the promotion of consistent state-wide information sharing policies, procedures and practices. This work is currently underway.</p> <p>To further support this work, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General will develop standard template processes and procedures to share with agencies who are empowered</p>

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		to share or receive information under Part 5A of the Act have processes and procedures in place regarding information sharing. These standard templates will be designed as resources that can be adapted as required to individual agencies' contexts. Peak bodies for key non-government organisations and other peak professional bodies will also be encouraged to promote relevant resources and use of the information sharing provisions to their memberships.
<p>Recommendation 6</p> <p>That the Queensland Government conduct a system-wide review of the impact of the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic on victims of domestic and family violence and consider maintaining any service delivery adaptations that have improved safety for victims and their children.</p>	Department of Justice and Attorney-General (OFWVP)	<p>Accept</p> <p>To support the domestic, family and sexual violence sector to respond to the impacts of COVID-19, the Queensland and Australian governments provided funding injections to the sector to enable them to increase capacity and implement service innovations and adaptations to continue to deliver services despite social distancing and lockdown requirements. For example, many services provided counselling online and via video or phone call.</p> <p>Similar innovations and adaptations were implemented by frontline services such as Courts Queensland, who introduced the use of technology such as e-signatures, verbal confirmation of declarations over the phone, and other virtual applications to deliver services. Temporary legislative changes were also implemented to support tenants experiencing domestic and family violence to leave unsafe housing environments without financial liability, which are now intended to be made permanent via a Bill introduced to Queensland Parliament in June 2021.</p>

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		<p>The Department of Justice and Attorney-General is continuously monitoring and engaging with the DFV sector to understand the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on victims, perpetrators and service providers, and what service delivery adjustments or innovations may have longer-term benefits. The Department will continue this work as part of its response to Recommendation 6, liaising with other relevant agencies to enable a system-wide understanding of the impacts of the responses to COVID-19 on victims of DFV.</p> <p>This includes continuing the formal evaluation of a new online perpetrator intervention program trial, which commenced in early 2021, and review of the effectiveness and future application of adjustments made to the Keeping Women Safe in their homes initiative during COVID-19.</p> <p>The Department is also leading Queensland's input to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's national report on the impact of COVID-19 on domestic, family and sexual violence service responses, expected in mid-2021. This report may have relevance for the response to this recommendation.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7</p> <p>That the Queensland Government review the mechanisms through which prisoners subject to a domestic violence protection order may contravene these orders while in custody in Queensland correctional centres, such as through the Prisoner Telephone System, mail and visits, with a view to identifying and addressing existing gaps that allow this to occur.</p>	Queensland Corrective Services	<p>Accept</p> <p>Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) is committed to the prevention and elimination of domestic and family violence by holding perpetrators to account for their actions.</p> <p>QCS will review its existing policies to minimise risk of prisoners contravening domestic and family violence orders while in Queensland correctional centres and consider whether any additional measures (including legislative</p>

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		amendments) are required to better protect victims of domestic and family violence from being re-victimised by prisoners.
<p>Recommendation 8</p> <p>That the Queensland Government ask a suitable body, such as the Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council or the Queensland Law Reform Commission, to examine and provide advice on options to improve supervision and monitoring of high risk and recidivist perpetrators of domestic and family violence.</p>	<p>Department of Justice and Attorney-General (SPLS)</p> <p>Supporting agency: Queensland Corrective Services</p> <p>Supporting agency: Queensland Police Service</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>The Government notes this issue is being examined by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. The Taskforce was established in March 2021 to independently examine and report on its findings and recommendations in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to best legislate against coercive control as a form of domestic and family violence and the need for a new offence of "commit domestic violence" by October 2021; and • in relation to other areas of women's experience in the criminal justice system by March 2022. <p>The Government will consider whether the recommendation requires any further consideration following receipt of the Taskforce's reports.</p>
<p>Recommendation 9</p> <p>That the Queensland Government develop a standalone, system-wide strategy for responding to <i>all</i> perpetrators of domestic and family violence, regardless of their level of risk, with a focus on early detection, intervention, accountability and prevention. Any strategy should:</p> <p>a. consider the need for legislative and policy reforms to enhance mechanisms to hold perpetrators to account across a range of government and non-government services, including specialist</p>	<p>Lead agency: Department of Justice and Attorney-General (OFWVP)</p> <p>Supporting agency: Queensland Police Service</p>	<p>Accept</p> <p>Continuing to address and strengthen responses to perpetrators to lower the incidence and severity of domestic and family violence is a priority for the Queensland Government, and at a national level.</p> <p>Significant work has been undertaken in this area since the release of the <i>Not Now, Not Ever</i> report, including a more</p>

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<p>domestic and family violence services, police, court services, corrections, child protection services and public and private health and mental services;</p> <p>b. include measures to support early intervention, prevention and the accessibility and availability of perpetrator intervention programs and other programs or services addressing co-occurring issues such as mental health, harmful substance use and/or homelessness;</p> <p>c. be informed by research and the outcome of the advice referred to in Recommendation 8; and</p> <p>d. be developed in consultation with specialist support services, Elders and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and other stakeholders, to ensure there are no unintended consequences.</p>	<p>Supporting agency: Queensland Corrective Services</p> <p>Supporting Agency: Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs</p> <p>Supporting Agency: Queensland Health</p>	<p>than doubling of funding for perpetrator intervention programs since 2015-16.</p> <p>The Department of Justice and Attorney-General, in close collaboration with Queensland Police Service and Queensland Corrective Services and with support from other relevant agencies, commits to the development of a strategic, long-term framework to guide the Queensland Government's work in strengthening responses to all perpetrators of domestic and family violence. This will align with the <i>Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016-26</i> and its action plans.</p> <p>Concerted, long-term effort across government is required to fully address the intent of this recommendation, including both specific DFV perpetrator interventions and services to address co-occurring issues such as mental health, harmful substance use and/or homelessness.</p> <p>The linkages between DFV and child protection will also be noted as part of the framework in light of the Board's findings which confirm the extensive harm children experience from DFV, with an awareness of their vulnerability to be built into the way the framework intervenes with perpetrators. Developmental and age-appropriate strategies will be considered for young people, noting that they can be both perpetrators and victims of DFV.</p> <p>Agencies note that any legislative and policy reforms (part A of this recommendation) and the advice referred to in recommendation 8 (part C of this recommendation) may be influenced by the work of the Women's Safety and Justice</p>

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		<p>Taskforce, which is due to report on coercive control in October 2021 and on its examination of broader issues for women in the criminal justice system in March 2022.</p> <p>Similarly, a review of the operation of the <i>Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012</i> will also commence in this term of government. The proposed framework will be responsive to any relevant outcomes of these initiatives as they progress.</p> <p>In developing the framework, the Queensland Government acknowledges ongoing challenges such as the limited national and international evidence base regarding what works to reduce and prevent perpetration of domestic and family violence, and ongoing work required to increase the capacity and capability of the perpetrator intervention sector.</p>

End