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Mid North Coast Domestic and Family Violence Service Mapping: Part One - Overview

DEVELOPED IN PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN MID COAST COMMUNITIES
AND DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

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Section 1: Introduction

The Mid North Coast Domestic and Family Violence Service Mapping project originated from a series of workshops held on the Mid North Coast in 2014 to discuss current priorities and issues for women affected by domestic and family violence (DFV). The workshops were held in Nambucca, Coffs Harbour and Kempsey, as these areas were prioritised under the Foundation for Regional and Rural Renewal (FRRR) Funding (due to the high levels of DFV being reported there).

Mapping key transition points, including services for women escaping domestic violence is a priority of the Mid North Coast District Child and Family Planning Group.¹ This group will use this document to inform future directions around planning and funding for DFV services.

This Part One document gives a background overview of the broader context of the current domestic and family violence issues and policy.

Part Two provides the local context of DFV responses on the Mid North Coast, broken down into four documents covering five local government areas (LGAs):

1. Coffs Harbour LGA (Part Two)
2. Port Macquarie LGA (Part Three)
3. Kempsey LGA (Part Four)
4. Bellingen and Nambucca LGAs (combined).(Part Five)

Each LGA document (Parts Two to Part Five) lists:

- the prevalence of DFV in the LGA
- identified DFV issues in the LGA
- the local DV Monitoring Committee and their campaigns in the LGA
- services and programs to support people who have been impacted by DFV in the LGA (Please note that it is out of scope for this project to determine the capacity of these services and programs to service community needs, and that it is recognised that they will have varying capacities).

¹ Members of this group are representatives from NGOs and Government agencies across the Mid North Coast who work with children, families and are in management or leadership positions. Meetings are bi-monthly.

Section 2: Definition issues: what is domestic and family violence (DFV)?

An aim of the NSW government (2014) *It Stops Here Framework for Reform* ('It Stops Here') is 'to promote a common understanding of, and response to DFV (such as a common definition)². The It Stops Here definition (p. 7) is:

Domestic and family violence includes any behaviour, in an intimate or family relationship, which is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling, causing a person to live in fear. It is usually manifested as part of a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour. An intimate relationship refers to people who are (or have been) in an intimate partnership whether or not the relationship involves or has involved a sexual relationship, i.e. married or engaged to be married, separated, divorced, de facto partners (whether of the same or different sex), couples promised to each other under cultural or religious tradition, or who are dating.

A family relationship has a broader definition and includes people who are related to one another through blood, marriage or de facto partnerships, adoption and fostering relationships, sibling and extended family relationships. It includes the full range of kinship ties in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) communities, extended family relationships, and constructs of family within lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ) communities. ...The behaviours that may constitute domestic and family violence include:

- physical violence including physical assault or abuse
- sexual assault and other sexually abusive or coercive behaviour
- emotional or psychological abuse including verbal abuse and threats of violence
- economic abuse; for example denying a person reasonable financial autonomy or financial support
- stalking; for example harassment, intimidation or coercion of the other person's family in order to cause fear or ongoing harassment, including through the use of electronic communication or social media

² NSW Government (2014) *It Stops Here. Standing Together to End Domestic and Family Violence in NSW. The NSW Government's Domestic and Family Violence Framework for Reform*. Accessed via www.women.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0003/289461/lt_stops_here_final_Feb2014.pdf

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- kidnapping or deprivation of liberty, as well as unreasonably preventing the other person from making or keeping connections with her or his family or kin, friends,
- faith or culture
- damage to property irrespective of whether the victim owns the property
- causing injury or death to an animal irrespective of whether the victim owns the animal.

It is notable that the terms 'Domestic Violence' and 'Family Violence' are often used interchangeably with the currently preferred term, which is 'Domestic and Family Violence' (DFV). This preference is due to it being more comprehensive and that it more accurately reflects its potential impact, since it not only covers intimate relationships, but wider associations.

Youth Violence in the Home (YVH) (also known as Adolescent Violence in the Home (AVITH)) is also recognised as a form of domestic violence and it is probably important to include it in the current definition as well, since, as Broadhead & Francis (2015, p.6) argue:

Increasingly, Youth Violence in the Home (YVH) is being tabled at interagency meetings of social service organisations that work with families dealing with violence and abuse issues. Notably, many interagency representatives describe YVH as widespread and on the increase. The specific prevalence of the issue of YVH is difficult to ascertain as parents may well be willing to report their child's victimisation, but may be reticent to report their child's perpetration of violence in the home due to the fear they may be experiencing along with feelings of shame, guilt and self-criticism of failing as a parent³.

Section 3: Australian government DFV response

3.1 The National Plan

Commonwealth, state and territory governments are working together, with the community to implement the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022'* (the 'National Plan'). The National Plan is a 12-year strategy with a vision that Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities. The National Plan is working towards a

³ Broadhead S. and Francis R. (2015), *The Making of Good Men and Women. Summary Report: Responding to Youth Violence in the Home and its Harmful Impacts on Families and Communities in Western Australia*. Women's Health and Family Services. Accessed via: <http://www.whfs.org.au/files/userfiles/11898%20-%20The%20making%20of%20good%20men%20and%20women%20reportONLINE.PDF>

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vision that by 2022 Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities and a target of achieving a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children.

Creating this change takes a long time. It requires attitudinal and behavioural change at societal, institutional and individual levels, as well as ongoing and highly complex reforms to systems and services. The National Plan sets out six overarching 'National Plan outcomes' for all governments to work towards over its 12-year lifespan. Each outcome has an accompanying success measure that sets out how the outcome's success will be measured over the life of the National Plan.

Table: National plan outcomes and success measures

National Plan outcome	Success measure	Data source
1. Communities are safe and free from violence	Increased intolerance of violence against women	National Survey on Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women
2. Relationships are respectful	Improved knowledge, skills and behaviour of respectful relationships by young people	National Survey on Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women
3. Indigenous communities are strengthened	Reduction in the proportion of Indigenous women who consider that family violence, assault and sexual assault are problems for their communities and neighbourhoods	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
	Increased proportions of Indigenous women who are able to have their say within community on important issues including violence	
4. Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence	Increased access to and responsiveness of services for victims of domestic/family violence and sexual assault	Personal Safety Survey and administrative data
5. Justice responses are effective	Increased rates of women reporting domestic violence and sexual assault to police	Personal Safety Survey and administrative data
6. Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account	A decrease in repeated partner victimisation	Personal Safety Survey and administrative data

3.2 Increased Australian government DFV funding

In September 2015, the Australian Government announced a \$100 million package of measures to provide a safety net for women and children at high risk of experiencing violence⁴. The package will improve frontline support and services, leverage innovative technologies to keep women safe, and provide education resources to help change community attitudes to violence and abuse.

Immediate practical actions to keep women safe include:

- \$12 million to trial with states the use of innovative technology to keep women safe (such as GPS trackers for perpetrators), with funding to be matched by states and territories.
- \$5 million for safer technology, including working with telecommunications companies to distribute safe phones to women, and with the eSafety Commissioner to develop a resource package about online safety for women, including for women from CALD communities.
- \$17 million to keep women safe in their homes by expanding successful initiatives like the Safer in the Home program to install CCTV cameras and other safety equipment, and a grant to the Salvation Army to work with security experts to conduct risk assessments on victim's homes, help change their locks and scan for bugs.
- \$5 million to expand 1800RESPECT, the national telephone and online counselling and information service, to ensure more women can get support.
- \$2 million increased funding for MensLine for tools and resources to support perpetrators not to reoffend.
- Up to \$15 million to enable police in Queensland to better respond to domestic violence in remote communities and for measures that reduce reoffending by Indigenous perpetrators.
- \$3.6 million for the Cross Border Domestic Violence Intelligence Desk to share information on victims and perpetrators who move around the cross border region of WA, SA and the NT.

Immediate measures to improve support and services for women will include increased training for frontline staff and trials of integrated service models:

- \$14 million to expand the DV-alert training program to police, social workers, emergency department staff and community workers to better support women, and work with the College of General Practitioners to develop and deliver specialised training to GPs across the country.
- \$15 million to establish specialised domestic violence units to provide access to coordinated legal, social work and cultural liaison services for women in a single location, and allow legal services to work with local hospitals, including for women from CALD communities and women living in regional/remote areas.

⁴ www.malcolmturnbull.com.au/media/release-womens-safety-package-to-stoptheviolence

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- \$5 million for local women’s case workers, to coordinate support for women, including housing, safety and budgeting services.
- \$1.4 million to extend the Community Engagement Police Officers in remote Indigenous communities in the Northern territory.
- Up to \$1.1 million to help remote Indigenous communities prevent and better respond to the incidence of domestic violence through targeted support.

Section 4 NSW government DFV response

4.1 It Stops Here Reforms

According to NSW Health (2014) the ‘It Stops Here: Standing together to end domestic and family violence reforms’ are ‘set to improve the way government agencies and non-government organisations respond to and prevent domestic and family violence across NSW’ through ‘an integrated and coordinated State-wide system to ensure that the safety of victims and their children is paramount, by strengthening our approach to violence prevention; changing the way we deliver services and support to victims of violence; and delivering programs and services that hold perpetrators accountable and reduce re-offending’⁵.

The foundation for these reforms is based on the importance of building a shared policy definition. While it is recognised that women in intimate partner relationships are the group in overwhelming need, all victims need protection, and while DFV is predominantly perpetrated by men against women, men can be victims too. It is also important to recognise the impact on other family members and the occurrence in same-sex relationships (NSW Government 2014). There is also a recognition that there are more vulnerable groups (such as ATSI, CALD and LGBTIQ communities) and individuals (children and younger and pregnant women) (NSW Government 2014, p. 8).

The overall outcomes of the DFV Framework for Reform (NSW Government 2014, p. 6) are that:

1. Domestic and family violence is prevented
2. Domestic and family violence is identified early
3. Victims are safe and supported to recover
4. Perpetrators stop using violence
5. A supported, professional and effective sector is developed

These outcomes will be achieved through five priority elements (NSW Government 2014, p. 6):

1. A strategic approach to prevention and early intervention
2. Streamlined referral pathways to secure victims’ safety and recovery
3. Accessible, flexible, person-centred service responses that make the best use of resources
4. A strong, skilled and capable workforce

⁵ [www.women.nsw.gov.au/ data/assets/file/0003/289461/It_stops_Here_final_Feb2014.pdf](http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/file/0003/289461/It_stops_Here_final_Feb2014.pdf)

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5. A strengthened criminal justice system response

It Stops Here (2014, p. 13) outlines the implementation of the framework in three distinct phases:

1. The first phase comprises the Domestic Violence Justice Strategy (see 2.6 below).
2. The second phase is the establishment of new referral pathways, in addition to a skills strategy to support the workforce to implement the DFV Framework (see 2.7 below).
3. The third and final phase involves service realignment and the implementation of evidence-based partnership projects.

4.1.1 It Stops Here Progress Report

In 2015, the NSW Government published the *It Stops Here Progress Report Card on Year One of the implementation of the domestic and family violence reforms*⁶.

4.2 NSW Domestic Violence Justice Strategy

The NSW Attorney General and Justice (2012) *NSW Domestic Violence Justice Strategy: improving the NSW criminal justice system's response to domestic violence 2013-2017* ('DVJS') developed in parallel to the It Stops Here reforms⁷. DVJS aims to strengthen the criminal justice response to domestic and family violence, for example, by holding perpetrators accountable and preventing re-offending. The DVJS comprised the first phase in the implementation of the DFV Framework outlined in the It Stops Here reforms.

The DVJS is an operational framework to be adopted by justice agencies in NSW which outlines the approaches and standards to implement to improve the criminal justice system's response to domestic violence, with its main objectives being making victims safer, holding people causing hurt and harm accountable and preventing domestic violence from reoccurring. This is to be accomplished through agency cooperation to provide an effective and integrated response.

The DVJS (Attorney General and Justice 2012, p. 3).clearly defines expected outcomes for those who are causing hurt and harm and those who are experiencing it, namely:

1. Victim's safety is secured immediately and the risk of further violence is reduced.
2. Victims have confidence in the justice system and are empowered to participate.
3. Victims have the support they need.
4. The court process for domestic violence matters is efficient, fair and accessible.
5. Abusive behaviour is stopped and perpetrators are held to account.
6. Perpetrators change their behaviour and re-offending is reduced or eliminated.

4.3 It Stops Here: Safer Pathway (Safer Pathway)

It Stops Here DFV reforms included the development of Safer Pathway and an accompanying Information Sharing Protocol as well as other resources. 'Under Safer Pathway, victims are placed at

⁶ www.women.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/file/0003/335388/It-Stops-Here-Progress-Report-Card.pdf

⁷ NSW Attorney General and Justice (2012) *The NSW Domestic Violence Justice Strategy: improving the NSW criminal justice system's response to domestic violence 2013-2017*. Accessed via www.crimeprevention.nsw.gov.au/domesticviolence/Documents/Publications/jag2391_dv_strategy_book_online.pdf

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the centre of the system and are provided with more effective and efficient responses, more integrated service support, to help them recover from domestic violence and to prevent the escalation of abuse⁸. The key components of Safer Pathway are:

1. A Domestic Violence Safety Assessment Tool (DVSAT) to better and consistently identify the level of threat to victims (see 4.3.1 below)
2. A Central Referral Point to electronically manage and monitor referrals
3. A state-wide network of Local Coordination Points that facilitate local responses and provide victims with case coordination and support
4. Safety Action Meetings in which members develop Safety Action Plans for victims at serious threat
5. Information sharing legislation that allows service providers to share information about victims and perpetrators so that victims do not have to retell their story multiple times, to hold perpetrators accountable and to promote an integrated response for victims at serious threat (see 4.4 below).

4.3.1 Domestic Violence Safety Assessment Tool

A consistent response, early identification and connection to the most appropriate domestic violence support services for victims of threat are the key underpinnings of Safer Pathways.

In support of this, the Domestic Violence Safety Assessment Tool (DVSAT) is a standard assessment tool for services providers (with training on the use of) which identifies the level of threat to victims of domestic violence and prioritises victims at serious threat^{9,10}.

NB. Where children have been identified as victims or have witnessed domestic and family violence, the service provider should refer to the mandatory reporter guide as the assessment tool for management of child victims.

⁸ www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0013/301180/Overview_Safer-Pathway.pdf

⁹ www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0003/301179/DVSAT_guide.pdf

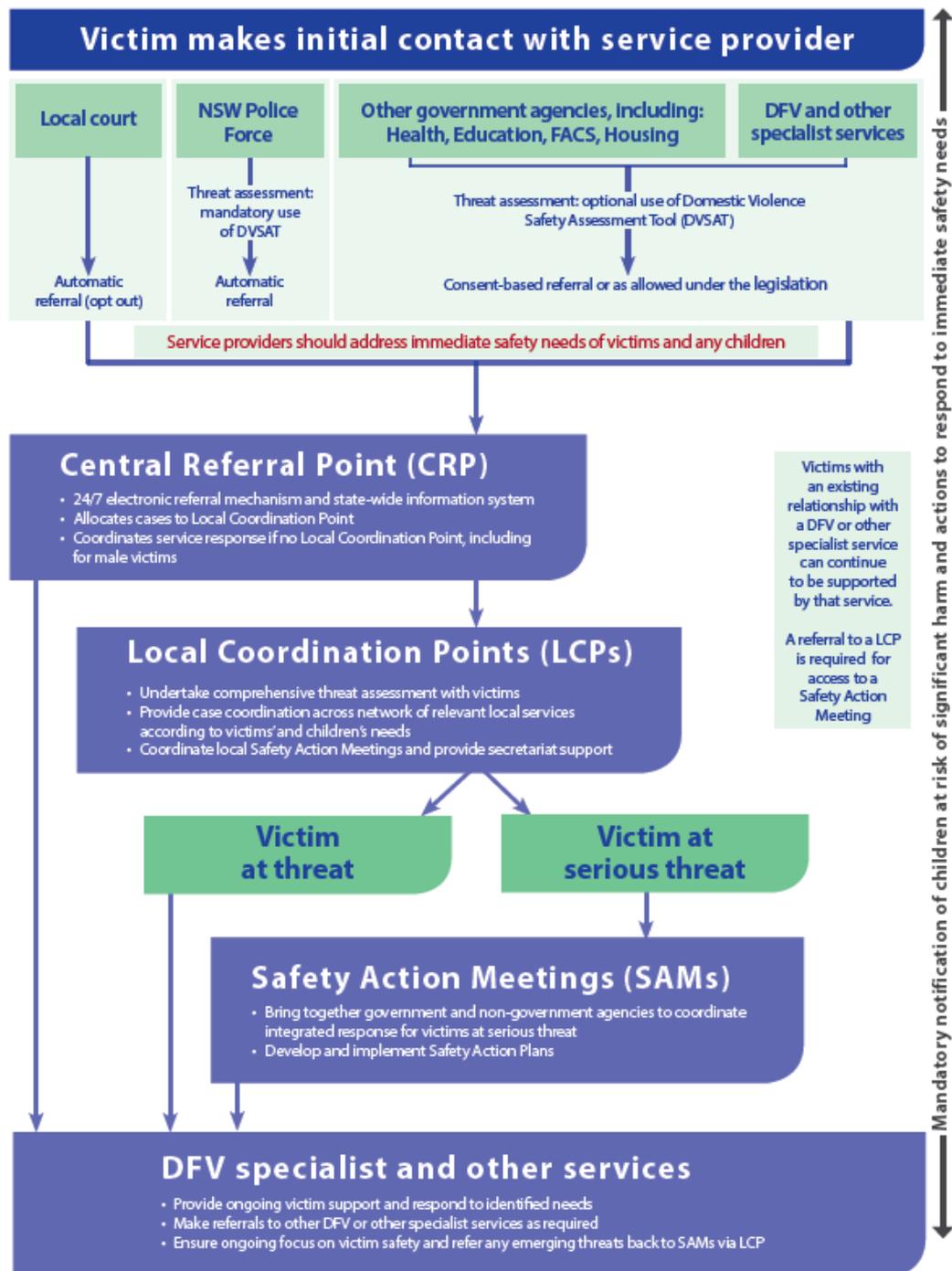
¹⁰ www.domesticviolence.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/file/0020/301178/DVSAT.pdf

4.3.2 Safer Pathway Service Delivery Map

This service delivery map links the key components of It Stops Here Safer Pathway to show how victims are supported in a seamless service system response¹¹.

Safer Pathway service delivery map

Part 13A of the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* and Information Sharing Protocol Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and other relevant legislation



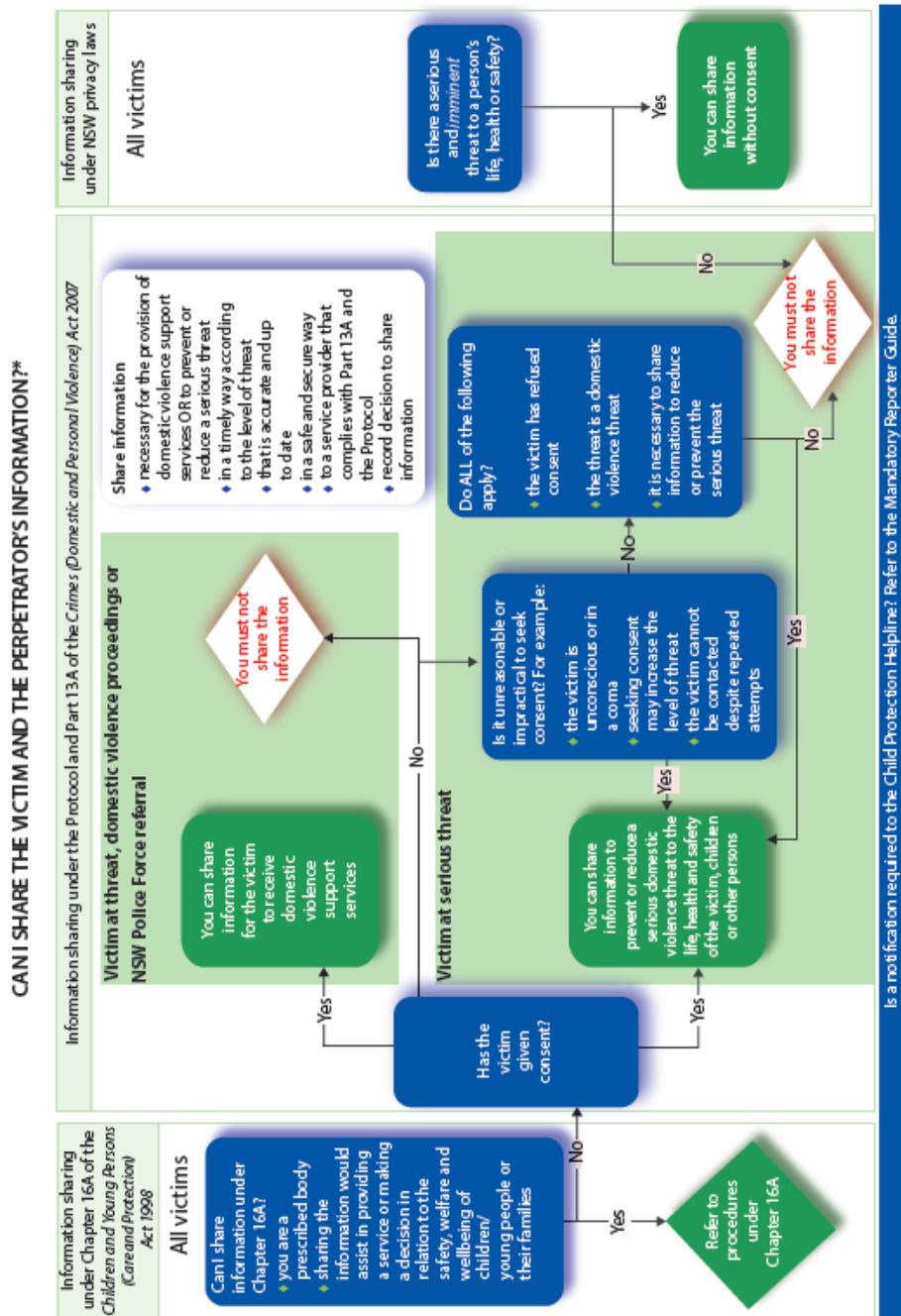
¹¹ www.crimeprevention.nsw.gov.au/domesticviolence/Documents/It%20stop/Tools/1_S_service_delivery_map.pdf

4.4 Information Sharing Process flowchart

This flowchart outlines the relevant legislation to illustrate how and when service providers can share information¹².

Information sharing process flowchart

Part 13A of the *Crimes (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007* and related Protocol
 Chapter 16A of the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and other relevant legislation



¹² www.crimeprevention.nsw.gov.au/domesticviolence/Documents/It%20stop/Tools/2_Info_sharing_process_flowchart.pdf

4.5 NSW government DFV response: increased funding

In October 2015, the NSW government announced a \$60 million funding package targeting domestic violence perpetrators and supporting victims, stating "This is in addition to the \$148.5 million over four years that government committed for specialist domestic and family violence services 2015-16 budget. The package augments the government's existing It Stops Here DFV reforms. It responds to the Premier's priority to reduce reoffending by 2019, and supports victims to escape and survive domestic and family violence' (Press release, p.2)¹³. In particular:

- An extra 24 police domestic violence liaison officers (DVLOs) will start work at local area commands across the state in early 2016;
- Almost \$20 million will be invested in behaviour change programs for domestic violence offenders who are at serious risk of reoffending. The programs focus on power and offenders' attitudes towards partners in relationships.
- \$20 million has been committed to women's refuges and homelessness services which will allow them to provide extra emergency accommodation and 24/7 on-call services.

Section 5: Research about vulnerable groups

5.1 AIFS research report

As part of the DFV Framework the Australian Institute for Family Studies (AIFS), undertook research targeting communities at risk published in the 2014 report *'Groups and communities at risk of domestic and family violence: A review and evaluation of domestic and family violence prevention and early intervention services focusing on at-risk groups and communities'*¹⁴.

The focus of the research is DFV prevention and early intervention activities aimed at several groups identified as being at greater risk of experiencing DFV and/or having difficulty accessing support services. These groups include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD), people who identify as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transsexual, Intersex and Queer (GLBTIQ), young women and women in regional, rural and remote (non-urban) communities.

Main findings and policy implications:

1. The gaps in DFV prevention and early intervention programs for at-risk groups and communities need to be addressed.
2. Universal and targeted prevention and early intervention approaches are both needed
3. DFV prevention and early intervention initiatives aimed at at-risk groups and communities need to be community driven

¹³ www.health.nsw.gov.au/news/Documents/20151014_05.pdf

¹⁴ http://www.women.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/file/0012/300621/PDF_4_Full_Report_At_risk_groups.pdf

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4. Programs that aim to empower women and educate them about their rights are critical to reducing DFV and need to be supported through policy and funding
5. Funding needs to be long-term and sustainable
6. Better evidence of the impact of DFV on at-risk groups is needed
7. DFV prevention and early intervention work in Australia is an emergent field and there is a need to build an evidence base about effective practice

DFV prevention and early intervention work in Australia exists within a dynamic policy environment and the move towards a coherent policy framework in NSW is positive and should be supported.

5.2 Other gaps

The difficulties of identifying and responding to DFV for people with disability are a gap that is beginning to be explored. People with disability were not identified by AIFS as a group at greater risk of experiencing DFV and/or having difficulty accessing support services. However, in practice, it is becoming evident that there are many issues. For example, the perpetrators of DFV against people with disability may be their carers. This can lead to issues for police about whether to remove a carer, as the person is unable to be left alone. There are issues for services like Specialist Family Violence Services in accommodating people with disabilities, as premises may not be disability accessible. This can also affect women trying to access accommodation support where they have children with disabilities.

Similar issues can affect older people. Elder abuse is a recognised emerging issue. It can include DFV.