



QUEENSLAND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES NETWORK (QDVSN)

QDVSN ISSUES PAPER

Issues for July – December 2017

QDVSN Statement of Purpose

Queensland Domestic Violence Service Network (QDVSN) is a network of Queensland regional Domestic Violence Services, the Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research and the Immigrant Women's Support Service.

- QDVSN works collaboratively and strategically to advance understanding of, and works to eliminate gender, structural, political, economic, legal and cultural inequalities and inequities which result in gender based violence in all its forms;
- Provide peer support, information sharing and debriefing within our membership;
- Be a change agent by providing education, a reference point and a collective voice to Government, non-government and member services on State and National issues relating to domestic and family violence.

In the spirit of enhancing information sharing and collaboration between our networks, QDVSN decided to distribute to other related and like networks and services, relevant issues arising from the QDVSN meetings. In addition, QDVSN recognizes that our networks are frequently responding to and discussing the same issues, and the strength that lies in coordinating and sharing information.

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Date Claimer – QDVSN is hosting a Two and a half day conference in Brisbane. Save the date - 8th May - 10th May 2018.

QDVSN is hosting a Two and a half day conference in Brisbane bringing experts from the US to Brisbane to share some great strategies and tools for collaborative work in the D&FV space. This excellent conference will support local, regional and state-based systems to strengthen coordination and collaboration, protect victim survivors and hold perpetrators accountable by presenting a variety of learnings as well as practical tools. It will offer timely and positive opportunities to break down barriers and develop relationships across sectors as well as assess possible partnerships and collaborative efforts to move forward with. The conference aims to be practical, experiential, useful and affordable. This conference will be useful especially if you are a part of an Integrated Response, starting and Integrated Response or have been hearing about Integrated Responses coming your way! The theme is ‘Lessons from Duluth and Beyond: Developing Coordinated Community Responses to Domestic and Family Violence in Australia Queensland’. We hope to see you there!

Information sharing without consent -

May 2017 brought some interesting changes to the D&FV space with new domestic and family violence information sharing provisions in Queensland being passed by Queensland Parliament in October 2016 and enacted in May 2017. The Department, acting on behalf of the Queensland Government, contracted Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) to develop the [Domestic and Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines](#) for sharing information without consent. The guidelines state that:

The Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 (the Act) (part 1 s4) states that “safety, protection and wellbeing of people who fear or experience domestic violence, including children, are paramount.” The Act (part 5A div 1 s169B) identifies the following key principles specific to information sharing:

a) whenever safe, possible and practical, a person’s consent should be obtained before—

- i. providing, or planning to provide, a service to the person*
- ii. disclosing personal information about the person to someone else*

b) because the safety, protection and wellbeing of people who fear or experience domestic violence are paramount, their safety and protection takes precedence over the principle mentioned in Paragraph (a)

c) before sharing information about a person with someone else, an entity should consider whether disclosing the information is likely to adversely affect the safety of the person or another person.

The above principles mean that the safety and protection of victims takes precedence over gaining a perpetrator’s consent to share relevant personal information.

(Page 5 Domestic and Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines 2017)

The QDVSN work with victims and persons using violence every day and want to raise the importance of always keeping the victim's safety at the very forefront of our work! Sharing information without consent may, on the surface, look like it will increase victim safety but there may well be unintended consequences that put her at further risk long term. There are a broad number of things to consider when making a risk assessment and decision about whether to share information without consent and we invite you to ring your local D&FV Service to discuss if in doubt. Sharing information without consent does not mean sharing information without the person's knowledge, although that may be the case in some exceptional circumstances. According to the guidelines only certain organisations are able to share information without consent. There are prescribed entities and according to the guide these include:

- Queensland Corrective Services
- Queensland Police Service
- Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
- Department of Justice and the Attorney-General
- Department of Education and Training and accredited state and non-state schools.
- Department of Housing and Public Works
- Department of Health and associated agencies, including public health services and public hospitals, and the Ambulance Service.

In addition, a prescribed entity includes the chief executive of any other department that provides services to persons who fear or experience domestic violence or who commit domestic violence. (Page 10 Domestic and Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines 2017)

Other services who are able to share information without consent are:

- *Specialist domestic and family violence services:*
A "specialist domestic and family violence service provider" means a non-government entity funded by the State or Commonwealth to provide services to persons who fear or experience domestic violence or who commit domestic violence (pt 5A div 1 s169C of the Act). This includes services that work with men who use violence.
- *Support service providers:*
A "support service provider" means a non-government entity, other than a specialist domestic and family violence service provider, that provides assistance or support services to persons who may include persons who fear or experience domestic violence or who commit domestic violence (pt 5A div 1 s169C(1) of the Act). This includes a range of services for people who fear or experience domestic violence or who commit domestic violence. Examples may include, but are not limited to: counselling, disability, private health services (including private hospitals and general practitioners), housing, legal services (including solicitors and barristers), and sexual assault service providers. (Page 10 Domestic and Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines 2017)

The QDVSN recognizes the importance of sharing information without consent when some one's life is at stake and work closely with other services and departments across the state to prevent serious harm or homicide. Specialist DFV Services also work with women who have the right to privacy and to be included in discussions about their safety plan. It is crucial to us as a group of specialist services that all of our key stakeholders fully understand the implications of this legislative change and that we all work together to ensure the best outcomes for victims.

Non-consent referrals

The other change we have seen across the state is a growing increase of referrals without consent from police to D&FV Services. D&FV Services receive large number of referrals from police with consent and find that the ability to get a hold of the victim or the perpetrator referred is limited. It appears once the incident has happened that people are not necessarily keen to engage when they get the call from services or may not answer their phone. Our concern with non-consent referrals to our services is the potential for even less engagement whilst increasing the administrative burden on services. We are also concerned that ringing a home without consent could put the victim at significant risk, particularly if the referral has scant information for workers to be able to adequately assess the situation. We invite the police to reconsider and hope to be able to discuss this further with them in future.

Client Centered Practice

Our core purpose as specialist services and a statewide network is working with victims of D&FV and holding the woman and her safety at the center of all of our interactions with her and other stakeholders. We sadly come across daily experiences of women who have been severely impacted by trauma, terror and control. Unfortunately, that experience is often paired with unrealistic expectations of how she is meant to deal with this trauma, her family life, her children and the ongoing violence and terror against her. We invite practitioners and officers across the broad spectrum of services and departments who work with victims of D&FV to be mindful of the expectations that you may have of women: expecting that she leave or she stop his violence. These expectations can alienate her and put her at further risk. They are also unrealistic expectations. It is important to be aware that leaving may increase her risk exponentially and the only person who can really stop the violence is the perpetrator.

D&FV Education in Universities

The QDVSN have been very excited to see the increase of D&FV related subjects and degrees at various universities and know that some keep a fairly close link with practice on the ground by inviting in consultants from the sector. These additions are very important as the D&FV workforce has grown exponentially but there is a skills shortage as we recruit into the field. We advocate that universities understand the importance of teaching domestic and family violence curricula underpinned by a values based practice framework with a solid gender analysis. To that end QDVSN supports and works with the QLD Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research (QCDFVR) in advocating for public education on gender-based violence and sector capacity building through the development of higher education, vocational training and professional development programs.

Specialist Services – according to QDVSN

In QLD Specialist D&FV Services are Non-government regional or state-wide specialist domestic and family violence services whose primary focus is on women and their children experiencing domestic violence and/or family violence and, in some regions, also perpetrators. Most services are funded for four core initiatives: Counselling & Support for women, Counselling & Support for Children, Court Support and Integrated Service Systems development. A core principle of our specialty is demonstrating a values based practice framework informed by a solid gender analysis and many years of evidence based practice. There are 18 such services throughout QLD.

Sustainable Services

QDVSN services are funded to operate predominantly from 9 am to 5 pm week days in a crisis (Mackay operates from 8.30 – 4.30pm), high trauma and high risk environment. We believe in the importance of allowing staff to debrief, be continuously upskilled, have adequate supervision and support, time to do their case notes and large administrative

duties, and also maintain a high level of service delivery. What the last 20+ years has shown us is that to be able to provide the best service possible for our clients we need stable staffing levels and adequate funding for sustainability. An important part of this is the ability to allow staff time to catch up, get together as a team to learn and improve, and to have the availability of suitable periods where all staff can de-stress and work through any building vicarious trauma. Another crucial element of sustainability is a community and a government that believes in the importance of the work that we do. Further resources and a clear national and state direction (such as implementation recommendations from the Not Now Not Ever enquiry and various other processes) has enabled D&FV Services to increase our efforts in developing more productive and targeted integrated responses to D&FV, as well as improve our local service systems. Furthermore, the collective knowledge of the members of QDVSN support and enrich its member services as well as play a leading role in the QLD Domestic and Family Violence service sector.

Thank you all for your time and efforts to eradicate domestic and family violence in QLD.

Warm Regards The Members of the QDVSN.