

QDVSN MEETING ISSUES PAPER
FOR DISTRIBUTION TO OTHER NETWORKS
KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM QDVSN MEETING ON
23RD & 24TH OCTOBER 2008 - MAROOCHYDORE

In the spirit of enhancing information sharing and collaboration between our networks, Queensland Domestic Violence Services Network (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.

After each QDVSN meeting, the QDVSN Secretary can forward to your network/service the key relevant issues arising from the QDVSN meeting. If you do not feel it is useful for your network/service to receive this information, please do not hesitate to let us know. In addition, if your network/service would like to similarly disseminate information relating to your network/service, we would certainly welcome this.

Judicial Registrars

Pauline, Donna and Gayle have judicial registrars in their courts. Challenge has been that they are all acting as mediators in their role and using their previous skills as FDR practitioners in their work. This is a concern. JRs are frustrated as they can see that it is one more step in the process for victims and no commitment to any ongoing training. Was a three month pilot, now a two year pilot. AG favours them as he sees them as a matter of efficiency. AG has made the statement that they have seen in excess of 2,000 matters already which is contrary to the file notes sent by the DoC.

Issue for Donna is that the service went from 1.25 staff being required at court to needing 4 because it is one more court, one more aggrieved room etc. An issue for Pauline is that the only training her JR has had is mediation and there is an attitudinal problem. Slows the process because there are a number of matters that he cannot deal with so court support are up at court for a long time.

Important to keep raising the issue as the DoC file note said the AG wanted feedback on how it was impacting on services.

Telephone link with VPT – Chris Munsie, Heather Lovatt and Maree Simpson

Service agreements, service plans and PPRs

Heather and Maree informed the group that a proposal about service agreements and plans came back from Acting DDG as not approved on basis that it was considered that the model was not supporting sufficiently integrated service delivery models and did not accommodate aggregated data reporting requirements. Will try to develop a proposal for this that accommodates both the sector and the department.

They have been looking closer at the range of models that DV service agreements accommodate at the moment, specifically where multiple service types involved. Considerable inconsistency and models being used across the state. Not clear to DoC the rationale behind why a certain model has been accommodated either. Predominant model is single service agreement which has multiple service types rolled into one service plan. Rolled up financial reporting but performance reporting tends to be separated. The policy and preference is that it should be one service agreement with separate service plans with separate financial and performance reporting, but this reinforces a silo approach to funding. Continuing to try and address this issue.

Their idea so far is a single service agreement, with single service plan with multiple service types included in that, aggregated financial reporting with breakdown of service types in case Treasury needed more info. On performance reporting side, still see a need for separate PPRs on each service types but streamline to make it easy as possible. Focusing on 'counts of' and trying to reduce the number of performance measures required, making them measurable and useful. Public Accounts Committee met earlier in the week and considered a Qld Audit Office report on funding to NGOs. DG provided an overview of work on revised measures and DG came back with a clear message that we need to consult with the sector before putting those in place.

The group was able to give some feedback to Heather and Maree about this and felt, overall, that some good progress had been made on this issue. Heather and Maree informed the group that for those coming up for service agreements renewal they will be working with the regions to make them aware of the possible changes to try to get consistency.

Integrated Responses/Coordinated Responses

The group raised the issue that there does not seem to be a definition for what the department constitutes as an IR/CR so individual regions are doing different things. VPT felt that they can provide a consistent definition as Regional DV services always had as one of their activities, coordinating community responses. Maybe could look at the definitions and send them out through Amanda and get some feedback on that which can then be fed back to regional CSOs.

- *Action: Chris to send out IR/CR definition to Amanda for feedback.*

Whole of Government Strategy

Expecting an announcement about the consultation paper either over the weekend or early next week. Regions are organizing the consultations for their areas.

White Ribbon Day

The group raised with the VPT that they had an email from Belinda Cahill, VPT, about events being put on for WRD. This is meant to be men organising, we support them but do not do it ourselves. The group asked if VPT is doing anything on the 16 days of activism. Chris advised that Doug Winten is attending CEO Challenge meetings around WRD.

DV Month 2009

Grants for the month will be advertised on 1st November 2008 and awards nominations open on 12th January 2009.

Government funding of TIS – Stephanie

Access to Interpreters Working Group was set up with key stakeholders lobbying government for funding for interpreting services. Annabelle met with Lindy Nelson-Carr last month and a shift in government position was observed at this meeting where it was acknowledged that state government was responsible for funding and ensuring access to interpreter services for funded organisations. Anna Bligh has since made a commitment that all DGs in all departments allocate a budget for interpreting services for their funded services. Have not costed the budgets yet nor how the funding will be rolled out ie. reimbursement or allocated recurrent funds. Looking at the reimbursement process of fees that is currently in place at the moment within Department of Communities for SAAP and DVIP funded services to make it more efficient and accessible for services. Working group has developed a position paper. Three key recommendations made including training around cultural competence within Departments and funded community services and working effectively with interpreters. AIWG has

also undertaken to collect some case studies and looking to put this together into a report and launch in November 2008.

- *Post meeting Note: The launch is now scheduled for December 2008.*

Telephone link with Women's Legal Service - Katrina Finn

Katrina updated the group on the training they had been doing around the state. Mediation booklet should be ready for Family Law Forum on 21st November. Family Law Forum to contribute to community discussions around FL reforms in 2006 and how DV issues are dealt with and what that means for women and children moving through the system. Hoping it will inform some of the law reform work WLS are doing. Three speakers, Zoe Rathus, Rachael Field and Thea Brown, cost \$60.

A couple of issues that have come up is variation between individual mediators in particular FRC. Always worth while providing feedback to centres, both orgs and client, and the AG Dept. is very keen to hear that feedback. Address feedback to the AG because of the processes they have to follow if it is addressed to him. If having problems with individual mediators/centres can talk to WLS if need to talk it over with one of the solicitors. FRCs have an operational framework which has been updated since 2006, it provides guidelines but not mandatory, so hard to hold them accountable to it but good idea to get on their reference groups so you can talk to them about policies and procedures etc. There is the operational framework but also WLS Australia did a breakdown of all of the structural things in place and set out very clearly the expectations and what document they can be found in - this information can help orgs to hold FRCs accountable for specific issues so always worth calling WLS or your local community legal centre.

Mediation Trends – Family Dispute Resolution services can be provided by FRCs, LA Qld and private mediators who are FDR practitioners. For some clients it may be more advantageous for them to go through the LAQ conferencing system (as long as they meet the merit test) rather than the FRC. This is because generally they are legally represented whereas they will not have lawyers at FRC. Having a legal rep can really assist women with DV issues. Preliminary view is that some clients might be better off not going through LAQ conferencing program. WLS still have clients report they are put under a lot of pressure by their lawyers to reach agreements during LAQ conferencing. This will also depend on your location and knowledge of whether there are good mediators at your local FRC or who the LAQ practitioner might be.

Pros and cons of mediation – some clients feel more comfortable or in control going through that process and negotiating their own outcome. But also, some concerns are the legal system generally and the results they might get from going through court by getting an exemption. Going into court could open other issues they do not want to have opened up. It is really about generating options for individual clients and finding out what might be best. Need to keep revisiting this issue. The mediation booklet covers some of these decisions.

See a lot more agreements coming out at FRC where time is divided much more significantly. Many mediators think that 50/50 is the way to go and put pressure on people to agree arrangements that include more time, including 50/50 time. So preparation is critical for this eg. identifying what your bottom line is, asking for time out to think things through etc. Problem with court is a lot of people are self represented, some lawyers are not challenging the law, vast differences between how the federal magistrates deal with the law, some differences between FM and family court.

At court – probably in the reported decisions time (in DV matters) is not being divided as much as we thought it would have been. Does seem that if judges are given the tools to make the decisions they are

not applying a 'presumption' of 50/50 time but lots of lawyers and court mediators seem to be doing this. Very young children being divided is a huge one in terms of attachment and bonding to parents – this is a trend we are seeing in the court. Fathers not consenting to counselling and this prevents children from getting the counselling they really need and WLS has seen a number of orders from courts preventing children being counselled.

Australian Institute of Family Studies evaluation due late next year. Will not provide all the answers in terms of DV so need to up the ante with government about how they make decisions around DV. Thinking of writing to AG in relation to the gap in the AIFS evaluation on DV. AG going to call a family law summit early next year, not sure who they are inviting, to talk about how it is going. There was a Family Law 'round table' called by the Fed AG in July, and this was to talk about intractable disputes and system responses. Katrina brought up violence. Their argument was that they did not want to try and squeeze it in with other things but Katrina was making the point that you cannot talk about intractable disputes without talking about violence issues.

DV Death Review Action Group

Been going for four years and put out request for money for project person and services donated money towards that. Employed Betty Taylor and she went through an extensive consultation process and wrote a discussion paper. Having a discussion forum on 2nd December at the Parliamentary Annexe and hoping to hand over the document to Anna Bligh. Put in an application to Wesnet to keep the project going and we have received \$40,000 so very excited by this. The Women's Legal Service are auspicing this. Arranging a forum and Diane is looking to see if DVConnect will host it for DV DRAG. Have designed a postcard for people to sign and send back to Anna Bligh.

- *Action: Diane will send out DV DRAG information and the discussion paper once it is available and asked that members ensured their networks were informed of the forum etc once Betty sends out the date claimer.*

Heather mentioned that the AIC has funded some QPS research on a risk assessment tool for domestic homicides.

Whole of Government Strategy Consultation Document

Focus is on prevention, early identification, connected services, perpetrator accountability and system planning and coordination. One key idea is Case Coordination Teams (CCTs) made up of police, Department of Child Safety and DV specialists. A long discussion was held around this with many ideas and questions generated. Important to feed these back via the consultation process and submissions.

- *Action: QDVSN to write a submission.*

State DV Line meeting

Diane informed the group that there will be another national meeting of the state DV lines early next year and are hoping to develop some inter-state protocols. If we have any ideas for how the state lines can work together transferring clients across borders, please let Diane know.

Wesnet update

Wesnet received \$500,000 from the government for prevention and intervention projects and had ??? applications. Three successful Qld submissions - Death Review Strategy; WLS to do early intervention and prevention D&FV training with over 100 solicitors; and billboard campaign in North Qld as info strategy. National one – older women to look at gaps between and bringing together DV sector and Elder abuse sector.