

Quarterly snapshots

Domestic Violence Regional Strategy Groups

Collaboration | Insights | Evidence | Implementation | Outcomes | Place based

Vol. 2 Issue 2 – April 2020

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Message from the Deputy Secretary



Welcome to the latest edition of the Domestic Violence Regional Strategy Groups (RSGs) quarterly newsletter, which we send to you under challenging circumstances.

Firstly, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude for the extraordinary work being done to continue the provision of essential services, particularly responding to domestic violence. These are extremely trying times for the domestic violence sector and the people we serve, so it is encouraging to hear about the innovation and victim

focused approaches being undertaken on the frontline. We are working to support you to continue this valuable work.

Due to the increased risk for those experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV), this is a particularly important time to deliver services. Under normal circumstances DFV is a hidden and isolating experience and during COVID-19 we are seeing new tactics being used by perpetrators, along with increased pressure from new or exacerbated financial, health, family and employment issues. For some, there is a reduction in resources and opportunities to escape the violence or seek help due to home-isolation.

I recently had a chat with Renata Field, Domestic Violence NSW's Voices for Change Coordinator, about supporting the DFV sector during these unprecedented times. You can view this [here](#).

To help connect our service providers with the Department and to address their questions, we have set up a dedicated email address:

COVID19.Support@facs.nsw.gov.au.

At this time, our focus is on continued service provision and managing the impact of social distancing and safety requirements. It's no surprise that the Premier's Priority interventions have also been impacted and the team is working hard on the development of new projects and is currently in the exploratory phase for this. While the target is even more ambitious in this climate, it is just as important to drive innovation and coordination across multiple agencies. To support our intervention efforts, Police are responding proactively to enforce protection orders and let perpetrators know that DFV is a crime and not acceptable, especially during this pandemic.

The Regional Strategy Group projects have also been impacted, however progress is being made through team members and stakeholders as they work from home. We recognise the frontline is already stretched at this time so consultations will be coordinated and postponed as needed.

It is important during this time to have access to as many resources and information so I would like to highlight some key DFV related websites:

- [Department of Communities and Justice](#): COVID-19 information and

resources, including for [service providers](#) and specific to [DFV](#)

- [e-Safety Commissioner](#): COVID-19 - online safety help for DFV workers
- [NSW Local Courts](#): operational changes in response to the coronavirus
- [Legal Aid NSW](#): series of factsheets about COVID-19 and family law
- Women's Safety NSW: [COVID-19 resource list](#) and [reports on the impacts of COVID-19 on DFV and on frontline services](#)
- [No To Violence](#): COVID-19 guide for sector workers
- [DVNSW](#): COVID-19 information and resource list
- [Insight Exchange](#): guides for family and friends, workplaces, responding to customers, and for faith communities, to respond to DFV during COVID-19
- [SBS](#): 'Coronavirus Explained In Your Language' videos in 32 languages

With gratitude

Simone Walker, Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Policy and Commissioning
Department of Communities and Justice

Regional Strategy Groups in focus

Consultations with CALD communities

The Domestic Violence Strategy team will be leading consultation forums with CALD communities, particularly seeking to include the voices of women leaders and youth. The consultations will focus on DFV and the barriers facing CALD communities (including language barriers, barriers to reporting, acculturation stress, vulnerable immigration status and the impacts of torture and trauma). The consultations will be held in the second half of 2020 (pending the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions and assessed public safety).

South West Metro in focus: Acculturation stress and pre-migration trauma

The South West Metro RSG has endorsed a review of DFV perpetrator interventions (within the SWM region) to determine if the interventions are inclusive of settlement stress and pre-migration trauma experiences of refugees and migrants from a CALD background. A working group of CALD community members will be established to assist with the review. Interest in the working group will be sought via an Expression of Interest (EOI) process in the second half of 2020. This project is co-led with the Diversity Services team at the Department of Communities and Justice.

If you would like more information on the above projects or to nominate a CALD community member, please email Dana Skopelja, SWM RSG Coordinator, at SouthWestMetroRSG@justice.nsw.gov.au.

Snapshots from the regions

Queanbeyan-Palerang says NO to Domestic and Family Violence

Last month the Queanbeyan, Braidwood and Bungendore Domestic Violence Committees coordinated marches in their communities to take a stand against Domestic and Family Violence (DFV). There was a good turnout despite the rain and these events highlight the strength of communities working together to stop DFV.

“We will be standing side by side with like-minded men and women in solidarity, sending a message to our community that we will not sit back and witness domestic violence we will act, we will call the police, we will intervene and we will name it for what it is. Queanbeyan-Palerang says NO to Domestic and Family Violence.”



New research on reoffending on the Mid North Coast by youth

Researchers from Southern Cross University, in collaboration with the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Mid North Coast Local Health District and the Northern NSW Local Health District, are currently undertaking a data linkage study of 1142 young people, residing on the mid to north coast of NSW, who have been issued a legal action by the NSW Police Force for a domestic and family violence (DFV) related offence in the period from July 2008 to June 2018.

A longitudinal dataset consisting of linked de-identified administrative data held by the NSW Police Force and the NSW Ministry of Health, is being analysed to identify individual and parental characteristics related to the severity of a young person's first DFV related offence and their likelihood of re-offending. This study will also employ process mining statistical analysis techniques, to model the service interaction pathways and temporal processes involved in DFV offending among this cohort of young people. This modelling will provide insight into elements and patterns, amenable to service or practice re-design, improved action, or future resource investment.

Key insights from the project will be reported in future editions of the newsletter.

Community Services deliver DV training for district leaders

Leaders from across Community Services in Western Sydney and Nepean Blue Mountains met in July 2019 to explore practitioner attitudes towards families experiencing violence, the impacts of societal views on practice with families and practice tools available to support practitioners in this area of practice.

Leaders were encouraged to consider their own beliefs, value and biases around commonly held societal views held about violence and how these played a vital role in their decision making when working with families experiencing violence. They discussed strategies for making fathers more visible as a parent and holding them accountable for their violence so as to be able to create safety for mothers and children.

NSW Police Force Fit for Home Out West

Eight-week crime prevention course in Brewarrina

Connecting vulnerable and disengaged young people with mentors and vocational training is key to getting them back into education, getting them ready for employment opportunities and for living well in the community. Reflecting this, the NSW Police Force RISEUP strategy was launched in 2018 by Commissioner Mick Fuller to do just this, through the programs offered through Youth & Crime Prevention Command (YCPC) and RISEUP. The YCPC has consolidated a suite of 8 programs as part of the RISEUP strategy all starting with the name *Fit for...* The *Fit for Home* program works with young people to break the cycle of violence between generations through education.

In 2019 the rural/remote community of Brewarrina became the first in Western NSW to implement the initiative. Supporting the great work of local Police who were already building engagement with young people in the town through a girl's breakfast program and sporting programs, Central North Police, PCYC, Region Domestic Violence Coordinators and many local service providers worked in partnership with 10 young local women.

They started with coaching around emotional regulation and strengths, setting personal goals and improving their awareness of their own personal development. District Commander, Superintendent Andrew Hurst said this was a great example of crime prevention in Aboriginal Communities. "Local Police worked hand-in-hand with services providers for targeted engagement", he said.

The young women gave a commitment to attend every Thursday for eight weeks. Each week they learned about different issues including violence, alcohol, well-being and mental health, alcohol foetal syndrome and the impact of violence on children.

They also enjoyed several pampering and creative sessions including facials, make-up, waxing, and nail art as well as making hand scrubs and bath bombs and engaging in art. With funding assistance from Mission Australia, eight of the participants completed a two-day espresso operation course through TAFE gaining statements of attainment.

A presentation day was held recognising the achievements of the young women and the contributions made to provide the development opportunity in Brewarrina. All the young women who completed the program continued to regularly attend school in 2019.



Left: Coffee Operation TAFE Tutor Nicolas John and Fit for Home participant:
Right: Superintendent Andrew Hurst presenting a Fit for Home certificate of completion

Improved coordination through Broadmeadow Children's Court pilot

A pilot project to support young people (10–17 year olds) who have contact with the Justice system is underway at the Broadmeadow Children's Court through cross government and multi-agency collaboration.

The Magistrate at the Broadmeadow Children's Court has been supportive of partner services being available at Court when young people criminal matters are listed, so direct and holistic support can be offered on the day. The services involved include Youth Justice, Department Communities and Justice, Department of Education, Justice Health & Forensic Mental Health Network, Mission Australia – Youth on Track and Allambi Care.

The multidisciplinary team share relevant information under Section 16A to support decisions, joint interventions and client focussed planning, to address underlying factors that have led to offending.

This collaborative way of working has increased referral pathways, prevented duplication of service and coordinated resources and actions between government and non-government service partners.

The pilot project has seen a significant decline in the number and length of time for Section 28s under the Bail Act (where a young person is held in remand due to a lack of suitable accommodation options), and longer term engagement with service partners through initial connection at court.



Pamper Day held for CALD women to share information about DFV



Last month Focus Connect, a Macarthur based migrant and refugee service, hosted a pamper day for CALD women with the focus on sharing information about domestic violence and legal issues in a supportive and relaxing environment.

Women from CALD communities met with local support workers and accessed information from various community organisations. Local women from similar backgrounds were able to exchange knowledge and share experiences in their native language. Attendees also made use of the free child minding services and artistic therapies on offer.

This was a joint project of Focus Connect, MWDVCAS, the Multicultural Society of Campbelltown, Women Council Australia Incorporated, the Benevolent Society and Campbelltown City Council.

For more information please contact: sanaalahmar@focusconnect.org.au

Cognitive Impairment Diversion Program closure

The Cognitive Impairment Diversion Program (CIDP) will cease operation when its funding ends on 30 June 2020. It operated as a pilot program from July 2017 in Gosford and Penrith. Since commencement, CIDP has identified good practice and benefits to its target cohort and has received strong court-based stakeholder support. It was set up to divert defendants with a cognitive impairment, charged with a low-level offence, from the criminal justice system by helping them access appropriate services.



Due to funding limitations a transition strategy is being implemented for the closure of the program. IDRS are integral to this process along with the delivery of the program since its inception. CIDP case managers will stop taking new CIDP referrals from 1 April 2020 and stakeholders are requested to refer clients to the Statewide Community and Court Liaison Service (SCCLS) in their respective location. CIDP case managers will continue to support active CIDP participants until 30 June 2020. The Department of Communities and Justice appreciates the support from RSG members for the program.

News from the domestic and family violence sector

New DVDRT report released

The [2017–19 NSW Domestic Violence Death Review Team Report](#) was released last month. It is the sixth report published by the Team since its establishment in 2010. This report outlines findings from the 53 domestic violence context deaths examined by the Team between 2017 and 2019.

New disability toolkit from 1800RESPECT

The [1800RESPECT Disability Support Toolkit](#) contains resources for frontline workers supporting people with disability who have been impacted by violence and abuse. The Toolkit is a result of the Disability Pathways Project, which aimed to improve responses for people with disability who have been impacted by sexual assault, domestic and family violence.



ANROWS podcast episode: How do we engage men who use violence?

[ANROWS produced an episode for their Insights podcast](#) where researchers and practitioners discuss findings from their report: [Engaging men who use violence: Invitational narrative approaches](#).

The discussion includes what invitational narrative practice is, how shame and “ethical preferences” play an important role in this technique, and how to evaluate the effectiveness of this work.



Workplace Toolkit – Insight Exchange

[Insight Exchange’s workplace toolkit](#) was launched in February this year and assists workplaces in understanding and responding to employees experiencing domestic and family violence.

It includes three of their resources: Insights Paper, Follow My Lead, and My Safety Kit.



TFM Human Services Data Set — District and LGA insights

The [TFM Human Services Data Set includes summary insights at a regional level](#) to assist with policy development, planning, and commissioning. The District and LGA data packs provide information on the two focus population groups:

- Vulnerable young children aged 0 to 5, and;
- Children and young people affected by mental illness.

OurWatch – Men in Focus report

Last year OurWatch produced a research report, [Men in Focus: Unpacking masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women](#). The report contains an extensive review of Australian and international research evidence and aims to build a deeper understanding of masculinity, as well as providing guidance for those working with men and boys to reduce violence against women. They also produced a [summary](#) to accompany the report.

Highlights from the Premier’s Priority to reduce DV reoffending

NSW Police Force ADVO compliance checks

There have been strong policing efforts throughout March and April to increase ADVO compliance. This is an important activity to support the work of the Premier’s Priority to increase perpetrator accountability.

The NSW Police Force released a [video on their Facebook page](#) earlier this month as part of their social media campaign to reinforce that accountability begins with the perpetrator. This is particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic.



NSW Police Force “Operation No More” — Targeting DV in the Western Region

It’s no secret that the Western Region has some of the highest rates of domestic violence in the state per capita and some the highest rates of re-offending and re-victimisation. In 2019, the top nine ranked Local Government Areas (LGA’s) for domestic violence assault per capita were in the Western region¹. Regional analysis from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) has previously showed that the rate of domestic violence occasioning grievous bodily harm was highest in the Far West and Orana region of NSW². With unique challenges, such as isolation, geographical distance, high levels of unemployment, high rates of drug and alcohol abuse, inconsistent resourcing and the diversity of the communities across the region all lends to challenges for police and other agencies alike in tackling domestic violence.

Research indicates that re-offending commonly occurs after a defendant is served with an Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO) and that a breach of an ADVO is more likely to occur within the first six months of enforcement³. There are also commonly known risk factors that increase the likelihood of recidivism and homicide in DV cases, including, recent separation, alcohol abuse, low socio-economic background and increasing occurrences of violence and strangulation.

Based on these factors, New South Wales Police Western Region, led by Superintendent Scott Tanner ran the region wide “Operation No More” throughout March 2020 focussing on ADVO Compliance Checks, high risk offenders, increasing the use of DVEC and increasing legal action rates, pro-investigation and victim support.

The outstanding success of the Operation saw Western Region Police Districts undertake 2,257 ADVO Compliance Checks in March 2020. During the course of Operation No More 786 domestic violence arrests were made with 1013 charges resulting. Of these 351 charges were for domestic violence related assault and 290 were for breaches of AVO.

Superintendent Tanner stated “Even during these uncertain times of COVID-19, Western Region Police will continue to actively support victims of DV as well as target those who commit harm to their families. Everyone is doing it tough but there never has been, nor will there ever be, any excuse for domestic violence. Stay safe.”

Operation No More clearly sent the message that NSW Police have zero tolerance for domestic violence and all efforts will be made to keep victims of this crime safe and bring offenders to justice in the Western Region.

New EQUIPS for women

Sydney West Community Corrections are trialling a new EQUIPS Foundations Program which is for women only. The program will run over 20 weeks at Blacktown Community Corrections. It includes workshops run by Service Providers plus also the Foundations Program content. Examples of service providers organised to attend include: Legal Aid NSW, Community Services (DCJ), TAFE, Victims Services (DCJ).

The course commences on 29 April 2020 and will take referrals from Western Sydney with the aim to have 15 women in the program.

EQUIPS Foundation is a therapeutic and educational program developed by CSNSW to reduce the risk of reoffending for a wide range of offenders. It is designed to increase participation opportunities for offenders in both custodial and community settings. It is not offence specific which means there can be multiple offence types in the same group.

EQUIPS is designed to:

- be effective in addressing the problem of repeated returns to the criminal justice system
- accommodate multiple offence types in one group
- assist offenders to make links between their thoughts, feelings and actions or choices that lead them to offend
- help offenders to understand and practise ways of responding to difficult emotional events in ways that are appropriate and law abiding
- be relevant and responsive to the individual offender.



¹ NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, 2019, the recorded rate of Assault - domestic violence related Local Government Area rankings out of the 120 Local Government Areas that have populations greater than 3000.

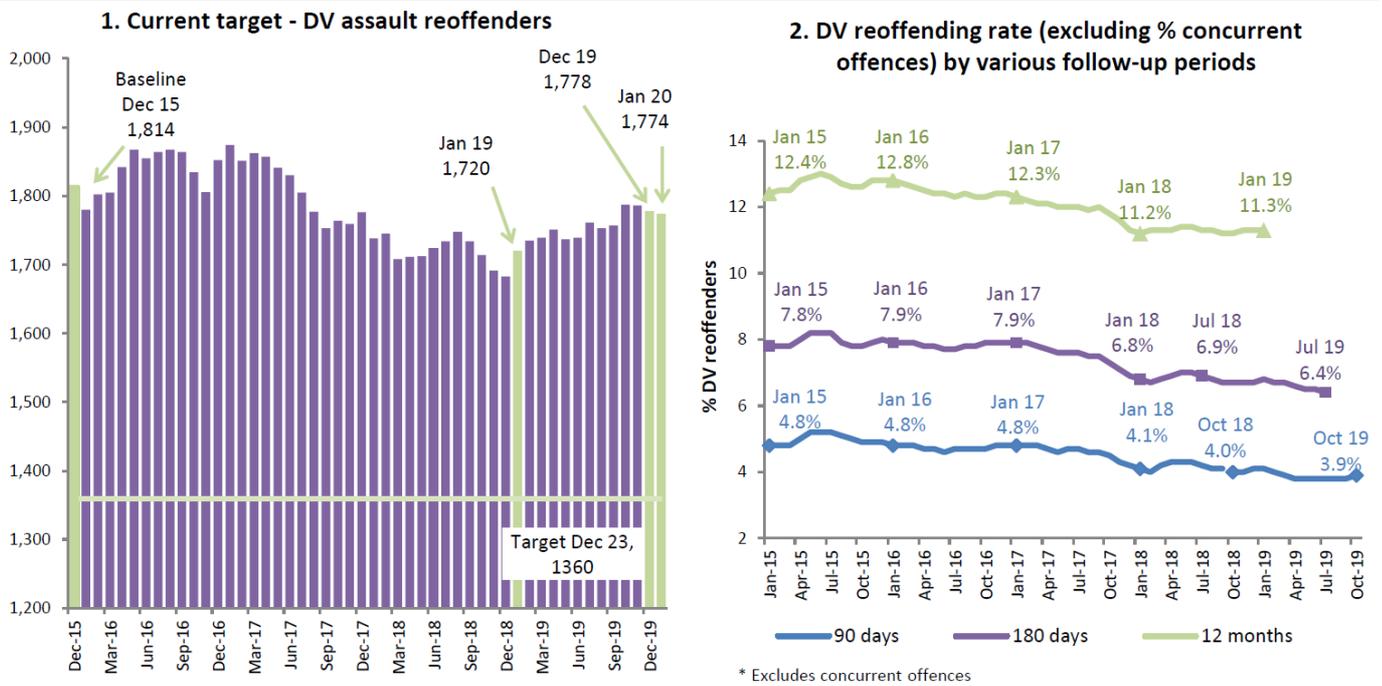
² Freeman, K. (2018). Is domestic violence in NSW decreasing? (Bureau Brief No. 134). Sydney: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

³ Poynton, S., Stavrou, E., Marott, N. and Fitzgerald, J. (2016). Breach rate of Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders in NSW (Bureau Brief No. 119). Sydney: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

Premier's Priority target shows 40 fewer DV assault reoffenders than the baseline

As at January 2020 there were 1,774 DV assault reoffenders, a reduction of 40 from the baseline period (December 2015). Whilst this result represents an increase of 54 DV assault reoffenders over the previous year the measure has been stable in recent months. The target is ambitious though important for driving change for the sector, particularly for changing perpetrator behaviour and holding perpetrators to account. Crime trends data indicates there has been a 4.5% increase in overall DV assaults over the past two years to January 2020.

Premier's priority



Crime Trends

Offence	Feb 2015 to Jan 2016	Feb 2016 to Jan 2017	Feb 2017 to Jan 2018	Feb 2018 to Jan 2019	Feb 2019 to Jan 2020	2 Year Trend p.a.	5 Year Trend p.a.
Murder	31	35	25	31	32	Stable	Stable
DV Assault	29,025	29,293	28,455	29,934	31,275	Up 4.5%	Up 1.9%
Actual bodily harm	7,250	7,522	7,491	7,960	8,154	Stable	Up 3.0%
Grievous bodily harm	423	353	387	355	351	Stable	Stable
Assault common	21,346	21,409	20,574	21,613	22,764	Up 5.3%	Up 1.6%
Intimidation/stalking	13,081	13,407	13,631	14,576	16,317	Up 11.9%	Up 5.7%
Breach ADVO	13,022	14,357	13,687	15,305	17,085	Up 11.6%	Up 7.0%
Final ADVOs issued	27,647	28,596	29,781	31,563	33,524	Stable	Up 4.9%

Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research



To subscribe, provide feedback, suggest newsletter content or for further enquiries, please email DVRegionalStrategyGroups@justice.nsw.gov.au