

THE
SERVICES
UNION 

SUBMISSION

Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy

16 November 2015

The Services Union commends the Palaszczuk Labor government for its immediate action toward addressing Domestic and Family violence. The comprehensive review undertaken by the domestic violence taskforce in the commissioning of the *“Not Now, Not Ever Report”* (“the Bryce Report”) has assisted in defining the domestic and family violence (DFV) landscape in Queensland, delivering 140 recommendations to inform the development of long term strategy for Government and the community to eliminate DFV in Queensland. Our Union supports the recommendations made and we are pleased that this government has committed to implementing each of the 140 recommendations the taskforce has put forward.

It is also timely that the Combined Women’s Refuge Group SE QLD (“CWRG”) has recently released a position paper titled *“More than just a bed. The contribution of women’s refuges in QLD”* (“the CWRG Paper”), which brings together the expertise of the CWRG to explore the critical success factors which drive the design and implementation of women’s refuges, and examine the relationship between women’s refuges in Queensland and recognised best practice. The CWRG Paper documents the economic impacts of DFV and highlights the contribution of our members in women’s refuges to reducing DFV over the past 40 years, reinforcing that it makes economic sense for governments to invest in a comprehensive integrated community response to the issue. The 18 key recommendations made within the CWRG Paper support and supplement those outlined in the Bryce Report and are strongly supported by our Union.

Both the Bryce Report and the CWRG Paper recognise that DFV is a gendered issue; the vast majority of DFV involves violence perpetrated by men against women and sadly, that the most dangerous time for women and children experiencing DFV is during, or immediately after attempting to leave a violent situation. The feminist discourse on DFV recognises that women who stay in violent situations are not doing so because they are weak; they are making a very real assessment about the likelihood of increased risk to their personal safety and that of other family members and pets if they try to leave. This is why it is essential that women and children are supported to escape DFV safely. This year as at 3 November, the number of women in Australia killed by their partner stands at 76 as documented by Counting Dead Women Australia and devastatingly, many of these women were in the process of leaving or had left their violent partner.

The recent government and media attention on the issue of DFV has assisted in bringing the issue of DFV into the spotlight, but has also resulted in an unprecedented increase in demand for frontline services, including domestic violence refuges, specialist DFV services and women and community legal centres. Our Union supports both the Bryce Report and the CWRG Paper which emphasise that fully resourced and integrated services that implement best practice principles, are of primary importance.

Our Union represents community services workers operating front line services to support and advocate for women and children experiencing DFV. This year, as part of our efforts to promote recognition of DFV as an industrial issue, our Union has established a Domestic Violence Delegates Network (“The Network”). The Network has examined the Recommendations from both the Bryce Report and the CWRG Paper closely; particularly in relation to what front line workers feel should be the priorities for the Palaszczuk Government. The purpose of this submission is to highlight the priority recommendations from both the Bryce Report and the CWRG Paper that frontline workers within the DFV sector view as being in urgent need of implementation in the next twelve months.

DFV IS AN INDUSTRIAL ISSUE

Our Union and the Union movement generally is currently focused on promoting the recognition of DFV as not just a community, but a workplace issue that warrants comprehensive industrial responses. This year our Branch Council endorsed Domestic and Family Violence Leave (DFVL) as the 29th Way in our *27 Ways and Growing Campaign* and made the following recommendations:

- The establishment in consultation with the women’s committee and women members operating DFV services of a DV delegate and activist group as a key outcome of DFVL being our 29th way.
- Efforts to achieve DFVL as a national employment standard, and a key bargaining outcome for enterprise bargaining in 2015/16.
- DFVL and education on DFV as an industrial issue to be included in our delegates training package.
- Continued engagement with all governments and our community services sector to identify and implement protective, legal and social service reform to end domestic and family violence within the Queensland landscape.

Accordingly, we support the various recommendations of The Bryce Report that focus on industrial responses to DFV. We consider that the Queensland Government, as the largest Employer in Queensland has the potential to lead the Industrial response to DFV and as such has the discretion to introduce the following priority Recommendations:

Recommendation 31

As the largest employer in Queensland, the Queensland Government takes the lead in developing and modelling workplaces that foster equality, and educates employees on unacceptable behaviour in the home and the workplace, with direct emphasis on domestic and family violence.

Recommendation 32

The Queensland Government funds the development of a training program for employers and businesses on building workplaces supportive to victims of domestic and family violence that includes skills on identifying and responding to domestic and family violence.

Recommendation 33

The Queensland Government amends the Industrial Relations Act to create a new category of leave for the public sector for victims of domestic and family violence that may be taken for any purpose related to the violence (such as for injury recovery, finding accommodation, court preparation and court appearance).

Recommendation 34

The Queensland Government ensures the amendment provide for 10 days a year of leave, non-accumulative, to be taken in conjunction with other leave and incorporating sensitivity as to the proof requirements for approval of the leave.

Recommendation 35

The Queensland Government amends the Industrial Relations Act to specify outcomes of domestic and family violence (i.e. injury, application for leave, taking of leave) are not grounds for fair dismissal (similar to parental leave).

Recommendation 36

The Queensland Government requests the Commonwealth Government considers similar leave and dismissal amendments to the Fair Work Act to protect Queensland workers engaged under the Federal Act from unfair dismissal and provide appropriate support to workers experiencing domestic and family violence.

Recommendation 37

The Queensland Public Service Commission Chief Executive develops Public Service Directives specifically for management of victims of domestic and family violence in the workplace.

Recommendation 38

The Queensland Public Service Commission Chief Executive develops training for managers and supervisors on implementing these directives and supporting victims of domestic and family violence.

Recommendation 39

Queensland Government departments develop and make available information resources for victims on where to seek assistance (financial, accommodation, personal safety, counselling) and for perpetrators to seek help to change behaviour (voluntary perpetrator programs, counselling etc.).

Recommendation 40

The Minister for Local Government works with the Local Government Association of Queensland and individual local governments to implement the changes in the Industrial Relations Act and the provision of new leave. This includes providing (free of charge) all directives, human resource policies and training programs established for state public service employees.

Recommendation 41

The Queensland Government supports businesses and non-government organisations to develop and maintain workplaces that support victims of domestic and family violence. This includes providing all directives, human resources policies and training programs established for state public service employees.

Recommendation 42

The Queensland Government amends the Queensland Procurement Policy and Guidelines to expand upon Principle 4: “We use our procurement to advance the government’s economic, environmental and social objectives and support the long-term wellbeing of our community”, to include consideration of workplace policies concerning domestic and family violence as part of the criteria for determining ‘ethical and socially responsible suppliers’.

Recommendation 43

The Queensland Government makes funded services that work with victims of domestic and family violence explain in their service agreements how they will foster a workplace culture that reduces work-induced trauma, outlining specific initiatives.

Recommendation 45

Businesses and non-government organisations in Queensland recognise the significant economic and social impact of domestic and family violence on the national and state economies and on workforce productivity.

Recommendation 46

Businesses and non-government organisations in Queensland implement human resource policies, leave arrangements and other support programs to support victims of domestic and family violence.

Recommendation 47

Businesses and non-government organisations in Queensland incorporate information on domestic and family violence, its unacceptability, and availability of support and how to safely intervene in staff training.

REFUGES, SUPPORT SERVICES AND CRISIS HOUSING

The delivery of an integrated community service response to DFV is imperative and increased crisis housing is also essential. However, the resounding message from frontline DFV workers is that the establishment of fully funded, woman centred, specialist refuges is the number one priority in addressing the growing need arising from DFV.

Many frontline services, including refuges, lost funding during the Newman Government regime and this; coupled with the unprecedented increase in demand for accommodation by women and children escaping DFV has led to a significant unmet need. This need must be addressed by the establishment of specialist refuges that can effectively cater for the diverse and often complex needs of women and children experiencing, escaping from and recovering from DFV.

The CWRG Paper outlines best practice principles recognised both nationally and internationally within the area of DFV as follows:-

1. "Provision of accommodation alone is an inefficient and ineffective means of responding to the needs of women and children escaping DFV.
2. Specialist women's refuges are a particularly efficient and effective immediate response to women and children survivors of DFV.
3. A holistic, customised approach to support service provision is essential to effective practice with women and children recovering from DFV.
4. Financial and housing security is a critical determinant of women and children's capacity build an independent, violence-free life.
5. Continuing support for women and children optimises their capacity to build a violence-free life.
6. Dedicated support for children reduces the risk of multigenerational harm as a result of DFV."

At present many women escaping DFV are by necessity, placed in hotels due to the shortage of safe specialist refuges. Unable to access the specialised support necessary to overcome DFV many return to the violent situation. Refuges that provide specialist support services and fitting responses to the individual needs of women and children escaping DFV such as, counselling, advocacy, access to legal assistance and transitional housing are best placed to assist women and children in crisis.

This is one of the reasons why so many DFV workers strongly recommend that refuges be recognised as critical specialist support services in their own right; and that governments should consider them discretely from services that focus solely on the provision of crisis assistance support housing services. To lump refuges and crisis housing into the same category is a recipe for failure to recognise that the needs of women and children escaping DFV differ markedly from those who are in need of crisis housing. Further, the issue of increased risk to personal safety means that women and children escaping from DFV cannot be accommodated by most mainstream crisis accommodation services. In addition, the majority of crisis accommodation services in Queensland only cater for single women who are unaccompanied by children. Due to the aforementioned issues, as well as other factors, DFV workers support the transfer of the DFV refuges from the Department of Housing portfolio to the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to enable appropriate focus on the complex needs of women and children escaping DFV and the specialist nature of the services they require so that best practice outcomes can be achieved.

Women's refuges in Queensland have been responding to the needs of women and children escaping DFV for over 40 years and accordingly have developed a wealth of expertise in responding to DFV. Our Union considers the CWRG Paper a particularly valuable and insightful resource and for this reason, we strongly encourage the Palaszczuk Labor government to closely consider the 18 Recommendations that it contains as follows:

1. That the Queensland Government adopt a comprehensive response to DFV involving collaboration with victims/survivors, women's refuges, domestic violence services, health workers, police and the criminal justice system in order to develop safe, meaningful and effective programs for a diverse range of victims/survivors. Further, that a particular emphasis be placed on resourcing collaboration in rural and remote Queensland.

2. That the Queensland Government:
 - a) Recognise that the structural, economic and cultural values of our society give power to men, making women more likely to be victims of domestic violence.
 - b) Acknowledge the gendered nature of DFV and the overwhelming evidence that best practice approaches are based in a gendered analysis.
 - c) Actively support best practice approaches to both DFV intervention and DFV prevention strategies.

3. That the Queensland Government make additional funding available to provide a variety of additional refuge beds to provide safe accommodation and support to women and children escaping DFV. The two 72 hour refuges recommended by the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence and subsequently announced by the Queensland Government will assist to relieve the pressure on women waiting in motels for a refuge vacancy, but without also increasing the numbers of refuge beds, there will still be no vacancies to accommodate these families after the 72 hour period.

4. That the Queensland Government make additional funding available to existing women's refuges to enable them to provide mobile support to women and children placed in motels by DV referral services whilst awaiting a refuge placement. Additionally, that the Queensland Government ensure that the two 72 hour refuge services recently announced, be adequately funded to ensure that they are appropriately staffed to provide the necessary support to these extremely vulnerable women and children during this crisis transition.

5. That the Queensland Government provide adequate funding to specialised women only refuges to enable skilled, professional, specialist support workers to provide extensive case management support to women and children escaping DFV. Furthermore, that additional funding be extended to existing refuges that have not received adequate funding increases to match wage increases for many years.

6. That the Queensland Government recognise the centrality of a gendered analysis to best practice DFV service provision, and the critical role that feminist organisations and women-only services play in an effective DFV response.

7. That the Queensland Government continue to explore and adequately resource models of integrated service delivery across both DFV and non-DFV agencies working with women affected by DFV, including expansion of the current Gold Coast pilot program.
8. That the Queensland Government recognise the need for culturally-specific services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children escaping DFV, and provide adequate funding to enable services driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to provide specialised accommodation and support.
9. That the Queensland Government recognise the right of women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds to communicate in their own language, and guarantee women's access to interpreters at all stages of the legal process, including all interactions with police and the court system. Further, that the Queensland Government provide adequate funding for women's refuges to be able to provide interpreting services to their clients free of charge.
10. That the Queensland Government recognise the need for culturally appropriate services for women and children from CALD backgrounds, and provide ongoing funding for the Immigrant Women's Support Service and the Refugee and Immigration Legal Service. Further, that the Queensland Government provide new funding to enable provision of specialist CALD services throughout Queensland.
11. That the Queensland Government liaise with the Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection to prioritise permanent residency applications for women and children escaping domestic violence.
12. That the Queensland Government act to ensure that women escaping domestic violence do not incur debts resulting from DFV (such as damage to property), and make perpetrators solely responsible for these debts. Further, that the Queensland Government implement the necessary policy changes to ensure women's access to priority public housing whilst this process is undertaken.
13. That the Queensland Government ensure that women and children without Australian permanent residency are eligible to access Community Housing properties whilst their residency applications are pending.

Additionally, that the Queensland Government consider the needs of women and children with New Zealand residency who are escaping domestic violence in Australia, and are not eligible for an income from Centrelink, to allow these families to access Community Housing.

14. That the Queensland Government provide additional funding to existing women's refuges to enable them to provide extended support, as required, to women and children following their refuge stay.
15. That the Queensland Government restore funding to the Tenancy Advocacy and Advisory Service, which provided vital support to women and children escaping DFV dealing with tenancy issues.
16. That the Queensland Government recognise the immediate and long term impact of DFV on children, and provide additional funding for the reinstatement of a dedicated children's support worker in each women's refuge.
17. That the Queensland Government recognise the economic value of the services provided by women's refuges, and lobby the Australian Government to fund research for a comprehensive cost/benefit analysis to quantify the contribution of women's refuges to the Australian economy.
18. That the Queensland Government made a dedicated, increased investment in existing, specialist women's refuges, which is protected from competition by large, generic, homelessness service providers

In consideration of the information previously outlined, DFV workers view the following Bryce Report Recommendations as urgent for implementation within a twelve month period:

Recommendation 71

The Queensland Government undertakes an immediate audit of services to ensure adequate resources are available to meet demand for specialist domestic and family violence services, including perpetrator intervention initiatives and specialist shelters.

Recommendation 74

The Queensland Government immediately, and in collaboration with the domestic and family violence service sector, establishes pilots for an integrated response model, incorporating:

- One urban integrated response to domestic and family violence.
- One regional city integrated response to domestic and family violence, with outreach programs to rural and remote communities
- One discrete Indigenous community integrated response (as discussed in section 5.2 of this Report).

Recommendation 78

The Taskforce recommends that the Queensland Government introduces enabling legislation to allow information sharing between agencies (government and non-government) within integrated responses, with appropriate safeguards. This would include legislative protection for the sharing of information without consent, if a risk assessment indicates it is for the purpose of protecting the safety of the victim and their immediate family.

Recommendation 79

The Taskforce recommends that the Queensland Government develops and shares with all relevant service providers, clear guidelines to facilitate information sharing within an integrated response, with a continued focus on obtaining consent unless a high risk threshold has been met.

Recommendation 84

The Queensland Government immediately funds two 72-hour crisis shelters in Brisbane and Townsville respectively for women and children escaping violence so that immediate safety and support can be met while awaiting a refuge placement.

Recommendation 85

The Queensland Government:

- a) Transfers responsibility and funding for domestic and family violence shelters back to a single portfolio, i.e. the portfolio that is responsible for the broader domestic and family violence service response.
- b) Commits to maintaining dedicated funding for specialist domestic and family violence accommodation, including refuges (non-competitive with generic crisis accommodation providers such as homelessness service providers).

Recommendation 87

The Queensland Government pilots a refuge that caters for families with companion animals with a view to rollout more flexible refuges into the future to meet the needs of victims.

PREGNANCY AND CHILDREN'S SUPPORT

Frontline DFV workers support the recommendations of the Bryce Report that focus on prenatal care and the important role of community health workers in responding to the needs of pregnant women experiencing DFV.

However, we note that there are no specific recommendations regarding access to abortion which remains illegal under the Criminal Code 1899. There is certainly a distinct gap in the discourse about the promotion of reproductive choice for women who have experienced DFV. In relation to this, Services Union member Sian Tooker states:-

"I work for a pro-choice service for women experiencing unplanned pregnancy and we are overwhelmed by the number of women experiencing domestic violence and/ or sexual violence and/ or reproductive coercion as part of their presentation to us. For those women choosing to terminate pregnancy, access is challenging given the costs associated with private termination of pregnancy (TOP) and that many hospitals that ignore the Therapeutic Termination of Pregnancy Guideline (a Queensland Health guideline that sanctions the therapeutic termination of pregnancy where a woman's physical or mental health is at unacceptable risk). Access to free and safe TOP for DFV survivors should be promoted"

Women experiencing DFV need to be supported to maintain reproductive freedom and choice.

Relevantly, the Bryce Report recognises the importance for Pregnant Women experiencing need to be appropriately supported by allied health and medical professionals. One of the key areas of need is for training for midwives, doctors and allied health professional to ensure that they are equipped with the skills to ask women about exposure to domestic violence and to appropriately deal with and respond to the disclosure.

Dedicated support for children who have experienced, are escaping and recovering from DFV is critical to ensure the immediate and long term impact of DFV on children is addressed. It is widely accepted that ongoing support for children who have experienced violence reduces the risk of mutigenerational harm. This is why the provision of additional funding for the reinstatement of a specialist children's worker in each refuge and funding for refuges to provide extended support to children following the refuge stay is, as recommended by the CWAG Paper vitally important.

Additionally, issues of isolation and trauma for children can be reduced by the encouragement of programs and measures that support women and children staying in the home, where safe, to do so.

Simultaneously, education is key to addressing DFV in children's lives and in our community. The implementation of children's education programs about DFV, which focus on respectful relationships, gender equality, building self esteem and how to get help is an urgent priority. The Bryce Report recommends that these programs be provided through primary and secondary schools as well as by specialist services.

In light of these factors, DFV workers feel the following Bryce Report Recommendations are priorities for delivery over the next twelve months.

Recommendation 15

The Queensland Government recognises the importance of community and government prevention programs for long term reduction of domestic and family violence and gives a clear commitment to resource and support comprehensive and coordinated prevention. In doing so, the Queensland Government must ensure both education and prevention initiatives and response programs receive funding.

Recommendation 16

The Queensland Government leads and promotes sustained, inter-generational communication in the community about the seriousness of domestic and family violence, the community's intolerance of domestic and family violence, and the services available to victims and perpetrators.

Recommendation 17

The Queensland Government funds the development of evaluation criteria and a robust evaluation program for existing and future initiatives aimed at changing culture and attitudes towards domestic and family violence. Evaluation of existing initiatives should be commenced as soon as possible.

Recommendation 24:

The Taskforce recommends that the Queensland Government leads and facilitates the introduction of programs in state schools to embed through the school life of all secondary and primary state schools a culture that emphasises:

- Developing and maintaining respectful relationships.
- Respecting self.
- Gender equality.

Recommendation 25:

The Taskforce recommends that the Queensland Government leads and facilitates the introduction of programs to ensure that all secondary students can:

- Recognise domestic and family violence and where to go for help.
- Safely intervene and provide support to victims.

Recommendation 26:

The Taskforce recommends that the Queensland Government leads and facilitates the introduction of programs to ensure that all primary students can:

- Resolve conflict without violence.
- Report fears and concerns safely.

Recommendation 27:

The Taskforce recommends that the Queensland Minister for Education works with Queensland Catholic Education Council and Independent Schools Queensland to support introduction of similar programs in private schools in Queensland.

Recommendation 28:

The Taskforce recommends that Principals of non-government schools consider the Queensland Government program and incorporate as appropriate into the school culture.

Recommendation 29:

The Taskforce recommends that the Queensland Government includes measures for implementing the programs into the performance agreements of Principals and Deputy Principals of state schools.

Recommendation 55:

The Taskforce recommends that the Queensland Government commissions the Australian College of Midwives to develop training for midwives on asking pregnant women about exposure to domestic violence during ante-natal appointments and how to deal with disclosure, and a tool kit to provide practical guidance on implementing the national practice guidelines.

Recommendation 56:

The Taskforce recommends that Hospital and Health Services ensure that all midwives receive appropriate training and that all women attending ante-natal clinics are asked about their exposure to domestic and family violence and appropriate referrals occur if domestic violence is disclosed.

Recommendation 59

The Queensland Government and DVConnect work in partnership to develop a model to provide immediate access to specialist domestic and family support and referral services within public and private maternity hospitals and emergency departments.

Recommendation 78:

The Taskforce recommends that the Queensland Government introduces enabling legislation to allow information sharing between agencies (government and non-government) within integrated responses, with appropriate safeguards. This would include legislative protection for the sharing of information without consent, if a risk assessment indicates it is for the purpose of protecting the safety of the victim and their immediate family.

Recommendation 86:

The Taskforce recommends that the Queensland Government:

- a) Provides flexibility to service providers to offer the necessary crisis accommodation required for the situation, whether that be access to a domestic and family violence refuge or brokerage funding for the perpetrator to stay in short term accommodation.
- b) Ensures the Queensland Police Service's current operational procedures strongly support women and children staying in the home, where safe, in line with the principles of the Act.
- c) Expands safety upgrade programs to give more victims the option to stay safely in their own homes.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN AND CHILDREN

We note and support the CWRG Paper acknowledges that the occurrence of DFV is overrepresented in the Indigenous community and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children are at greater risk of being subjected to DFV. Despite this, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, services have been heavily impacted by funding cuts. The CWRG Paper and Bryce Report also recognises the importance of culturally appropriate responses to the issue of DFV in the indigenous community as the issues experienced by Aboriginal women and children victims of DFV are different from those of women and children from other backgrounds.

This is why a “one size fits all” approach will have limited success, which also means that it is especially important that responses to the issue of DVF in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community are driven by Indigenous women. There is a desperate need for DFV programs and services that are responsive to the specific need of indigenous women and children escaping DFV and therefore increased funding to enable specialist services driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is of utmost importance.

Accordingly, our Union views the implementation of the following Bryce Report Recommendations as being imperative over the next twelve month period:

Recommendation 9:

The Taskforce recommends that the Queensland Government, in collaboration with local communities, develops a place-based, culturally appropriate integrated response to domestic and family violence in discrete Indigenous communities which includes:

- a) A trial of integrated service provision in one discrete Indigenous community (also discussed in Chapter 7) utilising a locally-based shelter as a hub for the provision of wraparound support services for women and children affected by domestic and family violence.
- b) Considering an expanded role of Community Justice Groups in design and implementation of the co-located service response, ensuring that they are properly resourced and supported to undertake this role.
- c) Increasing the funding for, and availability of community-driven and holistic responses to Indigenous male perpetrators

Recommendation 73

The Queensland Government explicitly outlines in the funding and investment model how new investment in service delivery for rural and remote communities will:

- Enhance collaboration and coordination.
- Encourage innovation in service delivery.
- Improve service to Queensland's rural and remote communities into the future.
- Expand technology to support victims of domestic and family violence.
- Attract and retain highly skilled workers to support victims of domestic and family violence in rural and remote communities.
- Link rural and remote services into the broader network of domestic and family violence service providers.

Recommendation 74:

The Taskforce recommends that the Queensland Government immediately, and in collaboration with the domestic and family violence service sector, establishes pilots for an integrated response model, incorporating:

- One urban integrated response to domestic and family violence.
- One regional city integrated response to domestic and family violence, with outreach programs to rural and remote communities.
- One discrete Indigenous community integrated response (as discussed in section 5.2 of this Report).

Recommendation 92

The Queensland Government works with discrete Indigenous communities to develop and support an effective local authority model to respond to crime and violence in those communities, with a priority focus on addressing domestic and family violence.

As a part of this work, consideration should be given to resourcing and expanding the role of community justice groups, JP Magistrate's courts, and related local justice initiatives as appropriate, as well as examining the specific role that community justice groups could play in conferencing, mediation, and criminal justice system support.

LEGAL

Our members want to see continued funding and expansion of recommendations already commenced such as the specialist courts, specialist magistrates, duty lawyer and other support services and the funding of frontline services to do this work. Additionally, DFV workers consider the following Recommendations to be of priority for implementation in the next year.

Recommendation 90

The Queensland Government continues its commitment to the development and implementation of a National Domestic Violence Order Scheme to achieve automatic mutual recognition and enforcement of domestic and family violence related orders across jurisdictions.

Recommendation 97

Specialist courts should include specialist divisions or programs and utilise specialist Magistrates with specialised expertise in domestic, family and intimate partner sexual violence to improve the efficacy of responses to domestic and family violence. This Recommendation is to be considered in combination with the other recommendations in this Report and in particular Recommendations 116 (interpreters), 124 (court support workers), 126 (duty-lawyers) and 80 (perpetrator interventions).

Recommendation 98

The Queensland Government considers providing for related family law children's matters (by consent) and child protection proceedings to be dealt with by the same court.

Recommendation 99

The Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act be amended so that the court must consider a family law order when making a Domestic Violence Order. An amendment also be made to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act so that the court must consider concurrent cross applications at the same time and a later application and related cross application or order.

Recommendation 100

The Queensland Government utilises trained and specialist circuit Magistrates, in areas where a specialist court is not feasible (e.g. rural and remote areas), with a good knowledge of the relevant legislation and knowledge and understanding of domestic and family violence and its impact on victims of the violence, including children who witness the violence.

Recommendation 101

The Chief Magistrate completes the domestic and family violence 'Bench Book' in consultation with relevant stakeholders (Women's Legal Service, North Queensland Women's Legal Service, Queensland Domestic Violence Services Network, Queensland Association of Independent Legal Services, Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service and Legal Aid Queensland).

Recommendation 105

The Chief Magistrate ensures that Magistrates receive intensive and regular professional development on domestic and family violence issues, including its impact on adult victims and children, from domestic and family violence practitioners who have expertise working with adult victims, children and perpetrators.

Recommendation 106

The Queensland Government ensures that court and registry staff receive compulsory training in responding to the needs of domestic and family violence clients.

Recommendation 112:

The Queensland Government:

- a) Supports the work of CrimTrac in developing a National Domestic Violence Order Information Sharing System.
- b) In the interim (acknowledging that a national scheme may take some time to be negotiated and implemented) progress bilateral agreements with other jurisdictions (in particular bordering jurisdictions such as New South Wales) where possible to facilitate increased information sharing for the protection of victims of domestic and family violence.

Recommendation 113

The Queensland Police Service strengthens policy and guideline documents to ensure the use of interpreters for victims of domestic and family violence and their families, where required.

Recommendation 117

The Queensland Government amends the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act to require a court when making a Domestic Violence Order to consider whether an order excluding the perpetrator from the home should be made, having regard to the wishes of the victim.

Recommendation 124

The Queensland Government employs court support workers for all Magistrates Courts for domestic and family violence matters for all applicants and information/liaison officers for all respondents.

Recommendation 125

The Queensland Government develops a formal position description and guidelines for court support workers and information/liaison officers to provide uniformity in support to people through domestic and family violence proceedings, and that the Chief Magistrate looks at the consistency across all Magistrates Courts on the role of court support workers.

Recommendation 140

The Queensland Government undertakes a review of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act by 31 December 2015, to ensure a cohesive legislative framework for domestic and family violence in Queensland that incorporates major reforms recommended in this Report. Resulting legislative amendments to be made as soon as possible, but not later than by 30 June 2016.