

15/06/2022

The Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service
responses to domestic and family violence
PO Box 12264
George Street Qld 4003

Dear Commissioners,

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) welcome the opportunity for provide a written submission for the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence.

The AASW is the national professional association for social workers representing more than 16,000 members across Australia, with more than 3,000 members in Queensland. The AASW works to promote the profession of social work including setting the benchmark for professional education and practice in social work, while also advocating on matters of human rights to advance social justice.

The AASW would like to note the following points and would expect all policy consideration and reforms to be responsive to these points:

- Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) is a pervasive, life-threatening crime that impacts on thousands of women and children with serious physical, psychological and economic effects.
- DVF is not just physical or sexual violence, but can also include or manifest in other ways involving power and control tactics, including psychological, emotional, financial, spiritual, legal, social, technology-facilitated and, visa abuse; neglect; stalking; and, reproductive violence.
- While men can be the victims of DVF, it is more likely to be perpetrated by men (predominately by a woman's current or ex- partner) towards women and their children.

Our submission to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce in June 2021 highlighted the urgent need to reform the way in which Queensland Police Service (QPS) respond to DVF in instances where¹:

1. reports of DVF do not meet the threshold for substantial investigation, in particular, allegations of coercive controlling behaviours and use of technologies to intimidate victims;
2. the victim-survivors native language is not English; and,
3. the victim-survivors are First Nations Australian women.

¹ Australia Association of Social Workers 2021, submission to the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, accessed 23 June 2022, https://www.womenstaskforce.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/692330/wsjt-submission-australian-association-of-social-workers-redacted.pdf

Our submission indicated a significant cultural shift and reforms of the QPS is required due to their responses to victim-survivors of family and domestic violence. We reiterate that the following key recommendations are required²:

1. That training provided for police to include building their understanding of coercive controlling behaviours and systemic abuse;
 - a. And that the training includes an understanding of women's coping mechanisms to this type of abuse to prevent the misidentification of the primary perpetrator when attending an incident;
2. The Queensland Government fund Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and multicultural family violence liaison officers in the social services, including the QPS, in Queensland;
3. The Queensland Government develop DFV professional development programs for police officers with the requirement to undertake mandatory refresher courses, including capabilities to recognise:
 - a. the extreme risk profile of strangulation
 - b. coercive controlling behaviours
 - c. the enforcement of existing Family Violence Orders such as the Ouster Order.

Further to this, the AASW refers the Commission to the report of the Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria, where it provided detailed recommendations for police service reform. We want to draw your attention to the following recommendations that can be applicable in the context of Queensland Police Service:

1. *Rec. 35: Additional resources for processing and responding to police referrals*³
2. *Rec. 41: Ensure Victoria Police have guidance for identifying family violence primary aggressors*⁴
3. *Rec. 43: Specialist family violence position holders review police files and cases*⁵
4. *Rec. 159: Victoria Police amend the Code of Practice around the use of interpreters*⁶

The AASW supports an integrated approach to police investigation in which a team of multi-disciplinary professionals assist victim-survivors to engage with police. This is a critical step to ensure that women feel safe and that culturally safe support can be provided for victim-survivor from the moment when they engage police. We refer the Commission to the Victorian Family Violence Referral Protocol in which a formal or an informal referral from police service to a

² Ibid.

³ See specifically, 'Increased funding has been provided to police referral recipient family violence agencies (including Safe Steps) to strengthen their response to police referrals.'

⁴ See specifically, 'review and amend the current Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence to include all changes to police practice from our reforms to the family violence system. This includes more guidance for police in identifying the primary aggressor in situations where it is unclear, and potential system changes.'

⁵ See specifically, 'develop an audit framework to support specialist family violence position holders to monitor compliance with the Victoria Police Code of Practice.'

⁶ See specifically, 'amend the Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence to emphasise the risks associated with using children as interpreters and using the same interpreter for both perpetrator and victim, as well as to provide practical guidance to officers on the use of interpreters provide training at all appropriate levels on the amended Code of Practice requirements relating to interpreters'



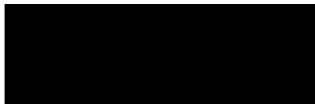
community-based family violence service or/and a specialist family violence service is required upon investigation.⁷ **Our recommendation is that Accredited Family Violence Social Workers are nominated as part of the expert panel to develop this integrated investigation approach.**

The AASW also recognises that different aspects of a person's identity can expose victim-survivors to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. In the context of FDV, police officers need to identify how the multiplicity of identities, such as women with disability, First Nations Australian women, women who do not speak English as first language, LGBTIQ women, and women on temporary visas can be associated with different sources of oppression and discrimination, and how those intersections can lead to increased risk, severity and frequency of experiencing different forms of violence. We refer the Commission to the submissions made by lived experience organisations and peak bodies and recommend working in collaboration with them to address the barriers for women of all backgrounds to engage with QPS.

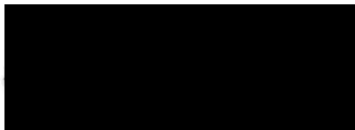
The AASW welcomes further opportunities to work more closely with the Police Service in Queensland to increase the safety of women who are experiencing violence by developing greater awareness and understanding by the Queensland police of the complexities and nuances of DFV to better inform their responses.

If you have further questions or queries, please contact Rachel Reilly (AASW Policy and Advocacy Manager), via rachel.reilly@asw.asn.au, and Charles Chu (AASW Social Policy and Advocacy Officer), via Charles.chu@asw.asn.au.

Yours sincerely,



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⁷ Family Safety Victoria 2018, *Family Violence Referral Protocol: between the Department of Health and Human Services, Family Safety Victoria, Department of Justice and Regulation and Victoria Police*, Melbourne: Australia.