

CONTINUED STATEMENT OF: **FELTHAM, Elise**

increase and enhance our DFV response. On that trip I visited the DFV teams at Logan and in South Brisbane.

6. In 2017 I was selected to become a trainer for the Vulnerable Persons training that was delivered over 2 full days to all officers throughout the state. After attending the training course, I delivered this course in company with other police officers to the entire Townsville District. This delivery took a period of 6 months.
7. In 2018 I developed and delivered a yearly DVLO workshop at Townsville that went for a full day and concentrated on delivering a better response to victims and reviewing DFV related occurrences for risk rather than for compliance. The objective was to help support the station DVLO's and create consistency throughout the district. This worked well as it gave DVLO's the opportunity to meet and discuss common issues, which later led to a collaborative approach when protracted or complex DFV incidents occurred. I found that with these workshops, the DVLO's became more confident to contact myself and each other, to discuss best options for providing the best policing response to the situation they were addressing.
8. In 2018 I attended a 3-day Strangulation workshop that was held in Brisbane and coordinated by the QPS and the Red Rose Foundation. There were several guest lecturers at the conference from the San Diego Strangulation Institute, as well as prosecutors and DFV specialist support services.
9. In 2019 I attended the 3-day Australasian Indigenous Family Violence Conference which was held in Cairns.
10. Also, in 2019 I attended the first Australian and New Zealand Police Domestic & Family Violence forum that was held in Melbourne, Victoria.

Townsville DFV & VPU

11. The Townsville DFV & VPU currently has 6 substantive positions which includes 1 x Sergeant and 5 x Senior Constables. We are currently rotating 6 officers through the unit. These officers either apply or are chosen from the five metropolitan stations in Townsville city (Mundingburra, Kirwan, Stuart, Deeragun and Townsville City). This arrangement was commenced 6 months ago and was created to provide 100 % reviews of all DFV related occurrences in the metro area, as well as offer a better prevention and disruption response to the district. After spending either 3 or 6 months in the DFV & VPU, it is expected that those officers return to their station and enhance station responses to DFV through guiding and offering advice to officers on the road.
12. In relation to a mental health response, the DFV & VPU also have 2 fulltime mental health Clinicians that work in the unit and work with officers to provide one Mental Health Co-responder unit that works every day of the week.
13. The DFV & VPU works on a 2-shift roster, 7 days a week. The shifts are 7am-3pm and 2pm-10pm.
14. The DFV & VPU are not a first response unit. DFV&VPU attend a DFV incident when requested by a first response unit.
15. The unit works out from the Mundingburra Police Complex and there is usually 2 officers on per shift, per day.

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- 16. In the district, the majority of the DFV related calls for service (CFS) come between the hours of 12pm and 12am daily, with Thursday, Friday, Saturday nights usually the busiest.
- 17. The DFV & VPU will usually get the most requests for assistance, either first thing in the mornings after incidents that have come in overnight, or often after 12pm for jobs that are occurring in the afternoons. It really can depend on what the first response officer needs from the VPU, so there is no real specific time when DFV & VPU have a heavier workload.
- 18. The following responsibilities will be conducted daily, or as operationally practicable:

Domestic Violence Occurrences

- 19. One hundred percent reviews of Domestic violence occurrences recorded on QPrime, ensuring an appropriate policing response and compliance with policy and legislation on a metro wide basis. When reviewing each occurrence, the DFV & VPU will determine if legislative and policy compliance requirements are met along with the appropriate investigative process conducted by investigating officers. The DFV & VPU will note repeat extreme DV offenders where further action, such as case management or additional support is required. Such offenders will be referred to the Domestic Violence Integrated Response Group for discussion and monitoring. The VPU will work collaboratively with external agencies when required on specific matters to ensure the safety of the aggrieved and the perpetrator is held accountable for their behaviour. All information with prescribed entities is shared under Part 5A of the DFVPA 2012.

DFV Case Management

- 20. Using the DFV PAF and in conjunction with the High Risk High Harm Dashboard the DFV & VPU monitor the most extreme DFV offenders throughout the district. Each district throughout the state has a different demographic and Townsville DFV manifests itself differently to that of other policing jurisdictions. The DFV & VPU analysis of the DFV offending in North Queensland identifies that physical violence plays a large role in DFV incidents rather than behaviours like coercive control. For example, assaults (unlawful wounding) are common. In declaring an extreme DFV offender, Townsville District takes into account that even though serious physical violence may have been committed by the respondent, it's not as strong an indicator of lethality like that of separation, suicidality, and strangulation. Case management will involve a review of the previous offending, contact with the aggrieved person/s to offer support and sharing information with all Government and non-government prescribed entities. Most extreme offenders will be brought before the DV Integrated Response Group to afford an interagency response to both the respondent and the aggrieved.

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21. This operation has been developed to prevent and disrupt extreme DFV offenders who have been incarcerated for committing DFV offending. DFV & VPU officers will attend the Townsville Correctional Centre each Wednesday to speak with and offer referrals to those offenders who are about to be released on parole or full-time release. DFV & VPU officers also visit with these offenders who have only just been remanded in custody for DFV offending and re-serve their Protection Orders and discuss what the DFV & VPU can do to assist them and offer advice on what DFV is and how they can avoid further charges whilst in custody (quite often contraventions of the DVO can be committed via the prison telephone system).

Operation Tango Glastron

22. The DFV & VPU conduct home visits and offer support and advice to both aggrieved and respondent persons who have only just become engaged with the DFV process (Eg - first time that have been named on an order). This is also a prevention and disruption strategy that was developed to stop first time offending. Due to the large volume of community members that don't understand what constitutes DFV, having police attend and offer support and guidance when the family isn't at the point of crisis gives both the respondent and aggrieved time to ask questions and make decisions about what support they may need. It also offers reassurance to the aggrieved that police have identified any risk they may be at and affords the respondent the awareness that Police are aware of their behaviour.

Domestic Violence Integrated Response Group (DVIRG)

23. The VPU hold/attend the Domestic Violence Integrated Response Group (DVIRG) meetings on a weekly basis. DVIRG facilitates sharing of appropriate information between the prescribed entities, specialist DFV service providers and non-government support service providers to develop, implement and monitor action plans for extreme risk domestic violence matters. The purpose of DVIRG is to provide an action-based, local integrated service response where it has been identified there is a serious threat to the life, health, and or safety of a person because of domestic violence to maximise their safety, protection, and wellbeing.
24. Townsville District does not have a High-Risk Team (HRT), so DVIRG was created by the QPS in 2017 after the information sharing legislation was introduced. I am now aware that a HRT for Townsville has been announced and this will replace DVIRG once it commences.

Domestic Violence Follow Up Response – Operation Tango Glastron

25. In collaboration with local support services including the Townsville Family Violence Support Service (Yumba Meta), the DFV & VPU provide an integrated response to specific families where it has been identified domestic violence is repeatedly occurring in the home. The aim of this project is to reduce domestic violence related calls for service and provide the families with additional support where required. Effective case management of these individuals involves correctly identifying their needs and connecting them with adequate and appropriate support

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to reduce the risk of harm. The VPU will continue to monitor and liaise with the support services to ensure best practices and consistency.

Vulnerable Persons On-Road Response and Support

26. The VPU will deliver an on-road response for general duties crews to provide advice and assistance with domestic violence and related calls for service involving vulnerable persons.
27. When a call for service is in relation to domestic and family violence, the VPU will support first response officer's in providing guidance and advice but will not assume the role as the investigator. In certain circumstances, the VPU may provide immediate assistance to an aggrieved and children where vital, for their protection and the progression of the investigation (Eg - transport, obtaining aggrieved statement in the home).

Mental Health Co-Responder Team

28. Townsville District Police and Queensland Health have implemented the Police and Mental Health Co-Responder, Crisis Response Team (Co-Responder). This initiative is aimed at providing a safer, more efficient, and effective response to the management and resolution of mental health incidences in the community. A Clinical Nurse Consultant joins with an officer from the VPU to respond to calls for service involving a mental health crisis or situation. The Co-Responder Team provides onsite clinical assessment and intervention advice for a person suffering a mental health related crisis.

High Profile or Complaint Investigations

29. The DFV & VPU upon advice from Townsville District Management or the Professional Practice Manager will investigate any sensitive or high profile domestic and family violence matters (Eg - internal QPS member, politically sensitive matters, or matters involving a public figure).

Domestic Violence Court Support

30. The VPU provides assistance to Townsville Police Prosecutions with informing vulnerable persons of information relating to the court process (Eg - appearance in court, witness preparation etc).

Calls for Assistance

31. Townsville District receive approx. 30-35 DFV CFS per 24 hrs. The DFV & VPU receive 2 calls for assistance per day, which requires a physical response and approx. 5-10 phone calls per day offering advice and guidance to officers throughout the district. DFV & VPU can receive in excess of 20 calls for support or guidance to support agencies and other prescribed entries per weekday.

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- 32. Most DFV CFS received for a policing response are between 12pm and 12am daily with Thursday, Friday, Saturday being the busiest days of the week.
- 33. The DFV & VPU will receive calls regularly during the hours of 7am and 10pm with no time busier than the other.
- 34. DFV & VPU will spend anywhere from 10 to 30 minutes on the phone with either police crews, prosecutors, or external agencies.
- 35. It is uncommon for calls to the Townsville DFV & VPU to go unanswered. Usually, most officers and support services have the unit mobile number or officer mobile phone numbers. There is also an answering machine in the DFV & VPU for officers to return calls.
- 36. Townsville DFV & VPU assist by providing best policing response recommendations to officers, assisting the aggrieved with accommodation needs and transport, case management review with prescribed entities, provide court result copies of DVO's, clarifying conditions on DVO's.
- 37. QPRIME is updated when action is taken by the DFV & VPU. If officers call the DFV & VPU for guidance we recommend they add the unit in the QPRIME report.
- 38. Townsville DFV & VPU has received very positive feedback from officers who have relied on it for assistance or guidance. External agencies are all very supportive of the DFV & VPU and it allows them a specific area to call concerning their needs and inquiries, rather than calling a police station who may not be able to provide the answer.
- 39. Most comments from officers and external agencies are around the consistency of approach by the DFV & VPU and the trust in the officers providing the advice and/or support. Trust and confidence in the stakeholder engagement is essential for a collaborative approach and having specialist sections allows for that stakeholder collaboration to grow and produce positive results.

Effectiveness of DFV & VPU

- 40. I consider DFV & VPU to be effective. In the last 5 years I have seen an enormous improvement in the area of DFV in the Townsville District. The DFV & VPU has added support and reassurance to our partner agencies and to victims in the community that have previously been disheartened by a policing response.
- 41. I think that the DFV & VPU having access to other agency data bases would assist and reduce the time it may take to obtain a more detailed understanding of domestic and family violence relative to that victim or offender. This can be either via co-location of prescribed entities or having prescribed officers having access to other data bases as a guest for retrieving the required information.

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Opportunities for Improvement

- 42. More specialist training is a must. Police can't deliver a victim centric trauma informed response to DFV without regular updated training at a district and state level. Depending what the DFV & VPU are trying to achieve will depend on what a unit would require. A dedicated investigative (detectives) and intelligence response embedded with the DFV & VPU would enhance our overcall capacity and response and ensure appropriate follow up and criminal investigation is available to the unit.
- 43. It is also essential to have access to external agencies and DFV specialist services after hours, as a high volume of DFV CFS occur after hours leaving police with limited support and safety options for a victim. Approximately 70% of DFV CFS are received after hours (*information retrieved from QPS Response & Attendance Dashboard*). Having an after hours DFV response team would also ensure higher prosecution rates due to support supplied to victims who receive immediate uptake with specialist DFV workers ensuring trust and more confidence in the court process. Having support services be able to do outreach with police would be also greatly beneficial to victims.
- 44. There is a large majority of intelligence received from agencies like Community Corrections and Community agencies involving DFV. Each DFV & VPU being allocated a new position for a specialist intelligence officer, would assist in police in being better prepared for high-risk offending and assist in predicting perpetrator behaviours.

What do you think success looks like for QPS VPU's?

- 45. In my opinion, success for DFV & VPUs is offering a strong, timely response to DFV calls for service and ensuring police conduct a thorough investigation through the support and guidance from DFV & VPU's. It would involve the co-location of prescribed entities and DFV specialist support workers, who all have a specialist area expertise in the DFV portfolio (Eg - victim support, perpetrator support, child support, housing support, medical support, prosecutions support, family law support, crisis accommodation and counselling support, child education support, child trauma counselling).

.....
 Elise Feltham

Justices Act 1886

I acknowledge by virtue of section 110A(6C)(c) of the *Justices Act 1886* that:

- (1) This written statement by me datedand contained in the pages numbered 1 to 9 is true to the best of my knowledge and belief; and
- (2) I make this statement knowing that I may be liable to prosecution for stating in it anything that I know is false.

(Witness's signature)	(Justice of the Peace (Qual.)/ Commissioner for Declarations's signature)	(Signature of police officer preparing statement)
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.....Signature

Signed at Brisbane this day of July 2022.

(Witness's signature)

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