



PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT 10 November 2022

Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence

Report 5: 2022–23

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The Honourable C Pitt MP
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
BRISBANE QLD 4000

10 November 2022

This report is prepared under Part 3 Division 3 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*.



Brendan Worrall
Auditor-General



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Help and support

If you or anyone you know is experiencing domestic and family violence, please call one of the services listed below. In an emergency, always call Triple Zero (000).

- DVConnect Womensline: 1800 811 811 – 24 hours, 7 days a week.
 - National helpline: 1800 RESPECT – 1800 737 732 – 24 hours, 7 days a week.
 - Policelink: 131 444 – 24 hours, 7 days a week.
 - DVConnect Mensline: 1800 600 636 – 9 am to midnight, 7 days a week.
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Auditor-General's foreword

Domestic and family violence is a serious, complex, and widespread issue for society, and a great deal of work and effort has gone into responding to it. As such, it has been our intention to audit the effectiveness of public sector entities in addressing this problem. We first included this audit on our forward work plan (strategic audit plan) in 2016 and have consulted widely and monitored performance information since then.

The government and non-government entities who carry out this work and effort are overloaded and under pressure, which at times has contributed to poor responses and, even tragic, outcomes. These have led to reviews and coronial inquests, increased efforts, funding, and new initiatives, including changes to legislation.

Since 2015 the Queensland Government has committed more than \$600 million in programs, services and strategies to address domestic and family violence. It has spurred efforts to improve how we deal with domestic and family violence, raise awareness about it in the community, and encourage people to recognise and report it. Some efforts have also been made to co-locate different services and to cooperate on specific issues.

Despite all of this, and the fact that every review has recommended more information-sharing and more collaborative efforts, the various government and non-government entities that deal with domestic violence are still not working together as much as they need to.

Domestic and family violence is not just a matter of a victim and a perpetrator, and it is more than just crisis management. Government needs to take a holistic approach to dealing with it. This means considering everyone in the family or relationship unit, particularly children.

It means focusing on prevention, and on helping young people who have lived through domestic and family violence to not follow that path themselves. It means managing perpetrators, giving them alternatives, and providing useful rehabilitation and meaningful deterrents.

It means knocking down the silos that exist in the relevant entities, ensuring that everyone who needs to make decisions or take action has the full picture. They need to deliver a seamless and coordinated service response to tackle this challenge. It is not happening at present.

In this performance audit, we identify opportunities to understand the results of existing efforts, by monitoring, evaluating and reporting on the outcomes. We highlight the need for entities to take account of everyone in family and relationship units.

And we stress the need for them to ensure all the various services and responses – prevention, enforcement, justice, education, health, corrective services, and rehabilitation – work together to effectively deal with domestic and family violence.

During the conduct of our audit, the state government established the Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence (the Commission). We have liaised with the Commission as well as various other reviewers during the conduct of our audit. In forming our recommendations, we have incorporated the results of our consultation and considered existing recommendations from these various other reviews and inquiries into domestic and family violence. Some of the recommendations I have made complement or build on some recommendations from these other reviews and inquiries.



Brendan Worrall
Auditor-General



Report on a page

Domestic and family violence (DFV) is a complex societal problem that needs a comprehensive, coordinated response. The complexity arises because of the mix of victims, perpetrators, types of violence, involvement of children, and the sheer scale of the problem.

This audit examined how effectively state public sector entities keep people safe from DFV, prevent it from occurring, and rehabilitate perpetrators to minimise re-offending. We also assessed how they coordinate with non-government DFV services.

A holistic approach and more education and rehabilitation are needed

The Queensland Government recognises the size of the domestic and family violence challenge and is taking steps to deal with it, but more training, more information-sharing, and more monitoring of efforts is required. This, together with a holistic focus and a concerted, coordinated approach, will help the entities involved to make a difference. At present, no entity has overall responsibility for coordinating case information and management. Each manages cases independently and focuses on its specific role.

The number of young people under supervision for DFV offences has increased by 57 per cent, yet minimal services and programs are available for them. The Department of Education's *Respect* program (formerly the *Respectful Relationships Education* program), which is a preventative measure, is not measured in terms of use, detail, or outcomes. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General has limited knowledge of the rehabilitation programs it funds, and few rehabilitation programs and services are available for adult DFV perpetrators in prison and community settings. Prisons are also limited in how they monitor the behaviour of DFV offenders.

Responses to domestic and family violence

The system that responds to DFV in Queensland is under pressure. As first responders, the Queensland Police Service (QPS) recorded over 139,000 DFV occurrences in 2021–22 – an increase of nearly 48 per cent in the last 6 years. The QPS is assigning a lower-priority response category (requiring a reduced police response) to more DFV calls, and is not responding within the target time frame to all of those calls it assesses as urgent. The police's job of responding is complicated by a lack of consistent access to relevant and accurate information, such as warning flags, partly because limited information is shared across the DFV sector. At a time when demand is increasing, there are significant gaps in the quality and coordination of responses and services. Responders lack training, are missing information or not using it, and are not adequately assessing risk.

It is positive that QPS is referring more people for support. It is also applying for more domestic violence orders on behalf of victims. Police applications have a higher chance of being granted than those victims apply for, indicating victims need more support from the courts.

Recommendations

We have made 21 recommendations. Many are aimed at enhancing responses, training, case management, interagency coordination, and preventing domestic and family violence. We have also made recommendations to better support young people and tackle intergenerational violence.



1. Audit conclusions

In most cases, the relevant public sector entities and service providers help keep people safe from domestic violence. But the entities are under pressure and not always as effective as they should be, which can lead to unacceptable and even tragic consequences. Much more needs to be done, including a shift in focus from incident response to case management.

The government needs to strengthen its prevention, education, and early intervention services to ensure action occurs before risk escalates. More coordination is needed – in terms of the case management of victims, perpetrators, and children – to prevent the recurrence of violence. The overall approach needs to shift from relying mostly on a reactive incident response, to a holistic case management approach catering for all members of a family or relationship unit.

The relevant public sector entities are not effectively rehabilitating perpetrators of domestic violence, largely because they have not developed nor invested in adequate or sufficient rehabilitation programs. They are also failing to proactively address the intergenerational transmission of violence, providing few support services for children and adolescents exposed to domestic violence. The *Respect* program available to all Queensland schools is a small but positive step in educating children and adolescents, but more needs to be done to ensure it is effective. At present, entities rely too heavily on this program, yet they do not monitor its effectiveness and it is not compulsory for non-public schools.

The state government has invested considerable effort and funds in improving its response, and there are some early signs of progress. Police are doing more in terms of referrals to DFV support services, and in applying for and issuing protection orders and notices. QPS is also acting more on breaches of orders and using new laws relating to strangulation offences (although neither QPS nor the Department of Justice and Attorney-General have yet evaluated how effective these are). Some interagency coordination is also happening.

Significant gaps also exist in coordination between response entities and DFV service providers. Police need to improve the ways in which they respond, and other entities could provide more support to help them in this. Better coordination and timely sharing of information across entities is needed to close gaps in service delivery. Entities also need to review and improve the performance of those responses that are coordinated across entities. By doing this, those entities can help ensure people experiencing domestic and family violence will get the right support, at the right time.

Police and other DFV response workers need to be trained in how to work together to provide complete, seamless, and effective case management. In addition, many of the people involved – including police first responders and specialists – lack job-specific DFV training.

The Queensland Government recognises the size of the domestic and family violence challenge and is taking steps to deal with it, but more training, more information-sharing, and more monitoring of efforts is required. This, together with a holistic focus and a concerted, coordinated approach, will help the entities involved to make more of a difference.



2. Recommendations

Response to domestic and family violence incidents

We recommend that the **Queensland Police Service**:

1. ensures its prioritisation of domestic and family violence calls for service is appropriate and effective. This should include assessing all categories and investigating the significant increase in calls being categorised as Code 4 priority
2. undertakes a root cause analysis into delayed response times for calls regarding domestic and family violence, particularly those related to Code 2 and 3 priority calls for service.

Accessibility of information and warning flags

We recommend that the **Queensland Police Service**:

3. strengthens its system and processes for sharing and accessing information, including better guidance and training and better use of warning flags to communicate risk.

Acting to protect people

We recommend that the **Department of Justice and Attorney-General** and the **Queensland Police Service**:

4. enhance support within courts to assist victims in making private applications for domestic violence and temporary protection orders
5. identify why a high proportion of prosecutions for *Criminal Code Act 1899* s. 315A offences (choking, suffocation, or strangulation) are unsuccessful
6. gather and analyse data to assess where action is needed to improve access to, and timeliness and effectiveness of, referrals to DFV support services.

Training

We recommend that the **Queensland Police Service**:

7. ensures all police receive adequate and ongoing domestic and family violence-specific training appropriate to their role, and in particular that
 - it provides all police officers mandatory annual face-to-face training on domestic and family violence
 - all operational supervisors receive additional domestic and family violence training in accordance with the leadership requirements of their role. This should include periodic refresher/update training for supervisors who remain operational for extended periods
 - all police officers assigned to specialist domestic and family violence roles receive advanced domestic and family violence training in accordance with the specialist requirements of their role. This should occur within a short period of officers being newly assigned to these roles. Periodic refreshers/update training should be made available to officers who remain in specialist roles for extended periods.

We recommend that the **Department of Justice and Attorney-General** and the **Queensland Police Service**:

8. implement a cross-agency training program focused on enhancing inter-agency roles, coordination, communication, protocols, and multidisciplinary approaches. This should include other key domestic and family violence support and service delivery entities, such as the courts, the Department of Health, the hospital and health services, the Department of Education, and non-government victim support services.



Holistic case management

We recommend that the **Department of Justice and Attorney-General**:

9. establishes a holistic case management approach to domestic and family violence that considers the context and impact on the broader family or relationship and includes
 - coordinating case management across entities and services
 - integrating risk assessment to consider all risk factors, and all people directly and indirectly exposed to domestic and family violence
 - taking collective responsibility for managing risk and ensuring staff are trained to assess risk
 - providing seamless access to information and data
 - working collaboratively and coordinating services and support
10. analyses data and information to regularly evaluate the performance of high-risk teams, drive improvements, share learnings, inform resourcing and funding, and ensure all high-risk victims are being referred
11. refers all consenting high-risk victims in Queensland to high-risk teams and provides support appropriate to their assessed risk, regardless of geographical boundaries
12. improves the recording and availability of high-risk teams' information to ensure it is accessible across the teams and to all police responding to domestic and family violence incidents.

We recommend that the **Department of Justice and Attorney-General** and the **Queensland Police Service**:

13. progressively expand co-location and co-responder approaches across the state and include a wider range of services to better meet the needs of victims and people affected by domestic and family violence. This includes integrating them with high-risk teams and the Queensland Police Service's Domestic, Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons units.

We recommend that the **Department of Justice and Attorney-General** and the **Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs**:

14. develop strategies, resource, fund and identify suitable programs to provide support services specifically for children and young people exposed to domestic and family violence.

We recommend that the **Department of Health** and **hospital and health services**:

15. strengthen screening and risk assessing practices by
 - implementing the recommendations of the Death Review and Advisory Board (set up under the *Coroners Act 2003* to research and analyse data and make recommendations to government) as a priority
 - ensuring its risk assessment and screening tools are updated and widely available across the health system
 - mandating and delivering face-to-face domestic and family violence training for all frontline health workers.

Prevention and education

We recommend that the **Department of Justice and Attorney-General**:

16. collects and analyses its expenditure data to quantify and assess the government's investment in domestic and family violence, in particular its funding of prevention and early intervention initiatives.

We recommend that the **Department of Education**:

17. annually assesses the delivery, reach, and effectiveness of the *Respect* program in Queensland state schools.

Rehabilitation

We recommend that the **Department of Justice and Attorney-General** and the **Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy**:

18. develop strategies to provide a range of crisis accommodation including for perpetrators of domestic and family violence, taking into consideration the management of risk to victims.

We recommend that the **Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Queensland Corrective Services** and the **Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs**:

19. increase the number, range, and quality of rehabilitation programs, including specific programs tailored for young people.

We recommend that the **Department of Justice and Attorney-General**:

20. strengthens its oversight and monitoring of its funded programs by

- reviewing the demand, type, availability, and accessibility of perpetrator programs across Queensland
- collecting data on attendance rates, completion rates, and waiting lists for its funded programs
- evaluating the effectiveness of its funded programs.

We recommend that **Queensland Corrective Services**:

21. enhances its systems and processes for monitoring prisoners to ensure they do not breach domestic violence orders.

Reference to comments

In accordance with s. 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, we provided a copy of this report to relevant entities. In reaching our conclusions, we considered their views and represented them to the extent we deemed relevant and warranted. Any formal responses from the entities are at [Appendix A](#).



3. Responding to violence

In this chapter we report on government entities' effectiveness in responding to domestic and family violence incidents. We focus on the Queensland Police Service (QPS), because of its frontline role.

This chapter also details our findings and recommendations about these issues.

Crisis and incident response

As first responders to domestic and family violence occurrences, police perform an important role, and they do so 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. These occurrences usually represent a crisis point for the victim, who often feels at risk and in immediate need of assistance.

The demand on police is increasing



In 2021–22, the QPS recorded 139,135 DFV occurrences. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (*Personal Safety, Australia* survey, 2016), up to 80 per cent of DFV occurrences are not reported to police. Eighty-two per cent of women and 97 per cent of men who report experiencing DFV from a current partner did not report it to police.

Between 2015–16 and 2021–22, the number of reported occurrences increased by 47.8 per cent. The state government cannot determine if this indicates an increase of DFV in the community, or a greater willingness of people to report it.

In 2019, the Queensland Treasury Corporation and the QPS reviewed demand for police services. They identified that it takes almost 12 hours on average to investigate a domestic violence occurrence. This includes completing an application for a domestic violence order (DVO – a document issued by the court to stop threats or acts of domestic violence). The QPS estimates that about 40 per cent of all of its recorded occurrences relate to DFV.

In the Queensland Audit Office's *Forward Work Plan 2022–25*, we have an audit on deploying police resources, which we intend to table in parliament in 2022–23. It will examine in detail how effectively the QPS manages demand for its services.

First responders to domestic and family violence incidents

Matching the response to the urgency

The QPS prioritises calls for service (including for DFV occurrences) depending on the urgency, with Code 1 classified as 'very urgent' and Code 2 considered 'urgent'. The QPS only classifies 24 per cent of DFV calls for police assistance as Code 1 or 2. Figure 3A shows the percentage classification of codes between 2015–16 and 2021–22.



Figure 3A
Classification of priority codes between 2015–16 and 2021–22

Classification	Priority	Percentage of calls
Code 1	Very urgent	0.08
Code 2	Urgent	23.96
Code 3	Direct response required	70.06
Code 4	Alternate resolution	5.90
Code 5	No police tasking required	nil

Note: 8.9 per cent of data was excluded due to a data quality issue.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using Queensland Police computer-aided dispatch (QCAD) data provided by the Queensland Police Service.

DEFINITION

Code 1 – very urgent – for circumstances of imminent danger to human life or where life is ‘actually and directly threatened’ with imminent danger.

Code 2 – urgent – for circumstances similar to Code 1 but when danger or threat to human life is not imminent. Code 2 calls include circumstances involving injury, or a present threat of injury, to a person or property.

Code 3 – requires a direct police response to an incident that is occurring and/or may escalate.

Code 4 – may be resolved by alternate resolution, which, according to the QPS operational procedures manual, consists of resolving the matter over the phone or by making an appointment with the caller.

Code 5 – does not require a police tasking.

Source: Queensland Police Service Operational Procedures Manual (OPM) 9.3.1, Chapter 14, sections 14.22.1 and 14.24.2.

When the QPS does classify a call as urgent, it often fails to respond within its targeted time frames. The percentage of calls categorised as Code 3 has decreased each year, from 72.9 per cent in 2015–16 to 68 per cent in 2021–22. There has been a slight increase in calls categorised as Code 2, but a more significant increase in Code 4 calls (from 4 per cent in 2015–16 to 8.2 per cent in 2021–22).

This indicates police are responding to an increasing percentage of DFV calls by alternate resolution rather than direct response. In 2021–22, 8,318 DFV calls were responded to by alternate resolution.

The QPS has not assessed:

- why there is such a significant increase in this type of response to DFV
- whether these calls are being appropriately classified
- the effectiveness of alternate resolution in DFV cases.

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Queensland Police Service ensures its prioritisation of domestic and family violence calls for service is appropriate and effective. This should include assessing all categories and investigating the significant increase in calls being categorised as Code 4 priority.

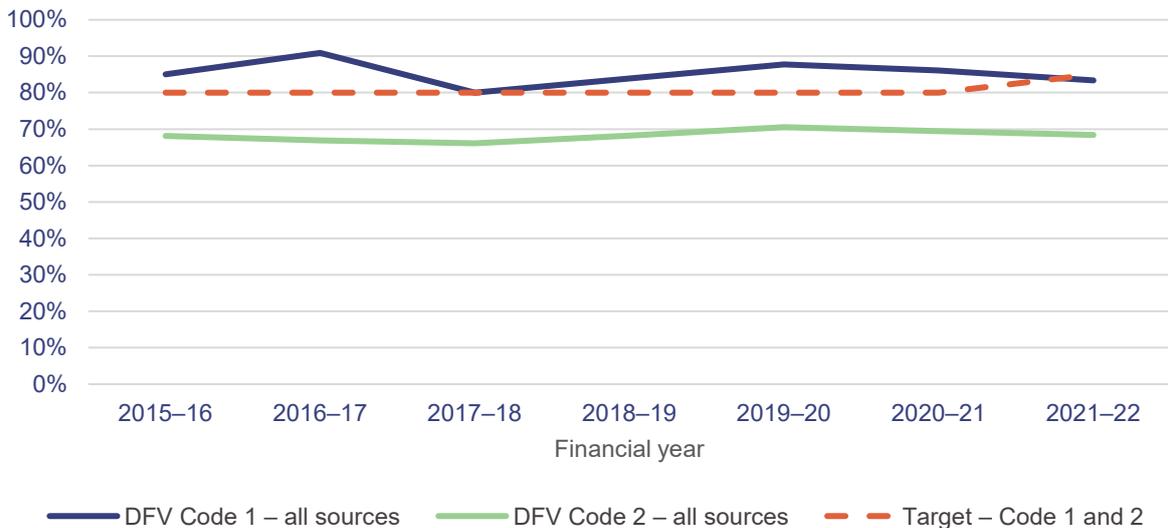
Responding quickly

Before 2021–22, the QPS aimed to respond to 80 per cent of Code 1 and 2 calls for service within 12 minutes. The time is measured from when the call taker creates the task requiring police to attend, to when police arrive on scene. (This does not count the 2 minutes and 44 seconds it takes to create the task for Code 1 and Code 2 calls.) In 2021–22, it increased its target to 85 per cent.

Figure 3B shows our analysis of Code 1 and 2 calls specific to DFV occurrences. The QPS has consistently met or exceeded its 80 per cent 12-minute response target for DFV Code 1 calls over this period, but its performance has declined since 2019–20. In 2021–22 it fell just short of meeting the increased 85 per cent target.

The QPS has not met its target for responses to DFV Code 2 calls for service and has been well below its 80 per cent target in each of the 7 years (see Figure 3B).

Figure 3B
Percentage of Code 1 and 2 calls for service responded to within 12 minutes



Note: Police only report 000 calls publicly, but they make up most calls for service. Very few Code 1 calls are made outside 000. 8.9 per cent of data was excluded due to a data quality issue.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using QCAD data provided by the Queensland Police Service.



The median time for the QPS to respond to Code 3 calls is 36 minutes and 25 seconds. As the QPS has no target for responding to these, it is difficult for us to assess timeliness. However, we found it responds to 80 per cent of Code 3 calls within 1 hour and 38 minutes. Given that Code 3 calls require a direct police response to an incident that is occurring and/or may escalate, this is not timely.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the Queensland Police Service undertakes a root cause analysis into delayed response times for calls regarding domestic and family violence, particularly those related to Code 2 and 3 priority calls for service.

Police need accessible and accurate information



First responders need readily accessible, up-to-date, and accurate information in order to effectively assess risks to safety and make informed decisions.

At a minimum, they require access to national criminal and domestic violence-related history, warning flags, warrants, and court information such as current and past domestic violence orders.

DEFINITION

A **warning flag** can be attached to various records in QPRIME (the QPS information management system) to alert police to a particular caution or issue. In the case of DFV, flags provide important information to help in making decisions about the safety of the people they are dealing with, the community, and themselves.

Officers can assign a range of warning flags to records within QPRIME, including to:

- identify a domestic and family violence victim
- highlight the existence of various types of domestic violence notices and orders
- identify locations with DFV history or relevance.

They are meant to provide responding officers with accurate information when attending a scene, so they must be applied consistently and in a timely way.

The QPS provides instructions for staff in its QPRIME user guide on how to apply a flag to a record. However, it does not provide criteria or guidance on when a flag should be applied or to which record, potentially leading to inconsistencies in application, or records being missed. For example, the user guide provides no instructions on how or when to apply the domestic violence flag for victims.

Most domestic violence flags must be assigned manually. Officers need to use their professional judgement on this, and also remember to assign them. The only exception is the domestic violence order flag. It is automatically applied to the perpetrator's record in the system when court details are electronically transferred to police.

There are no flags to show people who are being managed by high-risk teams (which means they may be at risk of imminent harm or death – see Chapter 4). Officers can use existing warning flags for them, but they may not convey the extent of the risk, and there is no process for applying them. Only 7.8 per cent of people who were identified as victims in the QPRIME system had a domestic violence flag on their record.

This means that, if the victim faces a subsequent DFV incident, they may not receive the appropriate priority and police may not recognise the significant risk when they make decisions.

Coroners have previously reported on failures and inconsistencies in flags being applied to at-risk victims.

The QPS operational procedures manual says officers receiving a report of DFV should check various information systems, including the national (CRIMTRAC/NPRS) system (to identify nationally recognised interstate orders). This does not always happen. The QPS needs to ensure its officers know how to access critical DFV information – and do so as a matter of routine.

Case study 1 provides an example of how not accessing information can have serious consequences.

Figure 3C Case study 1

Information access, warning flags, and QLITE

The QPS introduced a 'QLiTE' mobile device in 2014–15 to give police officers the ability to access accurate, real-time information in the field, quickly and easily. It allows them to perform tasks more efficiently and allows the QPS to improve capability and ensure the safety of officers.

However, QLiTE is only a tool, and its effectiveness is dependent on the training police officers have in applying it to DFV occurrences. For example, a Queensland coroner reporting on the findings of the inquest into the deaths of Doreen Gail Langham and Gary Matthew Hely found:

... no officers considered his CrimTrac history [national criminal history records], which may have prompted flags to be entered on the system and altered the manner in which future complaints were treated. ... Had one of the numerous officers with whom she [Ms Langham] had contact looked at CrimTrac on their QLiTE device they would have realised that Ms Langham was at great risk. ... Every officer involved in this case failed to comply with OPM 9.3.1, which stated they should review interstate records. Further, a number of officers (including a sergeant) said they did not know how to find that information on the police database.

In November 2021, the QPS announced it had implemented an upgrade to its existing QLiTE system, called 'QLiTE NextGen DV Search interface'. It is intended to provide officers with quick and easy historical information relating to victims and perpetrators, including alerts and crucial personal information, current and previous domestic violence orders, past relationships, photos, and referrals. This still relies on officers accurately and consistently recording and flagging DFV information in police systems.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using information provided from the Queensland Police Service and Queensland Courts.

Recommendation 3

We recommend that the Queensland Police Service strengthens its system and processes for sharing and accessing information, including better guidance and training and better using warning flags to communicate risk.

Acting to provide immediate protection for victims

When criminal offences occur, police can investigate the matter and lay charges where appropriate. But they have various other tools available to them as well.

Protection orders and notices



Police can refer people to DFV support services, issue police protection notices (PPNs), or apply to a court for a temporary protection order or a domestic violence order.

In 2016, the Queensland Government amended the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012* (the Act), to extend police powers to issue PPNs, include conditions and use them in applications to the courts for domestic violence orders. Since then, the number of PPNs issued has increased by over 2,000 per cent, from 726 issued in 2015–16 to 18,813 in 2021–22.

The number of domestic violence orders has fluctuated over the period, with a decrease in 2019–20 most likely due to the impacts of COVID-19. The number of temporary protection orders has remained stable.

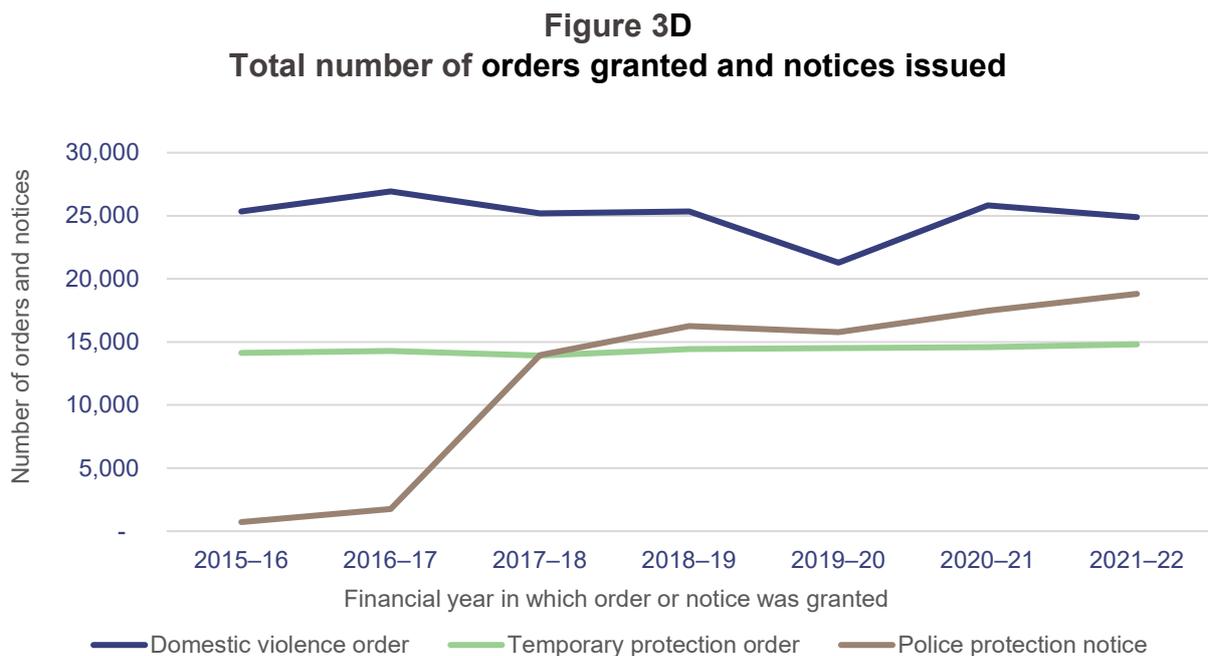
DEFINITION

A **police protection notice** is issued by a police officer if an officer reasonably believes a person has committed domestic and family violence. It provides temporary protection for the victim, pending an application to a court.

A **temporary protection order** is made prior to a domestic violence order. It is normally imposed at the first mention of an application and will stay in force until the hearing date. The intent is to protect the victim until the magistrate decides on the domestic violence order.

A **domestic violence order** is an official document issued by a court to stop threats or acts of domestic violence. It can be long term or temporary and can include a range of conditions that may prevent a perpetrator from approaching, contacting, or locating the people named in the order.

Figure 3D shows the number of orders and notices for each year between 2015–16 and 2021–22.



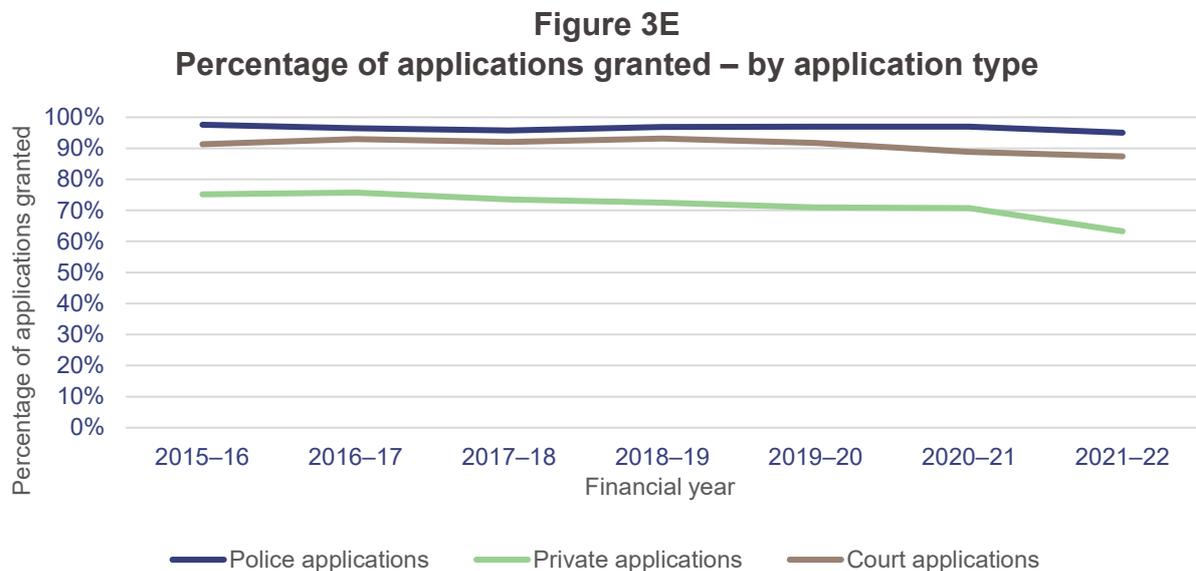
Note: The figures for domestic violence orders and temporary protection orders include private applications, that is, applications made by individuals direct to the courts as opposed to applications made by police on an aggrieved person’s behalf.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using Queensland Wide Inter-Linked Courts (QWIC) data provided by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

Victims can apply for a domestic violence order themselves (referred to as a private application throughout this report) or police can lodge an application on their behalf. In a small number of cases, a court may apply for an order on behalf of a victim. Between 2015–16 and 2021–22, police made the most applications, and the percentage has increased recently, from just over 70 per cent in the years prior to 2019–20, to 81 per cent in 2021–22.



Applications made by police have on average a 97 per cent success rate of being granted, while the success rate for private applications has declined significantly from around 75 per cent in 2015–16 to 63 per cent in 2021–22 (see Figure 3E).



Source: Queensland Audit Office using QWIC data provided by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

The much greater success rate of police applications may be due to various factors, including the ability of police to better present a case to the courts, and victims feeling safer, supported, and more confident in seeing their application through than when making the application themselves. Police prosecutors do provide support to victims making private applications. However, this data suggests that victims making private applications need more support than they currently receive.

Recommendation 4

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Queensland Police Service enhance support within courts to assist victims in making private applications for domestic violence and temporary protection orders.

Responding to breaches of domestic violence orders



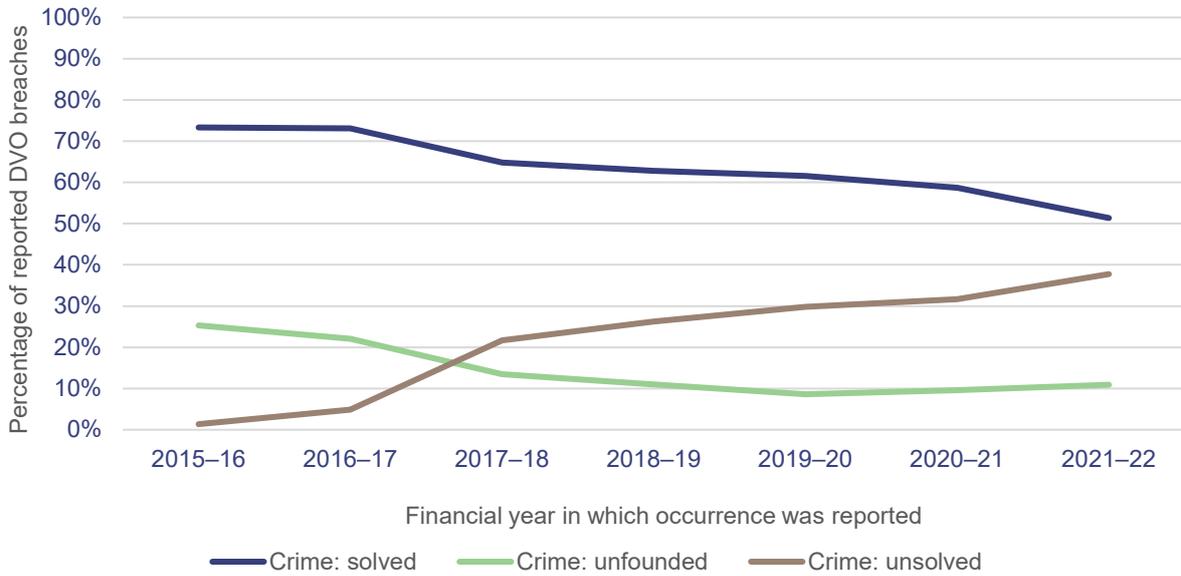
The operational procedures manual is clear that, when officers suspect a person in a DFV occurrence has committed an offence against the Act, they must take appropriate action to address the DFV occurrence – not just arrest the person.

In October 2015, the government increased the maximum penalties for first-time and subsequent breaches of domestic violence orders to 3- and 5-years’ imprisonment respectively. A breach occurs when a court finds a perpetrator has violated the terms of an order.

Reported breaches have increased by 67.6 per cent from 29,501 in 2015–16 to 49,446 in 2021–22. However, the QPS is solving a decreasing percentage of these, from 73.3 per cent in 2015–16 to around 51.4 per cent in 2021–22 (see Figure 3F).



Figure 3F
Status of reported breaches of domestic violence orders



Source: Queensland Audit Office using QPRIME data provided by the Queensland Police Service.

The number of domestic violence order breaches finalised as ‘unfounded’ has decreased since 2015–16. In 2017 we tabled our report *Criminal justice system—reliability and integration of data* (Report 14: 2016–17). In that report, we identified that some areas of the QPS had adopted questionable practices for classifying occurrences as ‘unfounded’ to improve clearance rates. We recommended that QPS strengthen its data quality assurance practices, including ‘monitoring the data and data trends to identify and check for changes which may indicate poor practice or manipulation’.

We observed that, over the past 2 years, the percentage of ‘unfounded’ DFV occurrences has increased, from 8.6 per cent (3,018) to 10.9 per cent (5,382) in 2021–22. This 78.3 per cent increase is greater than the 31.6 per cent increase in reported DFV occurrences over the past 2 years. The QPS should investigate why this has occurred.

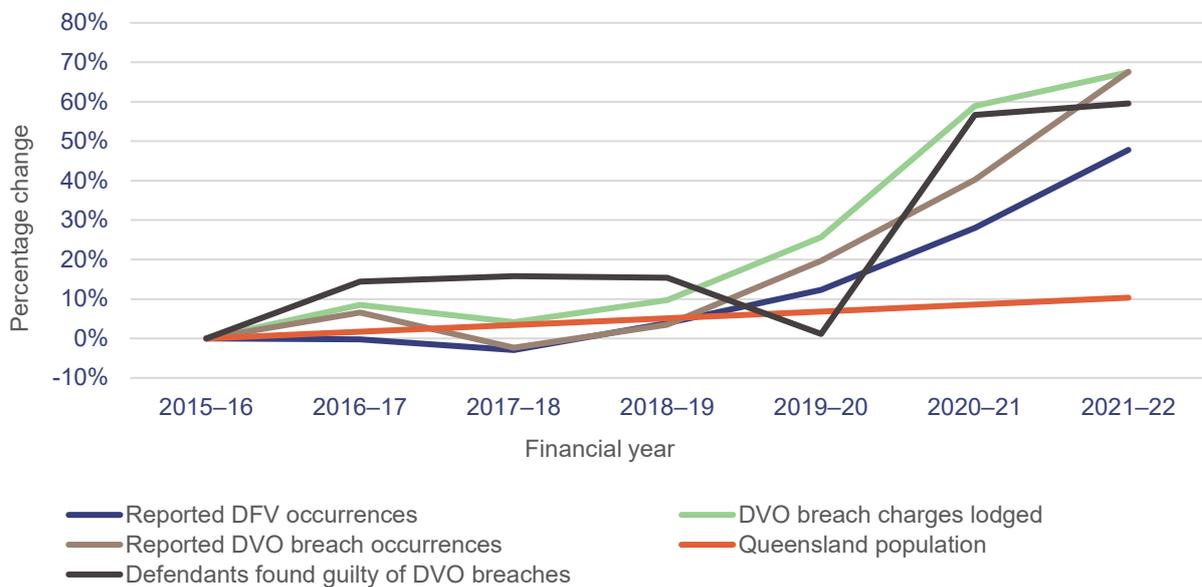
Charging perpetrators for breaching domestic violence orders

The number of perpetrators convicted of a breach increased by 59.6 per cent between 2015–16 and 2021–22. Figure 3G shows that since 2015–16, the percentage increase in police lodging charges for breaches of domestic violence orders and the percentage change in people found guilty of breaching a domestic violence order have increased at a greater rate than DFV occurrences and reported breaches of domestic violence orders.

It also shows that these increases are greater than population growth. This indicates police are acting on reports of breaches more often than previously.



Figure 3G
Percentage change of domestic violence order occurrences, lodgements, and findings of guilt since 2015–16



Notes: A breach of a domestic violence order includes a breach of police protection notices, temporary protection orders, and domestic violence orders, and also includes breach of release conditions, and the publication of information used in a court proceeding (which is a small number within the data set).

For 3 months in the 2019–20 period, courts only processed high-risk matters due to COVID-19. The remainder were processed in the 2020–21 period.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using QWIC and QPRIME data provided by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Queensland Police Service.

Reports and convictions for choking, suffocation, or strangulation offences

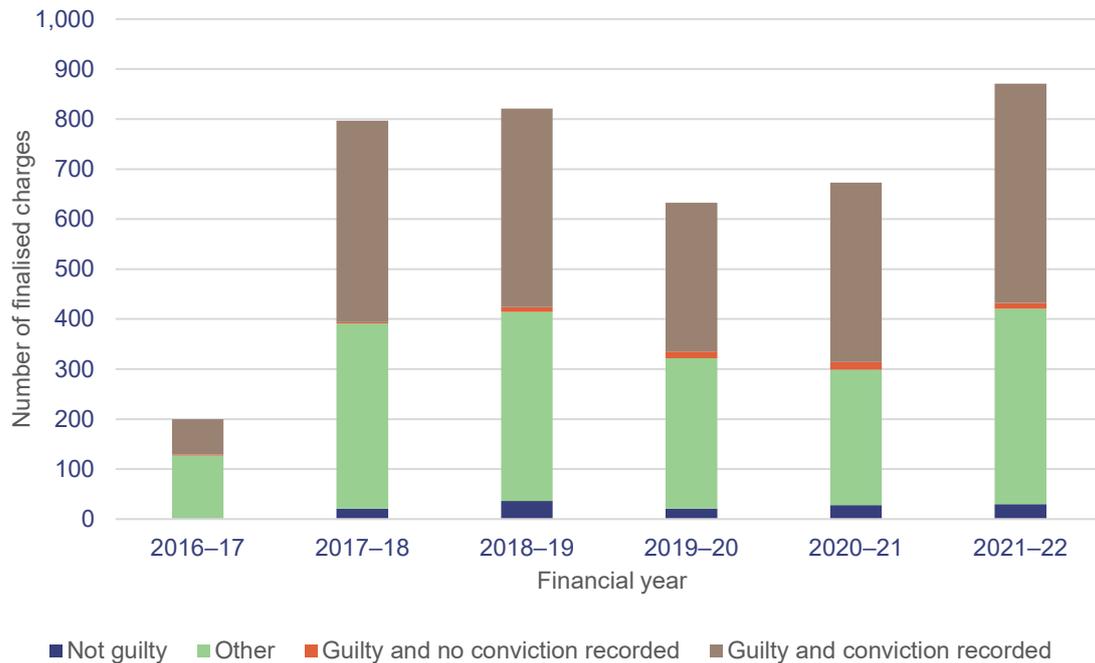


The introduction of ‘choking, suffocation, or strangulation in a domestic setting’ is now a specific offence in the criminal code. No entity has measured how effective it has been in preventing subsequent violence, and to date, the QPS has had low conviction rates for this offence.

Recommendation 120 of the *Not now, not ever: Putting an end to domestic and family violence reform* report (by the 2015 Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland) highlighted the need for non-fatal strangulation to be made a specific offence. The government introduced legislation to the parliament, and in May 2016, included it in the *Criminal Code Act 1899* section 315A, with a maximum penalty of 7 years’ imprisonment.

Figure 3H shows the QPS has acted on this offence since its introduction in 2016.

Figure 3H
Strangulation, choking, and suffocation charges finalised



Note: The 'Other' category consists of several results including 'nolle prosequi', meaning this case will not proceed, and 'no evidence to offer' which make up 56.6 per cent and 32.9 per cent of the 'Other' category respectively.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using QWIC data provided by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

The impacts of COVID-19 are most likely the reason for the lower number of charges lodged finalised in 2019–20 and 2020–21. Apart from in these 2 years, lodgement finalisation rates have been between 800 and 900 per year. (Due to the lag in time between lodgement and conviction, they do not present a direct link between the number lodged and the number convicted in any given year.)

Of the finalised charges for this offence, 51 per cent have resulted in a conviction, of which 1.4 per cent have not resulted in the court recording a conviction against the perpetrator. Almost half do not result in a finding of guilt.

Neither the QPS nor the Department of Justice and Attorney-General has evaluated the effectiveness of the charges and prosecutions in inhibiting subsequent violence against victims, nor evaluated the reasons for the many unsuccessful prosecutions.

Recommendation 5

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Queensland Police Service identify why a high proportion of prosecutions for *Criminal Code Act 1899 s. 315A* offences (choking, suffocation, or strangulation) are unsuccessful.



Police are making more referrals to domestic and family violence services

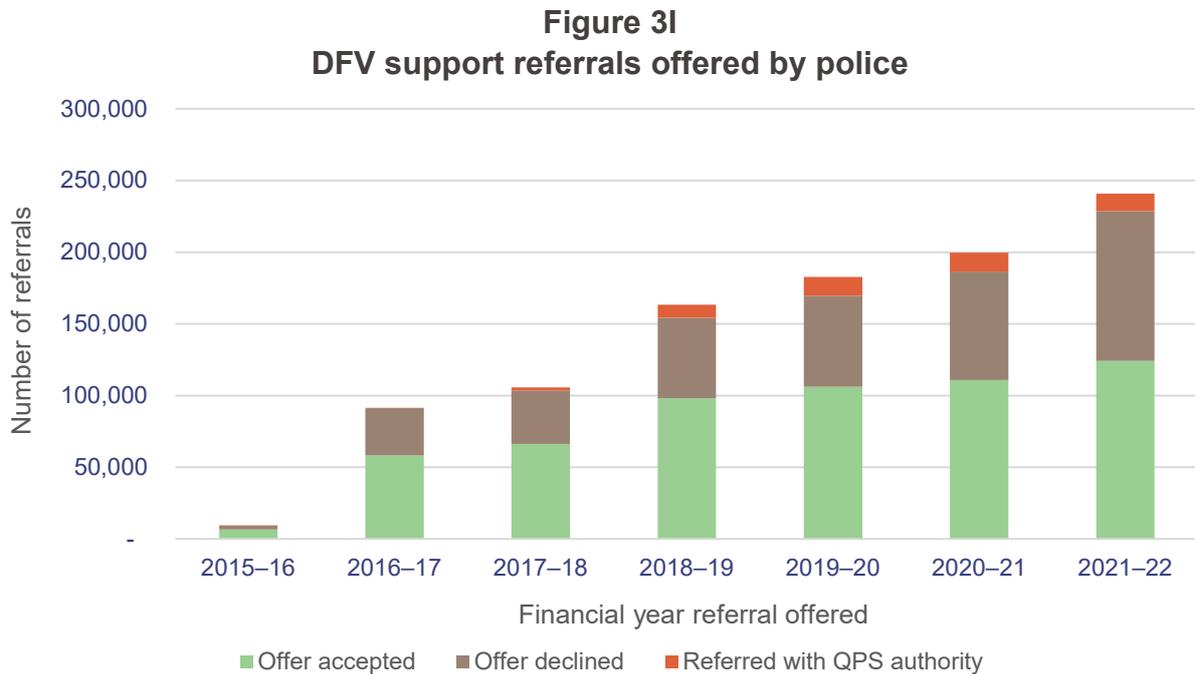


Police are offering more people referrals to DFV support services than they were. They are also using reforms to refer people in some circumstances without the person’s consent, which is positive. Unfortunately, not all people are able to access the services.

Offering referrals with consent

Where appropriate, police responding to DFV occurrences may offer to refer victims, perpetrators, children, or other parties to a DFV support service. Not all people accept the offer.

Figure 3I shows that between 2015–16 and 2021–22, referral offers made by the QPS increased by 2,500 per cent, from 9,261 to 240,860.



Note: ‘Referred with QPS authority’ means an individual was referred without their consent.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using QPRIME data provided by the Queensland Police Service.

While police are offering more referrals and more people are accepting the referral, less than 30 per cent of those people have subsequently accepted the offer of support when contacted by a DFV support service. In fact, as shown in Figure 3J, the percentage of people declining the offer of support once contacted has increased from 13.3 per cent in 2015–16 to 35.4 per cent in 2021–22.



Figure 3J
Outcome of police referrals with consent when support services made contact

	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	Total % 2015–2022
Services accepted (%)	35.3	39.2	39.4	28.6	28.7	27.4	24.6	29.9
Services declined (%)	13.3	11.6	12.8	32.5	33.1	34.2	35.4	29.0
Could not contact (%)	30.8	33.9	35.9	27.9	26.4	24.0	23.2	27.4
Other (%)	20.6	15.3	11.9	11.0	11.8	14.4	16.8	13.7

Notes: These percentages show the outcome when people are contacted by the DFV support service provider. In some cases where the services were declined, the service provider sent DFV information to the person, and in other cases it did not. Similarly, where the service provider could not contact the person, some service providers sent DFV information to the person.

'Other' includes those referrals recorded as being 'not applicable' and those on-referred, pending, and recalled.

4.9 per cent of accepted referrals were excluded from this analysis due to data quality issues.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using QPRIME data provided by the Queensland Police Service.

DFV support service providers are timelier in making a first attempt to contact people referred to them by police. The median time it takes for a service to contact an individual after they have accepted the referral has decreased from 2.5 days in 2015–16 to one day in 2021–22 (see Figure 3K).

Figure 3K
Median time between people accepting a police referral and being first contacted by DFV service providers



Source: Queensland Audit Office using QPRIME data provided by the Queensland Police Service.

Making referrals without consent

In May 2017, the government introduced reforms that allowed police to refer victims and perpetrators to specialist DFV services without their consent. Officers can do this if there is a threat to a person's safety, or if the officer believes the person has committed DFV.



Police have been increasingly using this to refer people to services. Between 2017–18 and 2021–22, non-consent referrals increased by 445 per cent.

Figure 3L shows that, although a high percentage of people referred without consent have either declined the services or could not be contacted by the service, more than one in 5 people subsequently accepted. This is good, as these people may not otherwise have received support services.

Figure 3L
Police referrals without consent, and the referral outcome

	2017–18	2018–19	2019–20	2020–21	2021–22	Total % 2017–2022
Services accepted (%)	26.9	24.7	21.7	22.9	22.4	23.0
Services declined (%)	12.9	16.8	16.1	17.1	18.0	16.8
Could not contact (%)	46.0	39.4	38.3	37.6	34.6	37.7
Other (%)	14.2	19.1	23.9	22.4	25.0	22.5

Notes: 'Services declined' includes instances where services were declined but information was sent.

'Could not contact' includes instances where people could not be contacted but information was sent, and instances where people could not be contacted and no further action was taken.

'Other' includes not/applicable, on-referred, pending, and recalled.

Five per cent of referrals without consent were excluded from this analysis due to data quality issues.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using QPRIME data provided by the Queensland Police Service.

Barriers to people accessing support services

Despite the increased numbers of referrals, a number of factors make it difficult for people to access these services, including:

- wait times for services. Service providers and departments have indicated that some services and programs have lengthy wait times
- a lack of services in some regional areas (according to the police we spoke with). People in those areas are not referred. Due to limited data, we were unable to identify the level of services and referrals for each police region or district. The QPS and the Department of Justice and Attorney-General have not identified where additional services are most needed.

The government does not collect data from service providers, so does not have a clear picture of wait times for services or programs, attendance rates, or completion rates. It also does not know how many people are continuing to commit DFV while waiting for a service.

Recommendation 6

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Queensland Police Service gather and analyse data to assess where action is needed to improve access to, and timeliness and effectiveness of, referrals to domestic and family violence support services.

More domestic and family violence training is needed

On 29 June 2022, a Queensland coroner recommended the QPS include in its annual operational skills training a face-to-face module on domestic violence that is mandatory for all officers.

Police first responders to DFV occurrences are usually general duties officers. They are often (but not always) less experienced officers. Given the wide range of situations general duties officers are required to attend, they need a broad range of knowledge and training across many policing areas. But they also need specific training to be able to identify and respond appropriately to DFV occurrences.

All police officers receive training in DFV as a part of their recruit training, and all first-year constables receive DFV training facilitated by the Domestic, Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons unit (a police unit established to deliver efficient policing strategies and responses to drive the response to incidents of DFV). In 2017, a 'Vulnerable Persons' training package was developed and delivered as compulsory training for all police officers up to the rank of inspector, as well as selected non-sworn employees. However, general duties officers do not receive ongoing DFV training.

To be able to identify and respond to DFV, they need to be trained in how to access the support and guidance available to them from supervisors, DFV specialist officers, external services, and multidisciplinary teams. QPS and DFV entities also need to make sure all of these resources are available to general duties officers when and where needed. At present, this is not the case. We discuss this further in our section on high-risk teams in Chapter 4.

The current gap in training for general duties officers will become even more marked as the government implements the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce recommendations on coercive control. The QPS has developed training packages in preparation.

DEFINITION

Coercive control is an ongoing pattern of behaviour designed to induce fear, intimidation, and submission in a victim. It may include isolation; humiliation and threats; monitoring a person's movements; limiting access to money; and abuse of children, pets, or relatives.

Need for supervisors and specialist DFV police to be trained

The QPS developed a 'Domestic and Family Violence Specialist' course and delivered it in 2019, but not in 2020 or 2021 due to COVID-19-related impacts. It was due to restart in the 2022–23 financial year.

The QPS has increased its number of domestic and family violence coordinator and officer positions from 47 in 2020, to 77 in 2022. We expected that those police assigned to specialist DFV roles (those officers whose core day-to-day role is dealing with DFV and high-risk DFV) would be more highly trained and have a higher level of experience and expertise. This is not the case.

Numerous reviews and inquiries have identified and made recommendations on the need for more, or better, training for police officers. Some have also recommended that specialist DFV officers be extensively trained as a matter of urgency.

Recommendation 7

We recommend that the Queensland Police Service ensures all police receive adequate and ongoing domestic and family violence-specific training appropriate to their role, and in particular that:

- it provides all police officers mandatory annual face-to-face training on domestic and family violence
- all operational supervisors receive additional domestic and family violence training in accordance with the leadership requirements of their role. This should include periodic refresher/update training for supervisors who remain operational for extended periods
- all police officers assigned to specialist domestic and family violence roles receive advanced domestic and family violence training in accordance with the specialist requirements of their role. This should occur within a short period of officers being newly assigned to these roles. Periodic refreshers/update training should be made available to officers who remain in specialist roles for extended periods.

Involved entities need training in multidisciplinary responses

Almost all of those reviews and inquiries have identified gaps in service coordination across entities, and recommended enhancing coordination, communication, and multidisciplinary approaches. Yet they have identified training needs for individual entities, rather than making it clear that staff in all DFV-related entities need to be specifically trained in providing multidisciplinary services and responses.

For multidisciplinary, cross-boundary approaches to succeed, the staff of each entity must be trained in a multidisciplinary setting. Entities must understand each other's role, legislative requirements (where applicable), capability, practices, and approaches. This will allow them to operate more effectively and efficiently, provide a more complete appreciation of the risk to safety, and minimise the toll on victims. It will not only broaden their understanding of the capabilities and resources of other staff and entities, but also allow them to better understand their own role.

Currently, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General delivers training to its high-risk teams on information sharing, and on screening and assessing for risk. This brings entities together and provides an element of multidisciplinary training. However, this needs to be broader to cover all services working as part of an integrated service response. Outside of high-risk teams, entities deliver their own training, separate from others.

Recommendation 8

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Queensland Police Service implement a cross-agency training program focused on enhancing inter-agency roles, coordination, communication, protocols, and multidisciplinary approaches. This should include other key domestic and family violence support and service delivery entities, such as the courts, the Department of Health, the hospital and health services, the Department of Education, and non-government victim support services.



4. Supporting people – challenges and shortfalls

Effective approaches to domestic and family violence must go further than immediate responses to crisis incidents. Entities need to also offer longer-term support that ensures:

- the needs of all people within, and associated with, the family/relationship are addressed. These can include children, extended family, and close friends directly or indirectly affected by the DFV
- perpetrators are held accountable for their behaviours and the broader effects of their actions – not just the immediate and visible effects
- all underlying or contributing issues are identified and appropriate measures are taken to reduce the likelihood of further violence.

Queensland's approach does not have the coordination, structure, and systems necessary to support family and relationship units.

Holistic case management is needed



People experiencing DFV often have complex needs and require ongoing support from multiple services. This could include trauma counselling, drug and alcohol treatment, legal or housing assistance, and financial support.

DEFINITION

Holistic case management is a coordinated approach to assessing and addressing DFV in the context of the broader family or relationship. It considers the impact on all people associated with the relationship to ensure they receive the assistance they need. It also assists in holding perpetrators to account for the broader impacts of their behaviour.

The need for case coordination

At present, the departments and service providers involved with DFV liaise with each other and work together to address it. This occurs only in a limited way and in response to individual initiative. The cooperation tends to be operational and task-oriented, and focuses almost exclusively on individuals or specific incidents. No entity has taken responsibility or accountability for coordinating responses, support and services across the various entities and service providers.

Information is documented in different systems, with little or no interface between those from partner organisations. Consequently, any sharing relies mainly on requests for information and is largely a manual process. This prevents entities from quickly sharing concerns about risks to a victim or family.

Different services sometimes manage individuals within the same family unit – as separate cases. This may create duplication of work, and means that context relating to the severity of DFV could be missed if the information is not shared. For example, in 2018–19 the Death Review and Advisory Board reported a lack of critical information sharing contributed to the death of a child.

Some areas of coordination and co-location of services are emerging in Queensland, but not everywhere. They largely consist of discrete voluntary partnerships between government and non-government organisations.

No entity has overall responsibility for coordinating case information and management. Each manages cases independently and focuses on its specific role.

Recommendation 9

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General establishes a holistic case management approach to domestic and family violence that considers the context and impact on the broader family or relationship and includes:

- coordinating case management across entities and services
- integrating risk assessment to consider all risk factors, and all people directly and indirectly exposed to domestic and family violence
- taking collective responsibility for managing risk and ensuring staff are trained to assess risk
- providing seamless access to information and data
- working collaboratively and coordinating services and support.

High-risk teams provide some coordinated support



The government has established 8 high-risk teams (HRTs) across the state to coordinate care for high-risk victims. It trialled HRTs in 3 locations in 2017, and the current 8 HRTs have been operational since 2018–19.

DEFINITION

High-risk teams (HRTs) are multi-agency teams established to improve the response to people assessed to be at risk of imminent harm or death.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG) is the lead agency for HRTs, which consist of representatives from the Queensland Police Service; Queensland Corrective Services; the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs; Queensland Health; and the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy.

Each HRT operates within a local government area boundary and has a (non-government) DFV service provider funded by DJAG leading and coordinating it.

Combined referrals across the 8 HRTs have increased by 12.4 per cent, from 1,383 in 2018–19 to 1,554 in 2020–21. HRTs have responded to 4,911 unique cases since they were rolled out in 2017.

While they provide some coordination, there are gaps, particularly in terms of information. Infoxchange (the system used to record referrals and case information) only allows each HRT to access its own information.

This is problematic because victims and perpetrators may live in locations covered by different HRTs. It could be important for HRTs to have access to both sets of information.

Similarly, when a victim moves from one HRT area to another, the information is not readily accessible. DJAG has advised that in such cases, the information should be packaged and sent to the new HRT. However, it is unable to confirm that this always occurs.

Not all people at high risk have access to high-risk teams

HRTs are only available to people living in the Logan-Beenleigh, Mt Isa, Cherbourg, Cairns, Brisbane, Ipswich, Mackay, and Caboolture areas (approximately 52 per cent of the Queensland population), which means some people who may be at risk of imminent harm or death have no access to them.

The QPS, departments, and service providers in some areas such as the Gold Coast, Whitsundays, and Scenic Rim have established their own version of HRTs to partly fill this gap.

Since 2017, 4.1 per cent (228) of referrals into HRTs have been rejected for varying reasons, including:

- the victim residing outside the HRT catchment areas
- insufficient information being provided in the referral
- not meeting eligibility criteria (for example, assessed to be not at risk of imminent harm or death)
- other reasons (for example, duplicate referrals, or not meeting the criteria for a DFV relationship as per the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012* (the Act)). For example, not being in a relevant relationship (family, care, or intimate personal relationship).

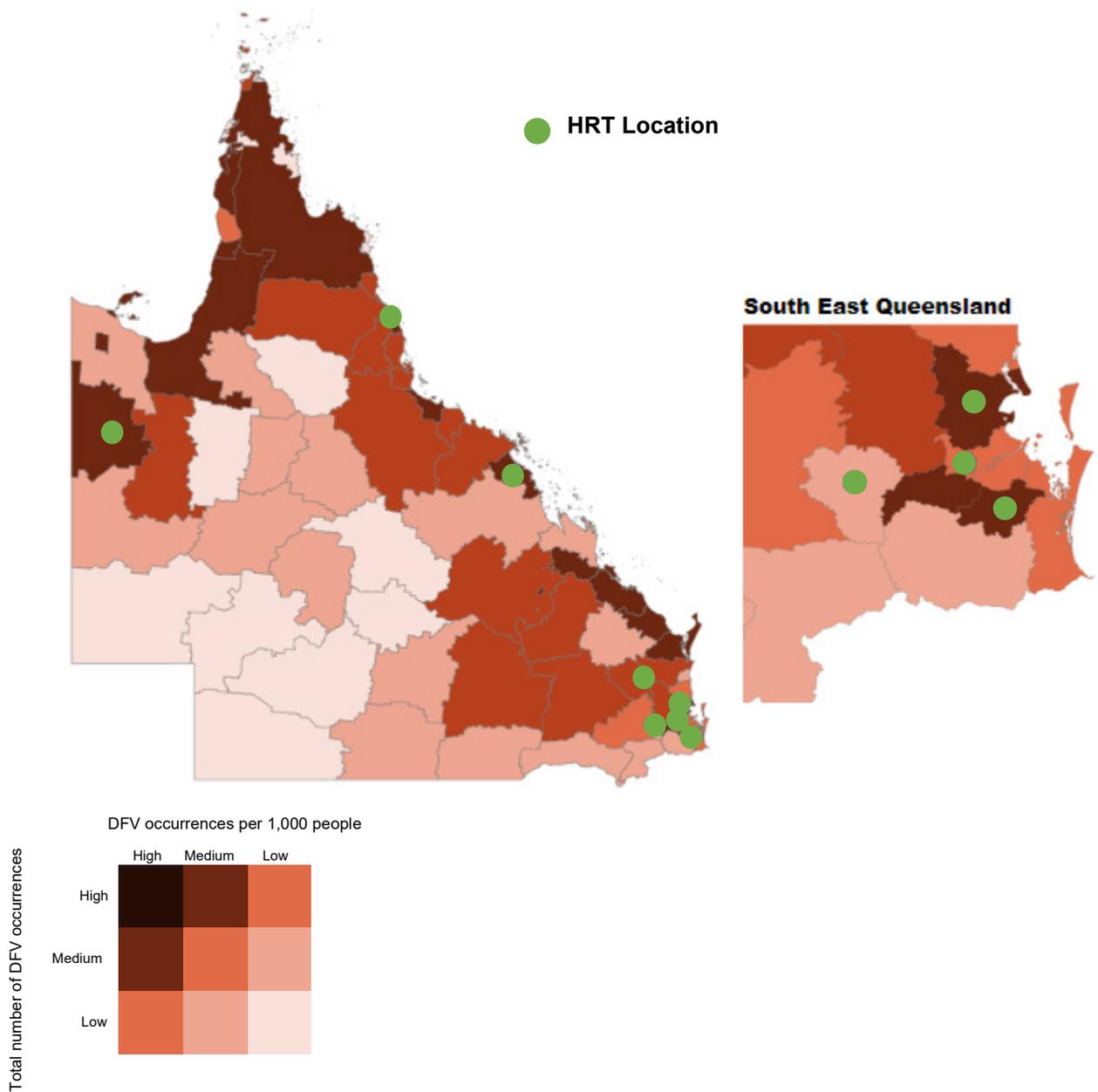
Other high-risk victims have likely not been referred to HRTs at all because they lived outside HRT catchments.

DJAG has not reviewed the placement of HRTs since 2016, and it does not analyse data to determine which local government areas most need them.

In 2020–21, 51.4 per cent (61,956) of all reported DFV occurrences occurred outside HRT boundaries, and some areas with the highest DFV rates do not have HRTs. Figure 4A shows the location of HRTs and the areas with the highest rates of DFV in Queensland (per thousand people).



Figure 4A
Location of high-risk teams and rates of domestic and family violence callouts and incidents



Source: Queensland Audit Office using Infoxchange data provided by Department of Justice and Attorney-General and QPRIME data provided by the Queensland Police Service.

DJAG has advised that 3 additional HRTs will be established, with the first announced for Townsville, to start operating in 2023. No time frame has been established for the others.



Even if a high-risk victim is within an HRT boundary, they may not be referred to one for support. Between 2019–20 and 2020–21, 13 DFV homicides occurred within the Brisbane HRT boundary. None of the victims were being managed by the HRT at the time of death, nor was there any record of them being referred to the HRT. In some cases, the victim had numerous prior DFV interactions with police. Coronial inquests identified that in some of these cases, information indicating victims were high-risk was missed or overlooked by responders and service providers.

Resourcing can affect the accessibility and performance of HRTs. A 2019 consultant’s evaluation found it was a critical issue and recommended that DJAG review HRT resourcing.

It has not reviewed the funding and staffing levels of HRTs since 2016, but it is currently conducting an investment review of DFV services, including HRTs. This was due to be completed in September 2022 but is still in progress. No revised completion date has been provided.

At present, DJAG does not know if all HRTs are achieving their intended outcomes. It completed a trial and evaluation of 3 HRTs between 2017 and 2019 but has not evaluated the other 5. Overall, the evaluation found the trial has produced evidence of improvements in service integration.

Recommendation 10

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General analyses data and information to regularly evaluate the performance of high-risk teams, drive improvements, share learnings, inform resourcing and funding, and ensure all high-risk victims are being referred.

Recommendation 11

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General refers all consenting high-risk victims in Queensland to high-risk teams and provides support appropriate to their assessed risk, regardless of geographical boundaries.

Recommendation 12

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General improves the recording and availability of high-risk teams’ information to ensure it is accessible across the teams and to all police responding to domestic and family violence incidents.

Comprehensive risk assessments



At present, risk assessments are not coordinated or integrated to build an overall picture of the risk to a victim and their family. For example, while police risk assessments focus on the risk of the perpetrator continuing to commit violence, support services assess risks to the victim, but they do not routinely share information.

The individual assessments made by entities may be appropriate to specific needs and often overlap to a degree. However, they are usually not linked, and do not provide an overall risk assessment based on the combination of victim, perpetrator, children, and extended family members.

Other family members are also at risk. Between July 2006 and June 2021, 29 collateral DFV homicides (27 men and 2 women) occurred. In 2020–21, they made up 18 per cent of all DFV-related homicides.

DEFINITION

Collateral homicide refers to the killing of a person who may have intervened in a domestic dispute, or of a new partner by their current partner’s former abusive spouse.

An effective crisis response includes a collective risk assessment and safety management plan for all relevant members of a family unit. This enables DFV services and departments to be aware of all members who are at risk of harm.

A common risk and safety framework is available, but is not widely used

In 2017, the Queensland Government developed a common risk and safety framework to establish a shared approach for recognising, assessing, and responding to DFV risk. It also developed information-sharing guidelines to help practitioners share information with one another.

Despite this, entities continue to use different methods to assess risk and do not have a clear understanding of what they can share.

They advised us that the framework is not suitable for some purposes. For example, Queensland Corrective Services has not implemented it within operational areas, because it believes the framework is not designed for a custodial setting. It does not provide a risk rating that can best tailor treatment to an individual or prioritise placement into limited program places. Only community corrections staff on HRTs use the framework.

The framework is not mandated for use by specialist DFV non-government organisations, so they use their own tools to assess risk. Consequently, government and non-government organisations are all assessing risk differently.

High-risk teams need to better manage risk

In 2016, the government rolled out a multi-agency risk assessment and management framework (Level 3 tool) and mandated its use by high-risk teams. It was developed to enable HRTs to manage the safety of victims and their families appropriately and consistently.

In 2019, a consultant’s evaluation of 3 HRTs identified that teams considered the Level 3 tool inflexible to meet their needs. Instead, they were using their pre-existing processes and tools to assess risk.

We found that HRTs are still using different approaches and tools to assess risk, and they do not always complete the Level 3 risk assessment tool in the HRT data management system. Between 2018–19 and 2020–21, there were 2,495 instances (42.6 per cent) where HRTs did not record multi-agency risk assessments as completed in the system (see Figure 4B).

Figure 4B
Proportion of multi-agency risk assessments not completed by each HRT

High risk team	2018–19 (%)	2019–20 (%)	2020–21 (%)
Brisbane	39	65	85
Caboolture	72	35	23
Cairns	15	8	4
Cherbourg	100	100	100
Ipswich	13	23	8
Logan-Beenleigh	24	84	54
Mackay	9	2	10
Mount Isa	62	57	73

Source: Queensland Audit Office using Infoxchange data provided by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.



In March 2021, DJAG engaged a consultant to review its risk assessment and management framework. It implemented the revised framework in July 2022 (3 years after the initial evaluation of HRTs in 2019).

The revised framework has addressed some of the deficiencies, including updating the Level 3 tool, but it will need to be evaluated to ensure HRTs are using it as intended, and that all necessary information is being captured and shared in the system.

Many victims must navigate the system themselves



Victims who cannot access HRTs may be referred to a range of individual support services, but many of these are at capacity. This puts the onus on victims to engage with the correct services. Their experience depends largely on where they live and the services that are available at the time.

For some, this can add stress to an already traumatic experience. It also means they can fall through the cracks, as there is no central coordination to help them navigate the system. Some measures have been taken that are starting to address this to some extent.

Co-location and co-responder models are a step in the right direction

The QPS has introduced new response models to coordinate and provide more tailored support to victims. It has established 8 Domestic, Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons units across Queensland, with 2 more police districts in the process of establishing them. The units work with victims and perpetrators at varying levels of risk of DFV, making and receiving referrals from other entities and high-risk teams, and performing components of case management. This includes collaborating with government and non-government DFV service providers, educating the victim and perpetrator on domestic violence orders, and performing follow-up activities such as home visits.

The South Brisbane, North Brisbane, Moreton, Sunshine Coast, and Logan police districts have partnered with non-government services to locate a domestic violence specialist worker with police in the unit, bringing DFV services together in the same building.

The QPS trialled and evaluated co-location of a DFV specialist worker at the Toowoomba police station in 2021. An evaluation found this enhanced support for victims and improved the police response, information sharing, communication, and efficiency. It also increased police awareness of the support services available to victims. According to the evaluation, police referrals to the Domestic Violence Action Centre (a specialist DFV service) increased by 16 per cent over the previous year. The trial was extended to June 2022, and the approach is being funded for another 3 years.

Through a joint partnership, QPS and DJAG are developing a broader co-responder model to trial in 2 locations. This model will build on the success of the other models with expansion of scope to include a response to perpetrators. It will be evaluated with a focus on cost/benefit comparison to the other models.

Specialist DFV workers also accompany police to follow up with victims in the Logan, Moreton, and South and North Brisbane police districts, providing victims with additional support.

Co-location and co-responder models need to expand and connect with a wider range of services to better meet the needs of victims and affected people. Other states – Victoria, Western Australia, and Tasmania – are establishing multidisciplinary centres to join services and drive better coordination. The services are located in the same building, and they provide holistic case management for all members of a family unit who require an integrated service approach.

Recommendation 13

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and Queensland Police Service progressively expand co-location and co-responder approaches across the state and include a wider range of services to better meet the needs of victims and people affected by domestic and family violence. This includes integrating them with high-risk teams and the Queensland Police Service’s Domestic, Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons units.

Young people

Young people need a tailored response



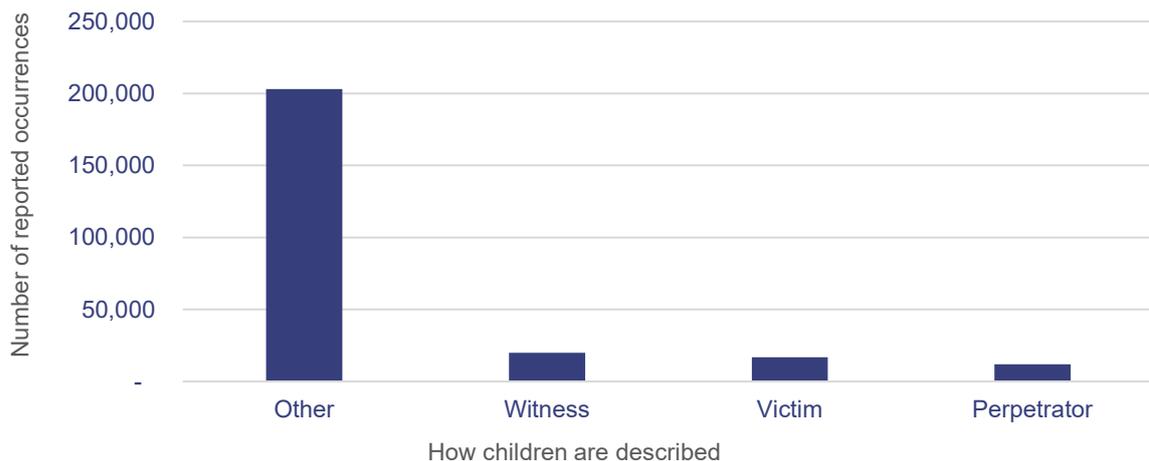
Children who live with DFV can suffer long-term emotional and physical trauma, even if they are not the direct victims of violence. They may overhear threats and taunts, experience financial stress, comfort the victim, observe bruising, clean up property, or be present at a DFV incident attended by police.

Between 2016 and 2022, 31.7 per cent of all DFV occurrences involved children – and this figure only captures occurrences reported to police. The number is likely much higher.

The Act recognises children as being particularly vulnerable to DFV, stating that ‘children who are exposed to domestic violence can experience serious physical, psychological and emotional harm’. It provides them with some protections (such as not publishing information that identifies them).

Despite their vulnerability, children exposed to DFV incidents are usually considered to be witnesses or bystanders. In fact, as shown in Figure 4C, most children (202,971) involved in an occurrence from 2016 to 2022 were not recognised as a victim, perpetrator, or witness, meaning they were less likely to receive appropriate support.

Figure 4C
Reported domestic and family violence occurrences involving children between 2016 and 2022



Source: Queensland Audit Office using QPRIME data provided by the Queensland Police Service.



The Department of Justice and Attorney-General provides funding to 26 organisations to deliver counselling across the state. Although this is a step in the right direction, there needs to be longer-term, post-crisis counselling, or therapeutic responses and dedicated support services available to support children and young people. The department cannot provide the number of children/young people who have accessed these support services.

Recommendation 14

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs develop strategies, resource, fund and identify suitable programs to provide support services specifically for children and young people exposed to domestic and family violence.

Young people face unique risks



Children and adolescents need risk assessment and management approaches tailored to their vulnerabilities, but even high-risk teams do not receive training on how to manage children and adolescents who are referred to them.

The QPS's risk screening tool is not specific to children and does not collect some information specifically related to them. For example, it does not ask if a child feels unsafe or scared or has ever been hurt.

DJAG has revised its common risk assessment and safety management planning framework to include a child-specific risk screening tool. While this has been made available online for all DFV services to use from July 2022, it does not have a child-specific risk assessment and safety management planning tool that can be used by HRTs and other departments. This is important when assessing needs and services specific to children.

The Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs delivers 'Safe and Together' training. Rather than considering DFV to be only incident-based, this training approaches it as a pattern of coercive behaviours, which gives a more holistic understanding of the abuse.

Currently, this training is not mandatory for HRTs. We were advised that most HRTs have received this training, but DJAG was unable to specify which HRT members have been trained.

Responding to DFV disclosures

Not all DFV victims report their experience to police. Victims or perpetrators may instead disclose it to hospital and health, legal, corrective, or child safety services.

They are likely to disclose their experience to a health professional



The Death Review and Advisory Board (set up under the *Coroners Act 2003* to research and analyse data and make recommendations to government) has noted that victims and perpetrators often have high levels of contact with hospitals, general practitioners (GPs), and mental health services. Health workers need to know how to respond in the most appropriate way to ensure safety and wellbeing is considered for the victim and any children.

Training

Many health professionals receive limited or no training in recognising and responding to DFV, and Queensland Health has not mandated DFV training for its frontline health workers. In 2016, it implemented a toolkit of resources to support health workers in recognising, responding to, and referring suspicions and disclosures of DFV, but it has identified that health workers in medical and administrative roles in public and private hospitals and primary health settings do not know where to find the toolkit or resources.

In May 2020, it approved \$2.07 million per annum over 4 years to provide specialist information and a DFV training program for frontline health workers, but this is still not mandatory. Between July and December 2021, 126 face-to-face DFV training events were delivered to 2,145 clinicians.

Screening

Queensland Health has not made risk screening tools widely available across the health system. In some instances, this has resulted in fatal consequences. For example, a coroner's report in July 2022 detailed a DFV death where the victim and perpetrator had multiple contacts with the health system prior to the victim's death. Health staff had not conducted any risk assessment or routine screening for DFV. At least 20 risk factors for the homicide of an intimate partner were present at the time of the victim's death, and many of these were known to support services.

Recommendation 15

We recommend that the Department of Health and hospital and health services strengthen screening and risk assessing practices by:

- implementing the recommendations of the Death Review and Advisory Board (set up under the *Coroners Act 2003* to research and analyse data and make recommendations to government) as a priority
- ensuring its risk assessment and screening tools are updated and widely available across the health system
- mandating and delivering face-to-face domestic and family violence training for all frontline health workers.



5. Preventing domestic and family violence

Preventing DFV is a complex challenge. It involves education, rehabilitation, a recognition of intergenerational patterns of violence, and a focus on working with perpetrators and possible perpetrators. Only by tackling all of these issues can the government bring about substantial and lasting changes.

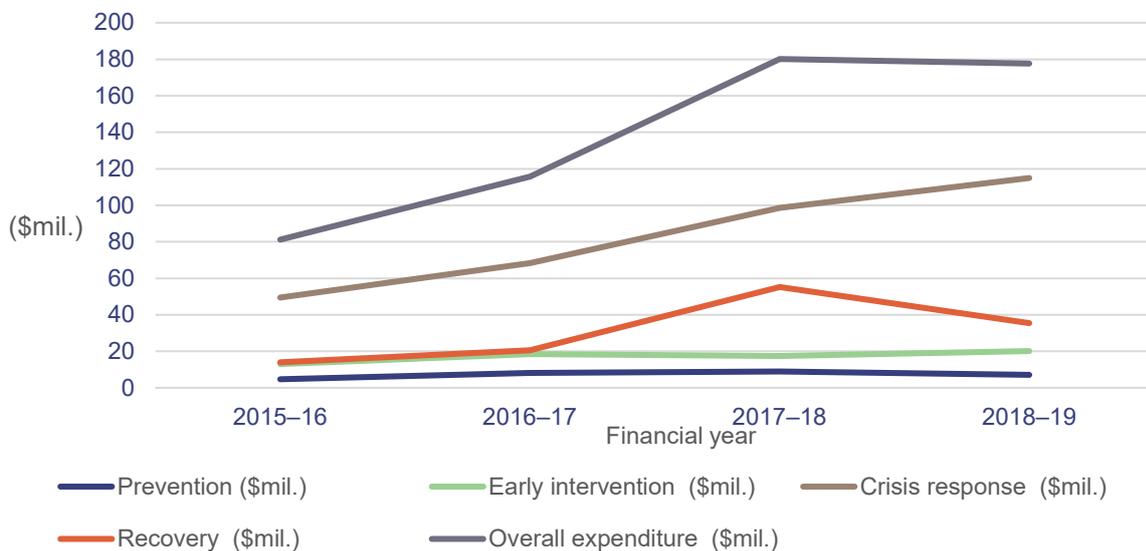
Funding prevention initiatives



In 2015, the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence recommended the government provide resources and support for comprehensive and coordinated prevention of DFV.

In response, the government developed the *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016-2026* that incorporated a communication strategy focused on preventing DFV, and a funding and investment model to support investment decisions on services and initiatives. However, while the strategy provides a clear commitment to long-term prevention, the investment has mainly concentrated on responding to domestic violence, as shown in Figure 5A.

Figure 5A
Breakdown of domestic violence expenditure
between 2015–16 and 2018–19



Note: The Department of Justice and Attorney-General developed the 4 funding categories, in consultation with other entities. These categories are listed in the Queensland Government Domestic and Family Violence Investment Summary. It did not track expenditure from 2019–20 onwards.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using data provided by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

In 2018–19, government spending on prevention measures accounted for only 4 per cent (\$7.1 million) of its overall expenditure on DFV initiatives. Because the department stopped collecting expenditure data that year, it does not know how much money has been spent on DFV initiatives since 2019–20.



Some of the government's expenditure on early intervention and recovery may include preventative elements. It also invests in prevention indirectly:

- by educating Queensland school students
- through the work of the DFV Prevention Council, whose role is to embed cultural change and encourage the community to take ownership of action to end DFV.

Recommendation 16

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General collect and analyses its expenditure data to quantify and assess the government's investment in domestic and family violence, in particular its funding of prevention and early intervention initiatives.

Addressing intergenerational violence and helping children

Young people exposed to DFV may learn that violence is an appropriate way to resolve conflict in their relationships and carry this belief through into adulthood. Research reported by the Australian Institute of Criminology suggests that young people exposed to DFV are more likely to become victims or perpetrators of DFV themselves later in life.

Young people are being increasingly exposed to domestic and family violence

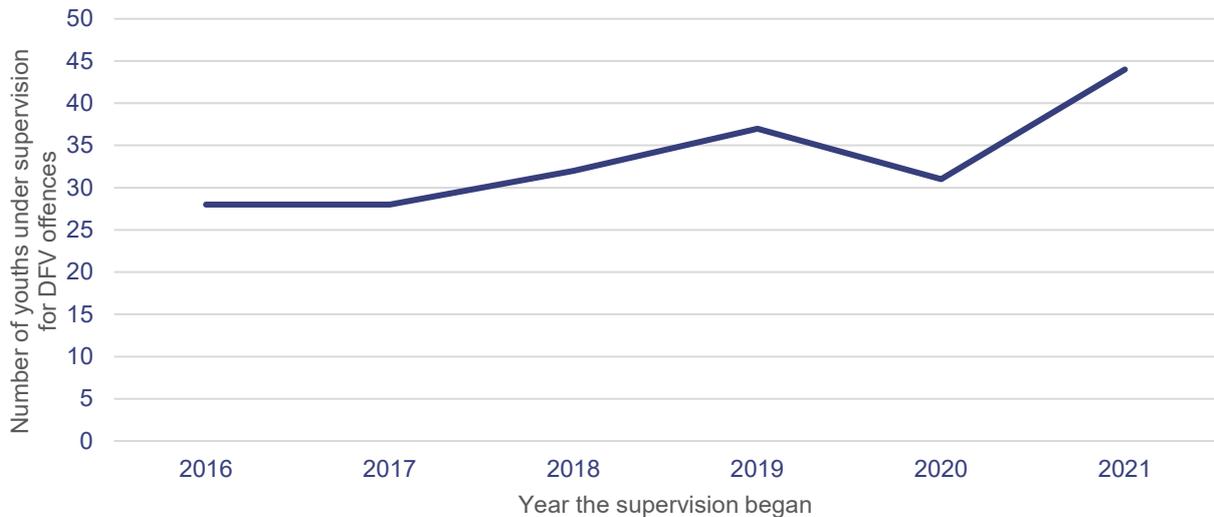


Around 32 per cent of reported DFV incidents between 2015–16 and 2021–22 involved young people as victims, witnesses, or perpetrators. Research shows that young people exposed to DFV are more likely to experience behavioural issues and poor mental and physical health, and to struggle with schooling. DFV is also the leading cause of homelessness for young people, and many children who perpetrate DFV have been victims themselves.

Between 2015–16 and 2020–21, the number of young people beginning a period of supervision in youth detention or the community for DFV offences increased by over 57 per cent, from 28 to 44.



Figure 5B
Increase in supervision of young people for domestic and family violence offences



Notes: 17-year-olds have been excluded from this data analysis due to only being in the youth justice system from February 2018.

For 3 months in the 2019–20 period, courts only processed high-risk matters due to COVID-19. The remainder were processed in the 2020–21 period.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using Integrated Client Management System data from the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs.

Education helps to break the cycle



Educating children about DFV and respectful relationships is an important long-term way to address intergenerational violence.

In 2015, the Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence recommended the Queensland Government facilitates programs for young people in state schools that emphasise:

- developing and maintaining respectful relationships
- respecting self
- gender equality.

In February 2016, the Department of Education developed an online *Respectful Relationships Education* program for all state and non-state schools. On 7 October 2022, this was renamed as the *Respect* program. It covers social and emotional learning about respect, inclusion, and power. The department advised us that all state schools are required to deliver health and wellbeing education, including respectful relationships education, either as part of the delivery of the Australian Curriculum or as part of the school's pastoral care program. It is unknown whether non-state schools provide similar respectful relationships education to students.

The *Respect* program provides resources and teacher guidelines that schools use across the year levels. The department does not know the use, detail, or outcomes of *Respect* education in Queensland state schools. As a result, it cannot demonstrate that the *Respect* program has been effective or is a useful resource.

Recommendation 17

We recommend that the Department of Education annually assesses the delivery, reach, and effectiveness of the *Respect* program in Queensland state schools.

Holding perpetrators accountable

Changing the behaviour of perpetrators is fundamental to addressing DFV in Queensland. Whether perpetrators are in prison or in the community, they need to stay engaged with DFV service providers to reduce their chance of reoffending.

There is limited information on perpetrators



The Department of Justice and Attorney-General needs detailed information about perpetrators to make informed decisions about the number and type of services needed in the community. At present, it does not have enough to be confident its programs and initiatives are effectively located and funded.

Better collection and sharing of information about perpetrators could also identify trends and allow for intervention before the risk of violence escalates. The Queensland Police Service has trialled initiatives to better monitor and intervene with perpetrators, as outlined in Case study 2.

Figure 5C Case study 2

Queensland Police Service initiatives to monitor high-risk offenders

In 2020–21, the Queensland Police Service trialled and evaluated 2 statewide operations targeting the most high-risk, high-harm perpetrators in Queensland.

In the first, it used strategies to proactively monitor and engage with 319 perpetrators with 3 or more current domestic violence orders against individual victims. Police aimed to increase perpetrator accountability by reinforcing the consequences of violence. They also aimed to connect perpetrators to specialist DFV services across the state, where they could receive additional tailored support.

In the second, police developed a harm ranking and evaluation tool to better target perpetrators who are disproportionately responsible for domestic and family violence. The tool collates large volumes of data across Queensland Police Service databases and ranks perpetrators from the highest known potential for committing harmful offences to the lowest.

The operation targeted 100 offenders – the top 20 offenders across Gold Coast, Logan, South Brisbane, Sunshine Coast, and Far North.

The trials resulted in a 50 per cent average reduction in domestic and family violence-related offending from targeted perpetrators.

The harm ranking and evaluation tool was built into a dashboard to better equip police with information about high-risk, high-harm perpetrators. This enables police to monitor them and cross-check information about their offending history, risk factors, court orders, and other information.

The Queensland Police Service intends to roll out these proactive operations on an ongoing basis.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using information provided by the Queensland Police Service.

More community-based perpetrator programs are needed



Community-based rehabilitation helps perpetrators who are ready and willing to change their behaviour. Unfortunately, not all of them can access it.

In 2015, the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence recommended that the Queensland Government increase access to intervention for perpetrators, and that it identify areas to prioritise, with a view to statewide coverage within 3 years.

In October 2019, the government reported that it had invested \$10.3 million over 4 years in perpetrator interventions to provide coverage across the state, targeting high-need populations. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General became responsible for overseeing this investment following machinery of government changes in 2020, which has impacted its ability to clearly track the full distribution amount. It can only account for an investment of \$8.94 million dollars.

It does not have a record of the number of programs being offered prior to the \$8.94 million dollar investment to compare with its current number of programs, so cannot quantify the impact of the investment.

It also cannot provide an accurate list of the local government areas its funded programs are servicing or how many people are accessing these programs. It needs to know this so it can identify service gaps and improve rehabilitation outcomes.

Most programs have lengthy wait lists

The government does not collect data on waitlists for rehabilitation programs, which stakeholders advised us can be lengthy. While it is good that rehabilitation programs are available, perpetrators need immediate access to them. This is particularly important for those who seek help before committing DFV, as this is an opportunity to prevent it from occurring.

Young perpetrators have unique needs

Very few support and rehabilitation services are tailored to the needs of young people who perpetrate DFV. As described in Case study 3, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General is trialling 2 programs in the Brisbane and Ipswich regions to meet their specific needs.



Figure 5D Case study 3

Trial of preventative approaches aimed at young men and boys

Brisbane Youth Service

Brisbane Youth Service was allocated \$320,000 from 1 October 2020 to 31 December 2021 to develop and trial a perpetrator program specifically for young men who are using violence and abuse towards their partners.

A specialist DFV worker is part of the program, working with young people and supporting youth workers in responding appropriately.

The evaluation of the Brisbane Youth Service was not complete at the time of our audit.

Family Pathways Model (ReNew program)

The ReNew program seeks to address abusive/violent behaviours committed by young men against their mothers and siblings. It also seeks to increase attachment between mothers and sons and reduce the risk of young people perpetrating domestic violence as adults. The program targets young men between the ages of 12 to 17 who have experienced DFV perpetrated by an adult in the family (usually their father).

It accepts referrals for intake, risk assessment, and psychoeducation group work support (which provides education and information to those seeking or receiving mental health services). Participants progress to a second service for Phase 2, which is therapeutic support and counselling.

A final evaluation was completed in November 2021. It found the ReNew program addresses a grossly under-met service delivery need, and that programs to address adolescent-to-parent violence are new and emerging areas of practice requiring specialist considerations and interventions.

Source: Queensland Audit Office using information provided by the Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

Beyond these programs, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General has no dedicated initiatives for community-based programs for young people perpetrating DFV. More programs are needed to effectively meet this growing need.

Rehabilitation is limited for young people in detention

The Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs delivers one program aimed at male youths (aged 15 and above) in the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre. This is a DFV-specific behavioural change program. While 38 young people have completed the course in the past year, it is not available in all youth detention settings in Queensland.

Youth Justice is trialling the KIND program, a therapeutic initiative specifically designed for youth justice clients who use violence. Phase one of the trial is currently underway in Ipswich and South Brisbane, with plans to broaden it across other locations by the end of 2023.

It is not clear if rehabilitation programs are effective



The Queensland Government does not collect data on attendance rates, completion rates, and waiting lists for perpetrator rehabilitation programs. It also does not know how many perpetrators reoffend after rehabilitation efforts. Without this, it cannot have confidence that rehabilitation programs are reducing the risk of DFV.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General provides ongoing funding to 17 organisations to deliver 134 perpetrator rehabilitation programs. It has not evaluated any of them, which means the department cannot be confident its investment in rehabilitation is delivering the desired results.

Existing rehabilitation services focus on male perpetrators

While existing rehabilitation programs are limited to male perpetrators, as they are the most prevalent perpetrator group, a wider range of programs is needed to respond to the diverse array of DFV scenarios. This includes:

- son to mother violence
- female to male violence
- intimate partner violence in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, or queer communities.

Although these other types of domestic violence are less common than male to female violence, their incidence is increasing. Expanding the coverage and types of programs across the state should improve rehabilitation outcomes.

The Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, in its 2021 *Hear her voice* report, made 4 recommendations to the government to provide a network of perpetrator rehabilitation programs and interventions statewide. The government has supported all of these.

More accommodation options are needed



Perpetrators are a greater risk to victims and their families if they do not have access to appropriate accommodation. Many will attempt to return to their family home after a DFV incident, often because they have nowhere else to go.

Other jurisdictions, such as Victoria, have identified accommodation for perpetrators as a key measure. In Queensland, neither the Department of Justice and Attorney-General nor the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy provides crisis accommodation targeted to perpetrators of domestic and family violence.

There are no initiatives, programs, or actions specific to perpetrators in the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy's key strategic documents. If perpetrators need crisis accommodation, they must seek it through mainstream homelessness services. These may lack the right supports to reduce the risk of reoffending. The provision of accommodation options for perpetrators must be assessed within the context of safety of victims and risks the perpetrator poses. This can better be managed outside of mainstream homelessness services.

Accommodation options are likely to be increasingly needed to cater for the needs and circumstances of victims and perpetrators from the diverse range of relationships that exist in modern society.

Recommendation 18

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy develop strategies to provide a range of crisis accommodation including for perpetrators of domestic and family violence, taking into consideration the management of risk to victims.

The system loses sight of perpetrators

Perpetrators may engage with perpetrator rehabilitation services, drug and alcohol services, employment, or financial support services. These services are well-placed to identify changes in a perpetrator's behaviour that may indicate a victim is at increased risk of DFV.

Currently, many of these services have limited ability to routinely share information about perpetrator risk with other DFV services. For example, high-risk teams (which bring together services to develop safety management plans for people) operate under a victim-centric framework. Safety planning includes consideration of the needs and risk factors relating to perpetrators, but the teams are not designed to coordinate the management of perpetrators at a heightened risk of DFV. That is not their role, but it is a gap in service delivery.

Perpetrator rehabilitation program providers are not funded as core members on high-risk teams. They have vital information about perpetrator risk and behaviour patterns including separation, alcohol and drug dependency, and mental health issues, but without systems to enable them to share this information, they may not. This means perpetrators are often not monitored until they commit another act of violence.

Greater collaboration between entities that work with perpetrators is needed to monitor them and their progress.

Prisons can do more to monitor and rehabilitate perpetrators



Queensland Corrective Services cannot confirm how many DFV perpetrators have been in Queensland's prisons or under supervision in the community since 2015. While it currently identifies DFV perpetrators in its system, this is a manual process that has changed over time. It is currently reviewing how it identifies the DFV risks of individuals. This information is essential for rehabilitation programs.

Rehabilitation of perpetrators in prisons is needed

Queensland Corrective Services has no permanent programs for rehabilitating DFV perpetrators in Queensland prisons. In January 2019, it began an internally-funded, 18-month trial of a rehabilitation program at the Woodford, Wolston, and Maryborough correctional centres.

A process evaluation highlighted benefits from the trial program, but it noted significant limitations with the data and measures for assessing outcomes. In June 2021, the government granted Queensland Corrective Services an additional \$402,000 to continue the trial for another 2 years and to perform an evaluation of the outcome.

The prisoner telephone system could better monitor perpetrators

DFV behaviour against a victim can continue and intensify when a perpetrator is in prison. The absence of physical abuse does not lessen the power and control perpetrators have over victims. The Queensland Corrective Services' prisoner telephone system can provide a means for perpetrators to continue to contact their victims.



Queensland Corrective Services restricts prisoner telephone calls to victims if the victim requests no contact, and if a non-contact domestic violence order is known to be in place. However, it advised us that it does not have a process to confirm the identity of the receiver of a prisoner's call, or if the phone number belongs to the receiver. Friends and family members have been known to assist prisoners to divert the prisoner telephone system call. These instances are managed on a case-by-case basis.

Currently, Queensland Corrective Services employs DFV intelligence analysts to manually review the prisoner telephone system for intended or possible breaches of domestic violence orders. It told us that Queensland prisoners make approximately 600,000 to 700,000 phone calls per month, and its analysts monitor less than 0.5 per cent of these – a significantly time- and resource-intensive task.

It is currently exploring the costs, operational impacts, and benefits of in-cell technology to improve its oversight of the prisoner telephone system.

It does not collect data relating to the number of breaches of domestic violence orders through the prisoner telephone system.

Recommendation 19

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Queensland Corrective Services, and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs, increase the number, range, and quality of rehabilitation programs, including specific programs tailored for young people.

Recommendation 20

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General strengthens its oversight and monitoring of its funded programs by:

- reviewing the demand, type, availability, and accessibility of perpetrator programs across Queensland
- collecting data on attendance rates, completion rates, and waiting lists for its funded programs
- evaluating the effectiveness of its funded programs.

Recommendation 21

We recommend that Queensland Corrective Services enhances its systems and processes for monitoring prisoners to ensure they do not breach domestic violence orders.



Appendices

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A. Entity responses

As mandated in Section 64 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, the Queensland Audit Office gave a copy of this report with a request for comments to the:

- Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Justice and Attorney-General
- Queensland Police Service
- Queensland Corrective Services
- Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs
- Department of Education
- Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy
- Department of Health.

We also provided a copy of the report, with the option of providing a response, to the:

- Queensland Family and Child Commission
- Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence.

This appendix contains their detailed responses to our audit recommendations.

The head of each entity is responsible for the accuracy, fairness and balance of their comments.

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Comments received from Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence



Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of
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Our ref: 605974/1, 6461348

4 November 2022

Mr Brendan Worrall
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
gao@gao.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Worrall

Thank you for your correspondence dated 14 October 2022 regarding your proposed report to Parliament on *Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence* and for the opportunity to provide a response.

The Department of Justice and Attorney-General (the Department) supports the work being undertaken by the Queensland Audit Office and welcomes its review of Queensland's efforts to address domestic and family violence. I note the QAO report makes 14 recommendations directed to the Department aimed at improving the domestic and family violence service system and related programs, and that the Department has agreed or agreed in-principle to those recommendations.

As you note in your report, domestic and family violence is a serious, complex and widespread issue for society. I am proud of the Queensland Government's efforts aimed at preventing and responding to all forms of domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) in our communities, backed by significant investment and a comprehensive reform program across government to address these issues since 2015. However, I acknowledge that more needs to be done.

The Queensland Government's *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026* (the Strategy) developed in response to the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland's *Not Now, Not Ever* report, sets the direction for collaborative action to end domestic and family violence in Queensland, encouraging partnerships between the government, communities, and business. Guided by the Strategy and supporting action plans, the Government has committed more than \$600 million in programs, services, and strategies to address DFSV in Queensland since 2015.

Building on the work of the Strategy, in May 2022 the Queensland Government announced an additional \$363 million over five years to support the implementation of all 89 recommendations from the independent Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce (WSJT) Report, *Hear Her Voice – Report One – Addressing coercive control and domestic and family violence in Queensland*.



(2)

You may also be aware that the WSJT second report: *Hear Her Voice – Report two – Women and girls' experiences across the criminal justice system* makes 188 recommendations. I anticipate the Government response will be released in the near future and where relevant, will take into consideration the recommendations made in your report.

In implementing the Queensland Government response to the WSJT Report One we have committed to a number of actions to address the key themes identified in your report, including expanding High Risk Teams and co-responder models; strengthening information sharing; strengthening responses to children and young people; perpetrator interventions and tracking investment and evaluating outcomes.

In addition to implementing the Strategy and WSJT actions, the Queensland Government is continuing to deliver a range of initiatives in response to recommendations arising from Coronial inquests and made by the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board in their Annual Reports since 2016-2017.

I am confident that by taking your report's recommendations into consideration in the ongoing development and implementation of the current program of reform, we will continue to improve the systemic response to domestic and family violence across Queensland and deliver better outcomes for victim-survivors.

I also refer you to the detailed response to your report from Mr David Mackie, the Department's Director-General, for further information.

If you have any questions in relation to the above, I invite you to contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Shannon Fentiman MP
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice
Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence
Member for Waterford

Comments received from Minister for Children and Youth Justice and Minister for Multicultural Affairs



Minister for Children and Youth Justice
Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Our reference: MO ID# 10856; CYJMA 04071-2022

– 4 NOV 2022

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Mr Brendan Worrall
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Dear Mr Worrall

Thank you for your email regarding the Queensland Audit Office's (QAO) proposed report *Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence* (the report).

I understand Ms Deidre Mulkerin, Director-General, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (DCYJMA) has also written to you regarding the report and has provided detail regarding recommendations allocated to DCYJMA.

I would like to thank the QAO for undertaking this important work to examine the effectiveness of public sector entities in addressing the serious issue of domestic and family violence. DCYJMA is committed to working with victim-survivors and supporting children and young people in its care who have experienced or been exposed to domestic and family violence.

I note the findings of the report and support the need for government to strengthen its coordinated approach across prevention, education, early intervention, and rehabilitation service systems to achieve long term and generational change. DCYJMA is committed to working with partner agencies to address domestic and family violence, including protecting victim-survivors and their children.

The findings and recommendations from the report align to a number of pieces of work DCYJMA is engaged in through the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce Report 1 and 2, the *Domestic and Family Violence Strategy 2016-26* and action plans, the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board annual reports, and several other high-profile reviews and inquiries. From a national perspective, it is positive to see the recent publication of the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* which will provide a national policy framework to guide all parts of society to work together to end gender-based violence in one generation.

If you require any further information or assistance in relation to this matter, please contact

Yours sincerely

Leanne Linard MP
Minister for Children and Youth Justice and
Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Comments received from Director-General, Department of Justice and Attorney-General



Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Office of the Director-General

In reply please quote: 601874/1, 6456765
- 4 NOV 2022

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Dear Mr Worrall

Thank you for your email dated 14 October 2022 seeking a formal response to recommendations from the Queensland Audit Office proposed report – *Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence*.

I welcome the proposed report. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General (the Department) appreciated the opportunity provided to work with the Queensland Audit Office and agrees or agrees in-principle with all 14 of your recommendations. As requested, I have **enclosed** a response to individual recommendations.

I note your recommendations are well aligned to recommendations of the independent Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce (WSJT) Report, *Hear Her Voice – Report One – Addressing coercive control and domestic and family violence in Queensland*, delivered to Government in late 2021. As you would be aware, the Queensland Government has accepted all 89 recommendations of that report, with the Department leading implementation of a significant number of the recommendations.

On a technical note, I would like to provide clarification on terminology used in the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012* (the DFVP Act). Under the DFVP Act, a temporary protection order is a domestic violence order (see section 23). On page 15 and Figure 3C of your report, I note you use both "temporary protection order" and "domestic violence order".

I look forward to continuing our current reform program taking into consideration the further enhancements recommended in your report. The Department will provide updates on the implementation of the recommendations as required.

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

David Mackie
Director-General

Enc.

Responses to recommendations

Department of Justice and Attorney General

Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence

Response to recommendations provided by Mr David Mackie, Director-General, Department of Justice and Attorney-General on 4 November 2022

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Queensland Police Service:</p> <p>4. enhance support within courts to assist victims in making private applications for domestic violence and temporary protection orders</p>	Agree in-principle	Ongoing	<p>Pending the findings of the Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General will work with the Queensland Police Service to implement the intent of this recommendation.</p> <p>The Department of Justice and Attorney-General notes it is delivering on a number of related recommendations from the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce (WSJT) Report 1.</p> <p>In response to that report, Queensland Courts will implement a state-wide plan to improve safety for victims when attending courts, continue the expansion of the specialist DFV court program, and develop a trauma-informed and intersectional training strategy for Court Services Queensland and Community Justice Services.</p> <p>Collectively these reforms will meet the intent of this recommendation by enhancing the safety and accessibility of the court for victims, and equipping staff with the necessary skills and capabilities to recognise and respond to DFV in a trauma-informed and appropriate way. This will further increase the capacity of the court to facilitate essential referrals to specialist DFV support services, including legal support.</p>

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
5. identify why a high proportion of prosecutions for <i>Criminal Code Act 1899</i> s. 315A offences (choking, suffocation, or strangulation) are unsuccessful	Agree in-principle	Ongoing	The Department of Justice and Attorney-General will consider relevant research and other developments relating to the prosecution of offences under Section 315A of the Criminal Code in order to identify any issues that may be contributing to unsuccessful prosecutions and that may require a legislative response.
6. gather and analyse data to assess where action is needed to improve access to, and timeliness and effectiveness of referrals to DFV support services.	Agree in-principle	Ongoing	Pending the findings of the Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General will work with the Queensland Police Service to implement the intent of this recommendation. The Department notes it currently collects and analyses a range of data and information from its funded DFV support services. It is currently undertaking a data improvement project and will consider the QAO recommendation in progressing that work.



Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Queensland Police Service:</p> <p>8. implement a cross-agency training program focused on enhancing inter-agency roles, coordination, communication, protocols, and multidisciplinary approaches. This should include other key domestic and family violence support and service delivery entities, such as the courts, the Department of Health, the hospital and health services, the Department of Education, and non-government victim support services.</p>	Agree in-principle	Ongoing	<p>Pending the findings of the Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence, the Department of Justice and Attorney-General will work with the Queensland Police Service and other relevant agencies to implement the intent of this recommendation.</p> <p>The Department of Justice and Attorney-General notes it has related work underway in response to Recommendations of the WSJT Report 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendation 23 - developing an evidence-based and trauma-informed framework to support training and education across all parts of the domestic and family violence and justice system. Recommendation 24 – exploring options to best implement and embed training and education for all frontline and other relevant staff across government, as well as funded non-government agency staff effectively and efficiently.



Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General:</p> <p>9. establishes a holistic case management approach to domestic and family violence that considers the context and impact on the broader family or relationship and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • coordinating case management across entities and services • integrating risk assessment to consider all risk factors and all people directly and indirectly exposed to <i>domestic and family violence</i> • taking collective responsibility for managing risk and ensuring staff are trained to assess risk • providing seamless access to information and data • working collaboratively and coordinating services and support 	Agree-in-principle	Ongoing	<p>The Department of Justice and Attorney-General is leading work to implement a number of WSJT Report 1 recommendations that will address the intent of this recommendation.</p> <p>This includes work underway to implement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommendation 20 - to review the <i>Domestic and Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines</i> to ensure they are accessible to all relevant agencies; and Recommendation 21 - to continue to promote the use of the Common Risk and Safety Framework (CRASF) or aligned risk assessment tools to improve Queensland's response to recognising, assessing and responding to DFV and coercive control. A cross government approach is being adopted to implementing the CRASF across all elements of the integrated service system. <p>The CRASF has been updated with a revised version released in July 2022. The revised CRASF will help to improve skills and awareness across agencies for the risk assessment, safety management planning, information sharing and co-ordination of service and support.</p> <p>The Department is also supporting the strengthening of integrated service responses to high risk victims more broadly across the state.</p>

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>10. analyses data and information to regularly evaluate the performance of high-risk teams, drive improvements, share learnings, inform resourcing and funding, and ensure all high-risk victims are being referred</p>	Agree	Ongoing	<p>As part of the Queensland Government's \$363 million reform funding package to support its response to the WSJT Report 1, funding has been allocated to uplift the existing eight High Risk Teams (HRTs) and establish HRTs in three new locations, including Townsville which has already been announced.</p> <p>The Department of Justice and Attorney-General will continue to strengthen its existing work to analyse data and information relating to HRTs.</p> <p>The Department also notes that in response to recommendation 18 of the WSJT Report 1, the Queensland Government has committed to undertake detailed analysis of the HRT model and funding structure to ensure HRTs are adequately resourced, interconnected and appropriately equipped to meet existing and emerging needs in the community.</p> <p>As part of this analysis, the Department will consider whether there are regions where there is unmet demand to inform decision making for the locations of additional Integrated Service Responses and HRTs across Queensland.</p> <p>In regions where no high risk team formally exists, the Department is supporting the strengthening of responses through an integrated service response to high risk victims.</p>

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
11. refers all consenting high-risk victims in Queensland to high-risk teams and provides support appropriate to their assessed risk, regardless of geographical boundaries	Agree-in-principle	Ongoing	<p>As part of the Queensland Government's \$363 million reform funding package to support its response to the WSJT Report 1, funding has been allocated to uplift the existing eight High Risk Teams (HRTs) and establish HRTs in three new locations, including Townsville which has already been announced.</p> <p>The Department of Justice and Attorney-General has funded positions on each HRT alongside relevant agencies as part of a multi-agency response. The Department notes it does not lead referrals.</p> <p>To implement the intent of the recommendation, the Department will consider options to support referral entities such as the Queensland Police Service and domestic and family violence services in referring all consenting people assessed as high-risk.</p> <p>As per response to Recommendation 10, the Department also notes that in response to recommendation 18 of the WSJT Report 1, the Queensland Government has committed to undertake detailed analysis of the HRT model and funding structure to ensure HRTs are adequately resourced, interconnected and appropriately equipped to meet existing and emerging needs in the community.</p> <p>As part of this analysis, the Department will consider whether there are regions where there is unmet demand to inform decision making for the locations of additional Integrated Service Responses and HRTs across Queensland. In regions where no high risk team formally exists, the Department is supporting the strengthening of responses through an integrated service response to high risk victims.</p>

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
12. improves the recording and availability of high-risk teams' information to ensure it is accessible across the teams and to all police responding to domestic and family violence incidents	Agree-in-principle	Ongoing	The Department of Justice and Attorney-General notes that protocols have recently been introduced to ensure that information is shared across High Risk Teams as appropriate.
We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Queensland Police Service: 13. progressively expand co-location and co-responder approaches across the state and includes a wider range of services to better meet the needs of victims and people affected by domestic and family violence. This includes integrating them with high-risk teams and the Queensland Police Service's Domestic and Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons units.	Agree	Ongoing	The Department of Justice and Attorney-General recognises the opportunities that co-location presents and currently contributes funding to a range of co-location pilots. The Department is also partnering with the Queensland Police Service on initiatives to expand co-response approaches across the state, where police and specialist domestic and family violence services respond together, to ensure the person most at risk is protected. For example, funding has been secured to trial co-responder pilots in line with Recommendation 37 of Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce Report 1. This will support the development, trial and evaluation of a co-responder model involving a mobile co-response to police call outs between Queensland Police Service and government funded specialist domestic and family violence services, in a number of locations.

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend the Department of Justice and Attorney General and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs:</p> <p>14. develop strategies, resource, fund and identify suitable programs to provide support services specifically for children and young people exposed to domestic and family violence.</p>	Agree-in-principle	Ongoing	<p>The Department of Justice and Attorney-General currently funds services to provide counselling to children and young people experiencing domestic and family violence, and is aware that there are gaps in service delivery.</p> <p>In implementing the Queensland Government response to Recommendation 13 of the WSJT Report 1 to develop a whole-of-government domestic and family violence service system strategic investment plan, the Department is undertaking a strategic investment review. The identification of appropriate programs and services for children and young people will be considered as part of that work.</p>
<p>We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General:</p> <p>16. collects and analyses its expenditure data to quantify and assess the government's investment in domestic and family violence, in particular its funding of prevention and early intervention initiatives.</p>	Agree-in-principle	Ongoing	<p>A DFV Funding and Investment Model was developed in response to Recommendation 72 of the <i>Not Now, Not Ever</i> Report. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General will continue to explore opportunities to embed this model into government decision making processes to assist government in quantifying and assessing its investment in DFV.</p> <p>In implementing the Queensland Government response to Recommendation 9 of the WSJT Report 1, the Department is developing a comprehensive and integrated plan for the primary prevention of DFV in Queensland and will consider the QAO recommendation in progressing that work.</p>



Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy:</p> <p>18. develop strategies to provide a range of crisis accommodation including for perpetrators of domestic and family violence, taking into consideration the management of risk to victims.</p>	Agree-in-principle	Ongoing	<p>The Department of Justice and Attorney-General will continue to work with the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy to consider future strategies to continuously improve Queensland Government support and crisis accommodation service offers, for all people in Queensland, including victims and perpetrators of domestic, family and/or sexual violence.</p> <p>The Department of Justice and Attorney-General will also consider the issues raised by the QAO as it implements the Queensland Government commitment to develop a standalone, system-wide strategy for responding to all perpetrators of domestic and family violence in response to Recommendation 9 of the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board 2019-20 Annual Report, and as it implements Recommendations (25-29) from the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce Report 1.</p>



Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General; Queensland Corrective Services; and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs:</p> <p>19. increase the number, range, and quality of rehabilitation programs, including specific programs tailored for young people.</p>	Agree in-principle	Ongoing	<p>The Department of Justice and Attorney-General will consider issues raised by the QAO as part of implementation of a number of related recommendations.</p> <p>For example, the Queensland Government has committed to developing a standalone, system-wide strategy for responding to all perpetrators of domestic and family violence in response to Recommendation 9 of the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board 2019-20 Annual Report.</p> <p>Further, the Queensland Government has supported recommendations (25-28) of the WSJT Report 1 to design and establish a state-wide network of perpetrator intervention programs across a continuum of risk and need, informed by the system wide strategy.</p> <p>As part of the \$363 million reform funding package committed to implement the Government response to Report 1, additional funding has been allocated for the network of perpetrator programs and related reforms. The Department continues to monitor demand pressures to identify priorities for future investment.</p> <p>The Queensland Government has also committed to developing and trialling perpetrator programs specifically tailored to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; developing a perpetrator-centric risk assessment approach and tool; and establishing a new court-based perpetrator diversion scheme.</p> <p>The Queensland Government has also supported Rec 74 of the WSJT Report 1 for the establishment of a court-based perpetrator diversion scheme.</p>

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General:</p> <p>20. strengthens its oversight and monitoring of its funded programs by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reviewing the demand, type, availability, and accessibility of perpetrator programs across Queensland • collecting data on attendance rates, completion rates, and waiting lists for its funded programs • evaluating the effectiveness of its funded programs. 	Agree in-principle	Ongoing	<p>The Department of Justice and Attorney-General will consider the issues raised by the QAO as it implements a standalone, system-wide strategy for responding to all perpetrators of domestic and family violence in response to Recommendation 9 of the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board 2019-20 Annual Report.</p> <p>Further, the Queensland Government has supported recommendations (25-28) of the WSJT Report 1 to design and establish a state-wide network of perpetrator intervention programs across a continuum of risk and need, informed by the system wide strategy.</p> <p>As part of the \$363 million reform funding package committed to implement the Government response to Report 1, additional funding has been allocated for the network of perpetrator programs and related reforms. The Department continues to monitor demand pressures to identify priorities for future investment.</p> <p>The Department notes it currently collects and analyses a range of data and information from its funded DFV support services. It is currently undertaking a data improvement project and will consider the QAO recommendation in progressing that work.</p>



Comments received from Director-General, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs



Our reference: CYJMA 04048-2022

31 October 2022

Mr Brendan Worrall
Auditor General
Queensland Audit Office
Qao@qao.qld.gov.au

Office of the
Director-General

Department of
**Children, Youth Justice
and Multicultural Affairs**

Dear Mr Worrall

Thank you for your email regarding the Queensland Audit Office's (QAO) draft report *Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence* (the report).

I would like to acknowledge the QAO for undertaking this important piece of work to examine the effectiveness of public sector entities in addressing the serious issue of domestic and family violence. The Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (DCYJMA) is committed to working with victim-survivors and supporting children and young people in its care who have experienced or been exposed to domestic and family violence.

I note the findings from the report and support the need for government to strengthen its coordinated approach across prevention, education, early intervention, and rehabilitation service systems to achieve long-term and generational change. DCYJMA is committed to working with partner agencies to address domestic and family violence, including protecting victim-survivors and their children.

The findings and recommendations from the report align to a number of activities DCYJMA is engaged in through the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce Report 1 and 2, the *Domestic and Family Violence Strategy 2016-26* and action plans, the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board annual reports, and several other high-profile reviews and inquiries. From a national perspective, it is positive to see the recent publication of the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* which will provide a national policy framework to guide all parts of society to work together to end gender-based violence in one generation.

As requested, please find enclosed DCYJMA's response to recommendations 14 and 19.

If you require any further information or assistance in relation to this matter, please contact

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Deidre Mulkerin".

Deidre Mulkerin
Director-General

Enc (1)

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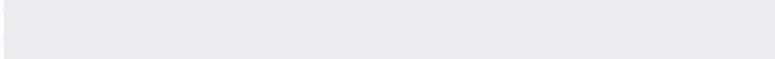
Responses to recommendations



Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence

Response to recommendations provided by Ms Deidre Mulkerin, Director-General, Department of Children, Youth Justice, Multicultural Affairs



Recommendation	Agree/Disagree	Timeframe	Additional comments
<p>We recommend the Department of Justice and Attorney General and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs:</p> <p>14. develop strategies, resource, fund and identify suitable programs to provide support services specifically for children and young people exposed to domestic and family violence.</p>	<p>Agree in principle</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs (DCYJMA) agrees with this recommendation in-principle and will work with the Department of Justice and Attorney-general (DJAG) to consider programs and support services specifically for children and young people exposed to domestic and family violence, subject to availability of funding.</p> <p>As per recommendation 13 from the <i>Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce Report 1 – addressing coercive control and domestic and family violence in Queensland</i>, the Queensland Government has committed to developing a five-year, whole-of-government domestic and family violence service system strategic investment plan encompassing services and supports delivered and funded by Queensland Government agencies. DCYJMA supports that decisions regarding any new funding for domestic and family violence programs and services are made after the investment plan is finalised.</p> <p>There are also strong synergies between this recommendation and the work DCYJMA is progressing through the <i>Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce Report 1 and 2</i>, the <i>Domestic and Family Violence Strategy 2016-26</i> and action plans, the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Board annual reports, and several other high-profile reviews and inquiries.</p> <p>For example, DCYJMA is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with youth service providers to ensure young people not engaged in formal education have access to respectful relationships-informed information; • continuing work to implement respectful relationships education in Queensland youth detention centres; and • continuing to implement and embed the Strengthening Families Protecting Children Framework for Practice (Framework for Practice) and the Safe and Together program across the state which provides staff with ongoing training and tools to support a victim of domestic and family violence to care protectively for their children, and to hold perpetrators accountable. <p>Additionally, DCYJMA funds Intensive Family Support (IFS) and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services (FWS) as well as some youth support services across the state and counselling services for children in care. IFS services support families who are experiencing multiple and/or complex needs, including domestic and family violence. The aim of IFS services is to strengthen skills so parents can safely care for and nurture their children and improve their health and wellbeing.</p> <p>FWS make it easier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in communities across Queensland to access culturally responsive support to improve their social, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing, and build their capacity to safely care for and protect their children.</p>





Better public services

We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General; Queensland Corrective Services; and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs:

19. increase the number, range, and quality of rehabilitation programs, including specific programs tailored for young people.

Agree in principle

Unknown

DCYJMA agrees with this recommendation in-principle as any expansion of existing services and programs, or the development and delivery of new programs and services, requires further consultation and funding.

The Report highlights that services and programs for young people who are perpetrators of domestic and family violence are minimal, despite an increase in the number of young people under supervision for domestic and family violence offences. The report also points to a lack of clarity as to the effectiveness of existing services and programs.

DCYJMA is currently trialling the Kinship, Improve relations, No violence and Developing skills (KIND) program, which is aimed at young people who use violence in the family and in their intimate relationships. The program is competency based and can vary in length between three and six months. KIND requires a psychologist and cultural worker to deliver the program. It consists of nine modules with the young person, six modules with the young person's family, and three sessions with the young person and family together.

DCYJMA notes the alignment of Recommendation 19 with Recommendation 147 of the *Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce Report 2 – Women and girls' experience across the criminal justice system*, regarding the enhancement of rehabilitation programs for women and girls, including those on remand.



Comments received from Director-General, Department of the Premier and Cabinet

For reply please quote: LJP/KG – TF/22/16843 – DOC/22/195589



Department of the
Premier and Cabinet

Mr Brendan Worrall
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
qao@qao.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Worrall

Thank you for your email of 14 October 2022 providing a copy of the Queensland Audit Office's (QAO) Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence report (the report).

I thank the QAO for undertaking this important performance review on domestic and family violence (DFV).

The Queensland Government acknowledges there is more to do to work towards ending DFV in Queensland. Performance reviews are critical in continuing to build a strong evidence base to inform future reform directions and improvements to service delivery, and I appreciate the work undertaken to complete the report.

While the report acknowledges the work and effort that has gone into responding to DFV, as flagged directly with your team by officers in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, the report may have benefitted from providing greater context, as well as more information, about the extensive action that the Queensland Government has undertaken.

In this regard, the *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland* report (Not Now, Not Ever Report) in 2015 and the Queensland Government's response to the Not Now, Not Ever Report have been instrumental in shaping prevention and intervention responses to DFV in Queensland. The Queensland Government response to the Not Now, Not Ever Report resulted in an investment not previously seen in whole-of-Government efforts to address this serious and complex issue. I also note that all 140 recommendations were implemented by October 2019.

The *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026* (the Strategy) implemented in response to the Not Now, Not Ever Report set the Queensland Government's 10-year, whole-of-Government DFV reform agenda. It has been critical in building the evidence-base and a holistic, community-informed foundation supporting the Queensland Government DFV reform agenda.

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Now in the seventh year of delivering the Strategy, significant legislative, policy and service delivery action has been taken to respond to DFV.

The Queensland Government has led statewide communication and engagement campaigns to increase awareness and understanding of DFV; integrated service responses to focus on how service systems can work together in a timely, structured and collaborative way to provide integrated, culturally appropriate safety responses; and amended laws to better protect Queenslanders and hold perpetrators to account.

Further, the Queensland Government's 10-year reform agenda continues to be supported by a comprehensive evaluation framework which supports examination of best practice approaches to preventing DFV, keeping people safe and holding perpetrators to account. The outcomes of the evaluation of the *Third Action Plan 2019–20 to 2021–22* of the Strategy, will inform the finalisation of the *Fourth Action Plan 2022–22 to 2025–26* of the Strategy.

The Queensland Government continues its commitment to addressing all forms of DFV, for example, by establishing the independent Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce to examine non-physical forms of DFV, with a focus on coercive control. The Queensland Government now has a clear pathway forward to respond to coercive control supported by a new funding package of \$363 million over five years.

The Department of the Premier and Cabinet thanks the QAO for the report and will work to further examine findings and recommendations made in the report to deliver action to work to achieve a Queensland free from DFV.

Again, thank you again for your writing to me.

Yours sincerely



Rachel Hunter
Director-General

4/11/22



Comments received from Commissioner, Queensland Corrective Services



Ref: QCS-04337-2022
Your Ref: PRJ02770

28 OCT 2022

Mr Brendan Worrall
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
qao@qao.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Worrall

Thank you for your email of 14 October 2022 requesting a formal response to your proposed report, *Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence* (the report).

Queensland Corrective Services (QCS) acknowledges that preventing domestic and family violence (DFV) is a complex social issue which requires a comprehensive, coordinated, whole-of-government response. DFV is a critical issue within the criminal justice system, with a high proportion of offenders and prisoners managed by QCS having DFV offending history and/or active DFV orders.

QCS is committed to the prevention and elimination of DFV by holding perpetrators to account for their actions. QCS will review its existing policies to minimise the risk of prisoners contravening DFV orders while in Queensland correctional centres, and consider whether any additional measures, (including legislative amendments) are required to better protect victims of DFV from being re-victimised by prisoners. Further, the Queensland Government is currently exploring opportunities for enhanced in-cell technologies.

Please find attached QCS's formal response to the relevant recommendations of the report.

I trust that this information is helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

Paul Stewart APM
Commissioner

Enc.



Office of the
Commissioner
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Corrective Services

OFFICIAL

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Responses to recommendations

Queensland Corrective Services

Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence

Response to recommendations provided by Queensland Corrective Services on 24 October 2022.

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General, Queensland Corrective Services; and the Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs:</p> <p>19. increase the number, range, and quality of rehabilitation programs, including specific programs tailored for young people.</p>	Agree		<p>Queensland Corrective Services notes the \$402,000 provided by government was to secure two years of victim advocacy services to support delivery of the perpetrator program which is ongoing at the Maryborough, Woodford, Wolston and Capricornia Correctional Centres.</p>
<p>We recommend that Queensland Corrective Services:</p> <p>21. enhances its systems and processes for monitoring prisoners to ensure they do not breach domestic violence orders.</p>	Agree		<p>Queensland Corrective Services has made several changes and improvements to processes and systems in recent years and continues to explore further opportunities.</p>



Comments received from Commissioner, Queensland Police Service



QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

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Our Ref:

Your Ref:

7 November 2022

Mr Brendan Worrall
Auditor-General Queensland
GPO Box 15396, City East, QLD 4002
qao@qao.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Worrall

I refer to my previous correspondence to you dated 28 October 2022 and your request of 14 October 2022 for the Queensland Police Service (QPS) to indicate whether it agrees or disagrees with draft recommendations 1-8 and 13 of your proposed Queensland Audit Office (QAO) report, *Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence*.

I indicated in my previous correspondence that due to the ongoing *Commission of Inquiry into QPS responses to domestic and family violence*, it would be premature for the QPS to comment on the draft recommendations, pending the release of the Commission's final report.

I have given further consideration to the matter, and I have decided that there would be benefit in providing feedback on the recommendations at this early stage, noting that the QPS comments on the draft recommendations will need to be revisited following the release of the Commission's final report.

Please find attached a table containing the QPS's comments in relation to the proposed the recommendations.

Yours sincerely

KATARINA CARROLL APM
COMMISSIONER

QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

Responses to recommendations



Queensland Police Service

Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence

Response to recommendations provided by Commissioner Katarina Carroll, Queensland Police Service

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Queensland Police Service:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> ensures its prioritisation of domestic and family violence calls for service is appropriate and effective. This should include assessing all categories and investigating the significant increase in calls being categorised as Code 4 priority 	Agree	Complete	<p>Priority codes are now assigned in accordance with section 14.24 of the OPM in consideration of SOLVE (severity, opportunity, likelihood, vulnerability and expectation) and NOTICES (Nature of incident, Offender status, Threats, Identifiers, Computer checks, External agencies and Supervisor / Supplementary information).</p> <p>The Service Delivery Program and Communications Group Instructions indicate all DFV calls for service will initially be recorded as priority code 3 or higher and where appropriate, may be changed to priority code 4 following a risk assessment by a Communications Room Supervisor.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> undertake a root cause analysis into delayed response times for calls regarding domestic and family violence, particularly those related to Code 2 and 3 priority calls for service. 	Noted	N/A	<p>All efforts are made to dispatch code 2 and 3 calls for service upon receipt however availability of front-line crews impacts ability to do so at times. Availability is impacted by a range of factors including capacity and demand spikes.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> strengthens its system and processes for sharing and accessing information, including better guidance and training and better use of warning flags to communicate risk. 	Agree	Complete	<p>Warning flags are already linked / accessible between QPS databases and the QCAD system, with the importance of the information being relayed integrated into the Communications Group Training package.</p>



Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Queensland Police Service:</p> <p>4. enhance support within courts to assist victims in making private applications for domestic violence and temporary protection orders</p>	<p>Agree In Principle</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>Section 9.11.1 of the OPM provides police prosecutors are to assist an aggrieved with the making of a private application when requested to do so and will appear on behalf of the aggrieved. Whilst the report acknowledges police prosecutors do provide support to victims making private applications though recommends more should be provided on the basis there is a greater success rate for orders being made where police are involved (approximately 97% success rate for police applications versus 75% for private applications).</p> <p>Current staffing does not allow for police prosecutors to appear on private applications, apart from contested applications.</p> <p>The QPS will need to revisit Recommendation 4 once the findings of the <i>Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence</i>, have been released.</p>
<p>5. identify why a high proportion of prosecutions for <i>Criminal Code Act 1899</i> s. 315A offences (choking, suffocation, or strangulation) are unsuccessful</p>	<p>Noted</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Section 315A <i>Criminal Code</i> offences are not generally prosecuted and resolved by the QPS, with the ODPP normally prosecuting this offence.</p>
<p>6. gather and analyse data to assess where action is needed to improve access to, and timeliness and effectiveness of referrals to DFV support services.</p>	<p>Agree In Principle</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>The QPS notes that support services offered through the referral system are funded by DJAG and will work with DJAG to consider how to implement the intent of Recommendation 6.</p> <p>The QPS will need to revisit Recommendation 6 once the findings of the <i>Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence</i>, have been released.</p>



Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Queensland Police Service:</p>			
<p>7. ensures all police receive adequate and ongoing domestic and family violence-specific training appropriate to their role, and in particular that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it provides all police officers mandatory annual face to face training on <i>domestic and family violence</i> • all operational supervisors receive additional <i>domestic and family violence</i> training in accordance with the leadership requirements of their role. This should include periodic refresher/update training for supervisors who remain operational for extended periods • all police officers assigned to specialist <i>domestic and family violence</i> roles receive advanced <i>domestic and family violence</i> training in accordance with the specialist requirements of their role. This should occur within a short period of officers being newly assigned to these roles. Periodic refreshers/update training should be made available to officers who remain in specialist roles for extended periods. 	Agree	Completed (and Ongoing)	<p>Dot Point 1: The QPS commenced a three-day holistic DFV training program for all officers up to and including the rank of Superintendent, with the intention for continual mandatory annual DFV training to follow in subsequent financial years. As at 31 October 2022, 2,612 Police Personnel have completed the three-day training, and 14,352 Police Personnel have completed enhanced Domestic and Family Violence training. 15,233 Police Personnel have completed the Coercive Control training.</p>
	Agree	Ongoing	<p>The QPS will consider content and scope for the training product for Supervisors in 2023/2024 once the initial three-day training package, subsequent mandatory annual training and the DFV specialist training course (5 days) has been implemented.</p>
	Agree	Ongoing	<p>A five-day DFV specialist training course is under development and scheduled for delivery from November 2022.</p> <p>The QPS will need to revisit Recommendation 7 once the findings of the <i>Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence</i>, have been released.</p>

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Queensland Police Service:</p> <p>8. implement a cross-agency training program focused on enhancing inter-agency roles, coordination, communication, protocols, and multidisciplinary approaches. This should include other key domestic and family violence support and service delivery entities, such as the courts, the Department of Health, the hospital and health services, the Department of Education, and non-government victim support services.</p>	<p>Agree In Principle</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>The QPS notes that Recommendation 8 is aligned with various recommendations 4, 21, 23, 24 and 41 of Report 1 of the Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce and will work with DJAG to consider how to implement the intent of Recommendation 8.</p> <p>The QPS will need to revisit Recommendation 8 once the findings of the <i>Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence</i>, have been released.</p>
<p>We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Queensland Police Service:</p> <p>13. progressively expand co-location and co-responder approaches across the state and includes a wider range of services to better meet the needs of victims and people affected by domestic and family violence. This includes integrating them with high-risk teams and the Queensland Police Service’s Domestic and Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons units.</p>	<p>Agree in Principle</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Recommendation 13 of the QAO Report aligns with future implementation activities relating to Recommendation 37 of Report 1 of the Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce, and which DJAG and the QPS are working together on initiatives to expand co-response approaches across the state.</p> <p>The QPS is participating in a trial relating to the embedding of specialist trained DFV officers into domestic violence support services in South Brisbane and Ipswich.</p> <p>The QPS is currently considering co-location opportunities at Logan in the context of Recommendations 1 and 2 from the <i>Inquest into the deaths of Doreen Gail Langham and Gary Matthew Hely</i>, and the trialling of embedding DV specialist social workers in police stations and the operation of specialist victim centred police stations staffed by multi-disciplinary teams.</p> <p>The QPS will need to revisit Recommendation 13 once the findings of the <i>Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence</i>, have been released.</p>

Previous correspondence



QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE
200 ROMA STREET BRISBANE QLD 4000 AUSTRALIA
GPO BOX 1440 BRISBANE QLD 4001 AUSTRALIA

Email: commissioner@police.qld.gov.au



28 October 2022

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

Mr Brendan Worrall
Auditor-General Queensland
GPO Box 15396, City East, QLD 4002
gao@gao.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Worrall

I refer to your email correspondence dated 14 October 2022 requesting the Queensland Police Service (QPS) to indicate whether it agrees or disagrees with each of the draft recommendations contained in your proposed Queensland Audit Office (QAO) report, *Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence*.

The *Commission of Inquiry into QPS responses to domestic and family violence* is currently examining policing responses to domestic and family violence, including the capability, capacity and structure of the QPS to respond to domestic and family violence matters.

The Commission of Inquiry is due to report on 14 November 2022.

As the draft recommendations contained in the proposed QAO Report may also be matters under consideration by, or the subject of future recommendations made by the Commission of Inquiry, it would be premature for the QPS to comment on the draft recommendations at this time, pending the release of the final Commission of Inquiry report.

The QPS will consider both final reports in full following their release, in the context of other relevant reports and recommendations, including the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce report *Hear her Voice, Report One, Addressing coercive control and domestic and family violence in Queensland*.

Yours sincerely

KATARINA CARROLL APM
COMMISSIONER

QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE



Comments received from Director-General, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy



Office of the
Director-General

Department of
**Communities, Housing
and Digital Economy**

Your reference: PRJ02770
Our reference: MN010552-2022

4 NOV 2022

Mr Brendan Worrall
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
qao.mail@qao.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Worrall

Thank you for your email of 14 October 2022 seeking a formal response to the Queensland Audit Office's draft report to Parliament - *Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence*, including agreement/disagreement to Recommendation 18.

Recommendation 18:

- *We recommend that the **Department of Justice and Attorney-General (DJAG)** and the **Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy (DCHDE)** develop strategies to provide a range of crisis accommodation including for perpetrators of domestic and family violence, taking into consideration the management of risk to victims.*

I agree in-principle with the recommendation and attach DCHDE response as requested. DCHDE will continue to work with the DJAG to consider future strategies to continuously improve our support and crisis accommodation service offers, for all people in Queensland, including victims and perpetrators of domestic, family and/or sexual violence (DFSV). The risk to victims is a primary consideration in the development and delivery of our services.

The full range of crisis accommodation responses with appropriate support services, already in place for all people in Queensland, is available to perpetrators to access. Perpetrators, if eligible, may also access the broad range of housing products and services available through DCHDE's statewide network of Housing Service Centres.

Should you require any further information or assistance in relation to this matter,

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely


C. O'Connor
Director-General

Enc. (1)

Responses to recommendations



Department of Communities Housing and Digital Economy

Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence

Response to recommendations provided by the Director-General, Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy, on 4 November 2022.

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Justice and Attorney-General and the Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy:</p> <p>18. develop strategies to provide a range of crisis accommodation including for perpetrators of domestic and family violence, taking into consideration the management of risk to victims.</p>	Agree in principle	Q2 2023-24	<p>The Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy (DCHDE) will continue to work with the Department of Justice and Attorney General to consider future strategies to continuously improve our support and crisis accommodation service offers, for all people in Queensland, including victims and perpetrators of domestic, family and/or sexual violence.</p> <p>The full range of crisis accommodation responses with appropriate support services, already in place for all people in Queensland, is available to perpetrators to access. Perpetrators, if eligible, may also access the broad range of housing products and services available through the DCHDE's state-wide network of Housing Service Centres.</p>



Comments received from Director-General, Department of Education



Office of the
Director-General
Department of
Education

08 NOV 2022

Mr Darren Brown
Assistant Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Mr Brown

Thank you for your email dated 7 November 2022 regarding the Department of Education's response to the proposed report, *Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence*.

I appreciate your agreement to update the name of the department's former *Respectful Relationships Education Program* (RREP) to reflect the current name of *Respect*.

I note you are not able to include the word 'strengthened' in relation to the *Respect* program, given it has not been audited by the Queensland Audit Office (QAO) following the program's release on 7 October 2022.

Additionally, I understand it was communicated during a meeting on 7 November 2022 that the feedback in the amendments table was included in my response, given the recent change of the department's program name to *Respect*.

As you indicated, the changes mentioned in the cover letter and response to the recommendation are the appropriate inclusions for the QAO's report to Parliament; therefore, these inclusions are supported for publishing. There is no need to publish the amendments table. The updated departmental response has been enclosed for publication.

If you require further information or assistance, please contact [REDACTED]

I trust this information is of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M De'ATH'.

MICHAEL DE'ATH
Director-General

Ref: 22/770944
Enc.

1 William Street Brisbane
Queensland 4000 Australia
PO Box 15033 City East
Queensland 4002 Australia
Telephone +61 7 3034 4754
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ABN 76 337 613 647

Responses to recommendations



Department of Education

Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence

Response to recommendations provided by Mr Michael De'Ath, Director-General, Department of Education, on 4 November 2022.

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Education:</p> <p>17. annually assesses the delivery, reach, and effectiveness of the Respectful Relationships Education program in Queensland state schools.</p>	Agree with the following amendments	2024/25	<p>The Department of Education will evaluate the reach and effectiveness of delivery of respectful relationships education (RRE) in Queensland state schools.</p> <p>This will evaluate the \$15.469 million of funded initiatives that support implementation of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce recommendations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivery, reach and effectiveness of the Respect program; • delivery and reach of professional development provided through Principal Advisors: Respectful Relationships Education; and • delivery of Teacher Relief Scheme funding to provide teachers with time to undertake professional learning and planning in support of respectful relationships education delivery. <p>The P–12 curriculum, assessment and reporting framework specifies Queensland state schools are required to provide health and wellbeing education, including RRE, as part of the delivery of the Australian Curriculum or as part of the school's pastoral care program.</p>

Comments received from Director-General, Queensland Health



Queensland Health

Enquiries to:

Telephone:
Our ref:
Your ref:

C-ECTF-22/16749

Mr Brendan Worrall
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
PO Box 15396
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Email: gao@qao.qld.gov.au

Dear Mr Worrall

Thank you for your email dated 14 October 2022, providing a copy of your report to Parliament titled *Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence* which examines how effectively state public sector entities keep people safe from domestic and family violence (DFV), prevent it from occurring and rehabilitate perpetrators to minimise re-offending, as well as coordination with non-government DFV services.

I appreciate the opportunity to review the report and provide a formal response to the Queensland Audit Office findings and recommendation directed to Queensland Health which incorporates the Department of Health and Hospital and Health Services. I note that the Department of Health and Hospital and Health Services were not key entities at the focus of this audit, however the Department of Health was engaged with as a stakeholder during the audit.

Queensland Health agrees in principle to Recommendation 15 of the audit, noting that all elements of the recommendation align with the *Domestic and family violence prevention strategy 2016–2026* and current DFV reform activities. The response to the recommendation is at Attachment 1.

Additionally, where Queensland Health is mentioned in other recommendations as a key support or service delivery entity, including Recommendation 8, or where there are broader service system impacts, the Department of Health will work collaboratively with agencies to achieve the intent of those recommendations.

Should you require further information, the Department of Health's contact is

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shaun Drummond".

Shaun Drummond
Director-General
2/11/2022

Level 37
1 William St Brisbane
GPO Box 48 Brisbane
Queensland 4000 Australia

Website health.qld.gov.au
Email DG_Correspondence@health.qld.gov.au
ABN 66 329 169 412

Responses to recommendations

Department of Health and hospital and health services

Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence

Response to recommendations provided by Shaun Drummond, Director-General, Department of Health on 4 November 2022

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
<p>We recommend that the Department of Health and hospital and health services:</p> <p>15. strengthen screening and risk assessing practices by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implementing the recommendations of the Death Review and Advisory Board (set up under the Coroners Act 2003 to research and analyse data and make recommendations to government) as a priority ensuring its risk assessment and screening tools are updated and widely available across the health system mandating and delivering face-to-face domestic and family violence training for all frontline health workers. 	Agree in principle	Ongoing	<p>Since the establishment of the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board as an outcome of the <i>Not Now, Not Ever: Ending domestic and family violence in Queensland</i> report, Queensland Health has implemented or made continued progress to implement recommendations made for the public health system.</p> <p>The Queensland Health guideline <i>Health workforce domestic and family violence training</i> applies to all newly appointed health service employees and health professionals working in specific clinical areas to undertake training to understand their role and responsibilities in recognising and responding to DFV.</p>

Recommendation	Agree/ Disagree	Timeframe for implementation (Quarter and financial year)	Additional comments
			<p>The Queensland Health DFV toolkit of resources is the primary tool to support health professionals understanding and response to clinical presentations of domestic and family violence.</p> <p>Reflecting the <i>National Risk Assessment Principles for domestic and family violence</i> the DFV toolkit provides evidence-based information to support health professionals' understanding of DFV risk, guide their use of sensitive enquiry for basic risk screening, and make referrals to specialist workers for ongoing risk assessment and management.</p> <p>Additionally, a Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Health Workforce Program is being implemented to provide a flexible and responsive-to-needs training program to frontline health service providers using the DFV toolkit of resources. This program includes the delivery of face to face, online and other innovative delivery of training that is adapted for local circumstance.</p> <p>The DFV toolkit of resources is available on the Queensland Health internet site for access by all public and private frontline health service providers.</p>

Comments received from Principal Commissioner and Commissioner, Queensland Family and Child Commission

Queensland
Family & Child
Commission



Telephone: 07 3900 6000
Reference: OoC – TF22/645 – D22/17299

Mr Brendan Worrall
Auditor-General
Queensland Audit Office
PO Box 15396
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Mr Worrall

Thank you for your providing the Queensland Family and Child Commission (QFCC) with an advance copy of the proposed report to Parliament, *Keeping people safe from domestic and family violence*.

The QFCC is pleased to see recommendations in the proposed report to strengthen whole-of-government responses to people experiencing domestic and family violence (DFV).

In particular, we welcome recommendations to develop programs specifically for children and young people exposed to DFV, and to annually assess the progress of the *Respectful Relationships Education* program in Queensland state schools.

While the QFCC supports recommendation 7, we believe it could be enhanced by training police officers to respond to DFV concerns with trauma-informed and child-centred approaches when children are present in the home.

In *Hear her voice report one: Addressing coercive control and domestic and family violence in Queensland*, the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are disproportionately affected by DFV. Future work by the Queensland Audit Office could explore the effectiveness of responses to DFV for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and make recommendations to strengthen support for these communities.

Yours sincerely

A blue ink signature of Luke Twyford, Principal Commissioner of the Queensland Family and Child Commission.

Luke Twyford
Principal Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission

A blue ink signature of Natalie Lewis, Commissioner of the Queensland Family and Child Commission.

Natalie Lewis
Commissioner
Queensland Family and Child Commission



Level 8, 63 George Street
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ABN: 91 102 013 458



B. Audit scope and methods

Performance engagement

This audit has been performed in accordance with the *Auditor-General Auditing Standards*, and the Standard on Assurance Engagements ASAE 3500 *Performance Engagements*, issued by the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board. This standard establishes mandatory requirements and provides explanatory guidance for undertaking and reporting on performance engagements.

The conclusions in our report provide reasonable assurance that the objectives of our audit have been achieved. Our objectives and criteria are set out below.

Audit objective and criteria

The entities subject to this audit were:

- Department of Justice and Attorney-General
- Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs
- Queensland Police Service
- Queensland Corrective Services
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet.

We also engaged with the following entities as stakeholders during the audit:

- Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy
- Department of Education
- Department of Health
- Queensland Family and Child Commission
- Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Council
- Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce
- Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence
- non-government organisations, including victim support groups.

The objective of the audit is to examine the governance arrangements for responding to and preventing domestic and family violence in Queensland. It will also examine how effectively public sector entities keep people safe from domestic and family violence and how effectively they rehabilitate perpetrators to reduce the recurrence of violence.

Sub-objective 1: How effectively and efficiently do entities act to keep people safe from domestic and family violence?

Criteria

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 1.1 | Is the government effectively coordinating, managing, and monitoring Queensland's domestic and family violence programs and services? |
| 1.2 | Do entities work together to ensure timely and effective whole-of-government responses to reports of domestic and family violence? |
| 1.3 | Do entities work together to proactively assess risk and implement appropriate controls and treatments to manage risk? |
| 1.4 | Do entities provide adequate support to victims and children of domestic violence, including connecting them to appropriate support services? |
| 1.5 | Do entities share information about reports of domestic and family violence, and about actions taken to support victims? |
| 1.6 | Do entities ensure there is adequate provision of shelters for victims and perpetrators? |

Sub-objective 2: How effectively do entities rehabilitate perpetrators to reduce the recurrence of domestic and family violence?

Criteria

- | | |
|-----|---|
| 2.1 | Do entities ensure there is adequate provision of programs within the community and Queensland prisons to rehabilitate domestic and family violence perpetrators? |
| 2.2 | Do entities regularly monitor the support services provided to perpetrators, including the attendance and completion rates, the outcome of services, and whether there is reoccurrence? |
| 2.3 | Do entities ensure staff are adequately trained and qualified to deliver rehabilitation programs to perpetrators? |
| 2.4 | Do entities inform victims in a timely manner when perpetrators are released from prison to ensure adequate protection? |
| 2.5 | Do entities track and monitor the behaviour of high-risk perpetrators to ensure there is adequate protection of victims (including the use of electronic monitoring devices)? |

Scope exclusions and limitations

This audit scope includes all police call outs for domestic and family violence incidents, domestic violence orders, and reported breaches of domestic violence orders between 2015–16 and 2021–22. We did not examine police call outs, domestic violence orders, or breaches outside of this period.

We did not examine rehabilitation programs and support services that the Queensland Government does not fund.



Method

Field interviews

We conducted interviews with key people, staff and stakeholders from across the domestic and family violence sector including regional areas of Queensland. This included but was not limited to:

- Department of Justice and Attorney-General
- Queensland Police Service
- Queensland Corrective Services
- Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs
- Queensland Health
- Department of Education
- Department of Communities, Housing and Digital Economy
- non-government organisations
- service providers in other states.

Document review

We obtained and reviewed relevant documents from the entities involved in the audit. We reviewed relevant legislation, organisation reviews and evaluations, strategic plans, budget submissions, performance reports and indicators, guidelines, and correspondence.

We assessed previous and recent reviews and inquests conducted and considered their recommendations and findings. We did not perform an independent assessment to validate the status of these recommendations.

We considered research from other jurisdictions and academia.

Data analysis

We analysed data from the Department of Justice and Attorney-General; Queensland Police Service; Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs; and Queensland Courts. The data we analysed covered the period of:

- 2015–16 to 2021–22 for Queensland Police Service and Queensland Courts data
- 2015–16 to 2020–21 for Department of Justice and Attorney-General, and Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs.

Our data methods and data analysis outputs were progressively validated with the relevant entities.

Subject matter experts

We engaged and sought advice from subject matter experts from the Australian Institute of Criminology, as its expertise is within the domestic and family violence sector.



Person or parties with a special interest in this report

During the conduct of our audit, the Queensland Government established the Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence (the Commission). We have liaised with the Commission as well as various other reviewers during the conduct of our audit. In forming our recommendations, we have incorporated the results of our consultation, and considered existing recommendations from these various other reviews and inquiries into domestic and family violence.

In accordance with Section 54 of the *Auditor-General Act 2009*, we assessed that the following entities had a special interest in the report, and provided them with our proposed report (or relevant sections), and the opportunity to comment on it:

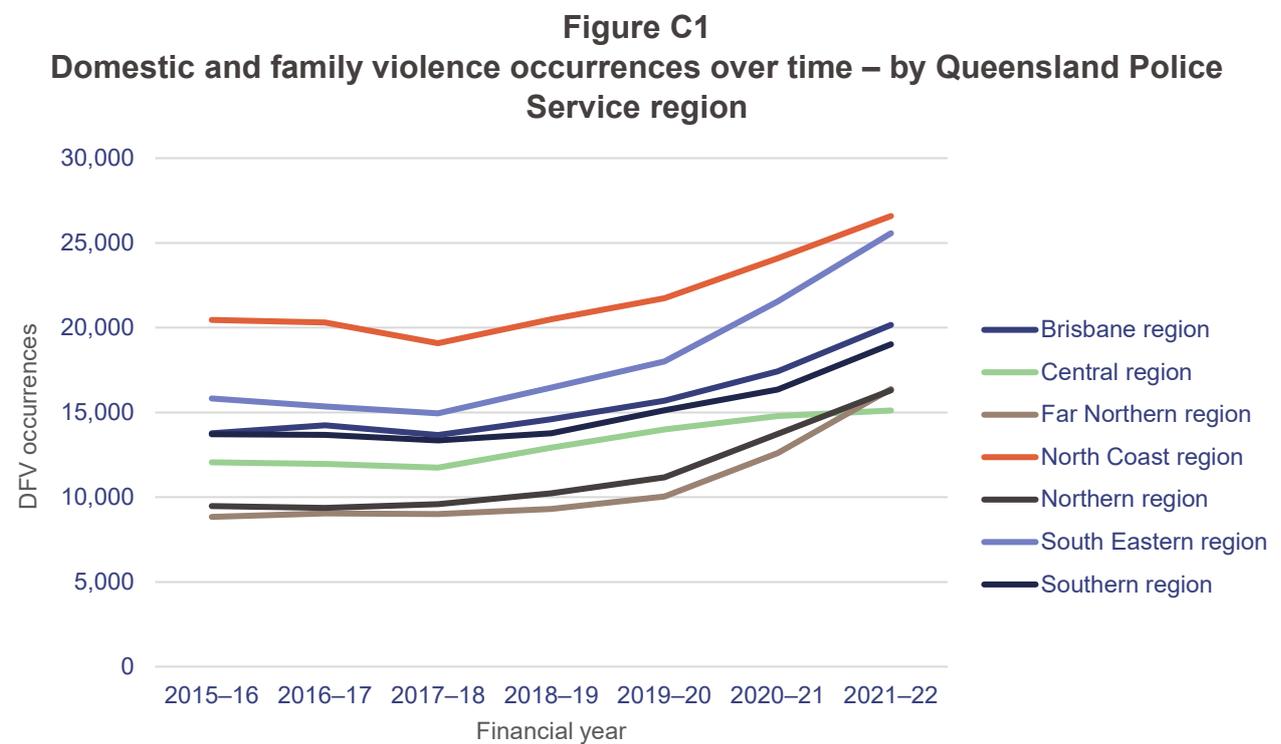
- Queensland Family and Child Commission
- Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence.



C. Queensland Police Service regional breakdown

We carried out additional analysis on Queensland Police Service QPRIME and Queensland Police computer-aided dispatch (QCAD) data.

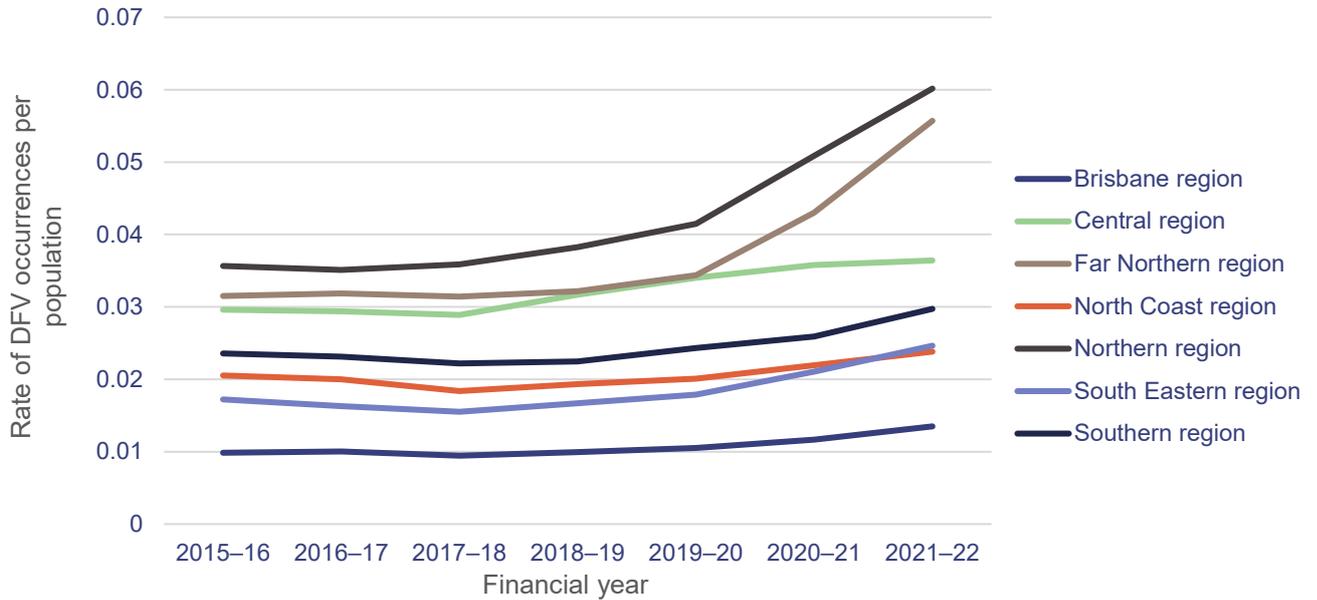
We conducted a breakdown by region to provide additional insights on DFV occurrences; unfounded, withdrawn or cancelled domestic violence order (DVO) breaches; percentage of applications conducted via police; and median response times for 000 Code 1 (very urgent), Code 2 (urgent), and Code 3 (direct response required) calls for service.



Source: Queensland Audit Office using QPRIME data provided by the Queensland Police Service.

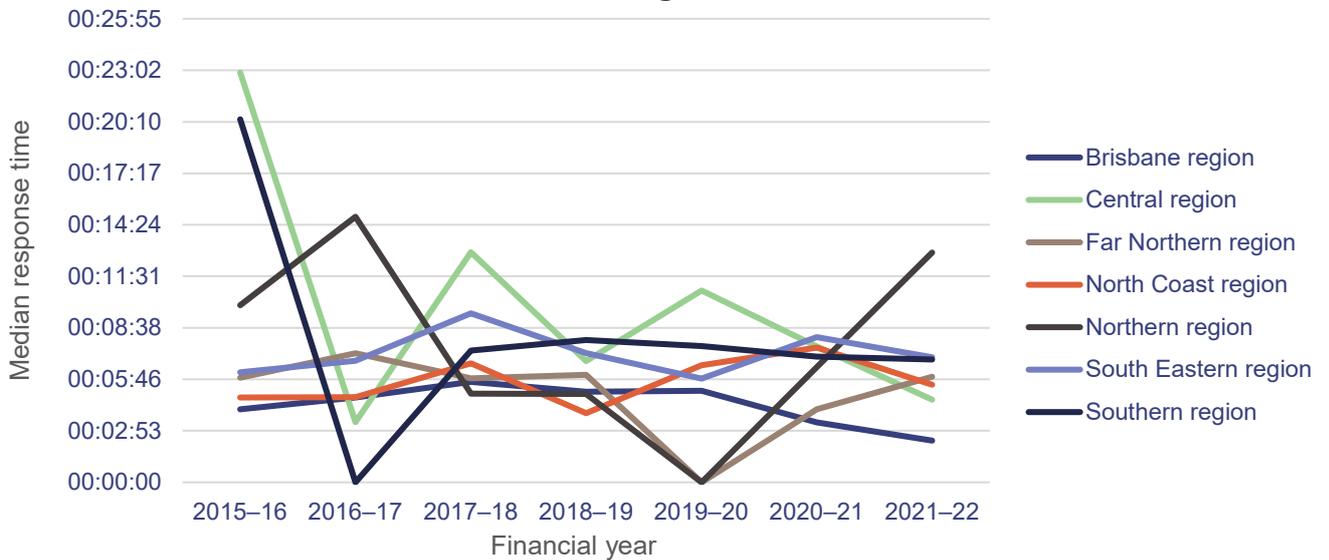


Figure C2
Domestic and family violence occurrences over time by population – by Queensland Police Service region



Source: Queensland Audit Office using QCAD data provided by the Queensland Police Service.

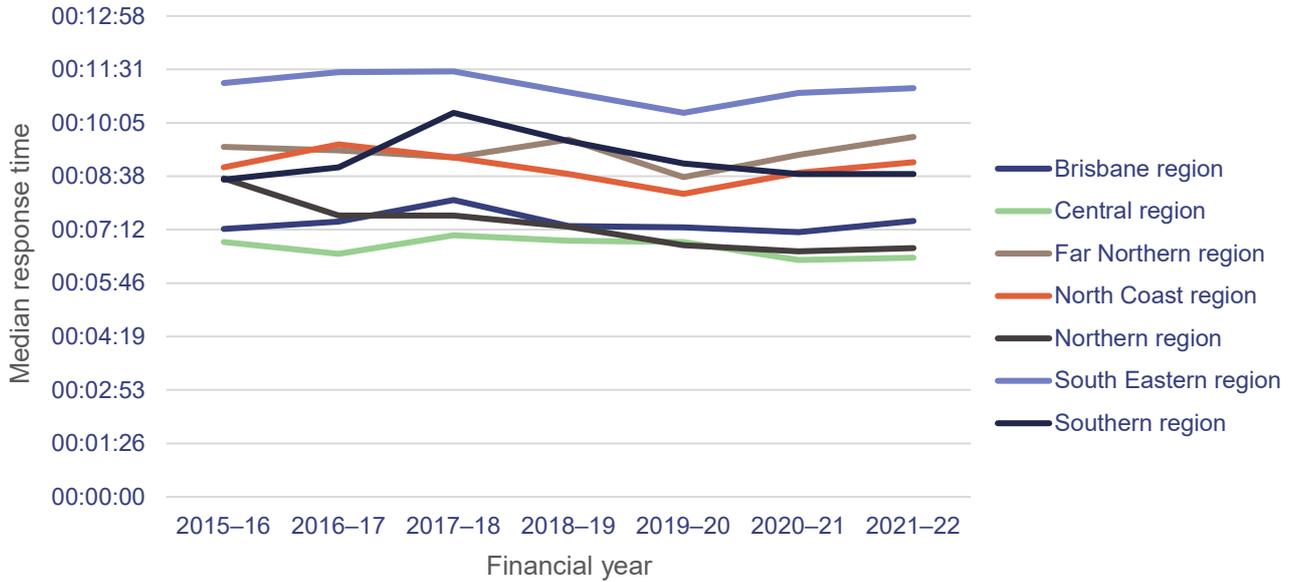
Figure C3
Median response times to Code 1 calls for service – by Queensland Police Service region



Source: Queensland Audit Office using QCAD data provided by the Queensland Police Service.

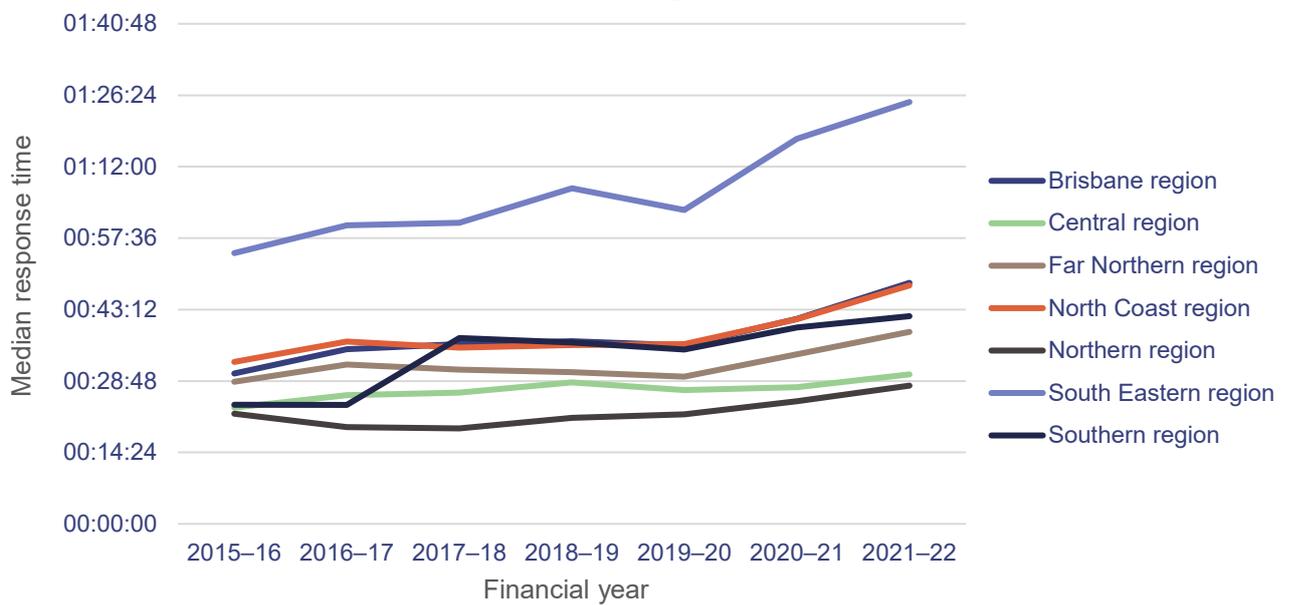


Figure C4
Median response times to Code 2 calls for service – by Queensland Police Service region



Source: Queensland Audit Office using QCAD data provided by the Queensland Police Service.

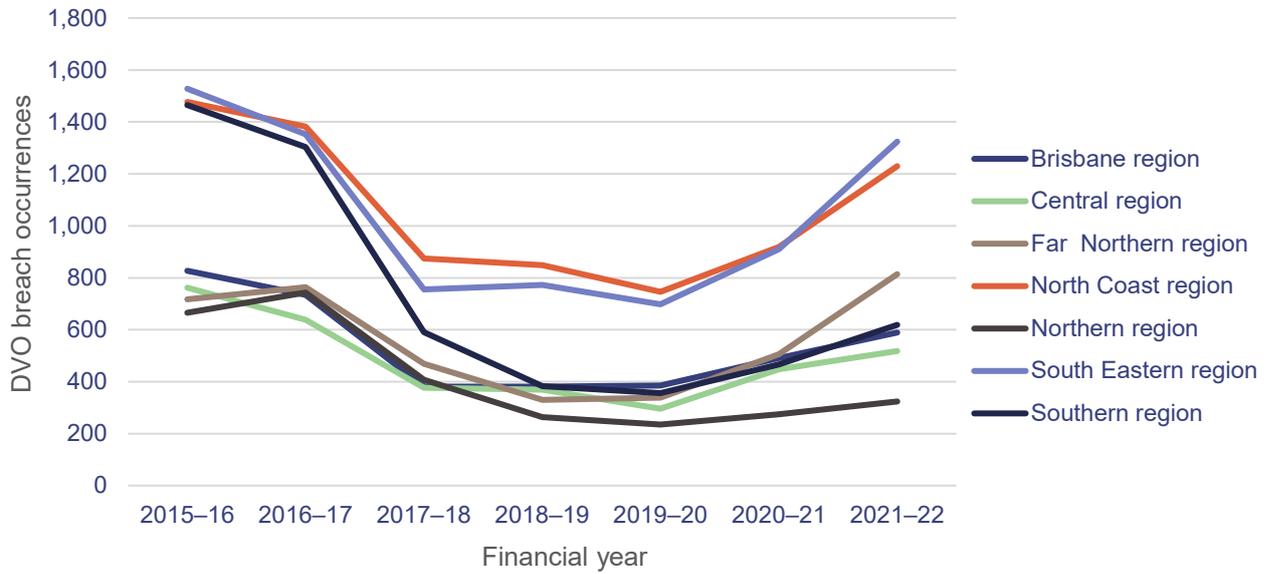
Figure C5
Median response times to Code 3 calls for service – by Queensland Police Service region



Source: Queensland Audit Office using QCAD data provided by the Queensland Police Service.

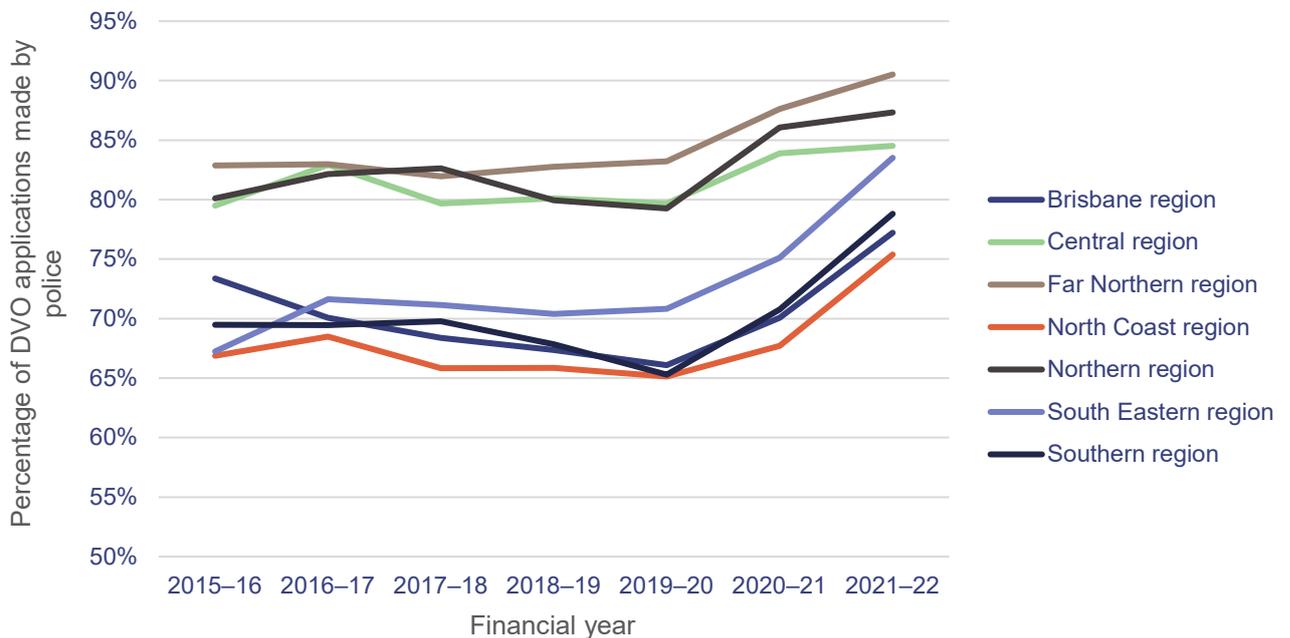


Figure C6
Domestic violence order breach occurrences that were unfounded, cancelled, or withdrawn – by Queensland Police Service region



Source: Queensland Audit Office using QPRIME data provided by the Queensland Police Service.

Figure C7
Percentage of domestic violence order application occurrences that are police applications – by Queensland Police Service region



Source: Queensland Audit Office using QPRIME data provided by the Queensland Police Service.





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