

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Cross Agency Working Group - Communique

The 12th meeting of the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV) Cross Agency Working Group (CAWG) was held in Darwin on Thursday 5 August 2021.

Non-Government Organisation (NGO) representatives' update and discussion of systemic issues

A standing agenda item at CAWG meetings is an update from CAWG NGO representatives on key activities since the last meeting. Another standing agenda item is the discussion of systemic issues identified across the services sector. The two standing agenda items have been combined, brought forward to the beginning of the meeting and allocated 45 minutes to enable adequate focus. The following issues were discussed:

NT Police responses to domestic and family violence (DFV) incidents:

A discussion on the effectiveness and consistency of NT Police responses to DFV incidents highlighted that further training is required for police on an ongoing basis. CAWG members noted that issues about police practice have been raised through the Justice Reform Working Group (JRWG), which includes representatives from NT Police.

Members noted the CORE Safe and Together™ training sessions and the risk assessment and management training workshops include places reserved for NT Police and these are filling up fast.

NT Police are currently working on a review of police responses to DFV and a special meeting of the CAWG is scheduled for September 2021 to discuss the review in detail.

NGO recruitment:

NGO representatives noted the difficulty experienced by many of the services in recruiting, particularly for skilled positions in regional locations. This is compounded by a lack of housing for staff and increased recruitment costs due to COVID-19 quarantine requirements.

A number of options were discussed to address the issue, including seeking a blanket exemption for quarantine costs for DFV essential workers; a sector-wide recruitment drive; recruitment through the skilled migration visa scheme, where the worker must stay for a minimum of three years; a push to reinstate TAFE to provide services with the option to hire students and build their skills; and the possibility of sharing a dedicated staff member across organisations to provide supervision for students.

The issue remains unresolved and further work is required to address the problem.

DFV Information Sharing Scheme

Members raised questions about the information sharing scheme, including how it can be implemented within organisations. The Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (the Department) [website](#) includes a comprehensive guideline, templates and tools to assist organisations to implement the scheme.

Members discussed an issue that arose as part of the implementation of the Specialist Approach to DFV at the Alice Springs Local Court. A view has been put forward that Chapter 5A of the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007* sets out criteria for the disclosure of information by an Information Sharing Entity (ISE) does not explicitly authorise the collection of information. As a result, the collection of information by the

Katherine Local Reference Group Tennant Creek Local Reference Group Top End Remote Safe House Network NT Legal Assistance Forum



receiving ISE is governed by the Information Privacy Principles (IPPs) in the *Information Act 2002* (i.e. IPP1 for the collection of personal information; IPP10 for the collection of personal information that is also sensitive information).

Ordinarily the receiving organisation will be communicating with the person about why the information was shared in accordance with good practice so the IPPs on collection (IPP 1.3 and 1.5) will be met through that communication process. However, an obligation to comply with the IPPs on collection may, in some circumstances, create practical difficulties for ISEs like the Court where another organisation has the primary contact with the victim survivor.

To avoid any doubt, the Local Court has decided to make an application under section 81 of the *Information Act 2002* for a grant of authorisation by the Information Commissioner to enable the Local Court to convene Case Coordination Meetings as part of the Specialist Approach to DFV at the Alice Springs Court. An authorisation may be granted by the Information Commissioner if the public interest of the benefit to persons outweighs the interference in privacy. In the future, consideration may be given to amendments to clarify the legal position.

Members noted the Information Commissioner is about to commence the first review of the information sharing scheme, which provides an opportunity to discuss issues including amendments to the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007*.

Risk assessment and management training

Members discussed the high demand for the free risk assessment and management training, with the current second round of workshops in Darwin, Alice Springs, Nhulunbuy and Katherine filling up fast. A further round of training is scheduled for October and November and will include Tennant Creek .

Members noted that a key action arising from the [DFSV Workforce and Sector Development Plan](#) is the establishment of a centralised DFSV training centre for developing, brokering, coordinating and delivering DFSV training across the Northern Territory (NT). It is intended that the centre deliver risk assessment and management training on an ongoing basis. The plans for delivery of training in the interim period are being progressed by the Department.

Members were reminded that Information Sharing Entities must align their policies, procedures, practice guidance, tools and training, relevant to information sharing, with the [Risk Assessment and Management Framework](#) (RAMF). It is up to each organisation how they align, but the training is an essential component of ensuring alignment.

The training sessions are designed to facilitate and model interagency collaboration which is at the core of the RAMF and for this reason, places at the sessions are reserved for Family Safety Framework members; NGO workers and managers; and NT Government employees.

A 12-minute orientation video on the RAMF is currently being finalised and will be available on the Department's website by the end of the month.

Action Plan 1 progress report

Progress on implementing [Action Plan 1: Changing Attitudes, Intervening Earlier and Responding Better \(2018-2021\)](#) is now published [online](#). NGO representatives questioned the accuracy of the online progress report updates.

Many actions are listed as 'complete', however members noted it is unclear what this means in practical terms for long-term actions, as on the ground experience is that some actions are ongoing rather than completed. Members called for an explanation of how progress is measured. The Department will coordinate with responsible agencies and provide a response to the questions raised about the [Action Plan 1 progress updates](#).

Other issues

Members were reminded that any papers arising from CAWG meetings that are not marked 'confidential' may be shared with networks and representative groups. Members are free to share their own notes from meetings, excluding any information explicitly identified as confidential.

Members asked if the agenda and meeting papers could be provided earlier than the five working days set out in the Terms of Reference, to allow for discussion of the agenda at network meetings. CAWG Secretariat agreed to circulate the papers and agenda as soon as possible prior to meetings.

Grant funding for DFSV legal assistance services

The Department of the Attorney-General and Justice representative circulated an outline of the grant funding distributed to legal assistance services in the NT (attached).

Presentation on consent/protective behaviours education

The Department of Education provided a presentation on Protective Behaviours and Consent Education in NT Schools (attached). Government schools in the NT must use the Australian curriculum, which includes the Health and Physical Education curriculum (including safety, relationships and sexuality) and General Capabilities. The Department of Education provides resources to assist schools to teach the curriculum, including NT Social and Emotional Learning (NT SEL) resources.

The Department of Education does not mandate the use of the resources. In the NT only the Australian curriculum is mandated. Each individual school decides how they will deliver the learning outcomes of the Australian curriculum and this can include the NT SEL.

Members noted the Australian curriculum is currently under review, with the results expected in mid-September and rolled out in 2022. The review is examining more explicit references to consent education, and for younger age groups.

Members were advised that the Department of Education is developing guidelines on gender and sexuality diversity for schools.

Presentation on DFSV Research

Guest speaker Mr Steve Guthridge from Menzies School of Health Research presented an overview of the Menzies Child and Youth Development Research Partnership (CYDRP).

The CYDRP integrates de-identified data from 24 different datasets to examine how outcomes overlap, for example, the links between child protection substantiations and self-harming, or between criminal convictions and educational participation. This could inform how government could invest in key areas early to change trajectories.

The program is governed by a Steering Committee comprising representatives from seven NTG agencies and supported by an Indigenous Reference Group.

Update from the Chair on activities since the last meeting

Due to machinery of government changes within the Department, the Office of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction now reports to Ms Samantha Livesley, Executive Director Families. Ms Livesley is the new Chair of the CAWG.

The Chair advised members that the National Summit on Women's Safety 2021 has been postponed to 6 and 7 September. The Department is supporting 15 nominated delegates to attend the summit.

NTCOSS is hosting a pre-summit meeting on 2 September to consolidate NT messages, and extended the invitation to the CAWG.

The Chair noted that consultation has commenced on the development of Action Plan 2 of the [Northern Territory Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028 Safe, respected and free from violence](#). Consultation with NGOs is being managed by NTCOSS and the Department is managing consultation across government.

The Chair noted that the CAWG has requested information about family responsibility agreements and how these would impact on mothers who are victim survivors of DFV. The Department will present on this matter at the November 2021 meeting.

NGO members were advised that a briefing about the Multi-Agency Community and Child Safety Framework will be scheduled for the next CAWG meeting in November 2021 (date to be confirmed).

Department of Education

Protective Behaviours and Consent Education in NT Schools

Tamie Needham
Senior Manager Policy and Programs – Health Education
Student Wellbeing and Inclusion

What does this look like in schools?

- Australian Curriculum
- Health and Physical Education Curriculum Area (focus areas: Safety; Relationships and Sexuality) and the General Capabilities
- Woven in to the delivery of the curriculum - day to day delivery of lessons and conversations with children and students

What does this look like in schools?

The department provides programs and resources to assist teachers and school staff to teach the curriculum:

- NT Social and Emotional Learning Resources
- Education about protective behaviours
- Explicit consent education

Other resources:

- Curriculum Advisors
- Health Promoting School Nurses
- School Based Police Officers
- School Counselling Service
- External Providers (note Guidelines at <https://education.nt.gov.au/policies>)

NT Social and Emotional Learning Resources

- NTSEL refers to the combined use of:
 - Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships learning materials produced by the Vic Department of Education (core teaching resource)
 - NTSEL supplementary resources, produced by the NT Department of Education (the department)
- Designed to support NT teachers to develop the social, emotional and positive relationship skills of students across all levels of schooling, in line with the Australian Curriculum general capabilities and health and physical education learning areas.
- Available across all stages of schooling (primary, middle, senior)
- <https://education.nt.gov.au/support-for-teachers/nt-social-and-emotional-learning>

Policy considerations

- Guidelines for Suitable Text and Media Resources in Schools
- External Providers Engaged for Teaching and Learning Guidelines

<https://education.nt.gov.au/policies>

- Diverse Sex, Sexuality and Gender Identity in Schools Guidelines

Our commitments

- A working group is being formed to support the implementation of the new HPE curriculum across all years
- The delivery of NTSEL will be strengthened
- Continued rollout of protective behaviours programs
- Audit of programs delivered by NTG schools and in other jurisdictions