

Feminist Governance Toolkit

For boards of specialist gendered violence services in Queensland

Section 3: The Nature of the Work



WorkUp
QUEENSLAND

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Taking Care

This resource discusses domestic, family, and sexual violence.

It is important to understand that people working in the sector, including board members, may have lived experience of gendered violence and trauma and, at times, need support.

As you go through these materials, please take a break and access help if you need to.

Here are some expert organisations that offer both personal and professional support when you may need it:



WorkUP Queensland is the Sexual Violence, Women's Health and Wellbeing, and Domestic and Family Violence sector's partner in supporting a strong, skilled and engaged workforce.

We bring together The Healing Foundation's strong connection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and healing, backed by the expertise of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) in facilitating evidence-based policy and practice.

Informed and driven by frontline providers, WorkUP aims to address workforce-related challenges while taking opportunities to grow and equip the workforce and better support current and future workers.

Funded by the Queensland Government, we are proud to support the people who work in this sector who make such a significant, often pivotal impact in ending violence against women.

Together, WorkUP Queensland and the sector have created a plan to grow, retain, develop, support, connect, and sustain the workforce. This Feminist Governance Toolkit is one part of our important work. We hope that you may be able to use it to guide your thinking and complement your practices as a professional, diligent and compassionate board member.

Acknowledgment

The Feminist Governance Toolkit was developed by WorkUP Queensland in partnership with Inner Vision Consulting and Red Bandana Productions.

Representatives from the Domestic and Family Violence, Sexual Violence and Women's Health and Wellbeing sector contributed their ideas, knowledge, and practice wisdom to inform its development.

We thank everyone involved for their input and commitment to supporting good governance in the gendered violence sector.



The Nature of the Work



This section helps us understand the nature of the work of a gendered violence service.

In the following pages, we explore the drivers of gendered violence and what it is.

An overview of some of the drivers of change underway at a state and national level is provided. And, we explore the funding and legal obligations that services are working with and the board's role in ensuring a sustainable and thriving workforce.

DRIVERS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

In governing a gendered violence service, including engaging in advocacy, it is critical to have clarity about the systemic drivers of gender-based violence and what it looks like. This understanding also helps us connect to the purpose of the work and work constructively with stakeholders including the CEO. It helps inform us as board members in making decisions that support high-quality service provision.

A range of contextual and systemic factors drive gender-based violence in Australia. Some of the primary drivers are gender inequality and inequity that is still more pervasive than we want to admit. We live in a society where rigid gender roles and dominant forms of masculinity can enable control over and violence against women, children, other men, young people and people who are 'different'.

Our structural, legal, and political systems still may not hold men accountable enough for their violence and continue to promote and enforce rigid and hierarchical gender stereotypes that underpin gender-based violence. We live in a society where aggression and disrespect towards women is trivialised.

Ours is also a society where other forms of systemic and structural inequality exist such as heteronormativity, racism, ableism, cissexism, agism, class discrimination as well as the ongoing impacts of colonialism. These factors also continue to enable and normalise violence against women.

Adapted from Our Watch, Socio-Ecological Model for Prevention

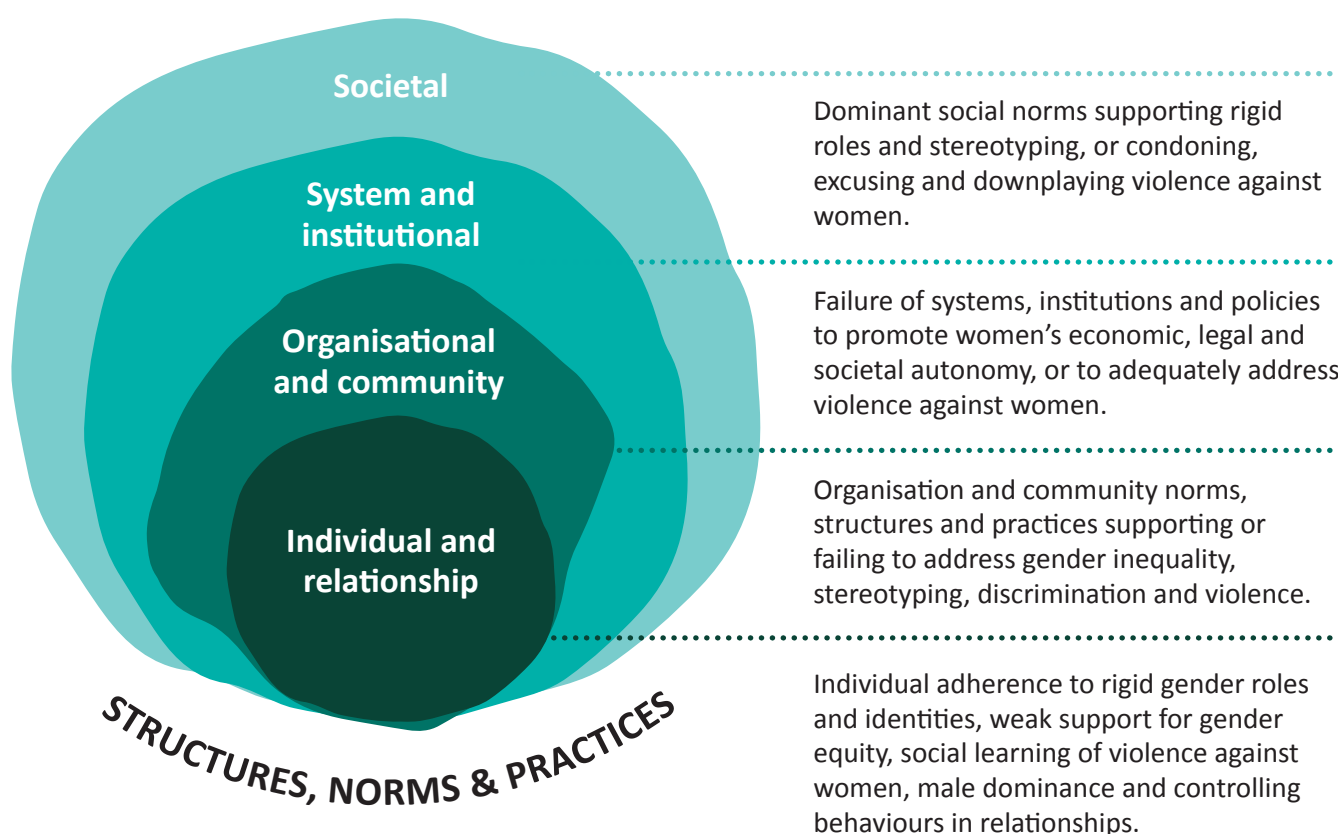


DRIVERS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

The Socio-Ecological Model for Prevention

The socio-ecological model below demonstrates how violence against women occurs as the result of many factors at different levels. It reminds us of our responsibility at board level to ensure we are working in solidarity with the community and service system to support gender equality.

Examples of structures, norms and practices found to increase the probability of violence against women, at different levels of the socio ecology.



(Our Watch, n.d.)

Intersectional Feminist Governance must be cognisant not to replicate the oppression inherent in power structures. If our collective goal is to do work that liberates rather than oppresses, then to be congruent we need to govern and lead in a way that liberates rather than oppresses. This means we need to understand what choices look like from the bottom and middle of the hierarchy, and how the decisions at a board level impact the community and workforce. We must actively seek feedback on the impact of our decisions and agitate for change at systemic and societal levels.

Rosie

DRIVERS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

Examples of systemic drivers of gender-based violence

1. Patriarchy and gender inequality:

One of the fundamental drivers of domestic and family violence is the patriarchal system, which places men in positions of power and women in subordinate roles. This power imbalance reinforces traditional gender norms and encourages the use of violence to control and dominate women.

Watch *Change the Story* video

[CLICK HERE](#)



2. Cultural and social norms:

Societal norms and cultural practices that condone or tolerate violence against women can perpetuate this problem. These norms often reinforce traditional gender roles, attitudes that devalue women, amidst a culture of silence that discourages victims from speaking out.

My learning about gendered violence is ongoing and so is our learning here in Queensland. The key to change is in all of us and in our commitment to understanding what beliefs and values we have taken on and internalised. It is in our willingness to challenge and change. I still encounter internalised misogyny in my own thinking, despite being a wholehearted feminist, because it permeates everything. Any change we seek requires our insight into the issue and our actions to do differently. Until we are prepared to state openly without apology what these drivers are and who has the power and responsibility to make the change we are moving incrementally when we could be revolutionary.

Gabrielle

3. Economic disparities:

Economic inequalities can contribute to domestic violence as perpetrators may use financial control as a means of asserting power over their victims. Lack of financial independence can also trap victims in abusive relationships.

4. Institutional failures:

The failures of various institutions, such as law enforcement, legal systems, and social services to adequately respond to domestic violence can perpetuate the cycle. Victims may not report abuse due to fear of retaliation or mistrust in these systems.

5. Lack of education and awareness:

A lack of comprehensive education on healthy relationships, consent, and gender equality can perpetuate ignorance about domestic violence. Many people may not recognise abusive behaviour or know how to seek help.

6. Social stigma:

Victims of domestic violence often face significant social stigma and shame, which can discourage them from seeking help or reporting the abuse. This stigma can be exacerbated by cultural and religious factors.

DRIVERS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

7. Legal and judicial barriers:

Systemic issues within legal and justice systems can perpetuate domestic violence. These include insufficient legal protections for victims, lenient sentencing of perpetrators, and biases within the justice system that may favour the abuser.

8. Law enforcement response:

Inadequate training for law enforcement personnel on handling domestic or sexual violence cases, as well as biases or stereotypes held by some officers, can lead to inconsistent or insufficient responses to reports of abuse.

9. Healthcare system shortcomings:

Healthcare professionals may not always be adequately trained to identify and respond to domestic or sexual violence, resulting in missed opportunities to intervene and provide support to victims.

10. Child protection services:

Child protective services may not always effectively assess or address domestic violence in homes, potentially putting children at risk or separating them from their abused parent.

11. Policy gaps:

Gaps in laws and policies related to domestic or sexual violence, including those that do not adequately address issues such as dating violence or violence within LGBTQIA+ relationships, can create barriers to preventative work and service responses to abuse.

12. Political climate:

Political ideologies and policies can either support or hinder efforts to address domestic violence. A lack of political will to fund and prioritise prevention and support services can have a significant impact.

13. Education system:

Inadequate sex education and curriculum that does not address issues related to consent, healthy relationships, and gender equality can contribute to the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and behaviours.

14. Lack of accessible support services:

The availability and accessibility of shelters, counselling, legal aid, and other support services can vary widely by location, leaving some victims with limited options for escape and recovery.

15. Economic and housing policies:

Economic policies that perpetuate income inequality or housing policies that make it difficult for victims to secure stable housing can leave them financially dependent on their perpetrators.

16. Media and entertainment:

Media portrayals that normalise or romanticise violence in relationships can contribute to distorted perceptions of healthy relationships and gender roles, potentially perpetuating domestic violence.

17. Economic disparities:

Broader systemic issues, such as income inequality and poverty, can exacerbate domestic violence by creating additional stressors and limiting resources for both victims and perpetrators.

18. Cultural and social tolerance:

Societal tolerance of sexism, racism, ableism, misogyny, and gender-based violence can contribute to a culture in which abusive behaviours are more likely to be tolerated or excused.

19. Institutional discrimination:

Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other factors can compound the vulnerability of certain individuals to domestic violence and make it harder for them to access support services.

Adapted from Our Watch (2017)

Good governance of a gendered violence service is about working for the good of the people and striving for just outcomes that respond to and seek to rebalance unequal power relations.

Anonymous

DRIVERS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

How technology drives gendered violence

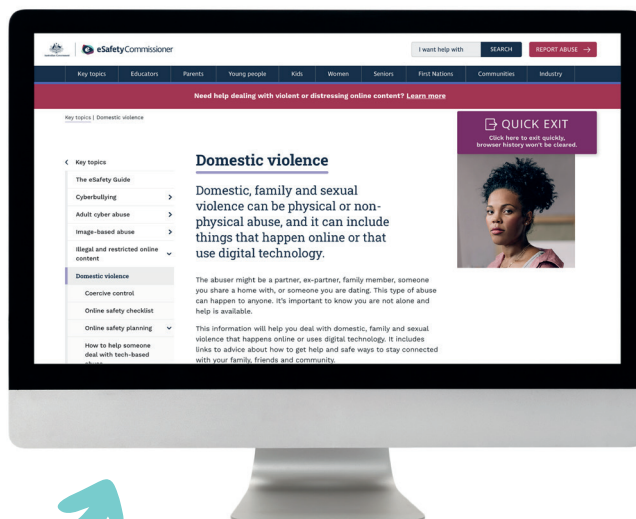
Increasingly, perpetrators are finding more and more ways to perpetrate abuse by using technology. This is known as technology-facilitated gender-based violence or tech-based gendered abuse.

This type of abuse can have significant consequences for victim-survivors and their children and affects how practitioners approach their work, their relationships and their communities, and the things they need to consider when safety planning.

It is important to keep up to date with emerging changes in this space to support our advocacy, planning, and service delivery considerations.

Check out the
eSafety Commissioner
website

CLICK HERE



Here are some key points to understand how technology can drive gender-based violence:



1. Online harassment and cyberbullying:

Social media platforms and messaging apps are used to send abusive messages, threats, and harassment, targeting individuals based on their gender.

2. Revenge porn:

Perpetrators share explicit images or videos without consent, often as a form of revenge or control, causing emotional distress and harm to the victim.

3. Online stalking:

Digital tools enable stalkers to track their victims' online activities, location, and personal information, leading to feelings of insecurity and fear.

4. Catfishing and deception:

Perpetrators create fake online personas to manipulate and deceive victims emotionally, financially, or for personal gain.

DRIVERS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

5. Non-consensual distribution of intimate images (NCDII):

Perpetrators share intimate images or videos of someone without their consent, leading to embarrassment, shame, and damage to the victim's reputation.

6. AI and deepfakes:

Artificial intelligence and deepfake technology can be used to create realistic but fabricated content, including fake videos or audio recordings, which can be used for harassment or defamation.

7. Online forums and communities:

Some online communities foster misogynistic ideologies, normalising gender-based violence and providing a platform for individuals to share harmful views.

8. Privacy invasion:

Technology can be used to invade someone's privacy through hacking, surveillance, or the use of hidden cameras, leading to a sense of vulnerability.

9. Digital manipulation:

Photoshopping and digital manipulation can be employed to alter images and manipulate appearances, further contributing to unrealistic beauty standards and objectification.

We need to be absolutely crystal clear. Board members need to be aware of the nature of the work and stay out of the way of the work. The board must support the CEO and leadership team and keep focus on governance and strategy oversight. The role is not about having opinions, making judgments or providing advice on operational matters.

Anonymous

10. Dissemination of harmful content:

Perpetrators may spread false or damaging information about someone online, causing harm to their personal and professional life.

11. Online dating violence:

Dating apps can be used to exploit and abuse individuals, with perpetrators using technology to control, intimidate, or harm their partners.

12. Lack of accountability:

The anonymity provided by technology sometimes allows perpetrators to avoid consequences, making it difficult for victims to seek justice.

13. Perpetuation of stereotypes:

Social media, online content, and algorithms can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes, reinforcing existing biases and prejudices.

14. Economic abuse:

Technology can be used to control finances and restrict access to resources, making it difficult for victims to leave abusive relationships.

15. Isolation and manipulation:

Perpetrators may use technology to isolate victims from friends and support networks, making it harder for them to seek help or escape abusive situations.

16. Lack of awareness and education:

Insufficient education and awareness about the dangers of technology-facilitated gender-based violence can leave individuals vulnerable and unprepared to protect themselves.

(Powell & Henry, 20217)

Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach involving technology companies, law enforcement, policymakers, and society at large to create a safer digital environment and support victims of gender-based violence while also holding perpetrators to account.



What else can influence gendered violence and access to support?

Many other factors play a key role in driving gender-based violence as well as creating significant barriers for victim-survivors seeking support and safety. Examples include:

1. Isolation:

Isolation of victims from friends and family is a common tactic used by perpetrators to maintain control. This isolation can make it difficult for victims to seek support or escape abusive situations.

2. Mental health issues:

Both perpetrators and victims may have underlying mental health issues that contribute to domestic violence. This includes conditions like depression, anxiety, and personality disorders.

3. Childhood experiences:

Individuals who have experienced or witnessed domestic violence in their own childhoods may be more likely to become either victims or perpetrators themselves.

4. Immigration status:

Immigrant women may be particularly vulnerable to domestic violence due to their immigration status, as perpetrators can use the threat of deportation to control them.

5. Lack of legal protections:

In some societies or regions, laws and legal protections for victims of domestic violence may be inadequate or not effectively enforced, leaving victims with little recourse.

6. Economic stressors:

Economic downturns, unemployment, and financial stress can intensify domestic violence, as perpetrators may become more frustrated and aggressive under such conditions.

DRIVERS OF GENDERED VIOLENCE

7. Community tolerance:

The level of tolerance or acceptance of domestic violence within a community can play a significant role. In some communities, domestic violence may be normalised or excused, making it harder for victims to seek help or for perpetrators to face consequences.

8. Religious beliefs

Religious beliefs and interpretations can either support or condemn domestic violence. Some religious or cultural contexts may misinterpret scriptures or traditions to justify abusive behaviour or to discourage victims from leaving abusive relationships.

9. Access to weapons:

The presence of firearms or other weapons in a household can escalate the risk of violence. Perpetrators who have access to weapons are more likely to use them to intimidate or harm their victims.

10. Disability:

Individuals with disabilities may be at higher risk of domestic violence due to increased vulnerability, dependency on caregivers, and limited mobility. Perpetrators may exploit these vulnerabilities.

11. Legal status:

Undocumented immigrants or individuals with precarious legal status may be reluctant to report domestic violence for fear of deportation or legal repercussions. Perpetrators may exploit this vulnerability as a means of control.

12. LGBTQIA+ discrimination:

LGBTQIA+ individuals may face domestic violence within their relationships, and they may be reluctant to seek help due to fear of discrimination or misunderstanding by service providers.

13. Cultural language barriers and norms:

In some cultures, the concept of “honour” can be used to justify violence against family members, particularly women who are perceived to have violated cultural norms or family honour. For immigrant or refugee populations, language barriers and limited knowledge of local laws and resources can hinder their ability to seek help or understand their rights.

14. Substance use disorders:

Substance abuse by either the victim or the abuser can lead to more frequent and severe instances of domestic violence. Drugs and alcohol can impair judgment and increase aggression.

15. Digital technology:

The misuse of digital technology, such as surveillance apps, tracking devices, or cyberbullying, can extend the reach of abuse and make it harder for victims to escape their perpetrators.

16. Child custody concerns:

Concerns about losing custody of their children can deter some victims from reporting abuse or seeking help, particularly if they fear that authorities may view them as unfit parents due to the violence.



ANROWS - Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety

WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE – COERCIVE CONTROL?

Multiple definitions for domestic and family violence exist. There are legal definitions contained within the legislation. There are definitions used by practitioners that may differ by organisation, target group or focus of interventions. There are also definitions developed by people with lived experience of violence.

In our role as board members who govern a gendered violence service, it is important to familiarise ourselves with the law and all other relevant definitions for the service.

Domestic Violence Protection Act, 2012

[CLICK HERE](#)



Key points about DFV:

- > It is controlling behaviour, violence, or abuse
- > It is about gaining and maintaining control
- > It is an ongoing pattern of behaviour that may cause the victim to feel afraid and unsafe
- > It can and does happen in all types of relationships
- > It is most often perpetrated by men against women
- > It often has severe and long-lasting physical, emotional and mental impacts on anyone experiencing or witnessing it
- > Is punishable as a crime in Queensland.

Can domestic and family violence be mutual abuse?

Domestic and family violence is not the same as having a fight or an argument. It is not the same as having communication issues and resorting to low-level mutual aggression.

- > ‘Mutually violent’ is a label often unfairly given to women who defend themselves or their children
- > Mutual violence cannot exist in a power dynamic where one partner physically and psychologically dominates the other
- > When addressing acts of aggression, it is important not to confuse an act of resistance or self-defence with an attempt to overpower or control
- > Where an act of violence is an isolated response to a partner’s patterned and systematic use of violence against them, this should not be confused with mutual violence.

(Schonberg, 2005)



As board members, we do not have to be experts in gendered violence, however, it is critical to understand the context of our service’s work so that we can appropriately support its mission and sustainability.

TIP

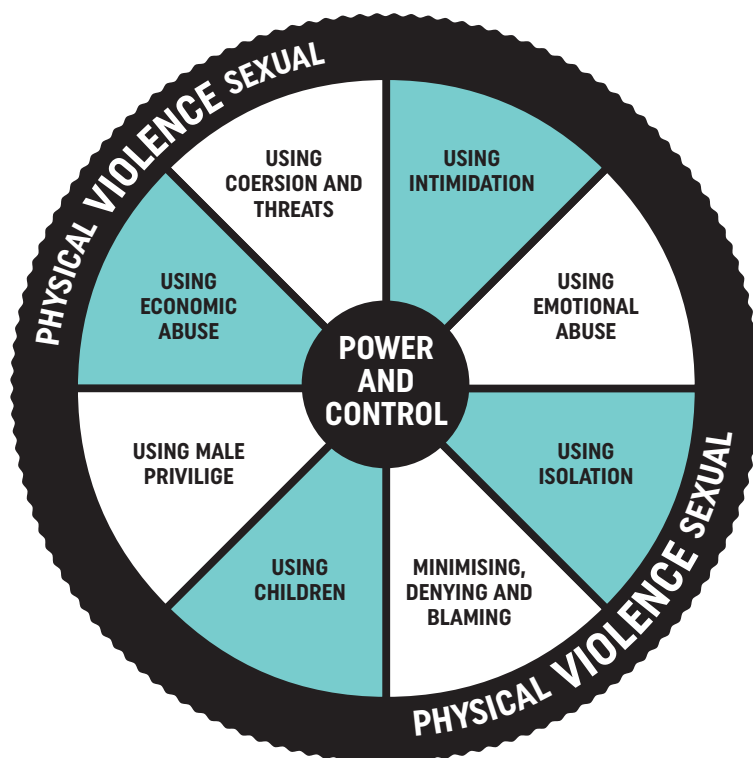
Coercive control is almost always an underpinning dynamic of domestic and family violence. It is a deliberate and rational pattern of behaviours used against another person to manipulate and control them and limit their freedom and agency.

(Queensland Government, 2023)

WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE – COERCIVE CONTROL?

Power and control

Domestic violence is characterised by a pattern of violent and controlling behaviour and tactics that an individual uses to intentionally dominate, intimidate and control a person's intimate partner.



Domestic violence is not about loss of control. It is not caused by drug or alcohol use, mental health issues or rage. Complexities like substance use may exacerbate the violence but is not the cause of it. A person using violence against their partner, their family or a person they are caring for are making a deliberate choice. They are behaving this way to have power over them and are using controlling and abusive behaviour to do so.

Power and control is the definitional element of abuse. Domestic and family violence as a type of control is deliberate and can quickly grow to be constant. If the victim resists or tries to disregard the control, the situation can escalate rapidly.
The cause of violence is the person using it.

A tool that is often used in the gendered violence sector is called the Power and Control wheel. This tool was developed in 1984 by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, USA,

through months of focus groups with women impacted by domestic and family violence who identified these main themes of violence. This wheel highlights some of the same types previously mentioned, but uses some different language and another way of illustrating what the pattern of abuse might be that (largely) men chose to use against their loved ones.

Domestic violence is characterised by a pattern of behaviour and actions that an individual uses to intentionally dominate, intimidate and control an intimate partner. These behaviours are the spokes of the wheel. Physical and sexual violence form the rim of the wheel as the ultimate form of power and control. Most gendered violence services will be using evidence-based tools like these to support their practice.

(Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, 1984)

WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE – COERCIVE CONTROL?



Myths and Facts about DFV

MYTHS	FACTS
Men are just as likely to be victims of domestic and family violence as women.	> Research shows that domestic and family violence is most often committed by men against women > Men are most likely to experience violence by a stranger > Women are most likely to experience violence by someone they know in their own home.
Victims provoke domestic and family violence.	> Most victims of domestic and family violence do everything they can to try and stop the violence including adapting how they behave. This will not stop the violence because the victim is not causing it > The cause of the violence is the violent person who is trying to control the victim.
Women are just as violent in relationships as men.	> When women use violence in an intimate relationship, the context of that violence tends to differ from men > Men's use of violence against women is learned and reinforced while women's use of violence does not have the same kind of societal support > Most women who use violence against their male partners are responding to and resisting the controlling violence being used against them.
If victims wanted the violence to stop, they would just leave.	> No one wants to be abused or controlled. There are many complex reasons why a person chooses to stay or may be unable to leave an abusive relationship > Many victims of domestic and family violence want to leave, but they can't > Victims are most at risk when they try to leave or just after they have left.

WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE – COERCIVE CONTROL?

MYTHS	FACTS
Domestic and family violence is a part of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures.	> Domestic and family violence is not a traditional part of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures > The history of colonisation, dispossession of land and culture, racism and the removal of children from their parents has created intergenerational grief and trauma > The intersection of these complex factors with gender inequality means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience higher rates and more severe forms of domestic and family violence compared to other women.
Women with a disability are less likely to experience domestic and family violence.	> People with a disability are twice as likely to experience physical or sexual violence by a partner, compared to people who do not have a disability, and often this violence goes unreported > Women with disabilities can experience forms of domestic and family violence that are particular to their increased dependency.
Domestic and family violence is more common in heterosexual relationships.	> People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual (LGBTIQA+) experience domestic and family violence from a partner at similar rates as those who identify as heterosexual > LGBTIQA+ people may find it more difficult to access services that meet their particular needs.
Children are not affected by domestic and family violence unless directly experienced.	> Research shows the impact of domestic and family violence on children can be significant regardless of whether they are directly experiencing it or witnessing violence against another family member.

(National Legal Aid, n.d.)

It's important for boards to model inclusivity and cultural safety.

Anonymous



Jot down your thoughts

How might you respond when you hear – ‘but men are just as likely to be victims too’?

.....

What other myths am I aware of that could be dangerous to victim-survivors?

.....

How skilled and confident do I feel in challenging myths, how do I build more confidence?

WHAT IS DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE – COERCIVE CONTROL?

Impacts of domestic and family violence

DFV can have significant short and long term impacts on a person's health and wellbeing.

For example:

- > Physical injuries such as cuts, scrapes and bruises, fractures and sometimes devastatingly, murder, or intimate partner homicide as it is referred to
- > Hearing or vision loss
- > Miscarriage or early delivery
- > Sexually transmitted diseases
- > Stress-related illnesses
- > Depression
- > Anxiety
- > Sleep disturbances
- > Confusion
- > Low self-esteem
- > Concentration difficulties
- > Feelings of helplessness
- > Alcohol and substance use/misuse
- > Hypervigilance
- > Difficulty making decisions.

It is also important to understand that even though children may not experience physical violence on their own bodies – them witnessing, hearing, or knowing that the violence is happening to their mother, sibling or another caregiver can have equally devastating short and long term impacts. Children are victims in their own right. This impact might show through significant behavioural problems, emotional distress, anxiety, depression, and developmental delays.

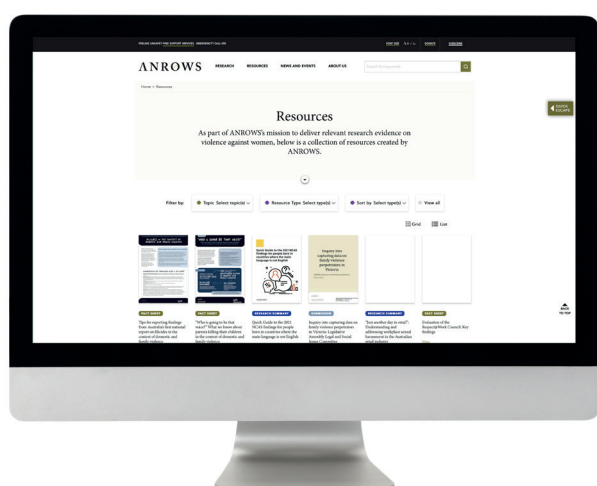
Gender-based violence can have profound and lasting effects on victim-survivors. This may include emotional, mental and physical injuries over time, resulting in trauma impacts that can be both immediate and long-lasting. Victim-survivors are at increased risk of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Domestic and family violence can impact a women's ability to parent due to ongoing safety concerns causing fear and terror and the emotional toll of having to manage that fear every day.

Due to existing rigid gender roles women often carry, the emotional and mental load of caring for children and a family can cause them to have to rely on their abusive partners for financial support. This creates additional barriers to seeking safety. Financial abuse also often causes poverty and homelessness for victim-survivors.

Victim-survivors may also be re-traumatised by the complex service system they have to navigate to seek support and try and keep themselves and their children safe while there is little accountability for the perpetrator. Victim-survivors may have limited capacity to make decisions due to the significant coercive control they experience from perpetrators as well as due to the additional control and expectations from service systems. Victim-survivors are at most of risk of significant harm or being killed when trying to leave.

(Ayre et. Al, 2016; Safe and Equal, n.d.)



ANROWS fast facts impacts of domestic and family violence

CLICK HERE



WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Sexual violence is any unwanted sexual behaviour towards another person. Women, men, children and young people can experience sexual violence however, sexual violence is a gendered issue, and the majority of victim-survivors are women and girls.

It can happen in public, private, or institutional settings and can be carried out by people known to the victim-survivor (including family members, partners, former partners) or by strangers.



Sexual violence includes:

Rape, sexual abuse, unwanted sexual advances/harassment and intimidation at work or elsewhere, being forced to watch or engage in pornography, sexual coercion, having sexual intercourse due to fear of what a partner could do, forced sex work, and trafficking.

Intimate partner violence includes:

Being physically forced to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to, having sexual intercourse because you were afraid of what your partner might do, and/or being forced to do something sexual that you found humiliating or degrading.

Non-partner violence:

“When aged 15 years or over, experience of being forced to perform any sexual act that you did not want to by someone other than your husband/partner.”

‘Sexual violence’ an umbrella term to include all crimes of a sexual nature

- > Child sexual abuse
- > Date rape
- > Fondling
- > Grooming
- > Incest
- > Rape in marriage
- > Harmful sexual behaviours
- > Molestation
- > Explicit texts or calls
- > Paedophilia
- > Rape
- > Revenge porn
- > Sexual abuse
- > Unwanted sexual behaviour or contact
- > Sexual harassment
- > Sexual offenders
- > Stalking
- > Sexual exploitation
- > Unwanted sex
- > Sexual assault
- > Technology-facilitated sexual abuse

Sexual violence often has lifelong impacts on the people who experience it. These impacts can include financial stress, poorer physical and mental health including chronic health conditions.

Women who experienced childhood sexual violence are also twice as likely as those who did not to experience sexual violence, domestic violence and physical violence as an adult.

WHAT IS SEXUAL VIOLENCE?

Myths and Facts about sexual violence

MYTHS	FACTS
Sexual assaults are committed by strangers.	> The majority of people who commit sexual assaults know their victims and in some cases are relations, friends or work colleagues > Sexual assault can be committed within any type of relationship, including marriage, dating relationships, or by friends, acquaintances, a person you have just met, co-workers or family members.
Sexual assault is more likely to occur in a public place.	> Sexual assault can happen anywhere and anytime > Most sexual assaults often occur in private spaces such as homes of the victims or perpetrators.
Girls and women ask to be sexually assaulted by the way they dress and behave.	> Women and children of all ages, cultures and backgrounds are sexually assaulted > Women may dress in a way to attract or to feel good about themselves but that is different to asking to be sexually assaulted.
Rape is a 'spur of the moment' act.	> Most rapists plan carefully in advance, and set up situations so the rape can take place > A rapist is capable of raping again and again.
Women and children make up stories about being sexually assaulted.	> This is a commonly held belief in the community. But, research suggests only a minority of disclosures of sexual assault are false. Women are more likely to deny or minimise sexual assault experiences than make them up.
Sexual assault offenders are mentally ill.	> The majority of sexual offenders are not mentally ill. Mental illness does not cause people to sexually offend. Many sex offenders are functioning people in the community, they have jobs, are married, have children > The media often seem to focus on sex offenders who fit the stereotype; they are selective in who they choose to report on. This only helps to maintain the silence on sexual assault and makes it difficult for people to believe that someone who doesn't fit that profile could commit sexual offenses.
Men cannot be sexually assaulted.	> Any unwanted sexual contact against any person by any other person is a sexual assault.

Ref: QSAN <https://qsan.org.au/resources/svam2020-campaign/>

THE BIG PICTURE – WHAT INFORMS THE WORK OF A GENDERED VIOLENCE SERVICE?



It is important for us as board members to be across the upcoming changes in the gender-based violence sector to strategic policy plans, legislation, funding specifications, emerging issues, stakeholder engagement and media strategies.

The Queensland Government continues to consult and review plans, policy, legislation and funding purposes to improve not only responses but also funding purpose and outcomes. All of these spaces continue to change and it is imperative for board members to be across these changes to continue to advocate for victim-survivors, consult with various government bodies and to make sound and strategic decisions about the organisation's purpose and direction.

The table on the next page provides an overview of relevant state and national information. We have provided brief information and links for further exploration.



Jot down your thoughts

What have I learned about gendered violence that surprises me?

.....

How might understanding the causes of gendered violence support my role on the board?

.....

Have I identified any myths that I unconsciously held about gendered violence?

The board needs to reflect the community served to the greatest extent possible and tap into the relationships, systems and levers of power to best resource and equip the organisation.

Anonymous

THE BIG PICTURE – WHAT INFORMS THE WORK OF A GENDERED VIOLENCE SERVICE?

The table provides an overview of relevant state and national information. We have provided brief information and links for further exploration.

Federal Strategy	State Strategy	Funding Requirements	Legislation	Quality Framework	Other Relevant Frameworks
The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 Two 5-year Action Plans First action plan 2023-27 + activities addendum Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence (2023)	The QLD DFV Prevention Strategy 2016 – 2026 (based on the Not Now Not Ever Report) Fourth Action Plan 2022-23 to 2025-26 of the DFV Prevention Strategy Queensland’s Framework for Action Reshaping our approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander domestic and family violence Hear Her Voice Report 1: Addressing Coercive Control and DFV in QLD 2022 Hear Her Voice Report 2: Women and girls’ experiences across the criminal justice system Hear Her Voice Discussion Paper 3: Women and girls’ experiences across the criminal justice system as victims-survivors of sexual violence and also as accused persons and offenders Prevent. Support. Believe. Queensland’s Framework to address Sexual Violence Termination of Pregnancy Action Plan 2024 Ensuring women and pregnant people can access information and termination of pregnancy care that meets their needs Women and Girls Health Strategy 2032 To address health inequity and improve access to health care for women and girls	DFV Support Services Investment Specifications Sexual violence and women’s support services investment specification The Outputs and Performance Measures Catalogue Perpetrator intervention services requirements	<i>DFV Protection Act 2012 (QLD)</i> <i>Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023</i> The Criminal Law (Coercive Control and Affirmative Consent) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. DFV Information Sharing Guidelines <i>Child Protection Act 1999</i> <i>Human Rights Act 2019</i> <i>Public Guardian Act 2001</i> <i>The Residential Services (Accreditation) Act 2002</i> <i>The Criminal Code Act 1899</i> <i>Evidence Act 1977</i>	DFV Services Regulatory Framework DFV Services Practice Principles, Standards and Guidance Human Services Quality Framework (HSQF) HSQF Domestic and Family Violence Services Supplement	Suicide Prevention Framework for Working with People Impacted by DFV ANROWS National Risk Assessment Principles for DFV DFV Common Risk and Safety Framework DFV Responding to Sexual Assault and Child Sexual Abuse Queensland Government Interagency Guidelines for responding to children, young people and adults who have experienced sexual assault or child sexual abuse

THE BIG PICTURE – WHAT INFORMS THE WORK OF A GENDERED VIOLENCE SERVICE?



Reforms

The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 is the overarching national policy framework that guides actions towards ending violence against women and children over the next 10 years.

It highlights how all parts of society, including governments, businesses and workplaces, media, schools and educational institutions, the family, domestic and sexual violence sector, communities and all individuals, should work together to achieve the shared vision of ending gender-based violence in one generation.

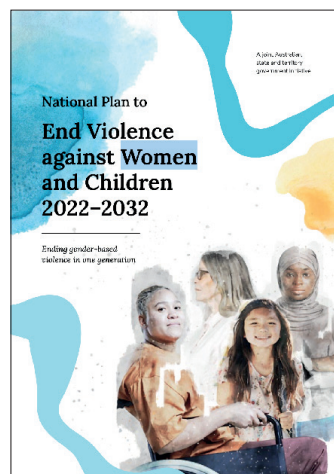
The dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan sits alongside the National Plan to End Violence. It has been developed in recognition of the disproportionately high rates of family, domestic and sexual violence that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience.

Developing a robust strategic plan for the organisation involves looking into the horizon and considering emerging policy reforms and emerging evidence and what this means for the future. It must also be informed by the voices of victim-survivors and service users and include continuous improvement measures.

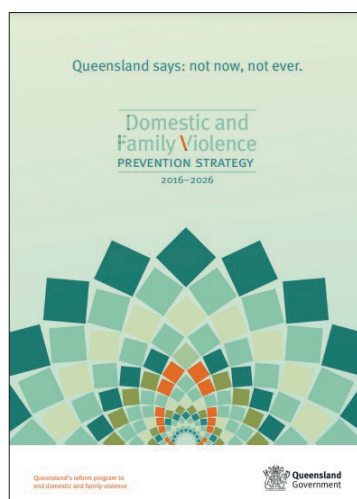
Anonymous

The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032

CLICK HERE



THE BIG PICTURE – WHAT INFORMS THE WORK OF A GENDERED VIOLENCE SERVICE?



Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016

CLICK HERE



The **Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce** was established in March 2021 to examine coercive control and review both the need for a specific offence of 'domestic violence' and, more broadly, the experience of women across the criminal justice system.

In February 2023, the Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2022 was passed. It included amendments to:

- > Modernise and strengthen the offence of unlawful stalking
- > Amend the definition of 'domestic violence' to recognise a pattern of behaviour
- > Strengthen the court's ability to hear and decide cross applications
- > Strengthen the consideration of previous domestic and family violence or criminal history
- > Bring domestic and family violence complainants and other witnesses within the protected witness scheme.

Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce

CLICK HERE



State level

The Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland report was commissioned by the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland in February 2015. The report made 140 recommendations for ending domestic and family violence in Queensland and all have been accepted by the State Government. According to the Queensland Government, all 140 recommendations were delivered as of 24 October 2019. In response, the Government released the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016 which sets the direction for collaborative action to end domestic and family violence across the state.



Jot down your thoughts

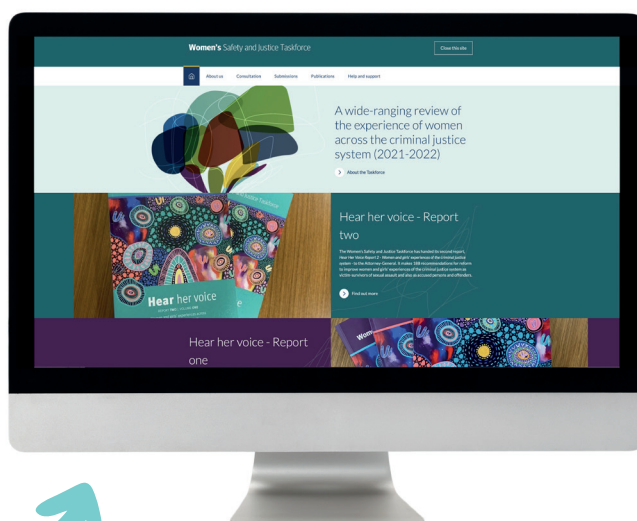
How can I keep abreast of emerging reforms impacting the service now and into the future?

.....

How might I encourage the board to keep informed about emerging issues and reforms?

.....

How might I use my position on the board to create change for victim-survivors of gender-based violence?



FUNDING REQUIREMENTS AND COMMITMENTS

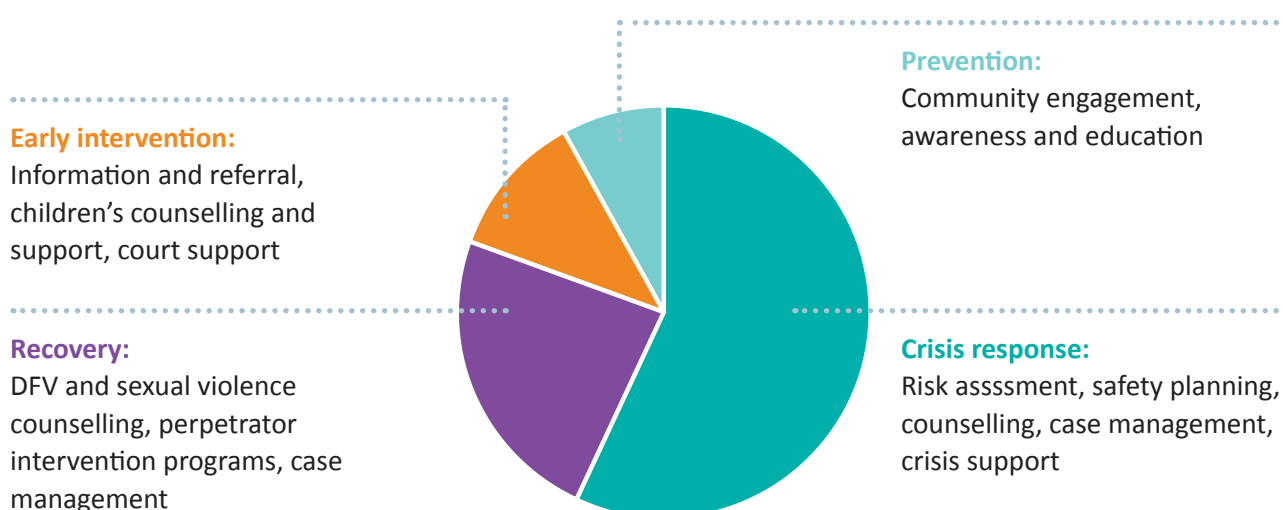


In this section we provide an overview of funding requirements and commitments of gendered violence services in Queensland funded by the Office for Women and Violence Prevention, Department of Justice and Attorney-General.

Service initiatives range from specialist crisis responses and counselling for victim-survivors and children, advocacy, court support, perpetrator intervention programs, specific services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, housing responses such as shelters and telephone services such as DV Connect and 1800Respect.

The table below provides an overview of the types of services funded. In governing a gendered violence service as board members we may oversee one or more of these programs.

Funded Services



(Office for Women and Violence Prevention)

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS AND COMMITMENTS

Legal and contractual requirements

Investment Specifications are for services that are funded under the Domestic and Family Violence, Sexual Violence and Women's Support Services funding areas.

The purpose of the investment specification is to:

- > Describe the intent of funding
- > Outline the service users and identified issues
- > Describe the service types and associated service delivery requirements.

It is crucial for us as board members to be aware of and understand the investment specifications attached to each funding schedule/program. This is the guiding document that sits behind the funding received and defines what we are holding the organisation accountable to.

With the investment specifications comes the Outputs and **Performance Measures Catalogue** that describes how to measure the work that is done. Our role as a board is to be able to talk through and ask questions to ensure reporting is ethical and accountable.

Domestic and Family
Violence Support Services

[CLICK HERE](#)



Individual service agreements

The investment specifications and performance measures catalogue go hand in hand with Funding Schedules/Agreements as it outlines service users, service types as well as:

- > Duration of funding
- > Service outlet
- > Funding amount
- > Details about the service
- > Deliverables (outputs, outcomes)
- > Service delivery requirements (outlined in investment specifications)
- > Reporting requirements.

Monitoring and compliance

Human Services Quality Framework

The Human Services Quality Framework includes mandatory evidence requirements common to all organisations as well as service specific requirements including:

- 1. Governance and Management**
Sound governance and management systems that maximise outcomes for stakeholders
- 2. Service Access**
Sound eligibility, entry and exit processes facilitate access to services on the basis of relative need and available resources
- 3. Responding to Individual Need**
The assessed needs of the individual are being appropriately addressed and responded to within resource capacity
- 4. Safety, Wellbeing and Rights**
The safety, wellbeing and human and legal rights of people using services are protected and promoted
- 5. Feedback, Complaints and Appeals**
Effective feedback, complaints and appeals processes that lead to improvements in service delivery
- 6. Human Resources**
Effective human resource management systems, including recruitment, induction and supervisory processes, result in quality service provision.



Human Services
Quality Framework

[CLICK HERE](#)

FUNDING REQUIREMENTS AND COMMITMENTS

Domestic and Family Violence Regulatory Framework

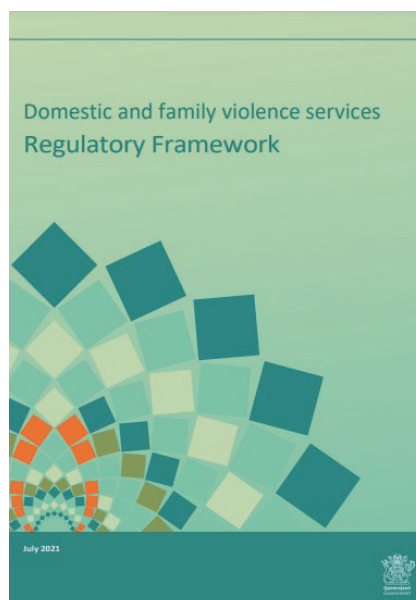
The Regulatory Framework for DFV Services came into effect on 1 January 2022. Services that are audited are assessed against the Regulatory Framework criteria and evidence, embedded in the Queensland Government's Human Service Quality Framework (HSQF) user guide as well as against the general mandatory HSQF requirement.

The Regulatory Framework is a monitoring and compliance mechanism to ensure a high standard of service delivery across DFV services that demonstrates compliance with the DFV Practice Principles, Standards and Guidance. As part of the Regulatory Framework, DFV-specific criteria, designed to measure the implementation of the Practice Standards, has been developed and embedded into the HSQF user guide.

The domestic and family violence practice standards are intended to outline the everyday practice expectations for people working in Queensland's domestic and family violence system. This includes staff working with victim-survivors (and their children) and perpetrators. The practice standards reflect the quality of services the community can expect from organisations that provide Queensland Government-funded domestic and family violence services.

**Practice, Principles,
Standards & Guidance**

[CLICK HERE](#)



Overall, organisations have moral and ethical expectations to:

- > Provide equitable, accessible, ethical and professional services across all programs
- > Initiate and drive systemic change
- > Advocate for the rights of victim-survivors regardless of program
- > Operate an organisation that upholds the rights of victim-survivors while holding perpetrators to account
- > Operate a fiscally sound as well as professional organisation
- > Implement and foster values that are conducive to a gendered analysis and mindful of power and how it is used in the organisation and in the systems surrounding the organisation
- > Operate according to the funded specifications and to report accurately on services provided as well as demand.



Jot down your thoughts

**Do I have sufficient knowledge
to provide appropriate oversight
of funded programs?
What else do I need?**

.....

**How confident do I feel to speak
to auditors about matters of
organisational compliance?**

SUSTAINING A THRIVING WORKFORCE AND ORGANISATION

The board sets the scene for a thriving workforce by modelling a positive culture that enables the service to achieve its purpose, mission and vision.

A positive culture in the gendered violence sector as described in the Workforce Capability Framework recognises honesty and vulnerability as a strength in creating resilience. It is one where we 'show up for ourselves and others' and contribute to a learning culture, working together to balance the intensity of the work in a reflective, calm and engaged manner.

A positive culture is one where personal and organisational values combine with a strong belief in the ability to make a positive difference in people's lives. These features help to advance and sustain the way we work. It is about being part of collective efforts, acting in solidarity with others, and celebrating achievements to facilitate a vibrant, valuing and meaningful culture.

Checkout the Workforce Capability Framework Domain 5 for more information.



Organisational culture is the collection of beliefs, values and ways of interacting that create the environment of an organisation.

SUSTAINING A THRIVING WORKFORCE AND ORGANISATION

How can we, as a board, set the scene for a thriving workforce and organisation?

WHAT	HOW
Model and enable positive work culture	> Ensure transparent improvement mechanisms are in place including clients, staff and stakeholders, e.g.; • Staff culture surveys • Staff turnover feedback • Client surveys/feedback • Complaints • WH&S data.
Inclusive decision-making	> Engage staff and seek feedback, e.g.; • Consult staff on program design and organisational change • The development of operational plans – i.e. ensure the budget allows for this.
Staff support and development	> Ensure staff have the support and development opportunities they need, e.g.; • Access to specialist EAP providers who understand the context and content of the work • Access to support for staff impacted by gendered violence • Build extra paid leave and work/life flexibility into budgets and processes • Professional supervision factored into budgets and resourcing plans • Budget provisions for staff support and upskilling annually and regularly.
Ongoing sustainability	> Ensure calculation of input hours for tenders, new contracts etc include costs and resourcing for practice development, support, supervision, i.e., do not overpromise at a cost to staff wellbeing/culture.



Everything a gendered violence service does is in the service of those experiencing violence, abuse and harm. The board must understand they are governing a social justice, human rights organisation and not a commercial business. Things that are logical and appropriate in their day jobs may not be useful or appropriate when making decisions that impact some of the most vulnerable in the community. Demand for services likely exceeds available support and the workforce may be under immense pressure. It may be difficult to attract and retain staff. The board needs to have processes in place to ensure they are working in support of the workforce.

Rosie





You are a well-connected former politician, passionate about ending domestic and family violence. Because of your high profile in the community, people often come to you to ‘get things done’ or to advocate on their behalf. Since leaving politics you have joined the board of a large domestic, family and sexual violence service.

You have been approached in your capacity as a board member following a high-profile domestic violence incident with the offer of a donation to develop a new women’s shelter. You believe this is a great opportunity for service expansion and a new funding stream. You are excited to bring this to the next board meeting for discussion where you expect it will be gratefully accepted.

When you bring this opportunity to the board meeting the CEO pushes back saying she feels this donation should go to the local existing women’s shelter where it fits within their scope and area of expertise. She also indicates they have enough on their hands with existing programs and funding increases.

How should you approach this offer with consideration of:

- > The process for considering this significant change in service delivery
- > The motives and expectations of the donor
- > The unintended strategic and operational consequences of this decision
- > The benefits and possible unintended consequences to service users of this new project
- > Stakeholders, including the community and service providers, especially as there is already a women’s shelter in your catchment area
- > Workforce sustainability and supporting the CEO to manage this significant change in operational direction.



Workforce wellbeing

Working in the gendered violence sector is complex and can take a toll on individual and overall wellbeing. It is vitally important the board is aware of the risks and impacts of the work which can also impact organisational culture and sustainability.

It's important to have policies and processes in place to monitor workforce wellbeing and support.

Key issues that impact worker wellbeing are:

- > Exposure to continual extreme trauma content
- > Working in constantly high-risk, stressful crisis environments
- > Working in this space with own lived experience of historical or current domestic, family or sexual violence
- > Working in a patriarchal system that impacts the workforce every day
- > Working with people who are at extreme risk with limited resources and capacity that may inadvertently increase that risk
- > Working in organisations with poor workplace culture and ongoing internal conflict/tension.

Our board's cohesive relationship with the CEO was primarily driven by our shared commitment to the organisation's mission and our collective desire to support its growth and success. We recognised that providing strong support to the leadership was essential to achieving these goals. This mutual dedication also helped to foster a collaborative environment in which open communication, transparency, and respect were prioritised.

Furthermore, several board members, including myself, had experience working in the non-profit sector, which gave us an appreciation for the demands faced by the CEO. This firsthand experience strengthened our commitment to collaborate effectively with the CEO with a goal of supporting her to best fulfill responsibilities of her role.

Hannah

The potential impacts of working with gendered violence

Vicarious trauma

Trauma of clients can cause Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) - like symptoms in workers if not managed appropriately.

Vicarious trauma in the gendered violence sector refers to the emotional and psychological toll experienced by people who work with victim-survivors and perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence. Over time, exposure to these distressing narratives and situations can lead to workers developing symptoms similar to those of PTSD themselves. It can also impact a professional's ability to provide effective support to clients.

Some symptoms of vicarious trauma

Symptoms may include heightened anxiety, depression, intrusive thoughts, emotional numbness, irritability, nightmares, and a diminished sense of personal wellbeing.

To mitigate the risk of vicarious trauma, organisations in this sector often implement self-care strategies, provide regular supervision, and offer trauma-informed training for their staff.

Recognising and addressing vicarious trauma is crucial to maintaining the wellbeing of those dedicated to helping survivors of domestic and family violence.



Compassion fatigue

Hearing stories over and over can push workers to feel a sense of helplessness that can show in reduced compassion.

Compassion fatigue is a psychological condition that can affect people working in the gendered violence sector. It arises from prolonged exposure to the suffering and trauma of survivors and can lead to a state of emotional and physical exhaustion.

Compassion fatigue in domestic, family, and sexual violence work is the result of sustained and empathetic engagement, and re-engagement, with survivors of abuse and trauma. Workers in this field, include counsellors, advocates, and social workers, often witness and hear about harrowing experiences endured by their clients. Over time, this constant exposure to suffering can lead to feelings of emotional depletion, cynicism, and a reduced ability to feel empathy or compassion.

Symptoms of compassion fatigue

Symptoms include chronic exhaustion, feelings of hopelessness, irritability, a decrease in job satisfaction, and difficulty maintaining healthy boundaries with clients. Workers experiencing compassion fatigue may find it challenging to provide the high level of support and care that victim-survivors need.

To address compassion fatigue, organisations emphasise self-care practices, provide regular supervision, and stress the importance of support from peers and mental health workers.

.....

Recognising and managing compassion fatigue is essential to ensure workers can continue to provide effective and empathetic assistance to survivors while safeguarding their wellbeing.

.....

SUSTAINING A THRIVING WORKFORCE AND ORGANISATION

Burnout

Prolonged exposure to stressors and demands can lead to chronic fatigue, disillusionment, lowered work performance, etc.

Burnout is a state of emotional, physical, and mental exhaustion that can affect workers in the gendered violence sector due to the demanding and emotionally taxing nature of their roles. Burnout in providing domestic, family and sexual violence support is caused by the prolonged exposure to the stressors and challenges associated with supporting survivors of abuse and violence.

Workers in this field, including counsellors, advocates, and social workers, often face heavy workloads, high levels of responsibility, and the emotional burden of dealing with traumatic experiences on a regular basis.

Symptoms of burnout

Symptoms include chronic fatigue, a sense of cynicism or detachment from one's work, reduced job performance, and a feeling of hopelessness or disillusionment.

Burnout can significantly impact an individual's overall wellbeing and may lead to decreased job satisfaction and increased turnover in the profession.

To address burnout, organisations prioritise self-care strategies, practice workload management and offer access to support services. Encouraging a supportive work environment and promoting the importance of seeking help when needed are crucial steps in preventing and managing burnout.

Recognising and addressing burnout is essential to ensure that those working with survivors can continue to provide effective and compassionate care.

Vicarious resilience

Stories of resilience shared by clients can have a vicarious and positive impact.

Communities and workers may experience strength, growth, and empowerment which is inspired by awareness and appreciation of victim-survivors' capacity to grow and maintain hope amid their stories of perseverance and strength.

Positive impacts of the work may include:

- > Changes in life goals and perspectives
- > Hope inspired by victim-survivors
- > Increased recognition of victim-survivor spirituality as a therapeutic resource
- > Increased self-awareness and self-care practices
- > Increased consciousness about power relative to social location
- > Increased capacity for resourcefulness
- > An increased capacity for attentiveness to the victim-survivor narratives of trauma.

It took some time for me to fully understand that I had control of my emotional wellbeing in the workspace. I had to keep developing my own awareness of the things that impacted me such as heart-breaking stories, aggravating systems failures, challenging workplace dynamics and the constant unrealistic pace. I had to develop management strategies such as clear professional boundaries, being an activist to push against those systems, not engaging in workplace politics and being clear with myself about my workplace capacity. That doesn't mean the organisation wasn't responsible for implementing the things required to support and develop a healthy staff pool. It means I have choices to make and work to do to grow and develop professionally.

Gabrielle



You are a board member of a sexual violence service. Now retired, you have a lengthy background of working with the gendered violence sector in practice and leadership roles and are well-connected across the sector.

At each board meeting, the CEO provides a report including a human resources update. You have noticed a high level of staff exits and difficulties in recruitment over the past 12 months with some positions remaining unfilled. You have also received a personal email from a staff member who has reported concerns about the culture of the service.

You have also noticed these HR issues do not seem to have impacted service delivery with increasing demand being met. You are concerned about the impacts of increasing service demand and the challenges this poses for current staff.

How would you approach this with consideration of:

- > The direct contact to you from the staff member
- > Understanding how staff are managing this increasing workload
- > The risks of increasing service demand and staffing constraints
- > Ongoing workforce sustainability
- > Potential CEO support with advocacy and strategic approaches to funding providers.

SUSTAINING A THRIVING WORKFORCE AND ORGANISATION

Psychosocial Work Health and Safety Regulations

As board members, we are responsible for ensuring the organisation has done everything it can to ensure the wellbeing of staff. Recent changes to Psychosocial WHS regulations include a strong focus on psychosocial wellbeing.

*“The amended Work Health and Safety Regulations prescribe how duty holders **must identify and manage** hazards and risks to workers’ psychological health and safety.*

Organisations need to consider and review approaches to managing psychosocial risks and fostering mentally healthy workplaces.”

How do psychosocial hazards cause harm?

“Psychosocial hazards can create stress. Stress is the body’s reaction when a worker perceives the demands of their work exceed their ability or resources to cope.

Stress creates a physiological and psychological response in the body by releasing adrenaline and cortisol, raising the heart rate and blood pressure, boosting glucose levels in the bloodstream and diverting energy from the immune system to other areas of the body.

Stress itself is not an injury but if it becomes frequent, prolonged or severe it can cause psychological and physical harm.”

Ref; Safe Work Australia. Managing psychosocial hazards at work. Code of Practice 2022



Psychological health can be negatively and positively impacted at work

TIP

What are psychosocial hazards?

- > Job demands
- > Low job control
- > Poor support
- > Lack of role clarity
- > Poor organisational change management
- > Inadequate reward and recognition
- > Poor organisational justice
- > Traumatic events or material
- > Remote or isolated work
- > Poor physical environment
- > Violence or aggression
- > Bullying
- > Harassment including sexual harassment
- > Conflict or poor workplace relationships and interactions.

(Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, 2022)

The board must be willing to be challenged in their thinking and accountable for the decisions they make. This means being curious and mindful about the impact of their governance and decisions on the workforce. The board must stay in its lane and resist drifting into operational concerns or decisions that can have serious impacts.

Rosie

SUSTAINING A THRIVING WORKFORCE AND ORGANISATION

Managing psychosocial WHS hazards

An organisation must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, workers and other persons are not exposed to risks to their psychological or physical health and safety. The organisation must eliminate psychosocial risks in the workplace, or if that is not reasonably practicable, minimise these risks so far as is reasonably practicable.

Under the WHS Regulations, to manage psychosocial risks, a duty holder must:

- > Identify reasonably foreseeable hazards that could give rise to psychosocial risks
- > Eliminate risks, so far as is reasonably practicable
- > If it is not reasonably practicable to eliminate the risks, minimise the risks so far as is reasonably practicable
- > Maintain implemented control measures so they remain effective
- > Review, and if necessary, revise, control measures so as to maintain, so far as is reasonably practicable, a work environment that is without risks to health and safety.

(Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, 2022)



Jot down your thoughts

What surprises me about the impacts of the work?

.....

How are we factoring workforce and cultural wellbeing processes into our budget and strategic decision-making?

.....

What questions can I ask to ensure staff are getting the support they need?

How the board can minimise the risk for psychosocial WHS hazards

When we make decisions about how the funding the organisation receives is allocated and how policies and procedures are scaffolding the work, we ensure provision for:

- > Internal practice development
- > Funded professional development and training
- > Regular and structured internal supervision
- > Specialist external professional supervision
- > Self-reflection and personal development.



The work we govern is complex and demanding. It can be tempting to cut back on essential support for workers when finances get tight. A decision to do so poses significant risk to the workforce, our clients and the community.

TIP

We have to invest in our workforce. It is not just about workplace health and safety. The work in this sector is hard and it is work most people don't do or understand. I have seen board members start their journey with a corporate hat on and heard about boards cutting budgets for staff supervision and training. I get that when money is tight this feels like a good option, but it comes at a massive cost to staff wellbeing and retention. Staff are the most valuable resource an organisation has. We pushed back successfully with the funding body, rallied with sister services, tendered with staff support, and were not prepared to compromise the budget to get more funding. We have collective power as a sector. I hope people on boards remember this when they face tough budget decisions.

Gabrielle



You are the Chairperson on the board of a small Aboriginal service in a remote area of QLD. You are an active and well-connected community member and these are your ancestral lands. Your family is well-known, and you are a respected Elder in the community.

You are passionate about the organisation as you grew up with violence in your home and are the victim-survivor of a previous violent relationship yourself. You have been a kinship carer for your nephew for several years and are supporting him through accusations of violence from his female partner.

You have been the Chairperson for five years and are also on several other boards in the community.

How do you manage your role on the board with consideration of the following:

- > Community expectations and the expectations of your role on the board
- > Your lived experience and decision-making on this board
- > Maintaining a focus on strategic governance
- > The benefits of your participation on the board – for yourself, staff, victim-survivors and the community.
- > Leadership and succession planning – e.g., supporting others to step into the Chairperson role
- > Maintaining a positive working relationship with the CEO/Manager and supporting their leadership of operational aspects of the organisation
- > How you manage confidentiality and conflicts of interest in regard to your participation across multiple boards.

The Nature of the Work



Key Take Aways

- > It's important to have policies and processes in place to monitor workforce wellbeing and support
- > Consider emerging policy reforms and change drivers in strategic planning
- > Understanding the drivers and contextual influences of gendered violence enables us to be effective advocates for change
- > Understanding the contracted funded services enables us to provide effective oversight and contribute to audit processes
- > We have an obligation to ensure quality performance, outcomes and outputs measurements and reporting
- > The physical and psychological wellbeing of staff is critical to the organisation's success
- > Prioritising worker wellbeing and professional growth is critical to workforce retention and sustainability.



Effective and appropriate professional relationships with the workforce means considering them in decision-making.

For example, ensure the organisation is providing sufficient support, internal and external supervision and skills development as well as considering capacity in strategic decisions.

TIP

Group Activity and Reflection



Cultural and Workforce Wellbeing check

Set time aside for regular cultural and workforce wellbeing checks and consider the following:

- > How to implement and evaluate wellbeing and professional development processes in the organisation
- > Safeguard a percentage of funding for psychosocial wellbeing, cultural wellbeing, and professional development – choose to invest appropriately in the workforce for long term sustainability
- > How to ensure workloads and funding are realistic and that the organisation has sufficient resources to support a healthy and capable workforce
- > How the organisation monitors, recognises and responds to potential compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma in the workgroup
- > What steps the board can take to ensure that the psychosocial and professional wellbeing of workers.

Reflective Questions

- > What are the drivers of change that will impact the gendered violence sector in the future? How are these informing our strategic planning?
- > How can we stay abreast of emerging legislative changes that impact the work of the organisation?
- > How do we ensure our oversight of funded programs is adequate?
- > Do we have a sufficient understanding of the regulatory and legal obligations of the organisation?
- > Are we as a board able to think beyond providing a service and the contractual obligations of the organisation?
- > How confident are we as a board to speak to auditors about how the service complies with funding requirements?
- > What policies and procedures are in place to manage WH&S psychosocial hazards and are they adequate?
- > How does the organisation monitor, recognise and respond to potential compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma in the workgroup?
- > How do we ensure that a workforce wellbeing and sustainability lens is brought to all new funding and strategic planning conversations?



Donna - Board Story

I experienced domestic and family violence for many years and have worked hard to educate and heal myself. I am eager to use my wisdom and skills to support mothers and children in a way that suits me.

I was asked to join the board of directors for a shelter that supports women and children. Elders in our community established this shelter many years ago. We honour this history by ensuring we do right by the Uncles and Aunties.

When I started on the board, I was learning about governance. I was fortunate to join a board of mature and nurturing women with lots of experience and skills they were willing to share.

They created a safe space where I felt comfortable asking questions and for what I needed. Our board acknowledges that we may all bring trauma and this understanding helps us all be mindful of how we interact and support each other. It's great to feel so welcome and safe in my role on the board.

Our service also provided access to training and support through ORIC (Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations). This support is invaluable. It helped me understand what governance means and the importance of connecting to the purpose and vision of the service and using this to inform plans and decisions.

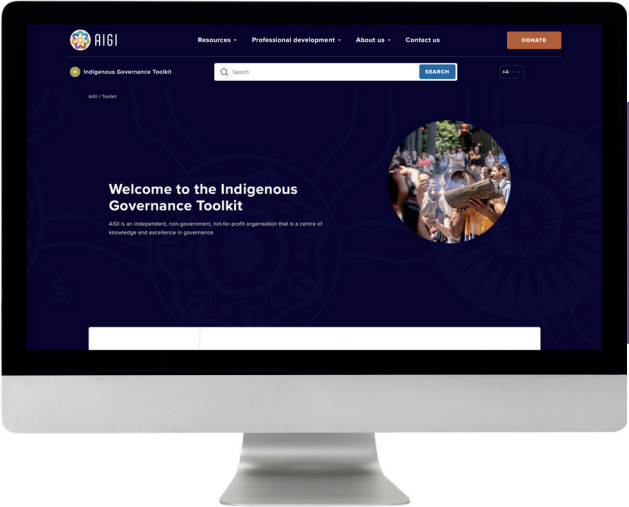
We are committed to positive and open communication and ensure everyone is included in conversations and decision-making. The Chairperson and General Manager have regular catch-ups, and discussions are noted and conveyed to the Board. This ensures everyone is working in the same direction.

.....

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be represented on boards. My advice for mainstream services is to be authentic in inviting First Nations people onto boards. Think about your intention and the positive contribution we can make to your service's purpose and mission.

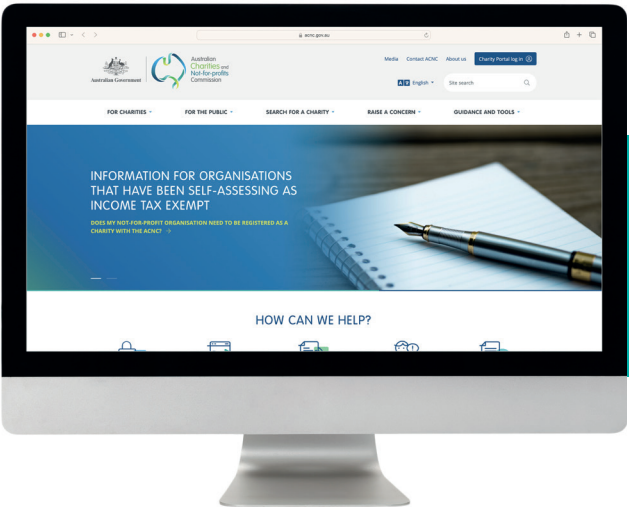
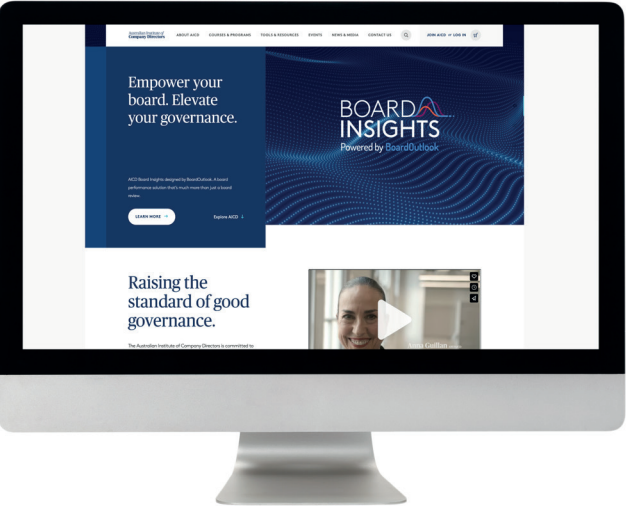
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Indigenous Governance Toolkit

CLICK HERE



ACNC Governance Standards

CLICK HERE

REFERENCES

INTRODUCTION

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THE NATURE OF THE WORK

- The project A life course approach to determining the prevalence and impact of sexual violence in Australia: Findings from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, published by ANROWS in 2022 examined the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH), which has captured sexual violence data – from more than 57,000 women – since 1996.
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