

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

The 10th meeting of the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Cross Agency Working Group (CAWG) was held on Wednesday 3 February 2021.

Action Plan 2

The Chair confirmed that implementation of [the Northern Territory's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2021: Safe, respected and free from violence](#) (the Framework) will continue to be a focus for the CAWG, with the Hon Kate Worden, Minister for Territory Families and Urban Housing keen to progress the significant reforms arising from the Framework.

The Framework is being implemented by a series of action plans. The majority of actions in [Action Plan 1: Changing Attitudes, Intervening Earlier and Responding Better \(2018-2021\)](#) are underway or already completed and planning is commencing for the development of Action Plan 2.

Members discussed areas for consideration in Action Plan 2 and noted that the focus of the second action plan will be on taking stock, evaluating and reviewing and building on what works.

The Northern Territory Council of Social Service has been engaged to coordinate consultation on the development of Action Plan 2.

DFV Information Sharing Scheme Review

Ms Brenda Monaghan, Deputy Information Commissioner, provided a briefing on the Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) [Information Sharing Scheme](#).

In late 2018, amendments were made to the *Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007* (the DFV Act) to allow for information about people experiencing or committing DFV to be shared between Information Sharing Entities (ISEs), including without consent from the individual in certain circumstances. The Information Sharing Scheme commenced on 30 August 2019.

The amended DFV Act requires the Information Commissioner to review the first two years of operation of the Information Sharing Scheme (the First Review) and later, the 3rd to 5th years of its operation (the Second Review).

As part of each review, the Commissioner must consult with ISEs and include in each review a consideration of any adverse effects of the information sharing scheme. The First Review of the DFV Information Sharing Scheme is due to commence on 31 August 2021.

The Commissioner has sought feedback from ISEs to inform the review, acknowledging that the Information Sharing Scheme has not been in operation long enough to provide definitive information about its adoption for general use or to identify significant areas of concern. The Commissioner invited CAWG members to provide their feedback to inform the review.

Katherine Local Reference Group



Tennant Creek Local Reference Group



Risk Assessment and Management Framework

The Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities continues to deliver free risk assessment and management training in Darwin, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and Katherine throughout February and March 2021.

The training supports implementation of the NT [Domestic and Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework](#) (RAMF) and consists of two one-day workshops. Workshop one is aimed at universal workers and provides an introduction to DFV identification, risk assessment and risk management. Workshop two is aimed at specialist and statutory workers and provides more comprehensive DFV risk assessment and management training.

The Department provides financial support to cover the costs of accommodation and travel for workers from remote communities to attend the training at the nearest regional centre.

Interest in the training has been significant, with all sessions in the first round fully booked. Further sessions are planned for June and October 2021. The Department is also offering interested and suitably experienced workers the opportunity to undertake train the trainer sessions to deliver the risk assessment and management training into the future. Enhancing the training skills of local workers will support the sustainability of the risk assessment and management training.

CAWG members acknowledged the significant work that had gone in to development of the RAMF and the importance of a consistent practice framework across the service system.

Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework

Members were updated on the [Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework](#). The Department has contracted the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) to develop and deliver training on responding to children, young people and adults who have experienced sexual violence, as well as a second workshop on working with young people with harmful sexualised behaviours. SARC can be contacted on 8922 6472 for more information.

Multi Agency Community and Child Safety Teams

The Chair updated members on the Multi Agency Community and Child Safety teams (MACCS), which was established following coronial recommendations to address the lack of service coordination in multi-agency case management in regional and remote communities.

The MACCS will bring agencies and communities together to focus on:

- children and families who, in comparison with the other children and families in their community, have greater needs that significantly increase their risk of harm to themselves and/or others; and
- thematic social issues affecting groups of children and their families in the local community where statutory responses may be required or where there is concern for a group of children or young people.

The CAWG Terms of Reference have been amended to provide the option for members to escalate issues to the MACCS Management Group which consists of Deputy Chief Executives across the NT Government.

Network and peak representatives update

At each CAWG meeting the networks and peaks provide updates and raise any questions or issues of concern to the group.

The Tennant Creek Local Reference Group (LRG) held a workshop in December 2020 to discuss the outcomes of the Barkly and Big Rivers DFSV Service System reviews and the Access to Justice in the Barkly review. The group has commenced service system mapping across the Barkly region.

In Katherine, the DFV Local Action Plan is being finalised and will be discussed by the Katherine LRG at the next meeting in February.

The Katherine Women's Crisis Centre is experiencing challenges recruiting staff due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

The NT Legal Assistance Forum reported that legal services are experiencing an increase in clients presenting with DFV matters and in the complexity of matters they are presenting with. Legal services are also observing an increased number of women identified as respondents in DFV matters. The NT Legal Assistance Forum told the CAWG that their members are also encountering recruitment challenges, especially in senior roles.

The NT Council of Social Service advised members they meet with Minister Worden and DFV services representatives on a quarterly basis.

The Northern Territory Police, Fire and Emergency Services (NTPFES) have undertaken audits of police responses to DFV and noted an improved policing response. NTPFES are now finalising revisions to the Family Safety Framework Guidelines with the Department.

Next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for May 2021.