

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

The 14th meeting of the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV) Cross Agency Working Group (CAWG) was held in Darwin on Tuesday 1 March 2022.

Non-Government organisation 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 and systemic issues identified across the services sector. The following issues were discussed:

National Partnership funding to the Northern Territory Domestic and Family Violence Sector

Members discussed the additional funding to be provided to the Northern Territory (NT) under the National Partnership, announced by the Australian Government on Monday 28 February 2022 (Attachment A).

As the Australian jurisdiction with the highest rates of reported domestic and family violence (DFV) in the country, CAWG members were pleased the NT will receive a larger portion of this national funding, while disappointed the funding is one-off and will not be provided beyond 2023. As such, the funding cannot be used to address ongoing need to improve responses to and prevention of DFSV across the NT.

NT Council of Social Service (NTCOSS) is meeting with the Hon Kate Worden, MLA, Minister for Territory Families and Urban Housing, and with DFSV services, to discuss funding priorities for the DFSV sector under the National Partnership.

COVID-19 impacts

The CAWG discussed the issues faced by many DFV services who are experiencing an increased demand, often with limited capacity to respond due to workers having to isolate due to COVID or being a close contact, and lack of available crisis accommodation. This is especially the case in remote locations, meaning some clients are being turned away with no alternatives able to be offered.

Members requested more translations of COVID-19 messages in community languages. CAWG members will work with the Aboriginal Interpreter Service to ensure essential information is translated.

Presentations

The Aboriginal Justice Unit provided a presentation on the development and implementation of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement Action Plan 2021-22, and particularly the element of the plan that relates to DFSV.

The Aboriginal Justice Unit will provide further updates to the CAWG through the Department of the Attorney-General and Justice representative.

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



An overview of the current review and reset of the Multi-Agency Child and Community Safety (MACCS) Framework was provided. The CAWG raised issues about the interaction of the MACCS with the Family Safety Framework, and the MACCS responses to DFSV.

Changes to the CAWG terms of reference and governance structure as a result of the review may be required. Further information will be provided for the CAWG's consideration.

Update from the Chair on ODFSVR activities since the last meeting

Members were advised that registrations are now open for the free DFV risk assessment and management training in 2022. Government and non-government workers can register online at the NTCOSS training calendar: <https://ntcoss.org.au/dfsv-training-calendar-all/>

The next round of the [Safe, Respected and Free from Violence Prevention Grants](#) has opened, with applications extended for two weeks. The closing date is now 14 March. The grants have been reconfigured and now provide funding for up to three years, in recognition of the time it takes to achieve meaningful change in primary prevention activities. Funding is also available to evaluate projects. Interested parties should visit [Grants NT](#) to find out more.

The first payment of the National Partnership on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses has been received by the NT. It comprises \$1.195m and is to be allocated to flexible support packages for clients and funding for managing COVID-19.

A new *Community and place-based partnerships for DFSV prevention and response grant* has been established, with \$1m available over two years. The grants support partnerships between Aboriginal organisations and DFSV service providers to increase collaboration; develop community-led initiatives to respond to and reduce DFSV; build capability of Aboriginal community controlled organisations; and improve the capability of the DFSV workforce to deliver culturally appropriate services. Interested parties should visit [Grants NT](#) to find out more.

The Domestic and Family Violence Regulations have been amended to prescribe five new ISEs. ISEs can participate in the NT Information Sharing Scheme, which aims to remove barriers to enable services and organisations to work together to improve safety for victim survivors of DFV.

Non-government organisations providing a DFV related service can voluntarily apply to the Minister for Territory Families and Urban Housing to become an ISE and participate in the scheme. The next round of applications will close on 31 March 2022. Application forms, frequently asked questions, tools, templates and the Information Sharing Guidelines are available online at <https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/domestic,-family-and-sexual-violence-reduction/informationsharing>. An online training module is also available from this page.

Members agreed that *sexual violence that occurs outside the family* will be included as a standing agenda item at future CAWG meetings. This will ensure members share information and discuss relevant issues relating to this topic as a function of the CAWG.

Attachment A



Senator the Hon Anne Ruston

Minister for Families and Social Services

Minister for Women's Safety

Manager of Government Business in the Senate

MEDIA RELEASE

28 February 2022

\$10.7 million boost for domestic violence services in the NT

The Morrison Government will triple funding under the National Partnership on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence responses to boost frontline services in the Northern Territory in response to the chronic rates of violence and to work towards our *Closing the Gap* commitments.

Minister for Women's Safety Anne Ruston announced the Morrison Government was delivering an additional \$10.7 million on top of the funding being provided under the \$260 million National Partnership on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses.

"The rates of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children in the NT are devastating and must be urgently addressed," Minister Ruston said.

"Under the National Partnership Agreement we have already delivered a \$1.195 million to the Northern Territory Government to support frontline services and had been expected to make a further \$3.585 million in payments over the next 12 months totalling \$4.78 million based on the Territory's population size and remoteness.

"But we recognise that it is vital for funding to be directed to the areas of most need which is why we have made the decision to triple the amount of funding the Northern Territory Government will receive to a total of \$15.5 million.

The \$260 million National Partnership Agreement is the single biggest payment from the Commonwealth to states and territories for domestic and family violence responses and builds on the \$130 million National Partnership on COVID-19 Domestic and Family Violence Responses which was rolled out in 2020 which

supported 16 organisations to boost emergency accommodation and outreach services, specifically in remote communities.

“The additional funding will allow services across the Northern Territory to provide staff mentoring and training for frontline staff, early intervention programs for young people and tailored services for women in remote communities experiencing violence,” Minister Ruston said.

“We must also ensure that we are investing in programs that are developed and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because we must support community-led solutions if we want to see real and lasting change.”

For the first time an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan is being developed to sit alongside the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children and to deliver Closing the Gap Target 13 that by 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50 per cent as progress towards zero.

Sandra Creamer, the interim chair of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council which was developing the Action Plan, said an extra boost to frontline services in the Northern Territory was a major step forward in addressing domestic and family violence, especially in regional and remote areas where there are high service provision costs.

“The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council have worked together with Minister Ruston to identify the importance of the many issues our women are experiencing when escaping domestic and family violence,” she said.

“This funding will provide women with the support they need to create a safe supportive environment for themselves and their children.”

The Morrison Government is investing \$4.315 million to deliver new emergency accommodation that will support up to 200 women and children each year in the NT who are fleeing violence.

Salvation Army (Northern Territory) Property Trust General Manager Lorrinda Hamilton said the project in the Darwin area would be completed by October 2023.

“This funding has allowed us to rebuild and expand to two studio and eight two bedroom self-contained units, as well as three three-bedroom outreach houses including some accommodation with full disability access,” Ms Hamilton said.

These programs build on the Morrison Government’s commitment to end all forms of gender based violence which we backed with our record \$1.1 billion investment into women’s safety as a down payment on the next National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children.

If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or visit www.1800RESPECT.org.au

ENDS

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