

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

The 15th meeting of the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV) Cross Agency Working Group (CAWG) was held in Darwin on Thursday 12 May 2022.

Updates from the Chair

TFHC DFSV Grant Updates

Successful applicants from the Safe, Respected and Free from Violence Primary Prevention Grants and the Community Place-Based Partnership Grants will be announced in May and June. The Enhanced Specialist Services Grants have been extended by twelve months.

In February, Senator Ruston announced the Australian Government will triple funding to the Northern Territory under the National Partnership agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses to \$15.5m over two years (\$1.195m in payment one and \$4.768m each for payments two, three and four). Payment one is for domestic and family violence (DFV) specialist services to utilise for flexible support packages and COVID-19 responses and will be paid by the end of May, along with Infrastructure grants.

ODFSVR Staffing update

- Anna Davis has been permanently appointed to the Director position, and Sam Bowden has been permanently appointed to the Manager position.
- Caroline Morrissey, Senior Policy Officer has taken up a 12 month development opportunity with the Department of Business, and ODFSVR is looking at options to fill that role.
- Natalie McCabe, Barkly DFSV Regional Coordinator has taken a role with Anyinginyi Health, with funding for the Regional Coordinator position until 30 June 2022.
- ODFSVR welcomes new staff members Sonia Russell (Policy Officer) and Sarah Grace (Senior Policy Officer).

Our Watch Primary Prevention Officer

Lisa Dietrich has commenced as the NT Our Watch Primary Prevention Officer. This role is funded by TFHC for two years to build NT workforce capability in primary prevention both within government and with key stakeholders. The NT Primary Prevention Officer is employed by Our Watch but co-located with the ODFSVR in Darwin. Lisa will work closely with ODFSVR to support the primary prevention grant recipients and to establish a Primary Prevention Community of Practice. More information about Our Watch is available on their [website](#).

Update on NT Government budget response to DFSV

The NT Government DFSV budget increased to approximately \$54m in 2022-23, including \$10m additional funding over the next four years for:

- \$4 million to expand the Enhanced Specialist Services Grants program to continue delivery of wraparound services (such as counselling and outreach) for crisis accommodation services
- \$4 million to develop a new secondary prevention (early intervention) grants program
- \$2 million to expand Safe, Respected and Free from Violence Primary Prevention grants program

David Ah Toy (Executive Director, Reform Management Office) highlighted the recent Budget announcement also focussed on strengthening coordination of NT Government responses to DFSV, to be

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led by the establishment of the new DFSV Interagency Coordination and Reform Office (ICRO). The ICRO will sit in the Reform Management Office and report directly to the Children and Families Standing Committee, operating for one year.

The ICRO will second senior officers from TFHC, NT Police, Attorney General and Justice, Department of Education, and NT Health, to lead DFSV coordination across government.

Anna Davis will be the Director of ICRO, retaining the ODFSVR Director role to ensure this critical link is maintained, with ODFSVR continuing the reforms already underway

The CAWG will continue to fulfil its critical role as the key DFSV stakeholder group and a partner in the coordination of reforms. Representation of Aboriginal people and groups on the CAWG will also be examined by the ICRO.

The status of unfinished or ongoing Action Plan 1 actions will still need to be completed and reports provided by responsible agencies. The ICRO will build on the work already undertaken to develop AP2.

It was agreed that there would be a public release of the Action Plan 2 consultation report that describes the role of the ICRO, and presentations to DFSV networks could be arranged.

Housing and DFSV

Brent Warren (Deputy CEO, Housing, TFHC) briefed members on a range of housing reforms, including:

- Improvements to tenancy management processes to better support DFSV victim survivors.
- Improved priority housing decision making processes to better identify clients experiencing DFSV.
- An EOI process was underway to transition 250 dwellings in Darwin and Palmerston to Community Housing Providers, which includes a budget for service providers to make dwellings more suitable. There is also a remote stream, including in the Barkly.
- A review of homelessness services and funding is being conducted, including redesigning homelessness funding packages, with the \$40 million homelessness packages expiring 30 June 2023.

Update on *Domestic and Family Violence Act Review*

Penny Drysdale (Senior Policy Lawyer, Attorney General and Justice) reported on the draft report which would be considered by the Attorney-General for public release in mid-2022. The report examines legislative and non-legislative reforms and provides options for the government to make a decision about criminalising coercive control, including the systemic reforms recommended. The report is being written to align with the DFSV Framework and the RAMF, and will involve the ICRO as the implementation will require cross agency coordination.

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 the systemic issues identified across the services sector. The following issues were discussed:

- NTCOSS convene a pre and post CAWG NGO meeting to discuss the reporting process to the networks and formalise NGO responses.

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- A request was made for NT Police to provide Family Safety Framework statistics and DFSV statistics by region in 12-month comparisons as part of their CAWG update.
- RAMF training had been impacted by COVID, with some sessions at 50% capacity, however feedback had still been positive. It was noted attendance by NTG staff at RAMF training was particularly low and NTG CAWG members should encourage and promote RAMF training which could be found on the [NTCOSS website](#).
- CAWLS has been funded to deliver accredited training for health practitioners over the next 6 months.
- Members advised that pressures as a result of COVID-19 were easing, however demand on services was still high.
- Housing was still being reported as a major issue with service providers not having anywhere to refer clients. This creates a bottleneck.
- Concerns were raised with Police completing DFV risk assessments, consistent incident responses, misidentification and opacity of DFV general orders. Police referrals to services are also impacted by the lack of information provided. The large administrative demand on frontline police taking them away from attending incidents was also raised by NT Police.