

ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021



**North
Queensland
Domestic
Violence
Resource
Service**



Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we work and live, the Wulgurukaba of Gurambilbarra and Yunbenun, Bindal, Gugu Badhun and Nywaigi and Kalkadoon people and pay tribute to their cultures, their ancestors and their elders past, present and all future generations.

We also acknowledge the women and children who have lost their lives to domestic violence, and those who continue to live with this fear and most despicable torment every day here and now in Townsville and Mount Isa and the world over.



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A message from NQDVRs President

Another year of dealing with the pandemic, sudden lockdowns, restrictions etc, although we are fortunate here in Townsville to not have been so greatly affected. However, there are still impacts on the organisation's ability to continue to provide the much needed service for vulnerable women and children of Townsville, and I am pleased to say that the staff team of NQDVRs continued to display a strong commitment to supporting the many women and children experiencing domestic violence.

It has been a year of some changes within the staff team, with Mandy Thompson resigning in June after two years of leading the organisation through difficult times and challenges, not the least of which being the on going battle with funding bodies to improve and increase resources to enable the best service to be delivered for the community. Following Mandy's resignation, to enable her to move on to other interesting adventures, we were fortunate to employ Verity Bennett who brings to the organisation a wealth of experience, not only in the not for profit sector, but more recently many years in a senior position in the Townsville City Council.

The Mount Isa Office has continued to provide a very valuable service to the women and children of this region, responding to the large demand with one of the highest numbers of domestic violence around the state. Although every effort is made to include the staff team in all aspects of the organisation, with the Townsville office, it is difficult when geographically isolated, and I would like to acknowledge the great work of Val and the staff team.

A major focus for the organisation over the past year has been the search for more suitable office premises for the Townsville service and this will be a continuing focus over the next 12 months.

As mentioned above, the year has seen many meetings with the Department around increases to funding and improved resources to cope with the large increase in demand, seen particularly since the start of the pandemic. I wish to acknowledge the continued funding by the state government in particular the brokerage funds made available during the pandemic, and more recently further funding for 12 months, which will enable the service to meet the increased demand for service. In particular I would like to make mention of staff in the Regional Office, Zoe Semson and Kate Wimblett who have always demonstrated strong support for the organisation and advocated where possible around the continuing needs of the service.

Finally, the organisation would not be what it is with the strong reputation it has, without the hard work of the committed, compassionate staff across all programs, in both offices. I would like to acknowledge the ongoing work of all staff over the past 12 months, under Mandy's strong leadership, and now with Verity at the helm I am confident the organisation will go from strength to strength.

Crucial to this is a strong Management Committee, and I would like to acknowledge the time given by all the Management Committee, in particular Bob Hinds, who has been with the organisation since its inception in 1994. I have enjoyed working with Bob over the many years since CoCAITH set up the organisation and have valued his wisdom, clear thinking and sense of humour. Bob is not re-nominating this year and I would like to acknowledge his support for COCAITH and the NQ DV Service over the many years. Your contribution to the Committee and the Organisation has been greatly appreciated and we will miss you. I would also like to thank all the Committee members who have provided support to myself and Mandy and Verity and the staff team over the past 12 months.

I am pleased to say that all other members will be re-standing and continuing to support NQDVRs into 2022.

Lindy Edwards

NQDVRs PRESIDENT

A message from NQDVRS CEO

It was an incredible honour to take the up the role of CEO on 31 May 2021. Through years of dedication from staff, students and Management Committee Members, North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service (NQDVRS) has become and continues to be a well-established and respected service.

It has been such a privilege over these past few months to work alongside the staff team, students and the Management Committee members. I am very grateful for how welcomed and supported I have felt. When I stop and consider everyone I am now working with, I can honestly say I am surrounded by incredible leaders and advocates for women's rights and social justice.

Starting in the role provided me with the opportunity to listen, learn and understand where the organisation has been, where it is at now and what we might see as our future opportunities. It is without questions that the most outstanding constant I have found is the strong feminist philosophy which underpins and guides everything that we all do.

The dedication and resilience of the staff and the care and belief shown towards women and families in the face of increasing domestic and family violence and abuse continues to be outstanding. The past year has seen the number and severity of domestic violence and abuse climb. Townsville has the 3rd highest rates of domestic violence per capita, and the highest rate of Domestic Violence Orders contraventions, in Queensland. Abusive tactics have adapted and shifted, and the sector has felt the strain. Positively, the year has seen greater focus and emphasis placed upon recognising and highlighting the array of coercive controls in all its forms which are often overlooked and not acknowledged.

Over the past year the commitment to support victim survivors and their families, to collaborate with partners and to raise awareness of the critical issue across community has remained strong. I would like to thank all of our community partners and collaborators who worked with us. I also want to thank all of the generous donors who have worked so hard to provide funds and much needed items; your generosity truly helps people in times of crisis. Our appreciation also goes to our funders the Department of Justice and Attorney General for their ongoing support.

In the year to come we will be building on our values and strong feminist framework to advance our strategic direction and enhance our systems and processes. As we embark along this journey, we are committed to keeping our vision of creating a community that is free from domestic and family violence at the forefront of our purpose.

Verity Bennett

NQDVRS CEO



Who we are

North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service (NQDVRS) was established under the name of Coalition on Criminal Assault in the Home NQ Inc. (COCAITH) in 1994 and currently service areas of Townsville and Mount Isa.

We provide a variety of programs to support those who have suffered from the impacts of Domestic and Family Violence.

NQDVRS works collaboratively with a wide range of local and state services to provide effective and integrated support, in particular we work closely with The Women's Centre, Sera's Women's Shelter, and Flora House.

Our aim is to conduct a service in the North Queensland region which provides direct crisis support services, community education, training for service providers and co-ordination of domestic and family violence responses, that actively promotes and enhances the safety of those involved in domestic and family violence and abuse.

Our staff are highly trained and experienced practitioner advocates who are multi-disciplined in their approach. Staff lead on different programs but also provide back up support for each program to ensure shared knowledge and a holistic approach to anyone we work with.

Our approach

NQDVRS has a gender analysis of domestic and family violence that understands the cause to be a result of systematic power imbalances and inequalities. Therefore, as an organisation we operate from a strong feminist framework.

We acknowledge the intersectionality of the many barriers that exist for women and their families as they seek safety and support, and that women from diverse backgrounds can face particular and unique barriers.

In the work we do we believe in the right of justice, equality and fairness for all. We regard women as the experts over their own life and we see our work as a partnership that is respectful, transparent and accountable.

Our values are strongly held and shared with everyone we spend time with, whether this is our clients, colleagues or our many partner organisation.

Collaboration and integration are central to the work we do. This occurs every day as part of service delivery locally. NQDVRS are also active members of longstanding Queensland networks such as Queensland Domestic Violence Services Network (QDVSN) and Services and Practitioners for the Elimination of Abuse Queensland (SPEAQ).

On behalf of the Management Committee and the staff at NQDVRS we sincerely acknowledge the women and children that came to our service for support. For sharing your stories and for trusting our service. We will do our utmost to be here for you to help advocate and be a trust worthy support.

Value Statements

NQDVRS Values

- The view of women is privileged at NQDVRS
- We value professional practice within a feminist framework
 - We value innovation in all our work
- We value and are committed to human rights and social justice
- We value partnerships that meet the needs of our clients
 - We value and practice respect in all our dealings
- We value compassion and empathy as core to all our work
- We value the place and contribution of First Nations Australians.

NQDVRS Mission

To support women and children through the provision of a holistic response to people affected by domestic and family violence.

NQDVRS Vision

Create a community that is free from Domestic and Family Violence



Working towards our strategic goals

Place

Develop service offerings that are welcoming, safe, accessible and appropriate for the needs of our clients and staff.

Work has continued to embed the new Client Record Management system to support service deliver. The facility has undergone a number of changes to maximise on access and safety. The search for a new premises has continued throughout the year.

Partnerships

Focus on community and other stakeholder engagement that is effective and has positive impact on our Mission and Vision

Focus has been maintained on collaboration with community partners to innovate and improve integrated service delivery. DVIRG has met weekly and Dovetail monthly with many other collaborations throughout the year.

People

Attract and retain staff to drive our Mission, Vision and Values

The year has seen new staff and students who have brought fresh energy and perspectives to the service. Whilst welcoming new people others have moved on which always brings with in the challenges of sustainability against growing service demands.

Financial Sustainability

Develop strategies that increase and diversify income streams

Campaigning and advocating for greater funding occurred throughout the year recognising the growing need and severity of domestic violence and abuse. The financial support provide by many other organisations and community members has played a significant role in helping those in need.

Our service in numbers

Over the past financial year our organisation has consisted of 32 different staff members, 8 students and 8 Management Committee members.



4340 clients received individual support last financial year



2930 clients supported through adult counselling



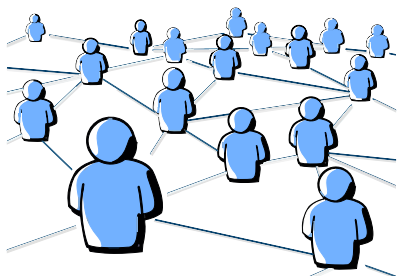
293 participants in the AARDVARC Program



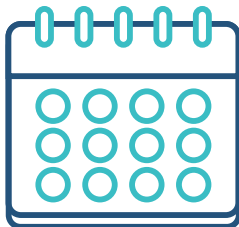
833 participants in the Men's Program



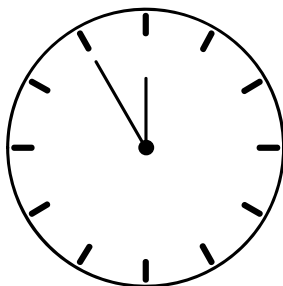
11 Dovetail meetings convened



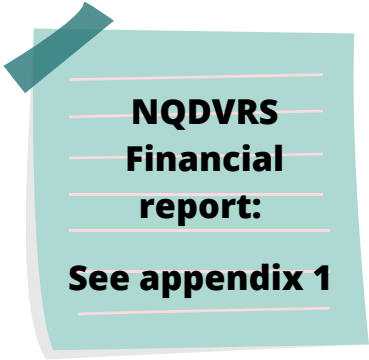
51 DVIRG meetings convened



32,330 hours of appointments (in person & phone)



34,863 hours of service delivered



**NQDVRS
Financial
report:**

See appendix 1

NQDVRS Programs

Crisis Support - Townsville

NQDVRS continues to be busy ensuring crisis needs are able to be met as a priority by assisting clients seeking refuge, safety planning, supporting Domestic Violence Order applications in addition to applications to vary orders, writing support letters, providing information and making referrals to other services.

In Townsville, many clients fleeing domestic violence are finding themselves at risk of being homeless. Finding accommodation is challenging due to the high demand for Townsville rental properties and women's lack of financial resources to secure them. Finding crisis accommodation is problematic as the women's shelters are often full and cannot meet client demand. The scarcity of funding for short-term hotel accommodation and shelter unavailability result in women returning to unsafe housing after a few nights. New housing packages from the Department of Housing rent connect office have successfully addressed some of these needs in recent months.

In addition, there are many women seeking assistance in navigating the gap between the family law system and the domestic and family violence act. Currently, perpetrator abuse can continue after separation using coercive control by defying family court orders. Many women cannot financially challenge the behaviour when they are on low incomes and have a greater percentage of child care.

The interagency collaboration with other service providers in Townsville has successfully assisted women and their children with ongoing referrals and responses. The information sharing with consent from clients enables a fast follow-up to information seeking, particularly around police and court outcomes which can be difficult for women to access.

Client testimonial:

"During my phone appointment with the NQDVRS, I felt safe. She understood if I had to go (if he showed up). She never downplayed or questioned any of my statements. She showed me care and respect, something I desperately needed during this difficult time. She let me talk. She listened. She let me cry. She reassured me. She gave me time. She gave me advice. It was then that I realised that this was the bottom and things could only get better. But I had help. I didn't have to navigate it on my own. New country, new laws? I had help."

The NQDVRS needs everyone to realise how important their services are, and how more services are needed. Bit by bit, this will enable women to find their inner strength. To become independent and free from abuse, and to raise their children in healthy environments".

Esme, Lorraine, Jackie, Erin, Heidi, Rechelle, Lexie & Bree



16 Days of Activism



16 Days of Activism

Court Support - Townsville

NQDVRs provide a Court Support program for the aggrieved or respondent experiencing domestic and family violence, and have their matters going through the Specialist Domestic and Family Violence Court. Domestic violence civil call over days occur on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. Court Support workers attend court and will work closely with stakeholders including NQWLS, Court Staff, Respondent Duty Lawyers, and Police Prosecutions.

2021 saw some changes with staff in the program. In addition to these changes, COVID-19 has brought about other changes in relation to the daily operation of the civil call over. These include:

- Clients have the ability to appear via phone for their court appearance.
- The Court list has now been separated into staggered start times.
- The Court now has capacity limits in relation to the number of people inside the court foyer at any time.

These changes have brought both challenges and benefits. The capacity limits that were introduced have meant that once capacity is reached, people must wait outside. This presents challenges in relation to the aggrieved being denied entry to the building and potentially having to wait in the same area as the respondent. This has meant extra vigilance and awareness when capacity is reached in order to liaise with security to ensure women's safety whilst at court. The benefit of the COVID-19 changes has been the introduction of the staggered start times. This works well for women as it means they do not have to wait at court all day for their matter to be heard. Prior to this change, everyone was told to arrive at 9am and there was no structure to when the matter may be heard in court.

In addition, we are experiencing further challenges in relation to inconsistencies in outcomes for women. This highlights the importance of the court support role in providing emotional and practical support to women who are navigating this tricky system.

Service has been provided individualised support to male respondents and male aggrieved persons who present to the Townsville Specialist Domestic Violence Court. Notwithstanding the gendered nature of violence in the home, the majority of clients with whom the male court support worker continues to meet is male.

The purpose of the work with respondents is to inform them of the options of response to the Magistrate, and, secondarily, to outline the benefits of the Service's men's behaviour change program with a view to securing their enrolment in it. The engagement is intentionally strategic to elicit as much information in a casual manner as possible; the objective being for the men to hear consistencies and inconsistencies in what they are reporting so that cognitive distortions may be identified and, ultimately, a realisation of the role they have played in their misuse of power and the reason for their summons to court.

A challenge of doing this type of work is being ready to meet the men where they are at – literally; often standing when the court waiting area looks and sounds as busy as a train station. The rewards by far outweigh this challenge, which are the opportunity to speak hope into the lives of men to see themselves, life, and the other person in the matter differently (a paraphrase of Greer's sentiments that "all that is could be otherwise") and, as commented on at the start of this brief report, to be the change agent having encouraged them to enrol in the men's behaviour change program.

Client testimonial:

"I cannot speak highly enough of the encouragement I received at court, nor can I of the men's program"



During Domestic and Family Violence Prevention month, NQDVRs played a large role in organising an open day for the Specialist DFV Court.

The purpose of this was to allow service providers, who do not usually attend court, to have an opportunity to learn about what a day at court might be like for their client.

In turn, this would allow them to have better informed discussions with their clients.

This event was extremely successful and received great feedback.



Domestic & Family Violence Prevention Month event

Rechelle, Lexie & Shannon

Choosing Safety - Townsville

The purpose of the Choosing Safety program is to assist women and children to feel safer to remain in their homes after experiencing domestic and family violence. This is done by offering practical support, safety planning, liaising with relevant housing providers such as Department of Housing and Real Estates.

Examples of safety upgrades include:

· Lock changes · sensor lights · security screens · securing entry/exit points · providing personal alarms and motion sensor alarms · securing power boxes · security cameras.

Referrals have been received internally within NQDVRS and from DVIRG; Centacare; Sera's; Qld Police; Save the Children; Act for Kids; Child Safety; Relationships Australia; Yumba Meta; The Women's Centre; ICAN; TAIHS, FACC and NQWLS.

A thorough consideration is given to the clients risk and needs assessment and current situation to determine the best supports in relation to security upgrades at her property. Following this, work takes place with housing providers, tradespeople, relevant service providers to increase the security to help the woman to remain at home.

Choosing Safety experience:

The program has helped women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) working closely with TMSG. For women who have experienced significant domestic violence who have only recently come to this country and from very different cultural backgrounds, their challenges are extreme and complex. Working with partner organisations and using a telephone interpreter we are able to speak with woman about their safety and where possible have been able to assist with home safety upgrades such as lock change and installation of cameras at her property. Other assistance can include arranging for a new phone through using the Telstra Wesnet program. There are very limited options for woman in terms of relocating or moving house due to income and the difficulty with finding private rental accommodation in Townsville.

We liaise with women's support workers and other organisations such as landlords to implement upgrades and provide woman with support as required. These situations show how positive it can be to work collaboratively with other services to assist women and children who have complex needs to remain safely in their homes following domestic and family violence.

Client testimonials:

"Thank you so much. The cameras have been brilliant in giving me peace of mind. I really appreciate the service you and your organisation have given me, it means so much."

"The cameras and dash cam are being put to great use, I am so thankful for them!"



Heidi & Erin

Aardvarc - Townsville

AARDVARC - Acknowledgement And Recognition of Domestic Violence And Real Change

The AARDVARC program offers acknowledgement of children's experience of domestic violence and an opportunity to talk and makes sense of their experience within a safe and supportive environment. AARDVARC involves a shared commitment between children, their parent/caregiver and workers, and offers individual appointments and groups.

The program has had a busy year supporting mums/caregivers and children. Our organisation acknowledges the privilege to work with our AARDVARC families, and to be a part of their healing journey. The year has presented a number of challenges with a number of different staff working in the program due to changing roles within the organisation. Despite these challenges, a supportive and safe environment for women and children to access the program has been maintained.

Client testimonials:

Feedback from mums

- Thank you so much for your help, guidance and support over this past year, it has been invaluable
- The program helped support my children and I during our recovery from domestic violence
- I really enjoyed seeing how much my children enjoyed the play based therapy, they were always excited for each session and what we gained from these sessions also helped my own relationship with my children
- Workers were kind, helpful and supportive
- The program has helped my emotional regulation, confidence and self-esteem. It has helped me process trauma in a healthy way and feel empowered to move forward in my life
- I noticed a big change in how my children were behaving and how they were able to express their emotions after finishing the program. I could tell they were feeling safe and supported
- I feel my son has gotten a lot better after the support he got from Bec at AARDVARC. AARDVARC got us through the most stressful period of our lives

Feedback from children/young people

- I learned about dealing with stress and anxiety and feeling safer
- Was there anything you didn't like about the program? – When my little brother came along
- My favourite thing about the program- spending time with Bec and my mum
- I learned- if you had a problem it is always good to talk about it or it is not going to be fixed
- It was good to talk about- problems at school or things that upset me

Bec, Lexie & Bree



Counselling & Women's Advocate - Townsville

Women's Counselling

NQDVRS provides therapeutic counselling to support survivors to achieve improved quality of life. This takes place both at the service but also at the Townsville Women's Correctional Centre.

Demand for counselling services remain high which proves difficult to keep up with an ever-increasing waitlist. Referrals come from many organisations and from those who have accessed other NQDVRS programs. Some of the women have been named as the victims of the abusive behaviour and some of the women have been named as the perpetrator of the abusive behaviour. Those women named as the perpetrator are assisted under the Safe Women program. When working with these women in the Safe Women program it usually doesn't take the counsellor very long to identify that the woman has been subjected to many years, sometimes decades, of coercively controlling and abusive behaviour by the real perpetrator. An incident may have resulted in which she has reacted to the power and control that this real perpetrator is yet again exercising against her, and she reacts, he calls the police and she is taken away and mis-identified as the perpetrator of DV. Many of these victims are at the Townsville prison and come from all over the north of Queensland, many from rural and remote Queensland.

The ongoing challenge is around the need for judicial system that will protect women and keep them safe. One with better oversights and tighter controls on all legislation; together with culturally appropriate, regular, and ongoing training about the nuances and complexities involved with domestic and sexual abuse for all parts of the criminal justice system.

Women's Advocate

NQDVRS provides a women's advocacy role to the men's behavioural change program. Therefore, any partner who has been affected by the domestic violence perpetrated by a man participating in the behavioural change program will be contacted by a NQDVRS women's advocate. This means partner or ex-partner will get a call to offer them support and give them someone to talk to. It's up to that person how much they want to engage with that contact.

The women's advocate works closely with the men's behavioural change facilitators to support the ongoing safety of women.

Heather, Betty, Lexie & Rechelle



Red Rose Rally - March 2021

Men's Program - Townsville

The men's behaviour change program consists of several components all geared towards men changing their behaviour. The purpose is to move men away from violence and towards becoming a safer person, partner, and parent.

The program's various facets include the Getting MenTER Ready pre-course engagement component, the core MenTER (Men Towards Equal Relationships) behaviour change program, and the post-MenTER called MenTAIN (Men Taking Action and Investing in Non-violence) component.

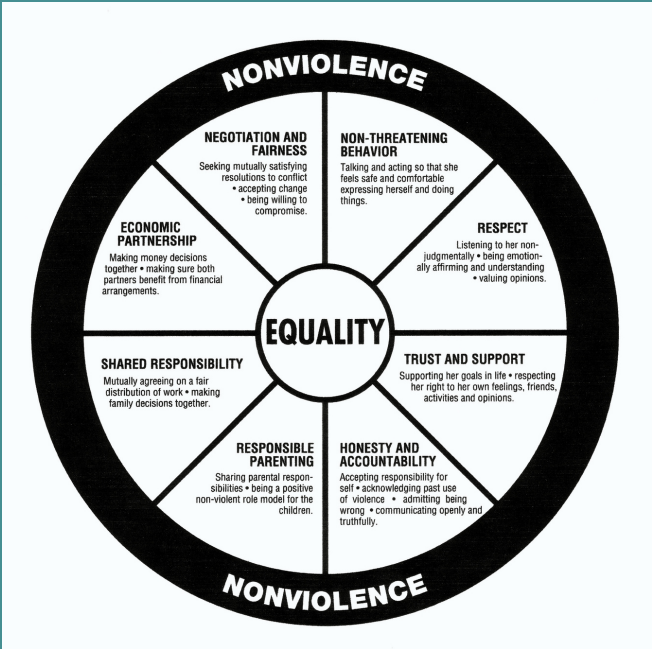
One positive aspect of the program in the 2020-2021 period is that our enrollments have increased given that one of the male facilitators is now also a respondent men's court support worker and is able to speak to men about the benefits of the program early in the domestic violence court process.

With respect to the challenges over the last year, one in particular is the rise in referrals from Community Corrections for men whose level of violence is significant. Discussions are occurring on the issue and contingency plans are being implemented for how to work with these men and in what setting.

MenTER experience:

The men's program is certainly challenging work however it has its own intrinsic rewards in the form of men who make real changes to their lives.

We have experienced men who have gone to great lengths to remain engaged. This has included men who have traveled some distance to attend group twice a week. A part of the wider program is the MenTAIN component where men who have completed MenTER remain engaged to work on prolonged behavior change. This number of men engaging for longer has continued to see positive increases in attendees and evidence of real change.



Chris, Richard & Shannon

Integrated Response - Townsville

DVIRG



The purpose of DVIRG (Domestic Violence Integrated Response Group) is to provide a local integrated service response where there is a 'serious threat to the life, health or safety of a person because of domestic violence' and to maximise their safety, protection and wellbeing.

Over the year, DVIRG maintained a dedicated and integrated approach responding to domestic and family violence. The DVIRG group consists of multidisciplinary agencies – NQDVRS, Queensland Police Service, Community Corrections, Department of Housing, Department of Education, Yumba Meta, Sera's and Queensland Health. Each member of the group brings their own strengths and resources to provide an integrated response to domestic and family violence.

The group members have a shared passion and commitment to responding effectively to domestic and family violence and has a strong working relationship.

During the year, it was identified by Community Corrections that they were able to offer a worker to be the DVIRG secretariat, taking on this role from NQDVRS which has been greatly appreciated.

DVIRG's pro-active responses achieved numerous positive outcomes that assisted victims with their safety, whilst also holding perpetrators of domestic violence accountable for their violence.

For instance, when assessed as safe or appropriate, there were occasions where Community Corrections obtained information from NQDVRS, and as a result were able to issue a Return to Prison Warrant to prevent the victim from being further harassed, abused or coerced by their perpetrator. Additionally, Department of Housing were also able to assist women by facilitating urgent housing transfer applications, allowing women and children to obtain safer and more appropriate accommodation.

Dovetail

DOVETAIL continues to expand its membership and regular members attend the monthly meetings. After months of virtual meetings due to COVID-19, face to face meetings resumed in June of this year.

DOVETAIL members continue to work towards a consistent and pro-active approach to intervention irrespective of which agency is the first point of contact with the aim of improving systems and services to benefit victims of domestic and family violence.

The monthly meetings provide an opportunity to discuss current topical issues and to share and disseminate information. Meetings often have guest speakers present which increases awareness and provides valuable information to assist each organisation as they support victim survivors.

The AGM is a good time to thank members for their participation and encourage their continued valuable support which contributes to positive outcomes for victims of domestic and family violence.



Community Education

An essential role of NQDVRS is to provide community education, training and awareness on domestic violence and abuse. Programs over the year have included Love Bites and Heatley High Healthy Relationships program.

No more to Domestic and Family Violence

Many community leaders and organisations joined together in Townsville to sign a pledge as part of the 16 Days of Activism to say no to Domestic Violence

Red Rose Rallies

Over the last year NQDVRS has joined together with other DV services and community to remember women and children who have been murdered as a result of domestic violence here in Queensland.

Candlelight Ceremony

Annual ceremony took place on 5 May held at the Women's Centre on remembrance of the women and children who have died in an act of domestic violence.

Crisis Support - Mount Isa

There continues to be a high demand for crisis support in Mt Isa. The risks and needs of all women who come to the service are carefully worked through and safety planning undertaken to ensure the best support is provided to assist with their safety needs. Much of the safety planning we do result in focus on preventing homelessness through our homelessness program or safety in the home through our safe at home program.

Many women come in wanting to leave a relationship or remove themselves from an unsafe family environment and don't know where to start. This year a number of domestic violence protection orders have been completed including variations to remove or add conditions as well as affidavits for women taking their domestic violence orders to trial. Many women also attend the service to have a yarn about what is going on for them.

Crisis support experience:

Women often present having been exposed to physical violence, intimidation and jealousy after experiencing recent domestic violence. Women arrive stressed and unsure what to do and where to start. Workers start by completing a risk and needs assessment, and safety planning, signing women up for the homelessness program and completing domestic violence protection orders. Women will often stay engaged and return to the service for ongoing support and to be able to visit a safe place for a yarn.

Val, Nakita & Catilyn



Mount Isa staff

Court Support - Mount Isa

Looking at the positives for 2020 -2021 financial year for the Mount Isa court support program are the number of women supported prior to their court mention. The women know they are not alone and that the service is there for them. Often women look over and see the Court Support worker and this helps to overcome their fear of meeting the respondent face to face.

There were a few challenges over this reporting period one such challenge has been the Covid-19 restrictions. For court this meant distancing between people in the court waiting area, which reduced the seating capacity, so people had to wait outside which made finding people for their court mention difficult. Seating in court was also reduced so at times not enough room for Court Support worker to attend and support clients. Also, there has been a reduction in aggrieved attending courts and some police advising the aggrieved they don't have to attend, or some women were able to phone in for their mentions. This has made it hard to support more aggrieved women in court over the past twelve months, and to this date the number of women attending court is quite low.

By attending the criminal DV court sittings, the large number of breaches by respondents is clearly evident. Many men are breaching their DV order over the five years the order is in place, with some men being incarcerated many times for breaching and abusing their partners and children.

The challenge is to find a way to reduce the breaches and keep the women and children safe, the men's behavioural change program can help with making the men more accountable, but this is just one program, the justice system needs to look at making changes.

Court Support experience:

Quite a few women need support after court to help them understand their DV order and make sure they are safe by reviewing their safety plan. This can be especially important for anyone who is living with a disability and may find it harder to understand what the magistrate said which can be very upsetting. Time is taken to carefully read through the order with the woman to help her understand each condition of the order pertaining to her and her ex-partner. Advise around safety and calling the Police is always provided should the respondent make contact.

This knowledge helps women feel safe and able to live by themselves.

Val & Matt



Red Bench - Change the Ending

Safe at Home - Mount Isa

Safe at Home has been a great program to facilitate over the past year. We have seen and heard firsthand many success stories of women who have benefited greatly from the program.

Women have improved not only their physical safety, but also their mental wellbeing and the safety upgrades have provided reassurance.

There have been some confusions where referrals being made to NQDVRS, were on the basis of safety or fearfulness from general crime occurring such as break ins. Some victims of domestic and family violence are not fearful of their partner as they are incarcerated but wanted safety upgrades because children were breaking into their home. This experience paved the way for improved processes within the program working on a risk needs basis. Additionally, many women were seeking security cameras, however, there is a greater cost for the purchase and installation of these devices in Mount Isa which proves to be prohibitive. Despite this demand, sensor lights, new locks, security doors and window screens and alarms throughout the homes of the women have been successfully installed to maintain safety.

Safe At Home experience:

We have seen many high-risk clients who are so fearful of their ex-partners that they refuse to leave their house due to constant worry that they are following them. When we engage with these clients, they generally have experienced physical, mental, manipulation, intimidation and financial abuse and don't know where to begin after fleeing for their safety. We also often see children who are exposed who are the sole reason for woman wanting safety upgrades to their homes. The current safety upgrades we have completed include lock changes and installation, security cameras, security screens on windows and doors, sensor lights and personal alarms.

Nakita & Catilyn



2021 DFV Prevention Month - Mt Isa Walk in her Shoes display

Homelessness - Mount Isa

This year there have been many challenges encountered with the homelessness program predominantly due to limited housing availability. This is a global problem where there are so little houses but a large number of women and children who need a home. Whilst there have been challenges, clients seeking accommodation are still supported and staff remain positive and hopeful in the best way they can. The program requires close collaboration with the Department of Housing, Real Estate Agencies and Shelters in not only Mount Isa, but most regions across Queensland.

Unfortunately, success stories are limited and often receive disengagement from clients as a result. Despite this, many clients maintain continuous contact with the service.

Homelessness support experience:

One client is a woman in her 50s who has experienced domestic and family violence for many years. It had forced her into living with her daughter in Townsville and being away from her two youngest children. During the first consultation with the client, it was recognised that the end goal was for her to be reunited with her two youngest daughters in Mount Isa. The housing process is difficult and very time consuming with a lot of integrated service delivery with the Department of Housing. To begin, this client required multiple upgrades to the home to support her and her youngest daughter's disabilities. Application for Housing were completed with the client, support letter provided and contact with the Department of Housing was maintained once a week for three months. Acting as the main communication point between the Department of Housing and the client ensuring medical forms and DVO's were provided to the Department of Housing in order to support her application. After a long wait of three months, the client's housing application was approved, and she was placed on a housing waitlist. The client also became employed on a part-time basis and is experiencing less stress and anxiety. A house has not become unavailable as of yet, however, consistent contact is being maintained with this client.

Nakita & Catilyn



2021 Candlelight ceremony

Keeping Strong Women Safe - Mount Isa

A yarn on empowering women to make positive change

This year has seen fundamental progress made to the Keeping Strong Women Safe Program. The program moved from four sessions to six weeks with a focus on empowering and educating women on domestic and family violence.

A strong need for education in the community has been identified due to a lack of understanding surrounding court and general domestic and family violence. Many women participating in the program do not realise they have been exposed to the coercive and manipulative tactics by their partner or family.

The sessions have evolved to ensure they understand domestic and family violence while also giving the women ample opportunity to tell their story. The aim is to help the women speak out against the violence and strive to bring back empowerment that they may have been stripped of within their relationship.

Program experience:

One achievement this year is continuing the Muri Women's Group through the North West Indigenous Catholic Social Services. The program is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are on bail or probation and parole. Sessions are conducted by Aunty Dolly and Aunty Valerie and one elder and workers from NQDVRs. One really important message learnt from Aunty Dolly is "We are strong women; domestic violence is everyone's business; if you see a woman in need of help you help them as long as it is safe for you to do so".

We repeat these in a group circle with the women and we have seen a great improvement in the women's attitudes. The women might have to go due to court, but many women continue to return to the program after court because it enables reunification and empowerment, key values in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Nakita & Catilyn



NAIDOC WEEK 2021

Men's Behaviour Change - Mount Isa

The men's program has been a challenge to facilitate and initiate this past year. For the majority of the year, the program has not been running due to staffing challenges.

It is difficult to finding appropriate facilitators for the program. Father Mick from North West Queensland Indigenous Catholic Social Services (NWQICSS) showed strong interest in the program and decided to facilitate it alongside Aunty Dolly. The program was sub contracted to NWQICSS and facilitated over April, May and June with 6 clients partaking in one group session.

It has been a struggle to keep men engaged until the program can commence again which we are working towards in this current financial year.

Matt



Integrated Response - Mount Isa

NQDVRS in Mt Isa is proud of its advocacy and relationships with so many local people. We value the contribution that different organisations make to keeping women and children safe and enjoy close working relationships across many community networks to enhance collaboration and partnership to reduce gender-based violence in our communities.

The groups NQDVRS join in with:

- Domestic Violence Action Group Mount Isa
- Domestic Violence Action Group Cloncurry
- Mount Isa Specialist DFV Court OWG Meeting
- Murri Womens (Counselling group through NWQICSS)

Services NQDVRS are aligned with:

- NWQICSS
- Jimaylya Topsy Harry Centre
- Centacare
- QIFVLS
- Nawamba House
- Ngukuthati
- Ngurri Ngurri
- Save the Children
- Young People Ahead

NAIDOC

Staff attended NAIDOC in the park with a stall and information which attracted many conversations

16 days of Activism

Theme in 2020 was "Free to be Every Me", an event was held at the Buffs club with a luncheon and Guest speakers who spoke about the highs and lows of their careers the speakers included special unit Police officer, Manager of Ab health, and women in Management across services in Mount Isa who have overcome abuse and health issues to go onto study and achieve their goals. The event was attended by around 60 people who gave feedback to say they had been inspired by the women.

DFV Prevention Month

During the month there was a display of shoes, signs, and messages out front of the service. This display of shoes depicted the number of Women and children killed by partners, fathers, and Husbands over the last year. An open day event took place with Mob FM radio station attending with live to air music and advertising for our service. A Red Bench gifted by Queensland Police was launched. The Red bench is founded by Red Rose foundation and is a permanent visible reminder that DV occurs within our community.

Val, Nakita & Catilyn



Kate's Campaign for Change



Lisa Holmes



Teresa Hope - Body Shop



Share the Dignity

Heidi Turner - Crystal Clear Promotions

Eleni Millios

Rize Up



The Rock Christian Church

Moksha Hair & Beauty

The Mother's Union

Althea Projects

TAFE Townsville



Townsville City Council



Calvary Christian Church

iSee Church



Woolworths Townsville

Symbion Townsville

Massage Me NQ



Bell & Moir Toyota, Mt Isa

Holy Spirit Catholic School



Mount Isa Rodeo Committee

Northreach Baptist Church - Women's Ministry

Mineral Assessment Hub - Dep't of Resources Staff



Zonta Townsville

Kangatraining

St James Retirement Village

Jamaica Blue, Stockland

Little Peg

Sigma Pharmaceuticals

Townsville Toy Library

Rebel Sports, Stockland

Heatley State Primary School



Fizz Rush



Mal's Pies & Pastries



The amazing people who attended and donated to NQDVRs Give Now following the Fabulous Women's Charitable Luncheon

Thank you to the wonderful individuals, business and organisation who have provided personal hygiene and care products and monetary donations throughout the year

Thank you!

Our Staff, Students and Management Committee

2020-2021

Staff

Carolyn Adams
Kady Agius
Verity Bennett
Bree Blakeman
Heather Bond
Chris Brabrook
John Brown
Valerie Brown
Natasha Burns
Lexie Campbell
Shannon Chadwick
Bri Cooper
Nakita Daley
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Lorraine Milne-Smith
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Esme Podobnik
Gerry Polovich
Erin Poole
Karen Rowan
Catilyn Saunders
Mandy Thompson
Jackie Watson

Students

Tanya Andersen
Bree Blakeman
Abel Fisure
Aleesha Jose
Alan Nyhuis
Amy Peacock
Cathee Warren
Chathuri Weerasekara



Management Committee

President - Lindy Edwards
Secretary - Ines Zuchowski
Treasurer - Bob Hinds
Member - Meg Davis
Member - Suzy Dormer
Member - Nonie Harris
Member - Therese Smith
Member - Alexandra Whitney



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[facebook.com/north-queensland-domestic-violence-resource-service](https://www.facebook.com/north-queensland-domestic-violence-resource-service)

Website: www.nqdvrs.org.au

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Appendix 1