

Women's Health Queensland

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Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce

Via submission portal: <https://www.womenstaskforce.qld.gov.au/consultation/make-a-submission>

Women's Health Queensland general submission and in relation to Discussion Paper 1.

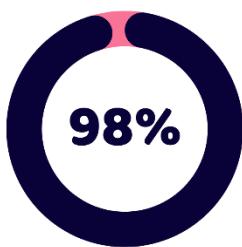
Dear Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce,

Women's Health Queensland (WHQ) would like to thank the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce (the Taskforce) for the work that is being done to ensure the future safety of women and children in Queensland. WHQ offers free gendered violence recovery services to women in Brisbane and has been operating in Queensland supporting women for almost forty years. We have developed the following recommendations considering our extensive experience with victim-survivors of gendered violence. Included below is a short summary of WHQ statistical data on gendered violence and three key points for the Taskforce to consider. WHQ recommends the introduction of state-wide primary prevention initiatives; an increase in government funded education programs for professionals in the policing and judicial system; and highlights concerns of increasing incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Thank you for taking this submission into consideration when the Taskforce advises the Attorney General.

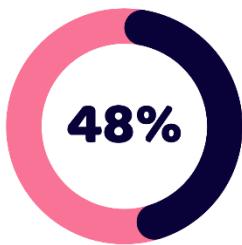
1.0 Relevant WHQ Data.

In 2020 WHQ conducted the following surveys. The *Gendered Violence Recovery* survey received 102 responses and was shared with the public via WHQ social media platforms, quarterly newsletter, and sector network via email in 2020. Gendered violence includes sexual violence, domestic and family violence, coercive control. The *Media and Violence Prevention* survey received 16 responses, as it was shared via email with registered participants of our '*Online Media Forum: Reporting Domestic and Family Violence – How Far Have We Come in Queensland?*' in 2020. This included professionals from mainstream media in Queensland. The most relevant data for the Taskforce has been included.

Gendered Violence Recovery



98% of women who answered the survey had some experience of gendered violence.



48% of women who experienced this violence did not report or seek help.

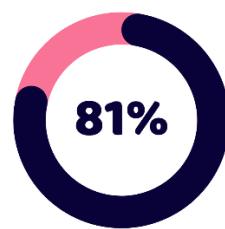
Those who did not report/ seek help were asked to select all the relevant reasons:

- 49% felt too ashamed
- 34% did not want to talk about what happened
- 26% felt too traumatized
- 23% felt unsafe

The Media and Violence Prevention



50% of respondents were not confident to report incidents of DFV.



81% of respondents were unable to correctly identify the cause of DFV.

When women with experiences of gendered violence were asked what help or support would have been beneficial; holistic, accessible, trauma-informed, and non-judgmental were key words that appeared throughout the responses.

"... importance of acceptance and non-judgemental support."

"Trauma-informed police would aid hugely in recovery ..."

"... non-judgemental information about my rights ..."

2.0 State-wide primary prevention initiatives and funding are needed to stop violence before it occurs.

Whilst primary prevention work falls outside of this Taskforce's scope, we advise that this be considered in any report to the Attorney General. Women and children will continue to be subjected to violence and any new or amended legislation will simply act as a band aid if the gendered drivers of violence are not addressed. The National Community Attitudes towards violence against women ([NCAS 2017](#)) found some concerning trends. That is, community knowledge and attitudes to violence against women (VAW) do not align with evidence; young people's knowledge of VAW is

declining; and attitudes towards sexual consent are concerning. Two in five Australians believe that women make up false reports of sexual assault in order to punish men.¹ Whilst legislation amendments may keep women and children safe in the short term, it is not the only solution that should be considered. Legislation amendments also present a large cost to the economy when considering increasing incarceration rates, the burden on the court system and policing requirements. Evidence based primary prevention initiatives that target the whole of a community including schools, childcare, health systems, sporting clubs, community centres, media, families and workplaces dismantle the gendered drivers and can prevent the violence before it occurs. This would substantially reduce the cost of violence on our communities and economy. Currently, Queensland does not have a funded, state-wide approach to the primary prevention of men's violence. There is an opportunity for the Government to create a significant impact in the prevention of violence. This has been evidenced by the positive results from [programs introduced](#) in Victoria.

Baby Makes 3 evaluations post program demonstrated positive changes in attitudes towards gender equality as an important part of healthy relationships and parenting.² The program has been evaluated as both effective in achieving target results and in cost.³ *Respectful Relationships Education in Schools* has been developed by [Our Watch](#) and uses a whole of school approach to address the gendered drivers of violence and promote equality. This program was introduced in Victorian and more recently Queensland schools. Over the course of the delivery in Victoria 64% of teachers saw an improvement in student relationships and behaviour.⁴ The same program was piloted in Queensland schools focusing on year 1 and 2 students. This demonstrated numerous positive results including students' gendered attitudes tending to be less stereotypical. [Our Watch](#) have developed numerous frameworks for programs to be delivered state-wide with government funding and support by community-based organisations that would produce positive long-term outcomes and prevent gendered violence from occurring.

3.0 With or without the introduction of new or amended legislation it is imperative that the government funds education initiatives/programs for first responders, police departments and the judicial system.

One of the main concerns raised across the sector is the lack of training for our policing and judicial system. It is evident that there are many barriers for women and children when reporting violence. WHQ surveyed women with experiences of gendered violence which showed that 48% did not

¹Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, Are we there yet? Australians' Attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality', *Summary Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)* (Report, 2017) 12 <https://20ian81kynqg38bl3l3eh8bf-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/300419_NCAS_Summary_Report.pdf>

² David Flynn, *Baby Makes 3: Project Report* (Report, 2011) 28 – 33 <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/PVAW/Sharing%20the%20evidence_Baby%20Makes%203%20Project.ashx>

³ Helen Keleher, Emma Hutchinson, 'Carrington Health', *Baby Makes 3: Final Report* (Report, 2015) 29 <<https://www.carringtonhealth.org.au/app/uploads/2017/03/Baby-Makes-3-Final-Evaluation-Report.pdf>>

⁴ Sarah Kearney, Cara Gleeson, Loksee Leung, 'Respectful Relationships Education in Schools: The Beginnings of Change', *Final Evaluation Report* (Report, 2016) 49 <https://media-cdn.ourwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/06/24034138/RREiS_R3_Final_AA.pdf>

report or seek help and 49% felt too ashamed. It is imperative that further barriers such as police response or re-traumatisation by the judicial system are reduced. Police, judges, prosecutors, defence lawyers and court workers require further training on general principles, current societal data and the drivers of gendered violence which could be in the form of guiding principles. There would also need to be a state-wide and consistent effort into the delivery of training in trauma-informed best practice and improved evidence collection and treatment methods. Recent legislation review of the sexual assault and violence offences put forward in the *Criminal Code (Consent and Mistake of Fact) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2020* did not go far enough to adequately protect victim-survivors of sexual violence further highlighting the need for improved policing, first responder and judicial responses.

WHQ recently hosted *Understanding Pathways to Safety: Domestic and Family Violence 2021 Forum* attended by 136 individuals and 86 organisations. The role of police and justice system in DFV crisis situations was a key discussion point throughout the forum. Key recommendations developed from the forum were increase in interpreter use and training to support culturally and linguistically diverse women and the state-wide implementation of DFV-informed practitioner embedded models. The current framework in place fails to provide a space where they can safely report their experience. Without making changes to the system and comprehensive training for police, first responders, court workers, judges, prosecution, and defence, new or amended legislation may not ensure the safety of women and children.

4.0 The government must fund Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander organisations to develop and inform community-based solutions to violence perpetration.

Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their families are not profiled, criminalised, or incarcerated needs to be a foremost priority of the Queensland Government. It is essential that the expertise of Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander organisations be the primary source of community-based solutions for Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander peoples. The government must introduce funding stream for these organisations and implement recommended solutions locally and state-wide.

Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander women experience the highest incarceration rates by population. In 2018-19 the number of Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander women being imprisoned has tripled in Queensland.⁵ Data from around Australia demonstrates that approximately 80% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women currently incarcerated are the victim-survivors of some form of violence in their lifetime.⁶ Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander women face increased barriers to reporting their experience of violence to police and may not seek or want carceral solutions. Solutions for women's safety, reduction of incarceration rates and prevention of violence must be informed and led by Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander organisations and peoples.

⁵ Queensland Sentencing Advisory Council (Qld) *Connecting the dots: the sentencing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Queensland* (Report, March 2021) V, 16 (*Sentencing Profile*)

⁶ Australian Law Reform Commission (Cth), *Pathways to Justice: Inquiry into the Incarceration Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples* (ALRC Report 133, 11 January 2018) 350 – 352 (*ALRC Report 133*)

Thank you again for the opportunity to consult with the Taskforce. WHQ appreciates the important work that is being done to keep women and children in Queensland safe.

Kind regards,



Emma Iwinska | CEO