

Domestic and family violence reform program



Structured Review of the Second Action Plan 2016–17 to 2018–19

Key findings

In response to the landmark *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland report*, the Queensland Government developed the *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026* (the Strategy). The Strategy provides a framework for action through four action plans to achieve the long-term vision of a Queensland free from domestic and family violence—predicting that change will occur over time across seven supporting outcomes.

The First Action Plan 2015–16 focussed on establishing the foundations for the Strategy and the necessary framework to drive change over the longer term. The *Second Action Plan 2016–17 to 2018–19* built on those foundations aiming to better protect victims and hold perpetrators to account.

The Strategy is also supported by an **evaluation framework** used to measure progress and outcomes. The evaluation framework has a number of key components, including a structured review of the four action plans.

In 2019, Deloitte Access Economics, in partnership with Ipsos, completed a structured review of the Second Action Plan to evaluate activity during the period of the Second Action Plan and the extent to which Queensland is on track towards achieving the Strategy's long-term vision.

The evaluators explored whether the Second Action Plan was implemented as intended and gathered available evidence against the seven supporting outcomes. Their approach included semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with key government and non-government stakeholders, document analysis, analysis of quantitative data, surveys with service providers and government staff, and case studies of specific actions.

The review finds that good progress has been made in implementing the Second Action Plan driven in part by strong leadership, collaboration and innovation. At the time of the review, of the 84 actions committed to by government under the Second Action Plan, 61 actions were delivered and 23 commenced.

The Second Action Plan delivered wide-ranging reforms including release of a Workplace Support Package for all Queensland workplaces, specialist domestic and family violence courts, four new domestic and family violence shelters (and three replacement shelters), commencement of integrated service response trials and eight High Risk Teams, 24 additional specialist domestic and family violence police officers, new or enhanced domestic and family violence support services to address service gaps, legislative reform, and a statewide communication and engagement strategy to increase awareness and help-seeking behaviour.

The review finds evidence to suggest that Queensland is on track towards achieving the Strategy's long-term vision.

This evidence includes a mix of outputs produced from the reform activity as well as intermediate outcomes under each of the seven supporting outcomes of the Strategy.

It is important to note that the evidence currently available only allows for tentative conclusions to be drawn. It is expected that over time as new data becomes available and reform activity is embedded, data quality will also improve strengthening the evidence base for the impact of the reform.

Notwithstanding the progress and achievements to date, there remains more that can and should be done to ensure Queensland achieves the long-term vision of the Strategy. In particular, the review identified a need to place greater focus on meeting the needs of Queenslanders disproportionately more likely to experience domestic and family violence or who face additional barriers when accessing support. This includes a mix of specialised support and building capacity and capability within the service sector. Furthermore, stakeholders noted that responses to date have not always been culturally appropriate, and there is a need for future activity to be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led, designed and owned.

Implementing *Queensland's Framework for Action – Reshaping our approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander domestic and family violence* and *Queensland's plan to respond to domestic and family violence against people with disability* is the first step towards achieving equity across the reform program for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people with disability.

The review also finds that further work is needed to improve awareness of the non-physical forms of domestic and family violence (and its seriousness) and gender inequality as a driver of domestic and family violence. For example, in 2018, up to 93 per cent of Queenslanders considered intimidation and threats, sexual abuse and physical abuse to always constitute domestic and family violence, while less than 64 per cent considered financial control, harassment over electronic communications, and psychological and verbal abuse to always constitute domestic and family violence. Furthermore, between 2017 and 2018, there was a decline in the proportion of Queenslanders who value a culture that respects gender equality from 82 per cent to 76 per cent.



The Third Action Plan 2019–20 to 2021–22

proposes to deliver a new communication and engagement response focused on raising awareness and understanding of domestic and family violence for all Queenslanders, including raising visibility of help and support services.

The review finds that results are mixed as to whether perpetrators are increasingly accessing services and have reduced their use of domestic and family violence. More work is needed to develop the evidence base for the effectiveness of perpetrator intervention programs in Queensland, including improving our approach to data collection and evaluation to better track implementation, progress and outcomes. The Third Action Plan proposes to strengthen perpetrator accountability and increase accessibility of behaviour change initiatives.

Finally, empowering business and community leaders will be important to maintaining momentum under the reform and achieving change at the local level. The review finds that successful local initiatives are characterised by business, local government and community leaders recognising domestic and family violence as an important issue for their community and taking action in response. Government plays an important role in facilitating community-led action by providing a trusted and authoritative source of information to change policies, challenge attitudes, and promote awareness.

The Third Action Plan proposes to develop a corporate and community engagement framework to strengthen community ownership of domestic and family violence reform, and support the corporate community to effect cultural change by creating safe and aware workplaces. It will also establish a new domestic and family violence prevention champions group to guide and support engagement across all communities and groups to drive cultural change.

Supporting Outcomes 1 and 2: Queenslanders take a zero-tolerance approach to domestic and family violence, and respectful relationships are embedded in our community

- In 2018, up to 93 per cent of Queenslanders recognised six defined behaviours as forms of domestic and family violence, and up to 90 per cent of Queenslanders believed these behaviours to be serious.
- Between 2017 and 2018 an increasing number of state schools implemented the Respectful Relationships Education Program, which educates students in Prep to Year 12 on the drivers of domestic and family violence and gender-based violence.

Supporting Outcome 4: Queensland workplaces challenge attitudes contributing to violence and effectively support workers

- Between 2017 and 2018, there was a 6 per cent statistically significant increase in the proportion of government employees who reported that they were aware of domestic and family violence support policies, and all Queensland Government departments have now achieved White Ribbon Accreditation.
- The percentage of companies reporting to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency that they had a domestic and family violence policy and/or strategy in place increased from 42 per cent in 2016–17 to 49 per cent in 2017–18.

Supporting Outcome 6: Perpetrators stop using violence and are held to account

- Between 2015 and 2017, the number of intervention orders issued by Queensland Courts requiring perpetrators to attend a program or counselling to address their behaviour increased from 616 to 1088.

Supporting Outcome 3: Queensland community, business, religious and sporting leaders are taking action and working together

- Compared to 2016–17, there was a 26 per cent increase in the number of participants in events supported by Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month grants in South East Queensland, and a 48 per cent increase in the number of participants in events in regional and rural locations.
- In 2018, 8 per cent of Queenslanders reported being involved in domestic and family violence prevention initiatives in their community.

Supporting Outcome 5: Victims and their families are safe and supported

- Service providers are generally positive regarding the contribution of the reform to improving access to, and uptake of, services by victim survivors.
- Referrals to crisis accommodation remained stable between 2015–16 and 2017–18, and 91 per cent of referrals for crisis accommodation in 2017–18 were completed within 24 hours.
- Between 2015–16 and 2017–18, there was a 99 per cent increase in the number of domestic and family violence counselling clients who received brokerage for safety upgrades to their homes.

Supporting Outcome 7: The justice system deals effectively with domestic and family violence

- There are positive early indicators to suggest improved experiences of the justice response, particularly in the Southport Specialist Domestic and Family Violence Court.
- In 2017–18, Queensland Police attended 3.2 per cent more domestic and family violence matters than in 2015–16, and made more than double the amount of referrals for perpetrators in the same period.