

Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

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Inquiry into the Domestic Violence and Family Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

Submission by Centacare FNQ – June 2025

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1. Introduction

Centacare FNQ welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Education, Arts and Communities Committee's inquiry into the Domestic Violence and Family Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025.

We are a regional, not-for-profit organisation delivering locally led, trauma-informed services across the Far North Queensland region:

- Mental health and wellbeing services
- Disability and aged care supports
- Humanitarian settlement and multicultural services
- Diverse Employment and training programs
- Family support and parenting programs
- Neighbourhood centres and community development
- Human and social disaster recovery

In addition our Catholic Early Learning and Care services caters for children aged from 6 weeks to 13 years and include Early Learning Centres, Kindergarten and Outside School Hours Care.

We are embedded in some of Far North Queensland's most culturally diverse, socially vulnerable, and disaster-prone communities. This unique position allows us to observe the complex, intersectional nature of domestic and family violence (DFV)—particularly as it affects women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, people with additional needs, seniors, and those living in regional isolation.

2. The Intersections of DFV in Regional and CALD Communities

DFV in our region is rarely disclosed early or in isolation. It appears in case notes about housing crises, mental health decline, child safety concerns, or economic distress. Many of our client face:

- Limited English proficiency
- Visa dependency and migration-related fears
- Deep cultural stigma around reporting violence
- Limited knowledge of their legal rights
- Low digital and financial literacy
- Lack of transport or child care
- Distrust in formal systems, especially police

These barriers mean that the first disclosure of violence often happens to a community-based worker, not a government authority. The relationships of trust we build as a local provider are foundational in creating pathways to safety.

3. Legislative Reform Must Be Paired with Community-Based Responses

Centacare FNQ supports the intent of the Bill, particularly provisions aimed at improving victim protections and holding those using violence accountable.

However, legislative change alone is not enough. It must be coupled with:

- Funding for early intervention and culturally responsive programs
- Greater availability of interpreters, translated resources, and bicultural workers and the training of those responding to and supporting victims of FDV in the essential use of this support.
- Place-based service models that can operate flexibly and holistically
- Regional capacity building for frontline workers to recognise and respond to DFV
- Collaborative frameworks with community and faith leaders to address stigma and prevention

4. Engaging with Men: A Constructive Community Conversation

Centacare FNQ has been exploring new ways to engage men in community-led efforts to address family safety. While our victim-survivor support remains paramount, we also recognise that addressing violence requires dialogue with those at risk of using violence.

We are trialling strengths-based, collective, culturally informed initiatives that invite men into conversations about:

- Healthy relationships and communication
- Emotional regulation and mental wellbeing
- Accountability and the impact of harm
- Alternative models of masculinity
- Building stronger families and communities

These early-stage initiatives are framed not as punitive, but as invitations to growth and connection. They are designed in partnership with local leaders, particularly in diverse communities, where shame and silence have often prevented engagement.

5. Recommendations

Based on our experience, we offer the following recommendations to the Committee:

1. **Enhance funding for culturally safe DFV programs**, including legal, housing, and therapeutic supports for migrant women and children.
2. **Ensure regional communities have access to interpreter services, and that training programs of the essential use of this support by frontline workers is embedded into practice** both in-person and virtually, especially during legal and safety planning processes.
3. **Support community-based work with men** focused on reflection, responsibility, and cultural healing.
4. **Invest in early intervention programs** across schools, parenting programs, and settlement services.
5. **Strengthen collaboration with diverse, faith, cultural, and community leaders** to shift attitudes and build pathways to disclosure and safety.

6. Conclusion

Centacare FNQ supports the direction of the Domestic Violence and Family Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025. We urge the Committee to ensure that reforms reflect not only urban and institutional contexts, but the nuanced realities of Queensland's diverse and regional communities.

We remain committed to working in partnership to support victim-survivors, prevent violence before it begins, and foster safe, inclusive, and connected communities.

We thank the Committee for its time, and for recognising the importance of hearing regional voices in this inquiry.