

Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025

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Education, Arts and Communities Committee
Parliament House
George Street
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Re: Domestic and Family Violence Protection and other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 ('the Bill')

We welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2025 Inquiry ('the Inquiry').

Much more must urgently be done to address DFV in our communities and we welcome the Queensland Government's commitment to further reform.

The Combined Women's Refuge Group Southeast Queensland (CWRG SE QLD) is a peak body dedicated to supporting women and children escaping domestic and family violence (DFV). The Combined Women's refuge Group SEQ has been advocating for the interests of women and children escaping domestic and family violence; and the services which provide them with information, referral, accommodation and support for over 40 years.

We support the Inquiry's goals to examine proposed amendments to the *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Act 2012* (Qld) ('DFVP Act') and the *Evidence Act 1977* (Qld) ('Evidence Act').

Changes to Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) legislation should reflect recommendations made by the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce. Any change must have the safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors as the priority policy objective.

While we support some amendments in the Bill, such as the further use of video-recorded evidence-in-chief in the correct context, we do not support reforms that will potentially endanger victim-survivors, such as police protection directions (PPDs).

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Addressing Domestic and Family Violence

Violence against women in Australia has been declared a national crisis by the Federal Government.¹ In Queensland, DFV services are experiencing unprecedented demand for help from victim-survivors. In 2024, Queensland recorded its highest number of offences of breach of a domestic violence protection order in at least 20 years, with a total of 69,528 offences recorded.² The number of calls to the Queensland Police Service (QPS) asking for help with DFV incidents has more than tripled between 2012-2014, from 60,000 incidents to over 192,000.³ This is especially concerning given an estimated 80 per cent of women do not report domestic violence inflicted by a partner.⁴

There is a disproportionate rate of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.⁵ First Nations women are 11 times more likely to die, and 32 times more likely to be hospitalised, as a result of violence.⁶

Women's refuges are vital in terms of providing a place of safety for women and children between escaping violence and finding safe alternative accommodation, but the timely availability of suitable exit options for those in refuge is the key determinant of the availability of refuge spaces for other women/families urgently needing to flee.

Our members consistently report they have full refuges with women and children unable to exit refuge into safe and stable housing due to a lack of affordable housing in Queensland. This means that women who need to flee their violent partners are unable to access refuge for safe supported accommodation.

Establishing a framework for police protection directions (PPDs) to improve efficiencies for police

We strongly oppose the introduction of PPDs. Our concerns with PPDs include the following:

- PPDs are designed to save police time. They do not prioritise the safety and wellbeing of victim survivors.

¹ Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Unlocking the Prevention Potential: accelerating action to end domestic, family and sexual violence. Australian Government. Accessed 16 May 2024. <https://www.pmc.gov.au/resources/unlocking-prevention-potential/national-emergency-and-ongoing-national-priority>.

² Queensland Police Service. Queensland Crime Statistics Advance Search based on 'Breach of Domestic Violence Protection Order' as of 16 January 2025. Accessed 16 January 2025: [Queensland Crime Statistics - Queensland Police News](#).

³ Minister for Police and Emergency Services Dan Purdie and the Minister for Families, Seniors and Disability Services and Minister for Child Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence Amanda Camm. Major reform for domestic and family violence puts victims ahead of perpetrators. 4 April 2025. Accessed 19 May 2025. [MEDIA STATEMENT: Major reform for domestic and family violence puts victims ahead of perpetrators - Ministerial Media Statements](#)

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. How do people respond to FDSV? 15 February 2024. 27 November 2024. Accessed December 2024. How do people respond to FDSV? - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

⁵ Department of Social Services, Australian Government. 28 November 2024. Accessed December 2024. National Plan to End Gender Based Violence | Department of Social Services.

⁶ Ibid.

- Continued misidentification of the person who is most in need of protection at DFV incidents means victim-survivors will be left without protection.
- Appealing PPDs will be difficult, and legal services are not accessible or available for all people.
- Removal of court processes will result in the removal of important oversight of police decisions,
- There will be a reduced opportunity for referrals to support services and behavior change programs, which can occur in court and can be ordered by Magistrates.

Case study – Ariana 28 yrs old born overseas.

Ariana attended a local magistrate court after she was named as a respondent on a Domestic Violence Police Order (DVPO). She spoke with the duty lawyer who referred her to a specialist domestic violence service. Ariana spoke limited English and had no support or family in Australia. Ariana told workers at the DV service she and her partner had an argument, and she had “broken a plate” so her husband called the police. Ariana said the police didn’t get an interpreter when they applied for the DVPO. Ariana reported to DV workers she suffered physical assault, coercive control, choking, financial abuse, social isolation and regular threats from her husband that he would have her deported. After talking with the DV workers she was referred to a women’s refuge.

Workers at the refuge referred Ariana to a legal service who contacted police and told them they would be contesting the DVO naming Ariana as respondent. Ariana was then contacted by the Queensland Police Vulnerable Person’s Unit who came and met with her and told her and the workers at the refuge that the DVO was inappropriate however there was nothing they could do stating that once the police have lodged a DVO application with the court, they have no power to withdraw their application-that the decision sits with the magistrate.

The refuge workers sought information from a legal service who informed them of the Operational Procedures Manual, page 35, **9.6.9 Withdrawal of an application for a domestic violence order**, “officers or the police prosecutor are able to withdraw an Application for a Protection Order, if a compelling reason exists, which may include, (ii) ‘ a DVO is no longer necessary or desirable to protect the aggrieved and named persons from domestic violence.’

The workers at the refuge wrote to the officers within the Vulnerable Persons Unit informing them about the Operational Procedures Manual however they never replied.

Ariana’s lawyer continued to liaise with police and was advised by Police Prosecutions that they would not be withdrawing the application. The lawyer assisted Ariana to apply for a DVO naming her as the aggrieved. The DVO was granted by the magistrate with no contact conditions whilst the order naming her as the respondent was dismissed. With support and advocacy from the lawyer and refuge workers Ariana was assisted to be protected by the DVO however the process had a significant impact on her mental health. If this scenario had occurred with the police applying a Police Protection Direction she may still be in the violent relationship and at risk of continued harm.

This situation is just one of many that highlights the concerns we have with increasing police powers to make orders without judicial oversight. We believe the introduction of police

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protection directions increase the risk of misidentification of the person using violence which can have serious ramifications on a victim's safety, rights and agency. The Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce and the Commission of Inquiry into QPS Responses to Domestic and Family Violence found that police misidentification of DFV perpetrators and victims is a consistent problem. We believe that if PPDs are introduced they will have a significant negative impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children, and men, who are already disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system and women who are from Culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

To address domestic and family violence the Queensland Government should:

1. Continue to implement the recommendations from the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce
2. Invest comprehensively in services including early intervention and prevention, crisis services, shelters, healing and recovery, women's health services and behaviour change programs.
3. Invest in affordable housing options prioritising women and children in refuge. This will enable more women and child and access refuge when they need it most.
4. Support the continued improvement of policing of domestic and family violence including through the implementation of recommendations included in the Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence, and
5. Scale up support for the continued improvement of policing of domestic and family violence including through the implementation of the co-responder model across the state.

Video Recorded Evidence-in-Chief (VREC) framework

We support the extension of VREC in Magistrates Courts across the state alongside victim-centred training for police. This reform supports victim-survivors from being re-traumatised by having to retell their evidence to courts.

We do not support the removal of the requirement for police to be trained to take VREC.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide a submission to the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

Julia Dawson – Secretariat

Combine Women's Refuge Group SEQ