



Inquiry Into Elder Abuse

The Queensland Police Service Departmental
Briefing for the Inquiry into Elder Abuse in
Queensland

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INTRODUCTION

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) has been invited to provide a written briefing to the *Inquiry into elder abuse in Queensland* (the Inquiry) to inform its deliberations and findings in accordance with the Terms of Reference.

The briefing responds to the particular matters of interest identified in correspondence from the Education, Art and Communities Committee (the Committee) received by the QPS on 17 December 2024 (reference A1389772).

The Commissioner of Police appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the Inquiry by providing information regarding policing responses to elder abuse in Queensland and progressing laws, policies and services to support continued enhancements for victim-survivors.

As awareness of, and understanding about elder abuse has grown, the QPS is committed to working with older people and the community to eliminate harm to the elderly.

STRATEGIC FOCUS

There is an increased awareness of elder abuse following several broader reviews and inquiries focusing on police responses to domestic and family violence (DFV), which encompasses the prevalence and characteristics of elder abuse in Queensland. Much has been done to raise awareness, promote prevention and support reporting. With an ageing population, it is an increasing societal issue.

QPS strategies with structures in place to respond to victim-survivors, including elderly persons, include the:

- QPS Strategic Plan 2024-2028
- Domestic and Family Violence Doctrine
- Domestic and Family Violence Strategy 2023-2025
- Sexual Violence Response Strategy 2023-2025; and
- Disability Service Plan 2023-2026.

It can be challenging to identify elder abuse as there is no single type of person who is at risk or who may cause harm, however the awareness of elder abuse has been growing and involves multiple sectors of society that are responsible for law, policy and service system reform.

The *Independent Commission of Inquiry into QPS responses to Domestic and Family Violence* (DFV COI) titled, *A Call for Change* which was publicly released on 21 November 2022, identified several areas for improvement in police responses to elder abuse in Queensland.

Specifically, Recommendation 32 of the DFV COI proposed that the QPS enhance its DFV training, to capture the behaviours which amount to elder abuse, and the steps that should be taken to protect older people when they report harm at the hand of a family member. That recommendation is complete and further details regarding full delivery of this recommendation is outlined in the Training and Capability section to this submission.

The QPS has heavily invested to update its training framework to better educate its workforce on trauma informed and victim centric practice. Significant effort has been made to improve the QPS response to victim-survivors of domestic and family violence and sexual violence, including elderly people.

BACKGROUND

QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE – SYSTEMS AND STRUCTURES

The QPS is the primary law enforcement agency for the State of Queensland, with a focus on prevention, disruption, response to, and investigation of crime, to deliver high quality and responsive policing services to make Queensland safer.

Section 2.3 of the *Police Service Administration Act 1990* (Qld) (PSAA) mandates the functions of the QPS, which include the preservation of peace and good order, the protection of all communities in the state and all members of those communities, the prevention of crime, the detection of offenders and bringing of offenders to justice. Police have a broad range of powers available to carry out their functions.

Police officers exercise powers under the legislative framework of the *Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000* (PPRA) and the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012* (DFVP Act) and government policy. The QPS recognises the importance of the police response to DFV, as officers are often the first contact a DFV victim survivor has with the justice system. The QPS promotes a victim-centric, trauma informed response, where victim survivor needs are prioritised to reduce ongoing trauma and officers understand and are responsive to the impact of trauma. This emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone and creates opportunities for victim survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

Police officers are also assigned powers or functions by statutory delegation under a broad range of intra and inter State and Commonwealth legislation.

Police officers are guided by policies and procedures relevant to operational policing matters established in the Operational Procedures Manual (OPM)¹, and are also prescribed responsibility to comply with 'Commissioner's directions' issued pursuant to section 4.9 of the PSAA which may be of a particular or generalised nature.

The Domestic, Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons Command (DFVVPC) was established in March 2021 to deliver sustainable, effective, innovative and efficient policing strategies and responses to drive the prevention, disruption, response to, and investigation of incidents of domestic and family violence and those involving vulnerable persons.

The Command provides a domestic, family violence and vulnerable persons lens over QPS systems, training and processes, and drives the implementation of reform recommendations, to strengthen Service capability to respond to the needs of communities, including victims and those over-represented in the criminal justice system.

The DFVVPC is the central point of contact for state-wide, national, international, government and non-government entities, stakeholders, and academics for matters pertaining to domestic, family violence and vulnerable persons.

The QPS continues to partner with external bodies to support victims including the Victims' Commissioner, Queensland Homicide Victims Support Group (QHVSOG), the Volunteers in Policing (VIP) program and Victim Assist Queensland (VAQ).

The victim journey with the QPS commences from the first complaint being made through investigation until a matter is resolved, sometimes including prosecution phases. For some victims this will be a one-time experience, however others will be re-victimised, sometimes multiple times. The QPS acknowledges the

¹ <https://www.police.qld.gov.au/qps-corporate-documents/operational-policies/operational-procedures-manual>

role it plays in ensuring adequate supports are afforded to all victim-survivors and ensuring the prevention of future re-victimisation.

DISABILITY AND ELDER ABUSE TEAM

The QPS Disability and Elder Abuse Team (DEAT) is established within the Domestic, Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons Unit (DFV&VPU) and is positioned amongst the DFVPC. The team provides strategic governance, policy advice and project coordination to enhance QPS responses to older people and persons living with a disability. The DEAT liaises with a range of external stakeholders on behalf of the QPS to deliver progressive and dynamic policing practices to decrease harm and increase the safety of persons experiencing or impacted by elder abuse or disability in Queensland.

The DEAT includes a dedicated State Elder Abuse Coordinator role that has existed since 2016 and provides a strategic response to elder abuse, including developing strategies, projects, training and resources to support operational police, investigators, crime prevention officers and DFV officers. The role has outward facing aspects including participating in working groups and research, and is involved in committees to provide advice, advocacy and investigative support in relation to elder abuse. Within the QPS, the role develops resources, referral pathways and identifies training needs across the organisation.

DISTRICT DOMESTIC FAMILY VIOLENCE AND VULNERABLE PERSONS UNITS

In 2025, every Queensland police district will have an established Domestic, Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons Unit (DFV&VPU). These units ensure an on-call response through support to DFV and vulnerable persons matters, aligning with the organisational strategy of providing victim-centric and trauma informed care.

DFV&VPUs are essential in delivering specialist capability, case managing high-risk aggrieved persons and respondents in collaboration with partner agencies, investigating serious, complex and high-risk cases, and supporting district operations to prevent, disrupt, respond to and investigate DFV and vulnerable persons matters.

In support of this initiative, 114 specialised frontline positions were created within DFV&VPUs. These positions enhance capability to address DFV and vulnerable person cases, offering guidance and support to general duties officers.

The key objectives of DFV&VPU operations include:

- reducing DFV related harm in the community;
- increasing community satisfaction, confidence and trust;
- enhancing QPS members' proficiency in victim-centric and trauma informed responses; and
- strengthening collaboration with DFV support providers and partner agencies.

Each district retains autonomy for shaping strategies that address DFV and vulnerable persons specific to targeted community needs, ensuring localised, coordinated and effective responses.

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE COORDINATORS

DFV Coordinators support and lead the QPS response to DFV. Officers in charge of districts appoint a district DFV Coordinator and allocate adequate time and resources to those officers to enable them to:

- coordinate policing strategies and monitor their effectiveness in dealing with DFV within the district;
- provide direction, guidance and advice to QPS members and the community on issues associated with DFV;

- liaise with community and other government agencies to develop referral networks and preventative strategies for dealing with DFV;
- liaise regularly with and provide advice and guidance to station DFV liaison officers to ensure effective policing of DFV within the division;
- assist with police officer education and training programs relating to legislation, policy, orders and procedures and social understanding in dealing with DFV;
- liaise with police prosecutors to ensure consistent and appropriate standards and responses are maintained in dealing with the legal issues of DFV; and
- identify and monitor repeat calls for service in relation to DFV matters.

STATE DFV&VPU OPERATIONAL ADVISORY UNIT

The State DFV&VPU Operational Advisory Unit provides for the placement of DFV Coordinators in the Brisbane Police Communications Centre to give operational advice and assistance to support timely, optimal and legislatively compliant police responses to DFV matters.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE LIAISON OFFICERS, POLICE LIAISON OFFICERS AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER POLICE LIAISON OFFICERS

The officers in charge of Criminal Investigation Branches (CIB) and Child Protection Investigation Units (CPIU) are responsible for undertaking the role of the Sexual Violence Liaison Officer (SVLO).

The QPS Sexual Violence Liaison network rolled out statewide from January 2022, with policies and procedures embedded into section 2.6.3 the OPM.

Part of the role of the SVLO is to engage with their local sexual assault support services to maximise support for victims of sexual violence. Through the SVLO network and the Business Unit Review process, local sexual assault networks comprising representatives from key government and non-government agencies have been or are being established across most QPS districts.

The purpose of the local networks is to build and sustain partnerships to identify and address barriers faced by victims when entering the criminal justice process. The SVLO is also tasked to ensure investigators and frontline officers offer appropriate support and services to victims of sexual violence throughout the investigation and justice process.

SVLOs play a crucial role in ensuring best practice responses are provided to victim-survivors of sexual violence. SVLO responsibilities include ensuring appropriate communication between investigators and victim-survivors, maintaining relationships with relevant government and non-government agencies including sexual assault support services and undertaking reviews of sexual offence investigations. There are 96 officers in charge of CIB and CPIU undertaking the role of SVLO across the state.

Police Liaison Officers (PLOs), including Torres Strait Islander PLOs, establish and maintain positive rapport with culturally specific communities. The role of the PLO is to promote trust and understanding by assisting the community and police to:

- reduce and prevent crime;
- divert people from the criminal justice system;
- advise and educate police officers on culture and cultural issues; and
- improve community knowledge of law-and-order issues and policing services.

The specialist liaison role performed by PLOs does not require powers of a police officer. However, PLOs may be called upon to assist police officers with law enforcement tasks in certain circumstances. PLOs have a duty to:

- liaise with culturally specific communities to foster co-operation and understanding;
- advise police officers on the cultural beliefs, needs and protocols of the community in which they work;
- identify potential crime and disorder problems in the community, and advise and assist in prevention strategies;
- establish and maintain communication between the community and police; and
- improve community access to policing services and refer to services where necessary.

These activities assist the QPS to be more effective by improving client services, preventing or reducing crime and maintaining community partnerships. Importantly, the PLO programs also support respect for and preservation of local First Nations cultures and languages.

NATURE AND EXTENT OF ELDER ABUSE IN QUEENSLAND

DEFINING ELDER ABUSE

Australia wide, older persons are generally understood to be 65 years old or older. The QPS aligns with the Australian Bureau of Statistics by defining an older person as 65 years of age and older or, 50 years of age and older for First Nations Australians.

The QPS adopts the World Health Organisation definition for elder abuse as “a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person.”²

The most widely recognised forms of abuse relate to physical, sexual, psychological or emotional abuse, financial and material abuse, abandonment, neglect, and serious loss of dignity and respect. Elder abuse often intersects with DFV and can involve coercive control.

There is no standalone elder abuse offence in Queensland. The lack of distinct offence makes it difficult to distinguish elder abuse from other types of offending behaviour when quantifying the number of reports and prevalence of offending. Elder abuse can be captured within various offences in the *Criminal Code 1899* (Qld) including fraud, stealing, extortion, serious assault of a person over 60 years³, failure to provide necessities, abuse of person with impairment of the mind, murder, manslaughter, attempted murder, and the new coercive control offence which comes into effect on 26 May 2025⁴.

A comparison of QPS data from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024 shows a small increase in the number of reported victims aged 65 years and over, as displayed in Appendix 1.

ELDER ABUSE AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

In Queensland in 2023-24, family relationships accounted for 95% of elder abuse cases in close or intimate relationships, with approximately three quarters reporting sons and daughters as the perpetrator⁵.

² World Health Organization, *Abuse of older people* <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/abuse-of-older-people>

³ It is a circumstance of aggravation where the victim is aged 60 years or above, and increased penalties apply.

⁴ Commencing on 26 May 2025. Introduced as part of the *Criminal Law (Coercive Control and Affirmative Consent) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024*, passed on the 18 March 2024.

⁵ Gillbard, A. (2024). Elder abuse statistics in Queensland: Year in review 2023–24. Elder Abuse Prevention Unit, UnitingCare. <https://eapu.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/UC-Elder-Abuse-Statistics-in-QLD-Year-in-Review-2024.pdf>

The DFVP Act captures elder abuse where a 'relevant relationship' exists. Section 13 provides a 'relevant relationship' includes:

- an intimate personal relationship;
- a family relationship; and
- an informal care relationship.

Where an older person is the victim of elder abuse and a police officer identifies behaviour which may constitute DFV within the context of a relevant relationship, the officer is to investigate whether DFV has occurred and take appropriate action to immediately protect the older person from further harm⁶.

While elder abuse may be captured by DFV offending behaviours, it also presents in other contexts outside of the family such as consumer interactions and other social relationships.

FIRST NATIONS AND CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

It is suspected underreporting and reluctance to engage with police is a significant factor in DFV and elder abuse matters in First Nations communities.

The term 'elder abuse' itself can cause cultural misunderstandings where it conflicts with the respected title of 'elder' reserved for community leaders in First Nations and other culturally diverse communities.

Family structures, financial management, and living arrangements vary across cultures and many First Nations and culturally diverse communities hesitate to engage with service providers where services are not culturally appropriate, meaning there is a lack of cultural safety. High-risk populations, such as those in remote areas, face additional barriers to, and gaps in services and support, due to limited availability and accessibility. This is especially so for First Nations communities across Queensland, but particularly those in rural and remote communities.

RESPONDING TO ELDER ABUSE

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The QPS is committed to working with older people, the community and support agencies to eliminate elder abuse in Queensland. The QPS investigates elder abuse when a criminal offence is suspected or where DFV is reported or identified. Identifying elder abuse can be challenging because it has a diverse presentation – there is no single offending behaviour, no single category of victim survivor, and no single category of perpetrator. The QPS prosecutes perpetrators of elder abuse.

The QPS has policies and procedures for investigating and responding to DFV, and supporting victims of crime that have specific vulnerabilities, including older people. Relevant OPM chapters include:

- *Chapter 6: Persons who are vulnerable, disabled or have cultural needs* – provides direct links to relevant legislative provisions relating to identified vulnerabilities, and guidance on how to respond to vulnerable members of the community. The chapter also includes referrals to support services, through Police Referrals and release of victim details to the Queensland Health Victim Support Service.
- *Chapter 9: Domestic violence* – outlines policy and procedures for managing DFV incidents and providing assistance to members of the community who may be affected by DFV.

⁶ Operational Procedures Manual, Chapter 6.5.1

INVESTIGATIONS

Section 1.11.6 of the QPS OPM requires police officers to advise an informant or victim of crime that they are investigating the offence, and to periodically inform the victim/informant of the current stage of the investigations.

This requirement is underpinned by section 2.12.1 of the OPM when dealing with victims of crime where reference to the Charter of Victim's Rights (the Charter) is made. The Charter places an onus on agencies including the QPS to provide information to victims. Investigating officers should, until a matter is finalised, maintain contact with victims to ensure the provisions of the Charter are followed. Victims have the right to make complaint if the Charter is not followed.

From an investigative perspective, the length of time taken to obtain the results of a forensic examination can impact on the time taken to complete an investigation and progress a matter to its conclusion.

Due to the vulnerability of older persons, officers may consult their district DFV Coordinator and district crime prevention officer for advice on specific assistance and resources that can be provided.

The QPS also receives reports through mandatory reporting requirements, for example the mandatory reporting required by health professionals under the *Aged Care Act 1997* (Cth). Any injury or suspected abuse of an older person observed by a health worker or social worker must be reported to police.

DFV INVESTIGATIONS

Police must investigate if they reasonably suspect DFV is occurring or has occurred. Police have powers to enter a place, search the premises, and make reasonable enquiries without a search warrant. When investigating report of DFV, police will conduct a holistic, victim-centric and trauma-informed investigation, which means speaking with all parties involved to determine what has occurred. They may request the name and address of any person, including witnesses, involved in the DFV incident, and this may involve speaking with children. To identify the person most in need of protection, police will consider the behaviour of each person in the context of the relationship as a whole and will make inquiries about the relationship between the parties involved and any history of domestic violence.

The QPS recognises the importance of the police response to DFV, as officers are often the first contact a DFV victim survivor has with the justice system. The QPS promotes a victim-centric, trauma informed response, where victim survivor needs are prioritised to reduce ongoing trauma and officers understand and are responsive to the impact of trauma. This emphasises physical, psychological, and emotional safety for everyone and create opportunities for victim survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

The QPS continues to develop and refine the application of holistic investigative strategies in response to reports or allegations of DFV.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE INVESTIGATIONS

The QPS submission to discussion paper 3⁷ of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce provides an overview of the QPS processes and practices in responding to sexual violence.

⁷ https://www.womenstaskforce.qld.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/717377/wsjt-submission-dp3-qps-r-r.pdf

Section 2.6.3 of the OPM outlines the responsibilities of officers (first response, investigators, and SVLOs) when engaging with victims of sexual violence and with support services.

It includes obligations for SVLOs to ensure officers are appropriately trained and mentored when investigating sexual violence, and to ensure appropriate supports are available to the victim during the investigation. A referral to an appropriate support service must be offered to all sexual violence victims.

The QPS also has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (ODPP) in relation to communications with victims throughout the investigation and prosecution process.

TRAINING AND CAPABILITY

The QPS has committed to delivering a comprehensive suite of service-wide DFV training products to enhance the knowledge and understanding of contemporary victim-centric, trauma informed investigative practice. Collectively, the training supports the identification of persons most in most need of protection by moving to a holistic pattern-based and future focused investigative approach, recognising the cumulative effects of DFV upon victim-survivors and their children.

Internal elder abuse training, from online learning products (OLP) to specialist training courses, is available for QPS employees at all levels of employment. The Elder Abuse 5MILE training video has been available for all QPS employees since 2015. Although not compulsory, the training provides awareness and understanding of elder abuse as an emerging issue in an ageing population.

As part of the formal QPS recruitment training program new police recruits must complete the 'Vulnerable Persons' OLP which incorporates a component relating to elder abuse. Exploration of elder sexual abuse is included in the 'Responding to Sexual Crimes' OLP.

QPS commenced foundational workforce education on coercive control through the development and delivery of the Coercive Control OLP launched on 31 January 2022. 'Unpacking Coercive Control' is a full day face to face training that has subsequently been developed to support implementation of the criminal offence of coercive control, and delivery of this course has commenced. The coercive control training options are designed to expand knowledge and recognition of physical and non-physical abuse, and the subtle tactics used by perpetrators to coerce, control and restrict the autonomy and independence of victim-survivors through social isolation, humiliation, insults and power dynamics.

In September 2022, the QPS launched a three-day training course, called *DFV: The Holistic Approach*, which provides face-to-face training for all QPS members up to and including the rank of superintendent. The training incorporates content in relation to organisational culture and its impact on policing DFV incidents, with a focus on responding to entrenched patterned approaches involving coercive control behaviours exerted by perpetrators. The training provides QPS members with scenario-based examples involving people with multiple intersecting complex needs. Participants develop analytical skills to select and apply strategies that align with DFV scenarios and particular victim-survivor and perpetrator experiences, including vulnerabilities. This ensures comprehensive capability for QPS members to respond with agility when dealing with, and investigating, DFV incidents.

The QPS has developed a five day face-to-face *Domestic and Family Violence and Vulnerable Persons Specialist Course*, which focuses on the delivery of victim-centric, trauma-informed responses that are sensitive to the cultural and specific needs of vulnerable persons. The training incorporates a module on elder abuse. This training is compulsory for DFV Coordinators, Domestic Violence Liaison Officers, DFV&VPU team members, High Risk Teams (HRT) and specialist DFV prosecutors and investigators. The course is evaluated by participants at the end of each module via an online evaluation form disseminated to all attendees at the conclusion of each session. The questions gauge whether the content is new to the participant, relevant and applicable to the role. For the elder abuse module, 88% of training participants indicated the content had practical application to their duties.

Commencing in 2023, the DFV Specialist Leadership Course was developed and rolled out to enhance the leadership, management, and supervision of DFV responses, to ensure they are conducted in an ethical and professional manner, in accordance with legal, evidentiary, and service requirements. The course provides leaders and supervisors with specialist knowledge, skills and behaviours necessary to lead and supervise best practice DFV responses that prioritise victim-survivor safety and perpetrator accountability, are supportive of member well-being, and meet both QPS and community expectations relevant to the members' role.

SUPPORTING VICTIMS

POLICE REFERRALS

At the time of complaint and investigation, police provide further support to victims of crime through Police Referrals.

Police Referrals has become an embedded strategy of QPS frontline operational policing to connect at risk and vulnerable community members, including victims of crime, with external support services. Police officers use every engagement with community members to identify support needs and regularly provide further support to victims of crime through referrals. Police Referrals provides an avenue for early and effective intervention for a broad range of social issues where referred individuals are engaged with external support services, contributing to reduced repeat calls for police service, and a reduction in recidivism and victimisation.

Section 6.3.14 of the OPM details procedures around Police Referrals including criteria to enable police to conduct a suitability assessment to determine who is suitable for a Police Referral. Where a victim of an 'act of violence' specifically requires the services of VAQ, QPS members are to refer the victim to VAQ via a Police Referral. This includes victims of domestic violence.

Chapter 2.6.2 of the OPM provides for the establishment of an investigation centre including the appointment of a Family Liaison Officer in the event that a death is determined to be suspicious. The role of the Family Liaison Officer is to assist the victim's family during the investigation and court process.

The Police Referrals system provides a platform for police officers to refer at risk and vulnerable persons to a network of over 500 external support providers across Queensland covering multiple different vulnerabilities including elder abuse. The program has statewide coverage and referral service categories relate to ten themes: community support, domestic violence, family and youth support, health and wellbeing, homelessness, identity theft and fraud, legal, mental health, seniors, and victim support.

Police officers must consider making referrals for the victim, offender and involved parties as soon as possible after being notified of any incident of elder abuse. The main referral options police officers consider for elder abuse include:

- The Elder Abuse Prevention Unit Helpline
- Seniors Legal and Support Services (SLASS)
- Relationships Australia Elder Abuse Prevention and Support Service
- Office of the Public Guardian
- Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia

Appendix 2 shows that in the five financial years between 1 July 2019 and 30 June 2024, the QPS submitted:

- 1,643 referrals to external support services providing non-First Nations individuals over 65 years old with support in relation to elder abuse; and

- 106 referrals to external support services providing First Nations identifying individuals over 50 years old with support in relation to elder abuse.

In accordance with Chapter 9 of the OPM, Police Referrals must be offered if it is reasonably believed that DFV is present. The issuance of a referral is not mandatory where the community member declines to provide consent for the referral, however subject to the circumstances of the particular incident, there is an ability for police officers to make a referral without consent, if required.

VICTIM ASSIST QUEENSLAND

The *Victims of Crime Assistance Act 2009* (VOCAA) provides victims of an act of violence committed in Queensland with financial assistance. This financial assistance scheme is administered by VAQ.

Section 2.12.3 of the OPM provides that where an officer believes a victim requires the assistance of VAQ, a Police Referral is to be submitted.

Pursuant to Section 65(1) and 66 of the VOCAA, VAQ assessors can request access to QPS information (documentation, records of interview, body worn video etc.) gathered during the course of an investigation.

This information is required to assist VAQ assessors with the processing and determination of eligibility of applications from victims of crime for the granting of financial assistance.

VAQ Assessors can download QPS Occurrence Reports and QPS Court briefs directly from QPRIME using the Self Service of Document Retrieval portal.

For documents that can't be accessed via this portal (such as supplementary reports, witness and victim statements, DFV Reports or Police Protection Notices), the QPS VAQ Liaison Officer can download these documents and provide them to VAQ following approval from the investigating officer.

The VAQ Liaison Officer will also seek approval for the release of supplementary reports, statements, official police notebook entries, body worn camera footage, and any other related documents available through QPRIME. The information is disclosed to VAQ and not to the applicant victims applying for assistance.

ALTERNATIVE REPORTING OPTIONS

The QPS recognises there are a range of barriers to victims reporting crimes. To reduce these barriers, the QPS offers alternative reporting options.

To report non-urgent DFV, there is an online portal and an SMS contact service. An assessment of the online and SMS reporting options found that these were well used alternatives to reporting non-urgent DFV. As a result, both platforms are current permanent reporting options. The DFV online portal provides for non-urgent contact with the QPS using an online form⁸ introduced on 3 April 2020, enabling victims and survivors of DFV to discreetly provide reasons for making contact, preferred method of contact, and/or request a specific police officer who may be familiar with an open investigation or case. Key security and safety features associated with the portal include tips for browsing safely online and a button allowing users to instantly close the site without browser history being recorded.

To report non-urgent sexual violence, there are options for victims to make a formal complaint or inform police but not make a formal complaint. The online sexual assault reporting form provides telephone and online options for victims to make a non-urgent report to police, while the alternative reporting

⁸ <https://www.police.qld.gov.au/domestic-violence>

options form enables victims of sexual violence to provide, either anonymously or otherwise, information to police without making a complaint.

PROGRAMS AND INITIATIVES

EMBEDDED DFV SPECIALIST PRACTITIONERS

The QPS has commenced embedding DFV specialist practitioners in police stations which enables victim-survivors of DFV to access timely onsite support. This model provides crisis intervention, as well as the assessment of risk and needs and safety planning to address immediate wellbeing measures for the victim. The embedded DFV specialist practitioners provide victim-survivors with holistic support and are a valuable tool for police officers to engage with the victim-survivor by building trust and rapport, while also providing the specialist support required by victim-survivors. Embedded DFV specialist practitioners strengthen the police process of identifying the person most in need of protection in the relationship.

Social workers are embedded in the following police stations:

- Gladstone
- Toowoomba
- Cairns
- Mareeba
- Nerang
- Robina
- Ipswich
- Springfield
- Beaudesert
- Beenleigh
- Browns Plains
- Jimboomba
- Crestmead
- Logan Central
- Mackay
- Whitsunday
- Bribie
- Mount Isa
- Brisbane City
- Fortitude Valley
- Boondall
- Ferny Grove
- Hendra
- Stafford
- Dutton Park
- Capalaba
- Cleveland
- Inala
- Upper Mount Gravatt
- Kirwan
- Mundingburra
- Townsville
- Bundaberg

HIGH RISK TEAMS

HRTs provide integrated, culturally appropriate responses to victims and children of DFV who are at high risk of harm or lethality while holding perpetrators to account. HRTs were implemented in response to Recommendation 76 of the *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland* report, to establish a model for inter-agency responses to high risk cases which works within, or complements integrated responses and which is progressively established throughout the state. HRTs aim to increase the safety and security of DFV victims and their children, as well as increase perpetrator accountability. This is achieved through a composition of government and non-government organisations that share relevant information, formulate safety and risk assessments, manage risks posed by the perpetrator, increase accountability of both the perpetrator and agencies tasked with over-seeing DFV cases and provide flexibility in responding to evolving needs. The progressive roll out of HRTs commenced as a staged approach in 2017.

Each HRT has a Coordinator from a specialist non-government DFV service and comprises representatives from government agencies including the QPS, Department of Health, Queensland Court Services, Queensland Corrective Services, and Housing and Homelessness Services.

These agencies work collaboratively to:

- share information in accordance with Part 5A Information sharing of the DFVP Act;
- identify appropriate specialist service providers;
- coordinate services and support to improve the safety of DFV victims and their families; and
- hold perpetrators to account.

The QPS ensures high risk DFV cases are prioritised with HRTs and coordinate any actions from safety plans developed that may require a QPS response.

HRTs operate in 11 locations:

- Mount Isa/Gulf
- Cairns
- Townsville
- Mackay
- Moreton
- South Burnett
- North Brisbane
- South Brisbane
- Ipswich
- Logan/Beenleigh
- Redlands

DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE CO-RESPONDER TEAMS

In response to Recommendation 37 of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce, *Hear Her Voice: Report One – Addressing Coercive Control and Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland*, the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety (DFSDSCS) (formerly the Department of Justice and Attorney-General) in partnership with the QPS, is leading the trial of a DFV co-response in Cairns. The co-response model adopts a crisis intervention and early intervention approach for responding to DFV incidents enabling the DFV service system response to commence at the same time as the intervention by QPS.

The trial aims to:

- enhance victim-survivor safety;

- increase accountability of the person using violence and promote behaviour change to stop the violence;
- reduce the misidentification of the person most in need of protection; and
- strengthen knowledge sharing between the QPS and DFV services.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE LIAISON OFFICERS

SVLOs are embedded at all Criminal Investigation Branches across Queensland and support QPS responses to victim-survivors over the age of 16 years and includes support for historical sexual offences.

SVLOs play a crucial role in ensuring appropriate communication between victims and investigators, while enhancing best practice responses by maintaining relationships with relevant government agencies and NGO support services, facilitating training, and reviewing decision making.

The SVLO role and responsibilities are outlined in section 2.6.3 of the OPM. Their responsibilities include ensuring victim-survivors are afforded appropriate supports throughout the investigation and, where appropriate, prosecution of a matter, by allowing a support person to be present during each interview with an investigating officer and offering referrals to appropriate support services.

PARTNERSHIPS

The QPS DEAT has regular scheduled meetings with the Office of the Public Advocate which is responsible for upholding and protecting the rights of Queensland adults with impaired decision-making capability. The partnership facilitates collaboration and advice, and a regular forum to discuss emerging trends and issues in the sector.

The QPS also participates in Elder Abuse Prevention Networks facilitated by Relationships Australia. This provides the opportunity for QPS to share knowledge and learn from guest speakers. These networks are in Moreton, Mackay, the Gold Coast and Central Queensland, and comprise representatives from support services and practitioners including Queensland Health, Office of the Public Guardian, Public Trustee, the Department of Seniors, Council on the Ageing and Seniors Legal and Support Service.

DEAT partnered with Dementia Australia and the Gold Coast City Council to facilitate the Gold Coast as a Dementia Friendly City. Additionally, Runaway Bay Police Station, supported by DEAT, partnered with Dementia Australia to become the first ever certified Dementia Friendly Police Station in Australia and aims to create an inclusive and supportive environment for people living with dementia. The Runaway Bay police division has the largest population of older persons and highest number of aged care facilities on the Gold Coast. All police at this station have completed training to better engage and understand how to best meet the needs of people experiencing dementia. Changes have also been made to the physical environment at the station to improve its accessibility and appropriateness for people living with dementia. People with lived experience of dementia and advocates were included in this process.

FRAUD AND CYBERCRIME

In Queensland reports of cybercrime are generally made via the national reporting platform ReportCyber (www.cyber.gov.au). This portal is available to all Australians and is used by all States/Territories and the Federal Government. When a person initially reports via this platform, they receive an acknowledgement receipt providing advice specific to the type of crime they are the victim of and contact details for the jurisdiction receiving the report. The reports are then, in accordance with the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA) rules, referred to the policing

jurisdiction where the victim is located. Following investigative inquiries, a referral may be made to the jurisdiction where a suspect may be located, per ANZPAA protocols.

Every report that comes to the Queensland Police jurisdiction is triaged and the reporter sent an email with specific advice regarding their report. This email also provides links to support mechanisms such as IDCare, Beyond Blue, and the eSafety Commissioner. Where it is identified that a victim is particularly vulnerable, an occurrence and/or an intelligence submission is recorded within the QPRIME system for follow up by local officers to provide the victim with a referral to IDCare.

Upon receipt of a Fraud complaint referred to the QPS, investigative actions are reviewed including further contact with the victim if necessary. To keep complainants advised during investigations, regular contact is maintained to ensure victim wellbeing and support during that process.

The Financial and Cyber Crime Group represents the QPS on and contributes to a number of national bodies and industry associations that explore best practice and means of earlier intervention opportunities for types of crime specific to elder abuse, including:

- ANZPAA Crime Forum's e-Crime Working Group
- Fraud in Banking Forum
- National Cyber Crime Working Group
- National Online Security Council
- National Heads of Fraud
- AUSTRAC partnerships

EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

The QPS is a member of the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day (WEAAD) Committee, which also includes the Department of Families, Seniors, Disability Services and Child Safety, Brisbane City Council, Caxton Legal Centre and Aged and Disability Advocacy Law. Established in 2023, the committee is a key forum for elder abuse response and prevention stakeholders to collaborate and coordinate efforts including, but not limited to, WEAAD events.

The QPS regularly attends and presents at community events to raise awareness of elder abuse to educate about reporting processes, share useful information and promote personal and community safety. These events include:

- Seniors Expos across Queensland;
- Queensland Seniors Forum;
- Statewide Public Health Networks; and
- Aged and Community Care Providers Association Queensland Conference.

The QPS has developed the *Elder Abuse: Keeping Older People Safe*⁹ and *QPS Seniors Safety Information Sheet*¹⁰ – two informational brochures to increase awareness of the signs of elder abuse and reporting mechanisms available, as well as provide guidance for preventing elder abuse. These brochures are distributed at the above events.

Additionally, the FCCG focus on fraud prevention by administering and delivering the Fraud Awareness and Prevention Program, involving symposiums and presentations to seniors and support groups (including Probus, Returned Services and Neighbourhood Watch Groups) in relation to online safety, identity crime and financial crime with a focus on seniors' specific issues.

⁹ <https://www.police.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-08/QPS%20Elder%20Abuse%20brochure.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.police.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-05/Seniors-Safety-2024.pdf>

APPENDIX 1. Number of reported victims over 64 by offence type and sex, 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2024

Offence Type	Number of victims							
	2022-23				2023-24			
	Male	Female	Not stated	Total	Male	Female	Not stated	Total
Homicide (Murder)	6	3	0	9	7	6	0	13
Other Homicide	4	3	0	7	14	11	0	25
Attempted Murder	1	0	0	1	1	4	0	5
Conspiracy to Murder	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Manslaughter (excl. by Driving & Striking)	0	0	0	0	2	3	0	5
Manslaughter - Unlawful Striking Cause Death	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
Driving Causing Death	3	3	0	6	10	3	0	13
Assault	1241	887	3	2131	1371	1032	9	2412
Grievous Assault	19	13	1	33	26	6	0	32
Serious Assault	503	276	1	780	579	330	4	913
Serious Assault (Other)	617	492	1	1110	664	571	1	1236
Common Assault	102	106	0	208	102	125	4	231
Sexual Offences	16	106	1	123	25	108	1	134
Rape and Attempted Rape	4	25	0	29	3	26	0	29
Other Sexual Offences	12	81	1	94	22	82	1	105
Robbery	82	53	0	135	69	49	0	118
Armed Robbery	43	19	0	62	38	22	0	60
Unarmed Robbery	39	34	0	73	31	27	0	58
Other Offences Against the Person	104	114	0	218	142	165	1	308
Kidnapping & Abduction etc.	5	4	0	9	3	2	0	5
Extortion	4	3	0	7	6	3	0	9
Stalking	18	26	0	44	32	45	0	77
Life Endangering Acts	77	81	0	158	101	115	1	217
Voluntary Assisted Dying	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Offences Against the Person	1453	1166	4	2623	1628	1371	11	3010

Notes:

1. This data is preliminary and may be subject to change.
2. Data is not a unique victim count. A person may be the victim of more than one offence in the period.
3. Only victims whose age are identified and over the age of 64 have been included.
4. Data only includes victims who are 'people' (not businesses).

APPENDIX 2. NUMBER OF POLICE REFERRALS 1 JULY 2019 TO 30 JUNE 2024

The total number of accepted referral reports generated from any occurrence type for a person over 64 years

Financial year	Referral Reports
2019/20	286
2020/21	313
2021/22	330
2022/23	341
2023/24	414

The total number of accepted referral reports generated from any occurrence type for a person over 50 years identifying as First Nations

Financial year	Referral Reports
2019/20	20
2020/21	23
2021/22	13
2022/23	26
2023/24	24

Notes:

1. This data is preliminary and may be subject to change.
2. The referral types of 'Aged support', 'Elder Abuse' included
3. Age calculated as at referral report entered date
4. Financial year is based on the referral report entered date

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