



youth affairs network qld

"Working together to improve the quality of life of young people in Queensland
and thereby improve the quality of life of society."

Submission Response

from

Youth Affairs Network of Queensland (YANQ)

Safe Families – Safer Communities
Action Plan on Domestic & Family Violence: 2001-2003
Draft
(Queensland Government – Department of Families)

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1. About the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland

The Youth Affairs Network of Queensland Inc. (YANQ) is the peak community youth affairs organisation in Queensland. Representing over 400 individuals and organisations from Queensland's youth sector, we promote the interests and well being of young people across the state. YANQ advocates for and with young people, especially marginalised and disadvantaged young people, to government and the community. Further, YANQ encourages and participates in the development of policies, programs, projects and research that are responsive to the needs of young people and we promote and support cultural development.

2. Introduction

YANQ welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Queensland Government's *Safe Families – Safer Communities Draft Action Plan on Domestic and Family Violence: 2001-2003*.

YANQ recognizes the importance of this action plan and its preceding policy objectives which aim to give effect to the Queensland Government's priority outcome of safe and supportive communities and a better quality of life for all Queenslanders.

Various youth sector programs, networks, organisations and individuals have given direct and indirect input to YANQ as the youth sector Peak Body in regards to this submission response.

3. General Comments

Members exhibited a positive overall reaction in regard to the Safer Families – Safer Communities Policy statement and its priorities.

Members also believe it is beneficial that this issue is being addressed through an 'across- government' approach because domestic violence and its repercussions touch a whole variety of agencies, services, and departments.

It is positive to have focuses on the specific cultural diversity issues (esp. indigenous and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) people, as these cultural groupings are demonstrated high risk groups which need focused, strategic, and well resourced and thought-out strategies to achieve change.

4. General Issues

YANQ and its members experienced some difficulties relating to the layout of the draft policy and action plan. In particular, the stated actions do not necessarily correspond to the strategies listed under each policy priority and outcome. As there are a large number of actions for each priority area it is difficult to determine which strategy each action corresponds to. It also makes it difficult for the community to see how the issue of domestic and family violence is being addressed in a coherent, holistic manner through the various interlinking actions.

For example, the variety of actions related to the developing of mechanisms to meet the needs of cultural, linguistic and other diverse groupings (p.5, dot point 7) are scattered throughout sixteen pages.

It has also been noted by members that the focus of the draft policy and action plan is on government departments taking direct action to respond to the issues rather than providing the community sector with significant resources to do this at local levels.

Noting that, in many areas throughout Queensland, the Department of Families is struggling with it's current case load there is concern within the community sector that the Department will have difficulty in extending it's role to cover the additional responsibilities outlined in the across-government action plan without further resources. Further resourcing also need to be shared with the community sector to assist community to address domestic and family violence and add to the across-government outcomes.

It would be helpful to have a glossary of terms for definitions etc within the document, especially highlighting the governments definition of safe family & healthy relationship.

5. Specific Feedback on Draft Actions

The following format of our response is based on a number of issue areas rather than dealing with each individual strategy and/or action. Although a number of comments do relate to individual actions.

5.1 Domestic Violence Service Models and Programs

It is a positive step to see a focus on the development of flexible service delivery models throughout the action plan.

There are questions however regarding how the existing Domestic Violence Service Models respond to victims who are also perpetrators. There is a need to further explore domestic violence response models which recognize the potential duality of roles of some individuals. For example, where a person is a victim of domestic violence but also a perpetrator of family violence.

There also needs to be strategic thought and resourcing given to making service models youth, GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, bi-sexual & Transgender), Indigenous, CALD friendly. Further sub-areas of need within these broader categories also need to be addressed, for example the specific needs and issues of young pregnant and parenting women.

Member would also stress that it is important to develop and maintain a range of entrance points to service delivery and support, particularly addressing the needs of gender and cultural diversity, and youth specific services.

In relation to the Children and Young People Domestic Violence Prevention Program, it is important that the program liaise with YANQ as a Peak Body for youth affairs to enable information dissemination and feedback to occur throughout the statewide sector.

It is a positive to note actions pertaining to programs through youth justice services to assist young aboriginal people to address violent behavior patterns etc. However, the existing programs noted on page 10 of the draft, are not themselves indigenous focused and cover a variety of cultural backgrounds and needs. There is also some level of concern in the sector as to whether these programs would classify themselves as Domestic Violence programs. Consultation feedback has also been made regarding the

absence of acknowledging the community based Youth Justice Program (formally YACCA).

5.2 Training Strategies

A number of actions rely on ISD for delivery, although there are limited resources for the provision of training through ISD, and the sector has noted that ability to access training is sometimes limited. Any actions relating to training strategies need to offer community delivered professional development and forums relating to domestic and family violence.

Education strategies across communities and to organisations responding to domestic violence needs to include specific information on the needs of young people including young people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, GLBT young people, Indigenous young people and pregnant and parenting young women.

There is also a need for non-accredited training for community workers provided by the community sector. This could be provided through Peak Bodies who have a State-wide regional infrastructure.

5.3 Statewide Information Service

Members commend the Statewide Information Service for its role in developing a number of publications to address the needs of families. The sector is pleased that the Youth Peak Body is represented on the Multi-cultural reference group and hopes that the input into the group from the sector through YANQ will enable the development of further practical and effective resources, especially in the area of culturally and linguistically diverse people.

5.4 Culturally & Linguistically Diverse Issues

Members commend a number of references to culturally appropriate – if culturally appropriate means *“being aware of and sensitive to the differing attitudes and varying needs of different groups within the community. This includes being sensitive to the extra difficulties caused by communication problems and recognizing that those problems are not one-sided.”*

The question this definition raised is whether the various departments, strategies, agencies, have critically thought out the implications and requirements of effectively responding to *“cultural appropriateness”*?

We would wish to commend the various actions which highlight the need for use of interpreter services in dealing with CALD clients and the promotion of the Queensland Government Language services policy (1998), and the use of interpreters for the deaf.

In regard to facilitation of cross-agency collaboration to develop support strategies regarding domestic and family violence for refugee students and their families, there needs to be an increased level of resourcing and support for community agencies working with refugees and their families. There is still an enormous need for cultural awareness training (especially focusing on specific refugee groups), and a number of services need significant injections of funds to enhance the capacity of the service to respond.

5.5 Indigenous Issues

We support the development of responses to specifically address Indigenous issues using culturally appropriate strategies that enhance local communities ability to deal with these issues. We urge the government to continue to listen to the voices of Indigenous people and their communities when developing, implementing and evaluating policy initiatives.

Particularly in the area of indigenous men and indigenous men in detention.

In relation to the development of a national strategy regarding Indigenous Family Violence, the sector has articulated that resourcing should be available for the State Youth peak to be involved.

5.6 Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (GLBT) Community Issues

There is a need for more resources/support to enable the community to deliver professional development workshops and/or forums relating to domestic and family violence in the GLBT community to increase awareness and skills.

5.7 Housing/SAAP

Need to monitor & evaluate access and equity of young women & GLBT women to Domestic Violence SAAP services.

Need to liaise with YANQ in regard to implementing the outcomes of the SAAP funded domestic violence service system development strategy.

The document, *Cultural and Linguistically Diversity in SAAP – A Strategy for the supported Accommodation Assistance Program and Policy and Practice Guidelines for SAAP* services has sought to improve policy and program development and service delivery responses to cultural and linguistic diversity in SAAP services. While the document outlines Department of Families commitment to ensure that the cultural and linguistic needs of SAAP clients are taken into consideration for the purpose of policy and program development and services deliver, much more needs to be done to ensure the adequate resourcing of SAAP services, to enable an effective response to the needs of NESB families and young people. There is still a critical lack of safe and secure housing options for young people.

There is also a need to ensure that through monitoring of the above strategy there is community involvement.

The various actions relating to SAAP miss out a particular focus on young women. Young women are not necessarily accessing DV SAAP services and this is an issue that needs to be addressed in the context of this action plan.

In relation to the action on page 12 regarding the SAAP/CAP Ministerial Advisory Arrangement (MAA), YANQ's NESB Policy Officer, who represents some 120 NESB agencies throughout the state would be an invaluable addition as a member of this groups to raise the profile of issues of NESB/CALD young people!

Also in relation to developing links between the SAAP/CAP Ministerial Advisory Arrangement, the child protection council and Queensland Domestic Violence Council,

there is also a need to network, share information, build collaboration and have regular links with the Child Protection Partners Forum.

Issues relating to access to CRS and CATH housing by women escaping domestic violence who have an existing housing commission debt are diverse. Women's access to supported, transitional and emergency housing can be restricted where there is a Housing Commission debt. For many women, their partners or ex-partners have been responsible, at least in part, for the accrued debt. Repayment of the debt can take a significant length of time and for women escaping domestic violence the need for housing is imminent.

In regard to the action to explore opportunities for community responses and crisis accommodation for women in rural and remote areas escaping from domestic and family violence, particularly where no refuge/safe house accommodation is available – the action begs the question of why there is no refuge or safe house available and that the supplying of such should be the first response to the needs of people escaping domestic violence, then there is the opportunity to consider community responses.

5.8 Education

We commend the innovative strategies developed by the School Based Youth Health Program and the Youth Support Coordinators (YSC's) across Queensland in working with schools, students and families to respond to domestic violence issues. It is recognized, however, that these programs are currently not focused nor funded as a domestic violence response and therefore domestic violence is not a core part of the YSC's role, although it may be an issue and contributing at risk factor for young people.

5.9 Youth Participation

Members found it difficult to see how the inclusion of the actions relating to the Queensland Governments Youth Participation strategies will prevent domestic and family violence. The focus of the State Youth Advisory Council is youth participation not Domestic Violence, the Generate Website in about information and input for young people in its broadest sense, local level participation is about participation projects, not domestic violence, and the register for statutory Boards and Committees is yet to be completed. How this might assist in creating a safe environment was unclear.

5.10 Child Protection

Until the Forde Inquiry recommendations are fully implemented and resources attached as stated in recommendation No. 4, it is difficult for the sector to effectively address child protection needs within our society. It is also important for continued liaison and coordination to occur between major stakeholders such as liaising with the Child Protection Partners Forum to ensure the voice, commitment and involvement of the community sector continues.

5.11 Detention

In relation to the development of outreach services to women in prison, it is necessary for the Department of Families and the Department of Corrective Services to consult with the community sector, specifically those organisations that are currently providing support to women in prisons.

5.12 Queensland Police Service

Strategies for improving Police Service delivery need to take into account. Cultural considerations and the strategies should include the training, equipping and utilizing of Police Liaison Officers, both culturally and linguistically diverse and GLBT, in addressing domestic violence across divisions.

In relation to strategies for improving police education and training it is important that joint training also be provided to the Academy by the community sector e.g. peak Bodies such as YANQ to be resourced to provide training/professional development workshops in relation to young people's issues.

5.13 Men's Issues

Current responses rely on the implementation of the law to respond to men's violence. We commend the draft policy and action plan's stated commitment to community intolerance of domestic violence.

5.14 Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act

In considering a number of actions regarding the Domestic Violence (Family Protection) Act, YANQ would wish to reinforce the view given in the submission to the Domestic Violence Legislation Amendment Bill 2001 in May, that whilst we commend the Queensland Government on its commitment to extending the Act to include a range of relationships, there are still specific workability issues for the new act and these have not been addressed in the development of this action plan.

In the action regarding the provision of training on amendments to the act, the department should link with and resource Peak Bodies to provide this training to the sector.

5.15 Health

In relation to the current action in relation to the implementation of relevant programs and policy initiatives in priority areas such as alcohol misuse we recommend that drug misuse must be considered as a factor within many violent relationships and there is a persistent need for youth specific detoxification and rehabilitation beds to respond to young people's emotional and well-being needs given that there is currently a lack of services throughout the State.

It was also noted that the School based Youth Health Nurse Program is not funded specifically to respond to domestic violence. The program addresses areas in relation to education, counseling, referral and engagement with community. It is acknowledged that the role of the School Based Youth Health has a very broad scope.

5.16 Legal Aid

A number of actions relate to Legal Aid Queensland. Members have raised the importance of further resourcing to effectively enable legal aid to implement the various actions.

6. Conclusion

As earlier stated the formulation/design of the Action Plan was difficult to respond to as issues/themes were scattered throughout the document. Often documents that are not

simple to follow/read and/or include information that is not directly related to the subject can cause barriers for obtaining succinct feedback from members.

Maybe in future a draft document could be discussed with Peak Bodies before the final document is distributed for feedback.