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Most people in intimate relationships disagree about things from time to time; disagreements are a normal part of a healthy relationship. Both parties should be able to put forward their different points of view or concerns and feel comfortable discussing them together. In a healthy relationship both parties treat each other as equals and compromise to seek solutions to overcome their problems.

However, in a relationship where domestic and family violence is occurring the situation is very different. One person in the relationship uses abuse and or violence to control the other person through fear. The victim feels threatened, too frightened to argue back, or too scared to disagree or express their opinion. The perpetrator has power over the victim. In the majority of cases of domestic and family violence the victims are female.

Generally women in domestic and family violence situations do not enter a relationship believing it will become violent. Although sometimes women will choose to make a long-term relationship commitment when there is abuse occurring, often believing marriage or moving in together will put a stop to his extreme jealousy and possessiveness. There are also occasions when women enter longer term commitments out of fear, concerned about the consequences for their safety or for others if they don’t.

In many abusive relationships the physical and sexual violence does not begin until after the relationship is well established, and for many women their first experience of physical violence will be during pregnancy. Perpetrators of abuse and violence are often initially very controlling and dominating over their partner and this behaviour may mistakenly be interpreted as jealousy, or considered a compliment by the woman or as a sign of his love for her. In some cases domestic and family violence can continue long after the relationship has ended.

It is important domestic and family violence is understood in the context of social inequality rather than on the dynamics of individual relationships. The structural inequalities in society creates a power differential between women and men and results in domestic violence in interpersonal relationships.
relationships protected under the law in queensland

The Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 aims to provide safety and protection for people in domestic relationships who are victims of domestic and family violence. The ‘Act’ defines domestic relationships as spousal relationships, intimate personal relationships, family relationships and informal care relationships. In the majority of cases women are the victims of domestic and family violence, however, men can also be victims. The definitions of each relationship type are outlined below:

**Spousal relationships:**
Includes people who are married, separated or divorced; biological parents of a child; or two people of the same or opposite sex who are living together or have previously lived together as a couple.

**Intimate personal relationships:**
Includes people who are or were engaged to be married to each other including a betrothal under cultural or religious tradition. It also includes people who are or were previously dating and whose lives have become enmeshed.

**Family relationships:**
Includes people who are relatives of each other by blood or marriage such as a grandparent, aunt, uncle, step-parent, sibling, cousin or child over 18 years old. The relatives of those who are in or have been in a de facto relationship are also included. A relative also includes a person it is reasonable to regard as a relative. This is considering that for some people the concept of a relative may be wider such as for Aboriginal people, Torres Strait Islanders, members of certain non-English speaking background communities, and people with particular religious beliefs.

**Informal care relationships:**
Includes people who are or were dependent on another person (a carer) who helps them with an activity of daily living (personal care activities). This may include dressing, preparing meals or shopping. The personal care must be required because of a disability, illness or impairment.

If you wish to seek protection under the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 further information is available on page 22 of this booklet.
forms of domestic + family violence

Fear:
Is a key element in domestic violence and is often the most powerful way a perpetrator controls his victim. Fear is created by giving looks, or making gestures, possessing weapons (even if they are not used), destroying property, cruelty to pets – or any behaviour which can be used to intimidate and render the victim powerless.

Intimidation:
Includes smashing things, destroying her possessions, putting a fist through the wall, handling of guns or other weapons, using intimidating body language (angry looks, raised voice), hostile questioning of the victim, reckless driving of vehicle with victim in the car. It may also include harassing the victim at her workplace either by making persistent phone calls or sending text messages or emails, following her to and from work, or loitering near her workplace.

Verbal abuse:
Includes screaming, shouting, put-downs, name-calling, using sarcasm, ridiculing her for her religious beliefs or ethnic background.

Physical abuse:
Can range from a lack of consideration for her physical comfort to causing permanent injury or even death. It could include such behaviour as pushing, shoving, hitting, slapping, choking, hair-pulling, punching etc. and may or may not involve the use of weapons. It could also be threats to, or actually destroying prized possessions.

Emotional abuse:
Is any behaviour that deliberately undermines the victims confidence, leading her to believe she is stupid, or that she is 'a bad mother' or useless or even to believe she is going crazy or is insane. This type of abuse humiliates, degrades and demeans the victim. The perpetrator may make threats to harm the victim, friend or family member, threaten to take her children, or to commit suicide. Or the perpetrator may use silence and withdrawal as a means to abuse.

Social abuse:
Includes isolating the victim from social networks and supports either by preventing the victim from having contact with her family or friends or by verbally or physically abusing her in public or in front of others. It may be continually putting friends and family down so she is slowly disconnected from her support network.
Economic abuse:
Results in the victim being financially dependent on their partner. She may be denied access to money, including her own, demanding that she and her children live on inadequate resources. These can be contributing factors for women becoming 'trapped' in violent relationships.

Sexual abuse:
Includes a range of unwanted sexual behaviours including forced sexual contact, rape, forcing her to perform sexual acts that cause pain or humiliation, forcing her to have sex with others, causing injury to her sexual organs.

Controlling behaviours:
Includes dictating what she does, who she sees and talks to, where she goes, keeping her from making any friends or from talking to her family, or having any money of her own. This can include preventing her from going to work, not allowing her to express her own feelings or thoughts, not allowing her any privacy, forcing her to go without food or water.

Spiritual abuse:
Includes ridiculing or putting down a her beliefs and culture, or preventing her from belonging to, or taking part in a group that is important to her spiritual beliefs, or practising her religion.

Separation violence:
Often after the relationship has ended violence may continue, this can be a very dangerous time for the victim because the perpetrator may perceive a loss of control over the victim and may become more unpredictable. During and after separation is often a time when violence will escalate leaving the victim more unsafe than previously.

Stalking:
Sometimes the victim is stalked by the perpetrator either before or after separation. Stalking includes loitering around places she is known to frequent, watching her, following her, making persistent telephone calls and sending mail including unwanted loveletters, cards and gifts although the relationship has ended. Stalking is a criminal offence, under the stalking legislation more than one type of behaviour has to occur, or the same type of behaviour has to occur on more than one occasion.

Spousal homicide:
The death of the victim directly attributed to domestic violence. Research indicates between 25% - 31% of homicides in Australia involve either spouses or sexual intimates. (Esteal, 1993)

all forms of domestic violence are unacceptable
some forms are a criminal offence
Domestic violence generally occurs as a pattern of coercive power and control, whereby one person in the relationship intentionally and deliberately threatens to or actually does hurt or intimidate the other. The 'Power and Control Wheel' was developed in Duluth Minnesota following interviews with women who had experienced domestic violence where they were asked to identify the ways in which they felt they were controlled.

At the centre of the Wheel is the intention - the purpose - of all the abusive tactics - to establish power and control. Each spoke of the Wheel represents a particular tactic. The rim of the Wheel that holds it together is physical abuse and the threat of violence.
healthy relationships

In a healthy relationship power is shared equally between both parties, neither partner has to be in control of the other. Trust and love is built by equality between the couple. Both parties feel comfortable, safe and are treated with respect, there is never abuse or violence in the relationship.
how safe is your relationship?

The following is a checklist of warning signals that will identify if you are in an abusive relationship, answering yes to any of them may alert you to the level of danger in your situation. Whether the violence or abuse has happened once or many times, you are at risk. These behaviours indicate your partner is choosing to use a system of power and control over you.

Emotional abuse
☐ Does he call you names or make you feel bad about the way you look?
☐ Does he verbally degrade your self-worth by constantly putting you down?

Physical abuse
☐ Has he ever pushed, shoved, slapped, pinched, punched, or physically hurt you?
☐ Does he have a history of using violence with others?

Using male privilege
☐ Does he always see himself as superior or always right?
☐ Does he treat you like you a possession that can be owned?
☐ Does he insist on making all the big decisions?

Using coercion and threats
☐ Does he use force or coercion to make you do things against your will?
☐ Has threatened to hurt the children, friends, family members or pets?
☐ Has he threatened to report you to Centrelink, Taxation Department, or others?
☐ Has he ever threatened to leave you?
☐ Insist you dress more or less sexually than you want?

Using isolation
☐ Does he try to control your contact with your family and friends?
☐ Does he need to know where you are constantly?
☐ Does he insist that you are always at home, or only let you out of the house if he is with you or insist on knowing where you are going?
☐ Does he monitor or limit your phone calls, conversations and emails?
☐ Does he check the mileage on the car to see if he can work out where you have been or who you have seen?

Sexual abuse
☐ Does he pressure you to have sex which is unpleasant, pressured or forced?
☐ Made you do something very humiliating or degrading?
☐ Made you have sex after emotional or physical abuse or when you are sick?
Minimising, denying and blaming
- Does he blame you for his anger and violence, saying it was your fault?
- Does he say that you were “asking for it” after physically hitting or abusing you?
- Does he deny using violence or say it wasn’t that bad?

Using Intimidation
- Does he smash your belongings or break things around the house?
- Has he ever punched holes in the walls or doors?
- Is he easily angered and prone to sudden mood swings?
- Does your talking to members of the opposite sex result in unfounded jealousy and suspicion that is out of proportion?

Economic abuse
- Taken away your money or controlled how you spend it?
- Refused to pay the household bills, or to give any money towards them?

Using the children
- Has he told you that you would lose custody or never see the children again?
- Does he question the children to find out information about you?

If you ticked yes to any of the above questions then domestic violence is happening in your relationship. Regardless of whether physical abuse has occurred or not you are being abused, and your safety could be at risk. You deserve to be treated with respect and have a life free from violence and abuse.

Help and support is available, important safety information is available on page 19 of this booklet.
common questions + answers

Do some women provoke the violence by nagging?
No. Most abused women try to do everything they can to please their partner and avoid further violent episodes. Victims of domestic violence are vulnerable to further episodes of abuse regardless of their behaviour. Responsibility for violence rests solely with the abuser.

Is domestic violence a learned behaviour?
Abusers have often witnessed domestic violence as children. However not all children who grow up with domestic violence will go on to become abusers themselves likewise not all perpetrators of domestic violence grew up in violent homes. Violence is a choice. In our society there is widespread tolerance of gender, racial, religious and cultural inequality and violence, this teaches that abuse and controlling behaviour is acceptable. However, abuse that is learned can be un-learned and positive, healthy ways of relating can be learned.

Does alcohol or drugs cause domestic violence?
No, it is a misconception that domestic violence is caused by alcohol or substance abuse. The fact is that almost equal numbers of sober and drunken men are violent. Where studies show that more drinkers are violent to their partners, the studies are not able to explain why many drunken men (80% heavy and binge drinkers) do not abuse their partners. Alcohol or other addictive substances are used by men as a means to give themselves permission to be violent. If someone blames alcohol or drugs, they are avoiding taking responsibility for their actions - many people enjoy drinking and some may even drink excessively, and never use violence. Many people stop their drinking and still keep using violence and controlling behaviours. While the use of alcohol and drugs can often make the violence more serious, they do not cause it.

Religious beliefs and domestic violence
Abusers may use their religion as an excuse for their violence. Religion is no excuse for domestic violence. There is nothing to support the view that it is God's will for people to endure family violence. Use of Scripture to justify domestic violence is unacceptable. Some women may feel pressure from their faith or community to 'honour' their commitment to marriage and stay in the abusive relationship. They may think that to leave or get a divorce is against their religious beliefs. "The Scriptures can sometimes be misused to condone the use of power and to keep women and children in unsafe situations, hence care offered by the church has often been destructive rather than liberating" Ian George, Archbishop of Adelaide, 1995

Is domestic violence more prevalent in some cultures?
Domestic violence crosses all countries and cultures. Some abusive men claim that in their culture, women have a subordinate role, and the use of violence is permitted to keep women in line. Some accuse the legal system of attempting to destroy their culture or that laws against family violence are racist. It is important to maintain cultural traditions and beliefs, but this can be done without violence or abuse. Under the law the same standards of non-violent behaviour applies to all.
common questions about men who abuse

Can an abuser change?
Change is possible because violence is a choice. However to make positive change he must first accept responsibility for his violent and abusive behaviour. The process is slow as it requires the abuser to challenge their beliefs and attitudes and stop using power and control, this is not easy to do and requires much hard work and commitment.

Am I to blame for his violence?
No. Abusers make a choice to use violence and abuse. A lot of violent men will blame their partners for their abusive behaviour to avoid taking responsibility for themselves. They choose when and how they are violent or abusive. Most abusive men are only violent towards their partners, and many report they can turn off their violent and abusive behaviour when others are around.

Does he just lose control?
No. Abusers choose who to hurt, when to hurt and how to hurt, to accomplish their ends. Some people think men who have behaved in violent or aggressive ways must be mentally ill, crazy or lose control. Violence is not about losing control, but rather trying to get control over a person or situation. Domestic violence occurs when someone decides to use physical, sexual, emotional and or spiritual abuse to get their way – or to make someone do something, stop them from doing something or to punish them. Most are not violent or controlling outside the home.

What if he is sorry?
Most abusers are sorry about their violence afterwards. In fact, remorse is part of the pattern of violence. The abuser may promise to end the violence, to attend counselling, he may give gifts to his partner and will do, say or promise basically anything to ‘get everything back to normal’. When the victim accepts the apology or returns to the relationship the pattern of abuse and violence begins again. If an abuser is serious about stopping his violence he will take full responsibility for his behaviour and will seek help and actively work on changing his behaviour.

What about anger management programs?
It is now widely accepted that domestic violence is not about anger, but instead is more about the abuser’s desire to control his partner through any means that will work. Anger management programs do not address the fundamental causes of domestic violence, nor do they focus on safety of the victim or hold the perpetrator accountable for his violence. They are not appropriate alternatives to specialised domestic violence behaviour change programs.
What about men’s domestic violence education programs?
Men’s domestic violence education programs are group programs especially designed for men who are abusive to address their violent and abusive behaviours, they aim to:
- examine and challenge men’s beliefs and attitudes that support violence
- examine the effects their violence and abuse has on their partners and their children
- examine the impact their violence has had on their own life
- teach and practice non-controlling and non-violent alternatives.

Abusive men may be motivated to attend a domestic violence program for many different reasons. They may be directed by the Court to attend following a breach of a Domestic Violence Protection Order. Sometimes family, friends, employers or others place pressure on him to attend out of concern for his violent behaviour. Some men choose to attend in an attempt to save their relationship believing that if they attend a program their partner will not leave them or she will return with the hope that things will improve. Some men who attend do actually want to change their violent and abusive behaviour.

Many women are hopeful that once a man is attending a program this will bring an end to the violence and abuse. However, it is important to understand that whilst a program can offer a range of supports and opportunities for change it will not be effective unless the man himself wants to change. He must be prepared to challenge himself and work hard at becoming non violent, striving for equality in his relationships. This is a difficult thing to do as it requires challenging his belief systems and identifying the ways in which he gives himself permission to be violent and abusive. Attending or completing a program does not mean he will stop being violent or abusive or that his partner will be safe therefore a woman should not stay with him simply because he is attending a program. Since attendance at a program does not guarantee safety for his partner and children. It is a good idea to keep the safety plans you have made in place, and stay in touch with a counsellor from the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre or a women's support and education group.

How do I know if he has changed?
Some men do complete domestic violence education programs with changed beliefs and a willingness to be non-controlling and non-violent. However, it is not safe to assume that just because an abuser has completed or is attending a program that violence and abuse has stopped. Change comes slowly, trust your gut feelings and ask yourself the following questions:
- Has he completely stopped doing and saying things that frighten you?
- Can you express your opinions about the relationship without fear of being punished?
- Does it feel safe to bring up topics that you know upset him?
- Will he listen to your opinions with respect?
- Does he respect your wishes about sex and physical contact?
- Has he stopped expecting you to do things for him?
- Can you spend time with friends and family without being afraid he will retaliate?
- Do you feel in control of your life?

If you answered NO to any of these questions it is likely you are still at risk of further violence and abuse. Always consider your safety first.
what about women who use violence?

Some say “It takes two to tango” and believe that abuse in relationships is caused by both people but the reality is mutual abuse is not common. A ‘fight’ involving violence where both people share equal power in the relationship is rare. A pattern of violence that includes control and domination by one of the partners is more common.

Whilst the use of violence is never condoned it is helpful to understand that the violence used by women against their male partners can take several forms:

**Self defence**
Is when a woman uses as much force as is reasonably necessary to defend herself against an assault in an effort to protect herself from further violence.

**Retaliatory violence**
Retaliatory violence describes a situation when a woman hits back after experiencing a long history of violence and abuse from her partner in the relationship. Although she may use violence in this incidence she is not the most powerful or most dangerous person in the relationship. She may continue to fear for her safety.

**Violence used to control**
There are a small percentage of relationships where women use violence as a pattern of abuse using power and control against their partners. However, statistics compiled from Police reports, Hospital Accident and Emergency Departments, Court data, and Domestic Violence Counselling Services suggests these types of relationships are a minority. Because this type of violence is not common it can be difficult for men to reach out to seek help to become safe as they may feel ashamed or are embarrassed to talk about it.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Centre provides safety information and referrals for men who are victims of domestic and family violence who have been abused by their partner, son, brother, other family member or same sex partner.
**domestic violence facts**

The vast majority of dangerous, abusive and violent behaviours that occur in private in people's homes are committed by men, against women. The following statistics are a sobering reality:

1 million Australian women have experienced violence by a previous partner, including violence that occurred both during and after the relationship. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996)

23% of Australian women who have ever been married or in a de-facto relationship experienced violence by a partner at some time during the relationship. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996)

Women who experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner were significantly more likely to experience emotional abuse such as manipulation, isolation or intimidation than those who had not experienced violence (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996)

Younger women were more at risk than older women, with 7.3% of women aged 18-24 years having experienced one or more incidents of violence from a current partner in the previous 12 month period as compared to 1.2% of women aged 55 and over. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996)

Of all murder-suicides in Australia from July 1989 - June 1996, 43% were committed by partners or former partners of the victims. (Australian Institute of Criminology 1998)

In domestic homicides in Queensland between 1994-1997, 82% of victims were female and 82% of offenders were male.

In a 1992 survey held at the Emergency Department of the Royal Brisbane Hospital, 23.6% of the female Respondents indicated a history of experiencing domestic violence. It was also found that 70% - 80% of all victims of domestic violence seek medical assistance at least once (Roberts, 1994).

A further study undertaken at the Pre-Natal Clinic at Royal Brisbane Hospital found that 29.7% of pregnant women had a history of experiencing abuse and 8.9% suffered abuse during pregnancy. (Webster 1994)
the effects of domestic violence on children

In homes where domestic violence occurs, children are also at high risk of suffering physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Whether or not they are physically abused, children who witness domestic violence suffer significant emotional and psychological trauma said to be similar to that experienced by victims of child abuse. A child may experience domestic violence at a number of levels.

As direct victims of physical abuse or serious neglect.
Research suggests that men who abuse their partners are likely to assault their children. The abuse of women who are mothers usually predates the infliction of child abuse (Stark & Flitcraft, 1988). At least half of all abusive partners also batter their children (Pagelow, 1989). The more severe the abuse of the mother, the worse the child abuse (Bowker, Arbitell, and McFerron, 1988).

Daughters are more likely than sons to become victims. (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Woman abuse is also the context for sexual abuse of female children. Where the mother is assaulted by the father, daughters are exposed to a risk of sexual abuse 6.51 times greater than girls in nonabusive families (Bowker, Arbitell, and McFerron, 1988). Where a male is the perpetrator of child abuse, one study demonstrated that there is a 70 percent chance that any injury to the child will be severe and 80 percent of child fatalities within the family are attributable to fathers or father surrogates. (Bergman, Larsen, and Mueller, 1986).

As "indirect" victims of physical injury
Older children are frequently assaulted when they intervene to defend or protect their mothers (Hilberman and Munson, 1977-78). A child may be hurt when struck by a weapon or thrown object. Infants can be hurt if being held by their mothers when the abuser strikes out.

As victims of emotional and psychological trauma
Ninety percent of children present in violent homes had witnessed the violence perpetrated against their mother. (Report of the Queensland Domestic Violence Task Force, 1988). In a research undertaken by the Australian Institute of Criminology, 15% of young people surveyed identified they had experienced domestic violence and 32% of young people knew someone who had experienced domestic violence. (National Research on Young People’s Attitudes and experiences of Domestic Violence : 2000)

Children witnessing the violence inflicted on their mothers evidence behavioural, somatic, or emotional problems similar to those experienced by physically abused children (Jaffe, Wolfe, and Wilson, 1990).
Separation violence and or / child abduction
Research confirms that abusive men often escalate violence to re-capture their partner and children who have sought safety in separation. The risk to children in the context of domestic violence separation is substantial. Yet the risk is virtually invisible. While the impact of domestic violence on women has "come out of the closet" over the course of the last fifteen years, the impact and risk of domestic violence for children remains a closely held secret. The Domestic Violence Prevention Centre recognises that a child living in an environment where domestic violence occurs is an abused child. Not all children are affected by domestic violence in the same way. It can impact on every aspect of a child's life and behaviour.

Common reactions of children exposed to domestic violence

- Isolation
- Feeling responsible for the abuse
- Helplessness
- Guilt for not stopping the abuse
- Medical problems
- Grief
- Ambivalence
- Fear of abandonment
- Embarrassment
- Pessimism about the future
- Eating and sleeping disorders
- Depression
- Detachment
- Children will fantasise about living in a normal home life

Common reactions of adolescents to domestic violence

- Poor academic performance, school drop-out
- Low self esteem
- Refuses to bring friends home – stays away – runs away
- Isolated
- Violent outbursts
- Irresponsible decision making
- Eating Disorders
- Suicide Attempts
- Substance abuse and other delinquent behaviours
- Unable to communicate feelings
- Nightmares
- Depression
- Dating Violence
- Physical symptoms

Apart from the emotional, physical, social and behavioural damage abuse creates for children, they may also learn that it is okay to use violence to get what they want, and as adults may repeat the violence in their intimate relationships.

Often when women and children leave the domestic violence situation and children receive specialist support and counselling the emotional and behavioural effects of the violence on children will improve. If you are interested in accessing counselling for your children contact the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre for more information.
leaving an abusive relationship

If you are in a domestic violence situation the decision to leave is often a difficult one. There are many barriers that can stand in the way of a woman trying to leave an abusive relationship that must first be overcome to achieve safety. Some of the reasons it can be difficult to leave may be:

Fear for safety
- Fear of what he will do when he finds out you have left.
- Fear he will carry out a threat to harm or kill you, your children or others.
- Fear he will carry out his threat to commit suicide if you leave.
- Fear you won't be able to take care of themselves and the children alone.

Isolation from others
- Fear being alone, that no-one will understand or help you.
- Fear of being rejected by family and friends.
- If you are in a same sex relationship, you may fear you will be "outed" or that no one will believe you.

Pressures about the children
- Believe children need two parents, and don't want to raise them alone.
- Fear of being deported or that your children will be taken out of Australia.
- Believe you cannot give the children the same lifestyle they are accustomed to.

Promises from your partner
- You believe that things will get better.
- You believe that no one else will love you.
- You believe others will think you are stupid for staying as long as you have.

Pressures from cultural or religious communities,
- You want to try to keep the family together and live up to your religious commitment to remain with your partner.

Pressure from family and friends to stay
- You feel feel ashamed, embarrassed, and humiliated you don't want anyone to know what is happening.

Financial pressures
- You are financially dependent on your partner for shelter, food, and other necessities and you don’t know how you would cope alone.

Legal issues
- You fear you may lose your children in a ‘custody’ battle.
- You are worried about going to court and having to tell what has happened.
After living with domestic violence many women report feeling as if they are unable to make decisions and feel they have no control over their lives. Their self-esteem and self-confidence has disappeared and they feel they have lost their sense of their own self-worth and value. It may take time to build your confidence back and trust in yourself again to feel positive and hopeful about the future and confident in your ability to make decisions for yourself and your children, this is quite normal and to be expected.

Some people think it should be easy for a woman to leave a relationship where domestic violence is happening, that she should just get up and go. The truth is it is much harder to leave an abusive relationship than a non-abusive one. Many women do leave or try to leave, but it can be a difficult and lonely process. For some women, especially immigrant women or women from indigenous backgrounds, leaving is not an easy option because they risk being excluded from their support networks, the very group that gives them their place to stand in their family or community. On average most women will leave between five and seven times before they are able to leave permanently, each time becoming stronger and more confident. It is important to realise that leaving does not always mean you will become safe immediately. In fact you may be in greatest danger from your partner's abuse at the time of separation. Any attempt to leave should be planned with safety of you and your children in mind.

It is important to remember that whilst the list of barriers may seem overwhelming that many women have been able to leave abusive relationships and go on to have safe, healthy, happy fulfilling lives for themselves and their children. The key to doing so is having a belief in yourself and that you deserve a life free from violence and abuse. For many women the first step to rebuilding confidence has been to join a women’s support group. In these groups women have the opportunity to meet other women, share experiences and coping strategies and realise you are not alone. If you are interested in joining a group contact the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre for more information.

The following quotes are from women who have experienced domestic violence in their relationships and have expressed how they felt....

"For years he had me believing it was my fault. He made me think I was stupid and ugly and I deserved what I got.... I was scared.... I could never manage without him and no-one would ever want me or give me a job."

"I loved him - I still do really. He put me in hospital twice but I just melted when I saw him crying. I thought hitting me showed he cared. I believed him when he said he would change."

"He turned everyone against me. I had no friends, no social life, no support. He got the children to keep track of my movements and tell him what I'd been doing and who I'd talked to. I knew he'd never let me go."

"My mother, his mother, our counsellor and our minister all told me I should stay... They said he was trying to change and I needed to support him. I waited through six years of hell."
safety planning

Safety of you and your children is extremely important regardless of whether you choose to leave or stay in the relationship. It may be helpful to think about and develop a safety plan in advance so you will know what to do if you are in a situation in the future where you and or your children are at risk of abuse or violence. Safety plans are necessary to assist you to avoid serious injury and escape violence in the future, they are also essential if you decide to leave the relationship so you can separate safely and stay safe after you have separated.

For your safety plan to work it is vital you don't let your partner see the plan, but it is a good idea to talk about it with someone you trust that is close to you. It is important to understand that whilst you can take steps to avoid violence you cannot stop the violence, the only person who can do that is the person who is violent.

A plan to avoid serious injury during a violent incident

During a violent incident at home you must do everything you can to avoid serious injury this may include:

- Leaving the situation if possible.
- Knowing the easiest escape routes from the house - doors, windows etc.
- Planning where you will go in advance.
- Having a safe place to stay arranged that is known only to yourself and your children.
- Identifying a neighbour you can tell about the violence and asking them to call the police if they hear a disturbance coming from your house. Develop some sort of a code or signal between you where they will know you are in danger.
- Teach your children to phone 000 and practice what to say.
- Have the 24 Hour refuge referral number (1800 811 811) memorised or in a place that is easy to find.
- Call the Police as soon as it is safe to report the incident. The police can also arrange safe accommodation for you and your children.

It is essential for children who live in violent homes to have a simple safety plan so they know what to do when domestic violence is occurring, this could include:

- Warning children to stay out of the adult conflicts.
- Decide ahead of time on a safe place the children can go when they feel unsafe.
- Teach children how to use police and other emergency phone numbers.
- Making a list of people the children can trust and talk to when they are feeling unsafe (neighbors, teachers, relatives, friends).
A plan to leave the relationship as safely as possible

- Plan where you could go to be safe such as friends, family or a women’s refuge, always try to take the children with you.

- Keep a small amount of cash to make emergency calls, key cards, house keys, essential medications and important papers together in a place where you can get them quickly or have someone else retrieve them. You may wish to have a copy of these left with someone you trust.

- If you do leave you can always request police to accompany you back to the house to retrieve your personal possessions. Do not put your safety at risk to retrieve property or possessions.

- Make your own list of personal papers you need to take with you this may include:
  - Birth certificates
  - Marriage certificate
  - Domestic Violence Protection Order
  - Family Court Orders
  - Passports for yourself and children
  - Drivers licence
  - Insurance policies
  - Taxation, employment and Income documents
  - Centrelink card or number
  - Medicare card or number
  - Bank account numbers and statements
  - Bank Cards, cheque books, credit cards
  - Department of Immigration & Citizenship documentation
  - Medical records

- Arrange your transport in advance; a lift from friend or book a taxi

- Ask your doctor to carefully note any evidence of injuries on your patient records.

- Only tell friends and family you are sure you can trust of your plans.

CAUTION!
Leaving can be the most dangerous time
Always consider your safety when planning to leave
Staying safe after separation:

- Inform your children’s school or and child care centre who has permission to collect your children, if you have family court orders a copy may be left with the school.
- Arrange for your mail to be redirected to a post office box instead of your new address if you have moved.
- Consider reviewing your banking and postal arrangements.
- If possible try not to frequent places where you used to go, use different shops and banks to those you used previously.
- Increase security on your house or unit by installing an outside sensor lights.
- Plan for extra safety between where you park you car and entering your home, e.g. an automatic garage door opener, safety lighting, or removal of shrubs or trees in the area.
- Change the locks on your house and ensure the windows are secure. Have security chains fitted to all entry doors and make sure they are used at all times when the door is answered by you or your children.
- Arrange for your phone line to have calling number display/caller id and arrange for a private unlisted number.
- Keep a mobile phone with you at all times and pre-program any numbers you might need in an emergency; including the Police and DV Connect (24 Hour Refuge Referral Line).
- Vary your travel routes to and from work. Keep a map handy and pre plan routes in unknown areas to prevent you from having to leave your vehicle.
- Tell neighbours that your partner does not live with you and ask them to call the police if he is seen near your house, or if they hear an assault occurring.
- Tell your employer that you have a protection order, or that you are afraid of your ex-partner, and ask for your telephone calls at work to be screened.
- If your ex-partner breaches the protection order, telephone the Police and report the breach. If the Police do not help, contact your advocate or a legal service for assistance to make a complaint.
- Contact the Australian Electoral Commission and ask for your name and address to be excluded from the published electoral role.
- Attend a woman's domestic violence support group to help you grow stronger and understand what has happened to you.
Seeking protection under the law in Queensland

Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989
In Queensland the ‘Domestic & Family Violence Protection Act 1989’ provides protection to people from domestic and family violence. You can apply to the Magistrates Court for a ‘Domestic Violence Protection Order’. A Domestic Violence Protection Order is a civil (not criminal) order made by the Magistrate’s Court under the (The “Act”). The purpose of the Act is to provide safety and protection against further acts of domestic violence of a person being committed by someone else. It does this by seeking to restrict the behaviour of the person committing abuse. Domestic Violence Protection Orders are civil matters not criminal. People who can apply for a Protection Order are:

Persons in Spousal Relationships including:
- People who are or have been married
- People who are biological parents of a child
- People who are or have resided together as a couple including same sex relationships

Persons in Intimate Personal Relationships including:
- People who are or were engaged to each other
- People who are or were and whose lives have become enmeshed. This can be determined by such things as the circumstances of the relationship – including trust and commitment, the length of time of the relationship and the frequency of contact, and the level of intimacy. This may also include same sex relationships. Intimate Personal Relationships may also include children under the 18 years of age in a dating relationship if enmeshment is determined. If the young person is under the age of 16 all documentation including applications and orders will be given to the child’s parents as well as the child.

Persons in Family Relationships
- People who are related by blood or marriage such as grandparent, aunt, uncle, step parent, half-brother, mother-in-law, parent and child. This include relatives of those who are in or have been in a de-facto relationship. This definition also considers wider conceptions of a relative such as is understood by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people from non-english speaking backgrounds or who hold certain religious beliefs. Children under the age of 18 cannot be Respondents or the Aggrieved under this act as the violence would be considered a Child Protection issue and should be dealt with under the Child Protection Act 1999;

Persons in Informal Care Relationships
- Where a relationship exists between two persons if a person is or was dependant on the other person (a carer) who helps the person with the daily activities of living which can include shopping, dressing or preparing meals. The help provided must be provided to a person with a disability, illness or impairment and be provided in an informal way and not involve payment of a fee (not including a pension or allowance in the carers own name from Centrelink.)
**What is defined as domestic violence under the Act?**

The Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 defines domestic violence as:

- Wilful injury to the other person.
- Wilful damage to the other person’s property.
- Intimidation or harassment of the other person.
- Indecent Behaviour towards the other person without consent.
- A threat to commit one of the acts mentioned above towards the other person.

**Persons who can be included on the order**

If there has been an incident of violence or abuse towards others or a specific threat of violence or abuse towards others you can apply to the court to have those persons named on the order also. This may include your children, friends, relatives or coworkers.

Note: When children are named on a Domestic Violence Protection Order you must tell the Court if there are any Family Court Orders in place or Applications before the Family Court as these orders are Federal can override the conditions on a Domestic Violence Order.

**Order Conditions**

There are two basic conditions are made on all Domestic Violence Orders they are that:

1. The Respondent must be of good behaviour towards the Aggrieved (victim) and not commit Domestic Violence; and
2. The Respondent must be of good behaviour towards any named person in the order and not commit an act of associated Domestic Violence against the person.

In addition to these standard conditions, the court can impose extra conditions to help protect the Aggrieved and others named on the order from further domestic and family violence. Other conditions may include preventing the Respondent from:

- Approaching the Aggrieved, or any place where the Aggrieved lives or frequents
- Contacting or attempting to contact the Aggrieved directly or indirectly (telephone, text messaging, email, post etc)
- Remaining in a home where the Aggrieved and Respondent used to reside.
how to apply for a protection order

If you wish to apply for a Domestic Violence Protection Order you will need to fill out a Protection Order Application (DV1) these are available from the Magistrates Court Registry or you can download a copy of the form from the Department of Communities website: http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/violenceprevention/forms/index.html

Going to court
The Domestic Violence Prevention Centre staff are available to discuss with you how to make an Application for a Domestic Violence Protection Order and to explain the court process. Staff can also act as an advocate on your behalf if required. It may be possible for a Police Prosecutor to represent you in court however you must request this at the time of lodging the original application by ticking the appropriate box.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Centre provides court assistance and support to women attending court for Domestic Violence matters. Should you require assistance or information about court procedures or you have any safety concerns contact the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre.

Service of a Protection Order
Once a Domestic Violence Protection Order has been made, it needs to be served by police on the Respondent. The order will not be in place until the Respondent is served and you will not be protected by the order. It may take up to 5 days or longer to serve the order depending on how quickly Police can locate the Respondent. However, if further incidents of domestic violence occur whilst you are waiting for the order to be served you should still report the incident to the police, be sure to tell them you have a protection order and it has not been served.

Reporting a breach of the order
A ‘breach’ occurs when the Respondent either personally, or through another person, does any act, which disobeys any of the conditions on the order. It needs to be proven that the Respondent knew about the order and the conditions on the order before they can be charged. You will need to report the matter to the police, you may be asked to give a statement. This statement would detail what happened, when and where it happened and if there where any witnesses present. The Respondent can then be charged with a breach of the Domestic Violence Order. It is a criminal offence to breach a Domestic Violence Order. If you believe that your order has been breached, record all details. Try to keep as much evidence as possible including what happened, when and where it happened and the names of any witnesses.

If the police charge the Respondent with a breach of the Protection Order they will be arrested and brought before a Magistrate at the Courthouse. If the Respondent pleads guilty they will be sentenced. The Court will either issue the Respondent with a Fine, Order the Respondent to complete the Men’s Domestic Violence Education Program or given a Prison Sentence. If the Respondent pleads not guilty the matter will be sent to a trial or hearing. If the matter is sent to trial you will be required to give evidence at Court.
understanding the court process

Domestic or Family Violence occurs

You can apply for a protection order. This is done by filling out an Application for a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVO) detailing the most recent incidents of violence, intimidation or threats, history of your relationship and the violence and why you feel the domestic violence will occur again.

The DVO application is then registered at the Magistrates court by a clerk of the court. The clerk will give you a date when you need to appear in front of a Magistrate. This date is referred to as the first mention date. If an urgent order is required the clerk will set down the mention date for as soon as possible.

First Mention
The magistrate will read your application and will determine if you are at risk of further violence or abuse.

If the Magistrate determines that you are at further risk the court will grant you a temporary protection order and give you a date for a second mention.

The Temporary Protection Order and a copy of your DVO application will be served on the respondent by the police. You are not protected by the temporary order until it is served. The respondent is summoned to appear in court at the second mention.

If the Magistrate determines that there is not enough evidence in your application to demonstrate further risk you will be given a date for a second mention.

The DVO application is served on the respondent by the police. The respondent is summons to appear in court at the second mention.

Second Mention
You must appear at this second mention. If not your application may be dismissed.

Respondent has been served and appears at court.

Respondent is served but does not appear at court

Respondent is not served and does not appear at court

Respondent Consents to order (Agrees)  Respondent Contest order (Disagrees)  Full 2 year DVPO Granted  Date is set down for a Hearing.

Full 2 year DVPO Granted

A new mention date is set down to give the police more time to locate and serve the respondent. This process may continue until the respondent is served, it can then become the third or forth mention date.

At Hearing, the Aggrieved needs to provide evidence of Domestic Violence. This can be in the form of witnesses, photographs, statements, police reports. As the matter is a civil matter, the decision-making threshold is lower than that of a criminal nature and is based on the “balance of probabilities” rather than “beyond reasonable doubt”. The Magistrate will then make a decision based on the evidence provided and the balance of probability. If satisfied the court will grant a Full 2 year Domestic Violence Protection Order.
Many women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds living in Australia who experience domestic violence may not be fully aware of their rights or the law in Australia. The amount of information women may have will vary and may depend on the length of time they have been living in Australia, their level of fluency in English, the amount of supportive family or social networks they have and their level of economic independence.

If you are experiencing domestic violence and are not a permanent resident of Australia, there are immigration policies that may assist you should you leave a relationship or marriage because of domestic violence.

The domestic violence provisions of Australia's migration program allows certain people applying for permanent residence in Australia to continue with their application after the breakdown of their spouse or partner relationship if they, or a member of their family unit, have experienced domestic violence committed by their spouse or de facto partner.

The domestic violence provisions were introduced in response to community concerns that some spouses and partners might feel compelled to remain in abusive relationships rather than end the relationship and be forced to leave Australia. Under the Migration Regulations, domestic violence is defined as:

"Violence against the alleged victim or his or her property that causes the alleged victim, or a member of the alleged victim's family, to fear for, or to be apprehensive about, the alleged victim's personal well-being or safety. Violence includes the threat of violence."

Evidence needs to be supplied to prove the existence of the relationship and proof that domestic violence has occurred. The Domestic Violence Prevention Centre can provide further information and support.

The Department of Immigration & Citizenship has detailed information available about the provision which can be accessed [http://www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au) or by telephone, the number is listed at the back of this booklet.
If you are experiencing domestic violence, getting the right assistance and support you need is important. Not everyone understands domestic violence and the dynamics which occur in an abusive relationship. Others may experience disbelief that this occurs or may experience some discomfort in dealing with someone who has been abused and violated. If you reach out for help and you aren’t believed, this doesn’t mean that what is happening to you isn’t real. All it means is that the person didn’t understand what was happening to you. Be aware of individuals who are dismissive of your needs and concerns or discount or minimise your experiences. Trust your instincts and if you do not relate well to the person or feel they are not taking your issues seriously seek support elsewhere. During counselling you should be able to expect:

- That you will be treated with respect
- That you will be heard and understood
- That your counsellor will explain the centre’s confidentiality policy
- That your cultural beliefs and practices are affirmed and respected and that interpreting services are made available if you want them.
- That your counsellor will consider safety for you and your children the most important issue
- That you will not be blamed for the violence and that your behaviour will be seen in terms of how the abuse is affecting you.
- That your counsellor helps you understand your experience of violence by not treating it as a relationship issue but as something that happens to women from all kinds of backgrounds.
- That you will be given information about the effects of violence to help you understand any reactions you experience.
- That your counsellor will discuss with you the welfare of any children in your care and the effects the violence may be having on them.
- That your counsellor will help you look at your options and make informed choices. Your right to make your own decisions will be encouraged and respected at all times.
- That counselling moves at a pace that you are comfortable with and that you feel free to raise any issues of concern.
- That you will be referred to or given information about domestic violence services that you may find useful.
- That your counsellor has up to date training and knowledge in the area of domestic violence.
- That with your consent your counsellor works with other relevant professionals that you have contact with.
Feel free to ask your counsellor about their training, experience, how they work or anything else about their work. This also gives you a chance to see how they present as a person. Are they someone you could feel comfortable talking to? During counselling ask yourself: “Is this counselling being driven by my needs? Does my counsellor encourage me to take myself seriously?” (Adapted from ‘Women and Domestic Violence Standards for Counselling Practice’ Jan Seeley and Catherine Plunkett, 2002)

What about couples counselling?
Sometimes people think ‘couples counselling’ is appropriate for domestic violence but in fact as a form of addressing abuse and violence it is ineffective and can be dangerous. Couples counselling can reinforce the illusion that abuse is a ‘relationship problem’ and not a ‘use of abuse’ problem. A ‘therapeutic’ environment may also create a false sense of security for the victim to express her thoughts that she otherwise may not feel safe to do. Unfortunately, this openness may be ‘punished’ with more violence at home. Couples or relationship counselling should only be considered after all forms of violence and abuse have stopped and there is no longer any fear of retaliatory violence.
how can friends + family help?

Chances are, someone you know - your neighbor, co-worker, friend, sister, or mother is a victim of domestic violence. The following are signs that might alert you that a woman may be in trouble:

- She may have bruises or injuries or she has frequent “accidents” for which she gives vague explanations. These “accidents” sometimes cause her to miss work.
- Her partner controls her activities, the family’s finances, the way she dresses, or her contact with friends and family.
- She frequently cancels plans at the last minute or seems afraid of making her partner angry.
- Her partner ridicules her publicly or you sense volatility in his comments.
- You notice changes in her or her children’s behaviour. She appears frightened or exhausted.

Perhaps you feel her problem will "work itself out". Not so, domestic violence doesn’t usually end unless action is taken to stop it. But it can be hard to know what to do. People are often reluctant to discuss something so intimate, and they’re afraid of intruding. Consider these common reasons for not offering to help:

I shouldn't get involved in a private family matter...
Domestic violence is not just a family problem. It is a crime with serious repercussions for your friend, her children, and the entire community.

She must be doing something to provoke his violence...
Problems exist in many relationships, but using violence to resolve them is never acceptable.

If it was really bad, she would just leave?...
For most of us, a decision to end a relationship is not easy. Leaving a violent relationship is even harder. A woman’s emotional ties to her partner may be strong, giving her hope that the violence will end. She may be financially dependent—in leaving, she will likely face severe economic hardship. She may not know about resources, or social and justice systems may have been unhelpful to her in the past.

 Doesn't she care about what's happening to her children?...
Your friend is probably doing her best to protect her children from violence. She may feel that the abuse is directed only at her, and doesn’t yet realize its effects on the children. She may believe her children need a father, or she may lack the resources to support them on their own. The children may beg her to stay, not wanting to leave their home or friends. She may fear that, if she leaves, she will lose custody of her children.

I know him and I really don't think he could hurt anyone...
Many abusers are not violent in other relationships and can be charming in social situations, yet still be extremely violent in the privacy of their homes.
How can she still care for someone who abuses her?...

Chances are, the man is not always abusive. He may actually show remorse for his violence, promising that he will change. Your friend understandably hopes for such changes. Their relationship probably involves good times, bad times, and in-between times.

If she wanted my help, she’d ask for it...

Your friend may not want to confide in you, feeling you may not understand her situation. She may even be ashamed of what’s happening, and that may make her seem aloof. Talk to her about abuse in a general way. Tell her you’re concerned about women who are abused and that you do not blame women for the violence.

**-YOU MAY BE AN IMPORTANT PART OF A WOMAN’S JOURNEY TO SAFETY-**

For many women, it takes a lot of time, planning, help, and courage to escape the violence. In the meantime, it is important for women to know that help is available from people who know and care about the situation.

- **Lend a listening ear without judging.**
  Tell your friend that you care and are willing to listen. If she is willing to talk, listen carefully and empathically, in a safe place. Believe her. Never blame her for what's happening or underestimate her fear of danger. Let her know that no one deserves to be abused, beaten, or threatened.

- **Allow her to make her own decisions.**
  As you listen, try to understand the many obstacles that keep her from getting free. It’s usually very complex. Focus on supporting her in making her own decisions. If she is being abused, he is exercising a lot of control over her life. Making choices for herself—even if it means staying with the abuser for now—is often the first step towards freedom. Even if she leaves him and then goes back, don’t withdraw your support.

- **Guide her to community services.**
  Many abused women who found freedom describe someone they knew (a neighbour, doctor, friend) offering support and referring them to community service. Let her know she is not alone and that people are available to help her. Assure her that they will keep information about her confidential. Many women first seek the advice of marriage counsellors, psychiatrists or members of the clergy. Not all helping professionals however, are fully aware of the special circumstances of abused women. If the first person she contacts is not helpful, encourage her to look elsewhere.

- **Help her make a safety plan.**
  Your friend may decide to remain in the violent relationship or return to the abuser after a temporary separation. Do not pressure her to leave, but let her know that you are afraid for her and her children and help her consider how dangerous the violence may be. Encourage her to keep a diary of what’s happening to her. Help her think about steps she can take if her partner becomes abusive again. Make a list of people to call in an emergency. Suggest she hides a suitcase of clothing, money, Centrelink cards, bankbooks, birth certificates, and school records for future emergencies. Acknowledge that she may be in the most danger while she’s trying to leave.
• Help find a safe place.
Help your friend contact the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre, the staff can help her examine her options and assist her to find a safe place to go.

• If you see an assault in progress, take action.
Find the nearest phone and call the police. Don’t assume that someone else has done so. If you are in your car, honk your horn until a group gathers, he stops hitting her, or the police come. These situations can be dangerous, so whatever you do, be sure to keep yourself safe. But do take action. At the very least, watch them. By being a witness in a way that lets him know that you see him, you may reduce the level of violence.

If someone you know is using violence

If someone you know is using physical or sexual violence, call the police. This is criminal behaviour, and we do not help abusive men by playing down the seriousness of their abuse. Once they have been held accountable, family and friends can help him to choose non-violent alternatives, and check on the safety of women and children.

If you or someone you know has influence with the abusive person, you may be able to talk to him about his behaviour provided it seems safe to do so. When talking with the man, it is important to stress that the discussions stem from your personal observations, not from what his partner may have told you, as this will severely compromise her safety.

It may be helpful to talk to someone who knows and understands domestic violence, and listen to their suggestions. This will help to keep those involved safe. It is never the responsibility of the person being abused to challenge their partner’s behaviour. This could put them more at risk.

Some things that could be said to someone who uses violence:

“*I’m worried about how you treat ...... no one deserves to be treated like that.*”

“*I’ve been reading about abuse in relationships and some of your behaviours are concerning me*”

“*I’m not an expert on these things, but I know there are agencies who work respectfully with men to help them be non violent*”

“*I believe in equality and non violence in relationships, and it seems to me that you are using abuse against ......., that is not OK. I want to help you to change that.*”

Encourage abusive men to seek help in stopping their behaviour. There are phone numbers in the back of this booklet. Remember, five out of six men do not abuse their female partners! Men who support equality with women can stand up and challenge their brothers, fathers and uncles to be non-violent! Men can support other men to change - we all have a right to be safe in our family.
The Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Gold Coast (DVPC) was established in 1992 as a community-based specialist domestic violence service. The centre provides a range of services including:

**Client services:**
- Telephone support, counselling and crisis intervention
- Counselling appointments for women and children
- Group programs for women and children
- Victim Followup Project in partnership with Gold Coast Police
- Court Assistance for Domestic Violence Matters
- Men’s Domestic Violence Education Programs in partnership with Corrective Services.

**Education and training to:**
- Schools
- Police
- Service Providers and other professionals
- Business community
- General community

**Resources:**
- Brochures
- Posters
- Training manuals and other materials
- Information sheets and booklets

**Community events:**
- Domestic & Family Violence Prevention Week Activities
- International Women’s Day
- Forums
- Conferences
- Workshops

The centre is also the driver for the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response, a multi-agency response to domestic violence that aims to improve systems responses to domestic violence on the Gold Coast. Since 1992 the centre has grown extensively and is recognised nationally for providing high quality services and supports.

**Funding**
The centre receives recurrent funding from the Queensland Department of Communities. The funding agreement with the Department of Communities is formalised with a service agreement between the two bodies and is renewable every three years. Other one-off grants for various items and projects are sought through other sources including the Community Gaming Benefit Fund and Jupiter’s Community Fund. The service also relies on the generous support of the Gold Coast community.
Accountability Structure

Geographical Area
The catchment area for the centre is south of the Coomera River to the NSW border and west to the Hinterland, servicing a population base of approximately 500,000 people.

Client group
The primary target group is women and children affected by domestic violence. Telephone information and referral is provided to men identifying as victims and perpetrators of domestic violence, people affected by other forms of violence, relatives and friends, students, service providers, professionals and the general public. A Domestic Violence Education Program is provided in partnership with the Department of Corrective Services, Probation and Parole for men who use violence in their interpersonal relationships.

Philosophy
The Domestic Violence Prevention Centre works from a feminist perspective and practice. The centre upholds the belief that structural inequalities in society greatly disadvantage women and children and results in power differentials and violence in interpersonal relationships. The centre adheres to the principle that violence is never justifiable or excusable and that abusers should be held accountable for their behaviour.

Goals
The goals of the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Gold Coast Inc. are to:
- Provide a specialist crisis intervention and counselling service to women and children affected by domestic violence
- Enhance the safety of victims of domestic violence
- Hold abusers accountable for their behaviour
- Reduce secondary victimisation by working towards systems reform
- Raise community awareness on domestic violence
**Code of practice**
The Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Gold Coast is committed to providing the highest standard of professional services. All work undertaken by staff is governed by a code of practice. The code of practice enables service users and others to hold staff accountable for the quality of their professional conduct. The code of practice requires staff to:

- Work within the service philosophy
- Respect the right to safety and confidentiality of services users
- Work in ways which are empowering to women
- Work in ways which acknowledges and respects the cultural diversity of women
- Work in ways which enhances access to the service for women from marginalised groups
- Develop professional work practices including clear professional boundaries.

**Practice standards**
All work undertaken by the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre complies with practice standards outlined by the Queensland Department of Communities:
*Qld Practice Standards for ‘Working with women experiencing domestic violence’*
*Qld Practice Standards of ‘Working With Perpetrators of Domestic Violence’*

**Accessibility**
Staff of the centre are sensitive to the needs of women with additional needs including women with a disability and women from non-english speaking backgrounds. The centre is aware of the further barriers and challenges these women face. The centre can arrange for specialised support for women with additional needs and can advocate on their behalf if appropriate. Staff can arrange for interpreters and signers to attend appointments and court matters or to be available to interpret over the telephone if necessary. The service has strong links with other community organisations that can assist to enhance support provided. The centre is also wheelchair accessible.

**Safety**
The location of the centre is kept confidential to ensure a safe environment for women and children accessing the centre. The address is provided on a needs to know basis only, women will be given this information prior to their first appointment. Additionally counsellors will discuss a safety plan with you to provide the safest possible access and intervention. If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence, safety considerations must be a priority in any attempts to access support. Any threats need to be taken seriously.

**Cost**
All counselling and support services to women and and children are provided free of charge. A fee is charged for participants of the Men’s Domestic Violence Education Program to assist with costs of running the program. Professional training and development may also incur a charge.
Counselling appointments
Talking to someone about domestic violence is often difficult. Seeking counselling does not mean there is anything wrong with you but rather something wrong has happened to you. Counselling can assist women and children to come to terms with the impact violence and abuse has had on their lives and assist them to move on to a life free from violence and abuse.

The counsellors at the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre are well qualified and are able to work with women to assist them to make some safe choices for themselves and their children. They can provide information on supports and services available and assist with safety planning. Counsellors respect and support the decisions a woman makes. Counselling sessions are for one hour duration and are available to women who are currently in a violent relationship as well as women who are no longer in a relationship but are seeking support to deal with past abuse.

Crisis appointments
The centre prioritises safety of women and children and makes crisis appointments available for women with immediate and urgent physical and emotional safety concerns.

Confidentiality
Women who are clients of the centre have the right to confidentiality, the only exceptions are if:
- It is believed a child is in danger and is deemed to be at risk
- If the woman is at risk of harming herself or others
- If a court subpoenas the centre to provide a copy of any counselling notes

Client rights
All women accessing the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre for support have a right to:
- live their life without fear of violence
- have their safety concerns heard and taken seriously
- have access to services which provide a safe environment
- have their immediate safety needs addressed
- be treated with respect, dignity and sensitivity
- have their experiences of violence heard and believed
- be treated as an individual with specific needs
- have access to services which respond to their individual and specific needs
- receive accurate information provided in a timely manner
- make their own decisions
- know the services limitations on confidentiality
- access clearer pathways through the various systems
- counselling, advocacy and opportunities for healing
- have access to professionally qualified and trained counsellors
- provide feedback on services received
Client responsibilities
We request that women accessing the centre consider the following:

- respect other women using the centre, including their privacy and confidentiality
- inform us if they are unable to keep an appointment, to enable someone else who may be waiting for an appointment to be booked in
- inform us if you have specific needs

Feedback
Feed-back from women using the centre and other service providers is always welcome, and is used to evaluate and respond to emerging needs and issues. Feedback forms are available in the counselling area, or may be downloaded from the centre’s website http://www.domesticviolence.com.au. Feedback may also be provided to staff verbally, or in writing.

Client complaint process
If women accessing the centre have any concern about any service provided or wish to make a complaint these can be raised either verbally or in writing with either:

- The Staff Member directly involved
- The Manager of the Counselling team
- The Director of the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre
- The President of the Management Committee

All issues will be taken seriously and responded to promptly.

Contact us

Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Gold Coast Inc.
PO Box 409
Southport, Queensland 4215

Counselling: 5532 9000
Administration: 5591 4222
Facsimile: 5571 1508
Email: admin@domesticviolence.com.au
Website: www.domesticviolence.com.au

Opening Hours: Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm
### Key Agencies + Contacts

#### Women’s Support Services
- DV Connect – Refuge Referral (24 Hours) .......................................................... 1800 811 811
- Domestic Violence Prevention Centre, Gold Coast Inc. .............................. 55329000
- Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence Inc. ................................. 55911164
- Elder Abuse Prevention Unit Helpline ............................................... 13006511192
- Disability Information & Awareness Line ........................................... 1800177120

#### Men’s Domestic Violence Line
- DV Connect – Men’s Line .......................................................... 1800 600 636
- National Men’s Line (24 Hours) ................................................ 1800 789 978

#### Children’s Services
- Department of Child Safety .......................................................... 55957100
- Crisis Care (24 Hours) .......................................................... 1800 177 135

#### Legal Advice:
- Legal Aid ................................................................................ 1300 651 188
- Women’s Legal Service .......................................................... 1800 677 278
- Queensland Law Society Inc. ...................................................... 3842 5842
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Women’s Legal & Advocacy Svce... 1800 442450

#### Multicultural Services:
- Immigration Women’s Support Service ............................................ 3846 3490
- Translating & Interpreting Service (TIS) .................................................. 131450
- Department of Immigration & Citizenship ........................................ 131881

#### Gold Coast Police:
- Broadbeach Police Station .......................................................... 55812800
- Coolangatta Police Station .......................................................... 55362444
- Coomera Police Station .......................................................... 55736111
- Mudgeeraba Police Station ........................................................ 55306455
- Nerang Police Station ........................................................ 55781311
- Palm Beach Police Station .......................................................... 55340222
- Runaway Bay Police Station ............................................................ 55375099
- Surfers Paradise Police Station .......................................................... 55707888
- Southport Police Station .......................................................... 55714222
- Police Prosecutions .......................................................... 55714383
- Watchouse ........................................................................ 55714333
- Australian Federal Police .......................................................... 55538777

#### Courthouses:
- Southport Courthouse .......................................................... 55835900
- Coolangatta Courthouse .......................................................... 55363133
- Family Court of Australia .......................................................... 1300 352 000

#### Qld Corrective Services
- Probation & Parole Southport Office ................................................ 55835555
- Probation & Parole Burleigh Heads Office ........................................ 55697910
bibliography


