


DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE  
PREVENTION  
CENTRE GC INC.  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2016-2017



A small green plant with a white flower bud is growing out of a crack in a grey asphalt surface. The plant has a single stem with two leaves and a flower bud at the top. The background is a blurred grey asphalt surface.

We dedicate this report to the  
courageous women and children  
who have let us share their  
journey towards safety and  
healing.

# Directors report

When thinking about the year that was between 2016 and 2017 my mind immediately falls to the compelling nature of the work we do together. This work could be described in many ways: tragically necessary, gruelling, inspiring, frustrating, stress-inducing, powerful, urgent, galvanising, and scarily escalating. But the one thing it has consistently been for me, and for most of us at DVPC, is compelling.

Definitions of compelling include: captivating, gripping, convincing, weighty, not able to be resisted, and overwhelming. At DVPC, and with colleagues from partner agencies in the Integrated Response, we have the privilege of connecting with women, children, and men at some of the worst moments in their lives. Whether this is when they have just been assaulted, or their lives have been threatened; or when they have had this safe place called family, dissolve in front of their eyes; or when they sit in a men's program for the first time and come face to face with the impact of their behaviour.

As always it is important to start by remembering women on the Gold Coast who have lost their lives during these 12 months: Shelsea Schilling and Theresa Bradford who died at the hands of their ex-partners in November 2016 and February 2017. We remember them, their lives, their families and friends, and we grieve for all them, and for the potential of the years they never got to live. We also remember five DVPC clients who died from November 2016 to March 2017, all of whose lives had been deeply harmed by domestic violence and for whom this experience became too much to bear.

We also remember Kym Cobby who was murdered two weeks ago on the Gold Coast, and our hearts reach out to her three children who will not have their mum to celebrate Christmas with this year, or any year.

It has been a prodigious year in terms of innovations and milestones, including:

- This has been the year of DVPC embracing technology.
- In December last year we used Skype to undertake two days of training from the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) from Duluth in America on how to deliver the In Our Best Interests program for women.
- We also had two days of Skype training from Scott Miller from the DAIP for our Integrated Response partner agencies.
- Then in January we had two days of Skype training from the DAIP in delivering the Turning Points program for women who are identified as respondents in DVOs, and we rolled this program out a few months later.
- In February we had three days of Skype training from Scott Miller in delivering their men's program curriculum and then we had the pleasure of having Scott in person on the Gold Coast in July this year to speak directly of our men's program facilitators and to our Integrated Response partners.

# Directors report

- The rollout of the new Practice Model and our new database in June this year has been a game changer in terms of staff having an effective tool to assess escalating risk and to capture their work, and in terms of consistency of support that women receive from DVPC.
- The partnership with Multicultural Families Organisation with the SARA program which began in February this year.
- We had fantastic and very public Candlelight Vigil at the Broadwater Parklands with Minister Shannon Fentiman as the keynote speaker.
- In May DVPC officially began co-location at Nerang Child Safety for the Assessment, Service, Connect pilot.
- In June the Southport DV Court became the first permanent specialist DV in Queensland. DVPC has been in this Court space for the past 25 years and supported the pilot of the Specialist Court since it began in September 2015.
- We received training from Amovita and rolled out their PASE Supervision Model to more consistently support our teams.

All of this has occurred within the context of the increasing daily workload of our stoic, professional, and specialist team of advocates across all sites: Southport, Beenleigh, Southport and Coolangatta Courts, the Assessment, Service, and Connect Team at Nerang Child Safety, the SARA program, the Prison Programs, and our Men's Programs at Southport and Logan.

We have seen some long-term team members leave and many new women join us in this relentless and compelling work. We appreciate you all and everything you contribute to this unique and complex work.

The theme for this year's AGM is Visioning. When we hear this word, it is easy to drop into thinking about goalsetting or Vision Boards, and we have been busy with Strategic Planning and developing our Vision, Mission, and objectives for the next few years. But Visioning could also be an invitation to drop into something much bigger. Something that is within us here at DVPC, something which is beyond our imagination, the thing that is unique to us that only we can express, and it could potentially transcend vision?

If I envision anything for DVPC it is these things:

- That our collective work liberates:
  - women and children from violence, abuse, fear and hopelessness
  - men from recurring patterns of violence and being stuck in old personal and societal narratives that no longer serve them or their families
- That we courageously make the invisible visible; and connect professionals and the community at the heart level with the stories of women and children.
- That the hallmark of our reputation is collaboration, openness, and trustworthiness. That we bring professionals, agencies, and systems together to work collectively to respond to families, and to influence legislative and community attitudinal change.

# Directors report

- That we have a hunger for continuous improvement and fearless critical reflection, in the certain knowledge that what works today may not work tomorrow, and a genuine openness to embrace learning and development from a diversity of sources, and to learn from our failures.
- That our highly-skilled specialist advocates and facilitators are renowned for their contemporary practice, innovation, consistency, passion, and feminist professionalism. I agree with Junot Díaz that “Radical Hope Is Our Best Weapon”. Not blind optimism, but Hope with a capital H. An openness to the possibility that something surprising can and will happen. And it is more likely to happen with purposeful, relentless, clear, and consistent effort by all of us; individually, as the DVPC team, and collectively with our partner agencies and the Integrated Response.

Twenty-five years ago DVPC started on the Gold Coast so this is our silver anniversary. In 2018 we will have an event each month to commemorate and celebrate our lineage, our current work with women, and the aspirations of how our work will unfold over the next twenty-five years.

I would like to thank all of our advocates who work tirelessly in their roles every day, responding to women through the tsunamis of telephone calls we receive; through face-to-face appointments, through groups, through therapy with the children, our ASC colleagues in women's homes, in both the Gold Coast Courts, in the SARA program, through working closely coordinating response with our colleagues in stakeholder agencies in the Integrated Response, in both Women's Prisons in this part of Queensland, and on our men's programs. I would also like to acknowledge the work that is less visible but done with equal commitment by Tina, Louise, Shirley, and Kaitlyn, to support everyone at DVPC; you hold us up on any given day in so many different ways.

I would also like to thank all of our Men's Program facilitators. It has been an extraordinarily busy year, including a fourth weekly session being added on the Gold Coast to assist in managing the ever-growing Waitlist. This is gruelling, often thankless, but also surprisingly compelling work, and it is essential to the collective work that DVPC does both as an agency and within the Integrated Response. Thanks also to the advocates who support the partners of participants across the four weekly sessions, your work is equally gruelling and compelling, and drives and defines the work we do with the men.

This year I would particularly like to acknowledge two women; firstly, Kelly for her superwoman efforts to bring to life the new database and new Practice Model. Her ability to see a problem, be motivated to work towards a solution, and project-manage this piece of work to completion, has positioned DVPC well to be at the forefront of risk assessment and contemporary practice and will hopefully benefit many other agencies in the sector also.



# Directors report

• . Secondly, I would like to acknowledge Louise for her fortitude and seemingly endless energy to complete all the work necessary to get DVPC through the Human Services Quality Framework (HSQF) Audit. She fought through numerous robust discussions and workshops, to eventually prevail and have our work stand up to rigorous external scrutiny. I would like to thank the DVPC Leadership Team, Joan, Di, Kelly, Ria, Louise, Yolanda, and Marica for your essential support, energy, insights, and creativity. Individually and collectively you have been a gift to me from June 2016 to July 2017 and it would have been impossible to lead DVPC without any of you.

My gratitude to all the members of the Management Committee is incalculable, their faith in me, encouragement, and mentorship, has sustained me throughout the twelve months. You have all been so generous with your time, giving up precious weekend time to participate in Strategic Planning, twelve Monday nights away from your families, and numerous hours on collective emails trying to resolve issues. John has also been extraordinarily generous with his time in supporting Kelly with the database project, and assisting in both resolving ongoing IT issues and developing a plan to streamline our ICT services for next year. He also volunteered and spent many hours of his own time to develop all the necessary organisational governance documents for the HSQF which greatly contributed to the success of this audit.

With great sadness we farewell Brett and Cornelia from the Committee. I value beyond measure Cornelia's humour and loyalty, and we are committed to continuing to develop our new partnership with the SARA program. Brett is one of the most principled and compassionate men I have ever had the honour to know and his term as President of the committee for the past five years is the greatest example of leadership I have had the privilege to experience. His clarity of vision, ability to focus on the issue, bring together disparate views, take the appropriate action, and hold all of this together with compassion, generosity of spirit, and warmth, is remarkable and humbling. I cannot thank you both enough for your service and sacrifice of your time to develop DVPC into the much-improved position it is in today.

I have Radical Hope (with a capital H) for this amazing organisation and I am so honoured and grateful to have worked with all of you over these twelve months.

With revolutionary love always  
Rosie

Rosemary O'Malley  
Director



# Presidents Report

On reflection, the two words that come to mind to describe the year we've had at DVPC, are "Evolution" and "Disruption". While both words suggest change, there is a difference between the two in terms of pace and approach. Evolution is generally a slow, measured and calm process and Disruption...is not.

The Domestic and Family Violence sector continues to be highly scrutinised and the demand for services continues to escalate faster than the distribution of funding to meet that demand. In this environment the stressors on services and those working in them are considerable and the strength of our organisation has, and will, continue to be tested. The quality of any structure or service is only as strong and as effective as its foundations and as such this year the Management Committee has been focussed on making sure the foundations of DVPC are strong and stable. We wrap up 2017 with a greater level of confidence in the foundations of DVPC and a great sense of excitement, and anticipation, about what can, is and will be built on those foundations. Of significant importance to us, is that through 2017 DVPC has:

- Obtained Certification through the Human Services Quality Framework (HSQF) Audit process
- Completed Strategic Planning workshops – including working on sequencing and prioritising items for the first draft of the Strategic Plan
- Embedded a new staff supervision model
- Completed and rolled out the new Database and client record keeping system
- Engaged a Management Accountant to review and consolidate our financial system
- Locked in funding agreements for the next 3 years, and Embarked on improving communication across the organisation

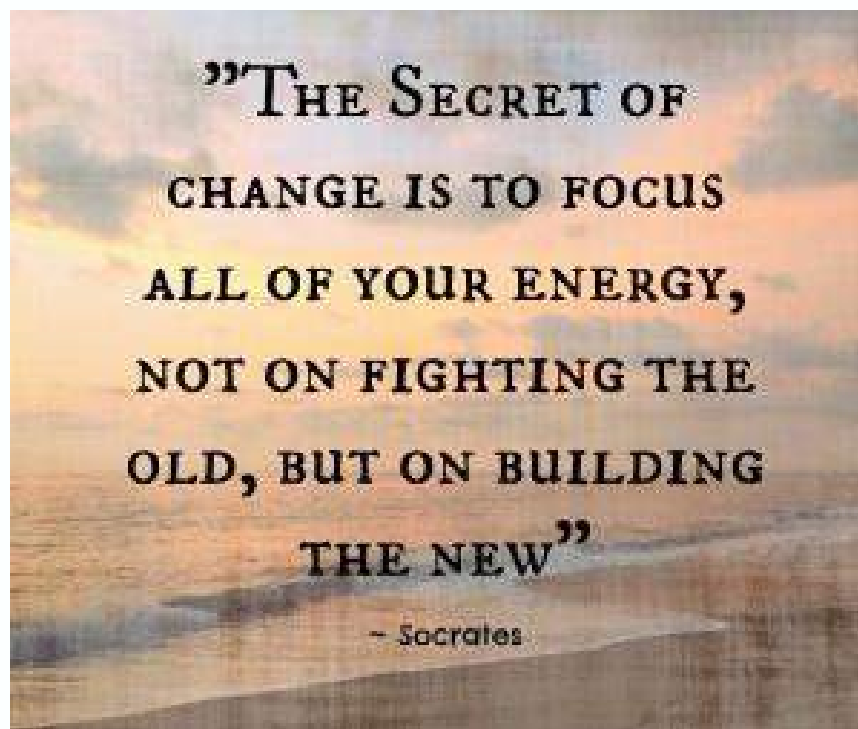
We know that there is still a way to go with the Organisational Structure, Staff Training, Professional Development and the promotion of Team Building and Personal Care for staff and all have been identified as priorities.

Along with the evolution though has come disruption and we certainly recognise and appreciate the impact that change and movement has on people experiencing the disruption. I've heard it said that 'nothing moves without friction' and that being the case, the team at DVPC have again shown their resilience and determination to persist through the change and through the friction to continue to deliver a valuable service to those who so desperately depend on us.

The DVPC Management Committee recognise your efforts, we also recognise the impact the recent evolution, and disruption has had on you and we acknowledge and thank you for your sacrifice and service. With discomfort and challenge though also comes opportunity and growth. We complete 2017 then with great confidence that DVPC is indeed well placed to grow and to pursue the opportunities before it. In closing then, I'd like to thank the volunteers on the DVPC Management Committee for their service and for contributing their time and skills to this wonderful and important service. Finally, I'd like to thank Rosie for her tireless work and ever-present passion for this cause that unites us all, a community free of violence and oppression.



Brett Lush  
President 2016-17





# Treasurers Report

**Income:** Total income received for the financial year period 2016/2017 - \$3,494,903

Grants : \$3,395,135

Interest : \$7,740

Donations : \$60,040

Other Income : \$31,988

**Expenditure:** Total expenditure for the financial year period 2016/2017 - \$3,364,908

- Salary related expenses - \$,2592,607
- Rental & Property Expenses - \$232,242
- Client Costs - \$106,950
- Computer and Database expenses - \$70,235
- Management costs - \$100,000
- Printing & Stationery - \$33,332
- Telephone - \$56,546
- Other Organisational Costs - \$172,996

**Additional Grants received:**

- In her Best Interest - \$11,750
- Dept. of Communities, Domestic Violence Prevention Month - \$5,000
- Assessment Service Connect - \$90,625
- Gold Coast City Council Youth Project - \$4,545
- Gold Coast Suns - \$2,500

**Donations Received both financially and in-kind:**

- Country Women's Association
- The Body Shop
- Burleigh Heads Lions Club
- TSS
- Gold Coast University Hospital
- Futuro Financial Services
- Rizeup
- Soroptomist International
- Warner Bros.
- Commonwealth Bank
- Give Now – 13 donors

5 Scholarships were provided to clients funded from the DVPC GC Inc. Gift Account.

Once again, we would like to thank our auditor Robert Martin, for completing the audit in a smooth, timely and professional manner.



# Community and Organisational Development Report

The 2016-17 Financial Year has been a significant one for DVPC that has seen change, growth and contraction. The year began with the news that we had been successful in obtaining a grant to develop a new database. The process neatly dovetailed with the preparation for Human Service Quality Framework Certification as it enable us to review practice models and responses and how we provided information, obtained consent and collected, stored and used information about the women and children who we support and serve. The process was intensive, multifaceted, arduous and worthwhile. DVPC now has a database that supports the work of keeping women and children safer and is the envy of many organisations.

During the period all the Service Agreements with the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services were up for renewal and the HOF/Stronger Families funding was ending. The process involved a renegotiation of deliverables and allocations, taking into consideration the needs of the women and children who require our service and the capacity to deliver. Unfortunately the renegotiations also involved, for the Beenleigh service location , a considerable reduction in their funding which was beyond our control given the introduction of the High Risk Team in Logan. The final agreements were signed in January. However, before the ink was dry on the Agreement, we began the first series of variations for the ASC and the Specialist Court.

The Candlelight Vigil held every year in on the first Wednesday of May as part of DVPM was held for the first time at the Broadwater Parklands. The event was attended by over 200 people from across the coast who joined together to remember those who have died as a result of domestic violence. The speakers included The Minister for Women, Shannon Fentiman, Nicolle Edwards from RizeUp, Nolan White from Kalwun, Sgt. Marc Hogan from the DV Taskforce and Magistrate Strohfeld .



In the midst all the negotiations, we were also applying for additional funds to expand Programs or resources and create some innovation. We were successful in obtaining a DV Prevention Month Grant and created a performance piece about young peoples experience of coercive control in their relationships. Delivered in partnership with Goat Track Theatre Group from MT Tamborine it was an amazing experience for the staff and young people involved. The feedback from the audience from their 2 performances in May was extremely positive.

Funding was also obtained to deliver the Reflections Group in both Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre and Numinbah Correctional Centre. The application was successful in an open tender process and has been renewed until April 2018.

A successful funding application was also made to Victims of Crime to deliver a symposium on Post Separation Violence. This will be held in May 2018.

We also received a grant from Dept. of Education to deliver a Program to mothers and children. The Stronger and Safer Program was delivered in partnership with The Benevolent Society at the Early Years Centre in Coomera and the i.reflect group ran from the Beenleigh Office. The groups ran for six weeks and supported mothers who had experienced domestic violence to explore and understand the impact of domestic violence on their parenting and their children and develop connections with service supports that are available in their community. The Project resources include a Mothers Book, which will provide an information resource similar to the Purple Book. The book is currently in the design phase and will be launched in 2018.

Funding was also obtained from GCCC for DVPC to print 10,000 purple books, fund DVPM activities and develop an phone app for young people concerned about their relationships. We also applied for and obtained some philanthropic funds which we used to run "Turning Points" a group for women who have been named as respondents.

We celebrated Christmas 2016 for the clients with a Christmas event known as the Purple Tent, which provided an opportunity to come together for pampering, craft activities and a wonderful lunch and some dancing to great band. Women left with their hand made treasures as well as Christmas Gifts provided by the Body Shop and Rize Up.

We are very fortunate to be supported through out the year by groups like Rizeup as well as individuals and companies who just want to help. The Gold Coast Suns are great supporters providing funding, tickets to games as well as White Christmas tickets for our client families. Groups such as the Soroptomists and the Country Women's Association provide us with toiletries and personal care items for which we are very grateful. Individual organisations or companies also contribute funds and personal care items and these too are appreciated. We continue to be in awe of the individuals who donate, fund-raise and champion our organisation, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Thank you for your generosity and commitment to the Organisation and the women and children who we work and advocate for.



IWD in March was celebrated with a trivia quiz covering all thing feminist. We were delighted to be joined by the SARA team and the former Director of DVPC, Donna Justo. Congrats to the winning team, The Pussy Hats.


A significant part of 2016-17 was preparing for the Human Service Quality Framework Audit. Certification was essential for compliance with the Service Agreement and to increase the certainty of ongoing funding. It was also necessary to remain competitive in a competitive tendering environment. The process required a review and revision of the existing policies, development of new policies and the putting in place a range of new systems and processes. The process of continuous improvement is necessary, in any organisation for its growth and evolution. Sometimes it feels like you can only focus on the here and now, to deal what is in front of you, and this is particularly true of services that work with crisis. The HSQF process required DVPC not only to think about the present but also lay foundations for the future and improve our ongoing sustainability and survival.

The Community and Organisational Development Co-ordinator role contributes to keeping women and children safer, by guiding the organisation, overseeing compliance with contractual and legislative requirements, preparing acquittals and reports and ensuring they are accurate and delivered on time. It sources funding for projects and activities, rattles the tin to get resources and speaks to groups to raise awareness of DVPC and the issue of DV in the community. 2016-2017 has been a big year, much was achieved but there is still so much to do and so many exciting things to come.

The vision for DVPC from an Organisational Development perspective is a service that has its own purpose-built premises, adequate resources to meet the demand and has maintained and built on the foundations of governance and compliance established this year. From a Community Development perspective, community attitudes around domestic violence change, the increased awareness in the community continues to grow and we partner with existing and new allies to work to create a safer community and the increased accountability for those that choose to use violence in their relationships.







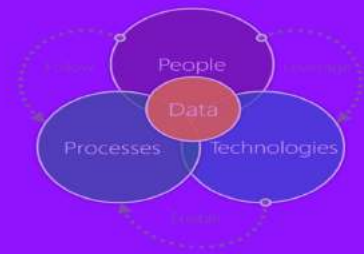
*Showing up is our power.  
Story is our way home. Truth is our song.  
We are the brave and broken hearted.  
We are rising strong.*

*Brene Brown*



# The Project

During 2016 - 2017 DVPC took on an "Whole of Organisation" innovative project of change in developing a database containing an integrated risk assessment tool, response and safety planning tools, technology upgrades and frameworks for practice.



Domestic Violence  
Prevention Centre  
Gold Coast Inc.

## Upgrading our technology



The Southport counselling appointment system was upgraded to a electronic calendar. Further more to support the business continuity plan DVPC moved to cloud based email and software programs. DVPC's Internet service was upgraded to support the increasing use of technology.

## Integration & Design Tools

The SA risk AX tool was trailed for a period of 6 months, after whole of team consultation and validation against other professional assessments - The tool was enhanced with features from identified gaps and then approved and configuration in the SRS Database . Risk AX became mandated for all clients requiring support. Response and Safety planning moved to individual and tailored plans in correlation with the risk assessed and the vulnerability of the woman and child / dren .

## Training & Support



The team came together to support each throughout the launch - The "Database Support Sisters" offered guidance, training and support .

## Research & Design

Early 2016, DVPC was successful in receiving a grant to design and develop a new database. We wanted to develop a tool that could inform current responses and contribute to future research in the field of Domestic and family violence. The Project started with a national and international literature review of risk assessments. The SA tool was chosen for trial as it was an actuarial tool . The design phase included careful consideration of the HSQF guidelines and requirements, as well as organisational needs.

## Frameworks for Practice

Within the business analysis it was identified that a practice model change was required to achieve best practice outcomes and client centred responses in accordance with response management design of the database - In Feb 2017, The response Model was launched at Southport alongside various tools for practice and included the original design of the DVPC Ethical Decision Making Framework

## Database LAUNCH

The database was launched on 5th of June 2017 - 37,000 client records were migrated and 142 current high risk women were manually entered into the integrated risk AX & Case plan's . At the end of June 2017 - DVPC had 520 open case plans in the Database for women and children.

## Visioning.....

The launch was only the start of the project - From here moving forward DVPC will have the ability to create its own evidence base - To inform practice both locally and nationally & support our sector partners in identifying trends and gaps to inform service and response planning. 2017 - 2018 will see the development and implementation of a complete practice guide for all DVPC programs .

# Program Reports

## Court

DVPC provides support to women at both the Southport and Coolangatta Court. Women are able to access assistance in a secure room within the Court houses and are provided with information and resources, assistance to complete applications, explanations about Court processes and outcomes and referral to services.

The support room operates on a Friday at Coolangatta and is well attended. In the absence of DVPC the registry staff, led by Les Haylock, provide information and support to women. Therefore, it is imperative that we acknowledge the work of the Team down at Coolangatta not just for this year but for many years provided support to women.

In September 2015, the DV Specialist Court trial was announced and immediately the impact of demand was felt. The numbers of applications and matters being heard at Court increased so rapidly that within 6 weeks a second Magistrate was announced. DVPC also received additional funding to respond to the increased demand. Initially the trial was to end in February 2016 however that was extended until June 2017 to enable an evaluation to be undertaken. Throughout this period and beyond, DVPC has been a member of the Operational Working Group (OWG), attending meetings and contributing to decisions making.

The Courthouse building underwent a facelift during the year. DVPC staff were instrumental in the redevelopment and redesign of the support rooms. Women are now able to wait in an inviting and comfortable space that has its own kitchen, child play area, consultation rooms and bathroom facilities as well as a video conferencing room. It is a significant change from the previous space and women have indicated how positive they see the changes.

DVPC was involved in the trial of video conferencing for women for who attending Court would be challenging. The pilot was trialed in partnership with Women's Legal Service. Video Conferencing facilities are now in available and used in the new Court space and many of the learnings from the trial have been incorporated.

The announcement of that the DFV Specialist Court would be a permanent change in May 2017 was met with much celebration within DVPC. This saw the funding incorporated into the Service Agreement and enabled DVPC to begin implementing a new model of service delivery of support in the Court.



# Program Reports

## Court

The "Not Now Not Ever" Report delivered by the DV Task force in February 2015, which was a catalyst for the Specialist Court trial, provided examples from women of poor experiences in the Court system, they spoke of uncertainty and outcomes that disadvantaged them or put them at risk. The success of the DV Specialist Court trial is an example of agencies and individuals working together to achieve a common goal, to improve the experience and outcomes for women when they engaged with the Court to seek protection from domestic and family violence. They say that somethings are greater than the sum of their parts and the DV Specialist Court is an example of this. However, it is important to acknowledge the individual parts as well. The Registry staff, Centacare, Legal Aid, the Magistrates who preside over the Courts, Women's Legal Service, GC Community Legal and Police Prosecutors all work together with DVPC to make the Court a place that is welcoming and safe for women and contribute to making their experience a positive one.

The DFV Specialist Court has seen many changes in a short time, however there are still more changes to come to build on what has already been achieved. The vision for the service is the full implementation of the new service model that ensures that women get a service response that allows access to a continuum of support. In effect we want to replicate DVPC within the Court space so that the women's risk and safety is assessed, and appropriate response plans developed in addition to supporting her through the Court process. The new model embraces the pre-and- post Court period and acknowledges the importance of these periods in engaging women and improving their safety outcomes. We also want to implement a Court Support Charter, which has been developed to sit alongside the new model. The Charter has been developed in consultation with staff and women who have accessed Court support to ensure that we are delivering a high-quality service that meets the needs of the women who we serve. It also goes without saying, but we shall, we want to continue to grow the relationships with the stakeholders and our partners in doing the work.

It is from the deepening of these relationships, the strengthening of the connections hat we will be able to continually improve and achieve the vision for the Court articulated in the "Not Now, Not Ever "Report.



# Program Reports

## Women's Counselling - Southport

The future and potential of the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre rests comfortably on the solid foundations built during the previous twenty-five years. It has been construction has occurred during successive terms of leadership adapting existing contemporary practice, and also built by teams of passionate and tireless advocates who have demonstrated tireless dedication to the women and children that they have served. As one recent advocate voiced 'I have never worked so hard as I have in this agency.' Indeed, over the last 15 years or so since I have worked within this agency I have witnessed the passionate energy from the many advocates and leadership who have contributed to the work and practice of DVPC in its various forms and various programs. As we reflect gratefully on the previous 25 years thankful to all who have contributed and shaped the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre into its current form, we are reminded of the philosophy, mission and vision on which DVPC was originally established and built.

That original vision, incorporating safety, support and assistance to women and children, whilst encouraging accountability for those who use violence and abuse in the context of their interpersonal relationships remains firm. The philosophical foundations of this Service were built within a solid theoretical feminist understanding that enabled a gender analysis of domestic violence to position the abuse of power within the social structures and institutions of our society. Empirical evidence has supported the original assumptions albeit the recognition of compounding factors within the social context.

Although 2016 – 2017 contained specific challenges, the same passion and commitment has been demonstrated through the dedication and the tireless commitment of the counselling team. The Team has found itself that the demand, volume, and the nature of domestic violence has significantly changes in nature within the las year or two often attributed to initiatives such as State and National Reports into domestic violence, greater public visibility of the issue, the inclusion of the Southport Specialist Court, the introduction of Queensland Police Domestic Violence Task Force, State and Federal task forces into domestic violence, impacts of social issues such as poverty, drugs such as ice, dual and multiple diagnosis. Changes to the organisation within the counselling response team are related to changes to the volume of calls and referrals that come into the service and the increase in visible high risk cases enable by the above. The notable changes occurring as a result to the increased volume of high risk cases can be attributed to some of the fore-mentioned factors, however conceivable other explanations can be attributed to a greater awareness around risk and safety by community agencies and the community generally with the domestic violence Task Force contributing to this on the Gold Coast.



# Program Reports

## Women's Counselling - Southport

The Domestic Violence Prevention Centre during the financial year also introduced a new 'risk assessment tool' which has allowed for efficient and increased sharpening of assessment skills by the counselling team to assess risk and safety. The tool allows for assessment on four levels; direct risk to the woman; direct risk to the children; the dangerousness of the person using violence (PUV) and the advocates own professional assessment. DVPC is also able to extrapolate data using this tool to demonstrate not only the level of risk that the service is dealing with on any day or a given week, but also to enable advocates clarity in tracking the risk on their increasingly large caseloads.

The counselling team both been challenged by and benefited from the introduction of a new data base this year. For many years DVPC has not benefited from an affordable data system that has been sufficient for our needs. Some very special thanks go to Kelly who throughout the year took up the challenge of tailoring the Infoxchange system specifically to DVPC needs. Her tireless contribution, skill, energy and professionalism has been invaluable to us all and specifically the counselling team who are enabled to be more responsive to their growing caseloads and growing risk. Another benefit to the team has been an upgraded telephone system that allows for women to queue for the next available advocate rather than get an engaged signal. The introduction of an electronic calendar was also a great asset the team.

A new model of service delivery was introduced into the team this year that is more consistent and responsive to women's needs. We have adopted the approach of one client one worker and where possible one advocate will work with a woman until she exits the service and her case plan is closed. This process is beneficial to both the woman and the worker.

### **The Future**

As we look back at the previous year and move into the future in 2017 – 2018, we not only acknowledge the vision, drive, wisdom and passion that are the roots of DVPC, but we also acknowledge the significant endeavours that have occurred during 2016 – 2017 that have been purposeful and strategic with the view of strengthening the Service as we enter future years. This report is devoted specifically to the vision for the counselling team during 2017 – 2018 and we envision that some minor changes to service delivery will enable us to be adaptive and responsive to current imposed limitations such as funding and the increased volume of high risk work. We are also in a strong position with a data base that can give us current and contemporary information which can inform our directions and align with our purpose. One of the increasing frustrations for the counselling team has been the inability to offer enough long-term counselling due to the sheer volume of the high-risk work. To assure .

# Program Reports

## Women's Counselling - Southport

that low to medium risk women have access to information and education, we intend to introduce evening information sessions on domestic violence. We believe that equipping and informing about the dynamics of power and control, cycles, impacts and healthy relationships for example will not only empower, but assist in breaking cycles, confusion and silence and assists women to make improved decisions for their lives. These sessions will operate once a week during the school term and can be entered at any point.

To keep up with demand, we will also introduce an evening Reflections Group that will allow women to attend after their working day as office hours is an identified barrier for some women attending the Service. The Group format will also change from a closed group each term to themed sections so that the group can be entered at the beginning of each theme enabling women to enter every three weeks and reduce the waiting times from term to term.

Whilst evening Groups and information sessions operate, counselling appointments can also be offered to women after their working day. The predominant workload within the counselling team is crisis counselling and crisis intervention which continues for as long as it is necessary to ensure a family's safety. Greater emphasis will be placed on referral to family support and other agencies for other support where necessary. DVPC recognises that long term counselling is indeed beneficial to breaking the cycle of violence and looks forward to the future where we can be adequately resourced to provide this on a greater scale.

Group work with children and adolescents will also be introduced during the year. A co-facilitated group for the 12 – 18-year-old cohort in conjunction with a community partner is envisioned for the coming year. Similarly, a group for under 12-year old's is under discussion for during the school holidays when engagement is restricted.

As we leave the year behind and walk into our future it is with the hopes of sound outcomes for women and children whilst we hold both anticipation and the challenges. We also walk with gratitude for what is behind and grateful for each other as a team, our director and a supportive and capable management committee to oversee and guide us in being true to our strategic plan and vision for the future.



# Strength

I act as a feather in the voyage of life  
Rising and falling with the winds of change,  
Dancing uncontrollably, against my own will,  
An observer for all that I cannot obtain.

But I am not a feather, plucked  
From the wings of a broken bird,  
I do not float freely in the skies,  
Through the rain and thunder.

A feather of red, tainted with shattered innocence,  
Although my youthful heart is gone,  
And with it, gentle wonder.

I desire to be made of stone, hard and unmovable,  
To be steel and stand my ground.

A soldier in the journey of this world,  
Who will not fall or tumble down.

But even a rock can be changed and cut into  
With the wind or tide.

Even the hard mountain bends  
To something of greater power.

Even the earth must swallow her well-earned pride,  
And experience weakness in her crumbling hour.

I am not feather nor stone,  
I am the waters rushing flow.  
What seems peaceful and serene  
Can be the strongest blow.

Tidal waves, high tides, floods, downpours,  
Strong fearless, never ending.

I am both life giving and life suffocating.  
A true oxymoron from nature's sending.  
I was still for so long, I thought I was weak,  
But in my calmness strength has come to  
me.

I am still kind, I am still gentle  
But I can be merciless when I need to be.  
Water flows and from it life succeeds.  
Growing trees, wet tongues, green fields.  
Water can be deep and treacherous,  
Within its beauty a danger is concealed.

I will be strong like the water  
Who never feels guilt  
For the wild flow,  
For the lives spoilt.  
Yet I will be as the water  
And seep calmly and free,  
And just like the water,  
Strength is always in me.

Amelia  
(A Beenleigh client)

# Program Reports

## Women's Counselling - Beenleigh

During 2016 the Logan area was nominated for the establishment of a High Risk Team (a recommendation of the Bryce Report – Not Now Not Ever). This process was arduous and resulted in a substantial budget cut to Beenleigh, Eagleby & NGC to relinquish funds required for establishment of the HRT.

The impact was that the office rent was not affordable and relocation was the only option! Luckily office space in the local vicinity was sourced in late September although the final budget was not signed off until late December. Thankfully the space was still available and early January saw DVPC exit from the only high risk in Beenleigh!! The biggest impact was the reduction of staffing positions with the loss of one full time equivalent.

Beenleigh staff were to be commended for their ability to maintain service delivery, pack up the office – together with the fantastic assistance of Shirley. Relocation took a week to finalise including a new phone system, data cabling and computer installation. Two staff relocated to DVPC Southport and continued to provide service delivery while the Coordinator and another staff member remained in Beenleigh.

The team has settled in and made the space work – with compromises – and we have had very positive feedback from women and others who have had the opportunity to attend.

During the year DVPC – Beenleigh/Eagleby & Nth Gold Coast has continued to receive referrals from a range of key stakeholders who work collaboratively to prioritise the safety of women and children. DVPC would like to acknowledge the work these agencies, both government and non government, undertake in providing a range of crucial services to women and children experiencing domestic and family violence in the Region.

There has been a steady number of Police Referrals via Redbourne information platform system. Women consent to the referral offered by QPS at the point of first response to a DV incident or via other Police processes including presenting at a Police Station. Other key stakeholders including Beenleigh Domestic Violence Assistance Programme located at the Magistrates Court, Probation & Parole and there is an increasing number of self referrals – often from women who have had previous contact.

Using a risk and safety framework has resulted in 71 women being identified in high risk situations and provided with a range of services/processes developed to enhance safety. This including both the Logan High Risk Team and the Gold Coast DV Integrated Response which includes systems advocacy with relevant first responders.

### HIGH RISK TEAM & LOGAN/BEENLEIGH INTEGRATED SERVICE RESPONSE

The implementation of the above Team and the Integrated Service Response meetings commenced in January 2017. New Domestic and Family Violence Information Sharing

# Program Reports

## Women's Counselling - Beenleigh

Guidelines were enacted and these new amendments to the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 mean government agencies, non-government specialist domestic and family violence services, and support services are better able to share information to help assess risk and/or respond to a domestic violence threat. DVPC Beenleigh's participation in the HRT has steadily increased and referrals directly from the team have increased.

### NEW DATABASE

At the end of May 2017 DVPC introduced a new Database using the SRX Platform. This was the culmination of extensive planning and a huge contribution by the Project Manager, Kelly.

Whilst the Leadership Team supported her the project came to fruition because of her dedication and commitment to the project. Whilst staff embraced the new system it must be said that the change did provoke much initial consternation and constant communication between Beenleigh staff and Southport Office, for guidance and support.

### I. REFLECT WOMEN'S GROUP

The Term 3 group in 2016 had nine participants attending for the eight weeks and was held at the Beenleigh Neighbourhood Centre. The Term 2 group in 2017 was the inaugural group to be held at the new office space with 8 women participating over eight weeks.

Women's 'wisdom' for future Group participants:

"I found it helpful to hear from other women who had been through similar things as me and it made me feel like I'm not alone."

"It's never too late to talk things out. Don't hold feelings in."

"Attend the group for yourselves and learn what you need at whatever stage you are at."

"You're not alone."

"Nothing will ever change the past but you can use your past to benefit your future. Best of luck."

### STAFF

The staff team faced the challenges and changes with stoicism – it is a sign of their skill and commitment to the work that with less (human) resources with the loss of one full time equivalent position, they continued to provide quality services to women and children both before and after the change process. A team is the sum of its parts and as Coordinator I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to Nicole W, Natalie S, Anika S (July-Dec locum position), Liz B (returned from maternity leave January 2017) Atefeh M (July-March 2017 who went on extended long service leave) and finally Lucy J who undertook a locum position and became a valued team member.



# Program Reports

## Women's Counselling - Beenleigh

VISION FOR 2017 – 2018

### PARTNERSHIPS & EXPANDING SERVICE PROVISION

DVPC Beenleigh, Eagleby & NGC has achieved consolidation in the local area and is an integral component of the ISR to domestic and family violence. Recognition of the organisations ability to deliver quality services to women and children and the limitations imposed by budget allocation will impede the growth of the organisation, particularly in areas that have been identified as needing placed based service delivery in the Northern corridor and primarily the growth area of Pimpama.

DVPC Beenleigh has the potential to be able to provide these services in partnership with other statutory and non statutory organisations, if budget allocation is increased to meet the demand.

Participation with High Risk Team Logan has increased over time including attending the HRT meetings to advocate and provide briefings on referred clients, together with the Integrated Service Response meetings. Providing intensive services from a high risk framework is essential to women and children's safety and consolidation has increased engagement with women during the period they are active referrals. This crucial work to increase the safety of women and children at serious risk of harm requires a longer term perspective focussing on safety and healing from trauma which should not be quantified via a process of procurement but by the quality of the services provided.

### THERAPEUTIC ART PROJECTS

Over the past two years DVPC Beenleigh has engaged in providing therapeutic art projects as a medium for women and children's healing. The power of the medium in the healing process cannot be minimised. It provides a powerful visual medium which is an articulate representation of the trauma experienced and assists women and children to process their experiences.

DVPC will be actively attempting to source partnerships and funding to increase the provision of therapeutic art projects from various sources and will showcase, with consent, the work at community events such as Domestic & Family Violence Prevention Month and 16 Days of Activism against Violence to women.

# Program Reports

## Children and Young Persons Counselling - Southport

Alongside our customary children's work at DVPC, the DVPC children's program has also developed and adapted to current recognized need. With the introduction of the Assessment and Service Connect another significant referral pathway into DVPC for women and children was formed. In response, an advocate is allocated solely to this body of work in which women and children are referred to DVPC Children's Program through the specialised DVPC assessment team that operate within the Child Safety office at Nerang. This Advocate works with the considerable amount of risk and safety issues that present through this caseload with the view of early intervention and keeping the family out of the Child Protection system.

We have also been enthusiastic with the introduction of a 'Young Persons Advocate' into the children's counselling team. The Young Persons advocate works with young girls and boys from the ages of 13 years to 18 years and engages with youth networks on the Gold Coast and Youth Justice.



# Program Reports

## Children and Young Person's Counselling -Beenleigh

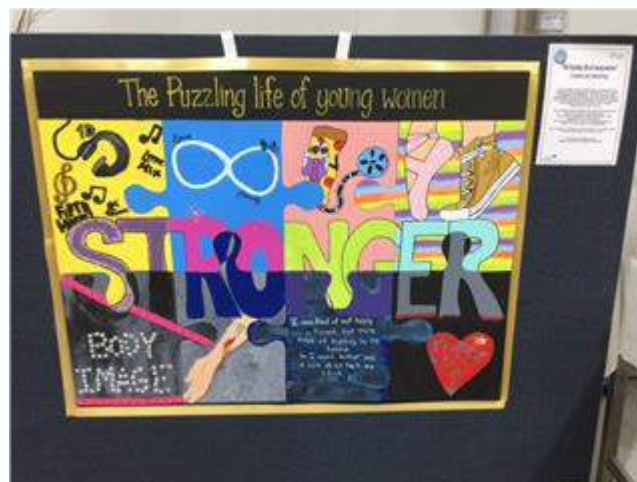
**Little Feet - Walk the Talk** An art project in partnership sponsored by Beenleigh Soroptomist Women's Club (funding from Bendigo Bank)

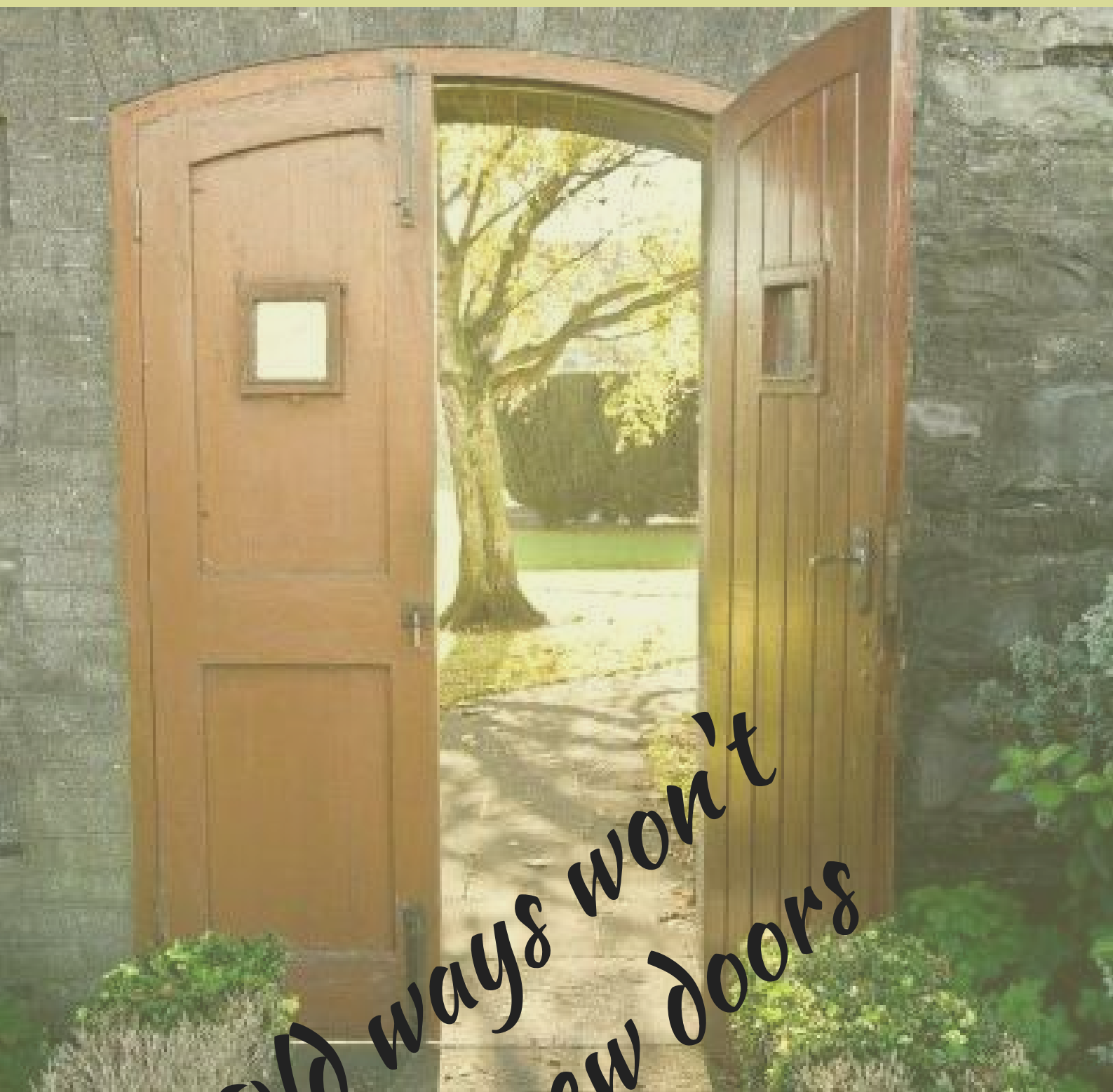
Beenleigh Soroptomist Women's Club continues to be a valuable partner with DVPC Beenleigh. This project was undertaken by 5 women and their 7 children participated in "Little Feet – Walk the Talk" – a 2-day Creative Art Workshop held at the Beenleigh PCYC - a collaboration between the Beenleigh office, the Soroptimists, PCYC, Bendigo Bank, and YourTown.

Natalie (DVPC) and Yourtown Art therapist Evangeline facilitated whilst the Beenleigh Soroptomist women provided encouragement and stacks of morning tea and lunch. (They said that they gained so much from meeting with the women, children and young women which has increased their understanding of the impact of DFV.)



Natalie and Evangeline also engaged with 6 young women who were either directly experiencing intimate partner violence or who had witnessed/experienced violence in their home. The concept was "The Puzzling Life of Young Women" which produced the artwork below depicting the positives and negatives of being young women affected by abuse. The top pieces of the puzzle being the positives and the bottom the negatives.





*Old ways won't  
open new doors*

# Program Reports

## Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response

It was an amazing year for the DVIR, full of change and innovation. The year started with the return of Michelle, the DVIR Manager, to her substantive position at Probation and Parole. Michelle brought a very calm energy to her role and made such a difference within DVPC and with the external stakeholders. She will always be part of the DVPC story and we are so very grateful for the time she worked with us.

From the recruitment, we were blessed to have another Probation and Parole staffer join our team. The amazing Ria made her presence felt from day 1, her energy was boundless and her knowledge, skills and commitment to supporting women was awe inspiring. Ria stepped into the role in September and began to dream, plan and act.

Ria strengthened connections and links with the Tweed Heads DVIRC, participating in their meetings and offering insight and guidance and of course her energy. She also participated in the Elder Abuse Networks, to build partnerships and opportunities for older women who are experiencing domestic or family violence to be able to access appropriate support services.

In December 2016, DVPC GC, Inc as lead agency and secretary to the GCDVIR commissioned Scott Miller of DAIP, to deliver specialised training and workshops to the network- regarding the fundamentals of coordinating community responses, specifically to enhance the work of the GCDVIR through guided and women centered practice of problem solving. These workshops formed the basis of the Discovery Project.

Commencing in 2017, the GCDVIR engaged in a Discovery Project to achieve change oriented advocacy through informed processes of system mapping, and network interviews to inform the establishment of shared projects in the effective response to Domestic and Family Violence on the Gold Coast. The report was released in September 2017.

DVPC has seen a shift in service delivery to a greater focus on crisis integration and high-risk responses. This coupled with the new framework of full risk assessments and tailored made response and safety planning has seen a need for a more specialist approach to working with woman and children who are in crisis and require a high-risk response.

The ISRW role was created in February 2017 as a response to the increased service demand for High risk response and integrated support. The role of the ISRW is to manage and oversee the high-risk response internally, while collaboratively working with the domestic violence integrated response partners to provide timely and effective response to women and children are high risk of harm from domestic and family violence. The ISRW



# Program Reports

## Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response

provides specialist case consults / case unpacks to staff through the organisation, coordinators high risk response.

The ISRW manages the oversight of the S.I.T list (Serious imminent threat) and makes recommendations for case and response plans. The ISRW manages all IR enquires and also the updating of court results to the team to be updated to woman. The ISRW is the prescribed role under the new legislation changes of information sharing. The ISRW also delivers presentation and training for sector partners around high risk an integrated response.

The ISRW also attends and participates in the twice weekly Triage meetings and is an advocate for change. They are responsible for collecting case example to use as evidence in advocating politically within the system for change.

The GC DVIR has been operating for nearly 20 years. It brings together key stakeholders who work within the Gold Coast Community to support women and children who have experienced domestic violence and hold the person using violence accountable. Representative from government agencies such as QPS, Probation and Parole, Health, Human Services and Housing sit alongside the community based agencies, all with the goal of working collaboratively to improving the way they respond to deliver better safety outcomes for women and children and holding perpetrators to account for their violence. They are a true reflection of the saying "stronger together".

With the introduction of the High-Risk teams across parts of Queensland, starting with Logan, there is always the risk that a decision will be made to standardize responses and models by the funding body. The GC DVIR is working, the connections, processes and trust that have been built up over so many years and across so many agencies, should not be sacrificed for conformity. Therefore, the vision for the GC DVIR, is that they will continue to work collaboratively, informed by the discovery process and it is findings and that the strength and practice that has been developed over many years is respected and acknowledged. Furthermore, the DVIR partnership will continue to grow and develop, going from strength to strength, recognized for its collective experience, commitment and achievements for women and children.



# Program Reports

## MDVEIP

This report is a composite taken from conversations, reports and feedback from the dedicated and committed team of MDVEIP facilitators.

### **How did this reporting year begin?**

This reporting year began with an emerging trend regarding the number of referrals being received from the DV Specialist Court that were inadvertently creating the issue of men not being able to enter the program. This was due to the number of men on the MDVEIP waitlist and their Probation or Parole orders expiring before the time needed to complete the duration of the program. This resulted in the projection of just under half the men on the GC waitlist and just under half of the men on the Beenleigh/Logan program not being offered a place on the program. This year also saw that this resulted in the men being referred to other programs offered in the community. The uncertainty of whether the Beenleigh/Logan program continuing after the end of 2017 added to this concern.

### **What were some other Issues/Concerns?**

**Participants** – The number of absences, participants arriving late to sessions and non-compliance issues with the program participation contract continued over the year and was not unexpected. Additionally, the number of exclusions from the program for a variety of reasons including breaching their parole or probation orders was also a continuing theme over the year and resulted in 14 out of 16 men in one program completing less than 10 out of the 27 sessions. Any exclusion results in new men entering the program and an increase in the number of exclusions has a ripple effect where the workload for the WA role escalates. This is due to the role that continues to offer support to the aggrieved for six months after men have completed/or are excluded from the program. There is also the ripple effect for the facilitators who need to become familiar with each new man's profile to assess risk accurately, including their referral to the group, their relationship status and dynamic and static risk factors.

**Facilitators** - Facilitator availability continues to be an issue and creates extra pressure for the program and other facilitator's who are asked for their availability and can result in working two nights in one week in addition to their full-time day employment. Furthermore, MDVEIP have to juggle both the administrative tasks related to the group as well as deliver the session, both requiring time and effort after 'normal' working hours.

# Program Reports

## MDVEIP

### What were some of the highlights?

There were many highlights over the year that included the following:

**Training** - A highlight for the MDVEIP facilitation team was the Skype Duluth training workshops delivered by Scott Miller with many facilitator's claiming it was practice changing for them. This supported an increase in their desire to work with the men that has more focus on being curious and asking the men questions to encourage critical thinking.

**Facilitator Levels** - A highlight over the year was the movement of facilitation levels for the team with seven at level 3, four at level 2 and only two at level one. It is projected that by the end of October, nine facilitators will be at level 1, leaving only 2 facilitators at level 2 and level 1. The implications of this means that the facilitators can work more across the team and share different skills and knowledge.

**Additional MDVEIP Group** - Another highlight for this reporting year was QCS funding for a new program at Southport on Tuesday nights that commenced in April. Despite the funding is for 40 weeks, this was welcoming news due to the number of men sitting on the waitlist at that time. The funding for this program included one day of Women's Advocate work and this involved training a new worker for this role – this however creates extra work for the current WA. It was becoming apparent that there were limitations for the WA role with women from the Beenleigh-Logan program due to travel and time constraints. This was addressed by appointing a WA position to work from the DVPC Beenleigh Office.

### Who's new to MDVEIP?

Over the year, the MDVEIP Co-ordinator position was covered by two new workers and although minimal disruption to the program was managed during the ending and commencing of the new workers amongst competing demands in the agency, the transition time for learning the role and processes was unavoidable.

### How were the groups going?

Programs were running at full capacity over the year to manage the waitlist and although there are invariably some absences each week, full capacity meant 16 men, 2 facilitators and up to 2 observers. The new program room at the Southport DO was initially concerning for the facilitators due to the size and shape of the room and other structural concerns. Liaison between MDVEIP Co-ordinator and QCS contributed to the concerns raised as much as possible.

# Program Reports

## MDVEIP

### **What about our stakeholders?**

Having stakeholders 'on board' with the MDVEIP is critical to mitigate risk and to align with the Duluth Model. The regular liaison with key stakeholders, particularly with Probation and Parole Officers again proved essential over the year. This involved having conversations to ensure DVPC are advised of any dynamic risk changes relating to the men, and ensuring there is sufficient information on the MDVEIP Assessment Referral Pack regarding risk. The monthly/six weekly meetings are a vital forum for items of concerns and regular review of how these are addressed. A new MDVEIP Assessment Referral Pack was developed along with forms essential for the program – review form, facilitator and participant feedback forms.

### **VISIONING - Where do we want to go and why?**

The DVPC MDVEIP has now been delivered for 18 years and has a solid reputation. It can be argued that the sustainability of the program is due to the communication pathways between the key stakeholders. Managing political tensions that carry varying notions about men's program work and practice approaches will undoubtedly continue. This can create challenges between community organisations and government departments, all contributing to the big question of whether men's programs work? /are successful? The philosophical stance is an evolving one when new research and practice learnings emerge and challenge existing positions. The MDVEIP facilitators have proved again this year to be open to new learning and ideas, and to their credit have taken 'practice risks' for the betterment of their facilitation practice and the outcome for the men in the program.

### **Main Vision - Secure Long-Term Funding for DVPC MDVEIP Strategic Planning:**

The MDVEIP Teams –

The vision of an MDVEIP Research and Development program with researchers who gather the vast and profound data regarding men who are referred to the program, that now spans over 18 years, for publishing in relevant journals and presenting at national and international conferences

The vision of a team who can support and mentor each other, who are valued and supported emotionally and financially, and who have the resources to train the sector and the community on the integrated community model and way of working with men.



# Program Reports

## MDVEIP

A vision of a MDVEIP team of facilitator's and a team of MDVEIP trainers. Both teams would be led by the MDVEIP Co-ordinator who is solely focussed on developing practice and supervision and assisted by a MDVEIP Administrator who is solely focussed on the program administrative tasks.

A vision of a MDVEIP training team that could compose of existing or past facilitators who educate the community and share the stories from the men in the program from the men themselves (audio/visual) and/or from the facilitator's experiences, the conversations between the men, the men's perspectives on life and relationships and the beliefs that are held by the men. Sharing these amongst the community in some way could prove to be preventative as well as educative, and contribute to the dispelling of myths and assumptions about men in domestic violence programs.

### **More programs –**

The vision of having the Tuesday night program and the Beenleigh-Logan program continue and other programs established due to extended and secure funding

A vision of a program that works with the men on the MDVEIP Waitlist with someone who contacts them regularly (phone) while they are waiting to enter the program to help them to 'warm into' the program.

A vision of delivering more groups that are delivered during the day as well as the evening (open and closed groups / shorter programs / individual programs) that could be modified and have a specific focus to meet the complexities men come with (i.e. parenting after separation). In addition, a refresher program for men who have completed the program and would like to stay connected and engaged with this type of group forum.

### **Internal Relationships –**

The vision of linking the MDVEIP team of facilitators and trainers to the work of the MDVEIP WA work and the work at DVPC with women and children

A vision of using a shared language with an understanding that language is powerful and can have a huge impact on us, our work and those we work with. 'Violent men/offenders' is a totalling term contributes to the belief that there is no room for change. Whereas participants of a men's program for 'men who use/have used violence' in their close relationships contributes to a different belief. Again, the political tension with language is difficult to navigate and some may view the latter as watering down the violence, rather than creating room/space for difference. As facilitators, working from a framework that has space for difference is crucial for building a working relationship with each participant of the program over 27 weeks.

# Program Reports

## MDVEIP

### **External Relationships -**

The vision of working closer together with external stakeholders that is robust and tangible with methods to capture and record women's experience, offender risk and participant recidivism

A vision of having a permanent seat on all HRT meetings in Logan-Beenleigh to ensure information is accurate and responses are formed that has considered the unintended consequences for women. A vision to ensure the MDVEIP remains visible to QCS by having the MDVEIP Co-ordinator and/or MDVEIP WA work one day a week from each QCS DO to work closely with PPO's – be present at assessments / facilitate risk unpacks / discuss dynamic risk factors and unintended consequences / conduct inductions, reviews (instead of facilitators). In addition, having a point of contact at DVTF or SVT for reciprocal case consults, collaborative risk assessment initiatives, proactive information sharing from QPS re: HR offenders, and QPS interventions.

A vision of the MDVEIP establishing and maintaining robust relationships with other specific services for men to assist with their specific needs – (i.e. Drug and Alcohol programs, Mental Health Services, Housing Org's, Individual counselling) and engage in regular case consults/management with such services regarding men to develop a tailor made individual case management plan for prior/during/and post program.



# Program Reports

## Assessment Service Connect (ASC)

DVPC participated in several practice clinics with the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services to explore the idea of collaboration and co-location to support vulnerable and hard to engage families .

DVPC submitted a proposal for Assessment Service Connect (ASC) and was successful.

### VISION

A specialist unit within child safety that worked collaboratively to support women to keep their children safe in their home and hold fathers to account for behaviors that put their children at risk. System agencies working together to identify and reduce the risks posed by perpetrators and collaboratively with community agencies to develop and provide a response that supports and increases the safety of the women and children.

### MAKING IT WORK

The Assessment Service Connect DFV Specialist Team moved into Nerang Child Safety Centre in May 2017. The team consists of a Coordinator, Women and Child Advocate and a Mens Engagement Worker.

Child Safety already work closely with Kalwun who are the Recognised Entity. Act for Kids ASC were also setting up their ASC team. To make this work we needed to be clear about the realities of what we were doing – combining up to 4 services with distinct practice frameworks and mandates with the aim of true collaboration to achieve best practice outcomes for children and families!

These services have made a commitment to making this work and as such we have all participated in induction workshops, team building days and regular planning meetings including a fortnightly Leadership Working Party.

We have started to develop pathways for ongoing communication and collaboration. We are trialing new ways of working together and building trust in partnership.

### CASE EXAMPLE

ASC team received a referral in relation to an Investigation and Assessment that began prior to ASC establishment. ASC Team provided consultation and DFV specific information to assist in completing the assessment. The mother and children were in a DV refuge. The notification contained risk information including physical and verbal abuse and breaches of a DVO.

# Program Reports

## Assessment Service Connect (ASC)

The ASC team provided information to assist the Child Safety Officer to understanding why a woman may not admit to having experienced DV until she has heard that the perpetrator has admitted (she may not have felt safe to do so due to power and control tactics). The team also discussed the need for perpetrators to be held to account in terms of breaching their DVO – highlighted that the DVO is not an order on the aggrieved. The team discussed tactics that perpetrators use to avoid accountability such as blaming the victim, minimising and refocusing the conversation away from them. The ASC team highlighted the discrepancies between what the father was saying and what he was doing. The ASC team recommended that as Child Safety were considering remaining involved with the family on a voluntary basis that they support the mother to keep her children safe and support the father to become a responsible parent whilst holding him to account for his violence.

### ASC VISION 2018 and Beyond

- That fathers are held accountable for their actions and the impact of exposure of DFV on their children.
- That fathers are supported to become responsible parents who role model respectful relationships.
- That mothers are supported to keep their children safe.
- That systems agencies work together to develop strategies and processes that promote safety.
- That all children are safe in their homes.





# Groups

## Turning Points

The 'Turning Points' program for women who use abuse or violence within the contexts of their own relationships was introduced during the year. Historically advocates have appreciated that when a woman fights back her safety is significantly compromised and that in most cases, these women are also the victims of domestic violence. Advocates have previously worked with this dynamic on an individual level, however the Turning Points Program has given the opportunity for women to tell their stories and hear others in a powerful group context. The educational program seeks to provide support, advocacy, and therapy for women who are using violence whilst also providing an opportunity for women to understand the violence being used against them. The following provide a little bit of feedback from women at different stages of attending the group: -

"Amazing time, difficult time, worth the hours and emotion"

"At first you may feel intimidated by others but be patient because you will feel cleansed and relieved".

"Having somewhere I can have a voice"; "Given Hope that I'm not crazy"

"Others are in the same situation, common ground"

"Being open and able to discuss with others issues that others don't understand or comprehend"

"Very confronting topics"

"How to think about there is difference between men's and women's violence"

"I found the group confronting hearing other women's stories"

"Overwhelming feelings! Judgment of others, Frustration of self for judging understanding myself with all that is going on is complex and overwhelming at times, but I will be back next week"

"Police just think you're crazy"

"Today's group was sensational"

## Reflections Group

Reflections Group Program takes place every school term semester and has been co-facilitated in a partnership with a social worker from Centrelink for many years. It continues to be a well-received program by the many women who have attended over the years and a place of support, healing and friendship with other women in similar circumstances.

# Groups

## Prison Groups

The Reflections Group Program continues at both Numinbah Correctional Centre and Brisbane Women's Correctional Centre after specific funding was received for 2016 - 2017. The Programs provide both individual counselling and the 'Reflections Prison Group'. It is recognised that incarcerated women experience unprecedented levels of domestic violence and it was envisaged that by running domestic violence programs in prison, women could have access to risk and safety planning, gain knowledge on domestic violence and be provided with information on future community supports that they may need when they exit.

It is widely acknowledged and researched that incarcerated women have extensive histories of experiencing domestic and family violence and/or sexual abuse in their lifetimes and often these women have had little or no access to supports and services in the community. The group consists of ten modules over ten weeks covering themes such as the Power and Control, Safety Planning, Warning Signs of Abuse, and the Impacts and Effects of Domestic Violence on women and children. These groups have been very well received by women with feedback generally centered around gaining knowledge, finding strengths and recognizing worthiness. The following is a small portion of the feedback that is gained weekly: -

"Before I started this course my relationship was unhealthy, abusive, I was scared and submissive and unaware of what domestic violence was or what supports are out there.

Now, only half way through, I know what is healthy, I am more stable and happy, more courageous and aware. I have become very aware of the impact that it (domestic violence) has had on my life!!!!"

"Before I started the course I felt different, alone and isolated. Now I feel normal".

"I can now see - my eyes are open".

"I can see the manipulation now and how men use my vulnerabilities against me"..

"I didn't know I had any rights".

The individual support sessions are designed to provide an opportunity for women to discuss current risk and safety concerns, to develop safety plans and to link in with a domestic violence services in the community. DVPC staff work closely with the prison psychology and mental health teams and other organisations such as Sisters Inside and the new MARA program.



# SARA Partnership

## **Long awaited funding opportunity for women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities**

In October 2016 the funding opportunity became available for a domestic and family violence support service for women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities on the Gold Coast. After a few phone calls and a couple of meetings between the leadership teams of the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre (DVPC) and the Multicultural Families Organisation (MFO), the two services began creating a collaborative practice model with the confidence that their partnership would be a “perfect” fit: MFO being the lead agency and the funding holder, while the DVPC provide a specialist domestic violence response, staff development, and supervision.

In designing the model, the agencies relied on their complementary skills, with MFO being the only migrant and refugee settlement service on the Gold Coast with strong connections with the local ethnic communities, while DVPC is currently the largest regional Domestic and Family Violence service in the state of Queensland. The proposed service response model was also endorsed by the Gold Coast CALD Women's Safety Stakeholder working group, which was established in 2014 to address the emerging and escalating issue of domestic and family violence in CALD communities on the Gold Coast.

### **The first six months of the SARA Program**

The Gold Coast CALD Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Support Service was established in January 2017 and it's known as a SARA (Support Assessment Referral Advocacy) Program.

During the first six months of the SARA Program, countless hours were poured into the staff recruitment and training, office establishment, development of the promotional materials, and introducing the SARA Program within the local community.

Ample emails, phone calls and meetings between the newly appointed team leader with the leadership teams at MFO and DVPC resulted in the creation of clear referral pathways for women from culturally and linguistically communities to access the SARA Program. In many ways this was “uncharted territory”, as this rather unique model doesn't really have a similar example to follow. Despite the day-to-day stresses and strains on resources, despite the “language” barriers that the partnership model had to overcome in the early days, the model has always held women and their children's safety in the centre of all the responses. This has been a fast-moving collaboration, where each partner is playing to their own strengths and both services are aware of each other's expectations as we progress with the SARA program implementation.

The model ensures access to timely and appropriate responses for women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities who are at immediate risk. The response is focused on meeting women's safety needs and the choices they have made to increase their safety. It also allows for a continuum of support that recognises the dynamic nature of domestic violence.



# SARA Partnership

The highly qualified and skilled and culturally competent multilingual workers at the SARA Program, with the support and guidance from the DVIR and other specialised programs at DVPC and MFO, have made the SARA office into a safe and welcoming space for women from all walks of life.

## **As we move forward**

No matter how good a partnership may look on paper, there are countless factors that will determine its success. After the first six months of the SARA Program, themes that emerged were: the importance of infusing collaborative skills and learnings into local CALD leadership development initiatives, and further developing the capacity of the service system agencies to respond to the complex safety needs of the women supported by the SARA Program. The SARA Program sees its role within the sector as the glue that binds different levels of support and response. There is a notable increase in the numbers of referrals to the SARA program, beyond all the expectations and predictions. Women walking through the SARA Program doors are dealing with the complex issues of keeping themselves and their children safe, navigating through the legal systems, overcoming the cultural, religious and language barriers.

## **Our 2022 Vision for the SARA Program - Dreaming Big**

It is year 2022. The year of Tiger, according to the Chinese zodiac. It is also the year that The Gold Coast CALD DFV Support Service, SARA Program is doing the final report at the end of the five-years funding. An initiative of Multicultural Families Organisation Inc, in partnership with the Domestic Violence Prevention Centre, this was the first domestic and family violence service for women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities on the Gold Coast:

The SARA Program has, from its humble beginnings in 2017, made deep footprints that cannot be ignored neither by the ethnic communities, funding body nor the major stakeholders in our community. Here is “Why”: Years of tireless advocacy by the SARA team with the other stakeholders have been fruitful: the experiences of women from CALD communities have been validated, their stories have been listened to and multifaced service’s response are available for them. They feel worthy and deserving. Their culture, their language and their migration experiences have been honoured. Their sense of safety and belongings have increased.

Women from CALD communities continue to be in the centre of all responses by the SARA Program: Good /promising practices in supporting women with their safety needs have emerged out of continuous learning about what does and does not work for women whom we support. Good/promising practices have been endorsed and implemented by our partner agencies on the Gold Coast, to demonstrate the shared commitment to the safety needs of women and their children from the CALD communities.





# SARA Partnership

As awareness and the knowledge base on violence against women from CALD communities has grown over the last five years the scope of persistence of the problem has become more visible. Therefore, work on prevention, has become a shared vision that is endorsed and led by the whole community.

Significant differences exist in access to support, advocacy and income support for women from CALD communities on temporary visas: No woman on a temporary visa had to return to her abusive partner because of a lack of financial means and housing options. Instead of “We can’t”, the other service providers are now saying “Why can’t we...offer our service to women on a temporary visa?”

The majority of woman from CALD communities living on the Gold Coast will be aware of their rights and services available for them: SARA program is actively engaging with CALD communities to facilitate access to information about the rights of women and services available to them. We speak their language and we meet women where they are at. Over the last five years, SARA Program has been recognised by the other stakeholders as a leader in provision of culturally competent services and trainings.

The SARA team has used evidence based practice to demonstrate the need for the recurrent funding: SARA program employs multidisciplinary, a multilingual team to respond to the growing demand for its support services. The SARA Program continues to make new footprints-one foot in front of the other...



*Thank You for being part  
of the DVPC GC Inc.  
2016-17 Annual General  
Meeting.*