

Someone to walk alongside
wraparound supports

ROADMAP of services and steps

Crisis accommodation during peak times

experience of

CONNECTED

services describe to service

experience a place WHEN

LIVED EXPERIENCE COMMUNITY

★ All services need to know what is available or how to find out what is available

★ services and support are

Visible & Accessible

eg, arts+crafts groups, GPs, billboards, hairdressers

★ Clear referral processes

★ TRAINING & INFORMATION is CONSISTENT across services and sectors

★ services are on the SAME PAGE with their FRAMEWORKS

★ LISTEN to

★ increased funding for services & community

every woman's

Well Train GPs

Gold Coast Domestic and Family Violence Community Plan

Our Community Voice

Being BELIEVED

The FIRST 15 seconds can make a difference

Lived Experience helps a service UNDERSTAND the PRIORITIES

Media Training

★ ONE DOOR ACCESS

It removes the "us + them"

Work with & support the CONNECT

Widen access to reach people the services

GP's, art c

families, c all genders

mening men

The person on the other end



How this plan came together	2
1. Awareness and Education.....	7
Community Awareness	7
Early DFV Education	8
Targeted Training for Services	9
2. Access to Supports and Information.....	10
Easily Accessible Information.....	10
Flexible and Timely Responses	11
Practical and Long-term Supports.....	13
3. Safety and Accountability	15
Safety and Stability Beyond Crisis	16
Accountability for People Using Violence	18
Reaching Everyone in Our Community.....	19
Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Support	19
Community Connection.....	21
Lived Experience	22
Turning Ideas into Action	24
Acknowledgements.....	26

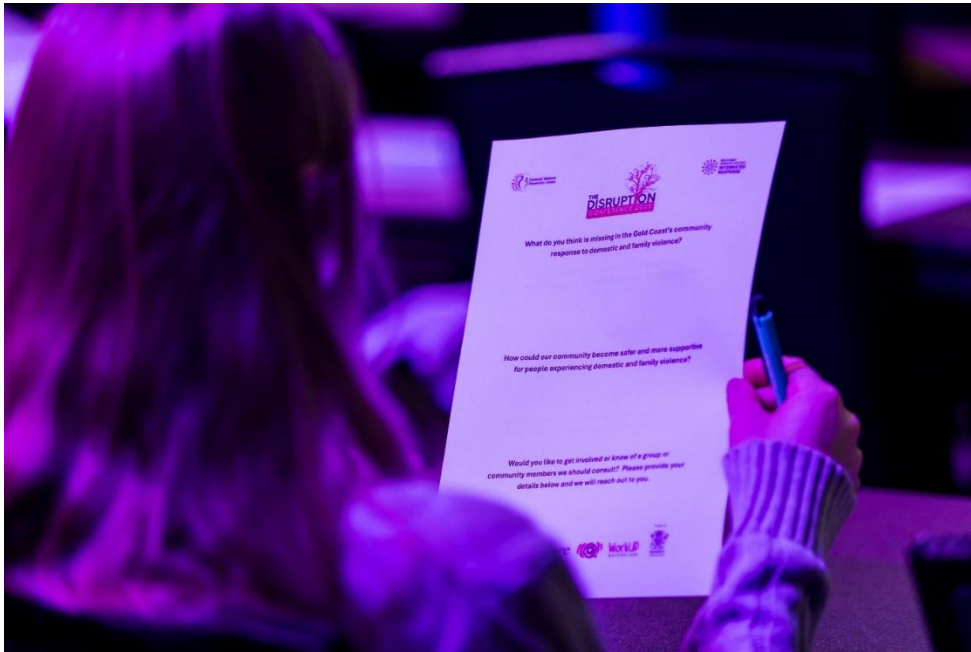
How this plan came together

In 2025, Domestic Violence Prevention Centre (DVPC), together with the Domestic Violence Integrated Response (DVIR) partners, Domestic Violence Interagency Group (DVIG) members, the City of Gold Coast and members of the local community commenced the project of the Gold Coast Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Community Plan. The main purpose of this initiative was to create a community-led plan to prevent, respond to, and end domestic and family violence.

A DFV Community Response Working Group was established to guide this process, bringing together members from not-for-profit organisations, government agencies, local community organisations and individual community members. The main aim of the working group was to consult the local Gold Coast community to understand what is currently working well, what is missing and what changes are needed to develop a strong whole of community response to domestic and family violence.

The community conversations began at the Disruption Conference in September 2025, where a survey helped gather insights of the audience, which included community members, those with a lived experience of domestic and family violence and people working in the sector.





The work then carried forward through the broader Community Survey and in-person consultation sessions held across the Gold Coast in early 2026. A total of 85 people responded to the community survey.

Gender:

73 Women
6 Men
1 Gender diverse
5 Preferred not to say

Age:

3 people 18-24 years
9 people 25-34 years
28 people 25-44 years
28 people 45-54 years
16 people 55-64 years
2 people >65 years
1 person Preferred not to say

Cultural background:

- 10 Aboriginal
 - 1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- 43 Non-indigenous Australians
 - 2 South Sea Islander
- 18 European
 - 4 Asian
 - 2 Middle Eastern
 - 9 Other
 - 3 Preferred not to say

42 people (49%) of all participants said they were from the Central part of Gold Coast, 23 (27%) from Southern Gold Coast, 18 (21%) from Northern Gold Coast and 2 people from the Gold Coast hinterland.

Two community consultations were held at the Nerang Bicentennial Community Centre and the Palm Beach Community Centre, and the local services were consulted at the Domestic Violence Interagency Group (DVIG) meeting. Demographic data was not captured at the consultation meetings and in the survey shared at the Disruption Conference.

Overall, more than 300 people contributed their thoughts, experiences, ideas, and reflections through survey responses and the in-person consultation meetings.

Members of the Community Plan Working Group facilitated these consultations and carefully gathered the community's knowledge. The consultation meetings were valuable opportunities to gather insights from local community members, survivors of domestic and family violence and people working in the sector, about what they appreciated, what frustrated them, why they felt let down by the system, and their hopes for change.



Listening to stories of hardship, strength and commitment, and sharing laughter, tears and hope, over platters of cheese and crackers, sweet treats and cups of tea, made these heart-to-heart conversations even more special.



Following are the main themes that emerged from the collective knowledge of those who contributed to the Gold Coast Domestic and Family Violence Community Plan through survey responses and in-person consultations.

This is the voice of our community.

1. Awareness and Education

Community members acknowledged that awareness about domestic and family violence has increased over the years. Some said that in the past *“the general population had no words to describe what they were experiencing”*, but now a *“language has developed to describe the acts of abuse.”* While this was acknowledged as a positive step towards prevention and early intervention, it was highlighted that there is a need for a continued focus on increasing awareness about domestic and family violence and coercive control for the whole community as the information has not yet reached everyone. Several people who participated in the community survey and consultation meetings also emphasised the importance of early domestic violence education for children and young people, and targeted training for police, lawyers, magistrates, health staff and other services to improve responses to domestic and family violence.

Here is what we heard from the community.

Community Awareness

Many people said that there is still a lack of understanding about coercive control and non-physical forms of abuse as these behaviours are harder to recognise. Some said that community education about coercive control currently includes *“stereotypical examples of domestic violence”* and must be improved to show that domestic violence happens across *“all socio-economic parts of society, all ages, all races.”*

One survey participant said:

“There still seems to be a myth that DV is contained to physical violence - the community, generally speaking, have very little understanding of other forms of DV - especially coercive control and sexual abuse.”

Some women survivors who participated in community consultations shared that they did not know that what they were experiencing was coercive control and felt confused about where to go and what to say. They said that having more education about domestic and family violence and control will help people to identify if they are experiencing it.

“I didn’t know that I was experiencing coercive control because I was so conditioned to think that it was all my fault.”

There were suggestions for having information and awareness sessions during ante-natal classes as women are at a higher risk of experiencing domestic violence during pregnancy.

Community members asked for services to hold regular domestic and family violence information and education sessions in community centres, neighbourhood centres and other community spaces where people visit regularly.

“Go to places where women are going to be... in informal spaces where it is easier to have the conversation.”

“Teach importance of listening. Sometimes this all that is needed. A gift to another.”

Early DFV Education

One of the key themes in survey responses and consultation meetings was starting conversations with children about healthy behaviours and respectful relationships from a young age, for example, in childcare centres and primary schools. There was a focus on educating young people about domestic and family violence and involving them in these dialogues.

Some suggestions were made to convey messages in a way that resonates with young people.

“Young people use very different language to naming conventions we give to DV, we need to open up the language so young people can more easily identify what is actually happening to them.”

School programs, community sporting groups, sports ambassadors and education programs for boys and young men were suggested as ways to increase children and young people’s knowledge about domestic and family violence.

“Re-define what is masculinity in a positive way.”

“There needs to be more presence of the department of education within the efforts. I believe early intervention in schools that address DFV in an age-appropriate way specifically to teenagers' entering intimate relationships is greatly lacking and would empower young women to leave earlier.”

Some community members also discussed that it is important for school and university students to have the option of speaking in safe discrete spaces with educators trained

in domestic and family violence. It was shared that some universities offer free domestic violence counselling to students.

There were suggestions for domestic and family violence education to be made compulsory across all university courses, as it is currently offered as an elective subject and only in some courses.

Targeted Training for Services

Community members acknowledged that there has been an increase in training for services. During the consultation with local services, many people identified that forums such as Domestic Violence Integrated Response, Domestic Violence Interagency Group meetings, and other networking meetings are a *“strength”* as *“they bring services together to share knowledge and build relationships across the sector.”*

However, most survey responses and feedback in community consultations highlighted the need for more targeted training for police, ambulance service, courts, magistrates, frontline workers, health workers, GPs, community services and staff and volunteers working in local sports clubs, churches and other faith groups to improve DFV responses to domestic and family violence.

Some survey responses suggested:

“More training to the teachers, childcare, educators, police, council, universities and people from all walks of life.”

“More education about DFV in male dominated industries and sporting teams. eg attending 'toolbox meetings', sports trainings etc more training for workplaces.”

“Training everyday professionals (hairdressers, massage therapists, real estate agents, Personal Trainers to recognise signs of DFV.”

“Being able to access support through trusted people and places like local churches, community groups and sports clubs would improve access and facilitate engagement with support services. Staff and volunteers at these organisations would need training and support to be able to appropriately connect people.”

“Engaging GPs to support women or offer help and support...”

Some said that domestic and family violence training was also needed for real estate agencies as some of them are starting to be more open about supporting women who have experienced domestic violence, to access private rental properties.

“I didn’t know where to go, who to call.”

“Older women may not go online to look up information, but they may be going to their GPs for regular health checkups. So have pamphlets of services available in medical centres.”

“People often don’t know where to go for help and how to navigate support for their family and friends.”

“More visible messaging across the Gold Coast to reach people not accessing service systems and to give a message to persons using violence that engaging in this behaviour is unacceptable.”

Many survivors said that there needs to be clear information available about what to expect when they go to places like court, police or a housing centre. There needs to be consistency in information and clear pathways of support. People said that websites of services need to be user-friendly and must be updated regularly so the information available is accurate. Several community members and survivors who participated in the survey and consultation meetings also expressed frustration about services sometimes providing incorrect information about what support other services can provide.

“Sometimes information on websites doesn’t match with what the service actually offers.”

“Build a system where all survivors know where to access support, protection and safety.”

“As someone who is currently navigating the DFV system, it amazes me how much mixed information I get even within the same organizations.”

Community members also want easily accessible information about what resources are already available and some people said that a review of the existing resources would be helpful to make sure that they are *“concise, accessible and easy to understand.”*

There were some suggestions to share resources and information about support services through social media, workplaces, schools, neighbourhood centres, and other community spaces so that it can reach more people.

Flexible and Timely Responses

Several people who responded to the community survey and participated in the consultation meetings acknowledged that organisations are *“trying to do their best”* and there is increased collaboration among many services including police, QCS, Queensland Health, domestic violence services and other local services. Domestic Violence Integrated Response, Southport specialist court and *“colocation initiatives”* such as specialist DFV workers in police stations, hospitals, Department of Housing and other organisations, were shared as some examples of good collaboration which increases the likelihood of survivors receiving flexible and timely responses.

“It is good to have a separate women’s space at the courthouse. It is good that women have a service they can access for specialist support.”

However, several community members and those working in the local services shared multiple barriers that impact access to flexible and timely supports.

It was raised that service responses are often inconsistent and depend on who survivors speak to or where they reach out for help.

“There is a lot of bouncing back and forth.”

“Too many wrong doors and too much red tape.”

“Organisations should stop bouncing clients to other services without understanding specific needs or whether that service can actually help them.”

Some people who responded to the survey raised the issue of survivors having to do excessive paperwork to access some supports and being expected to make phone calls to services when they are already feeling overwhelmed.

“There are services, but actually getting access when you need them is the hardest part.”

“Supports are pointed and only focus on their specific area depending on their funding. Services should be more holistic creating more of a one stop shop.”

Some community members identified that there is a need for more services on the southern end of Gold Coast, as it can be difficult for people living there to access services located in the northern suburbs. Public transport issues were brought up as a barrier.

“.....there are more DFV centres on the Northern end of the coast, many survivors feel overwhelmed or have no transport to get there.”

Restrictions around catchment areas was also raised as a significant issue, particularly when people are trying to access supports between the Gold Coast and Tweed regions.

There were suggestions for “better cross border information between Tweed Heads and QLD DFV Services connecting with each other, access to refuge and services between NSW and QLD streamlined.”

Some community members discussed the challenge of women having to “start again” if they are on a housing list in one state and then move to another state.

People emphasised the importance of receiving timely support, particularly in crisis situations. Some community members also highlighted the impacts of long waiting times and supports not being available.

“Sometimes it’s easier to return to the relationship due to long waits.”

Some expressed the need for more specialist workers in police stations, hospitals, mental health services, government agencies and community agencies to improve responses to domestic and family violence.

One survey participant said that there is “no clearly identified, trauma-identified DFV specific space within the hospital for victim-survivors.”

They suggested “A dedicated DFV room or hub at GCUH with private, safe space for disclosure, on-site specialist DFV workers, direct referral pathways to legal, housing, and counselling supports, culturally safe and disability-inclusive design.”

There were some suggestions to improve supports available for people experiencing family violence, including elder abuse.

“Provide more tailored support and provisions for Family violence, not just intimate partner violence.”

“Elder abuse can be much more complex due to extra contributing factors. Regarding elder abuse, we should have more supports/services for men who are victims/survivors.”

Practical and Long-term Supports

Community members said that financial payments such as the Centrelink Crisis Payment, Leaving Violence Payment and other forms of practical assistance like no-interest loans and domestic violence leave are helpful, but not all survivors are eligible

for this assistance, particularly if they are not citizens or permanent residents of Australia.

There was a strong focus on the need for longer-term supports. Many people stated that there is very little support available once the immediate crisis has passed, despite the ongoing challenges that often continue after leaving a relationship.

Some survivors and community members who participated in the survey shared:

“Support seems to just disappear after leaving the relationship.”

“Sometimes feels like we are doing short 'band aid' interventions and not addressing the root of the issue.”

“Resourcing in many services is targeted at crisis support rather than post crisis or prevention services.”

“While some support exists, it is often difficult to access, slow to respond, and short-term, which can leave women feeling abandoned when they need help the most.”

“I am grateful and humbled with the assistance I did receive during the initial leaving process, but guys PLEASE help the survivors thrive after, by providing follow ups and connecting them with appropriate assistance required for that individual situation.”

Some raised the importance of more financial supports, financial counselling and free, or reduced-fee, trainings for women, to help them get back to employment.

“Programs that focus on practical recovery after DFV, especially employment support and life-skills assistance, could work well on the Gold Coast.”

“Help women return to work with grants to open small businesses, the recent grant was only for a small number of women.”

Other suggestions included free parking for women attending court or support services and safe parking areas for women having to sleep in their cars.

Those working in the domestic and family violence sector who participated in the survey and consultation meeting raised the need for more funding and resources to be able to provide timely and long-term supports.

support, legal supports and long-term health services and mental health services impact the safety and stability of women and children.

Safety and Stability Beyond Crisis

The need for more emergency accommodation and affordable, long-term housing for women and children experiencing domestic and family violence was strongly reflected in survey responses as well as community consultation meetings. Many people raised concerns about women and children experiencing homelessness because of domestic and family violence and some having to sleep in their cars due to lack of sufficient housing options.

Some people raised the issue of survivors not receiving accommodation support due to homelessness services sometimes saying that they cannot manage the domestic violence risk. Some community members also said that women experiencing both domestic violence and homelessness at the same time, don't receive required support if domestic violence services identify it as a homelessness issue and homelessness services say that it is a domestic violence issue.

“Homelessness and DV often get confused as the primary issue by support services.”

“Women are encouraged to leave unsafe relationships and have short term support, however, quickly fall through the cracks into other unsafe scenarios e.g. homelessness.”

There were suggestions for emergency accommodation to be made available for a longer period (as is the case in some other states) and having access to more after-hours outreach support. Limited accommodation options on the Gold Coast during busy periods of the year was also raised as a concern.

“Crisis accommodation can become unavailable or impacted during holiday periods or large events.”

“Victim-survivors are still being placed far from support networks, kept in motels with poor safety, forced to choose between homelessness and returning to violence.”

Some people shared concerns about the lack of affordable housing options for women and children after they exit refuge. This means refuges not having enough vacancies to support other families, due to women and children having to stay longer in refuge as there is nowhere else to go. There were calls for increased funding for *“crisis housing, refuge and transitional housing.”* Community members who participated in the survey

and consultation meetings discussed the multiple adverse impacts on women and children, because of not having safe and stable accommodation.

“The despair of repeatedly hearing similar responses that there is no available safe space at the moment and then being put on a waiting list - women are losing hope, especially when young children are in their care.”

Some survey participants specifically highlighted the need for *“emergency housing for Aboriginal clients escaping DFV.”*

“The Gold Coast is needing to have more stronger collaborations with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and more crisis accommodation.”

There were a few suggestions about residential programs for men using violence so that women and children don’t have to flee and can continue staying in the home.

“Why does the woman always have to flee?”

When asked about concerns regarding current responses to domestic and family violence, some people who responded to the survey emphasised the need for a *“greater understanding and recognition of system abuse through court processes”* and some highlighted the impacts of having to go through the family law court system.

“The family court and its platform of allowing the perpetrator to continue coercive control and perpetrate DFV. The costs and psychological toll. The power at family court plays a huge role in the survivor’s ability to regain control and safety.”

“There is a lack of acknowledgment and supports of DFV in Family Law Court. The utilisation and leverage of this system by Persons Using Violence (PUV) and a disregard of how DFV affects children.”

“The impact on children and the lack of consideration of their views, wants and needs - how DFV is directly related to family court proceedings but the limited assistance available for victim survivors experiencing issues in Family Law Court.”

There were suggestions for more free legal services and female lawyers. Some shared that women sometimes have to pay for private legal supports particularly if their partner is receiving private legal representation.

“Women who own property with perpetrator can’t get access to legal assistance.”

“Justice system is too expensive.”

One woman survivor who participated in the community survey said there is a need for *“Additional free legal service. I lost everything paying for a private lawyer.”*

Some community members also spoke about the importance of access to long-term health services, mental health services for the whole family and free counselling support for women and children.

Accountability for People Using Violence

Community members acknowledged that more men are now speaking out about men’s use of violence and there is increased accountability for men using violence than there was a few years ago. It was also recognised that more men are now working in the domestic and family violence sector than before.

Survey responses and people attending consultation meetings emphasised the need for greater accountability and the importance of working with men using violence, not only after the violence, but through earlier interventions and thinking of *“accountability beyond a criminal justice response.”*

“Focus on perpetrator’s accountability more.”

Some people spoke about the important role that elders and community leaders play in having conversations about accountability with men using violence.

The community raised the need for men to be more present in broader conversations about DFV, prevention and accountability.

“Increase presence of men in discussions.”

“Invite men in community to talk about DV.”

“Teach men how to respect women. Careful not to “tell them” ... as they might not listen. But invite them to come together to explore ideas.”

Community members highlighted the need for more long-term, *“culturally informed”* programs that are quicker to access, to help men address their use of violence. Many people raised the need for more supports and help for men who are wanting to make a change and for those who waiting to get into a program.

There were suggestions for and specific targeted programs for fathers, young men using violence towards their partners and young people using of violence in the family.



Reaching Everyone in Our Community

The community spoke about the importance of support reaching everyone who needs support for domestic and family violence. People raised the different experiences of young people, older people, First Nations communities, culturally diverse communities, and LGBTIQ+ communities, and the need for responses that better understand and reflect those experiences.

Inclusive and Culturally Responsive Support

People discussed the importance of having supports that are more inclusive and tailored to better respond to the intersecting barriers experienced by diverse community groups such as First Nations communities, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities, LGBTIQ+ communities, faith-based communities, people with disability, young people and older people.

Community members said that there is increased awareness about services for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities. Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) National, QPS Cross Cultural Unit- Police Liaison Officers and local multicultural services were some examples of helpful supports.

Some cultural community groups such as the Thai, Japanese and Chinese associations are already undertaking initiatives to help survivors from their communities who are impacted by domestic and family violence, by providing practical supports and information in their first language that is relevant to their needs. However, there is usually limited and one-off project-based funding available for community groups.

Community members discussed the impacts of racism and negative stereotyping of certain cultures and people from CALD backgrounds.

“Cultural understanding makes a real difference to safety.”

“There are assumptions about cultural background, social and migration status and socio-economic status as predictor of violence.”

“No one is talking about what the CALD communities can teach services, only the other way around.”

“Men from some communities are seen as just violent.”

Multiple barriers were highlighted for LGBTIQ+ community members accessing supports including mental health and counselling services. Some community members said that the way some services are funded can exclude LGBTIQ+ community members from accessing certain supports.

“Queer kids who don’t have a safe home to live in, have nowhere to go if their foster carers do not support gender affirming care.”

“In LGBTIQ+ communities many people have “chosen families” meaning that because they have become isolated from biological families. They often create chosen families within the queer community. The law does not recognise these family relationships”

“There is a lack of supports (especially court support) for members of LGBTIQ+ Community”.

Some people participating in the consultation meetings raised specific barriers experienced by survivors from Aboriginal communities. Some Aboriginal women may want to access supports in other geographical areas due to fear of their privacy being breached in their local community. Some said that First Nations women don’t receive adequate supports and there is a need for more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led services.

“Aboriginal women don’t get priority with services, and they might know what supports are available.”

“Get more Indigenous DFV support services.”

One survey participant raised the need for *“more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led programs that are culturally safe and trauma-informed, healing circles and yarning groups, involvement of Elders in guidance and prevention work, community education led by First Nations people, and initiatives that strengthen family and cultural connections while supporting victim-survivors and holding perpetrators accountable.”*

People also discussed barriers for survivors of domestic violence who have a disability. Some said that community members and services need to be *“more disability aware and involved.”*

“Women with disability are overrepresented yet still in the ‘too hard’ basket.”

Community Connection

Many people discussed the importance of informal spaces and events for survivors and other community members to connect with each other and with services. There were suggestions for having more community events where people experiencing domestic and family violence can have opportunities to access supports such as haircuts, donations, food hampers and other essential items. Such events are also great networking opportunities for services to learn more about each other and connect with the community.

Some suggestions included:

“DFV agencies being visible at community events to promote opportunities to make the first step of knowing who to call and where to go.”

“Women need connection as they are so isolated after separation. Need hobbies groups or informal spaces where women can connect with each other.”

Some innovative ideas were shared about how community can become more involved in raising awareness about domestic and family violence through *“dialog, poem, music, art, drama and dance.”*

Community’s role in responding to domestic and family violence was highlighted in many responses.

“Continue the conversation. Continue the education. Continue challenging our friends, associates and family by calling out behaviours in the community.”

“We need the entire community to get on board and stand up against domestic and family violence.”

“Community-run peer-support groups, such as women’s circles or survivor-led groups, can create safe spaces for people to share experiences and build informal support networks. Cultural leaders and bilingual volunteers could also play a key role through cultural connector programs, helping CALD community members better understand DFV laws, access services and overcome language barriers.”

Lived Experience

Many people who participated in the survey and consultation meetings called for increased involvement of victim-survivors in education and awareness conversations, community initiatives, and service design.

“People with lived experience need to be part of the solution.”

“Ask survivors how they would design the system rather than asking what is working well or not working well. Involve them in creating and designing system models that will work for them.”

There were many suggestions for services to seek regular client feedback about their experience of accessing supports.

“Ask for feedback from clients navigating the system and understanding what is crucial to them.”

There were suggestions for *“services and government to connect with people and communities as ongoing process, not one off for the events and surveys.”*

Many women survivors said they were keen to contribute and help other women.

“Involve women in community projects where they can contribute and give back. Women need a purpose. They want to give back to other women.”

Turning Ideas into Action

The Gold Coast Community contributed enthusiastically to the creation of this DFV Community Plan and generously shared their knowledge and insights through survey responses and participation in community consultation meetings. Here are some suggestions that we heard from the community about turning ideas into action.

- Billboards, pamphlets, QR codes, and service information in places such as GP practices, medical centres, shopping centres, gyms, hairdressers, universities, public transport, service stations, and community hubs to make information more easily available and accessible.
- Central service directory for Gold Coast services.
- User-friendly, regularly updated websites.
- Clear information about processes such as applying for a domestic violence order.
- DFV specialist workers in police stations, hospitals, mental health services, government agencies and community services.
- Free parking for women attending services.
- Safer parking options for women living in cars.
- More after-hours outreach support.
- More emergency accommodation and long-term housing options.
- Easier access to services and refuges across the border.
- Financial assistance, skills training and employment assistance to women.
- Community information sessions, social media campaigns, and stronger online engagement.
- More training for GPs, health services, teachers, childcare educators, police, lawyers and magistrates.
- Regular information and education sessions in community centres, neighbourhood centres and other community spaces where people visit regularly.
- More awareness and education of available DFV services in universities and TAFE.
- School programs, community sporting groups, sports ambassadors, education programs for young boys and men.

Acknowledgements

The Gold Coast Community, for their generous contributions which made the creation of this plan possible.





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Special thanks to

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