

For Immediate Release

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Domestic Violence Peak Calls for Strong Action for Audit into Policing

Domestic Violence New South Wales (DVNSW) is calling for systemic change in NSW, including improvements to police training, auditing, reporting, transparency, and culture to adequately enhance police responses to domestic and family violence in the state.

“We acknowledge the important and difficult job NSW Police Force has in responding to domestic and family violence and supporting victim-survivors,” says Delia Donovan, CEO of Domestic Violence NSW. “But it’s imperative that they can meet the demand as this crime is so prevalent, and with this in mind, ensure adequate funding and resourcing.”

Informed by a large survey with over 90 DVNSW member service responses, DVNSW has made 18 recommendations in a submission to the Audit Office of New South Wales’s inquiry into NSW Police responses to domestic and family violence which closed on Saturday, 30th October.

DVNSW seeks a response from Audit Office of NSW to the following recommendations:

1. That the NSW Police Force implement a regular comprehensive audit process of officer compliance with the Domestic Violence Standard Operating Procedures (DVSOPs), which includes the results of ‘dip sampling’ conducted by an independent body. Until an existing independent body is established, the current dip sampling performed by the NSW Police Force should be published.
2. Publish the Domestic Violence Standard Operating Procedures (DVSOPs) and the Sexual Violence Standard Operating Procedures (SVSOPs) to increase transparency and accountability.
3. Improve the complaints response mechanism, including increasing the capacity and scope of the Law Enforcement Conduct Commission to increase transparency and independence in the complaints process.
4. Fund mandatory, regular, in-depth, trauma informed SDVF training delivered by sexual assault and domestic abuse experts.
5. Improve NSWPF Police capacity to respond to breaches of ADVOs through increased training and resourcing, with progress in this area tracked and monitored.
6. Fund mandatory training on including children as people in need of protection on apprehended domestic violence orders.
7. Implement an action plan to improve police identification of the primary aggressor.
8. Positively influence a cultural shift in the police force in the view of domestic violence liaison officers.
9. Review and improve training and use of the Automatic Referral Pathway (ARP) program for male perpetrators to be offered behavioural change programs.
10. NSWPF to continue to actively implement workforce diversity and development strategies to attract, develop and retain a workforce that represents the diverse community of NSW including women, and people from First Nations, migrant and refugee, LGBTIQ+ communities.

11. Greater utilisation of Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers to build greater trust and cooperation between the community and the police.
12. Greater consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for regular cultural awareness training for all police officers
13. Review use of Suspect Target Management Program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and youth to address their over-representation as STMP targets.
14. Consult with key external stakeholders and peak bodies to ensure specialist culturally appropriate training and police responses when assisting women from CALD and refugee backgrounds.
15. Reinforce policy to ensure interpreters are offered to anyone with language needs when required.
16. Introduce national requirements for police to collect and report on the sexuality and gender of clients.
17. Consult with key external stakeholders and peak bodies to ensure current specialist LBGTQIA+ training and police responses.
18. Consult with key external stakeholders and peak bodies to ensure current specialist disability training and police responses.

You can read the recommendations in their entirety [here](#).

Alison Waters, Manager of Northern Rivers Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service, says her service often hears of problems arising from poor police responses. “We speak to women who have been misidentified as perpetrators of violence by police, and too often women are disregarded or treated inappropriately because they do not present or react in a way that a ‘victim’ is typically expected to react,” she says.

“It is vital that police are trained to recognise the numerous ways that women who have experienced abuse and coercion may present, and to be skilled in appropriate responses.”

Ms Donovan says the sector is relying on the Audit Office to make recommendations that recognise the impact of the policing response on domestic violence victims and their children and acknowledges the high prevalence of sexual assault in a domestic context. “There needs to be fundamental, systemic improvements to funding, policy, training, and partnerships to ensure domestic and family violence victims and their children have access to appropriate supports and services and are safe in their own homes.”

“Women and children experiencing violence need to be able to trust their local law enforcement. Without real, positive change to the culture of the NSW Police, we will be leaving more women and children living in fear and danger,” she says.

“How a case of domestic violence is handled in the first response can shape a victim-survivor’s perception of the police. If they get an officer who is compassionate, understanding and patient with their trauma, they may feel believed and supported enough to leave the first time. If they receive an officer who is sceptical, impatient, and not trained in trauma response, this may deter the victim-survivor from leaving, or turning to the police ever again.”

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Domestic Violence NSW is the peak body for specialist domestic and family violence services in NSW. DVNSW provides a representative and advocacy function for specialist services and the women, families and communities they support. Their mission is to eliminate domestic and family violence through leadership in policy, advocacy, partnerships and the promotion of best practice.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence help can be found via:

- **1800RESPECT** or 1800 737 732 which offers a national counselling helpline, information and support
- **NSW Domestic Violence Line** 1800 65 64 63 which offers a state-wide counselling helpline, information and support
- **Men's Referral Service** 1300 766 491 for men, or friends and family of men using violence