



Acknowledgement of Country

Cumberland City Council acknowledges the Darug Nation and People as Traditional Custodians of the land on which the Cumberland Local Government Area (LGA) is situated and pays respect to Aboriginal Elders past, present, and future.

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the First Peoples of Australia.

Cumberland City Council acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples living in the Cumberland Local Government Area and reaffirms that we will work closely with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to advance reconciliation within the area.

Help and Support

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic and family violence, help and support is available. All services below are free and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Call 000 if you are or someone is in danger now.

1 800 RESPECT - 1800 737 732

For more information, you can scan the QR code to access the resources available on the Cumberland City Council's website.



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Committed to Ending Domestic and Family Violence

Cumberland City Council's Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan is a three-year plan that outlines the commitment to working towards the ending of domestic and family violence (DFV). The plan provides the community, community groups, services, and businesses in the Cumberland LGA with an opportunity to work collaboratively to encourage a cultural change that will lead to safer homes, neighbourhoods, and communities.

Cumberland City Council's Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan is a three-year plan that outlines the commitment to working towards the ending of domestic and family violence (DFV). The plan provides the community, community groups, services, and businesses in the Cumberland LGA with an opportunity to work collaboratively to encourage a cultural change that will lead to safer homes, neighbourhoods, and communities.

The Action Plan contributes to and compliments Council's Crime Prevention Plan and Homelessness Action Plan. DFV has far-reaching impacts within our community – it is a crime and a leading cause of homelessness for women.¹

Reducing the prevalence of DFV was a priority in the Cumberland Community Safety and Crime Prevention Plan 2018-2022, and is again a focus in this Plan for 2023. Cumberland Council has strong community networks and extensive relationships with other levels of Government and the local Police. Council is well placed to support measures and initiatives that address DFV and specifically, a robust understanding of the local context allows Council to support local organisations in a manner that best suits their clients.

Cumberland Council recognises that it can play an active role in preventing and reducing domestic and family violence through three key priorities:

- Primary prevention aimed to reduce or prevent new instances of violence before they occur by increasing knowledge, awareness, influencing changes to attitudes and understanding of all aspects of DFV.
- 2. **Early Intervention** aimed to keep people safe, change attitudes, prevent escalations and address arising issues and provide avenues for early interventions.
- 3. **Sector development and support** aimed to support the DFV services sector in Cumberland to provide help to the community.
- 1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022

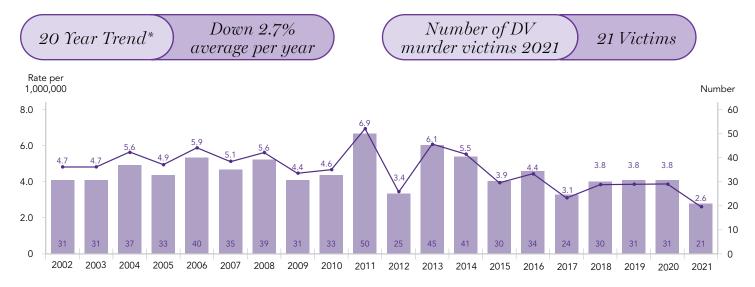
Our Initiatives

- Providing grants for not-for-profit organisations that prevent and respond to domestic and family violence
- Providing training and support for community workers, community leaders and advocates to recognise and respond to domestic and family violence
- Access to programs in schools partnering with the police, local youth services and schools to deliver respectful relationship programs, such as Love Bites and Rock and Water
- Working closely with local community services and groups
- Educating and raising awareness across different cultures and people least likely to report abuse
- Increasing public participation of women and girls in community networks, female only sports clubs and support groups
- Bringing gender equality to workplace culture, with support for those escaping domestic and family violence
- Raising awareness and supporting staff within Council

NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research: Domestic and Family Violence (December 2022)

Domestic Violence-related Murder in NSW

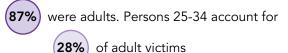
Long Term Trend: 20 Years from 2002 to 2021



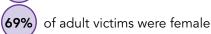
Victims of Domestic Violence Assault

In the past 12 months there were 34,413 victims:

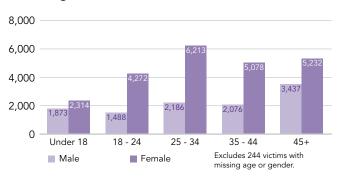








Age and Gender of DV Assault Victims

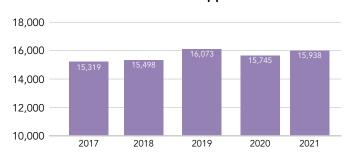


Court Appearances

In the past 12 months 15,938 people appeared in court for Domestic Violence Assault.

The fall in number of finalised appearances from 2019 - 2020 is due in part measures introduced in response to COVID-19

DV Assault Court Appearances



Purpose of this Plan

This Action Planning document and subsequent DFV Action Plan outlines the findings from a preliminary survey completed by service providers, the October 2022 DFV Action Planning Day, and the first meeting of the newly established Cumberland DFV Community of Practice (November 2022). Findings from these consultation activities are explored in detail through this document.

- On average in Australia, one woman a week is murdered by her current or former partner²,
- 1 in 3 women (33%) has experienced physical violence since the age of 153, and
- 1 in 5 women (22%) has experienced sexual violence since the age of 154.

Addressing Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) is a key priority for Cumberland City Council and its focus is to build and support a strong and leading community sector response to ending this issue in the Cumberland Local Government Area (LGA).

This Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) Action Plan document outlines the findings from a preliminary survey completed by service providers, the October 2022 DFV Action Planning Day, and the first meeting of the newly established Cumberland DFV Community of Practice (November 2022). Findings from these consultation activities are explored in detail through this document.

Defining the issue

Domestic and family violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviours used to intimidate or control a partner or family member. It is a complex issue that has many categories of abuse: physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, cultural, spiritual, financial, economic, verbal, social, stalking and technology facilitated abuse. Domestic and family violence can happen once or become a regular occurrence. Unfortunately, incidents often remain unreported. Although women are significantly more likely to experience DFV, it can happen to anyone, and its effects may be experienced by other family or household members.

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. 2018. <u>Violence against women: Accurate use of key statistics</u> Sydney, NSW: ANROWS.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). 2023. Personal Safety Survey, Australia, 2023 (ABS cat. no. 4906.0). Canberra, ACT: ABS.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). 2017. Personal Safety Survey, Australia, 2016 (ABS cat. no. 4906.0). Canberra, ACT: ABS.

Context, key stakeholders, and their roles

Federal Government

The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 provided local government a recognised role in the reduction, prevention and community capacity building in the levels of violence against women.

The National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-32 and the establishment of a Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission supports continuing cooperation between the Commonwealth, states, and territories. It provides greater transparency in delivering the targets and objectives of the National Plan.

The investment in establishing a Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner and for Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Project, including a National Summit that will focus on Indigenous women's leadership and decision-making.

State Government

The NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016-2021: Safer Lives for Women, Men and Children. The Blueprint delivered a five-year, whole of government approach to domestic and family violence in NSW.

The development of The NSW Domestic and Family Violence Plan 2022-2027 recognises the importance of capacity building within communities and the not-for-profit sector enhancing support for people experiencing violence. This includes an investment in housing, specialist services and support package for domestic violence victim-survivors.

Service providers

Service providers deliver a range of direct services to those at-risk of or to those currently experiencing or perpetrating DFV. This can include financial and legal assistance, mental and physical health services, housing, peer support, counselling, and referral services. Typically response mechanisms, they also play a crucial role in prevention by stopping violence from escalating or recurring.

Community organisations, leaders, and individuals

Community organisations and leaders have the most detailed and nuanced understanding of the barriers face by those impacted by DFV, as well as the most effective approaches in their local communities. They are some of the most trusted local figures and can drive grassroots change by being strong role models, condemning DFV and supporting survivors.

Lessons learnt from previous DFV projects

Engaging various stakeholders

A diverse range of parties must be involved in DFV focused projects as this ensures that the needs and interests of those impacted are considered in the planning of prevention, intervention, and response activities. This includes:

- groups or individuals with significant roles in either the DFV sector or within communities
- police
- service providers
- charities
- religious leaders
- community leaders or advocates

The leadership of local champions has supported implementation of strategies that have reduced the stigma of help-seeking behaviour regarding DFV. Being actively engaged with these groups ensures the Council maintains the social capital required to enact long term plans.

The involvement of community groups and community leaders are crucial given they are often the first responders to DFV in their communities. It is important to recognise that having diverse input into the planning of measures to address DFV is an essential component in the development of a robust and well-considered plan. Without this input the plan will fail to meet the needs of those on the periphery and those least in a position to bear the costs.

Conveying the message

It is important that communications are informed by the cultural context, as well as by the organisational context in which they are delivered, i.e., in volunteer-run organisations. Focusing on the small things that groups can do can also make a big difference. They are important as community organisations are often volunteer-run and may not have capacity to maintain large projects. Providing simple resources to and for local services increases the efficiency and effectiveness of DFV programs in multiple contexts.

Continuing the support

Some community leaders did not feel confident enough to deliver DFV education sessions themselves. Continued support from Council and other service providers where possible can help community leaders and organisations build confidence and capacity until they are able to deliver the packages independently.

Building a new DFV Action Plan

To gain an understanding of the complexities in addressing DFV in the local community, a survey was distributed by email and follow up phone calls to community organisations and targeted service providers. 28 responses were received from community organisations.

Diversity of organisations

A variety of organisations responded to the surveys, including culturally specific community groups, and service providers that target Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities. Respondents have been categorised into two groups; DFV specialist services and those who provide adjacent services (legal, accommodation, counselling, financial and employment). Within the respondent group there were organisations who identified as providing targeted support services for women, men, youth, children, families, seniors and people with disabilities, mental health issues or at-risk/experiencing of homelessness.

Common barriers and gaps

According to community organisations and service providers, the following were reported as common barriers impacting individuals that are trying to access support for domestic and family violence:

Cultural context

Recognising the cultural context is significant for effective service delivery in Cumberland, given the area's cultural diversity. Community groups described some of the cultural factors that influence the experience of DFV within some communities, including the dowry system in South Asian contexts and honour-based violence. Particularly problematic is when religious and community leaders reinforce cultural norms that can promote victim shaming and blaming. Other issues include:

- Cultural norms, such as cultural understandings of violence, patriarchy, shame, and possible community backlash associated with leaving and overall stigma surrounding DFV
- Unwillingness to recognise DFV as a problem or occurring at all
- Culturally appropriate advice
- Language barriers for people from diverse backgrounds
- Lack of funding to provide support programs and culturally specific domestic and family violence specialists
- Barriers to early detection and prevention due to cultural perceptions of violence, fear of authorities and awareness of support services.

First Nations Context

DFV in the context of First Nations communities is complex and layered. There are several factors that influence how people from First Nations backgrounds experience, report, and seek-help for DFV. Colonisation and dispossession continue to impact the lives of First Nations people. In practice, this means the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who experience domestic, or family violence are also less likely to report this to the police. First Nations people are also more likely to experience discrimination within the mainstream social, political, and legal structures that are designed to address the impacts of DFV. The likelihood of negative repercussions is a major barrier to disclosure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and survivors, particularly in small, interconnected, and isolated communities where anonymity cannot be maintained.

Family and community ties

Many of those experiencing DFV lack family support. Others fear that reaching out may compromise strong family or community bonds due to the stigma surrounding DFV, with this leading to further isolation. In other cases, uncertainty regarding how reporting DFV will affect children can lead to inaction, as can a lack of childcare or other child support services when managing the problem. Some stay in a relationship in hope that their abusive partner will change.

Programs for Men

There is a significant lack of programming to support men to create respectful relationships free from violence and abuse. The reasons for this are many, however one primary reason for this is that self-directed help seeking behaviour contradicts aspects of traditional masculinity - emotional stoicism, the need to be in control, fear of being seen as weak – which results in a low demand for such programs. However, these programs are desperately needed.

Lack of Resources

In circumstances where a person is ready to seek support, one major obstacle is the lack of various resources, including safe and affordable accommodation, access to transport, financial assistance, legal support in court and health care. Most services that deliver DFV services and programs are already at capacity.

Communication and Referral Barriers

Service providers highlighted a lack of adequate communication methods and limited strategies for connecting with other providers. It was suggested that council provide communication methods that allow providers to make referrals to each other more efficiently and encourage clients to self-refer are required to improve access to services. Improved communication between providers and clients regarding the available services is essential but it must be recognised that any barrier is exacerbated by language related issues and complex systems, including pathways for referrals.

Legal System

Understanding the legal system in Australia is complex and presents a challenge for many individuals that seek support. It is especially challenging for clients that have no address, come from diverse backgrounds, have language barriers, or visa issues. Legal support can be expensive and inaccessible for those on low incomes or those unfamiliar with the Australian legal system.

Structural Disadvantage

The Australian legal system does not facilitate optimal responses for those experiencing DFV, including privacy laws that inhibit evidence gathering, ongoing court cases that can hinder DFV responses and inability to guarantee the safety of the survivor. Referral systems are often not streamlined, so survivors often have to recount and relive traumatic experiences multiple times throughout the various stages of seeking support. There is also currently a shortage of follow-up support available for survivors. Cultural organisations mentioned several additional complexities in CALD communities, such as cross-jurisdictional court cases, financial abuse from overseas, marriage laws that do not readily respond to fraud and scams, as well as forced and underage marriages or visa restrictions when residency is dependent on an abusive partner. Visa restrictions also significantly restrict the number of services available.

Relationship with the police

Some communities lack confidence in the ability of the justice system to deliver positive results. In some cases, victims may be fearful of the justice system or the police. This is especially likely to be true for those from communities that have had negative experiences with police or authority figures, such as immigrant Australians who came from countries with oppressive regimes. Indigenous Australians and people in remote communities may have experienced racism from the police, or others in positions of power, or may have been subjected to impact of government decisions such as the forced removal of children. This will impact upon their ability to trust institutions like the police with sensitive issues like DFV.

Double discrimination

Many of those experiencing DFV in diverse communities already face other forms of discrimination based on gender, race or religion, ethnicity, cultural practice etc. These additional layers of prejudice can hinder attempts to seek support. Especially concerning is a lack of cultural awareness from authorities and service providers that can result in institutional discrimination.

Perception

One of the most significant barriers to engaging in 'the system' is the extent to which the decision to report an offence depends on the victim's belief that reporting will achieve a desired outcome. That is, will the perpetrator be removed or punished? Will the victim be the object of blame by the police and courts? Will the report increase the risk of victimisation and danger for the victim? Levels of reported crime, in part, reflect the community's confidence in the justice system and the willingness and ability of the system, particularly police, to respond effectively.

Staffing

Surveyed organisations provided information on staffing issues which impact their ability to support victims:

- Staff shortages due to higher resignations post COVID-19
- Difficulty in recruiting staff with specialised skills in DFV
- Higher need for case management services impacts overall capacity
- Shortage of volunteers
- Difficulty in finding culturally specific DFV specialists

Venues for delivering services

There is a need for more safe spaces that services can meet with clients. Community centres, childcare centres and schools are ideal spaces where someone can discreetly seek safety and support. Ensuring client, volunteer and staff safety from perpetrators can be a challenge. There is also a need for more services to be in Cumberland as many providers serve Cumberland residents, but they are based in other LGA's.

Strengths and strategies

The surveyed community organisations and service providers have a strong and nuanced understanding of the local context and the needs of the community. As a result, their existing responses to DFV are tailored to the respective community and clients. Recognising the reluctance of many community members to seek support, these groups simplify the process of accessing support by offering soft entry programs and warm referrals. The ability for local organisations to deliver face-to-face support, as opposed to online or phone support, helps build rapport between parties. Though, the need for multiple access points is recognised as an important component of a flexible and accessible system. Some organisations offer services after hours, whilst others leverage existing relationships in the community and help family members provide support to those showing signs of DFV. Through existing programs, organisations are also able to provide incidental counselling in a non-provocative setting where necessary. Programs that connect people in similar situations have also been beneficial in reducing the stigma surrounding DFV and speaking out. Locally targeted awareness campaigns for DFV, address the topic in a culturally sensitive way that fosters greater interest.

Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan 2023-2025

The DFV Action Plan outlines the findings from a preliminary survey completed by service providers, the October 2022 DFV Action Planning Day, and the first meeting of the newly established Cumberland DFV Community of Practice (November 2022). Findings from these consultation activities are explored in detail through this document.

Priority 1: Primary Prevention

Approaches aiming to reduce or prevent new instances of violence before they occur. These address the underlying causes of DFV by increasing knowledge, awareness and understanding of the nature and causes of DFV and influencing attitudes to bring about behavioural change.

| No. | Action/Item | Desired Outcome | Timeframe | Activities |
|-----|---|---|-----------|---|
| 1.1 | Awareness Building | Promote awareness amongst community to understand the effects of domestic and family violence on individuals and the community. | Year 1-3 | Community information forums on domestic and family violence Community First Responders (Community Mobilisers JRS or Supporting U SSI) Café (or similar venue) DV worker placement Increase uptake and usage of Asklzzy Launch DFV Bystander Film |
| 1.2 | Increased engagement with Young People | Increased integration into schools located in Cumberland to support community education programs. | Year 1-2 | Respectful Relationships program Corrections Behaviour Program for Teenagers First responder training for Principals, Deputy/Assistant Principals Fit for Life (PCYC) |
| 1.3 | Increased engagement for new arrivals, refugees, and asylum seekers | To create and implement a suite of culturally appropriate domestic and family violence prevention programs. | Year 1-2 | Understanding the law workshops Respectful Relationships focusing on parents of children under 6 NSW Health – Theatre project Community mobilisers project Men's programs such as fathering, leadership and playgroups |
| 1.4 | Increased Police community engagement | Aim to strengthen relationships between community, Police, and DFV Organisations | Year 1 | Fit for Life (PCYC)Coffee with a CopExcursions to police stations |

| Key Stakeholders | Notes / Progress | Status |
|--|--|--------|
| Cumberland City Council, DFV Officer NSW Health ICSA | Develop non-religious community leaders / role models Increasing male participation Bi-lingual community workers Leverage workshops or existing programs to deliver some DFV messages in language – identify partnerships with community orgs already operating in this space | |
| Cumberland City Council, DFV Officer Love bites (NSW Police – Auburn) | Respectful Relationships delivered in culturally appropriate contexts by specialists instead of general teachers Forced Marriages Respectful Relationships / Love Bites Lack of family support Access females through IEC, tertiary studies GWS/Granville Corrections behaviour program – culturally appropriate, staff who could speak other languages Work on consistent language for victims and offending partners | |
| Cumberland City Council, DFV Officer JRS | Legal – Understanding the laws / rights - stop visas being used as a threat or control mechanism Safety without borders programs Women's support programs Family program or specific activities for children and youth Follow up and after care support to consolidate change and strengthen relationships. Wrap-around supports | |
| Cumberland City Council, DFV Officer | Community event engagement Stop Police being used as a threat to young people (new parents at hospitals – Zen Tea Lounge) Inviting police to community sessions | |

Priority 2: Early Intervention

Approaches aimed to keep people safe and change attitudes and behaviours or build skills of individuals or groups who are at risk, exhibiting signs of using or experiencing domestic and family violence. These approaches seek to prevent escalation and address issues arising. They include early interventions for victims, perpetrators, and their children in relation to newly identified or disclosed incidences of DFV.

| No. | Action/Item | Desired Outcome | Timeframe | Activities |
|-----|---|--|-----------|--|
| 2.1 | First Nations Engagement | Increased engagement with First Nations led organisations Improve access to information for people from First Nations | Year 1-2 | Community education that is codesigned in consultation with Elders Map referral pathways specific to First Nations Identify Aboriginal organisations who operate in DFV space and can support Cumberland residents |
| 2.2 | Engagement with Men and Boys | Men and boys are engaged in building and supporting healthy relationships | Year 1-2 | Identify Male focused programs and organisations who could operate in Cumberland Men's Behaviour Change programs Men's parenting programs Seek to develop male champions, community leaders, or young men who will call out bad behaviour |
| 2.3 | Family Support | The family unit is better engaged and supported | Year 1-2 | Identify family focused programs and organisations who could operate in Cumberland |
| 2.4 | Build a greater Cumberland based data-set | Collect more data and statistics not currently accounted for to drive increased funding for services in Cumberland LGA | Year 1-3 | Explore research project with external research partner Work with sector to determine additional information capture from clients |

| Key Stakeholders | Notes / Progress | Status |
|--|--|--------|
| Cumberland City Council, DFV Officer and Aboriginal Officer | Corrective services – Community Engagement Team working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders | |
| Cumberland City Council, DFV Officer Relationships Australia | Improved Data collection Men's Referral Service - automatic referrals are made when charged by Police. Court Chaplains also offer courses Anglicare, Corrective Services Men's support / awareness - community role models How to get disclosure - not in front of other males Co-design for men's behaviour change program. Advocacy for funding in this space Map what works in the offending partner space | |
| Cumberland City Council, DFV Officer ICSA | Rather than a focus solely on individuals, how do we engage whole families. | |
| Cumberland City Council, DFV Officer | Research and additional data may help to increase funding into Cumberland and identify the need for direct funded services operating from Cumberland LGA and not just for the LGA. | |

Priority 3: Sector Development & Support

This priority area aims to support the capacity of the Domestic and Family Violence sector in Cumberland to respond to the needs of victims and perpetrators. This priority will focus on areas such as networking to share resources, professional development to increase skills and knowledge, funding support, and advocacy to peak bodies, state, and federal governments.

| No. | Action/Item | Desired Outcome | Timeframe | Activities |
|-----|-----------------------------|---|-----------|---|
| 3.1 | Networking | Cumberland DV Sector work together to share resources | Year 1-3 | Annual Cumberland DFV Forum Facilitate the Cumberland Domestic and Family Violence Community of Practice |
| 3.2 | Professional Development | Increase expertise of DV workers in Cumberland | Year 1-3 | Map skillsets of existing services and identify areas for targeted training Facilitate training opportunities for the sector |
| 3.3 | Advocacy | Increase in resources and support available to DFV Organisations in Cumberland | Year 1-3 | Recruitment and employment pathways Advocacy for visas/refugees without direct funding support for housing |
| 3.4 | Grant support | Cumberland DFV Sector is supported to apply for both Council and external funding opportunities Maximise funding coming into Cumberland. | Year 1-3 | Grant workshops Individual project sessions |
| 3.5 | DFV Officer | Recruitment of a DFV Officer to Cumberland City Council | Year 1 | Once recruited, the DFV Officer will engage with DFV services to strengthen our network |
| 3.6 | Cumberland DFV Hub | Establishment of a DFV specific facility in Cumberland engaging multiple DFV services and interconnected supports | Year 1 | Expression of interest will be facilitated to determine co-location of services in the hub. |

| Key Stakeholders | Notes / Progress | Status |
|---|--|--------|
| Cumberland City Council, DFV Officer | | |
| Cumberland City Council, DFV Officer | DFV Alert - Multicultural Workshop (Feb 28 & Mar 1 2023) Legal and Justice System workshops | |
| Cumberland City Council, DFV Officer DVNSW | | |
| Cumberland City Council, Grants and Funding Support Officer | | |
| Cumberland City Council | | |
| Cumberland City Council, DFV Officer | | |



Cumberland City Council

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