

**Strong  
Women.**

**Hard  
Yarns.**

*Stories and tips about domestic and family violence*

# Introduction

This helpful booklet captures real life stories of women of all ages who have been abused by their partners or other family members. This kind of abuse is usually referred to as domestic or family violence and it has harmful effects which are also shown in the stories of the women in this booklet. It gives clear and factual definitions of different types of violence and names it for what it is. I urge women who read this, and who see themselves in the stories, to ask for help from one of the organisations suggested. There are a range of organisations that provide services specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as many other organisations which can also help people affected by domestic and family violence to consider their options. This is a resource which should be circulated widely to ensure that all types of violence are known about so that people who need help can get it as soon as possible.



The stories in this publication are true, however they are not the stories of the models pictured.

Domestic and family violence can happen between men and women, men and men, women and women, adults and children and children and adults. In domestic violence and family violence involving adults, women are more often the victims, and suffer more physical and psychological harm, than men. This resource is for women.

Children can call Kids Helpline on **1800 55 1800** and men can call DVConnect mensline on **1800 600 636**. If there is immediate danger, anyone can call the police on **000**.

Under Queensland's law, domestic and family violence is behaviour that is:

- physically or sexually abusive; or
- emotionally or psychologically abusive; or
- economically abusive; or
- threatening; or
- coercive; or
- in any other way controls or dominates the other person in the relationship and causes them to fear for their safety or wellbeing or the safety and wellbeing of someone else.

**Domestic and family violence is not the Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander way.**

**There is no excuse for domestic or family violence.**

## **What is verbal abuse?**

- Swearing, putting you down, making you feel bad.
- Threatening to harm you, your friends or family, or themselves.
- Being jealous of your family and friends and putting them down.

## **What is sexual abuse?**

- Kissing or touching when you don't want to.
- Forcing you to have sex.
- Forcing you to do other sexual stuff.

## **What is controlling behaviour?**

- Not letting you hang around your family and/or friends.
- Checking up on you all the time to see where you are and who you're with.
- Checking your text messages and emails.
- Telling you how to do your hair or what clothes to wear.



# Young Women

*“I was told by him how to wear my hair and clothes, who I could and couldn’t be friends with and what I could and couldn’t say. The worst of the abuse was probably constantly being told I was nothing more than a “whinging, stupid bitch” and that I was “never going to be as pretty or sexy as other girls”. He also forced me to have sex with him in public, at school, outdoors, as well as force me to perform sex acts on him that I never would have dreamt of doing. If he wasn’t doing this, he’d constantly complain and spread rumours. He’d insult and make fun of me behind my back and I’d only find out from friends. I only got out of the relationship after some advice from a teacher at my school.”*

## Is jealousy love?

Some people believe that if their boyfriend is jealous of them being with friends or family then it is a sign of love. While a little bit of jealousy sometimes in a relationship is normal, ongoing jealousy is controlling behaviour and can destroy your relationship.

## When is jealousy controlling?

- When they want you to spend all your time with them.
- When they make you feel bad for wanting to see family and friends.
- When they want you to give up work, study or things you enjoy so they can have you to themselves.
- When they are always accusing you of flirting when you're talking to your friends.
- When they tell you what you can and can't wear when you go out with friends.

**Jealousy is not love – it's control**



*“I was seeing this guy I had known for a while. At first he seemed to be a great guy but then he started to change. He would get mad if I’d talk to my friends or jealous if I talked to other guys. Then it became worse. Towards the end, I didn’t have any friends, hardly even left my house, didn’t go to school or work and spent all my time with him. One night I went to the shop after he had left – I was gone about 10 minutes, and when I got home he had called three times. When I picked up the phone he started accusing me of cheating on him. I loved him so I thought I could change him. I realised I couldn’t be with him anymore when he put a hole through my door and threatened to hurt me. In the end he refused to leave so I was forced to call the police.”*

## Domestic violence and sexual assault is everyone's business!

Some ideas on how you can help:

**Q.** *You are at a party and notice that a young woman you know who has had too much to drink is leaving with someone she doesn't seem to know. What do you do?*

**A.** Talk to her. Ask her if she knows the person she's with and offer to take her home or stay with her until she's able to leave safely.

**Q.** *You are in a public place and notice a guy verbally or physically abusing his girlfriend. What do you do?*

**A.** Keep a safe distance but draw attention to the incident by shouting out for him to stop. Tell them you are going to call the police.

Things to do afterwards:

- Support the person being abused – comfort them if they are upset, tell them they haven't done anything to deserve abuse. Encourage them to seek medical help or counselling if necessary.
- Tell someone – a youth counsellor, police, someone you trust.



What you do or say might make a difference to someone's life.



*“A girl a few years younger than me was at the pub and drunk. It was clear she wasn’t thinking straight and likely to do something she’d regret. I took action and got her a glass of water, sat her down somewhere quiet and made sure she was alright to get home. A few men tried to approach her and made ‘invitations’, clearly trying to take advantage of her. I calmly told them she was in no state to make a rational decision or go home with anyone.”*

**Ask yourself: If I was in this situation, would I want someone to help me?**

## **What is rape?**

Rape is when someone has sexual intercourse, inserts a part of their body or an object inside you, or forces you to perform oral sex on them against your wishes.

## **What is sexual assault?**

Sexual assault is any sexual act or behaviour without your consent. This includes touching, kissing, or forcing you to do sexual things you don't want to.

## **What is consent?**

Consent is when you fully understand what is going to happen and you agree to do it.

## **Consent is not freely given if you:**

- Do not agree.
- Only agree because you are scared of being hurt.
- Are unconscious or asleep.
- Are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Are tricked into having sex with someone.

## **What can you do if you are raped or sexually assaulted?**

- Go somewhere you feel safe.
- Get medical attention and/or report the assault to police.
- Find someone to talk to by calling the sexual assault helpline: **1800 010 120**



*"I started drinking alcohol around the time I turned fifteen, and it wasn't long after that I started having sex. Me and my mates would go to parties on the weekends and drink heaps, and sometimes I'd hook up with some guy I met at the party. Sometimes I sort of knew them beforehand, but other times I didn't. Lots of times my memory of the night would be sort of blurry. I've never been frightened; cos I've always been able to defend myself, but sometimes you feel ... sometimes you just feel used. A lot of the time, especially with alcohol, you wake up the next day and you feel so degraded. It's just something you deal with cos if you sit and whinge about it, like if you stew on it and think about it, it just gets worse."*

**Physical abuse includes causing a person injury or threatening to do so. It includes:**

- Slapping.
- Punching.
- Biting.
- Kicking.
- Strangling.

**Verbal abuse includes:**

- Calling you names.
- Using bad language.
- Blaming you for everything that goes wrong.

**Financial abuse includes:**

- Controlling the money and not giving you enough for food and bills.
- Selling things that belong to you without your permission.
- Stopping you from having a job.

**Sexual abuse includes:**

- Pressuring you to have sex.
- Pressuring you to do other sexual stuff.
- Making you look at sexual pictures or movies.

**Emotional/psychological abuse includes:**

- Making you uncomfortable by sitting outside your home or work.
- Threatening not to give you medication you need.
- Stopping you from being part of your cultural group.
- Taking away your confidence by always putting you down.

# Women

*“I was in an on again off again relationship for nine years with an abusive man. The abuse was physical, emotional, verbal, financial, sexual and psychological. I didn’t know at the time it was abuse. I put up with the threatening text messages and kept quiet about his behaviour - but my family and friends could see what was happening. A couple of times I did try to stand up to him but ended up with a black eye and busted mouth. My relationship with my family, my sons and daughters and friends suffered because of him. It finally got to the point that I had enough of putting up with his abuse, and I moved away from him. I still got the accusing text and phone messages but I ignored them, I surrounded myself with good friends and family. It’s taken a while, but I feel confident again. I now have a job, money of my own and a place to live where I feel safe every day.”*

## **When children see or hear violence around them they are at risk of:**

- Causing trouble at school/bullying.
- Having trouble learning new things.
- Being angry.

## **When children see or hear violence around them they want:**

- The violence to stop.
- To feel safe.
- To be cared for.
- To know what's going to happen next in their lives.

## **How you can make your children feel safe:**

- Try to keep a routine for school, meal times and bed times.
- Talk to your children about their day, their friends, how they feel.
- Help your children find good family role models – uncles, aunties, cousins.
- Speak respectfully to your children and help them show respect toward others.
- Use positive and encouraging words towards your children. Tell them you love them.



*“When there was violence, I used to just get in the car and drive into the next town, just to get away, with the kids. Sleep in the car with the kids. Next morning I’d come back and get them ready for school and then go to work for eight hours standing up all day tired out, then maybe it would happen again the next night and I’d have to go again. The kids would be tired and cranky at school and I would often get calls from the teachers to tell me they were getting into trouble. I didn’t want to involve my family – so I just handled it by myself. All those years, I just hated that man so much. I could have killed him. I wished him dead. I don’t hate him anymore, but I’ll never forget. The pain of all those years is still there in me, and the kids will always have those memories too.”*

## **What is a Domestic Violence Order (DVO)?**

A DVO is an order made by the court that offers you and your children legal protection from the person using violence. DVOs are made at a Magistrates' Court.

## **Who can apply for a DVO?**

- The victim of domestic or family violence (the aggrieved).
- Another person with the permission of the victim.
- A police officer who has investigated and found domestic or family violence (they can do this with or without the permission of the victim).

You can get help to fill in your application for a DVO from a domestic violence service. You can have a DVO and still live in the same house together. You can have a DVO on more than one person, for example, an abusive partner and members of his family.

## **People in these kinds of relationships can apply for DVOs:**

***Intimate Personal:*** includes current and former partners - married, de-facto, parents of a child together, engaged or dating.

***Family:*** parent, uncle/aunt, brother/sister, adult child, in-laws (you do not have to be related by blood).

***Informal Care Relationship:*** Relationship between two people if one of them needs the other to help them with daily living activities without being paid (such as dressing, making meals).



A DVO puts conditions on the behaviour of the person using the violence. It is not a criminal charge; however, if the person commits violence again, or breaks the conditions of the DVO they may be charged with a breach of the DVO, which is a criminal offence. They may also be charged with another criminal offence if they commit assault, damage to property or other criminal behaviour.



*“I met this fella who I thought was charming, well mannered and nice to be with. About a year later I moved away from my family and friends to be with him in another town, where his family and friends lived. Things were good at first, but then I began to see him differently. He was really jealous and wanted to control what I did. It got to the point where I didn’t want to go out anywhere with him because I knew when we came home there would be an argument about who I spoke to and what we spoke about. One day I’d had enough and I walked into Centrelink to find out whether I would be able to get payments if I moved out. I told the worker what was happening at home - the threats, jealousy, accusations and being scared when he got angry. She referred me to a community worker, who helped me get a domestic violence protection order, came to court with me, and organised some accommodation. She gave me back my life.”*

## What does a respectful relationship look like?

When you're in a respectful, loving relationship:

- You don't have to do everything together because you feel secure in your relationship.
- You can share the decision making in a fair and equal way.
- You aren't afraid to be honest with each other.
- You can trust one another – going out with family and friends (male or female) is okay.
- You both can accept that there are good times in relationships and times when you need to respect differences in opinion and work on your relationship.
- You are able to talk about your thoughts and feelings honestly and openly.



**Being in a respectful relationship makes you feel good about yourself.**

*“The turning point was when I went to TAFE to do a course. When I saw other people around me and none of them were sporting black eyes, I could see they weren’t living the same lifestyle as me. They were all white people and they were all younger than me and they kind of had the world at their feet. Here was me coping with domestic violence, two kids and a drunk. I realised I didn’t want my kids to be any man’s punching bag, because that’s exactly what I was. Then I started getting stronger in myself. I started to say I’d call the police and I’d have him charged - which I’d never done before. So I started empowering myself through the TAFE and work and it got better and it wasn’t so violent. I started to learn my rights.”*

## What is elder abuse?

- Taking older people's property against their wishes.
- Threatening them verbally or physically to get what you want.
- Telling them you won't love them or come to see them if they don't share their pension with you.
- Stopping them from seeing family and friends.
- Not giving them enough food or proper care.
- Causing physical pain or injury.
- Sexual assault, abusive phone calls or watching obscene movies around them.



# Older Women

*“My daughter leaves me to look after her three kids all the time – she has a drinking problem and can’t cope with them. I love them and don’t mind doing it, but she still gets the money for having them so it makes it hard to stretch my pension to feed us all. I don’t tell anyone because I don’t want her to get in trouble with Centrelink, or for the kids to be taken away. Some weeks she comes round to get more money off me, for her and her man to take to the pub. Now my oldest grandson is starting to do the same. I worry who is going to look after them if anything happens to me.”*

## **What are women's shelters like?**

Women's shelters can be like share houses, self-contained units or separate units with shared space. Your local domestic violence service will know what type of shelter is available in your area so you will know what to expect.

## **Reasons why you might go to a shelter:**

- To provide you with a place to stay where you and your children will be safe.
- To get some time out, to rest, to think about what you want to do next.
- To meet and talk to women who are dealing with similar problems to you.
- To get information to help you decide what is best for you and your children.
- To look at all of the options available to you if you leave, but also if you decide to stay.



*'I always had a hard life, from the time I was a teenager till I got away from my husband. He used to beat me up all the time; he was always jealous, always accusing me of going off with other men. There were no services to help when I was young. I didn't know anything about domestic violence, or even that there were refuges you could go to keep you safe. I would have left a long time ago if I'd had somewhere to go. I've gotten really strong since I left my husband and started standing up for myself. Women have to be strong and not put up with violence, even if it means putting men in jail.'*



## Is someone you know a victim of elder abuse? Here are some signs to look out for:

- **Physical abuse:** injury or bruises, rashes, hair loss, pain when being touched.
- **Sexual abuse:** fear, disturbed sleep, withdrawal, infections or difficulty walking.
- **Financial abuse:** unpaid bills, bank cards and/or personal belongings missing, unusual activity in bank accounts.
- **Psychological/emotional abuse:** withdrawal, fearfulness, helplessness, acting nervous around certain people.
- **Social abuse:** sadness because of loneliness, withdrawal from friends, lack of confidence.
- **Neglect:** poor hygiene or personal care, health aids missing (dentures, hearing aids, glasses), weight loss, lack of variety in food, drink or social activity.



Elder Abuse Prevention Unit: 1300 651 192

*“I live in our family-owned home with my 17 year old daughter and her white boyfriend. They both use drugs and alcohol, and they abuse me all the time. I don’t want to call the cops and get her in trouble, but the financial and verbal abuse has to stop - it’s getting to me. I don’t want to move out of my home - this is my family home that mum and dad left to me - God love them, they’re gone now. I feel like I’m trapped in my own home. I love my daughter, but she needs to stop the drugs and get rid of that idiot boyfriend.”*

## Why would you get involved in a program like the *Time for Grandparents* program?

- You can meet other grandparents who are raising their grandchildren that you can share ideas and stories with.
- You can get financial assistance so that your grandchildren can take part in sporting groups and other fun activities.
- Your grandchildren can mix with other children that are also being cared for by their grandparents.
- You can get free financial and legal advice.
- You can be directed to other services that can also help you.
- Your grandchildren can be given the opportunity to take part in camps and other group activities and you can have a well-earned rest.

To find out more information about this and other programs call the Queensland-wide Grandparents Information line on **1300 135 500** or Senior Enquiry Line on **1300 135 500**.



*“I care full time for my two granddaughters as their mother (my daughter) would rather be drinking, and their father is in jail. It’s hard, but I wouldn’t have it any other way. I use my entire pension for their needs. It’s not enough but I’d rather do it like that than get in trouble with my daughter for taking the family allowance off her - she can get quite nasty, blaming me for her downfall and threatening to take the kids off me and not let me see them. I struggle with things like not able to help with school work or play active games with them. I felt that nobody knew what I was going through.*”

*Although I was a bit hesitant, I contacted the Older Persons Program who have a program for people like me. After joining the Time for Grandparents Program I learnt that there are many grandparents who are just like me. There is a support group and also financial help – the program has paid for my grandchildren’s sport and recreational activities – it’s fantastic. Joining the support group has taught me that I am only a phone call away from getting help.”*

## **How do I know if my friend is experiencing domestic violence and what can I do about it?**

If your friend is in an abusive relationship you might notice the following signs:

- She is worried and nervous when her partner is around.
- She constantly makes excuses for his bad behaviour.
- When her partner's around she tries to keep the peace.
- She has unexplained bruises or injuries.
- She keeps getting texts and phone calls from her partner when she's away from him.
- She rarely contacts you, or her family.

There are many ways to support a friend who is experiencing domestic or family violence. You can:

- Invite her to go to a safe place where you can talk.
- Tell her you're there for her if she needs you.
- Listen to her.
- Don't blame or judge her.
- Let her know the violence is not her fault.
- Keep what she tells you private.
- Ring DVConnect for advice.
- Put safety first –your friend, her children and your own.

**DVConnect 1800 811 811**  
**To help keep your friend safe**

# Community

*“I had extended family living with me for eight years out of the ten years I was with him. It was good having family there, they would try to quieten him down, say ‘Fightin’s no good’ ... that helped sometimes. But the most violent times happened when no one else was around. I don’t think my family felt they could do anything about it. You had to have money and somewhere to go. Those things weren’t available. I thought refuges and coppers were only for white people. That’s how you grew up and that’s what you seen and there was nowhere to go.”*

## **Older Persons Programs – Uniting Care Community**

The Time for Grandparents Program is run at Uniting Care Community where we support grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. The program can help families in lots of ways – we can assist with payment for activities such as school camps; for membership to Scouts, Guides, Police Citizens' Youth Club, Soccer Queensland and Little Athletics. We can also contribute funds to weekly dance and fitness classes. Another part of the program is the 'Grandfamily' camps that we run, where children and grandparents can join in safe and fun activities, and where grandparents can get financial and legal advice, and counselling. You can find out more about the Time for Grandparents Program by calling **1300 135 500**.

Uniting Care Community also runs the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit for older people suffering from abuse, mistreatment, neglect or being taken advantage of financially. Their number is **1300 651 192**.

Our Seniors Enquiry Line provides information on things like health, education, transport, concession cards, how to get help around the house and financial and legal help. The number is **1300 135 500**.

We take phone referrals from all over the state and from the Torres Strait Islands. We'll always do whatever we can to help you.

# Places to get help

## **Mackay Aboriginal and Islander Justice Alternatives Group (MAIJAG)**

The Mackay Aboriginal and Islander Justice Alternatives Group works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people between the ages of 10-17 in Mackay and district. Our role is to support young people and families through the court process and other requirements of the justice system. MAIJAG is home to the Binga Birry Justice Group (elders) who provide Murri Court support.

Young people can be referred to us, or can walk in to our service off the street. We can help local Indigenous youth by directing them into programs and education and employment opportunities. These programs are offered as diversionary programs for young people who are already involved in the criminal justice system, and as an early intervention strategy for all young people that access the service.

Local Elders visit the organisation every week and we encourage young people to talk with them and listen to their good advice and guidance. Our service is open to the community as a whole so we deal with a range of issues and one of these is domestic violence. Education is provided to young people on healthy and unhealthy relationships to offer them a good start when starting a relationship.

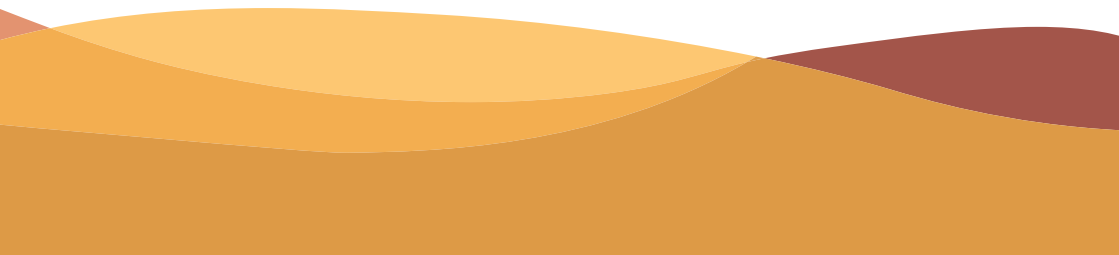
Maijag is a place for young people to go where they can feel safe.



## **Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services – Cairns street-based outreach service**

As outreach homelessness workers for the Cairns Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, we often come across situations where women are experiencing family or domestic violence. This might happen when we visit local Indigenous people in camps, or when we sit in the local mall and let people approach us. In either situation, if a woman tells us she is being abused or if we suspect she may be a victim of abuse, we can help by referring her on to appropriate local services. First we would make sure she is not at immediate risk, and help her to get medical attention if she needs it. We can speak to the local woman police liaison officer to help keep an eye on things. If she needs a safe place to go, we can arrange a referral to the Warringu Women's Shelter.

As outreach workers we spend a lot of time out in the community, and are able to help provide a range of options to Indigenous women depending on their particular situation.



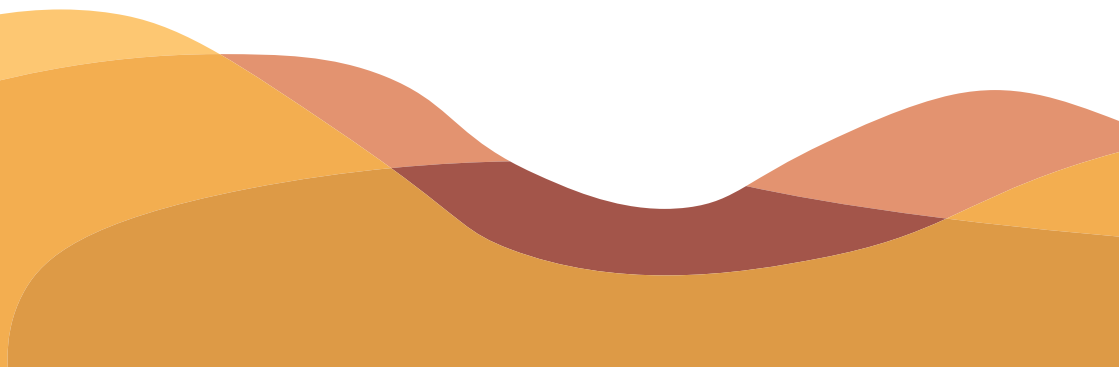
## **Mura Kosker Sorority, Thursday Island**

Mura Kosker Sorority (“All Women Sisters”) provides a range of services to meet the needs of women, children and families in crisis in the Torres Strait Island region.

When a woman presents to our service we can help with food vouchers; funds for bills and rent; transport assistance; and referrals to other appropriate services. We can provide help for clients dealing with emotional and/or financial stress; help for young or first time mums; court support; and assistance with Domestic Violence Protection Order applications. We also help older people with information and referrals, community living support and develop activities and outings to get them out of the house.

Our Indigenous Domestic and Family Violence Service offers a range of counselling options including information on legal rights, court support, and help with DVPO applications plans to keep women safe. We can provide help with budgeting, Centrelink debt and a range of other financial services.

We always do our best to meet the needs of all ages, nationality, race, religion and origin of women across the Torres Strait Region.

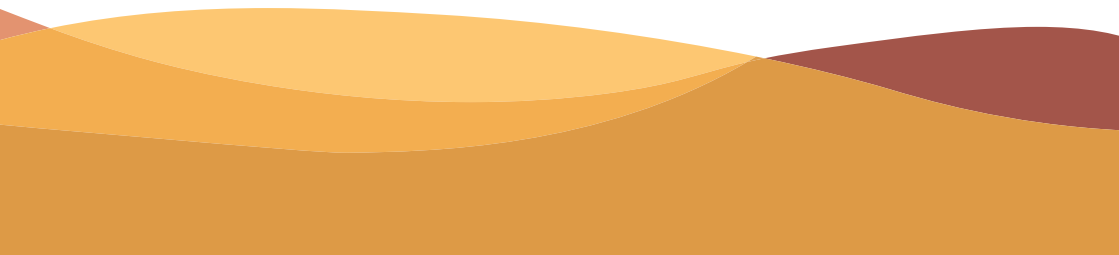


## **North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service, Mount Isa**

When a woman comes to see our service, we ask her what is happening and whether she is safe right now. We then suggest some ways that we might be able to help her. The woman may need a safe place to live and she may need a Domestic Violence Order (DVO) to try and stop further violence. We can fill out the DVO application with her and make sure that it suits her situation. We then go with the woman to the court house to have the application signed by a JP and get a court date.

When it is time to go to court, we can go with her to make sure that she feels comfortable and safe and understands what is happening. We can place the woman in a safe room at the court house whilst waiting for her turn, and make sure no one is in the court that doesn't need to be there. Once the application is heard by a Magistrate and the decision is made, we can then make sure the woman understands what the DVO means. If the woman wants, we can also contact other services for her.

Whether the woman stays in the relationship or leaves, the decision is hers. She is the expert in her own life. NQDVRS can also help in many other ways – women can drop in anytime for help, advice or just someone to talk to.

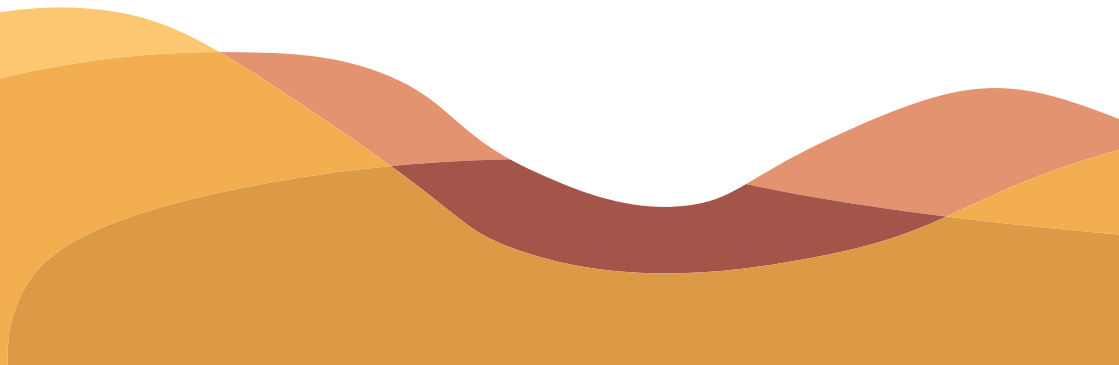


## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal and Advocacy Service, Brisbane**

When a woman walks into ATSIWLAS, we can offer her different kinds of support depending upon her situation. First we would concentrate on the woman's safety and the urgency of her needs. We have family support and court support workers here, so there are a number of things we can do to help.

We can help women get crisis payments for food or other essentials for them and their children, or if the incident just happened, we can help with a referral to a refuge or other emergency accommodation through DVConnect. We can provide transport if she needs medical attention, and we are able to pick her up from another location if she needs us to.

If there is no existing Domestic Violence Protection Order, we can make an appointment for her to get legal advice, and help her with an urgent application if necessary. We try to make it as easy as possible for women to get the help they need, in a culturally appropriate way. There are counselling services available, and if a woman wants to walk into our service and just tell us her story, we are here to listen to her.



This resource has provided six examples of support services that are available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Queensland, but there are many more available.

A wide range of services specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people include the following services:

- Domestic and/or family violence counselling and support;
- Legal assistance and support; and
- Health care and health related programs.

Other resources and services can be found at:

<https://noviolence.org.au/indigenous/resources/>

or by calling DVConnect's 24 hour Womensline on:

**1800 811 811**



The Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research wish to thank the members of our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reference group – Jenny Binsiar, Sonetta Fewquandie and Leda Barnett.

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## Find your closest domestic violence support service

A list of domestic violence services in Queensland is available at:

<http://qlddomesticviolencelink.org.au>

or, if you do not have access to the Internet:

Call Womensline, DVConnect's 24 hour domestic violence telephone service on **1800 811 811**.



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