



MEETING COMMUNIQUÉ

**Wednesday, 5 October 2016 and Thursday, 6 October 2016
Toowoomba**

On Wednesday, 5 October 2016 and Thursday, 6 October 2016, the Domestic and Family Violence Implementation Council (Council) travelled to **Toowoomba**. Council members **met with local representatives** of government and community organisations to discuss responses to domestic and family violence and associated issues within the Toowoomba community. The Council also **conducted its formal meeting** in Toowoomba, which included a **round table discussion with community representatives**.

Meetings with Toowoomba community organisations – 5-6 October 2016

During the course of Council's visit, members participated in a program of **16 separate meetings and activities** covering a range of aspects of Toowoomba's response to domestic and family violence issues. Council members met with representatives of the following local organisations and groups:

- Toowoomba Domestic Violence Prevention Service (Relationships Australia)
- Domestic Violence Action Centre
- Lifeline Darling Downs
- Ada's Haven
- Manna House
- Multicultural Development Association
- Mercy Community Services
- Catholic Care
- Act for Kids
- UnitingCare
- Toowoomba Together Inc.
- Ipswich Anti-domestic violence Community Taskforce (IACT)
- Far Western Local Level Alliance
- Safer Toowoomba Regional Partnerships
- YWCA
- TAFE Queensland South West
- Centenary Heights State High School
- Harristown State School
- The Glennie School
- Clontarf Foundation

- Catholic Education Office – Diocese of Toowoomba
- Toowoomba Housing and Homelessness Coalition
- Toowoomba Murri Court
- Toowoomba Community Justice Group
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service
- Legal Aid Queensland
- Munro Legal
- The Advocacy and Support Centre (TASC)
- MacDonald Law
- Goondir Health Services
- Carbal Medical Services
- Darling Downs and West Moreton Primary Health Network
- Toowoomba Rugby League
- Downs Rugby Union
- Football Queensland South West
- Toowoomba Hockey Association
- AFL Darling Downs
- Queensland Police Service
- Toowoomba PCYC
- Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
- Department of Housing and Public Works
- Department of Education and Training
- Toowoomba Courts
- Toowoomba Probation and Parole
- Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service.

At these meetings, Council members discussed a range of issues with local representatives, including:

- **specialist and related services** available to members of the Toowoomba community and surrounding regional and rural communities
- **community-led initiatives** established to combat the incidence of domestic and family violence in Toowoomba, Ipswich and Roma
- supports available to the significant proportion of the community from **culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds**
- **policing responses** to domestic and family violence including the integrated case management network
- operation of **courts and other justice services**, including the Toowoomba Murri Court and community justice group
- work of the **Toowoomba school network** to embed healthy relationships and respectful behaviours within school communities
- improvements to **health system practices** and responses
- outcomes from the four-week operation of the **Toowoomba Housing Connect integrated service hub**, which provided coordinated access to housing services
- opportunities for **sporting clubs and organisations** to promote awareness of domestic and family violence issues throughout their memberships.

Domestic and Family Violence Implementation Council meeting 6 October 2016

Representatives of the local community, including the Mayor of Toowoomba, attended the Council meeting to participate in a round table discussion about local domestic and family violence issues. The **Minister for Communities, Women and Youth, Minister for Child Safety and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence**, the Honourable Shannon Fentiman MP, also attended the round table discussion.

Council heard from community representatives about challenges and opportunities faced in the Toowoomba region. One of the key characteristics observed within the Toowoomba community was the **strong community spirit and impetus for community-led action** to stand up to domestic and family violence. This was evidenced by the work of Toowoomba Together Inc. and commitment by the local council and within the business community to **mobilise the broader community** towards efforts to address domestic and family violence.

It was acknowledged that service organisations were experiencing a **consistent upward trend in the numbers of people accessing services**. Challenges are arising as a result of not only these increases in demand, but also increased expectations from clients about the availability of intensive support services. Despite this, it was observed that **inter-agency cooperation and collaboration had improved** as a result of the reform process.

There was discussion on the needs and experiences of community members from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, particularly an anecdotal awareness of **under-reporting of incidents of domestic and family violence**. The need to build trust and confidence with members of the community was acknowledged as vital to improving support to those community members.

The importance of **building respectful behaviours** and supporting the needs of young people was raised in a number of contexts. The strong network of schools in Toowoomba is recognised as a positive feature of the community, with schools going beyond the delivery of specific programs by attempting to **embed healthy behaviours** within the student cohort and **develop a positive culture of respect**. The respectful relationships program developed by the YWCA and TAFE was discussed as a positive example of work to **effect long-term cultural and attitudinal change** in relation to domestic and family violence.

The reinstatement of the **Toowoomba Murri Court** was noted as beneficial to improving experiences of Indigenous people appearing in court. Other law and justice reforms were noted as **contributing positively to the operation of the court**. However, Council members noted that feedback had been received about a **lack of culturally appropriate services for Indigenous people** and a consequent low uptake of these services. This leads to increased risks for women and children accessing services which would ensure their safety, and low levels of participation by perpetrators in available programs.

Overall, Council noted the efforts of the Toowoomba community are **an exemplar of a community response to domestic and family violence**, which supports and reinforces the messages of the *Not Now, Not Ever* report about the importance of the broader community to achieving change. While the community itself is well-served by organisations, **increases in demand** are expected to continue to challenge service

delivery, particularly in **surrounding regional and rural communities** where availability of services is more limited. **Further integration of and cooperation between services** will be valuable in meeting these service delivery challenges.