

Queensland Domestic & Family Violence Prevention Strategy



16 November 2015

C&K makes the following comments in relation to the [draft Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2015-2015](#); and with reference to the [Not Now, Not Ever](#) report from Dame Quentin Bryce's Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland

Domestic and family violence is unacceptable

It is C&K's view that domestic and family violence is unacceptable. It damages health, well-being and future life opportunities.

Domestic and family violence has particularly profound effects on children. Evidence is now clearly showing the extensive and ongoing consequences for children when they are part of a home where violence occurs. While this may include witnessing or directly experiencing violence, often the child is used by the perpetrator as a way to exert power or to undermine the parent-child relationship. The stress on the child, and the risk to their safety, often continues post-separation.

C&K's overall support for the strategy

C&K strongly supports the Strategy's Vision - *A Queensland free from domestic and family violence.*

In particular we applaud the inclusion of children as having equal status in the Key Outcome - *All Queenslanders feel safe in their own homes and children can grow and develop in safe and secure environments.*

Key outcome

The primary long-term outcome of the Strategy is:

All Queenslanders feel safe in their own homes and children can grow and develop in safe and secure environments.

One in six



Australian women has experienced physical abuse at the hands of a current or former partner

One in four



Australian women has experienced emotional abuse at the hands of a current or former partner

C&K's relevance in family violence prevention: we support 6,000 families



C&K is the largest early childhood education and care (ECEC) provider in Queensland with more than 100 years of experience. C&K is proud to support around 21,000 children, 6,000 families and 2,000 staff through more than 400 long day care and kindergarten services, family day care schemes, limited hours care, in home care and outside school hours care programs.

While C&K is not historically a key stakeholder in domestic and family violence prevention, we are firmly committed to the issue.

We believe that C&K and other early childhood education and care providers have a role in bringing about social change and in leading advocacy for a community free from domestic and family violence.

- **C&K is part of the trusted network of 6,000 families** – because of their regular (often daily) contact with families, early childhood educators are one of the most likely professions to notice concerning behaviours or changes in families.
- **C&K grows resilience in young children** – our play-based early childhood learning curriculum supports children to become successful and enthusiastic learners; but equally we focus on their confidence and sense of identity.
- **97% of C&K's workforce are women (1700 women)** - we are aware that this means many of our people will be experiencing, or have experienced, some form of domestic and family violence. Through our [Domestic and Family Violence policy statement](#) we are explicitly committed to providing a supportive workplace where people can come forward and access support.

Domestic and family violence is a major cause of homelessness and has significant long-term impacts on the health and wellbeing of victims. Children who live with domestic and family violence are at greater risk of abuse. They can suffer serious impacts on their health, emotional wellbeing, ability to learn and ability to develop positive relationships with others and may be at heightened risk of alcohol misuse, drug dependency and criminal behaviour later in life.

Excerpt from draft Strategy

C&K's suggestions

We recommend efforts be prioritised towards both 'joining up' and 'skilling up' the range of human services that touch families at all stages in their lives: from the time young people leave home and begin their journeys of independence, to relationship-forming and children for many, through to 'empty nest' and/or ageing changes, through to dependent frail-aged care.

Specifically [C&K Suggests](#):

1. The early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector should be considered a more **substantial participant** in responding to domestic and family violence. At the policy and program-level, this may include:
 - focusing on additional, explicit referral links from ECEC to early intervention services eg. *Family and Child Connect*; and/or
 - protocols and training for ECEC workers by specialist crisis services eg. *DV Connect* and regional Domestic Violence services
2. Instigate awareness and skills training in '**how to have hard conversations**'. At the service-system level, it may be useful to create inter-disciplinary/inter-agency discussions (across the private and non-profit human service sectors), or skills sessions on how best to approach and speak to families who may be experiencing domestic violence (without impacting on the workers' professional boundaries).

Where children come first

3. The **Inter-departmental Committee** should include representation from the Office of Early Childhood Education and Care (OECEC).
4. Strong integration must occur between this Strategy and the **Stronger Families initiative** - in particular with *Family and Child Connect*. As these vital services roll-out, C&K would welcome opportunities to work with the Domestic Violence Advisors, in their nexus with early childhood educators and providers.
5. Integrated whole-of-government policy work - particularly noting the **current child protection reforms**. The links between *domestic and family violence* and *child protection* are significant and complex. C&K recommends examining the impacts of decisions across the two systems. For example
 - the upcoming changes to child protection legislation;
 - the current Queensland Law Reform Commission consideration of mandatory child protection reporting in child care services. Stronger prevention and early intervention, through the *Stronger Families* initiative for example, will always be preferable to enlarging statutory responses.
6. We support the intention behind the Strategy's inclusion of 'respectful relationships' education in schools. C&K recognises the learning that happens *within families*, who are children's first and most influential educators. It may therefore be useful, to include the ECEC sector in discussions about the 'respectful relationships education' initiative. The **early childhood curricula** may be another avenue to build resilience and protective factors in the younger ages.



C&K acknowledges the strength of the many Queenslanders who had input into the Taskforce Report and the Strategy, and also the hard work of the Special Taskforce and the Queensland Government in foregrounding domestic and family violence. C&K will use the suggestions offered to continue to take positive action through our people and our services.

Yours sincerely

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Chief Executive Officer

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Children

It is estimated that more than one million Australian children are affected by domestic and family violence.⁴¹ Children are affected by both the direct and indirect experiences of violence in a range of ways: through hearing or otherwise witnessing the violence; being used as a physical weapon; being forced to watch or participate in assaults; being forced to spy on a parent; being informed that they are to blame for the violence because of their behaviour; being used as a hostage; defending a parent against the violence; and/or intervening to stop the violence.⁴²

Children can suffer serious negative impacts on their emotional wellbeing, health, ability to learn and ability to develop positive relationships with others. Psychological and behavioural impacts have been documented:

- » Depression
- » Anxiety
- » Trauma symptoms
- » Increased aggression
- » Antisocial behaviour
- » Lower social competence
- » Temperament problems
- » Low self-esteem
- » The presence of pervasive fear
- » Mood problems
- » Loneliness
- » School difficulties
- » Peer conflict
- » Impaired cognitive functioning
- » Increased likelihood of substance abuse.⁴³

Excerpt from *Not Now, Not Ever*

Where children come first