

Alice Springs Integrated Response to Family and Domestic Violence

A new initiative

The Alice Springs Integrated Response to Family and Domestic Violence aims to:

- Increase the safety of women and children
- Improve accountability of men who use family and domestic violence and support them to change their behaviour.

The project was initially funded by the Alice Springs Transformation Plan (\$3.2 million over three and a half years from January 2012 – June 2015). Additional funding (\$2.4 million over two years) under Stronger Futures has been allocated to the project with the new end date being June 2017. The NT Department of Attorney-General and Justice (AGD) and NT Department of Children and Families (DCF) are the lead agencies for the project.

Integrated response

An integrated response to family and domestic violence is one in which agencies make a commitment to work collaboratively to improve the safety of women and children and to support people who use violence to take responsibility for their behaviour and to change that behaviour.

Policy context

In 2011 the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) endorsed a *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children*.ⁱ This project is a key way in which the NT Government will progress the actions and strategies outlined in the plan and contribute to a sustained reduction in violence against women and children in Australia.

Extent and severity

Family and domestic violence in Central Australia is high relative to the population size.

For the year from January to August 2014:

- 1,582 assault offences were recorded in Alice Springs. Over half of all assaults in Alice Springs were F&DV (59.7%)
- On average 18 domestic violence related disturbances were attended by police each day (double the number in 2013)
- There were 58 recorded sexual assaults
- Over two thirds of all assaults (69.3%) were alcohol-relatedⁱⁱ
- NT homicide rate is almost 4.7 times the national average and the majority (56%) of these are 'domestic' homicides (highest in Australia, in the most recent national data)ⁱⁱⁱ

These figures do not include family and domestic violence that is not disclosed or reported to police, and therefore under-represent the true extent of the problem.

Project components

The Alice Springs Integrated Response has five components:

1. Respectful relationships education for young people

Localised, culturally appropriate, community-based approaches to educating young people about respectful relationships, building on the Love Bites/Growing Respect Program already running in schools, and expanding delivery to non-school settings.

2. Family Safety framework

A Family Safety Framework to ensure that safety is at the centre of the response to family and domestic violence and improving co-ordination amongst agencies. The framework includes:

- Common risk assessment
- Interagency referral process
- Information sharing protocol
- Fortnightly family safety meetings.

3. Victim Safety and Advocacy Service

Additional safety and support for victims of family and domestic violence going through the justice system.

4. Family violence behaviour change program

A program to help men who use family and domestic violence to change their behaviour with emphasis on ensuring best practice standards are met, particularly in ensuring the safety women and children.

5. Community engagement

Engagement with the community to improve the uptake of services and involve community members in measures to prevent violence.

Members of the Reference group: The project's Reference Group includes nineteen government and non-government partners. Some of these include: the Alice Springs Women's Shelter, NPY Women's Council, Tangentyere Council, Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, local legal services and Department of the Attorney General and Justice, Department of Children and Families, Department of Health, Department of Housing, Department of Education, Department of the Chief Minister, Department of Correctional Services and representatives of the Australian Government.

References:

ⁱ *National Plan To Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2011.

ⁱⁱ *Northern Territory Crime Statistics, data through August 2014. Dept of Attorney-General and Justice, (October 2014.)*

ⁱⁱⁱ *AIC National Homicide Monitoring Program Annual Report Feb 2013*