

Rise in Downs men seeking domestic violence orders

■ **Sherelle Moody**

THE number of Southern Downs men protected under domestic violence orders is rising.

Exclusive NewsRegional research shows men make up 26% of the region's residents protected from family and domestic violence by the courts.

Local courts issued 201 DVOs across Warwick, Stanthorpe and Inglewood from June 1, 2015 to March 31 of last year.

Of these, 52 went to men and 149 were granted to women.

In the following 12 months the number of DVOs rose, with 57 men and 156 women from the region receiving them.

The divide between male and female victims is reflected by Australian Bureau of Statistics data that shows one in six women and one in 19 men are the victims of intimate partner abuse.

The same research shows one in four women and one in seven men endure emotional abuse.

The Queensland Government provides about \$4.4 million a year to DVConnect that runs MensLine, but it did not reveal how much was allocated specifically to support men in DV crisis.

Housing is available through the government's Homelessness Program for men and children leaving violent households.

MensLine is one of Australia's key support services for male survivors of domestic violence.

Manager Mark Walters said men often experienced violence from male relatives or, in fewer cases, women.

He said women's violence towards their male partners or former partners was usually to drive them from the house or protect themselves and their kids.

"The men I have talked to

that are genuinely frightened by the potential of harm from their partners, they have no trouble asking for help," Mr Walters said.

"I do think more males are seeking referrals and support for the violence they can be experiencing at the hands of family members – for example brothers or fathers – or in same-sex relationships.

"Certainly, referrals come through from police who have assessed the male as a victim in heterosexual relationships – usually at the point of separation.

"Robust policing is catching all the separation-instigated violence along with the resistance violence – for example fightback by abused females – or the retribution-type violence where the female looks to even the score after being abused."

Mr Walters said there

were not enough resources

available for male survivors.

"Mostly, like women trying to establish a safer place for their children, men are seeking stable accommodation and a place to get some routine back into the kids' lives," he said.

Domestic Violence

Minister Shannon Fentiman said male survivors in Queensland could access crisis accommodation, case management, practical and emotional support, information and referral to other services and court support.

"I absolutely acknowledge that men are victims of

domestic and family violence," Ms Fentiman said.

"Domestic violence is never acceptable."

Women's Legal Service Queensland principal solicitor Rachel Neil warned some perpetrators were using the DVO system against their victims.

"We are seeing a rise in

cross applications and some of those applications are in retaliation to the other person having a DVO on the abuser," Ms Neil said.

* For support phone MensLine on 1800 600 636, DVConnect on 1800 811 811 or the national hotline 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732.

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WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE FACING ABUSE

- Ensure safety of yourself and children and pets when deciding whether or not to stay in the abusive relationship.
- Work with an agency on a safety plan.
- There are plans that help you when you're committed to staying; thinking about leaving; planning to leave; and have left.
- Remember risk and danger are dynamic – they move up and down.
- You need to form a relationship with a professional to help you regularly review your safety plan and review risks.

Source: Mensline

SUPPORT FOR MALE FAMILY VIOLENCE SURVIVORS

- MensLine (1800 600 636) provides support across Australia for men in domestic violence crisis.
- Mensline links male survivors with the same support services offered to women, including emergency accommodation, counselling and legal.
- Crisis accommodation services for men and their children are funded under the Queensland Government's Homelessness Program.
- Support services are available at all Queensland courts for male survivors.
- Male survivors can also access support from regionally based domestic and family violence support services.
- Men can also phone DVConnect on 1800 811 811 or the national hotline 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732.

Source: Queensland Government, MensLine



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