

Dvconnect**Statewide Domestic and Family Violence Telephone Service****Chris Rackemann**, Managing Director

Funded in 2002, DVconnect operates a statewide telephone service for counselling and support for domestic and family violence matters.

Dvconnect Ltd is a not for profit company established under the Corporations Act and is a subsidiary of Womenconnect. Pty Ltd. Any dividends from dvconnect's activities is returned to promote domestic and family violence research and service development.

The company was established in early 2002 and on 19th Sept 02 it took over the running of the Statewide Domestic and Family Violence Service which had been managed in a caretaker role for approx 7mths by Crisis Care in the Dept of Families. Dvconnect has recurrent funding from the Dept of Families for a 3 year period. In addition dvconnect has been approved for additional funding to assist the organisation to expand the existing service to those people affected by the extended scope of the domestic and family violence legislation. The MD reports to a Board

Staffing of the service includes

- Managing Director
- Head of Counselling
- Office Manager

Nine permanent fulltime workers including 6 fulltime continuous shift workers and one fulltime service line worker. There are also 8 permanent part time workers with 7 of those working shifts on the Women's line or the Men's Line. A pool of approx .10 sessional workers has been maintained to ensure sufficient backfill for sick day, leave and training days.

dvconnect is located in the Brisbane area in a secure location with close proximity to other key domestic violence services.

Women's DV Line - 1800 811811 (direct line for women in crisis operates 24hrs)

Mensline - 1800 600636 (business hours, provision of counselling, information and referral to men)

Service Line - 1300 308 884 (business hours, operated by single worker to respond to refuges and service providers)

The 24 hr 7 days a week 1800 crisis line is provided to meet the needs of women and children affected by domestic violence and to ensure that immediate counselling and crisis intervention service are available. Currently 4 lines operate during peak times with 3 lines in the afternoon, 2 lines in the evening and one line overnight (11pm to 7am).

Services include

Assessment with the client of her situation with particular attention paid to the immediate safety needs of clients and their children. The safety plan developed frequently includes collaboration and liaison with a range of services including refuges, police, health services, legal and migrant services and Indigenous agencies. Provision of transport to safety. Sourcing of an available refuge/ safe accommodation – as the refuge system is frequently overloaded this may require many phone calls to locate an appropriate refuge/arrange motel accommodation. The logistics of transporting and accommodating a client with 4 young children out of Brisbane or out of her particular area are quite complex and may take many hours of work.

Other services provided include:

Provision of funds for food, fuel, baby provisions or arrangements for medical treatment and follow-up services to women in motels to ensure that they are supported and given appropriate assistance. Because some of this work is very time consuming there is always a challenge in balancing the needs of the client on the line and ensuring that she receives a quality service with the pressure on the service to answer as many calls as possible. The solutions to this are not simple and rely upon the whole sector working productively together in this area which is so tightly funded.

The **1300 service line** was an initiative to address the difficulties experienced by refugees and other agencies in contacting service workers. The service line also establishes a central point for referral and resource information. It was also envisaged that the worker on this line would act as a secondary support for isolated workers. One of the safety issues for clients in transit was the length of time spent by them trying to contact dvconnect to have messages passed onto refugees that they had arrived safely at pickup points. It was decided to provide clients with the 1300 no for this specific purpose and this has proved to be beneficial.

The **1800 Men's Line** operating during business hours provides a counselling, information and referral service for men. Outside of operating hours this number also provides a voicemail service so that messages can be returned to callers. The main target group is men who are perpetrators of domestic and family violence and male victims of violence. Calls to the Men's Line have been about a range of issues including relationship matters, separation, family law, parenting, child protection matters, men's health and mental health issues.

Client data

Data has been collected regarding services provided to clients so far and a sample of that data has been examined. This provided valuable information about the needs of clients and also provides dvconnect with some direction about the development needs of the service. This information will also contribute to the data being collected by the Dept of Families and it is hoped that sharing this information about client needs will be of some value to other stakeholders within the sector.

Workload - Women's Line

From 19th Sept to 31st May 03 dvconnect (Women's Line and Service line) has managed approximately 19,500 calls. The average number of calls being taken daily by the Women's line is 50- 60 calls. Dvconnect has data on:

- Sample of clients by Age
- Sample of clients by Sex
- Sample of clients by Location
- Sample of clients by Ethnicity
- Children of clients by Age of children

Data showed that over 50% of clients had children under 6 years of age and that over 70% of clients had children under 12 years of age.

Men's Line - Since Sept 2002 1542 calls have been received, of these calls 76.6% were from males, 82.2 % of callers were Australian, 1.3 % Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and 4.4% from other cultural groups, 12 % unknown. 23 % of callers were perpetrators of violence who were seeking counselling or information with 10% of callers being male victims of domestic and family violence.

Service Line Calls

Service line calls for one month average 264 and total number of calls managed by the service line since Sept 19th 2002 is approximately 3,797.