

NGO Benchmarking Tool feedback

Domestic Violence NSW

March 1, 2017



Domestic Violence NSW Inc. is the peak body for specialist domestic and family violence services in NSW. We provide a representative and advocacy function for specialist services and the women, families and communities they support. Our mission is to eliminate domestic and family violence through leadership in policy, advocacy, partnerships and the promotion of best practice. We work with our members, state and federal government and communities to create a safer NSW for all. DVNSW member services represent the diversity of specialist services working in NSW to support women, families and communities impacted by domestic and family violence including:

- Crisis and refuge services
- Transitional accommodation and community housing providers
- Family support services
- Neighbourhood centres and drop in centres
- Specialist homelessness service providers
- Men's behaviour change programs and networks
- Community organisations working with high risk communities
- Specialist women's legal support services
- Women and children's support services
- Safe at Home programs

DVNSW members are all non-government organisations, some entirely government funded, others supported through philanthropic donations or partnerships with industry or the corporate sector. Many of our members have multiple government (state and commonwealth) and non-government funding streams. DVNSW advocates for best practice, continuous system improvements and innovative policy responses to domestic and family violence including building workforce capacity and representation at all levels of government.

We have undertaken significant research in the sector over the last 18 months in relation to the creation of specific standards for best practice in domestic and family violence service delivery and we are continuing to work with the sector and NSW Government to design an effective and meaningful approach which will work across a diverse service sector and service delivery models. Our member organisations and the broader domestic and family violence sector have identified that they strongly support the delivery of quality services to women, families and communities impacted by violence.

Many of the services that we work with and represent already have a contractual obligation to regularly assess and/or accredit their service and practice given that they are part of the women's health or NGO health sector, community legal centre sector, the specialist homelessness sector, sexual assault services or delivering men's behaviour change programs.

We therefore draw your attention to the specific feedback that we have received from domestic and family violence and women's services in relation to the NGO Benchmarking Tool and a benchmarking or standards process:

- The tool may be helpful for some organisations that are not covered by existing standards but for it to be useful and applicable across a diversity of sectors a common tool would have to integrate a number of governance and service frameworks. This is a significant piece of work and would require an overarching framework.

- Some services have indicated that they have an appetite to be able to benchmark their service in terms of continuous quality improvement with similar services. This tool does not seem to offer that possibility, rather it appears to be a reporting mechanism for accountability to government.
- Services would like clarity as to how this tool fits with other accreditation or quality systems and to be assured that they will not be required to spend more administrative time “filling out another system”.
- The tool does not work for the diverse range of services in the domestic and family violence and women and children’s service sectors. The language and terminology is inconsistent with the language that clients and service providers use to describe their work, support and service delivery models. Some of the requirements don’t apply to organisations in our sectors.
- The ACNC governance standards and reporting requirements in government contracts already cover a number of the elements required in the Benchmarking Tool.
- Services are keen to show the value, expertise and impact of their work and have a strong commitment to improving quality in both governance and service delivery. This tool does not enhance services ability to do so.
- A number of specialist homelessness services have recently undergone the SHS QAS process and have expressed disappointment that the system is not accredited. Independent verification and accreditation systems should be a part of any development in this space and government contracts should be aligned with services accreditation to ensure that clients are serviced by quality practitioners.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the feedback provided.

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