

# Evaluation of the Keeping Women Safe – Private Rental Initiative

Prepared for: Queensland Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women

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# Glossary

CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CPD	Continuing professional development
DFV	Domestic and Family Violence
KWSITH	Keeping Women Safe In their Homes
NGO	Non-government organisation
OFT	Office of Fair Trading (Queensland)
PRAP	Private Rental Assistance Program
PRI	Private Rental Initiative
PRM	Private Rental Market
QCAT	Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal
QDCSYW	Queensland Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women
Q Shelter	Queensland Shelter Inc.
QSTARS	Queensland Statewide Tenant Advice and Referral Service
REIQ	Real Estate Institute of Queensland
RTA	Residential Tenancies Authority
SHS	Specialist Homelessness Services
SPRC	Social Policy Research Centre
Tenants Qld./TQ	Tenants Queensland Inc.
UNSW	University of New South Wales

# 1 Executive summary

## Aims and activities of the initiative

The Keeping Women Safe in their Homes: Private Rental Initiative is funded through the Commonwealth Women's Safety Package. The Queensland Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (DCSYW) is the lead agency for the initiative.

The overarching goal of this initiative is to address barriers for many victims of domestic and family violence (DFV) in accessing safe and stable accommodation, particularly in the private rental market.

Q Shelter worked with the Real Estate Institute of Queensland and a reference group to develop the 'Domestic and Family Violence – Strengthening the real estate response – a toolkit to guide practice', and to identify training opportunities within the private rental market sector. Q Shelter has worked collaboratively with real estate 'champions' in developing and trialling the resource.

Tenants Qld developed a 'Tenancy law toolkit for domestic and family violence service providers in Queensland', and have been delivering training sessions and telephone advice to support DFV support services to respond to women experiencing DFV and tenancy-related matters.

## Background

Access to long-term housing is critical for those leaving DFV, given it is a major cause of homelessness among women and children in Australia (valentine and Breckenridge, 2016) and housing assistance is not always available. Nationally, in 2016-17, 114,757 Specialist Homelessness Services clients identified family or domestic violence as their main reason for seeking assistance—this is 40% of all clients. Yet, although the proportion whose housing outcomes improve after receiving support has increased since 2012-13, less than half (47%) of those who were homeless when support began were assisted into housing in 2016-17, and just 4% of those who specifically requested long-term housing support received this assistance (AIHW 2018).

As the state retreats from direct housing provision through public housing (Rolvik 2013), there has been a corresponding increase in reliance on providing subsidies to assist households move into and pay for privately rented housing instead (Caulfield 2000; Dodson 2006; Yates 2013). Australia has always favoured assistance programs that attempt to keep vulnerable households within the private rental housing market (Slatter and Beer 2003) and has historically had a relatively small social housing sector.

In order to better facilitate access to the private rental market, the Queensland Government has developed the Private Rental Initiative (PRI). The PRI is part of the Keeping Women Safe in their Homes initiatives, funded through the Commonwealth Women's Safety Package. The aim of the PRI is to reduce barriers for women affected by DFV that prevent them from accessing or sustaining accommodation in the private rental market.

## **Evaluation scope and purpose**

The purpose of the evaluation is to identify and analyse implementation learnings as well as changes or progress towards outcomes for those who participated in the Private Rental Initiative (PRI). This evaluation reports on short- and medium-term objectives.

Short-term outcomes:

- Increased resourcing and support available to the private rental and DFV sectors to respond to DFV related tenancy matters (capacity)
- Increased knowledge and understanding of DFV related tenancy matters (capability)

Medium-term outcomes:

- DFV and private rental sector access and apply new and existing resources
- DFV and private rental staff respond more effectively to women experiencing DFV in their tenancies

Long-term outcomes:

- Increased safety for women experiencing DFV
- Increased housing stability for women experiencing DFV
- Stronger links between the DFV sector, private rental market and social housing to create a more integrated system

## **Methods**

The research team conducted an initial start-up meeting with the DCSYW and consulted with Tenants Qld and Q Shelter to discuss the evaluation. Research instruments (stakeholder surveys, interview guidelines) were developed and reviewed. Ethics approval was received (HC180560).

Program documents have been reviewed to better understand the rationale for the Private Rental Initiative.

The evaluation team requested data collected by Tenants Qld and Q Shelter as part of their projects and conducted primary data collection with stakeholders by way of interviews/focus groups and a survey (for service providers). The feedback forms collected by Tenants Qld at information sessions were also analysed.

Brisbane-based fieldwork took place between 11-13 February 2019. The survey was sent to service providers in early March 2019. A number of follow-up activities and interviews took place over the telephone in February – March 2019. The evaluators undertook four individual interviews and one focus group involving eight real estate agents, one individual interview and a focus group with four government employees (from DCSYW and Justice), and individual interviews and focus groups involving nine staff from non-government organisation (NGO) peak bodies and on the ground service providers.

We obtained up-to-date information from Tenants Qld on the operations of the advisory line including number of calls and the nature of the inquiries.

This approach allowed the evaluators to gauge the major stakeholder groups' perceptions of the implementation of the PRI, the two toolkits, the telephone advisory line, and whether or how these resources boosted capabilities and capacities. We obtained a range of views from a variety of stakeholders in different locations, including the government, peak industry and NGO organisations, service providers and courts/Justice.

### **Key Findings – real estate sector**

One of the aims of the PRI was to bring an awareness of DFV to the sector. Those who did become involved had mixed levels of awareness about DFV prior to their involvement. Some agents worked with tenants experiencing DFV on an almost weekly basis, while others said they did not come across it much at all.

Involvement in the PRI generally added to their awareness. Those who had participated, for example in a roundtable discussion or after a visit from Q Shelter, felt their capacity had increased. Involvement in the PRI and using the written resource reportedly assisted younger staff members to feel more confident and able to assist and try to resolve the situation to the favour of both landlord and tenant. However, this is not generalisable to the entire sector.

The findings indicate that the initiative has assisted the real estate sector, to some extent, to change their attitudes towards DFV and the sector's role in responding to it.

Real estate agents generally reported having a good grasp of tenancy law and understanding the rights and obligations of the parties to a residential tenancy agreement (lease). They also reported understanding the processes related to rental arrears and terminations. However, they did not always have great understanding of the parts of the Act that relate to DFV because they either did not come across it much or used other mechanisms within the Act, such as terminations due to breach of agreement (rather than suggesting a termination occur due to DFV – section 321<sup>1</sup> of the Act).

An important result of increased awareness by agents around DFV issues was that property managers developed strategies for avoiding some courses of action, for example in regard to terminations. Instead of an application for termination being made to Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT), agents could talk owners through their options and suggest a mutual termination instead.

While real estate agents were sensitive to the needs and rights of DFV victims, they also repeatedly made the point in interviews that they are not social workers, and their role in supporting tenants experiencing DFV is limited. Agents saw their role as circumscribed by the nature of their industry (that it is a commercial operation, not a social service) and by the law (they must act for the landlord). While agents were not opposed to doing what they could, they essentially want a quick and easy referral point, first and foremost.

The toolkit and interactions with Q Shelter have given property managers a greater understanding of DFV issues, where tenants can be referred to, and the effects of listing someone on a database

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<sup>1</sup> See the Queensland Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008, s.321, 'Application by tenant's domestic associate for termination for damage or injury'.



used by agents to screen tenants such as TICA<sup>2</sup> (that may prevent them from being able to access a new tenancy in the private rental market (PRM)). The toolkit provides information on 'how to start a conversation' with a tenant an agent suspects may be experiencing DFV and contact details for local DFV services.

The training property managers currently undertake is brief and very legislation-based. The Property Chapter of REIQ stresses that training should also be about 'humanity...how to deal with people' as well as the letter of the law. Training modules dealing with DFV and mental health and similar 'issues in general' that could attract continuing professional development (CPD) points could be beneficial.

Stakeholders were asked to suggest improvements for the real estate sector.

**Real estate agents** suggested:

- more and better training for agents and CPD recognition, especially for property managers
- using alternative methods to resolve issues (e.g. termination by mutual agreement rather than going to QCAT, allowing a co-tenant to remove themselves from the lease).  
Communication with landlords to get mutually beneficial outcomes for the parties
- more consideration of the circumstances of the situation and the consequences of listing a tenant on tenancy databases such as TICA
- access to referral points for tenants
- headleasing agreements with community housing providers
- considering the requirements of insurers in relation to landlord claims – further work is needed to examine if these stipulations are causing undue difficulties or hardship for tenants who have experienced DFV
- safety awareness and procedures should be adopted by all agencies
- use of the Office of Fair Trading's (OFT) annual registration process as an educational opportunity – OFT can communicate with real estate agents throughout Queensland through the registration process.

Government and NGO staff suggested, in relation to the real estate industry:

- the sector needs to show more compassion and move beyond the 'we're just here to collect the rent' mentality, as DFV is a societal problem – the sector needs to recognise it has a social responsibility as part of the community
- agents need to realise that the consequence of putting someone on a database such as TICA is that they may become homeless.

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<sup>2</sup> TICA is one of several company-operated databases that provides information on the rental history of tenants to subscribers for a fee. 'TICA' does not appear to be an acronym but is simply the name of the database. See <https://www.tica.com.au/>

## **Key Findings – DFV service provider sector**

It was found that while some DFV services can offer temporary supported accommodation, they may not have a deep knowledge of tenancy matters, such as how to get someone's name removed from a lease, how to seek a termination at QCAT due to DFV, or how to take the steps to get someone de-listed from TICA and other tenant databases. DFV service providers were likened to general practitioner doctors by one interviewee – they knew a lot of things but were not specialists in tenancy matters. Tenants Qld found in their consultations with the DFV sector a 'patchy' knowledge of tenancy law and associated processes, such as how to initiate QCAT applications.

Likewise, those working in Justice and around the Magistrates' Court may have a good understanding of the provisions of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 and court processes relating to protection orders and ouster orders, but only basic understanding of tenancy matters (under the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008).

The importance of building capacity in the DFV sector was acknowledged by participants, who noted that consistency of response across sectors and services is important, no matter where women present.

Having some capacity and knowledge around tenancy matters was identified as assisting services to provide a higher level of support to clients, in a more efficient manner.

The feedback forms collected at the Tenants Qld training sessions were analysed. In particular, participants mentioned learning about the QCAT application process, including how to fill in an application form. They also found the information on starting tenancy, staying in a tenancy and leaving a tenancy helpful (repeating the schema that structures the toolkit). The Act, law and legislation, and the relevant sections, were also mentioned frequently.

The survey for service provider staff issued by the evaluators also included questions about the training sessions, with responses indicating a positive impact on practice. When asked 'Thinking about the information sessions, toolkit, and telephone advice line, what impact has this had on your practice when responding to women affected by DFV related tenancy issues?':

- 58.3% of the ten respondents answered that they felt significantly more confident and capable
- 16.7% felt slightly more confident and capable; and
- 25% reported no change to before.

Participants who were interviewed were also asked to reflect on the information sessions and resources. Service provider staff were positive about the sessions and said it added another 'layer' to their knowledge. Staff reported feeling more confident about their abilities to initiate proceedings for clients, walk through those processes with clients, and seek extra advice from experts when required.

Data provided by Tenants Qld indicates that the Advisory Line is being solidly utilised, assisting 37 service providers with 46 separate matters. Tenants Qld reported that there is a direct and positive correlation between where it has run information sessions with service providers around the toolkit and the areas where Advisory Line calls are coming from.

In general service providers felt that the availability of the resources helped them cut out a 'step' for the client thus reducing the number of places that clients had to access for advice, potentially streamlining the process and reducing client stress.

One hoped-for outcome is that more DFV and tenancy matters will be heard in the Magistrates' Court. In terms of practices in the Court area, there was little evidence of DFV and tenancy matters being heard conjointly in the Magistrates' Court (e.g. protection order, and orders relating to the tenancy), as yet.

Stakeholders were asked to suggest improvements for the DFV sector.

**DFV service providers** suggested:

- consistency in service across the state, so clients receive the same response from DFV services across Queensland, regardless of location
- more proactive approaches to private sector bodies, including REIQ and real estate agents' networks
- recognition in the DFV sector that tenancy is a critical issue, as well as court procedures related to protection orders
- provide more education to real estate agents about the impact of DFV, including stigma
- let agents know there are supports available to tenants (and prospective tenants) who may have suffered DFV. Support services can manage issues
- DFV services could do more practical support work including, for example, outreach and assistance with moving and setting up utilities. There is a Federally-funded program currently being trialled in Queensland, and if this was rolled out across services it would benefit clients
- there should be no implicit or specific pressure on services to close clients' files after a set period. Due to the entrenched cycle of abuse that women experience, some clients require longer support periods and it is not feasible to end support after six months
- there needs to be a balance between empowerment and intensive support in service provision. Support designed to empower will not work for all clients in all circumstances
- service provision in DFV should be holistic and multi-sectoral, including DFV, family law, child protection, therapy and court support.

Others suggested, in relation to the DFV services sector:

- there be a single point of referral, using one phone number, so agents can ring and refer DFV clients (there is such a service, DV Connect, but agents were seemingly unaware of this)
- some services could deal with change better, take new approaches or look at things differently. For example, some services need to recognise the barriers that women are experiencing and be more solutions-focused; some services do not support clients to gain tenancies during their 12-week support period, but instead provide unhelpful reminders of time limits to clients in lieu of support

- holistic case management in DFV services, including assisting clients with long-term accommodation
- DFV services should have much more proactive relationships with their local housing providers, such as RentConnect, Department of Housing, and local community housing providers, and nurture those relationships
- due to a spike in demand, DFV services need more resources and should be expanded, because they are currently forced to triage to the most severe cases currently.

## **Conclusion**

The evaluators found that to a great extent the short- and medium-term outcomes of the PRI had been achieved.

It was found that for those who had interacted with the resources reported that capacity and knowledge about DFV, understanding of tenancy law, processes, and referrals, as well as general levels of confidence, had increased.

In the view of stakeholders, both in the DFV service provider sector and in the real estate industry, having access to better information gave staff more confidence to give clients advice, more efficiently, potentially leading to better outcomes. This is in line with the anticipated longer-term outcomes of the program and future data collection and evaluation research could assess if these outcomes for clients have been realised.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Aims and activities of the initiative

The Keeping Women Safe in their Homes: Private Rental Initiative is funded through the Commonwealth Women's Safety Package. The Queensland Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (DCSYW) is the lead agency for the initiative.

The overarching goal of this initiative is to address barriers for many victims of domestic and family violence (DFV) in accessing safe and stable accommodation, particularly in the private rental market.

The objectives of this initiative are to:

- increase understanding of DFV among property managers in the private rental market, and build their capacity to respond to victims in a fair and sensitive way by providing access to a DFV Toolkit and professional development opportunities
- improve the DFV sector's capacity to support clients affected by DFV-related tenancy issues by providing:
  - access to specialist tenancy advice
  - training in relation to tenancy law in the context of DFV
  - a toolkit to guide practice
  - information about available products such as rental grants
- promote earlier intervention in DFV-related tenancy matters by providing a specific point of access to information and advice for DFV services
- strengthen relationships between DFV services and housing related services (such as RentConnect).

The initiative included the following activities, delivered by two partner organisations:

Resources for the domestic and family violence sector, delivered by Tenants Queensland Inc.

The Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (DCSYW) contracted Tenants Queensland Inc. (Tenants Qld) to deliver capacity and capability building around tenancy issues targeted to the DFV sector from November 2017 to April 2019. The aim of the project is to reduce barriers for women affected by DFV that prevent them from accessing or sustaining accommodation in the private rental market.

Tenants Qld developed a toolkit for DFV service providers and have been delivering training sessions and telephone advice to support DFV support services to respond to women experiencing DFV and tenancy-related matters. A place-based trial was implemented in south-east Queensland to test and refine the resources.

Tenants Qld produces quarterly milestone reports that include:

- tenancy advice sessions data (number of sessions, breakdown of matter types, outcomes)
- activities (e.g. workshops)
- themes, trends and issues
- case studies.

Resources for the real estate industry, delivered by Queensland Shelter Inc.

DCSYW contracted Queensland Shelter Inc. (Q Shelter) from November 2017 to June 2018 to deliver a DFV toolkit targeted at property managers in the private rental market. The aim of this project is to build the private sector's capacity to respond appropriately to tenants affected by DFV.

Q Shelter convened a reference group to create and trial a DFV Toolkit and identify training opportunities within the private rental market sector. Members of the reference group included: DCSYW, Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW), Q Shelter, Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ), real estate champion representatives, a DFV sector service, and a DFV legal expert.

Q Shelter has worked collaboratively with real estate 'champions' in developing the resources. The participating real estate agents are based in greater Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Townsville and Ipswich.

## 2.2 Background

Access to long-term housing is critical for those leaving DFV, given DFV is a major cause of homelessness among women and children in Australia (valentine and Breckenridge 2016), and housing assistance is not always available. Nationally, in 2016-17, 114,757 Specialist Homelessness Services clients identified family or domestic violence as their main reason for seeking assistance—this is 40% of all clients. Yet, although the proportion whose housing outcomes improve after receiving support has increased since 2012-13, less than half (47%) of those who were homeless when support began were assisted into housing in 2016-17, and just 4% of those who specifically requested long-term housing support received this assistance (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2018). In particular women who are less connected to the workforce—those who are not working full time, are in casual employment, are older, sole parents, self-employed or not employed—are at greater risk of insecure housing (valentine and Breckenridge 2016).

As the state retreats from direct housing provision through public housing (Rolvik, 2013), there has been a corresponding increase in reliance on providing subsidies to assist households move into and pay for privately rented housing instead (Caulfield 2000; Dodson 2006; Yates 2013). Australia has always favoured assistance programs that attempt to keep vulnerable households within the private rental housing market (Slatter and Beer. 2003) and has historically had a relatively small social housing sector. Where a woman needs to leave a DFV situation, other states have employed rental supplement schemes like NSW's 'Rent Choice'. This is partly to supplement existing subsidies such as Commonwealth Rent Assistance, and partly in response to an uptick in social housing applicants citing DFV as the reason for application.

Rent Choice provides a subsidy for three years, which greatly enhances the range of private rental properties that women leaving DFV can afford (in medium to lower cost rental areas of NSW). An example would be the Private Rental Assistance Program (PRAP) in Victoria. PRAP is a short-term program that provides (through private rental brokers) flexible support that assists households to access or uphold private rental housing. It is typically provided to those in crisis and transitional housing situations (Department of Health and Human Services, State Government of Victoria, 2019)

As of 2016, 34% of households in Queensland rent. The most recent census data showed for the first time that the number of households renting outnumbered the number of households purchasing. In addition, the number of people who are renting for over ten years is increasing, and this includes many families with dependent children. For women and children leaving violence, the main form of housing assistance currently offered are subsidies for private rental; however, women also need practical support and flexible outreach support. For example, they may require assistance with moving their possessions or women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds might need help setting up utilities. Women on spousal visas without access to any income may rely on refuge and transitional accommodation for longer. This is a Commonwealth migration law issue but one that is impacting on Specialist Homelessness Services (SHSs) across Australia (see also Flanagan, Blunden and valentine, 2019).

In order to better facilitate access to the private rental market, the Queensland Government has developed the Private Rental Initiative (PRI). The PRI is part of the Keeping Women Safe in their Homes (KWSITH) initiatives, funded through the Commonwealth Women's Safety Package. The aim of the PRI is to reduce barriers for women affected by DFV that prevent them from accessing or sustaining accommodation in the private rental market.

Many studies have highlighted that governments are turning away from a 'bricks and mortar' approach such as providing permanent, social housing and increasingly assist victims of DFV to access private rental market housing through the use of rental subsidies. Many of the states and territories have a version of this type of program. However, such programs have been criticised for various shortcomings. They can be time-limited, meaning that after the subsidy ends, the tenant may struggle to pay the rent. Real estate agents and landlords may discriminate against applicants they perceive to pose a risk (Martin and Stern, 2005; Menard, 2001) including single women, women with children, women with pets, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people on a low income, and people on Centrelink payments. Other difficulties may stem from poor rental history, which may result from women's multiple moves to elude a persistent abuser or because of evictions that arise from the abuser's actions (Martin & Stern, 2005; National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2007). The applicant may be listed on the 'bad tenant' database, TICA, thus prompting a refusal of their rental application. In addition, women may have difficulty paying rent on their own which may lead to evictions and subsequent credit problems, thus reducing their ability to access alternate housing (Baker et.al., 2010). Other difficulties include high competition rental markets where there are many applicants competing for rental properties, and also, high rents in cities and some regional areas, limiting affordability and choice of rental properties. In an attempt to overcome at least some of these difficulties, in particular the discrimination that can be shown by agents and landlords to some types of prospective tenants, which may include homeless victims of DFV, state governments are attempting to provide educative programs and other

resources aimed at the real estate industry, and building capacity and knowledge in the DFV sector as well to improve exit rates from transitional and refuge accommodation.

Findings from this evaluation will not only inform the Queensland Department of Child Safety Youth and Women and stakeholders on future policy and program direction, but also be relevant to other governments that are contemplating adopting a similar program.

## **2.3 Evaluation scope and purpose**

The purpose of the evaluation is to identify and analyse implementation learnings as well as changes or progress towards outcomes for those who participated in the Private Rental Initiative (PRI). This evaluation reports on short- and medium-term objectives.

Short-term outcomes:

- Increased resourcing and support available to the private rental and DFV sectors to respond to DFV related tenancy matters (capacity)
- Increased knowledge and understanding of DFV related tenancy matters (capability)

Medium-term outcomes:

- DFV and private rental sector access and apply new and existing resources
- DFV and private rental staff respond more effectively to women experiencing DFV in their tenancies

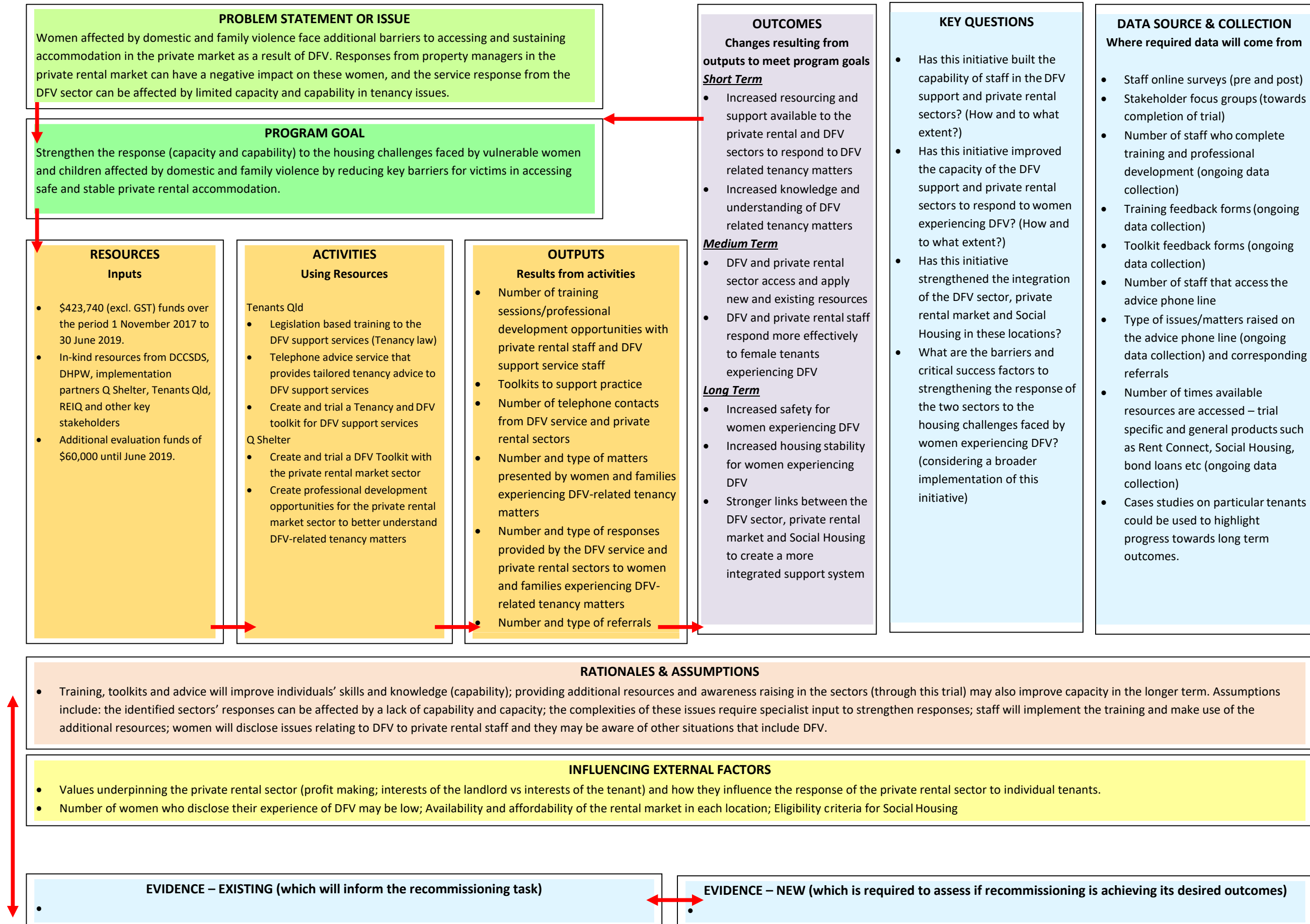
Long-term outcomes:

- Increased safety for women experiencing DFV
- Increased housing stability for women experiencing DFV
- Stronger links between the DFV sector, private rental market and social housing to create a more integrated system

A program logic is a graphic representation of the hypothesised connections between program inputs, outputs, and outcomes. The task of the evaluation is to assess whether and how these connections occur. The program logic developed by the DCSYW is presented below (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Logic model



- *Real estate industry outcomes:* if the PRI program is being implemented as intended, we would expect participating agents to gain greater awareness of the barriers facing women escaping from DFV to enter the private rental market, including listing on tenant databases such as TICA<sup>3</sup>, low income, and having to compete in tight and sometimes unaffordable private rental markets. In addition, we would expect to see greater awareness among real estate agents about the role of service providers and what supports are available to tenants, such as assistance with bonds, as well as increased awareness of provisions in the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act dealing with tenancy and DFV.
- *Service provider outcomes:* if the PRI program is being implemented as intended, we would expect a greater awareness, understanding and capacity and capability around tenancy law and assisting clients to exercise their rights from service providers who have participated in one or more of the components. In terms of the broader aspects of the PRI, we would also expect greater contact and dialogue between DFV service providers and real estate agents who may be able to assist with suggesting private rental properties that may be suitable for people looking to exit into the private rental market from refuge or transitional accommodation. We would expect service provider staff to be better trained and supported, and, through their support to clients, obtain better tenancy outcomes for their clients.
- *Client outcomes:* if the PRI program is being implemented as intended, we would expect that clients in DFV situations or who are leaving DFV will receive high quality advice and referrals where necessary from service providers, leading to better tenancy outcomes.
- *Inter-sectoral contact:* if the PRI program is being implemented as intended, we would also expect greater contact and dialogue between government agencies (e.g. Justice, Housing and DCSYW), and at the local level between government, NGOs and real estate agents.

In addition, if the PRI is being implemented as intended, we would expect to see this reflected in positive findings for *process or implementation* measures relating to how the program is being delivered; stakeholder satisfaction with implementation (including satisfaction with the toolkits and information sessions), use of the telephone advice line, and the extent to which the program is implemented as was intended.

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<sup>3</sup> TICA is one of several company-operated databases that provides information on the rental history of tenants to subscribers for a fee. They are often used by real estate agents and lessors to decide a tenant's suitability when assessing tenancy applications. Listing of a tenant can only occur for a lawful reason – including owing more than the rental bond, termination for objectionable behaviour and termination for repeatedly breaching the Agreement. Victims of domestic and family violence can seek not to be listed if the breach of the tenancy agreement is due to the actions of their partner (who was also a tenant). (Queensland Statewide Tenant Advice and Referral Service, <https://qstars.org.au/tenancies/tenancy-databases/>)

## **3 Methods**

### **3.1 Phase 1**

For Phase 1, the research team conducted an initial start-up meeting with the DCSYW and consulted with Tenants Qld and Q Shelter to discuss the evaluation.

Research instruments (stakeholder surveys, interview guidelines) were developed and reviewed. Ethics approval was received (HC180560).

#### **3.1.1 Program document review and initial consultation**

Program documents have been reviewed to better understand the rationale for the Private Rental Initiative. Program documents reviewed include:

- The 'Not Now, Not Ever' report, including recommendations relating to private rental
- The Domestic and Family Violence Implementation Council report 1 December 2016 - 30 November 2017
- Documents relating to the Innovations Lab (sessions 1 and 2) including agendas, notes from the meetings and material from the meetings
- The Tenants Qld 'Tenancy law toolkit for domestic and family violence service providers in Queensland'
- The Q Shelter 'Domestic and Family Violence – Strengthening the real estate response – a toolkit to guide practice'.

#### **3.1.2 Data sources**

The evaluation team requested data collected by Tenants Qld and Q Shelter as part of their projects and conducted a primary data collection with stakeholders by way of interviews/focus groups and a survey (for service providers).

There are three key sources of administrative and program data: DCSYW, Q Shelter and Tenants Qld. Data custodians were identified and consulted during the initial stages to identify what information had been captured about the PRI program to inform the evaluation and to request that information and data be shared with the evaluators.

#### **3.1.3 Data collection tools**

During this phase the research instruments for data collection were developed. We consulted with DCSYW on the data tools and received feedback on iterations of these. We road-tested surveys with representatives of the stakeholder group: with REIQ, a real estate agent and a service provider staff member. Feedback was received and incorporated. In addition, Tenants Qld suggested the inclusion of certain questions in the survey for service providers, some of which were adapted and incorporated into the final version of the survey in consultation with DCSYW. To

maximise efficiency and geographic reach, the surveys were constructed using an online survey tool, SurveyGizmo.

Three sources of data from the training sessions run by Tenants Qld were available for the evaluation:

- feedback forms from the training sessions, summarised here to protect anonymity
- an online survey, completed in full by 10 respondents, consisting of closed and open free-text questions (see Appendix C)
- interviews with persons who had attended the information sessions.

Given that the Q Shelter project did not include information sessions with real estate agents, the survey constructed for real estate agents was dropped as there was not a sufficient number of agents familiar with the toolkit. The survey for service providers went ahead as there were over 100 service provider staff who had attended information sessions run by Tenants Qld. The survey was sent to participants in the information sessions with assistance in the first instance from Tenants Qld. Follow-up contact was made by the evaluators to try to boost the response rate, by directly contacting the organisations. Participants were offered the chance to win a \$200 prize voucher.

The focus group/interview guides were drafted. These were reviewed by the DCSYW. Suggestions for amendments were incorporated. The original single focus groups/interview guide was split into two documents and questions were tailored for each stakeholder group.

### **3.1.4 Fieldwork**

Brisbane-based fieldwork took place between 11-13 February 2019. The survey was sent to service providers in early March 2019. A number of follow-up activities and interviews took place over the telephone in February – March 2019, which allowed the evaluation team to interview non-Brisbane based stakeholders as well as anyone who was unavailable during the Brisbane visit.

The evaluators undertook:

- four individual interviews and one focus group involving eight real estate agents
- one individual interview and a focus group with four government employees (from DCSYW and Justice)
- individual interviews and focus groups involving nine staff from NGO peak bodies and on the ground service providers.

Most of those interviewed were based in southeast Queensland (including the Gold Coast), and two were based in Townsville.

Service provider staff who had attended the Tenants Qld training sessions were invited to undertake an online survey. The returned surveys were analysed using SurveyGizmo's analysis and reporting functions.

We obtained up-to-date information from Tenants Qld on the operations of the advisory line, including the number of calls and the nature of the inquiries. Tenants Qld also shared general

feedback collected at training sessions which were read and summarised (to protect the individuals' anonymity).

This approach allowed the evaluators to gauge the major stakeholder groups' perceptions of the implementation of the PRI, the two toolkits, the telephone advisory line, and whether or how these resources boosted capabilities and capacities.

## **3.2 Ethical considerations**

Participants were given the opportunity to be identified by their name and organisation, or to remain anonymous in the report. This process was approved by the University of New South Wales (UNSW) Human Research Ethics Committee as part of the general approval given to the research.

We have respected the personal preferences of individual participants in this report by referring to those who indicated they wished to be identified by using their real name and organisation, or by using a pseudonym (e.g. Participant Y).

To ensure participants were comfortable with comments attributable to them, and because they were identified by their real name, quotes were checked with those participants. Likewise, any comments likely to be controversial were also checked with participants, regardless of whether they were identified or de-identified.

## **3.3 Limitations**

The evaluation is based on the assessments of participants in the initiative and other stakeholders, including real estate agents, and identifies strengths and weaknesses and areas for development. It is not possible to identify outcomes in the absence of a counterfactual.

Survey response rates were low. Although we offered the chance to win a \$200 prize for participating in the survey, and over 100 people were contacted, and 19 persons started to fill out the survey, a total of 10 completed responses were submitted. This may be because participants had already filled out a paper feedback form issued by Tenants Qld at the sessions and this may have felt like a repetitious exercise. Initially, contact was made via email by Tenants Qld, who attempted to send the invitation to those who had attended based on attendance sheets. Follow-up emails were sent. There was a significant number (about 20) of out-of-office messages and 'bounces' from email addresses, indicating staff were on annual leave, or had left the organisation. Those surveys that were returned contained useful information, which has been incorporated into the report.

We had intended to request de-identified case studies from service providers that were illustrative of the impact of the PRI and the toolkit and we had developed a standard case study form to elicit this information; however, resource constraints meant that we could not obtain this data. However, we were able to cover this aspect in interviews with service providers, who provided some examples of the possible or practical impacts of having the resources available to service provider staff.

We obtained a variety of views from a range of stakeholders in different locations, including the government, peak industry and NGO organisations, service providers and courts/Justice.

## 4 Findings

Two toolkits were developed:

- ‘Domestic and Family Violence – Strengthening the Real Estate Response – a toolkit to guide practice’, produced by Q Shelter, in collaboration with the Real Estate Institute of Queensland (REIQ), the peak body of the real estate sector in Queensland
- ‘Tenancy law toolkit for domestic and family violence service providers’, produced by Tenants Qld, the peak body for representing the concerns of all Queensland tenants who live in rental accommodation. In addition to developing the written resource, the initiative funded Tenants Qld to run information sessions around the DFV service provider toolkit and offered a sector-specific telephone advisory line.

In general, we found that the initiatives have been implemented as intended. Q Shelter successfully collaborated with REIQ and ‘champion’ agents to create the toolkit for the real estate sector. Dissemination of the toolkit has been more limited than the resource for the DFV sector. The publication (both the online version and hard copy format) is available but has not been disseminated widely. The provision of specific resources for distribution would increase its reach as would embedding it within training programs. The toolkit aimed at DFV service providers has been distributed in tandem with information sessions in different locations in Queensland and the operation of the specialist Advisory Line by Tenants Qld.

It was found that for those who had interacted with the resources reported that capacity and knowledge about DFV, understanding of tenancy law, processes, and referrals as well as general levels of confidence, had increased.

In the view of stakeholders, both in the DFV service provider sector and in the real estate industry, having access to better information gave staff more confidence to give clients advice, more efficiently, potentially leading to better outcomes. This is in line with the anticipated longer-term outcomes of the program and future data collection and evaluation research could assess if these outcomes for clients have been realised.

### 4.1 The real estate industry

The following section will look at whether the Private Rental Initiative has increased the capacity and capability of the real estate sector and whether real estate agency staff respond more effectively to women experiencing DFV.

#### 4.1.1 Design and development of the Initiative

To begin with, the Department held a series of ‘Innovation Lab’ sessions, which brought various stakeholders together in an effort to examine policy and service delivery challenges in new ways and come up with innovative ideas. There were three sessions, run by the consultancy firm Deloitte. A REIQ representative also attended these sessions. DCSYW staff thought carefully about who they wanted to bring into that process and were encouraged ‘to think outside the square’ and bring in people that they thought would provide different perspectives on the issue.

Following this, there was an event held in Brisbane on White Ribbon Day in 2017, which about 50 people attended. A separate event was also held on the Gold Coast.

These interactions brought different perspectives to the table. A DCSYW participant commented:

We knew what the issue was, but you didn't always understand what the issue might be from a different person's perspective. So the landlord insurance thing [insurance companies require a QCAT application or listing on TICA, before approving claims], we would never have thought about that. But it was the industry person who introduced that. So, it gave everyone a much better understanding of where the other people were coming from and indicated that this is more complex than we had anticipated. (Suzanne Coxon. DCSYW)

An NGO staff member present at the Innovations Kitchen explained that the cross-sectoral interactions were fruitful. While they advocated from their perspective as a service that assists victims of DFV, they found it useful to hear the real estate perspective:

So, she talked about things like insurance issues where... you know, so we're going, "Discrimination against victims of domestic violence!" And she's saying, "actually there's risks to property owners" and just explained it and I just thought that was really valuable and great. (Participant J)

After being contracted to write the resource for the real estate sector, Q Shelter worked with REIQ to identify potential 'champion' real estate agents from different locations in Queensland to advise on and pilot the new 'toolkit to guide practice'. Members of the Property Management Chapter of REIQ were also involved in the process. A reference group meeting was held by Q Shelter where they explained what the written resource was trying to achieve. Participating agents were flown in for the meeting. This was attended by REIQ, the 'champion' real estate agencies and other stakeholders including Caxton Legal, Residential Tenancies Authority (RTA), Tenants Qld, the Queensland Housing and RentConnect which is a Queensland Government service that helps Queenslanders find and apply for a place to rent. The purpose of this reference group meeting was to collect input on how the initiative was to be rolled out and to plan the piloting of the toolkit.

Rachael Vidler from Q Shelter explained the purpose of a one-day session with real estate agents as informing the refining of the toolkit:

We basically used that as an exercise to unpack what they believed they needed compared to what we believed they needed and whilst we were all on the same page, we did get a lot of consistent feedback from the real estate industry that they're very busy people and they don't have the time to read.

A real estate agent explained that the initial process was fairly open-ended brainstorming:

So, from that very first meeting that we had, it was just really brainstorming, and talking about what our opinions were. From my perspective, the questions I was being asked were, what are property managers seeing in the front line, and what sort of resources would we be able to use to deal with those sorts of situations? What information did we need and that sort of thing? (Participant M)

These conversations influenced the shape of the final draft of the publication aimed at real estate agents, and they suggested cutting down on wordiness and providing important information in a digestible format. The process also solidified the links Q Shelter had with REIQ. Reportedly, REIQ valued that they were involved throughout the process rather than presented with a product to simply endorse at the end. REIQ and Q Shelter built a collaborative partnership throughout the process. Q Shelter brought insight into the human services aspect while the real estate agents and



REIQ brought practical experience of the priorities and concerns of agents, and what they felt they needed to better respond to DFV, within the limitations of their roles. Both parties took a whole of society approach despite their constituent bases being in the social services and not-for-profit housing providers and the real estate business.

Q Shelter also attended a series of REIQ-organised breakfasts where they had a 5-minute slot to talk about the initiative. During the coffee breaks, they were approached by agents keen to ask questions which, in some cases, related to their property management experiences:

Then some of the other questions that came out of it, you know, "I was at an inspection the other day and she [the tenant] opened the fridge and there wasn't any food in there and I was thinking, "What's she going to feed the kids that night? I know she's doing it tough. What would I do?" I've been getting asked other questions about responding to other areas so it's really brought home to me how important it is that we fill that gap of knowledge between our sector and their industry because we're all housing people. (Rachael Vidler, Q Shelter).

Q Shelter also reported they had individual agents later contacting them via phone about DFV-related issues they were seeing in their everyday practice.

As mentioned above, the written resource aimed at real estate agents was originally longer and wordier. Two drafts were presented for review to the agents. The real estate agents provided feedback on whether it was practical and whether it was something real estate agents would use. The publication subsequently went through a significant refinement. Then, the finalised copy was issued and the participating agencies received hard copies for use in their office, acting as trial sites. After receiving feedback that property managers were 'busy people' and had limited time for reading, the language was simplified and cut down.

I initially had my concerns because it was very lengthy. We don't have time to learn about this stuff. We literally just need to have something where we go, "Right, this is the situation. What do I do next?" So, I think the toolkit as it is now is really helpful and it's been condensed right down into a format that's pretty practical now. (Participant M)

It seems that the toolkit does fill a gap, without forcing agents into taking up a role that is outside of their remit.

The toolkit guide to practice is available electronically from REIQ and Q Shelter websites and a limited number of hard copies have been printed. The toolkit was developed in fact sheet format for ease of reference and use, and users have reportedly seen this positively.

#### **4.1.2 Awareness and capacity**

One of the aims of the PRI was to bring an awareness of DFV to the real estate industry. Those who did become involved had mixed levels of awareness about DFV prior to their involvement. Some agents worked with tenants experiencing DFV on an almost weekly basis, while others said they did not come across it much at all. Different experiences of DFV were also a function of the socioeconomic status of the area the agency was located in. DFV is experienced by people in advantaged as well as disadvantaged circumstances, but DFV in affluent communities may not come to the attention of real estate agents as often, as victims may be homeowners rather than tenants, and may have more personal financial resources. Agents operating in low income areas were the most exposed to tenancy issues relating to DFV and some had already developed

practices around this, such as having telephone numbers for local DFV services included in the tenant 'welcome pack' information. Involvement in the PRI generally added to awareness. However, this is not generalisable to the entire sector.

From our point of view, yes, our awareness has come up because of the toolkit, the breakfast and the information coming through from our professional peak body. Whereas, there are other people who aren't involved in that.... I think, from our point of view yes, we're more aware of it and what we can do. But, broadly, I'm not too sure. (Clint Dowdell-Smith, Bees Nees City Realty).

Those who had participated, for example in a roundtable discussion or after a visit from Q Shelter, felt their capacity had increased:

Certainly, after participating in this, my whole team has got a better understanding of how to manage these sorts of situations. (Participant M)

The diverse experiences and expertise of the real estate workforce is also relevant to the potential benefits of the PRI. In particular, a property manager does not require as many qualifications as that of an agent involved in sales. Property managers are typically younger and just starting out in their real estate career. They may not have the resources to recognise what to do in situations where a tenancy is being affected by DFV. Involvement in the PRI and using the written resource reportedly assisted younger staff members to feel more confident and able to assist and try to resolve the situation to the benefit of both the landlord and tenant.

Some people working in the real estate industry have personally experienced DFV in their own lives and disclosed this during the interviews. This meant that they had an awareness of how DFV can impact on lives and a greater understanding of the issues, but conversely may also place them at risk of harm from vicarious trauma. The availability of support for people working with tenants experiencing DFV, from any sector, is an important need. This is especially relevant to the real estate workforce, which has a high proportion of female employees, many of whom may come into contact with DFV as part of their everyday business.

Q Shelter also made efforts to increase the capacity of agents to identify DFV. One section of the toolkit advises on 'how to start a conversation' with a tenant. Referral material is provided, including local service contact details for all regions of Queensland. Agents particularly valued this information being on hand. However, this was an area that Q Shelter, in their conversations with REIQ, felt needed more work. This includes communication with tenants as well as understanding of specific QCAT processes that can occur around DFV.

The findings indicate that the initiative has assisted the real estate sector, to some extent, to change their attitudes towards DFV and the sector's role in responding to it. One person from a key stakeholder organisation felt that while capacity and awareness were about the same, there had been a shift in attitude, and openness towards thinking about these types of 'social issues'; however, this person noted this was due to the impetus created by the PRI rather than any proactivity in the real estate sector. This raises the question of how best to sustain the involvement of the real estate industry in this and future initiatives by capitalising on the commitment already shown.

### 4.1.3 Understanding of tenancy law and processes

Real estate agents generally reported having a good grasp of tenancy law and understanding the rights and obligations of the parties to a residential tenancy agreement (lease). They also reported understanding the processes related to rental arrears and terminations. However, they did not always have great understanding of the parts of the Act that relate to DFV because they either did not come across it much or used other mechanisms within the Act, such as terminations due to breach of agreement (rather than suggesting a termination occur due to DFV – section 321<sup>4</sup> of the Act).

I feel like if I wasn't personally a part of this I wouldn't know. I would still be flying blind. I would still not have a good understanding. I'd be still contacting the REIQ every single time we had a situation come up. (Participant M)

Professional development may not be a priority for some agencies. Property managers may not participate in ongoing training – this depends on the Principal and the culture of the organisation. Agents had mixed experiences of access to ongoing professional development.

An important result of increased awareness of agents around DFV issues was that property managers developed strategies for avoiding some courses of action, for example in regard to terminations. Instead of an application for termination being made to QCAT, agents could talk owners through their options, and suggest a mutual termination instead. The toolkit assisted in this process knowledge as a Brisbane-based agent related:

So, for us, the pack [the toolkit] and things were good for getting an understanding of what people are going through, in that situation; but also, being able to explain to owners why they also need to be understanding of that, and not drag it through QCAT and have to get terminations that way, and things like that. And you know, what you can do, if you can't get to that point. (Cassie Protheroe, Havig and Jackson)

TICA and other tenancy databases are regularly used by real estate agents to screen tenancy applicants, and agents who were interviewed were using these on a regular basis. Agents were cognisant of TICA listing rules (such as the permissible reasons for a listing) and were able to advise tenants on the process for getting themselves removed from TICA, especially if damage was incurred by a DFV perpetrator co-tenant rather than them due to DFV. Likewise, one agent who regularly deals with issues of co-tenancy gives tenants clear advice on how to have their co-tenancy terminated:

If they do come in with DV, we tell them, "The quickest way to do it, to get your name off the lease, is to go straight down to QCAT. Just apply to QCAT, to get it taken off." (Participant K)

In dealing with DFV, and in particular when it came to terminating a tenancy, the Property Chapter of REIQ told us that agents fell back on the legislation and processes, but there was an awareness coming through training and through the PRI process that negotiated outcomes are possible. As the property manager is in a position of expertise in relation to the landlord, they recounted that if they explained the situation frankly, and suggested a course of action to the landlord, the landlord would usually agree to the suggested course of action. For example, agents recalled suggesting

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<sup>4</sup> See the Queensland Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008, s. 321, 'Application by tenant's domestic associate for termination for damage or injury'.

mutual termination instead of the landlord seeking a QCAT Order and obtaining agreement from the landlord to remove a co-tenant from the lease.

While real estate agents were sensitive to the needs and rights of DFV victims, they also made the point repeatedly in interviews that they are not social workers, and their role in supporting tenants experiencing DFV is limited. Nor did they see themselves as having the requisite level of expertise and training to get 'too involved', as one person put it – this was seen as the role of specialist NGOs and the government. They were eager, however, for information on services and support to which they could refer tenants. Some felt there should be 'one phone number' they could call (this was a recurring theme). One agent recounted how she had tried to assist a tenant but had 'got the run-around', ringing various services only to be referred to another. Eventually, she ended up in contact with Q Shelter in an effort to try to link the tenant with an appropriate service. Another agent, who had a lot of experience with tenants facing DFV, already had phone numbers for local DFV services on the tenant welcome sheet. In line with these expressed needs, the toolkit for real estate agents includes a comprehensive list of DFV services by region, and a small folding card with the same information that agents can hand out to tenants.

A common theme was that agents wanted practical information about who to call or to refer a tenant to, who would deal with the tenant's safety and support needs.

Some [property managers] don't feel comfortable, if they're going out to a property, and they believe that there may be a case of domestic violence. They actually don't feel comfortable approaching a tenant and discussing it. And I know that it was brought up at one stage, for us to go, "Are you okay?" or, "Is there anything we can do? We believe you're experiencing domestic violence." I think that's a bit out of our realm. I think it should be more to the case that if we believe there's domestic violence, if we could call somebody and report it, but it's out of our expertise, out of the comfort zone. It's a safety issue. (Natalie Wood, Donna Sands Property)

Laura Valenti, a member of the Property Management Chapter of REIQ, also echoed this sentiment.

Training organisations have been hesitant to introduce this kind of thing [i.e. training around DFV issues], because, then, what are we? Are we Lifeline workers now? (Laura Valenti, Solutions Property Management)

Agents saw their role as circumscribed by the nature of their industry (that it is a commercial operation, not a social service) and by the law (they must act for the landlord). While agents were not opposed to doing what they could, they essentially want a quick and easy referral point, first and foremost.

#### **4.1.4 Changes in practice**

The agents who had participated in the PRI were asked if their practices had changed as a result of their participation and use of the toolkit. The content of the toolkit was identified by agents as its most important component of the initiative for them, because the constraints on time, capacity, and experience mean that only information that is practical and immediately available will be used. Interview participants talked positively about the potential of the toolkit to change practice and lead to better outcomes for tenants. They liked its accessibility, the practical elements (such as the flow charts, the section on 'how to start a conversation' on DFV, the list of DFV service provider contact

details, and the pocket-sized version of this information). Just having information readily available that could be given to tenants was seen as useful and potentially even life-saving:

I think giving those tools to people is fantastic, because you don't always know what to do, or who to call. So that's why I think it's a vital toolkit. (Cassie Protheroe, Havig and Jackson)

We need to be aware of it, we need to be educated to be able to assist people in that, because no one would want to have a death in their portfolio because of domestic violence. That, to me would just be horrific. I think, if you could head that off at the pass, if the tenants come to you and say something to you, or you recognise something that you can subtly give them that information, so that they've got somewhere to start resourcing with an option for an out. (Tammy Vitale, Vitale and Co. Property Management Services)

The 'Starting a conversation' section of the toolkit is designed to give property managers confidence to have conversations with tenants and make a referral to a DFV specific service if needed. The flow chart format illustrating what steps to take was also identified as useful.

The toolkit provides information on services and referrals. Previously, an agent reported that a tenant told her she was experiencing DFV, and she called REIQ's property management support service but "there wasn't a resource as such" (Participant M). However, with the list of DFV services provided, she reported accessing the information in the pocket guides provided with the toolkit.

Two other specific topics of valuable content in the toolkit were noted in interviews. First, alternatives to QCAT are not very well known. Through training (Real Estate Excellence was mentioned), some agents understood that to get a tenant off the lease, a landlord just had to agree and the tenants did not necessarily have to go through a QCAT process. An REIQ participant expressed doubt that many agents really knew about processes such as urgent applications at QCAT despite the good work to publicise these options done by the Residential Tenancies Authority (RTA) via webinars and the like. A Q Shelter stakeholder noted that a lot of the uncertainty was not about the provisions of the Act but evidence needed to use them:

[Property managers need to know] "What kind of proof do I have? Do I need to do that? So, if [tenant] just says to me she needs to move out because it's DV, do I have to ask her to prove it or do I just take her word for it?' It's that level of understanding around not so much the law but it's how [does the property manager] communicate with the client. (Rachael Vidler, Q Shelter)

The toolkit and interactions with Q Shelter has also given property managers a greater understanding of the effects of listing someone on TICA (which may prevent them from being able to access a new tenancy in the PRM) and also look at other ways to approach a situation, for example by "sitting down and having a chat about it" (Cassie Protheroe, Havig and Jackson). Another agent commented:

Our focus before was 'we have a job to do, this person owes money, we need to get that money back for our owner, and this is the first step, put them on TICA'. There wasn't a lot of thought around it otherwise. (Participant M)

In summary, those who have been involved in the PRI and have piloted the toolkit reported greater awareness that there were other choices potentially available to them within the Act and in everyday practice. They also better understood that a TICA listing could potentially be injurious to women fleeing DFV as it may prevent these women from obtaining another tenancy (due to their 'blacklisted' status).

### **4.1.5 Stronger links between the DFV sector, private rental market and social housing to create a more integrated support system**

The real estate agents who had been involved with the PRI came into contact with various government agencies as well as Q Shelter. The peak industry body, REIQ, reportedly 'works very well' with the state government and puts the 'real estate perspective' forward (Participant K). Real estate agents were already aware of some services for tenants such as RentConnect.

There were few instances of strong local linkages between real estate agents and social housing. However, two agents reported relationships with community housing providers through headleasing arrangements. Through these agreements with the community housing sector they may also support DFV victims who are at risk of homelessness. One was positive about their arrangement, while another said they were thinking of ending the arrangement due to tenancy management and property damage problems.

Some agents reported that they attempt to refer tenants to DFV and other services. One agent whose practice is located in a socio-economically disadvantaged area expressed frustration at their experience of trying to find support for a vulnerable tenant, a single woman with mental health issues. She described multiple phone calls, and of being referred between multiple agencies:

She was going to be on the street. And it was five agencies before I finally got onto one that I could actually take her to, to go and get her some help. We *are* social workers. This is what it's becoming. Because we have to try and look after the owner's interests, and on the same token, you've got a human aspect to it. It's hard. It's really hard. (Participant K).

Like others, she argued for the need for a single point of referral: "one place where [property managers] can ring up and say, 'This person needs help. Can you help them?'" Or get the relevant person to them" (Participant K). As described above, other agents stressed that it was not their role to be social workers and get 'too involved'. This agent had personally tried to find a service that could help the tenant but was frustrated by her experience.

### **4.1.6 Sector development needs: training and Workplace Health and Safety**

While real estate agents had training around the Residential Tenancies Act, there was no specific training around DFV issues or an examination of the Act's provisions relating to this. Property managers have very little training, yet they are the ones dealing with tenancies on a day-to-day basis. For example, REIQ's Real Estate Agent Letting course can be completed online or over a three-day period. The training they undertake is very 'compliance-based' and 'legislation-based' with modules on leasing, legal and ethical requirements of property management, monitoring and managing leases, minimising risk and establishing agency trust accounts<sup>5</sup>. The Property Chapter of REIQ stressed that training should also be about 'humanity...how to deal with people' as well as the letter of the law. Interview participants described the existing training requirements for registration as "low on content" and in need of improvement (Clint Dowdell-Smith, Bees Nees City

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<sup>5</sup> See the REIQ information about this course:  
[https://www.reiq.com/REIQ/Training/Real\\_Estate\\_Residential\\_Letting\\_Agent\\_Course.aspx](https://www.reiq.com/REIQ/Training/Real_Estate_Residential_Letting_Agent_Course.aspx)

Realty). Another agent said that training modules dealing with DFV and mental health and similar 'issues in general' would be beneficial (Cassie Protheroe, Having and Jackson).

While professional development can represent a cost to agencies and this may be a barrier, participants nominated ways to minimise this. For example, real estate breakfasts are a useful forum, and invited guest speakers are a good way of starting these conversations.

I was trying to organise that at some stage, and get speakers along; like from, for example, Red Cross, or the women's shelter, or wherever, just to give the property managers a little bit more information. (Donna Sands, Donna Sands Property)

One way of improving exposure to training on these issues would be to give those who attended sessions continuing professional development (CPD) points. Registered training organisations can design new training modules. Q Shelter suggested that there is a unit of competency under the social housing Certificate IV course which could be included in existing training. The Property Chapter of REIQ pointed out that CPD points should be required to maintain individual registration of a real estate agent in Queensland and pointed to the practices in other states. These arguments from stakeholders suggest that the lessons from the PRI could be sustained through mechanisms such as the training and registration of real estate agents, because the registration process, and ongoing training linked to CPD points, could be a useful way of increasing awareness in the real estate sector. Q Shelter is currently working with REIQ to develop a business case to integrate this content into training modules for private real estate property managers as part of their continuing professional development curriculum.

Another issue that was raised by agents was practices around occupational health and safety. Property managers are required to carry out property inspections. This could pose a risk where there is DFV occurring, or in situations where the co-tenant has left but the perpetrator is still in the property. Some agents reported that they instructed property managers not to enter premises if they felt it would be unsafe to do so:

I've always said to the girls if you don't feel safe, don't go. It's as simple as that. If I can't come with them or if somebody can't go with you, then just don't do it. Postpone or reschedule it. (Tammy Vitale, Vitale and Co Property Management)

The Property Management Chapter focus group noted an incident in New Zealand that resulted in the deaths of two property managers who were shot with a firearm by a tenant when they attended the property to carry out repairs.

Some agencies had strong protocols in place and used monitoring apps or other means to keep track of staff:

An inspection app that we use actually has a duress signal that does GPS locking of the device, records video and audio in 30 second bursts on what is actually happening. It locks down our systems in our office so we can't do anything until we've checked on them. (Clint Dowdell-Smith, Bees Nees City Realty)

However, not all agencies use protocols. Given the risks faced by property managers in attending homes, there is likely to be benefits from the industry adopting formal risk assessment and safety protocols used by other sectors, including the DFV sector. While not a focus of the evaluation, interviews and focus groups indicate inconsistent approaches to staff safety monitoring in the industry which are relevant to responses to DFV.

## 4.1.7 Suggested improvements in practice – real estate sector

Real estate agents suggested:

- more and better training for agents and CPD recognition, especially for property managers
- using alternative methods to resolve issues (e.g. termination by mutual agreement rather than going to QCAT, allowing a co-tenant to remove themselves from the lease).  
Communication with landlords to get mutually beneficial outcomes for the parties
- more consideration of the circumstances of the situation and the consequences of listing a tenant on tenancy databases such as TICA
- access to referral points for tenants
- headleasing agreements with community housing providers
- considering the requirements of insurers in relation to landlord claims – further work is needed to examine if these stipulations are causing undue difficulties or hardship for tenants who have experienced DFV
- safety awareness and procedures should be adopted by all agencies
- use of the Office of Fair Trading’s annual registration process as an educational opportunity – OFT can communicate with real estate agents throughout Queensland through the registration process.

Government and NGO staff suggested, in relation to the real estate industry:

- the sector needs to show more compassion and move beyond the ‘we’re just here to collect the rent’ mentality, as DFV is a societal problem – the sector needs to recognise it has a social responsibility as part of the community
- agents need to realise that the consequence of putting someone on a database such as TICA is that they may become homeless.

## 4.2 The DFV service provider sector

The following section will look at whether the Private Rental Initiative has increased the capacity and capability of the DFV service provider sector and whether services staff respond more effectively to women experiencing DFV in relation to tenancy law.

### 4.2.1 Design and development of the initiative

There were three sessions of the ‘Innovation Lab’ AKA digital kitchen, facilitated by Deloitte. Participants described the process where ideas were discussed, written on post-it notes and distilled through a process of refinement into directions for action. While the process brought up some good ideas, and brought stakeholders together in a fruitful exchange, not all who attended were pleased with the end result.

In addition, while government representatives were present, their participation was seen as somewhat muted, as reported by three participants from different sectors. There was an expectation that government, as the instigator of strategy, should have been less passive, more on



the front foot, and have more fully formed policies or ideas to bring to such discussions. There appears to have been different expectations around the roles and responsibilities of the different sectors involved in the initiative, which is fairly typical for the early days of a new program and which for the most part seem to have been resolved over time. However, ongoing concerns about the availability of resources and the responsibilities of government were expressed by different stakeholders.

## **4.2.2 Awareness and capacity**

It was found that while some DFV services can offer temporary supported accommodation, they may not have a deep knowledge of tenancy matters, such as how to get someone's name removed from a lease, how to seek a termination at QCAT due to DFV, or how to take the steps to get someone de-listed from TICA and other tenant databases. Likewise, those working in Justice and around the Magistrates' Court may have a good understanding of the provisions of the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 and court processes relating to protection orders and ouster conditions, but only basic understanding of tenancy matters (under the Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008). Government staff noted that there is limited understanding in a range of sectors, including the courts, of the tenancy related matters associated with DFV.

DFV service providers were likened to GPs by one interviewee – they knew a lot of things but were not specialists in tenancy matters:

People go to GPs expecting, you know, a wonderful array of advice but GPs, you know, they have their various areas of specialisation depending on what the cohort of clients are. I think many people come to the DV sector, or even maybe any social service, and they're expecting people to know everything (Participant L)

The importance of building capacity in the DFV sector was acknowledged by participants, who noted that consistency of response across sectors and services is important, no matter where women present. Recognising also that due to fear, shame, trauma and cultural barriers, many support seekers may only appear once in the system, Participant L stated that sometimes the sector had only a very limited opportunity to provide meaningful and accurate advice. Referring people on to another service could result in them leaving the system altogether. Having some capacity and knowledge around tenancy matters was identified as assisting services to provide a higher level of support to clients and in a more efficient manner.

I think it's an area that probably needs more attention and more workers to be aware of what is available and the processes that these women can use to make one thing a little bit less stressful but also their rights as well in terms of their tenancies. (Participant B)

In summary, while DFV services had general knowledge, there was an identified lack of capacity to manage tenancy matters.

## **4.2.3 Understanding of tenancy law and processes**

Tenants Qld found in their consultations with the DFV sector a 'patchy' knowledge of tenancy law and associated processes, such as how to initiate QCAT applications. This was despite the fact that people who have experienced DFV and are clients of such services are highly likely to be affected by these processes and need support in negotiating them.

The consultation process run by Tenants Qld revealed that workers wanted something simple and practical that they could use with clients:

Staying on top of the details contained in the *Domestic and Family Violence Act* requires diligence in itself, never mind the *Tenancy Act* and all the other laws and legislation that holds the system together. (Participant L)

Tenants Qld identified that there was a need for the resource (the toolkit aimed at the sector) and that it needed to be quite orientated towards transmitting the basics of tenancy legislation and processes related to QCAT.

So, I saw it as just another way of value and another layer of education and knowledge base that feeds into the core business that we do. (Participant F)

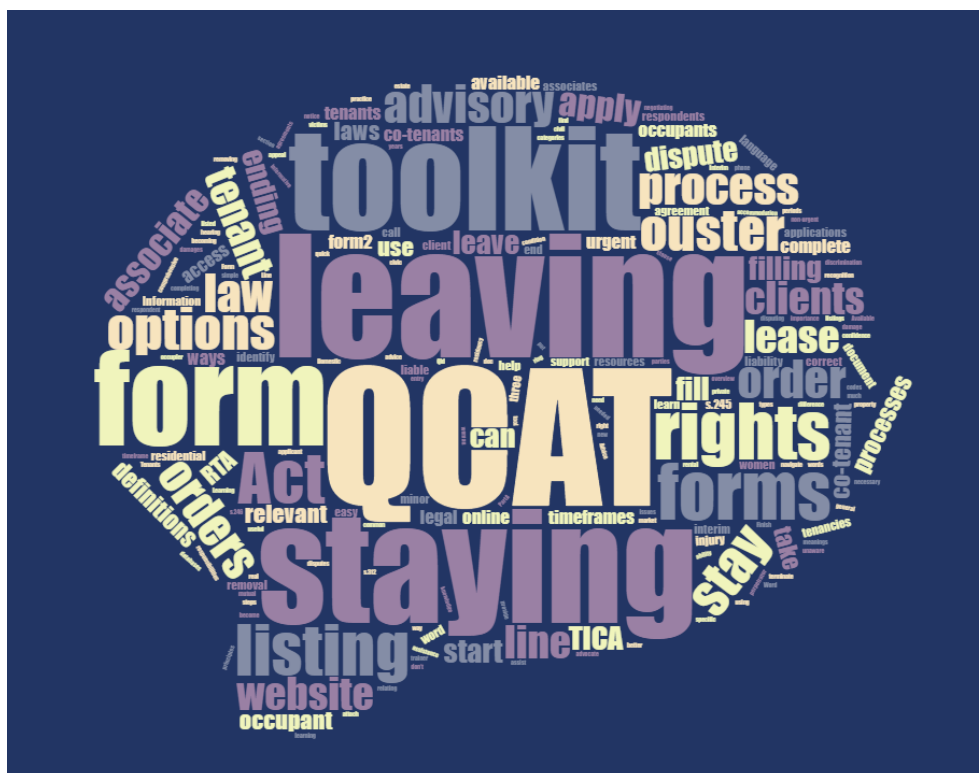
The development of the resources were therefore oriented towards building practical knowledge in the sector and including ready to use documents (such as form letters, QCAT forms) into the resource. The telephone Advisory Line was the other available resource which offered expert advice to sector staff.

#### 4.2.4 The training sessions

Generally, the feedback from these sessions was very positive.

The feedback forms issued to participants asked: ‘What were the three main learnings for you covered in the training session?’. This text was written into a word document (small non-descriptor words such as ‘the’ and ‘a’ etc. were omitted) then analysed using a Word Cloud generator. Figure 2 indicates the most commonly used keywords (the larger the word, the more it was used).

**Figure 2: Visual representation of responses to “The three main learnings for participants in the training sessions”**



Source: Authors, using a word cloud generator.

In particular, participants mentioned learning about:

- the QCAT application process, including how to fill in an application form.
- information on starting a tenancy, staying in a tenancy and leaving a tenancy helpful (repeating the schema that structures the toolkit).
- the Act, law and legislation, and the relevant sections, were also mentioned frequently.

The survey for service provider staff also included questions about the training sessions, (see Appendix D for a full report on the survey). Open text responses unsurprisingly echoed the responses collected by Tenants Qld on its feedback form, and included:

- “Understanding the DV provisions in tenancy law and processes for QCAT applications.”
- “Toolkit is an ongoing referral point for practitioners. The DV area is extremely complex so having a relevant and easy to use resource is perfect.”

When asked ‘on a scale of 0 to 10, how useful did you find the information sessions, toolkit, and telephone advice line in terms of adding to your capability and knowledge to assist your clients?’:

- the average score was 7.3
- no one gave a score of less than five.

For the next question asked, ‘On a scale of 0 to 10, how useful did you find the information sessions, toolkit, and telephone advice line in terms of adding to your understanding of tenancy law in relation to DFV?’, none of the ten respondents gave a score of less than five.

When asked ‘Thinking about the information sessions, toolkit, and telephone advice line, what impact has this had on your practice when responding to women affected by DFV related tenancy issues?’:

- 58.3% of the ten respondents answered that they felt significantly more confident and capable
- 16.7% felt slightly more confident and capable; and
- 25% reported no change to before.

Tenants Qld commented that sessions were designed to be straightforward and user-friendly:

I think it has raised capacity and the knowledge base. It's not too complex, what we're delivering. It's straightforward. It's easily enough understood and delivered in a way that's warm and to be receptive. (Participant D)

Participants who were interviewed were asked to reflect on the information sessions and resources. Service provider staff were positive about the sessions and said it added another ‘layer’ to their knowledge.

We found the training really informative and that was feedback received from everyone that attended. It was very engaging and the content was very well delivered, and I think the biggest bonus for that also was having someone facilitate the training that knew a lot about industry and the law. [As] participants, we were able to ask questions and get quality in-depth answers back and clear direction about where to go if we needed anything. (Participant B)

I think it's really simplified or given us somewhere clear to go to, to get those answers about that area of law in particular. (Participant F)

Staff reported feeling more confident about their abilities to initiate proceedings for clients, walk through those processes with clients, and seek extra advice from experts when required.

Post-training, Tenants Qld staff noted increased capacity:

If it's before training, no clue... but post-training, when we do that, a service provider will be on the phone saying, "We covered off on staying, section 245, 246, or leaving. We've done this. We're thinking this. We're thinking this section. Is that correct?" (Participant D)

In other words, service provider staff were managing tenancy issues themselves but consulting with Tenants Qld via the Advisory Line to double check if they were taking the right course of action.

The toolkit is also a very practical document, which flags limitation dates and provides hyperlinks to forms. This improves efficiency for workers working with clients:

Not having to sit with clients and have them wait with "Let me find the form", it's much more streamlined, "well I've got the form here, we can fill it out." There's a lot of content provided, however it's presented in an easy to follow fashion, making the efficiency of getting things in place a lot smoother. (Participant B)

Those persons who attended the information sessions were positive about the experience, mentioned that the sessions were informative, pitched right (for their particular context) and felt more confident afterwards.

## 4.2.5 The Telephone Advisory Line

Data provided by Tenants Qld indicates that the Advisory Line is being solidly utilised. Table 1 provides a summary of activities from when the Advisory Line opened in January 2018 to the end of March 2019. For further details on Advisory Line activity, see Appendix A.

**Table 1: Summary of Tenants Qld Advisory Line activity, January 2018–March 2019**

Total services assisted	Total services assisted by region	Total sessions*	Types of Inquiries	Sections of legislation that inquiries related to
37	Brisbane – 8 Brisbane and other region(s) – 6 Mid North – 8 Far North – 1 South East – 11 Central – 2 West – 1	73 (including approx. 8 recorded as referrals to Victim Assist, QCAT and DV Connect)	46 matters** Start – nil Stay – 10 Leave – 33 Other – 3	Start – nil Stay – sections 245/246 Leave – sections 310/312/321/322/323

Source: Based on CSNet Data, Aggregated Session Date and Time (23 Jan 2018 – 01 Apr 2019), provided by Tenants Qld, 1 April 2019. Service names have been anonymised at the request of Tenants Qld.

\*Note – ‘sessions’ refers to a single contact (e.g. a phone call). As several contacts may have been made on the same matter, the ‘sessions’ number is higher than the organisations assisted number.

\*\*Note – ‘matters’ refers to inquiries. Tenants Qld may have assisted the same organisation with more than one matter, which is why the ‘matters’ number is higher than the organisations assisted number.

Tenants Qld reported that there is a direct and positive correlation between where it has run information sessions with service providers around the toolkit and the areas where Advisory Line calls are coming from. They also described the Advisory Line service as a ‘help desk’ style service.

We offer a help desk service for the DFV sector workers in relation to how tenancy issues may affect their clients, essentially these issues are covered in the toolkit in which sector workers may have received training. The helpdesk service can offer reassurance to workers that they are on the right track with advice or case strategy or offer practical assistance regarding completing forms and documents. (Julie Bartlett, Tenants Qld).

By delivering advice to a service rather than an individual client, Tenants Qld’s intent is to quickly and directly help the client in situ, while assisting services build their own capacity and see it as supplementing their current activities.

One aspect of the service is that it cannot be provided immediately, as the advice must be checked with the Principal Solicitor. As the service is new and it takes time for a new worker to reach the level of competency required to give independent advice, Tenants Qld must follow certain risk management procedures and deliver advice to a certain standard. Once a worker has reached the level of competency, the advice can be delivered in real time. Given the length of the project and the desire to offer a help desk service to sector workers as soon as possible, Tenants Qld elected to run the service initially with advice being checked. The delay in advice receipt, however, was noted by one worker who commented: “Like it’s just that I’ve only got 10 minutes and if I’m making a phone call, I want it to be to the person that can answer the question in that phone call.” (Participant J). This slows the advice process down somewhat.

The availability of the Advisory Line worked in conjunction with the other resources to strengthen the capacity of service providers to directly assist clients.

I found it really useful. And knowing I guess – knowing there’s that option to contact and call directly as well. You know I guess [staff member’s name] took steps to develop that relationship so that I could do those things if we needed to. (Participant F)

Another NGO staff member used the toolkit, then the Advisory Line, for validating her approach.

As far as the toolkit goes, I’ve used it and I’ve found what... so, what I did... because I’m not a tenancy expert, but it’s handy to have the things at your fingertips. And when I followed it, I was like, ‘Okay, so I need this form and this is what I write in...’ and then I’d phone her up and I was right. So, I was like, ‘Okay, so that’s working.’ (Participant J)

One person felt that the advice line merely duplicated the Tenants Qld ‘hotline’ and Queensland Statewide Tenant Advice and Referral Service (QSTARS) and the money would have been ‘better spent on employing more QSTARS workers who could actually represent and assist clients at QCAT. However, they did value the toolkit.

The dedicated advice line for professionals has provided them with the confidence to assist clients and then ‘check back’ with Tenants Qld, sometimes to reassure themselves they are taking the correct steps. The service has been well utilised by DFV services with 73 ‘sessions’ (or contacts)

providing advice on 46 matters to 37 service providers in its period of operation from January 2018 - March 30, 2019. There was some consternation that the advice line may be ending in June 2019.

#### **4.2.6 Changes in practice**

Service providers were more able to provide clients with advice rather than in the first instance referring them to other services, such as the Queensland State-wide Tenant Advice and Referral Service (QSTARS). However, for complex matters they still referred.

While staff had come across situations before, they were better equipped after participating in the information sessions and using the toolkit to directly assist clients.

I've worked with clients within the Refuge who have had to flee their home into safety, often lengthy tenancies have been in place and they've since been listed on TICA... for damages, rental arrears due to the domestic violence. This then limits the options to be able to enter into the rental market and many women wait to get social housing. I think it's unknown that women can apply to the court and break their leases or have their name removed off TICA so that they can then move forward with their lives. I think it just wasn't wide known information and I personally was not aware as a worker. It wasn't until attending that training that we were made aware of what forms you can fill out and what kind of services are available. (Participant B)

Having access to QCAT forms had also changed practices and increased efficiency:

Not knowing this information, workers can spend upward of half an hour trying to find one form on QCAT or you're calling and waiting on line whereas I think the efficiency of the workers has increased because we know where to go, we know what to search, we know what code we need to put down and even empowering the women to know that there are those options available and this is how we can progress and this is what's going to happen sort a thing. (Participant B)

The availability of the resources cut out a 'step' for the client according to one staff member:

I mean you've always got to lean on people with knowledge, but it takes one of those referrals points out of the service experience. It is not uncommon for people seeking support to access multiple services and to have to share their story many times. Even those working in the sector can find navigating the service system from the inside, and knowing the language, can be difficult enough. For outsiders it must be incredibly daunting and confusing. Finding ways as a service system then to streamline support, and maybe even to work towards establishing co-located service centres would deliver better services to vulnerable people. (Participant L)

Others also mentioned they could decrease the 'stress' for the client by reducing the number of points they needed to go to for information and assistance.

In terms of practices in the Court area, there was little evidence of DFV and tenancy matters being heard conjointly in the Magistrates' Court (e.g. protection orders, and orders relating to the tenancy). A Court-based interviewee reported inconsistent practices. One magistrate was prepared to hear and make orders on both DFV and tenancy matters, while the other tended to refer tenancy matters to QCAT.

#### **4.2.7 Stronger links between the DFV sector, private rental market and social housing to create a more integrated support system**

Various services reported their chief executive officers sat on a variety of government advisory bodies, so links between the government and DFV services existed prior to the PRI. However, the PRI process itself brought new stakeholders together, and the toolkit and Advisory Line has increased interaction between local services and Tenants Qld. Government stakeholders noted that the Deloitte workshops were forums where different sectors could hear from each other and come to understand each other's issues, such as those associated with landlord insurance. Where interactions had occurred at a policy level, one NGO reported that it had been very productive for them to hear from the REIQ representative and try to resolve the issue together. There was some disappointment that these interactions had not led to a bolder strategy that also looked to other states' initiatives.

At the local level, there are inter-agencies in operation. There was reportedly a high level of integration reported in the Southport area in particular, where they have had an integrated service provision model for over twenty years.

Intersectoral linkages between service providers and real estate agents were not as strong. Agents that were interviewed had no relationships with local service providers such as refuges and saw their role as simply one of passing on information or making a basic referral. Some real estate agents had instituted their own responses to DFV among their tenant base, such as providing DFV contact numbers to tenants.

The NGO sector is involved with DCSYW and the Department of Housing and Public Works beyond this specific initiative. The government has a multiagency approach across human services departments. In that way, and through the process of the PRI, the foundations are in place for future intersectoral collaboration to develop policy further.

#### **4.2.8 Suggested improvements in practice – DFV sector**

Asked about their recommendations for changes in policies and services to achieve better housing outcomes for victims, DFV service providers suggested:

- consistency in service across the state, so clients receive the same response from DFV services across Queensland, regardless of location
- more proactive approaches to private sector bodies, including REIQ and real estate agents' networks
- recognition in the DFV sector that tenancy is a critical issue, as well as court procedures related to protection orders
- provide more education to real estate agents about the impact of DFV, including stigma
- let agents know there are supports available to tenants (and prospective tenants) who may have suffered DFV. Support services can manage any issues
- DFV services could do more practical support work including, for example, outreach and assistance with moving and setting up utilities. There is a Federally-funded program

currently being trialled in Queensland, and if this was rolled out across services it would benefit clients

- there should be no implicit or specific pressure on services to close clients' files after a set period. Due to the entrenched cycle of abuse that women experience, some clients require longer support periods and it is not feasible to end support after six months
- there needs to be a balance between empowerment and intensive support in service provision. Support designed to empower will not work for all clients in all circumstances
- service provision in DFV should be holistic and multi-sectoral, including DFV, family law, child protection, therapy and court support.

Others suggested, in relation to the DFV services sector:

- there be a single point of referral, using one phone number, so agents can ring and refer DFV clients (there is such a service, DV Connect, but agents were seemingly unaware of this)
- some services could deal with change better, take new approaches or look at things differently. For example, some services need to recognise the barriers that women are experiencing and be more solutions-focused; some services do not support clients to gain tenancies during their 12-week support period, but instead provide unhelpful reminders of time limits to clients in lieu of support
- holistic case management in DFV services, including assisting clients with long-term accommodation
- DFV services should have much more proactive relationships with their local housing providers, such as RentConnect, Department of Housing, and local community housing providers, and nurture those relationships
- due to a spike in demand, DFV services need more resources and should be expanded, because they are currently forced to triage to the most severe cases currently.

## **4.3 Increased departmental capacity**

The other enhancement of capacity has been for the Queensland Government as a result of the process. DCSYW staff were able to get more insight into the housing service system and this helped them to better 'talk the language' of the sector.

### **4.3.1 Key facilitators and barriers**

#### **Facilitators**

The reported facilitators are summarised below:

- more capacity, knowledge, and efficiency among service providers
- easy to read and easy to access information for real estate agents



- more awareness among real estate agents of how to negotiate outcomes without, for example, having to go to the Tribunal – mutual termination, giving permission for a co-tenant to have their name removed from the lease
- RentConnect as a referral point, DFV services as referral points
- confidence to refer tenants to external services.

## Barriers

The key barriers are summarised below:

- DFV services are developing capacity around tenancy issues and QCAT processes
- shelters are at capacity
- bottlenecks on exit points
- private rental housing is expensive
- real estate is a business and it is not agents' role to act as a social service
- lack of professional development modules on DFV and other such issues for real estate property managers
- risk averse landlords may not choose prospective tenants they perceive as posing a risk or as less reliable.

## 4.4 Other issues

A number of other issues came up that were not otherwise categorised and only tangentially linked to the PRI. However, they have been included here because they were identified as important by the interviewees and they were relevant to the whole of government approach to DFV.

Participants spoke about an increased demand for housing services and the worry that demand was much higher than supply. Participants believed DFV was increasing and becoming a serious issue, which resulted in a “bottleneck in crisis accommodation, with so many women accessing and seeking assistance” (Participant B).

Some participants felt that changes to the Migration Act would relieve a lot of the pressure on crisis accommodation services. It is beyond the scope of this study to know what any changes to the Migration Act could achieve; however, the Migration Act and eligibility restrictions are important contextual factors in the demands on the system and its capacity to respond to women in crisis.

Family law and location orders were mentioned as restricting women's movement towards cheaper rental markets. This is because where a shared parenting order is in place, there are limitations on how far away the female parent can locate herself in order to facilitate shared parenting. For women on low incomes, for example Centrelink, this can create problems if the local area has an expensive rental market.

It was clear that more assistance was needed to maximise housing options. The need for subsidies to allow women to stay in the home, or to leave, was mentioned. Brokerage funding for up to 12 months to cover the rental shortfall when the perpetrator has left or when an ouster order was

obtained was suggested as being useful. One of the key reasons why an ouster order may not be sought is because the victim cannot afford the housing costs after the perpetrator has left and stopped paying rent.

Monitoring and regulation of new entrants (such as charity-based and privately funded individuals and organisations providing DFV services) was raised as an issue in the context of ensuring consistency for clients approaching DFV services. While the government has oversight of publicly-funded services, various philanthropic or faith-based organisations provide support and services to DFV victims. It is not clear how they are monitored or if a regulatory regime is needed (such as licencing).

Landlord's insurance continues to determine what actions are taken in relation to terminations, and also possibly increases TICA listings. The terms of insurance policies may require proof relating to a claim of action being taken such as a termination order granted by QCAT. This may limit options available to real estate agents and tenants. Precise information on the terms of such policies was somewhat lacking and more investigation of this issue needs to occur.

During the interview with the Property Chapter of REIQ they expressed that they were underutilised as a resource. They believed they could be beneficial to the government as an expert group. A number of members wanted to make a difference, but felt they felt their expertise was untapped.

## **4.5 Implementation of program**

The PRI has been implemented as intended. Its aims have been to a large extent fulfilled. The PRI activities associated with DFV service providers have been broader in scope than those aimed at the real estate industry. More funding was made available for resources to the DFV sector than for the real estate sector. This is evidence in the reach of the different resources – Tenants Qld has been funded to run information sessions throughout Queensland, whereas Q Shelter was tasked with developing a resource, without much planning on how this would be disseminated to the sector.

## 5 Learnings, strengths, strategies and opportunities for improvements

This section summarises the insights and suggestions from stakeholders across sectors on the initiative, and implications for changes from these suggestions across the sectors.

Options for changes in the real estate industry:

- Within continuing professional development, and within courses for property management, there could be modules included that focus on DFV issues as they relate to tenants and property management. Q Shelter is currently working with REIQ to integrate this content into training workshops and lessons for private real estate property managers.
- Occupational health and safety best practices for staff could be better promoted in the industry as approaches are inconsistent.
- Wider distribution of the resource aimed at the real estate industry is occurring but needs to be repeated at regular intervals.
- The government could use the annual registration process as an opportunity to provide information to the real estate industry, for example about the existence of services such as DV Connect.

Options for changes in policy and service provision:

- Continue to develop capacity and knowledge around tenancy issues to better assist clients; consideration of how to allow Tenants Qld to continue to offer regular information sessions and updating of the toolkit for the DFV services sector.
- Development of strategies around DFV that review structural issues including:
  - lack of exit points due to inadequate social housing, and unaffordable private rental options (in some areas)
  - consideration of a rental subsidy model similar to Start Safely – Rent Choice in NSW
  - a strategy to maintain the benefits of the Private Rental Initiative and associated resources.
- Changes to the court management of tenancy and protection order matters so they are heard together in the Magistrates' Court.
- Specific training on tenancy matters for magistrates and how to hear matters conjointly.

## 6 Conclusion

The evaluators found that to a great extent the short- and medium-term outcomes of the PRI had been achieved:

- Increased resourcing and support available to the private rental and DFV sectors to respond to DFV related tenancy matters (capacity) had been achieved. This was to a greater extent in the DFV sector, due to the scope of the initiative in this sector being broader, and more substantial funding being available.
- There was evidence of increased knowledge and understanding of DFV related tenancy matters (capability) among DFV services staff and real estate agents that had involvement in the PRI.

The medium-term outcomes had also been achieved.

- The DFV and private rental sector were accessing and applying new and existing resources. In particular, the DFV sector was making use of the written resource and Advisory Line as evidenced by Tenants Qld. data on contacts. On the other hand, only real estate sector staff who had been directly involved in the PRI through the instigation period or as pilot sites were found to have knowledge of the resources linked to the PRI. While the resource is now available online, take-up was lower, due to limited funding for dissemination.
- There was evidence that DFV and private rental staff respond more effectively to women experiencing DFV in their tenancies as a result of their involvement with the PRI. This came out in the survey and interviews with both DFV service provider staff and real estate agents.

Long-term outcomes are less certain and beyond the scope of this study. A longer-term study involving women escaping DFV would need to be undertaken to ascertain whether the following aims have been achieved:

- increased safety for women experiencing DFV
- increased housing stability for women experiencing DFV
- stronger links between the DFV sector, private rental market and social housing to create a more integrated system.

In general, we found that the initiatives have been implemented as intended. Q Shelter successfully collaborated with REIQ and 'champion' agents to create the 'Domestic and Family Violence – Strengthening the Real Estate Response – a toolkit to guide practice' for the real estate sector. The publication (both the online version and hard copy format) is available but has not been disseminated widely. The provision of specific resources for distribution would increase its reach as would embedding it within training programs.

Tenants Qld produced the 'Tenancy law toolkit for domestic and family violence service providers' aimed at DFV service providers. This has been distributed in tandem with information sessions in different locations in Queensland. In addition, the specialist Advisory Line operated by Tenants Qld has assisted 37 services to date. It was found that those who had interacted with the resources

reported that capacity and knowledge about DFV, understanding of tenancy law, processes, and referrals as well as general levels of confidence had increased.

In the view of stakeholders, both in the DFV service provider sector and in the real estate industry, having access to better information gave staff more confidence to offer clients advice, more efficiently, potentially leading to better outcomes. This is in line with the anticipated longer-term outcomes of the program. Future data collection and evaluation research could assess if these outcomes for clients have been realised.

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# Appendix A Tenants Qld advice line - Organisational Advice, January 2018–March 2019

Service Provider and category	REGION	Sessions	Nature of enquiry	Sections of the legislation (Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008)
Service 1	South East	1	STAY	s 245
Service 2	Brisbane	6	LEAVE	s 312/321/323
Service 3	South East	1	LEAVE	s 312/321/323
		1	STAY	s 245
Service 4	Brisbane/South East	1	OTHER - TICA listing	s 461
		1	LEAVE	s 321
Service 5	Brisbane and state-wide	2	LEAVE	s 321
Service 6	South East and state-wide	1	LEAVE	s 312/321
Service 7	West	1	LEAVE	s 321
Service 8	South East	3	LEAVE	s 310/312/321/323
Service 9	Brisbane and South East	2	LEAVE	s 312/321/323
Service 10	Brisbane and South East	2	LEAVE	s 321
Service 11	South East	5	LEAVE	s 310/312
		1	STAY	
Service 12	Brisbane	1	LEAVE	s 245
Service 13	Brisbane	1	LEAVE	s 312/321
Service 14	South East	4	LEAVE	s 310/312/321
		1	OTHER – utilities	s 169
Service 15	Brisbane and other regions	1	STAY	s 245 w Ouster Order
Service 16	Brisbane	1	LEAVE	s 312/321/322/323
Service 17	Brisbane	1	LEAVE	s 312/321/322/323
Service 18	Mid North	2	LEAVE	s 312/321/322/323
Service 19	South East	5	LEAVE	s 312/321/322/323
Service 20	South East	3	LEAVE	s 312/321/322/323

Service Provider and category	REGION	Sessions	Nature of enquiry	Sections of the legislation (Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008)
Service 21	Brisbane and state-wide	3	LEAVE	s 312/321/322/323
Service 22	South East	2	OTHER - Fixtures/fittings	S 188
Service 23	Brisbane	2	LEAVE	s 312/321/322/323
Service 24	South East	3	STAY	s 245
	Brisbane		LEAVE	s 321
	Mid North		LEAVE	s 310/312
Service 25	Mid North	2	LEAVE	s 310
			LEAVE	s 321
Service 26	Mid North	1	STAY	s 245
Service 27	Mid North	1	STAY	s 245
Service 28	South East	1	LEAVE	s 312/321
Service 29	Mid North	1	LEAVE	s 310
Service 30	Mid North	1	STAY	s 245
Service 31	Central	1	LEAVE	s 310
Service 32	South East	1	LEAVE	s 321
Service 33	Mid North	1	LEAVE	s 312
Service 34	South East	1	LEAVE	s 310
Service 35	Far north	2	LEAVE	s 310
			LEAVE	
Service 36	Central	2	STAY	s 245
			STAY	
Service 37	Brisbane	1	LEAVE	s 310



Service Provider and category	REGION	Sessions	Nature of enquiry	Sections of the legislation (Residential Tenancies and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008)
Total services assisted – 37	<b>Total services assisted by region:</b>			
	Brisbane – 8			<b>Start – nil</b>
	Brisbane and other region(s) – 6	<b>Total sessions* – 73 (including approx. 8 recorded as referrals to Victim Assist, QCAT and DV Connect)</b>	<b>Types of Inquiries:</b>	<b>Stay – sections 245/246</b>
	Mid North – 8		<b>Start – nil</b>	<b>Leave – sections 310/312/321/322/323</b>
	Far North – 1		<b>Stay – 10</b>	
	South East – 11		<b>Leave – 33</b>	
	Central – 2		<b>Other – 3</b>	
	West – 1		<b>Total = 46 matters**</b>	
<b>TOTAL SERVICES ASSISTED – 37</b>				

Source: Based on CSNet Data, Aggregated Session Date and Time (23 Jan 2018 – 01 Apr 2019), provided by Tenants Qld, 1 April 2019. Service names have been anonymised at the request of Tenants Qld.

\*Note – ‘sessions’ refers to a single contact (e.g. a phone call). As several contacts may have been made on the same matter, the ‘sessions’ number is higher than the organisations assisted number.

\*\*Note – ‘matters’ refers to inquiries. Tenants Qld may have assisted the same organisation with more than one matter, which is why the ‘matters’ number is higher than the organisations assisted number.

# Appendix B Interview/Focus Group guide

## Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes - Private Rental Initiative evaluation

### Focus group/interview schedule – stakeholders – real estate agents

*Introduce yourself, outline the purpose of the evaluation and pass around the consent forms for signing*

#### **To all stakeholders:**

#### **Who they are and their involvement**

1. Introductions – can you tell us who you are and where you work, and what your role involves
2. What process that led to the initiative? What has your involvement been?

#### **Quality and usefulness of resources – for real estate agents**

3. Can you comment on the usefulness and design of the key resources:
  - a. Real estate agents: The 'Domestic and Family Violence - Strengthening the real estate response - a toolkit to guide practice'
  - b. The information sessions run by Q Shelter?
4. How useful do you think the Q Shelter toolkit is in terms of adding to **understanding of tenancy law** among real estate agents?
5. Do you think the toolkit has had an impact **on the everyday practices of real estate agents?**

#### **PRI – effectiveness in meeting its aims – capacity and knowledge**

6. Overall, do you think the Q Shelter toolkit has improved the **capacity of** real estate agents to respond to women affected by DFV related tenancy issues?

*Prompt: Can you expand on that? Why/why not?*

### **PRI – effectiveness in meeting its aims – outcomes for women**

7. Do you think the toolkit has had an impact **on outcomes for women who are:**
  - a. Seeking private rental
  - b. **Are in private rental but experiencing problems (rent arrears, damage to property, etc)?**
8. **What other factors may be affecting outcomes?**

### **PRI – effectiveness in meeting its aims - integration**

9. Has there been any improvement in relationships between real estate agencies and service providers at the:
  - a. State level
  - b. local level?

***Prompt – what improvements/how are these facilitated?***

### **Suggested improvements**

10. How could the real estate industry improve its practices when it comes to women who have experienced DFV seeking private rental?
11. Do you have any views on how the domestic and family violence service providers could improve their practices when it comes to women who have experienced DFV seeking private rental?
12. What are the key **barriers and enablers** to responding effectively to women affected by DFV-related tenancy issues?
13. What more could be done?
14. Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

# Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes - Private Rental Initiative evaluation

## Focus group/interview schedule – stakeholders – Domestic and family violence services

### Who they are and their involvement

1. Introductions – can you tell us who you are and where you work, and what your role involves
2. What process that led to the initiative? What has your involvement been?

### Quality and usefulness of resources – for domestic and family violence services

3. Can you comment on the usefulness and design of the key resources:
  - a. The Tenancy law toolkit for domestic and family violence service providers in Queensland
  - b. The information sessions run by Tenants Qld
  - c. The Tenants Qld advice line?
4. How useful do you think these resources are in terms of adding to **understanding of tenancy law** for domestic and family services?
5. Do you think the TQ resources have had an impact **on the everyday practices of DFV service providers**?

### PRI – effectiveness in meeting its aims – capacity and knowledge

6. Overall, do you think the TQ resources has improved the **capacity of domestic and family violence** service providers to respond to women affected by DFV related tenancy issues?

*Prompt: Can you expand on that? Why/why not?*

### PRI – effectiveness in meeting its aims – outcomes for women

7. Do you think the TQ resources have had an impact on outcomes for women who are:
  - a. Seeking private rental
  - b. Are in private rental but experiencing problems (rent arrears, damage to property, etc)?
8. What other factors may be affecting outcomes?

### **PRI – effectiveness in meeting its aims - integration**

9. Has there been any improvement in relationships and/or integration between DFV services, social housing providers and real estate agencies at the:
- c. State level
  - d. local level?

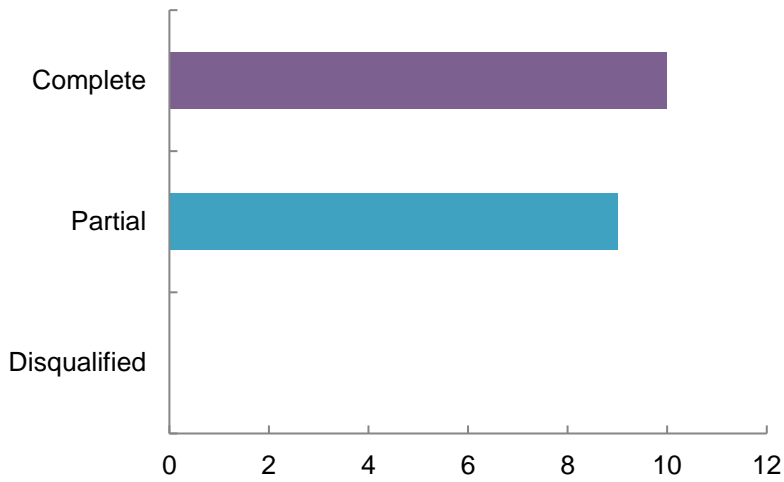
***Prompt – what improvements/how are these facilitated?***

### **Suggested improvements**

10. How could domestic and family violence services improve its practices when it comes to women who have experienced DFV seeking private rental?
11. Do you have any views on how the real estate industry could improve its practices when it comes to women who have experienced DFV seeking private rental?
12. What are the key **barriers and enablers** to responding effectively to women affected by DFV-related tenancy issues?
13. What more could be done?
14. Is there anything else you would like to discuss?

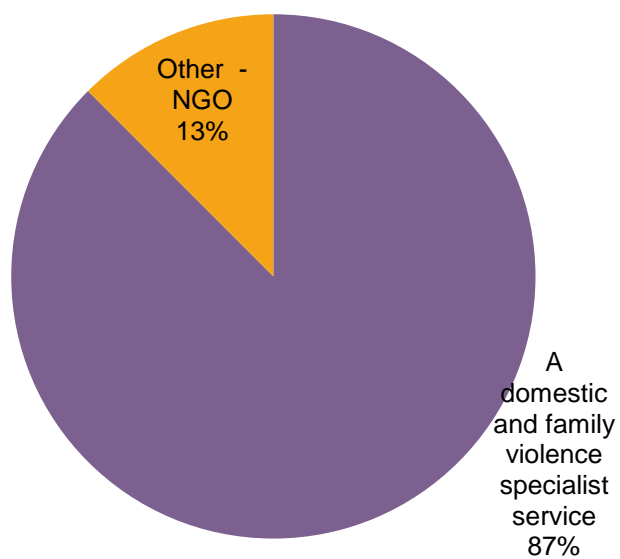
# Appendix C Survey of service providers - report

## 0. Response Statistics



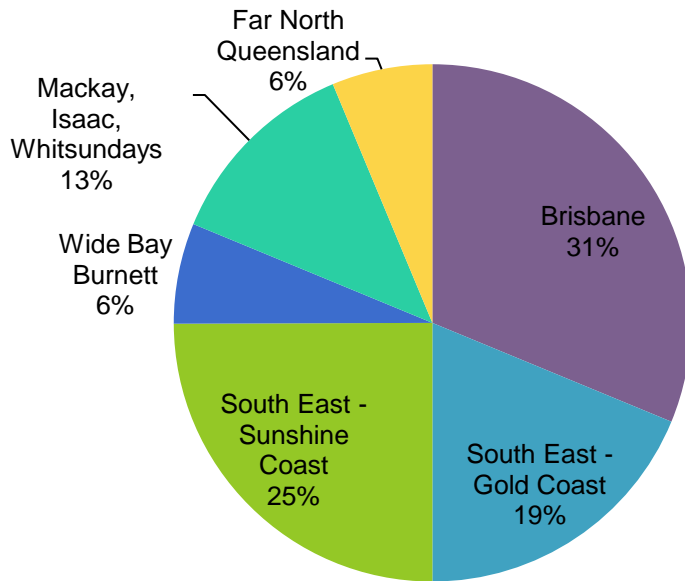
	Count	Percent
Complete	10	52.6
Partial	9	47.4
Disqualified	0	0
Totals	19	100

1. What sort of service do you work for?



Value	Percent	Count
A domestic and family violence specialist service	87.5%	14
Other - NGO	12.5%	2
	Totals	16

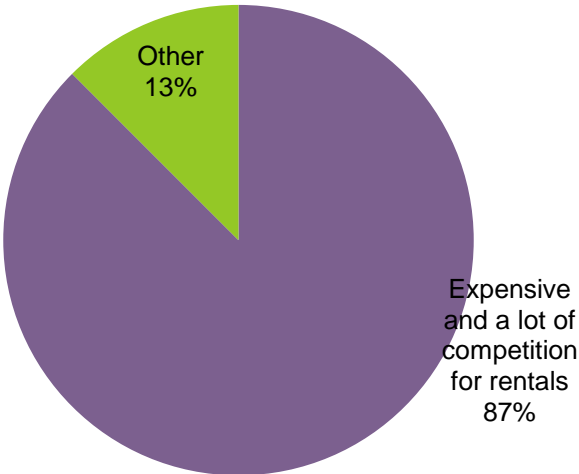
2. Where is your service located?



Value	Percent	Count
Brisbane	31.3%	5
South East - Gold Coast	18.8%	3
South East - Sunshine Coast	25.0%	4
Wide Bay Burnett	6.3%	1
Mackay, Isaac, Whitsundays	12.5%	2
Far North Queensland	6.3%	1
	Totals	16

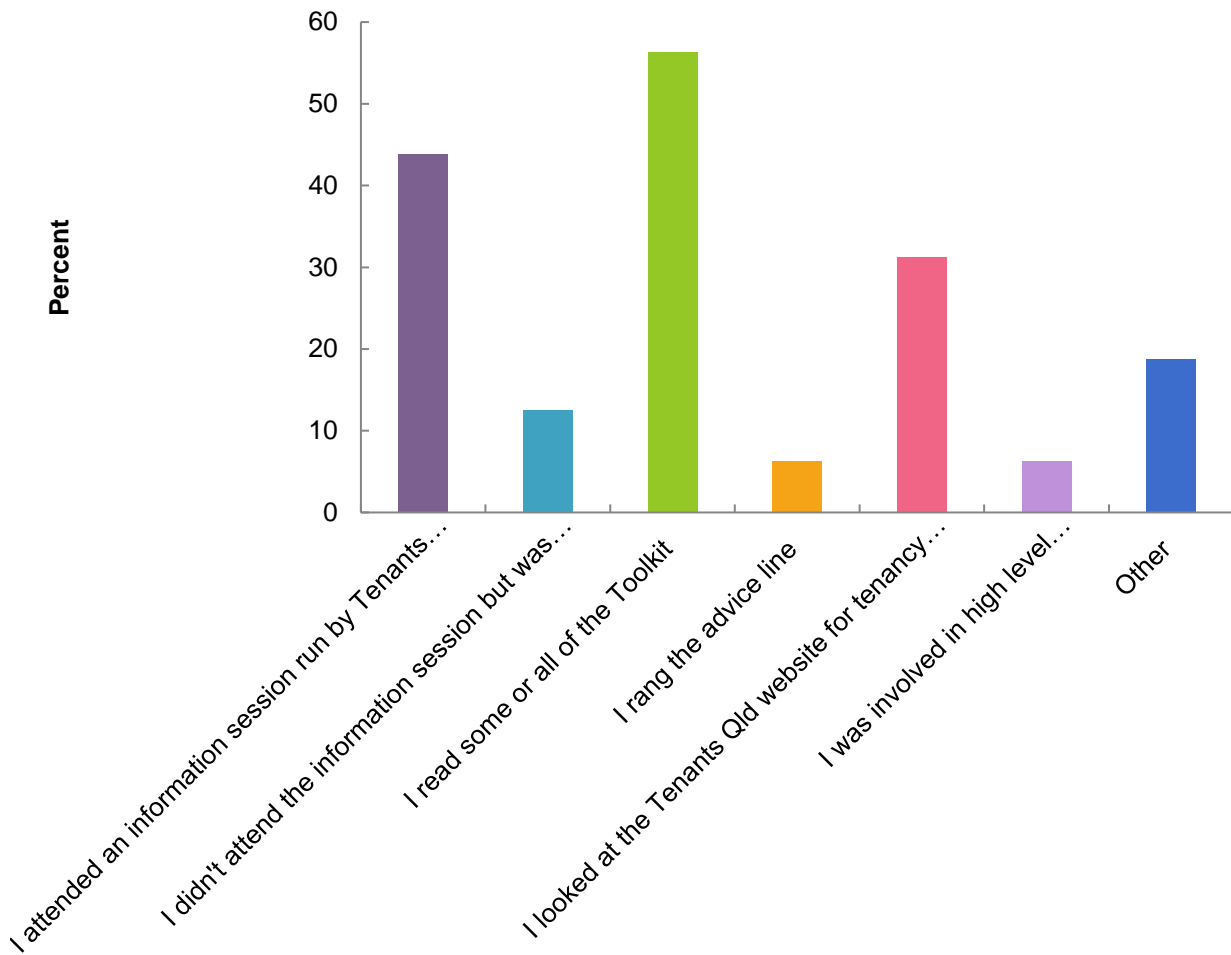


3. How would you describe the local private rental market?



Value	Percent	Count
Expensive and a lot of competition for rentals	87.5%	14
Other	12.5%	2
	Totals	16

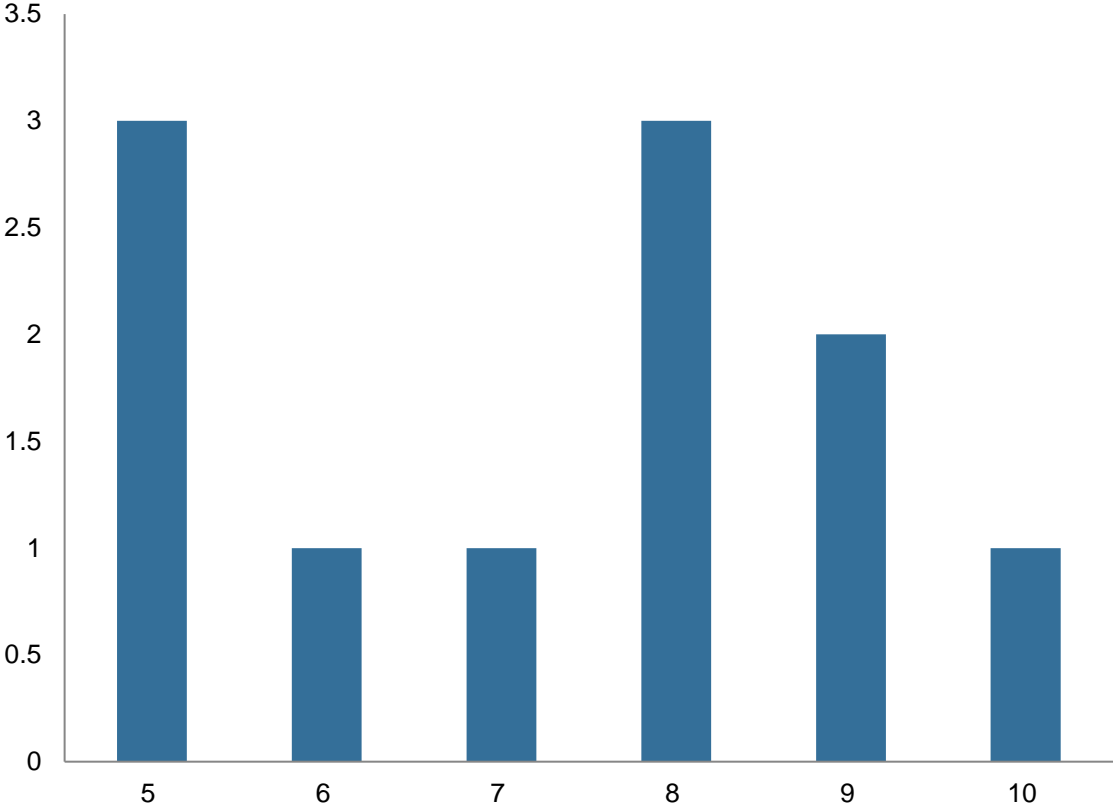
4. The Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes - Private Rental Initiative involved Tenants Queensland running information sessions, providing a tenancy law toolkit for domestic and family violence service providers in Queensland (hereafter the toolkit) and a telephone advice line for DFV service provider workers. What has your involvement/use been? (choose all that apply).



Value	Percent	Count
I attended an information session run by Tenants Qld	43.8%	7
I didn't attend the information session but was updated by a colleague/my supervisor	12.5%	2
I read some or all of the Toolkit	56.3%	9

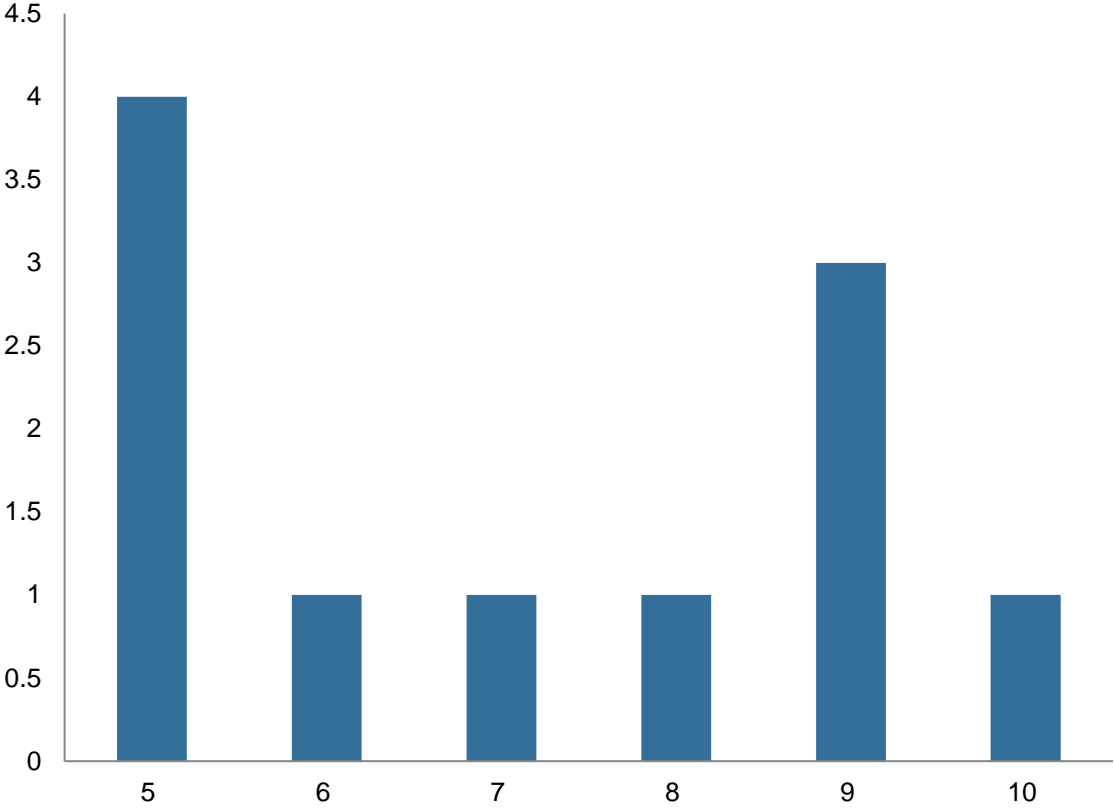
I rang the advice line	6.3%	1
I looked at the Tenants Qld website for tenancy advice	31.3%	5
I was involved in high level consultations/commented on drafts of the toolkit	6.3%	1
Other	18.8%	3

5. On a scale of 0 to 10, how useful did you find the information sessions, toolkit, and telephone advice line in terms of adding to your capability and knowledge to assist your clients?



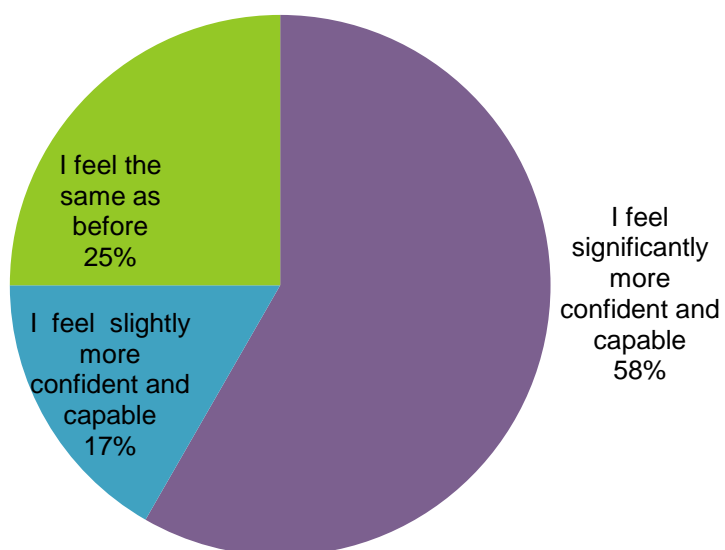
NOTE: Scores 0-4 not represented on chart (zero scores)

6. On a scale of 0 to 10, how useful did you find the information sessions, toolkit, and telephone advice line in terms of adding to your understanding of tenancy law in relation to DFV?



NOTE: Scores 0-4 not represented on chart (zero scores)

7. Thinking about the information sessions toolkit, and telephone advice line, what impact has this had on your practice when responding to women affected by DFV related tenancy issues?



Value	Percent	Count
I feel significantly more confident and capable	58.3%	7
I feel slightly more confident and capable	16.7%	2
I feel the same as before	25.0%	3
	Totals	12

8. What was a key learning for you?

- Understanding the DV provisions in the tenancy law and processes for QCAT applications.
- Guidance around maintaining tenancy for victims regardless of if they had been on the lease or not. Toolkit is an ongoing referral point for practitioners. The DV area is extremely complex so having a relevant and easy to use resource is perfect.
- different types of tenants; ability to waive lease under DFV circumstances.
- knowing the legislation and how to apply at QCAT
- Direct links with Residential Tenancy Act provisions to confidently pursue outcomes
- That the toolkit and telephone advice line existed, and that there are new housing support options for women.
- intersection with tenancy law and DFV
- there has been some improvement but unfortunately, the provisions are still a long way from adequately addressing the issue of domestic violence - we still see bias against victims

9. What improvements could be made?

It would be helpful if the worker answering the phone line could answer questions straight away rather than having to call back with answers. There could be some collaboration with the DV duty lawyer at QCAT (employed by LawRight) for representation for client matters.

not sure

Consult with DV Services, Peak Bodies, and Networks for future publications.

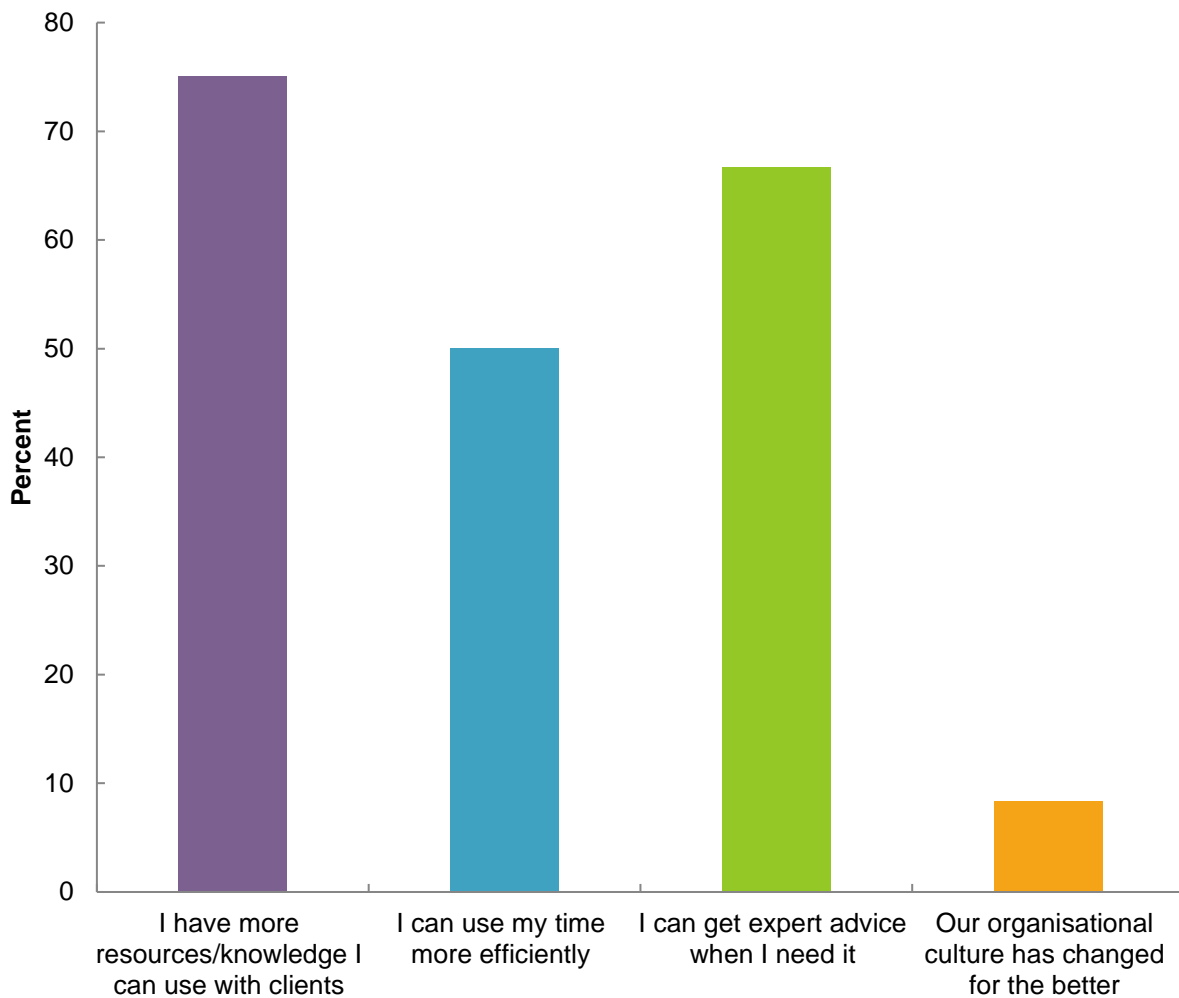
More awareness of the support / resource available for people

Perhaps community sessions or responses from "client" feedback rather than just "worker" feedback.

Less of a wait time to contact the advice line and speak to someone

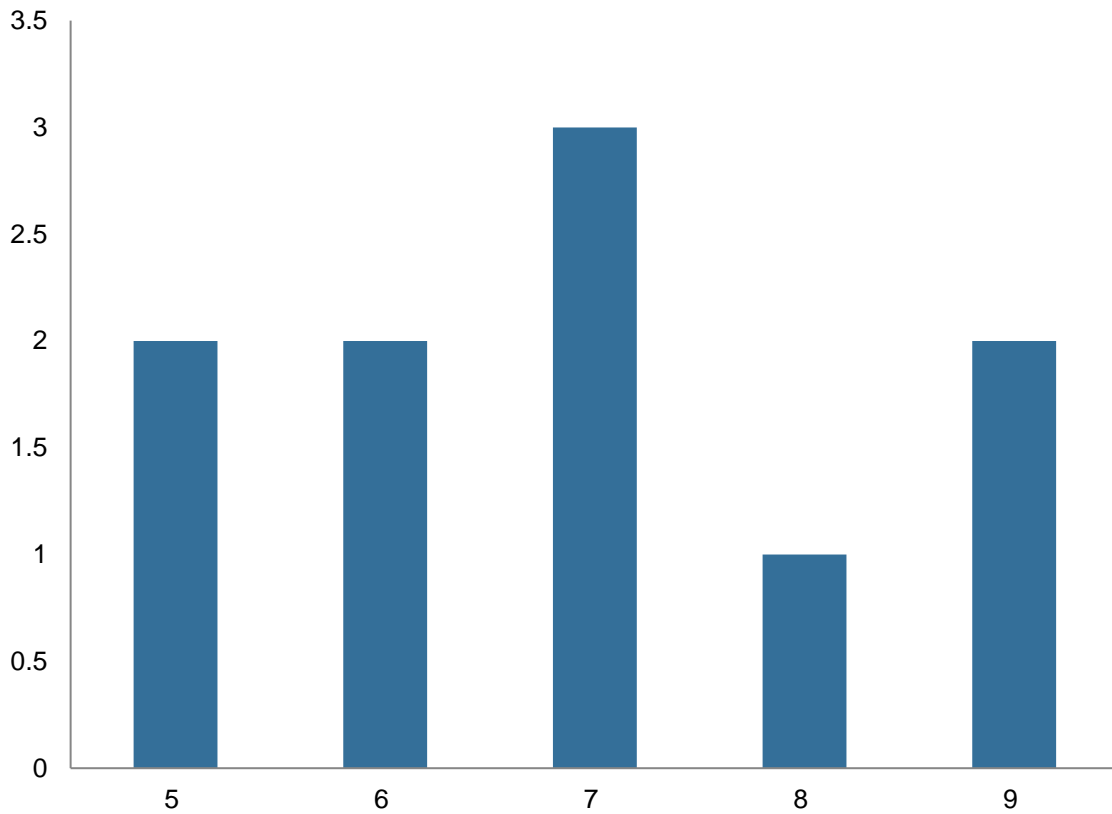


10. Thinking about the Private Rental Initiative resources provided by Tenants Qld, which of the following statements are true? (choose all that apply)



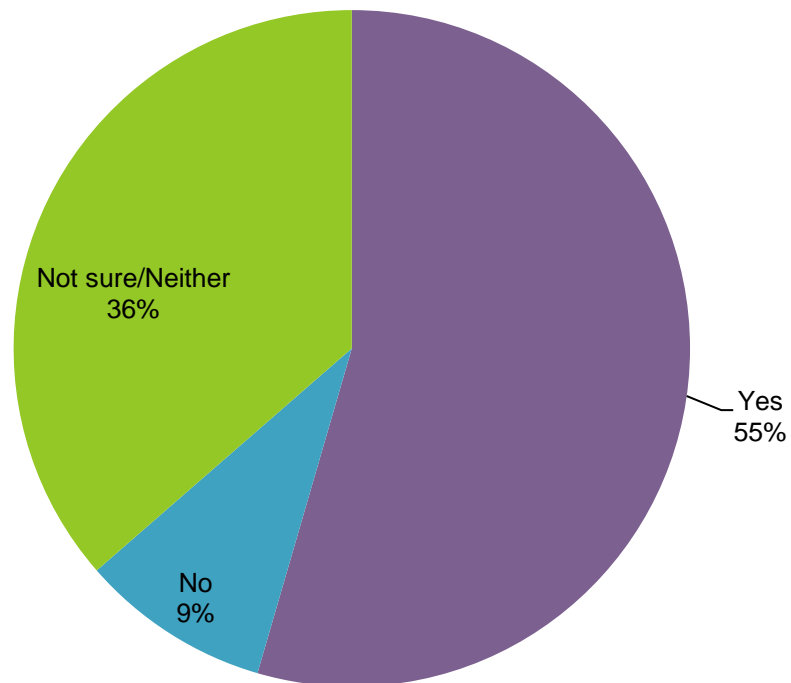
Value	Percent	Count
I have more resources/knowledge I can use with clients	75.0%	9
I can use my time more efficiently	50.0%	6
I can get expert advice when I need it	66.7%	8
Our organisational culture has changed for the better	8.3%	1

11. On a scale of 0 to 10, due to the additional resources and supports available through the Private Rental Initiative, rate its impact on the effectiveness and efficiency of your work.



NOTE: Scores 0-4 not represented on chart (zero scores)

12. Overall, do you think the Private Rental Initiative has improved the capacity of the DFV sector to respond to women affected by DFV related tenancy issues?

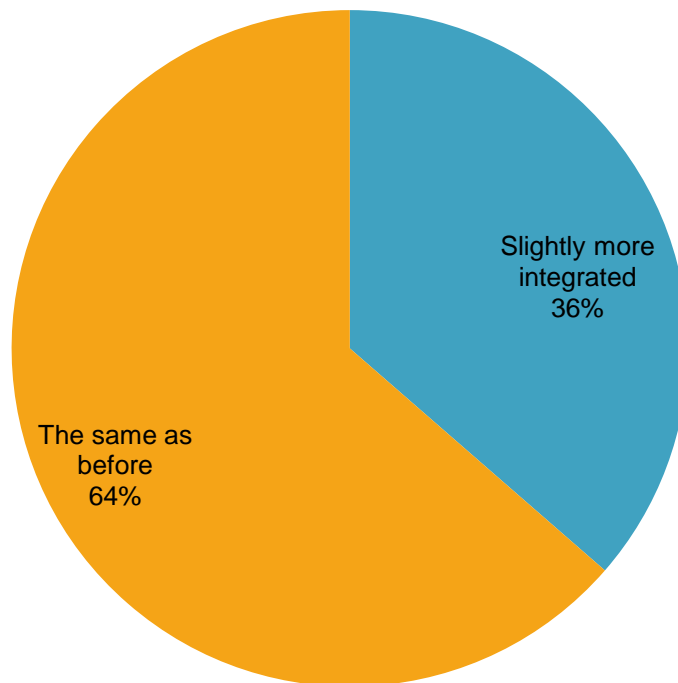


Value	Percent	Count
Yes	54.5%	6
No	9.1%	1
Not sure/Neither	36.4%	4
	Totals	11

13. Please explain why you gave this answer?

- [A landlord] always will favour non-DV clients for a tenancy
- Tenancy issues may not be the highest priority when someone is escaping DV, but if not addressed appropriately can have negative consequences for future housing / debts. The DV toolkit has upskilled the sector to remain aware and responsive to these issues.
- A case within our program has used the toolkit to maintain and re-establish tenancy for a woman in the [...] area through our program. Conversations around DFV and those in the private market have changed to include this information. Organisational practice has been informed. Also, movement away from immediate referral to refuge has occurred as practitioners now are more informed as to how to maintain tenancy.
- it confirmed existing knowledge on Qld Tenancy and provided additional ones. Also knowing there is support for clients on this topic.
- it has given our service more knowledge of legislation and guidelines around the private rental market. Some of our clients choose to rent privately and this will enable us to assist them to find properties and to stay in tenancies
- Maybe. I've only been exposed to the DV Toolkit and whilst this is a valuable tool, it is only one tool. Stabilising tenancies for DFV victims is critical in all case management planning. I would need to know more about other parts of the Private Rental Initiative to give a more informed answer as to whether it has improved the capacity of our sector.
- Homelessness or risk of homelessness for women experiencing DFV risk, and worker 'incapacity' to provide 'options' places both workers and clients in high stress and anxiety, and women and children at safety risk. It is fantastic to have alternative supported accommodation solutions.
- understanding legal framework and rights is very important at this time
- I have yet to see a response that is completely effective

14. Has this initiative strengthened the integration of the real estate industry, the DFV service provider sector, and social housing in your local area?



Value	Percent	Count
Slightly more integrated	36.4%	4
The same as before	63.6%	7
	Totals	11

15. Can you explain why you gave this answer?

hard to measure integration? lots of services working in silo -

I wasn't aware that liaising with housing services or real estate industry was part of the initiative.

No organisationally guided direct conversations with private real estate providers has occurred (in regards to this information). Discussions around DFV only occur on an ad hoc basis.

Not sure if integrated is the right word but I believe that real estate agents have more understanding about DV and able to respond for better outcomes for our clients.

real estate still make judgements if the woman discloses about DFV. We suggest the client does not share such information as it is unnecessary.

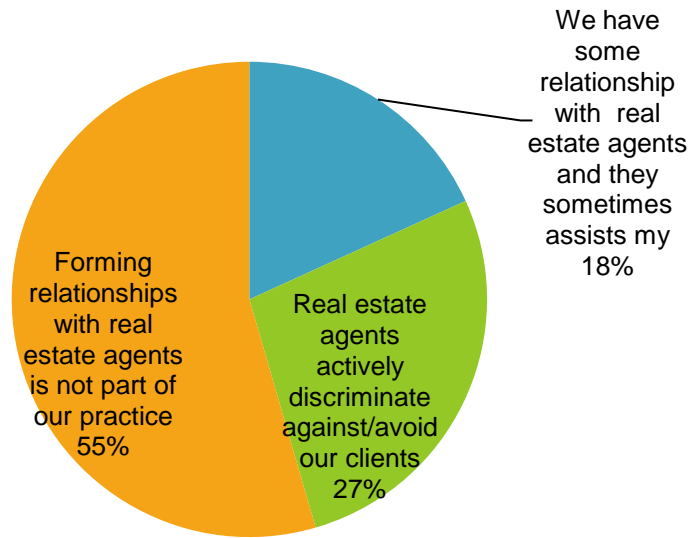
I haven't noticed anything significantly different. Deliberate and ongoing partnership building with key stakeholders here would be required to make a meaningful difference here. I'm thinking the Residential Unit Manager Networks of Management Right Industry leaders would be a good start. Many of these business owners have no background in dealing with difficult social problems and yet have immense power when making decisions about people's tenancies who are experiencing these challenges.

We have had 4 recent situations where we needed to support women through Real Estate communications to both leave tenancies and find new tenancies. Our consultation and communications with the Real Estate agencies was seemingly more informed, supportive and collaborative with the RE's understanding the risk and being willing to work together with our agency to support good outcomes.

Private renters are resistant to engaging with vulnerable people generally.

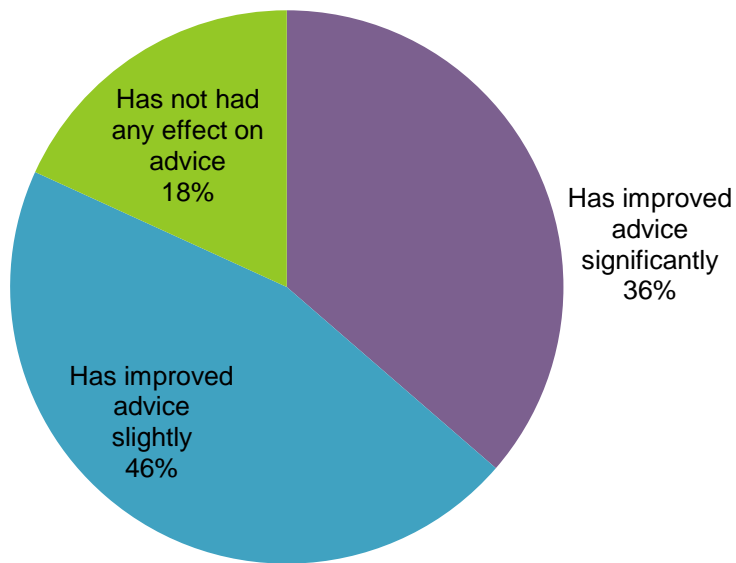
Clearer guidelines that are comprehensively set out - however, our region still has issues when trying to assist women and children of disadvantage.

16. How would you describe your current relationship with local real estate agents?



Value	Percent	Count
We have some relationship with real estate agents and they sometimes assists my clients to get private rental housing	18.2%	2
Real estate agents actively discriminate against/avoid our clients	27.3%	3
Forming relationships with real estate agents is not part of our practice	54.5%	6
	Totals	11

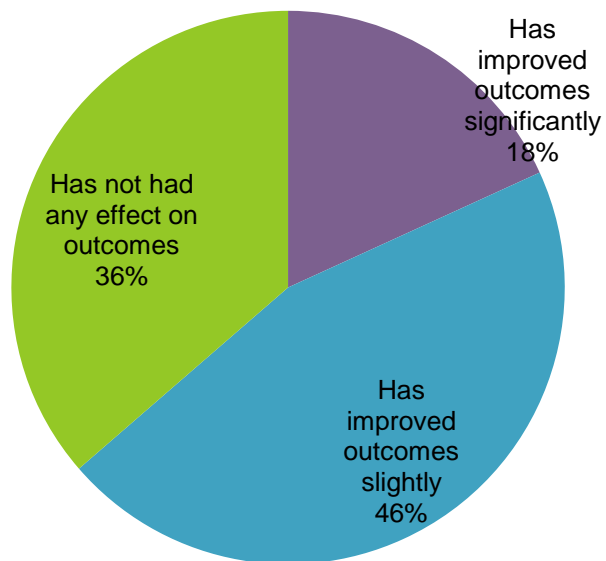
17. What has been the effect of the Private Rental Initiative on getting tenancy advice for your clients? (for example, use of the telephone advice line, consulting the toolkit)



Value	Percent	Count
Has improved advice significantly	36.4%	4
Has improved advice slightly	45.5%	5
Has not had any effect on advice	18.2%	2
	Totals	11

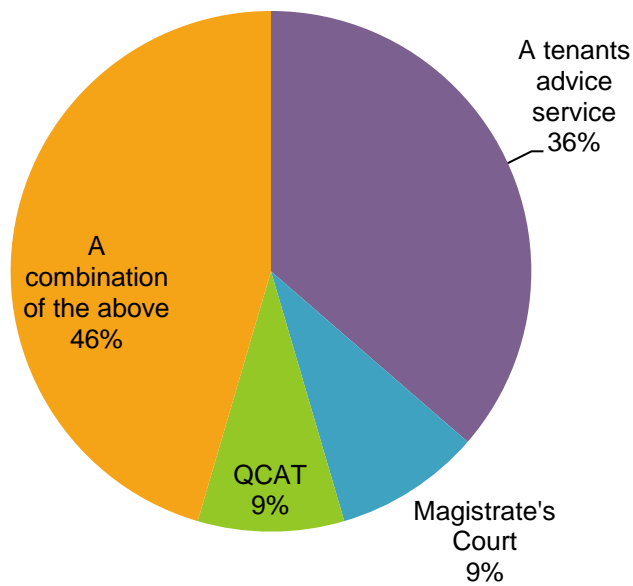


18. What has been the effect of the Private Rental Initiative on getting tenancy outcomes for your clients (for example, getting approved for a private rental property, getting name taken off lease due to damage caused by former partner, getting name taken off TICA, etc)?



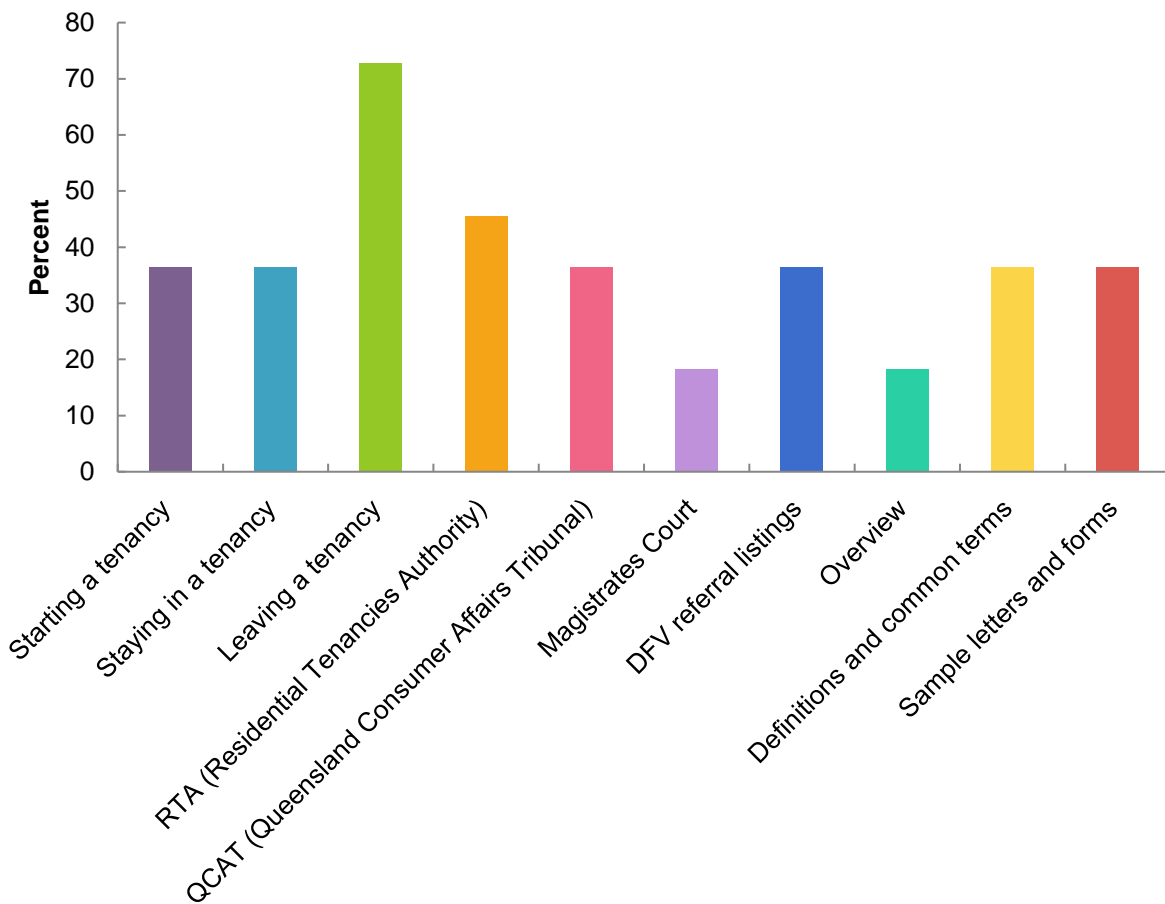
Value	Percent	Count
Has improved outcomes significantly	18.2%	2
Has improved outcomes slightly	45.5%	5
Has not had any effect on outcomes	36.4%	4
Totals		11

19. Where do you most often refer clients to in response to their presenting with DFV-related tenancy matters?



Value	Percent	Count
A tenants advice service	36.4%	4
Magistrate's Court	9.1%	1
QCAT	9.1%	1
A combination of the above	45.5%	5
	Totals	11

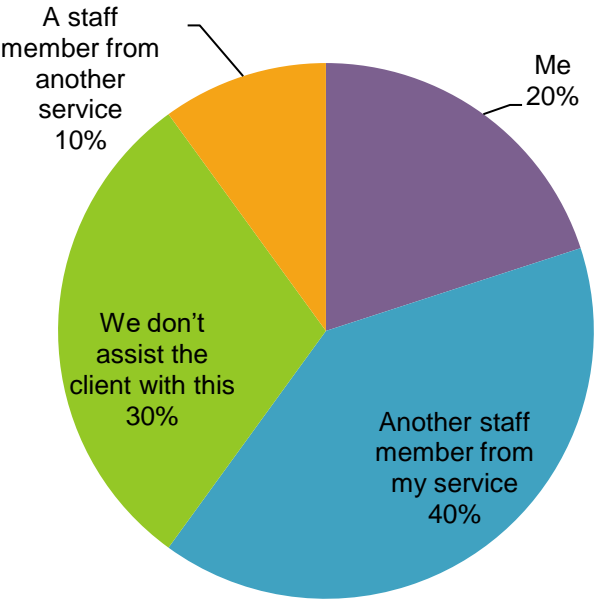
20. What parts of the TQ DFV tenancy toolkit has your service relied on most (you can choose more than one)?



Value	Percent	Count
Starting a tenancy	36.4%	4
Staying in a tenancy	36.4%	4
Leaving a tenancy	72.7%	8
RTA (Residential Tenancies Authority)	45.5%	5
QCAT (Queensland Consumer Affairs Tribunal)	36.4%	4
Magistrates Court	18.2%	2

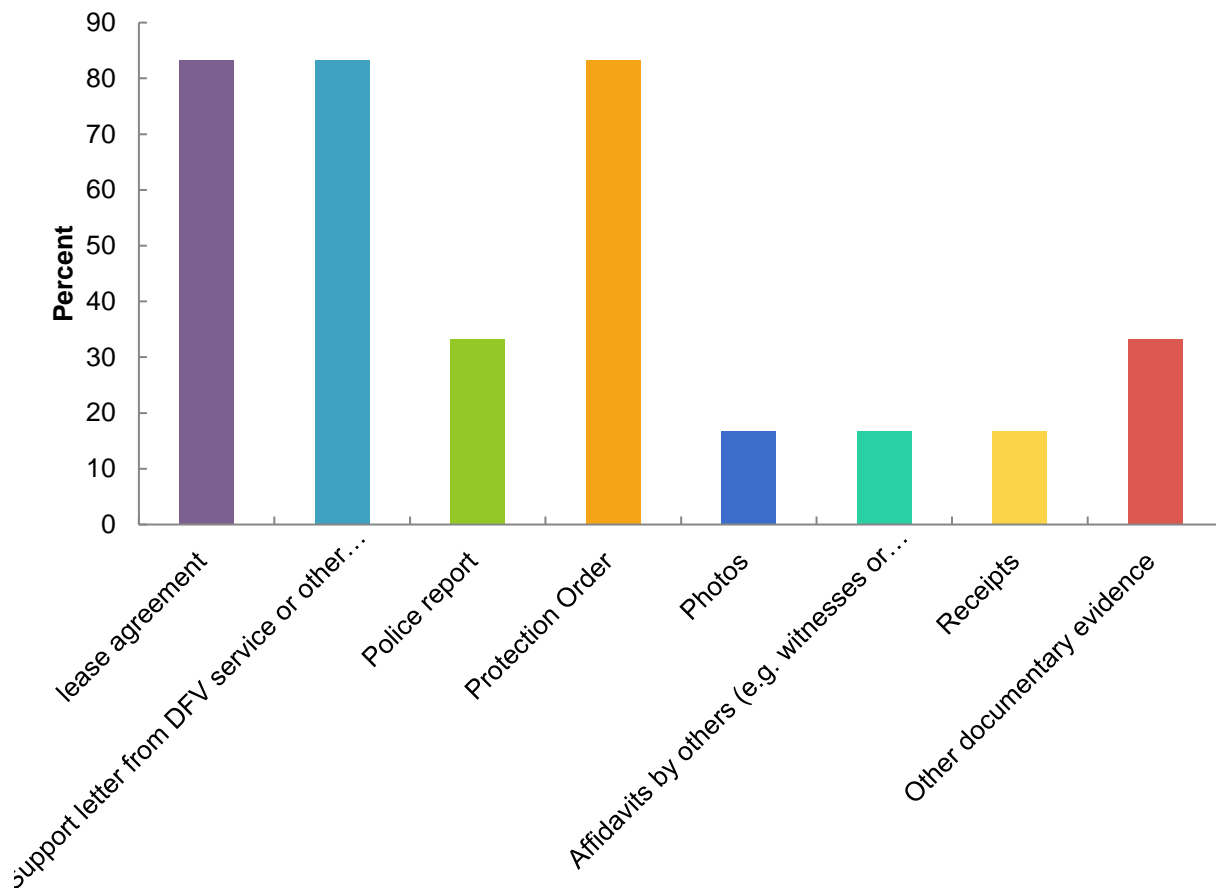
DFV referral listings	36.4%	4
Overview	18.2%	2
Definitions and common terms	36.4%	4
Sample letters and forms	36.4%	4

21. Who directly assists clients with their QCAT Application for minor civil dispute – Residential Tenancy Dispute form?



Value	Percent	Count
Me	20.0%	2
Another staff member from my service	40.0%	4
We don't assist the client with this	30.0%	3
A staff member from another service	10.0%	1
	Totals	10

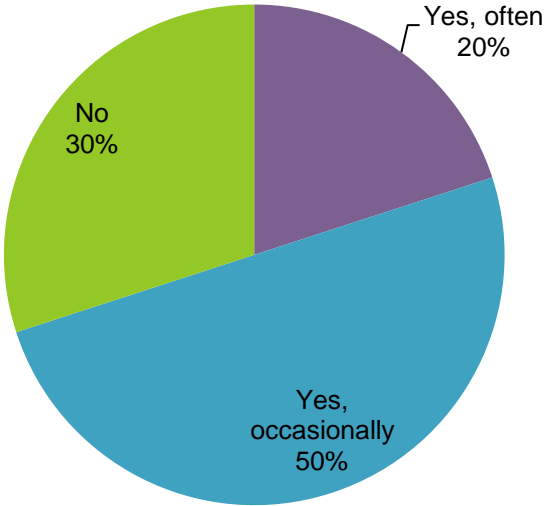
22. What evidence was provided by the client when seeking an order in QCAT/Magistrates Court? You can choose more than one.



Value	Percent	Count
lease agreement	83.3%	5
Support letter from DFV service or other support agency	83.3%	5
Police report	33.3%	2
Protection Order	83.3%	5
Photos	16.7%	1
Affidavits by others (e.g. witnesses or neighbours)	16.7%	1
Receipts	16.7%	1

Other documentary evidence	33.3%	2
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23. Has your service ever assisted clients with applying for an 'ouster condition' as part of a domestic violence order under the Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012 at the Magistrates Court in conjunction with an application under the Residential Tenancy and Rooming Accommodation Act 2008 (Qld)?



Value	Percent	Count
Yes, often	20.0%	2
Yes, occasionally	50.0%	5
No	30.0%	3
	Totals	10



24. How could the specialist DFV/homelessness service provider sector improve its practices when it comes to women who have experienced DFV seeking private rental?

- be on site - go around the state helping service providers to complete forms and file - practical assistance for a year cross the sector
- Outreach support to view and apply for private rental (noticed support is provided for social housing but not usually private rental). Early intervention on tenancy issues relating to debt or damage to address tenancy issues appropriately before a poor tenancy history is established.
- Ongoing funding for this program. Embedded tenancy workers in DFV services.
- increase local knowledge of 'friendly' realtors
- build better relationships with real estate agents
- Continue to seek advice from Dept of Housing colleagues.
- Perhaps having a Housing support worker placed within the DFV Regional service?
- more awareness about benefits of assisting this group
- Commitment to a secure outcome for the person/family - the tragedy is that most clients exit domestic violence into homelessness due to lack of understanding and bias against them concerning housing.

25. How could the specialist DFV/homelessness service provider sector improve its practices in relation to issues women who have experienced DFV face in tenancies (e.g. getting behind in rent, damage to the property, etc?)

- as above - put it in job descriptions - DFV workers - to assist clients work thru tenancy issues? - who is doing it? not a lot of people?
- Ongoing transitional support to maintain tenancies. Often support in private rental is non-existent or very limited after exit from refuge. More investment is needed for ongoing support which is needs based rather than time limited. Safety should be a priority but doesn't mean that victims need to move - security upgrades and DVOs can be considered as part of a comprehensive safety plan. For vulnerable clients, ongoing and consistent case management support is needed - which is rare to non-existent for private rentals.
- Brokerage availability Communication between stakeholders Housing First practice frameworks-including when refuges are involved.
- -better advocacy -access to low cost accommodation -develop relationship with real estate
- be better at supporting clients to sustain tenancies
- Continue to seek advice from Dept of Housing colleagues.
- Linking in with Victim Assist to help women pay for these items maybe?
- More tolerance but clearer guidelines about where to get information and support when issues arise
- Give relevant weight to the steps that a woman has already taken to ensure the safety of herself and her children - Protection Orders, Family assistance programs, Child Safety, Vacating when at high risk etc.

26. What are the key barriers, and facilitators/helpful factors, to responding effectively to women affected by DFV-related tenancy issues?

- the perceived need to obtain DVO? this perception is held by staff and clients alike - thinking if no DVO - then no ability to apply for tenancy issue dispute at QCAT.....incorrect - it is that a DVO and its conditions must be considered by adjudicators if there is a DVO in place - if no DVO - still apply QCAT - not a lot of service providers have understood this possibility
- Legislation needs to be amended to strengthen DV provisions. Lack of appropriate affordable housing means real estate agents can discriminate. Trauma and being overwhelmed with many other competing stressors at point of crisis / separation mean that tenancy issues are not prioritized. There is no brokerage for removalists that can be accessed quickly. Helpful - some services can be flexible and provide outreach or transitional support. Security upgrades - when available, can assist women to feel safer at home.
- QPS Innumerable others
- finance (lack of or ability to sustain tenancy as sole earner) - lack of knowledge about their rights
- language barriers
- Intersectional complex and competing presenting issues. Having Housing Colleagues co-located in our service so women can liaise them with while attending their DV counselling or groups.
- Women themselves feeling hopeless and not knowing who to contact. Demand on the DFV service workers to provide extra time and service supports for housing.
- Fear of eviction financial debt and loss of income/employment
- The way a specialist DFV /Homelessness service worker relates and speaks with a woman who has experienced DFV is paramount to the person being able to trust and work with the said service worker. Understanding that the woman who has experienced DFV has been put down, judged and blamed for the abuse - there are indeed trust issues and the fear of being judged.

27. Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

- yes, have several appointed staff to visit service providers regularly with a focus on undertaking completion of forms for staff for a one-year period - now staff have been taught the basic of tenancy law/DV - now some alongside practical mentoring in legal submissions to QCAT (for 12-month period?)
- There is a lot more that needs to be done across the DV and private rental sector to improve this space - it needs creative solutions and resourcing.
- Great training, would good to get refreshers as we go along.
- continued access to services like Qld Tenancy for our clients (free service) for advice and assistance.
- The overwhelming helplessness that a woman can be experiencing when trying to leave a Domestic and Family Violence relationship cannot be overstated, a person feels powerless, exhausted, fearful and unworthy.