

Fact Sheet

Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Court

A specialist court dealing exclusively with domestic and family violence matters is being trialled at Southport on the Gold Coast as part of the Government's response to the Report of the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence, *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland*.

The Southport based trial is aimed at enhancing the safety of victims by providing timely, coordinated and consistent responses to victims and perpetrators involved in domestic and family violence proceedings and related criminal matters.

The trial incorporates key elements from successful Australian and international specialist domestic violence court models, such as:

- dedicate magistrates
- dedicated police prosecutors
- duty lawyers to support both parties
- access to support, information and referral for victims
- specialist staff training, and
- access to domestic and family violence perpetrator programs.

The trial also provides opportunities for the court to build on existing linkages with the Children's Court and family law courts.

Who is involved?

Two dedicated magistrates with special interest and experience in dealing with domestic and family violence matters, preside over civil domestic and family violence proceedings, as well as breach proceedings and associated criminal charges including committal hearings. The magistrates also give consideration to amending family law orders in the event of an inconsistency with a proposed domestic violence order.

A court coordinator is overseeing implementation of the trial including coordinating stakeholder engagement and procedures to support the trial.

A specialist domestic and family violence court registry has been created as a single point of contact where specialist court staff can offer support and information.

The specialist court is supported by dedicated prosecutors, duty lawyers for both parties, court support workers for the aggrieved and support/liaison workers for the respondents.

A key aspect of the trial is the coordination of court-based stakeholders and strengthening of the court's relationship with the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response.

A working group of government stakeholders meets weekly to discuss and resolve emerging strategic and operational issues. An operational working group, comprising Southport court-based stakeholders, also meets weekly to discuss operational issues.

How long will the trial run?

The trial, which commenced on 1 September 2015, will run until 30 June 2017.

What will happen next?

The trial will be evaluated drawing on information collected during the trial to identify elements of best practice that could be adopted in other courts and locations. The outcomes of the evaluation will be used to inform any future rollout considered across Queensland.

