



# Position Statement

Breaking the cycle of Domestic & Family Violence



**ENDING HOMELESSNESS AND DOMESTIC & FAMILY VIOLENCE**

[www.coastshelter.org.au](http://www.coastshelter.org.au)





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
<b>1. CEO FOREWARD</b>	
<b>Government must invest in a raft of primary prevention strategies</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. NSW needs a strategy to reduce the rate of domestic and family violence assault reoffending</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3. NSW needs a plan to address the lack of social and affordable housing supply</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>4. Create an Integrated Service Response</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>5. Mandate Perpetrator Intervention Programs</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>6. Coercive Control must become a stand-alone criminal offence in NSW</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>7. Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Centre for Justice Survey, August 2020</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>8. Our commitment</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>9. Our Vision, Mission and Values</b>	<b>4</b>



## COAST SHELTER POSITION STATEMENT

### Breaking the cycle of Domestic and Family Violence

---

**FOREWORD** by Michael Starr, Coast Shelter CEO

Coast Shelter is a leading not-for-profit organisation providing Specialist Homelessness, Domestic and Family Violence support services and crisis accommodation for women, women with accompanying children, young people and men on the NSW Central Coast.

In 2021 alone, 75% of people accessing our homeless and crisis accommodation refuges reported they have experienced domestic, family violence. Together with mental health illness, the misuse of alcohol and other drugs and a lack of affordable housing, we see our Clients consistently identify personal trauma resulting from domestic and family violence as one of the main contributing factors to homelessness and poverty.

Everyone deserves a safe place to call home. To break the cycle of domestic and family violence we know that early intervention and education, swift and appropriate victim support, evidence based quality services and holding perpetrators accountable are the mechanisms to help victims restore dignity, feel safe and start their journey to healing and recovery.

Coast Shelter believes victims of domestic and family violence must be heard in policy and program design across the nation and that is why we have made domestic and family violence prevention a key and ongoing advocacy and investment priority. Our work includes collaboration with local stakeholders, listening to victims, working with peak bodies, investing in the supply of new accommodation for victims, providing in-house specialist counselling services and quick access to specialist trauma care, trialing new victim safety technology in our services and helping victims access Government support initiatives such as escaping violence funding. Early in 2022 we will commence evaluation on our early intervention schools program Love Bites as well as other specialist programs in partnership with The University of Newcastle.

Our aim is to bring greater focus and attention to this issue, help victims share their thoughts and experiences, work with others and create solutions to help break the cycle of domestic and family violence.

---

## COAST SHELTER'S POSITION STATEMENT

Based on our own research and experience, mission, the voice of our clients and external literature, Coast Shelter believes that:

- 1. Government must invest in a raft of primary prevention strategies.**

Invest in primary prevention strategies at stopping violence, abuse and neglect before it starts by tackling root causes. Coast Shelter does this in part through *Love Bites*, a respectful relationships school-based program for students aged 11-17 years developed by the National Association for Prevention of Child abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN). Love Bites delivers two interactive workshops: one on Relationship Violence, and one on Sex and Relationships, both of which include interactive workshops and community awareness campaigns. The objective of the program is to equip young people with the foundations and skills necessary to develop respectful relationships, improve critical thinking, and be able to problem solve and communicate more effectively. Beyond high school it is vital to design and implement evidence based prevention and education strategies in tertiary institutions to foster a help seeking culture and raise awareness among students.



## **2. NSW needs a strategy to reduce the rate of domestic and family violence assault reoffending.**

Domestic and Family violence is a crime which, according to the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics & Research, saw the number of people in NSW reoffend with a domestic violence assault within 12 months of another domestic violence offence increase to 1900 people in May 2021. This is the highest level since December 2015 and far exceeds the NSW Government target of 1360 by December 2023. Coast Shelter supports policy and Court outcomes for offenders that includes compulsory education and rehabilitation programs designed to reduce the likelihood of a person committing family violence.

## **3. NSW needs a plan to address the lack of social and affordable housing supply**

The lack of adequate affordable housing has a host of negative effects on communities. Currently in NSW almost 50,000 people are waiting for social housing, including domestic, family violence victims.<sup>1</sup> Domestic Violence is the leading cause of homelessness for women and children. NSW needs a strategy to build 5,000 new homes each year for the next ten years to address the serious lack of affordable housing supply.

## **4. Create an Integrated Service Response**

An integrated approach to local service delivery is essential to better meet the needs of people experiencing domestic, family violence and address fragmented service delivery. Bringing services together in formal and informal ways to work flexibly and collaboratively will help address the often complex and multiple personal needs that are unable to be met by one service alone. Seamless, continuous care is vital for victims recovering from trauma and violence. At Coast Shelter we practice tailored and consistent outreach support to help victims rebuild their life, develop self-determination and improve their personal wellbeing.

## **5. Mandate Perpetrator Intervention Programs**

An increased focus on perpetrators, reoffending rates, early interventions plus a boost in investment for local domestic, family violence Police resources. Identify high risk offenders, ensure Police are adequately resourced to investigate and prosecute offenders not completing programs or breaching Court orders, mandate behavior management plans for perpetrators and programs for those at risk of offending.

## **6. Coercive Control must become a stand-alone criminal offence in NSW**

Coercive control behaviours have long been recognised as a pre cursor to intimate partner assault, sexual assault and domestic homicide in Australia.<sup>2</sup> Following a 2020-21 NSW Government review a recommendation was adopted to draft a bill making coercive control in intimate partner relationships a crime in NSW. This draft bill is scheduled to go before the NSW Parliament in late 2022 and is scheduled to enter into law by late 2023. Coast Shelter supports this legislation and notes this has long been a gap in NSW Criminal Law. The state of NSW is lagging behind other jurisdictions such as QLD (2020) in making coercive control a crime.

Recent Queensland University of Technology Centre for Justice Survey results clearly indicate perpetrators have used COVID-19 lockdown situations to increase the level of control and coercion over victims,

---

<sup>1</sup> The Community Housing Industry Association NSW "We Can't Wait" campaign. NSW Dep't. of Communities & Justice 2019-20 Social Housing waitlist.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Government Institute of Criminology Statistical Bulletin 30, March 2021

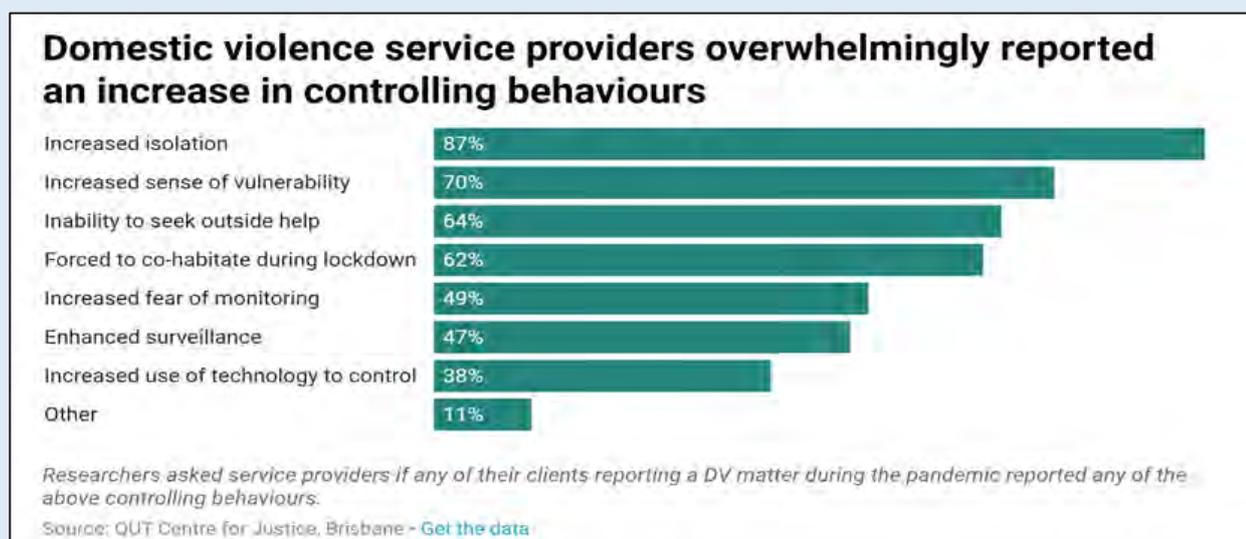
therefore it is essential that the NSW Government expedites legislation and makes coercive control a stand-alone crime in NSW by the end of 2022.<sup>3</sup>

### Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Centre for Justice Survey, August 2020.<sup>4</sup>

Researchers from the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Centre for Justice surveyed 362 domestic family violence (DFV) agencies and individuals across the country about their experiences from early June until the end of August 2020.

The survey revealed more than 40% of agencies reported significant increase in perpetrator controlling and coercive behaviour, noting that Covid-19 emerged as another form of control used to further isolate victims. The same study reported 87% of agencies reported victim’s experienced increased isolation and 64% of victims felt unable to safely seek outside help.

Researchers asked service providers if any of their clients reporting a domestic violence matter during the pandemic reported any of the controlling behaviours listed below:



### Our commitment

With over 400 women and children accessing our Domestic Violence Rapid Enhancement program in the past year, we know that seismic change is required to keep families safe, reduce perpetrator reoffending rates and end the cycle of homelessness caused by domestic and family violence. Reducing violence is a community responsibility. Coast Shelter will continue to prioritise support and assistance for victims of domestic and family violence and maintain a strong advocacy position calling for the elimination of violence against women and their children.

<sup>3</sup> June 2021 QUT report and submission to Australian Government inquiry into Family, Domestic & Sexual Violence

<sup>4</sup> June 2021 QUT report and submission to Australian Government inquiry into Family, Domestic & Sexual Violence



# Our Vision

Ending Homelessness and Domestic and Family Violence  
on the NSW Central Coast

## Our Mission

To deliver locally designed innovative solutions to homelessness, domestic and family violence and poverty that achieve immediate and lasting changes.



## TOTAL INCLUSION & EQUALITY.

COAST SHELTER acknowledges the Darkinjung people, the custodians of the land on which we work, live and gather, and we recognise their continuing connection to the land, water and community. We pay respect to Elders past and present and the emerging young leaders of tomorrow.

COAST SHELTER is proudly committed to diversity and social inclusion, incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, those who identify as LGBTQIA+, people who live with disability, and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.





# Help us end Homelessness and Domestic & Family Violence

## MAKE A DONATION

We accept financial, food, household furniture and white goods as donations to help the most vulnerable in our Community. Please call us for assistance.

## FUNDRAISE FOR US

Contact the fundraising team by calling Coast Shelter for more information.

## VOLUNTEER

Becoming a volunteer at Coast Shelter helps others and is a great way to give back to your community. Coast Shelter offers a range of volunteering opportunities at our Community Centre and Restaurant, driver mentor program, fundraising and event support. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer at Coast Shelter, please check out our website.

## Contact us

346 Mann Street, North Gosford, NSW 2250.  
(02) 4325 3540  
[admin@coastshelter.org.au](mailto:admin@coastshelter.org.au)

### Published by:

Coast Shelter, January 2022.

©Coast Shelter

You may make a print or digital copy in whole or part for personal non-commercial use. Reproduction for commercial use or sale requires prior written consent from Coast Shelter. All other rights are reserved, except for fair dealings as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968.



[www.coastshelter.org.au](http://www.coastshelter.org.au)



Coast Shelter is registered with the independent National regulator of charities, the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC).