



red rose
FOUNDATION

A quilted banner with a central panel featuring a wreath of red roses. The text "NOT ONE" is arched above the wreath and "MORE" is written below it. The banner is flanked by purple and green diamond patterns. In the background, the silhouettes of three people are visible.

NOT ONE
MORE

Lets Stop Domestic Violence Deaths

change the ending

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**Domestic Violence
Death Review Action Group
DVD DRAG - 2004-2011**



DV DRAG for EDITH

Ending Deaths In The Home

2011 onwards

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DEATH REVIEW ACTION GROUP (DVDRAG)

2004 to 2016

The campaign years

Every month in Australia at least six women die at the hands of their intimate partner. One of these is a Queenslanders.

Introduction

DVDRAG was the first network of its kind to form in Australia for the purposes of campaigning for the establishment of a Domestic Violence Death Review Board. It was hoped that Queensland would lead the way but sadly, other states, who began their campaign after DVDRAG, introduced a system of Domestic Violence Death Review ahead of us.

The National Homicide Monitoring Program Annual Report of 2005/2006 states that 53% of the 56 Homicides in Queensland that year were classified as either intimate partner or family relationships. However, this does not include friends or acquaintances, new partners, work colleagues or bystanders who were caught up in the horror of such incidents. There is also insufficient data to show how many victims of domestic violence commit suicide, die in 'suspect' car accidents or simply go missing. If this tragic loss of human life is to be stopped we need to learn from the events that led to these deaths.

It is for this reason that Domestic Violence Death Review Boards have been established overseas and have proven successful in reducing the number of these deaths. Their purpose is to bring representatives from various agencies (*Police, Courts Coroner, Child Protection, Community Corrections, Health, Domestic Violence Services, Shelters, and Perpetrator Programs etc*) together to review these deaths. These multi-disciplinary teams review public records and other documentation on domestic violence related deaths in order to identify the gaps in community responses and the barriers to effective intervention.

Counting the Cost of Domestic Violence Deaths

When someone is murdered, families are shattered beyond belief and the toll on surviving family members can be enormous. Often they struggle to cope with their own feelings of grief and loss while becoming carers for surviving children.

Surviving children of domestic homicides

When Mum is killed by Dad the impact on the child is immense. Sometimes their father also suicides and in an instant their young lives are changed forever.

Some children have to endure the drawn out trauma of court and the stresses involved in giving evidence along with the grief of their loss. The fear of facing the offending parent in court can be immense for these children. They may be fearful of reprisals around giving evidence. In “*When Father Kills Mother*”, Hendriks, Black and Kaplan (1992) suggest that children have to live not only with the shame of being a child of a killer but also with the guilt of not being able to prevent the killing of their mother. Many live with ongoing nightmares, fear and trauma. The intergenerational factors of abuse and violence continue. Sometimes the children do not survive.

Vicarious trauma

Many victims of domestic violence have often talked to someone about their situation prior to their deaths. They may have spoken to family members, friends, work colleagues, doctor, pastor or a variety of social or justice services. The impact of a domestic violence related death has a rippling effect that impacts on all those who have known or interacted with the victim and/or perpetrator.

Hendriks, J., Black, D. & Kaplan, T. (1993) When Father Kills Mother, Rutledge Press, London. Taylor, B., 1999, "Domestic Homicides And Children Who Witness Them" Paper presented at the Children and Crime: Victims and Offenders Conference convened by the Australian Institute of Criminology and held in Brisbane, 17-18 June 1999.

Estimated Annual Cost of Domestic Violence on the Australian Economy

In 2004, the Office for the Status of Women commissioned Access Economics to undertake a study of the costs of domestic violence to the Australian economy. This compelling report estimated 408,100 people, 87% of which were women, experienced domestic violence during the previous year. The financial cost for domestic violence for this twelve month period was estimated at \$8.1 billion. This cost incorporates the cost of pain, suffering and premature mortality.

International Experience of Death Review Boards

Domestic Violence Death / Fatality Review Boards have now been established across many international communities including Canada, USA and Great Britain. While the models vary in structure and function, they have similar features in that they bring together representatives from various stakeholders to review domestic violence deaths in the hope of preventing them in the future.

This multi-disciplinary team conducts a detailed review of public records and other documentation regarding domestic violence related homicides in order to identify gaps in community responses to domestic violence and barriers to effective intervention.

Annual Reports released by these boards have consistently highlighted a reduction in domestic homicides within their communities.

A recommendation consistently raised by DVDRAG was the need for a risk assessment tool/model across domestic violence services and that practitioners need to use a common language when talking about risk.

Findings from Multi-agency Domestic Violence Murder Reviews in London, 2003 found that of the homicides analysed, 73% showed a recorded or reported history of domestic violence.

This British review also identified six high risk identifiers such as:

- separation
- pregnancy/new birth
- escalation of violence
- cultural issues
- sexual assault
- stalking

What was emerging in the USA with regard to risk indicators was the significance of non-lethal strangulation for domestic homicide.

The prominence of strangulation as an indicator of lethal homicide was brought to the fore by Gael Strack (Prosecutor) in San Diego, USA. Betty Taylor, during her Churchill Fellowship study tour of USA, met Gael and brought her and her partner, Casey Gwinn to the Gold Coast in 2004 to present at a Domestic Violence conference. Because of this DVDRAG began to give more attention to strangulation.

Not a Case by Case Scrutiny

Domestic Violence Death Review Boards examine a select number of deaths over a set period of time – usually twelve months. The findings of the reviews highlight trends, gaps and issues across all reviewed deaths. Unlike a coronial enquiry, they do not focus specifically on the particulars of any given case. The purpose of the death review is to create change and is more concerned with addressing structural and systemic failures. The focus is primarily on social and systems change.

Board Membership & Function

Domestic Violence Death Review Boards are all established within a legislative framework which outlines the legal requirements for organizations to provide records and other documentation, board membership and responsibilities for Board members, protocols, confidentiality, reporting mechanisms and compliance issues.



DVDRAG's diary of significant events in the six years of campaigning for domestic violence death review panels in Queensland.

2004



In October, Betty Taylor returned from a Churchill Fellowship study tour of the United States where she researched domestic violence death review boards in a number of the states. Betty conducted a workshop, at Women's Legal Service, her research showed that a similar domestic violence death review board should be set up in Queensland.

There was a recommendation from the workshop that a network of interested people should be formed to explore the possibilities of a campaign that would work towards the establishment of a Domestic Violence Death Review Board in Queensland.

Formation of DVDRAG

In December, the Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group was officially formed to focus on the establishment of a Domestic Violence Death Review Board.

The core Members included:

- o *Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Gold Coast (Betty Taylor)*
- o *Women's Legal Service (Katrina Finn and Pam Godsell),*
- o *Women's House (Barb Crossing)*
- o *Griffith University (Selke Meyer)*
- o *DVConnect (Diane Mangan)Brisbane Domestic Violence Advocacy Service (Chris Rackemann and Dayle Marino)*
- o *North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service (Tracey Leigh French)*
- o *Pauline Eglington*

Many other services throughout the sector and community received minutes from meetings and were invited to contribute to the campaign as they wished to.

DVDRAG Terms of Reference

The Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group was formed for the purposes of community awareness, lobbying and campaigning for the establishment of a Domestic Violence Death Review Board in Queensland to stop these tragedies in our state.

Membership comprised service providers, academic researchers, lawyers and individuals who were concerned that people continued to die from domestic violence when we know that many of these deaths could have been prevented.

DVDRAG aims to make links both nationally and internationally with individuals and groups who have already developed domestic violence death review boards or who are working towards their establishment. Our hope was that Queensland would be the first state in Australia to introduce Domestic Violence Death Review Boards.

Our Vision

Creating an environment where domestic violence deaths are not tolerated and there is an openness to learn from these tragedies.

Rationale

- Many lethal incidents of domestic violence have predictive elements to them.
- Reviews allow for a better understanding of the nature and pattern of lethal domestic violence
- Recommendations from reviews can lead to social and systems reforms – and ultimately prevention.

2005 - The campaign begins - Community Awareness

Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group 2004 - 2016

Plan:

- An information paper to be written and distributed to selected government and community service.
- The gathering of 'reliable' data.
- Life size cutouts to use in community awareness events
- Presentations
- Petition to parliament for the introduction of Domestic Violence Death Review Board

Information Paper

An information paper was written and circulated throughout the community and especially the domestic violence sector.

Reliable Data

Members of the group spoke to police and the Australian Institute of Criminology about the improvement of identifying and gathering this data. Betty began keeping media reports of intimate partner deaths in particular.

Life size cutouts

Bunning's made, painted and donated 30 life size cutouts to DVDRAG. BDVAS volunteered to house them.

Presentations

In May, Betty Taylor spoke on domestic violence death reviews at the Homicide Awareness Day in King George Square.

Petition to Parliament

DVDRAG put a **petition** together (both epetition and paper) and distributed throughout the state. **The plan was to take the petition to Parliament in June and have them accepted by a member of parliament.**



June 2005 - Petition Day



The two petitions were tabled in the Queensland Parliament. The first was a paper petition with 1570 signatures; the second was an e-petition with 527 signatures. They were presented to five women parliamentarians outside Parliament House.

Approximately 40 supporters from the sector and public, dressed
Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group 2004 - 2016

in black, attended along with the black cutouts that represented some of the women who had died because of domestic violence.



The petition was presented to the Minister for Police, Judy Spence, by Betty Taylor on 9 June 2005. The petition requests that Parliament establish a Domestic Violence Death Review Board.



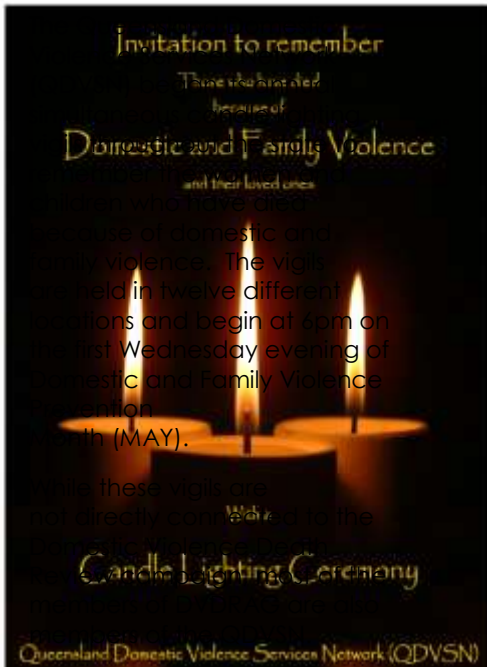
Our Petition was unsuccessful.

We learnt from this that while there was significant support from the domestic violence sector we had not reached many in the broader community and needed the support of the media for that.

The government and the media both displayed a lack of interest in the issue and the network had to continue with the awareness campaign and lobbying.

As well as collecting media articles relating to domestic violence deaths, DVDRAG also responded to these deaths via 'letters to the editor'. The understanding of the group was that we had a longer road ahead of us than we first thought but we were in it for the long haul.

Annual statewide Candle Lighting Vigils – began May 2005



2006 Getting campaign advice

A meeting was held with Sally Bennett to consult about ideas for gaining media support. Out of this it was decided to raise funds to employ a project worker who would, among other things, work towards gaining greater media attention.

Courier Mail Article

On 2nd September Sally Bennett's two page article for the Courier Mail on domestic violence death reviews was printed.

2007 Getting sector support

The request was sent out across the domestic violence sector seeking financial support to employ a part time project worker for six months. This call for support resulted in DVDRAG receiving

\$12,000 towards the employment of a project worker.

Presentation

Betty Taylor and Pam Godsell spoke at a National Community Legal Centre's Conference in Brisbane.

2008 Stepping up the campaign

DVDRAG members, auspiced by The Women's Legal Service Brisbane, employed Betty Taylor as a consultant for 6 months part time with the following three objectives:

1. Develop a discussion paper informed by both research and community input and presented to the Queensland Government on completion.
2. Educate and raise awareness of the public on the issues of domestic homicides and the benefits a death review board could provide in learning from such tragedies.
3. Inform and generate media interest in domestic homicides and death reviews.

Funding from WESNET

DVDRAG under the auspice of Women's Legal Service applied for funding from Wesnet and were successful in receiving \$43,030. This largely covered consultant's fees, finalization of the Discussion Paper, educational forums in Mt. Isa and Townsville, and a forum educating the media. The discussion paper *Dying to be Heard* was launched at a public forum at the parliamentary annex in December 2008.

The following plan was undertaken:

- Development of a media plan
- Project plan finalised
- Contact made with interstate projects
- Work commenced on developing community education resources
- Develop questions and strategies for the consultation process

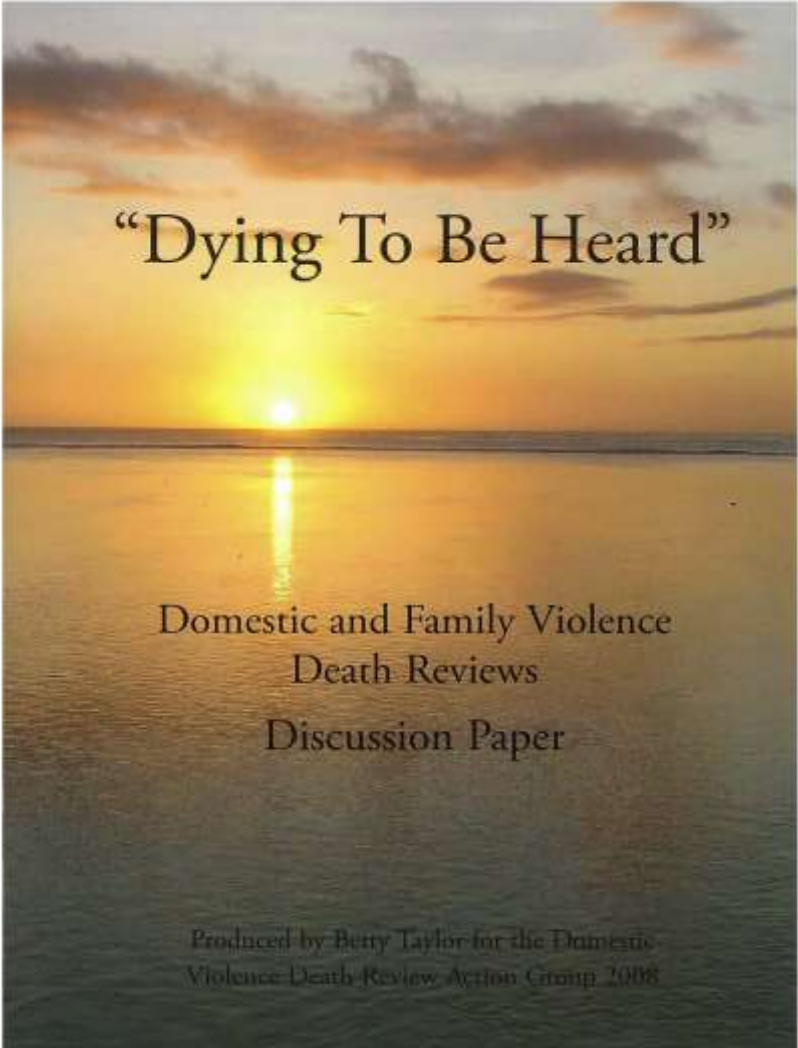
Consultations for Discussion Paper – Dying to be Heard

Betty Taylor, along with different members of DVDRAG, met with:

- State Coroner, Michael Barnes,
- Chief Magistrate, Marshal Irwin / Brendan Butler
- Child Death Review representatives
- Many others acknowledged in the Discussion Paper

Media

Betty Taylor was interviewed by Mark Oberhardt for an article in the Courier Mail in January.



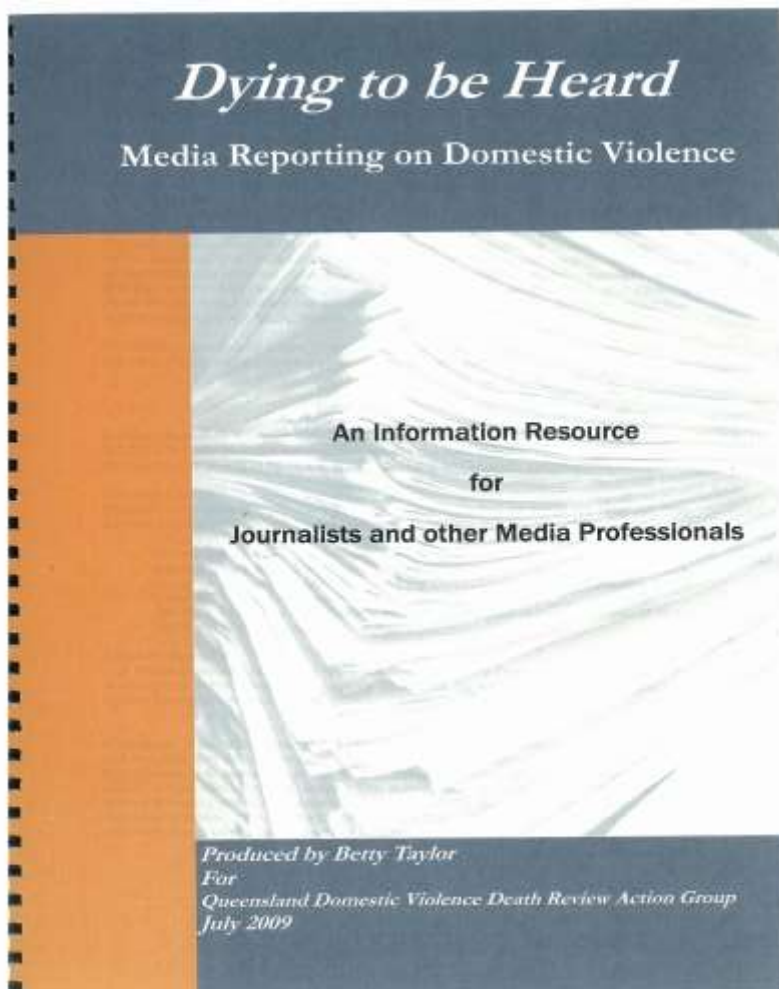
“Dying To Be Heard”

Domestic and Family Violence Death Reviews Discussion Paper

*Produced by Betty Taylor for the Domestic
Violence Death Review Action Group 2008*

Media Kit

In March 2008, Betty Taylor developed a media kit. This was distributed to Domestic Violence Regional Services for their use generally but in particular, for the May DV Prevention Month and Candle Lighting Ceremonies.



Presentations

Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group 2004 - 2016

- o Pam Godsell and Katrina Finn spoke about domestic violence death reviews at a National Women's Legal Service forum in Sydney
- o Pam Godsell and Betty Taylor spoke at the Brisbane Feminist Conference on domestic violence death reviews
- o Betty Taylor spoke at the Black & Blue Forum in Sydney
- o Betty Taylor spoke at the Griffith University Domestic Violence Symposium
- o Betty Taylor spoke at the Domestic Violence Forum Queensland University

Meeting with Premier

Katrina Finn, Betty Taylor and Rachael Field met with the Premier, Anna Bligh in July about DVDRAG. The Premier was interested and subsequently asked for domestic violence death reviews to be included in the statewide review of domestic violence.

Postcard campaign

Betty designed and had the postcards for the Postcard Campaign printed. They were distributed widely throughout the sector and community.



2008

Let the forums begin

On 2 December, **DVDRAG** hosted a “**Dying to be heard**” forum at the Queensland Parliamentary Annexe with invited speakers from Queensland, South Australia and NSW to launch the Discussion Paper and present it to the government. An over capacity audience of 90 people attended the forum.

Betty Taylor presented the **Discussion Paper** to the Minister for Communities, Ms Lindy Nelson-Carr.



Speakers and panel members for the first Brisbane forum were:

- Queensland state coroner, Michael Barnes,
- Dr Elspeth McGuinness, SA,
- Julie Stewart NSW,
- Carolyn Johnson, WA,
- Betty Taylor and Katrina Finn, DVDRAG.

2009

Forums and lobbying continues

Meeting with Ministers for Communities

A follow up meeting was held with the then Minister for Communities, Hon Lindy Nelson-Carr. She indicated government had costed the establishment of a death review board. It was looking positive but she thought that it might be a staged process – which we had anticipated given the government's promoted financial situation.

A meeting was sought and held with Hon Karen Struthers, Minister for Communities, providing her with a copy of the Discussion Paper and asking for a meeting with her.

25 May 2009 – Press Release

“The Bligh Government will establish an expert Death Review Panel in an effort to identify gaps in services for victims of domestic and family violence and prevent further deaths in the future.

Premier Anna Bligh said the panel, approved by Cabinet today, will investigate the circumstances surrounding domestic violence-related deaths over the past five years as well as examine any new cases as they arise in the future.

Ms Bligh said the establishment of the panel – to be comprised of both government and non-government members - was the first step in a long-term strategy to help stem the tide of domestic and family violence in Queensland.”

DVDRAG wrote to the Hon Mr Cameron Dick, (then) Attorney General, explaining our concerns about the Terms of Reference of the new panel and noted that DVDRAG members were not included on the panel.

2009

continued

DVDRAG members met with Barbara Shaw, Department of Communities who was consulting on the Terms of Reference for the Death Review Panel. DVDRAG provided written feedback on the terms of reference.

Second forum

Mt Isa - March 2009

Betty Taylor, Pam Godsell and Diane Mangan travelled to Mt Isa in March to co host the 'Dying to be heard' forum with Shirley Slann (pictured below), coordinator of the Mt Isa office of the North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service (Townsville). Betty Green, co-founder of the Domestic Violence Coalition in NSW accepted the invitation to speak at this forum. Betty Green is also a member of the newly established Domestic Death Review Panel in NSW.



Attending this forum were a number of Aboriginal workers from in and around Mt Isa.

Third forum

Townsville - March 2009

Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group 2004 - 2016

Betty Taylor, Diane Mangan and Katrina Finn travelled to Townsville to co host the forum with the North Queensland Domestic Violence Resource Service, Pauline Woodbridge and Tracey Leigh French. The forum was held at the courthouse and attended by staff from the domestic violence sector and other related services including police and court staff.



Attending this forum also was solicitor, Paul Grey, who survived an attempt on his life while in the company of a woman at the time she was murdered by an ex partner. Paul accepted DVDRAG's invitation to speak at the later media forum to be held in the Parliamentary Annex in Brisbane.

DVDRAG members met with Barbara Shaw, Department of Communities who was consulting on the Terms of Reference for the Death Review Panel. This panel planned to meet for six months then provide a report to the Minister on the way forward with regard to a Panel.

DVDRAG provided written feedback on the terms of reference to the department with regard to the reference group/panel.

Media forum held at the parliamentary annex, Brisbane

Domestic Violence Death Review Action Group 2004 - 2016



Media Forum speakers:

- Quentin Dempster, presenter of Stateline in NSW, spoke and chaired the event
- Rachael Kayrooz
- Paul Gray
- Betty Taylor

The Minister for Community Services, Housing and Minister for Women, Ms Karen Struthers accepted the Media Kit from Betty Taylor.

After the Media forum DVDRAG members were:

- Approached by ABC radio to be involved with a two hour radio program specifically on domestic violence.
- Kay Dibben from the Sunday Mail wrote a two page article on the stories of Rachael and Paul. Paula Donneman from the Sunday Mail spoke about doing a follow up article.
- We were contacted by local government media who want copies of the Kit sent to Councils throughout Queensland.
- Switch Radio agreed to put the launch through their news program.
- Online media asked us to do a story. Quentin Dempster said he would put his speech on the ABC website and was thinking about raising the issues in Stateline NSW.

The campaign is on hold for six months

With the setting up of the Domestic Violence Death Review Panel/Reference Group by the government, DVDRAG offered assistance to the panel. We continued to provide information with regard to the Terms of Reference. Katrina Finn and Pam Godsell spoke to the panel for an hour.

DVDRAG members did not support the course of action planned by the government in the setting up of this model of 'panel'. However, it was agreed that once the report was released we would review it, respond to it and then decide on the next phase of our determination to see that the number of domestic violence deaths are reduced.