

DV approach not working

Moving to Brae Street in 2007 was a deviation from our original vision for our lives in Rockhampton, but was also perhaps the best family decision we ever made. You see, Brae Street is a haven for families. In over 13 years as residents we have become close friends with neighbours, we have participated in and seen literally dozens of kids growing up.

All of us have been there for the births, the deaths, and life events that would never make the papers, but add interface and cross-stitch to the fabric of our community.

And so, it was on a Tuesday evening in June that I arrived home to see flashing lights. Such a scene is assuredly not Brae Street. I immediately thought 'heart attack' but there was too much commotion even for such a serious matter. Soon rumours began circulating; a death by stabbing, a woman in her prime with three kids. And now the alleged involvement of a man who was not from, and clearly did not belong in, Brae Street.

This is the second 'too close for comfort' family violence matter I have witnessed in a year. It led me to become treasurer of the organisation now known as Doctors Health in Queensland, because I believe that these things are caused not because of innate evil, but through pressures of mind that build up to a level where compulsion meets with ridiculous, obscene solutions. For many of us, such tragedies are as unfathomable as they are heartbreaking.

The current approach to the scourge known as domestic violence is just not working. It's not working for people in Aboriginal communities, it's not working for white people of lower socio-economic backgrounds, it's not working in Brae Street. It's also not working for ambulance workers who have to deal with these gruesome scenes, nor for the police who risk their lives to attend numerous incidents on a daily basis.

And why should we be surprised, when the



current approach is grossly flawed?

Whenever something happens, politicians say 'this must never happen again' and increase penalties. If 10 years behind bars doesn't put them off, then what good is 15? Then there's the accusative 'perpetrator brigade' which holds that all and only men are responsible.

This approach generalises the complex dynamics of any relationship, socio-economic factors, immediate financial and domestic pressures, issues of downright incompatibility, alcohol and drug addiction, mental illness and even worse, the possibility of creative, sustainable solutions for people suffering.

Then there's the 'do-gooder brigade', best typified by White Ribbon, now financially broke. These organisations hold out a 'membership based' approach where all recite a chant, pat themselves on the back, and act as if that is somehow going to make a difference. Finally, we have the various government departments and agencies which pretend they can administer and manage these complex issues, but they could never take the place of dedicated parents, and sometimes thrust children back into dreadful circumstances.

Regular readers know I rarely wade into controversial topics without at least a partial solution.

First, every incident of domestic violence involving physical harm should be properly investigated through a coronial-like process. As far as deaths go, the coroner should release



The current approach to domestic violence is just not working, according to David French.

the details of such matters if it is thought to be in the public's - and not just the family's - interests. Family violence is a matter that cuts to the core of our community. It's not the bloody detail that is necessary, but a very clear analysis of the surrounding circumstances. Is it culture, drugs, mental illness, or just plain murder? How many times has this occurred? Who knew and said nothing? Knowing these things helps cut through emotion and provides clear and consistent data essential for good policy. The public knowing these things also puts potential wrongdoers on notice.

Second, people who police have visited more than once, or who breach a DVO, need to be removed from society for camp-based rehabilitation. A mandatory jail term should apply for those who cannot or will not comply and courts should have the power to force separation. Mandatory loss of access rights to kids should apply to people who physically as-

sault their partners. Reconciliation should be a formal affair in front of witnesses.

Third, there should be universal income support of up to \$40,000 per annum for all people between 23 and 60 years of age. This would help people to plan a life regardless of their near-term financial situation, continue paying their mortgage in the event they lose their job, or begin to make a new life independent of their spouse.

Now, I'll sit back and weather the backlash. It will come from those citing privacy and procedural fairness, those who have an unfailing belief in our legal system and those that don't, those reminding me that physical violence is just the tip of the iceberg. What I say to them all, is: this is happening on your watch. I'm not promising a panacea, just suggesting that it might be time to try something different. Communities like Brae Street will likely thank you for it.

Survey highlights challenges with freight options

New research is expected to bolster support for more road and rail upgrades in the Central Highlands to cut freight times and costs.

The Central Highlands Freight Task Analysis Survey has found close to 48 per cent of respondents export goods and materials from the region and 62 per cent import goods and materials to the region.

Furthermore, 51 per cent of the exporters identified challenges with freight options including schedules, infrastructure and ineffective costs of small loads.

The survey was conducted in June 2020 by the Central Highlands Development Corporation (CHDC) in conjunction with Central Highlands Regional Council (CHRC) and CQ Inland Port (CQIP).

The survey results will help build a case for further investment in infrastructure and services to provide for more cost effective and efficient supply chains.

"The data demonstrates a significant demand to improve logistics connectivity for freight in and out of the Central Highlands," said CHDC Business and Investment Attraction Manager Peter Dowling.

"This demand is only going to increase when you consider freight volumes in Australia are projected to grow by more than 35 per cent between 2018 and 2040, according to the National Freight and Supply Chain Strategy."

CQIP Project Director Kevin Doggett congratulated CHDC and CHRC on the survey and the benefits it will provide in advocating for further support from state and federal governments.

"The survey was further confirmation of a detailed study completed in 2015 by the Department of Main Roads and Transport that quantified freight imported and exported to and from the region and opportunities for supply chain savings using a multi-modal approach," said Mr Doggett.

"CQ Inland Port looks forward to working with local business in developing the inter-modal terminal operation and ensuring that local business can take advantage of reduced



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supply chain costs."

The data has value-added to a larger Central Queensland and Wide Bay Burnett Transport Analytics project, which is foundational work to better understand transport across regions. This project has engaged the CSIRO with the use of their Transport Network Strategic Investment Tool (TraNSIT).

The survey attracted 147 responses. The major responders by industry were 40.1 per cent agriculture, 12.9 per cent retail, 8.8 per cent manufacturing/processing, 8.2 per cent

transport, 7.5 per cent mining, 6.8 per cent construction with 12.2 per cent other.

Key findings:

Exports:

- 47.6% of businesses export goods and materials from the Central Highlands.
- 43% of businesses export goods to an international market.
- 70% of freight exported is full container loads (FCL).
- 51% of businesses that export identified challenges with freight options including

schedules, infrastructure and ineffective costs of small loads.

Imports:

- 62% of businesses import goods and materials into the Central Highlands.
- 59% of businesses import goods by road, 28.5% import by rail and air.
- 48% of businesses import goods that travel through a shipping port.
- 29.6% of businesses that import cite cost as a barrier or challenge to changing transport type.