



# My Dad Our Home

A project designed to understand the needs of,  
and improve service responses for  
**‘Sole fathers with accompanying children  
who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness’.**

Domestic Violence Service Management (DVSM)

Refuge Outreach Action Response (ROAR)

Western Sydney

## Executive Summary

The project was undertaken to improve our understanding and service response needs of sole fathers with accompanying children who are at risk of/or are experiencing homelessness, a relatively new client cohort for DVSM and our ROAR service. It quickly became clear that sole fathers with accompanying children were largely missing from homelessness research and the service response of the sector. We recognised that we needed to better understand and respond to sole fathers with accompanying children by harnessing sector knowledge and current research to build a sustained approach.

This project was conducted through a combination of desk-based research, interviews with DVSM staff and specialist service providers and an organisational self-analysis. A workshop was held to build on the knowledge of staff and to explore **why** and **how** DVSM would support sole fathers with accompanying children and to define the next steps towards achieving this for the organisation.

Throughout this project it was evident that fathers experienced impacts that are unique to their role as a parent and their experience as homeless. Factors such as a lack of suitable accommodation for homeless fathers to be with their children are rare and single men's accommodation is predominantly available is unsafe for children and can lead to rough sleeping and potential risk to family separation. The stakeholders we engaged with during the course of this project told us that the lack of services available for sole fathers with accompanying children had driven the establishment of their services.

Research indicates that the meaning that fathers take from their relationship with their children can be a motivating factor to improve the conditions of their lives. Yet support needs to be timely and practical in the initial response as fathers are most likely to respond to support at first point of contact with a specialist homelessness service, after which time motivation drops away.

Through the course of this project DVSM has defined why and how it is going to continue to work with fathers with accompanying children. A set of recommendations have been developed that set out a clear course of action designed to increase referrals through targeted outreach, and a review and re-brand of our messages and materials for this client group. DVSM will build on the knowledge and skills of staff to ensuring a best practice response to sole fathers with accompanying children.

DVSM has set an ambitious 3 stage plan for this work:

- Stage 1 will focus on building DVSM's existing response to sole fathers with accompanying children.
- Stage 2 will consider how we can support fathers experiencing homelessness to have safe relationships and access to their children in acknowledgement of the unmet needs of this group.
- Stage 3 recognises that through our work with fathers we are likely to be working with some men who are perpetrators of violence against women and looks at this as an opportunity to engage with these men and explore ways to transform this behaviour.



A concept map was developed during the workshop to capture the discussion and agreements reached about what ROAR needs to do next within Stage 1 for working with Fathers. Details of these 'next actions' are presented in a table included in the full report.

### Acknowledgement and Appreciation

Domestic Violence Service Management would like to acknowledge and thank the following stakeholders and contributors to this learning and work;

- Canberra Fathers and Children Service – Anthony Rochester
- Australian Catholic University – Institute of Child Protection Studies – Dr Justin Barker
- Vincentian House Surry Hills – Kerri-Anne Williams
- NSW Department of Family and Community Services – SHS Western Sydney District
- Homelessness NSW – Dougie Wells

Sightlines would like to acknowledge the ROAR Team throughout this project, in particular for;

- sharing the highlights and challenges of their day to day work.
- sharing their individual and team reflections.
- being open to questions and to new learning.
- being engaged and committed to continuous improvement for all clients.



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## Project Background

Domestic Violence NSW Service Management (DVSM) is a public benevolent institution which aims to empower clients to make permanent positive changes to improve their safety and wellbeing. We do this by providing a range of services to prevent and support recovery from domestic and family violence (DFV) and/or to access safe, secure, stable housing homelessness.

DVSM delivers three separate services from different locations across NSW including:

- Refuge, Outreach, Action, Response (ROAR) – Blacktown and the Hills – Western Sydney
- Moving Out Moving On (MOMO) – City of Sydney
- Wilcannia Safe House

Refuge Outreach Action Response (ROAR) assists:

- Women and children escaping domestic violence
- Women exiting institutions
- Sole fathers with accompanying children
- Women and children escaping domestic and family violence to keep their pets as part of their family while living within our crisis accommodation.

Sightlines, the Professional Services Division of DVSM, provides capacity building internally to DVSM's client services and to external organisations through consultancy services.

The project was undertaken to improve our understanding and service response needs of sole fathers with accompanying children who are at risk of/or are experiencing homelessness, a relatively new client cohort for DVSM and our ROAR service. As ROAR is based in Western Sydney, the focus aimed to understand the needs of, and improve service responses for sole fathers with accompanying children within this region to improve our existing service. The project is part of a broader focus within DVSM to provide quality, evidence based services to all our clients to improve client needs and be client centric in service provision. The main issues identified at the beginning of the project was that:

- We didn't know much about the client group
- We were unsure of the size of the client group so we were unable to determine numbers
- We didn't know what other services for this client group were doing.

## What did we want to do about it?

The purpose of this project was to identify the service needs of sole fathers with accompanying children at risk of/or experiencing homelessness in Western Sydney; and to support DVSM staff and sector stakeholders to use this evidence base to improve the service design and delivery for these clients.

The project was conducted through a combination of desk-based research, interviews with DVSM staff, other specialist service providers and an organisational self-analysis. In March 2016 a workshop was held to build on the knowledge of staff of the realities that sole fathers with accompanying children face. A space was created that enabled participants to explore **why** and **how** DVSM would support sole fathers with accompanying children and to inform the recommendations contained in this report.

## Project Methodology

### Desk Based Research

- Report - 'Dad, Where are we Going to Live Now?' (Report)
- Report - 'More than just me: Supporting fathers who are homeless.'
- SHS Practice Guidelines
- Separated fathers and the father's rights movement

### Stakeholder Interviews/Presentations

- ROAR Team
- DVSM Team
- Canberra Fathers and Children Service
- Australian Catholic University – Institute of Child Protection Studies
- Vincentian House
- NSW Department of Family and Community Services – SHS Western Sydney District
- Homelessness NSW

### Organisational self-analysis

- Staff Survey
- Client data analysis

### Workshop

- Testing research with experience
- Transfer of Knowledge
- Build relationships with expert facilitators (Canberra Fathers and Children Service)
- Enable DVSM Management and ROAR Team to formulate our approach
- Clarify and articulate where to next

### My Dad Our Home (Project Report)

- Information, Learning & Analysis
- Service Scope and Pathway Maps
- Next Steps
- Recommendations



## What the research says:

It quickly became clear that the needs of men with accompanying children (or fathers with accompanying children) were largely missing from the homelessness research and literature. The research that is available is weighted towards men without current custody of children. Despite this limitation, we have attempted to draw out the key issues for services wanting to work with this client group. Please note that we have deliberately avoided any publications by men's rights organisations, and have instead accepted the premise of Dr Michael Flood's that father's rights groups are harmful to fathers as much as they are harmful to mothers and children because of their focus on blame.

***"Separated fathers often feel profound grief, distress, and anger at the end of their relationships with their partners and their children. Some participate in 'fathers' rights' groups, a movement which claims to advocate on behalf of men and fathers who are the victims of discrimination and injustice in the Family Court and elsewhere. Yet such groups may do little to help fathers heal or to build or maintain ongoing and positive relationships with their children. Some men do find support in these groups, but they also may be incited into anger, blame, and destructive strategies of litigation". (Flood: 2012)***

### 1. Custody and Access to children

The literature discusses homeless fathers without distinguishing between fathers with primary custody of children, fathers with joint caring arrangements with another carer, fathers with some contact but no regular care arrangements and fathers with little or no contact with children. "Rarely do people think of homeless men as being fathers intimately connected to their children, even when they're unable to be with them." (Barker: 2014)

***This generalisation in the literature is a symptom of the early stages of research into this client group, and potentially reflective of the history of homelessness services for single men. It is highly likely that men who maintain primary or shared custody of children have differences that require greater scrutiny to allow service development.***

### 2. Father identity

The concept of fatherhood is raised in the literature as a primary motivator of men to improve the conditions in their lives. "Becoming a father had shifted the focus of their lives beyond their own interests and needs, and they recognised the need to 'step up' and make changes and improvements that would be a benefit to their children". (Barker: 2014) Dr Flood cites research that suggests that "Some men respond to divorce by making a priority of relationships with their children, setting aside differences with their ex-wives to ensure good co-parenting" (Flood: 2012)

When there is a conflict between the father identity and other identities (being homeless, being unemployed, substance misuse and having been through the criminal justice system), some men despair about their ability to be a father. This distress often leads to poor coping mechanisms and shame, which increased the time away from their children.

The men's experience of being parented also has an impact on their father identity, and this "informed their ideas of what it means to be a father". This could be exacerbated by the relationship with the children's mother, or if there were other supportive relationships (family or friends) that provided support for their relationships with their children.



***While providing very useful insights into when father identity could be used as motivator of engagement with services and change, this also highlights that the literature remains very alert to individual men presenting without accompanying children, rather to overall needs of the father and the children. “The findings suggest that acknowledging and supporting father identity and involvement can have positive outcomes” for single homeless men” (Barker: 2011).***

### 3. Interpersonal relationship with mother or other primary carer

The historical and current relationship with the mother or primary care giver (if not 50/50 shared care), are important aspects to address with sole fathers with children. “Factors such as the nature of the inter-parental relationship and the characteristics and life histories of both the father and the mother also affected their involvement. Indeed, it was by having a working relationship with the children’s mothers that enabled some single fathers to maintain contact with their children”. (Barker: 2011)

***It is very important that the history of the relationship with children and with mothers is considered when supporting sole fathers with children, so that any new arrangements made, especially when at risk of or homeless, are not onerous or dangerous for anyone involved.***

### 4. Structural barriers

Specialist homelessness services struggle to meet the needs of homeless fathers with children because of limited services designed to accommodate this group. In 2008/9 65% of children who accompanied their father/guardian had their accommodation needs unmet, in contrast with 37% of children accompanied by their mother/guardian. “Homeless accommodation for single fathers who were homeless and had children in their care is rare” (Barker: 2011). There are few refuges, strong competition for medium term accommodation (transitional properties), and the waiting lists are long for social housing.

This gap in services can have “a major impact on ability and willingness to have contact with children.” (Barker: 2014), lead to men not maintaining contact as active fathers, and homelessness can adversely affect fathers’ ability to parent and be involved with their children even if they have 50/50 access agreements. Services are generally not set up in a way that can support the involvement and contact of single fathers with their children. The only exception to this is Canberra Fathers and Children Service in the ACT. (Barker: 2011)

Another structural issue that prevents us knowing the size of the population of fathers who are homeless is that fathers presenting without accompanying children at specialist homelessness services they are classified as ‘single’, even if they do have parental agreements. This contributes to a lack of data on the size of the population that require services. This also means that data on sole fathers is significantly under-reported. (Barker, Kolar, Mallet, McArthur, & Saunders, 2011) Ensuring this data is linked to mothers will provide better insight into overall family homelessness.

## **What are the gaps in research – what don’t we know?**

The 2011 study ‘More than just me: Supporting fathers who are homeless’ found that homeless fathers are rarely included in homelessness research with much of the work focusing on families and

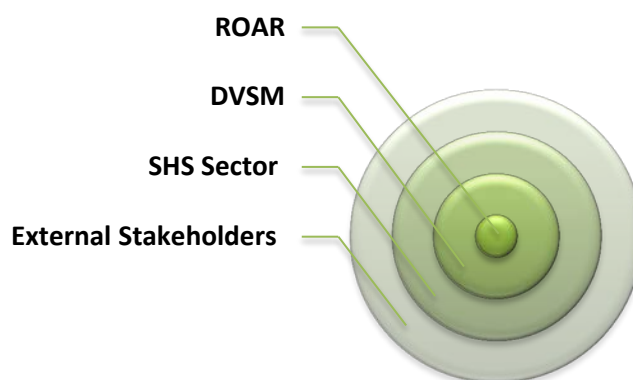
single mothers. The result of which is a gap in our understanding of the experiences of sole fathers who are homeless and their families.

*"We do not know:*

- *How many sole fathers without accompanying children access specialist homelessness services.*
- *What happens to sole fathers with accompanying children when they are turned away from specialist services – where do they go?*
- *How children are affected by their experiences of homelessness when they are cared for by a single father. This would include children who accompany their fathers and are being turned away by services.*
- *What interventions are helpful for fathers dealing with grief, despair, loss and trauma, and which therapeutic responses are most effective."* (Barker, Kolar, Mallet, McArthur, & Saunders, 2011, p. 84)

## Project Stakeholders

The primary stakeholders for this project are the ROAR client services staff and DVSM as an organisation, however it is recognised that this project may provide valuable insight to the broader SHS sector and other external stakeholders working with sole fathers with accompanying children. As a result this project also makes recommendations towards the sector more generally if there is an interest in working with sole fathers. DVSM will share the learnings of this project with these key target stakeholders.





## Who did we talk with and what did that tell us?

We held meetings and interviews with five stakeholders (including staff working) actively with this client group. The small number of external stakeholders engaged in the information gathering process reflects the limited specialised support available for sole fathers with accompanying children.

During interviews with stakeholders, DVSM took steps to communicate its commitment to ensuring shared learning and benefit from the project. In addition it made commitments to collate the learning into a report. This report 'My Dad Our Home' seeks to host, distil and distribute these learnings.

It is important to note the central role that Canberra Fathers and Children Service played in shaping this project. Canberra Fathers and Children Service is Australia's only crisis accommodation service specifically for sole father families and their experience and insight into the needs and how best to respond to these families is unmatched in this country.

### About Canberra Fathers and Children Service:

We work with the *relationship* between people and their families and communities because we understand that individuals are embedded in their communities and that children's long-term wellbeing particularly benefits from this approach.

We are committed to ensuring everyone gets some assistance, no matter what. We practice a 'no turn away' policy. This approach is especially important when working with people affected by poverty, homelessness and other forms of social disconnection. (Canberra Fathers and Children Service)

## Key Insights

The information gathered below represents a broad snap shot of what we learnt through our interviews and meetings through the stakeholder engagement process. We have summarised the key insights from our meetings in the sections that follow.

### Availability of service

The stakeholders we engaged with told us that the lack of services available for sole fathers with accompanying children was the driver for the establishment of their services and programs. In the case of services in the Sydney region it was clear that the needs of this client group outstripped the support that was available; however there was not a clear picture of the scale of the need in the Sydney region.

Services supporting fathers said:

- There are very few services that have specialised support for fathers with accompanying children who are at risk of or experience homelessness.



- We were set up as we realised that there were no services available that support fathers with kids.
- An inner city service said that many of the referrals we get are from Western Sydney.
- There is more work opportunities in Western Sydney such as labouring, traffic control, and packing in warehouses, so we are looking for services/accommodation in Western Sydney.
- Linking with DVSM to provide outreach support to clients who are leaving our crisis accommodation and wanting to move to Western Sydney could be an opportunity.

### **Who are we seeking to work with and why?**

Canberra Fathers and Children Service raised two questions that they saw as critical for DVSM to be able to answer in order to effectively work with sole fathers with accompanying children:

- Who do we mean by 'sole fathers with accompanying children'?
- What is the outcome we are trying to achieve by working with sole fathers with accompanying children?

These questions have shaped much of the focus of this project and are addressed in the following sections.

Canberra Fathers and Children Service said:

- It would be important to understand what our contracts say about 'accompanying' children. What does this mean in terms of how many nights children are in their fathers overnight care?
- However this created a gap for all the dads that they did outreach with and so Canberra Fathers and Children Service set a low outreach support threshold for fathers to have their child in their overnight care at least 1 night in 14. To be eligible for accommodation support, fathers need to have their child in their overnight care at least 7 nights in 14.

### **Needs of sole fathers with accompanying children**

Many of the needs of sole fathers with accompanying children were similar to those experienced by other homeless people and families and include AOD use, mental health, financial stress, lack of support in the community and gambling. However sole fathers may also face specific needs related to their father identity and their homelessness. These include relationship breakdown, domestic violence, access issues, accessing accommodation that is appropriate for fathers and their children, parenting support, childcare and a fathers own behavioural issues that create barriers to contact with their children and addressing their homelessness.

Canberra Fathers and Children Service said that:

- Separation is the primary pathway into homelessness for sole fathers.
- When thinking about working with father you need to understand what are the interventions required to support fathers to access their children such as AOD, issues with violence, lack of social capital and mental health.

Other services said that:

- The fathers presenting are generally 'complex' needs clients, by the time they present to us they are at a fairly desperate point. They will have already tried to get their kids to stay with other family members and may have ended up living in their car.
- The issues we see with clients include AOD, gambling, many have casual employment histories that are insecure.
- Unlike women, men often don't have networks with social or health workers. For many men their only engagement with the social services sector will be with counsellors at job networks or centre link. (These may be good referral pathways.)
- The priority for dad's presenting is that they need accommodation for their children, and then they need support that enables them to meet their kid's needs.
- There also is a need for legal support around family law as access arrangements are often very informal.
- Their capacity to parent and their experiences of being parented themselves.
- Child care for single dads is one of the biggest issues that we find ourselves supporting clients with. Providers often need to have the ability to support kids with additional needs.



## Where is ROAR at?

As part of this project DVSM staff undertook a self-assessment process to understand where the organisation was 'at' in relation to working with sole fathers with accompanying children. This was a 3 part processes that looked at:

- Our obligations under our service agreement with the Department of Family and Community Services.
- The current picture and patterns at ROAR in terms of our support of sole fathers with accompanying children.
- The attitudes and perspectives of staff in regards to working with sole fathers with accompanying children.

## What our service agreement says:

DVSM's service agreement with the Department of Families and Community Services states that ROAR will support three client groups; women with their children experiencing domestic violence; women with children leaving custody or institutions; and men with accompanying children.

The service agreement does break target numbers down by cohort, so there is no mention of any specific targets in relation to each of fathers with accompanying children. Additionally, documentation doesn't provide any detail in relation to how DVSM ought to be working with 'men with accompanying children' beyond the mention that we must work with all clients to provide a full response as per the client's need and to deliver services in line with the SHS practice guidelines. . further look at the Specialist Homelessness Sector's Practice Guidelines reveals little additional information on sole fathers with accompanying children other than a suggestion that that '*staff working with these client need to be aware the vulnerabilities that homeless families may possess.*' (Department of Family and Community Services, 2014, pp. 54, Module 1) This is not surprising given the limited inclusion of sole fathers into research on homelessness. A

The limited detail in the service agreement and the Practice Guidelines indicates that working with this specific client group is a relatively new focus for the sector and confirms the value of initiating this project.

## Client Patterns:

As part of this analysis we pulled data from the Client Information Management System CIMS which gave us the number and gender of clients that ROAR had supported from March 2014 to March 2016. As ROAR only supports clients with children this enabled us to gain a fairly accurate picture of how the organisation was tracking with its support of sole fathers with accompanying children.

### Clients supported March 2014 – March 2016

Age	Males		Females		All clients	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
0-9	96	65.30%	110	32.90%	206	42.80%
10-14	27	18.40%	32	9.60%	59	12.30%
15-17	9	6.10%	14	4.20%	23	4.80%
18-24	3	2.00%	32	9.60%	35	7.30%
25-34	5	3.40%	72	21.60%	77	16.00%
35-44	3	2.00%	59	17.70%	62	12.90%
45-54	3	2.00%	13	3.90%	16	3.30%
55-64	1	0.70%	2	0.60%	3	0.60%
65+	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Incomplete data	4	-	5	-	9	-
Total	151	100%	339	100%	490	100%
Total Adult:	15	7.77%	178	92.23%	193	100%
ATSI	4	2.07%	24	12.44%	28	14.51%

The data indicates that 15 sole fathers had been supported in the previous two years, which is 7.7% of the total clients that ROAR had supported during this time. Further discussion from DVSM staff indicated that referrals of sole fathers had been slow during the initial phases of the service agreement however recent initiatives have been taken which have increased the number of fathers supported with ROAR currently supporting 9 sole fathers with accompanying children.

This cohort can find out about or access the ROAR service by:

- Drop in at our regular booth at Mission Australia offices in Blacktown
- Referral through the Vacancy management system on Linked2Home (under support)
- Distribution of men's brochures around the region enabling them to contact us directly or be referred from another service
- Via the DVSM website
- Advertising on HSNet

### Staff Survey

13 staff participated in an anonymous online survey designed to gather their views about working with sole fathers with accompanying children. Below are the summarised results from the survey with the full survey results available in Appendix 5.

- 93% of survey respondents said it was either quite important or very important for DVSM to be working with sole fathers with accompanying children.
- When asked about the hopes and opportunities for working with fathers there was breadth of response which included: addressing their homelessness; achieving outcomes for children and their families; growing the organisation; supporting male victims of DFV and ensuring equality in our work.
- 51% of staff either disagreed or strongly disagreed that the organisations brand and image was conducive to working with men, 23% were unsure and 23% felt that it was conducive.
- 75% of staff agreed that the culture of the organisation was conducive to working with sole fathers.
- Of the 8 staff working directly with clients 6 said they felt confident in their ability to work with sole fathers with accompanying children while 2 stated they were unsure as to their ability.
- When asked if there were possible risks working with sole fathers with accompanying children, 61% said no there weren't while 39% said there were risks. Some of the risks identified in the survey include:
  - Concerns as to how to respond if clients were perpetrators of DFV.
  - Some staff were uncertain if they required additional knowledge or a different approach to working with fathers.
  - Staff also raised concerns about their own safety.

The following analysis can be made from the staff survey:

- Staff feel strongly about the importance of working with sole fathers with accompanying children, however there are divergent opinions as to what they hope to achieve through this work.
- There is a concern that the organisations image is not conducive to working with fathers.
- Some work does need to be done to ensure staffs feel safe and confident in working with this client group.
- Four specific comments were made in the survey indicating that the organisation could employ male case workers to be better able to respond to this client group.
- Staff feel confident in their ability to work with sole fathers with accompanying children and feel that their organisations culture is conducive to supporting this client group.

This review indicates that up until this point DVSM is meeting its obligations under its service agreement and that clients value the support that is being provided. However it is clear that there are opportunities to improve our service response to sole fathers with accompanying children. For example:

While the western Sydney service is named ROAR, this logo appears alongside the broader organisation name of DVSM. There has been feedback that the link with domestic violence is a disincentive to use the service or pick up the brochure.





The staff at ROAR have both in-house and outreach clients and the offices are situated inside crisis accommodation designed for women and children. Some fathers have indicated a wish to be able to visit their case worker at their offices rather than in the community, something which is not possible given the current arrangements.

Identifying single fathers with accompanying children who have fallen through the cracks in services need to be identified. The following quote was given during an interview with one of DVSM clients to ascertain their perspectives on the support they received. *"It's been a really positive experience for me, prior to that nothing had happened for me for a long time but working with DVSM was a practical experience, they helped me with the problems I was facing".*

## Moving Ahead

Following the above investigation, a one day workshop was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2016 for staff and management from DVSM and the ROAR service to discuss and challenge our views. The purpose of the workshop was to develop a common understanding of **who** are 'sole fathers with accompanying children (at risk of or experiencing homelessness and to enable the organisation to make decisions about **why** and **how** we work with them.

The workshop was co-facilitated by Anthony Rochester, Executive Officer of the Canberra Fathers and Children Service who shared his insights and expertise to help guide participants through the processes of developing DVSM's approach to supporting sole fathers with accompanying children. Refer to Appendix 3 for the workshop purpose objective & schedule.

## Defining Scope and Eligibility

Through the course of the workshop it became evident that a specific definition of what 'accompanying' children means was required in order to inform eligibility of ROAR supports. The following definitions were developed.

### Eligibility:

- *accompanying children living with their father for 7 or more days in a regular fortnight.*
- *homeless men with a family court order for 50% shared care, that the mother agrees to DVSM in writing, she would allow if he is able to be accommodated .*

While we recognise that the state of homelessness can create barriers for a fathers contact with their children, at this stage, we are also limited by our service level agreement and must work with fathers who are accompanied by their children as full time care arrangements or the only impediment to shared care is homelessness.

Fathers who approach ROAR who do not meet these minimum eligibility criteria for support will receive a warm Referral to alternative SHS providers (where eligible) or to appropriate alternative

non-SHS services in a manner that is consistent with our obligations under a ‘no wrong door’ approach.

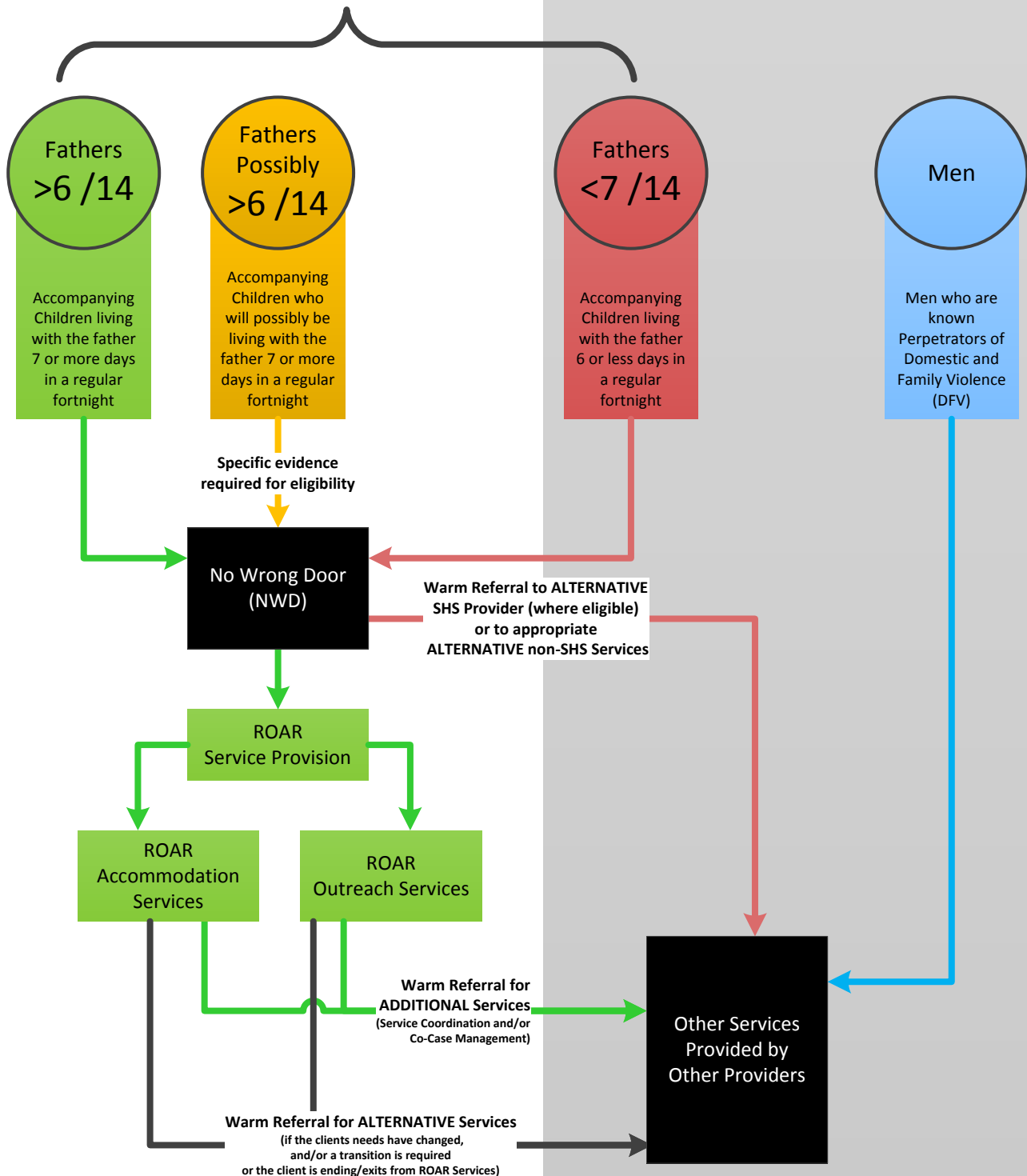
In defining this group it became clear that the primary purpose for ROAR’s work with these families was to address the underlying factors that are contributing to their risk of or experience of homelessness.

The following concept map, **‘Map 1 – Fathers – Scope and Eligibility (Men with accompanying children who are or at risk of homelessness)’** was developed during the workshop to capture the discussion and agreements reached about scope and eligibility.

## Map 1 – Fathers – Scope and Eligibility (Men with Accompanying children who are or at risk of homelessness)

**“All men matter”** – which men we work with, and how we work with them is determined by the scope of our funding contracts and our capacity to provide adequate duty of care and suitable supports to match client needs.

**“All fathers matter”** – which fathers we work with, and how we work with them is determined by the scope of our funding contracts and our capacity to provide adequate duty of care and suitable supports to match client needs – of fathers and their accompanying children.





## Overall findings

### How to support sole fathers with accompanying children

This question yielded a wealth of information and advice that can be broadly grouped into the following categories:

#### ***A focus on the ‘father identity’***

The literature supports the idea of leveraging the meaning of being a father with engagement of men and change. Canberra Fathers and Children Service uses this as the centre of their service response. They highlight the relationship between fathers and their children in an acknowledgement of the importance of this for fathers. Their approach is supported by research that indicates the ‘father identity’ is a key motivator for behaviour change needed to address the underlying issues that cause homelessness and create barriers to contact with their children. This includes violence, AOD use, gambling or their relationship with the mother of their children. Canberra Fathers and Children Service’ value of ‘fathers matter’ shapes their *Dad’s Place* service which enables fathers who do not have suitable accommodation to care overnight for their children where agreed and safe to do so. It focuses on working with hope, and strengthening their relationship with their kids.

#### ***A Practical timely response***

Stakeholders we spoke to told us that men’s highest point of motivation to address their issues is at the first point of contact, after that motivation drops away. They told us of the critical need for a rapid and practical response on first contact. Practical responses included help with paper work and engaging with housing or centre link, or support with furnishings, food and other basic needs. This then enabled focus to turn to some of a father’s underlying needs once the immediate crisis had passed.

#### ***A client centred approach***

All fathers are different; they have their own needs, and experiences that will shape the support that they require. The services we spoke with employed both female and male case workers acknowledging that clients had different preferences for which they were comfortable working with.

Some fathers may be looking for emotional support while others are just looking for help with the practicalities of addressing their homelessness. This means that while DVSM may need to build on staff confidence in working with men, staff will essentially require the same skills set that is required to support others experiencing homelessness.

The main thing fathers and their children need us to do is to engage with them, be guided by their hopes and dreams, and to modify our service in response to their feedback.



Canberra Fathers and Children Service said that:

- The Donovan research 1996/98 found that ‘father identity’ plays an important role in addressing their violence and this is a big motivator for behaviour change and to improve their situation which will address their homelessness.
- Men’s highest point of motivation to address their issues is at the first point of contact as a result Canberra Fathers and Children Service, has a no-wrong door policy, and they have high levels of engagement at first point of contact.
- In order to support dads with less than 7 of 14 days of overnight care who were homeless, we created ‘Dad’s Place’ which provides a space that enables dad’s to move in for the period that the kids are in their care. It focuses on working with hope, and strengthening their relationship with their kids. The men who use this service have some access, but generally their accommodation is not suitable.

It is realistic to provide effective support to fathers even if we don’t have accommodation. We know that only 20% of homelessness is addressed by homelessness services. It is usually addressed by family, friends and the community. But by supporting them to change their behaviours enables them to address their homelessness.

DVSM staff said that:

- It doesn’t take a different skill set or approach, as their needs are still the same (as other people experiencing homelessness).
- We could be looking at services that support their emotional needs (such as relationships Australia).

A DVSM client said that:

It’s not important for me if it is a male or female case worker. It’s nice to be able to speak to females from time to time I don’t get to do this very often given my situation.

Other services said that:

- Whenever we are working with a client we ask them if they are comfortable working with a male or female caseworker.
- One of the successes of the program is that we have men around, both in our crisis accommodation. This provides a good male role model both inside and outside the case management process.
- Accommodation and the kid’s needs are the priorities for dads and this is where the practical support often needs to focus. The personal/social support often comes after that through the



lens of supporting dads to support the kids.

- We are tapping into family day care options which provide more flexibility of hours for labouring or shift work.
- We provide intensive support in the first 4-6 weeks while they are in crisis-accommodation; they are often in crisis accommodation for 6 months, then outreach can go for 12 months to 2 years.
- Most of the dads with kids still need other strategies to help them have contact with their children such as the 'Supporting Children After Separation Program' (SCASP) or the 'Personal Care Service Program' (PCSP) however the reality is that homeless fathers are not able to access these programs.

### **Sole fathers and domestic and family violence**

According to the Canberra Fathers and Children Service on first engagement approximately 5% of fathers they work with disclose that have used 'coercive and controlling behaviour including violence' in their relationships with their partners (i.e. are perpetrators of DFV). However this goes up to around 30% disclosure once a trusting relationship has been established with the client. Given that we know that relationship break down is one of two key drivers of homelessness among sole fathers it is likely that DVSM will come in contact with fathers who are perpetrators of DFV. DVSM will need to carefully consider how it responds to these fathers (if they disclose this information). It is also possible that fathers that DVSM supports may also be victims of violence. If this is the case DVSM will be well placed to support these victims.

Canberra Fathers and Children Service said that:

- Following separation, many fathers number one concern is their ongoing relationship with their children. 'Dad's Place' takes the heat out of this crisis by supporting his relationship with his children when it is safe to do so and with the agreement of the child's mother/ legal guardian.

All Stakeholders acknowledged that:

- Fathers/men are at times also victims of domestic and family violence and that when this is the case the appropriate support needs to be provided.
- You can't discount the relationship between sole father families and domestic violence. After working with our clients and building up trust approximately 30% disclose that violence was been part of their family life. Of those most of them identified it as 'situational violence' i.e. not always coercive controlling though this is interpretive and is very hard to pull apart in terms of if it is domestic violence or not.

## Branding and Image

DVSM's brand and image was identified as not attractive to fathers with accompanying children. The two issues are the use of the domestic violence logo and the strong female imagery for overall DVSM and ROAR services. Canberra Fathers and Children Service has demonstrated that with careful consideration an organisation can adapt its brand and image in a way that enables it cater for a variety of client groups in a manner that enables and encourages fathers to seek support.

Canberra Fathers and Children Service said that:

- Dads are going to pick up on the vibe of the organisation such as the name 'Domestic Violence Service Management'.
- We developed a very deliberate branding strategy to differentiate our services for fathers and those for homeless people more generally. (<http://connectionsact.org.au/>, <http://firstpoint.org.au/> & <http://www.canfacs.org.au/>). We know that homeless women are less likely to access homeless services that are operated by a men's organisation.





## What next for DVSM?

### A Staged Approach

DVSM has identified and acknowledged who it can work with now, and who we may be able to work with in the future. A map was developed during the workshop to capture the discussion about a sequenced approach to widening our client scope and service menu. Each stage is indicated in the map markers 1-3 on the concept map that follows - **'Map 2 – A staged approach to service design and provision for 'Fathers' and for 'Men'.**

#### Stage 1:

Stage 1 focuses on improving DVSM's existing response for fathers with accompanying children. A series of actions have been identified which will enable DVSM to increase referrals, build the knowledge and skills of the organisation ensuring a best practice response to sole fathers with accompanying children.

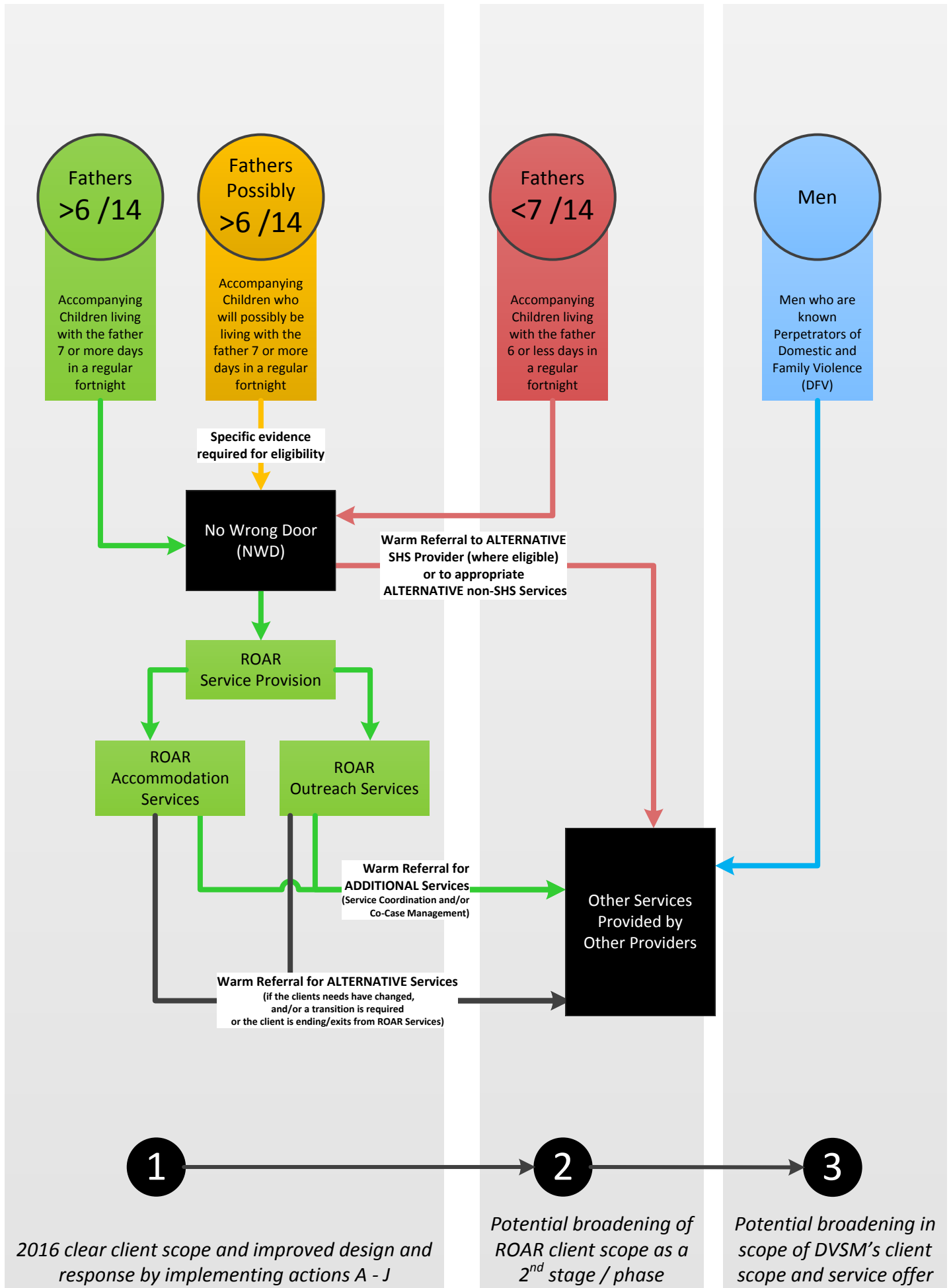
#### Stage 2:

Acknowledges the research and stakeholders feedback on the gaps in the service for sole fathers with accompanying children who have less than 50% shared care. While DVSM is not currently in a position to support these fathers in the short term, the organisation has ambition for the medium term based on a successful implementation of stage 1 and assuming continued alignment of this work with the organisations strategic direction.

#### Stage 3:

Is grounded in the organisations vision *"a world where women, families and communities live free from violence, have equal rights, opportunities, and the freedom to reach their potential"* it recognises that through our work with fathers we are likely to be working with some men who are perpetrators of violence against women and looks at this as an opportunity to engage with these men and explore ways to transform this behaviour. Stage 3 is an aspirational focus that will be dependent on building a body of knowledge of how to support fathers; and to develop practices that use 'father identity' as a key motivator for behaviour change.

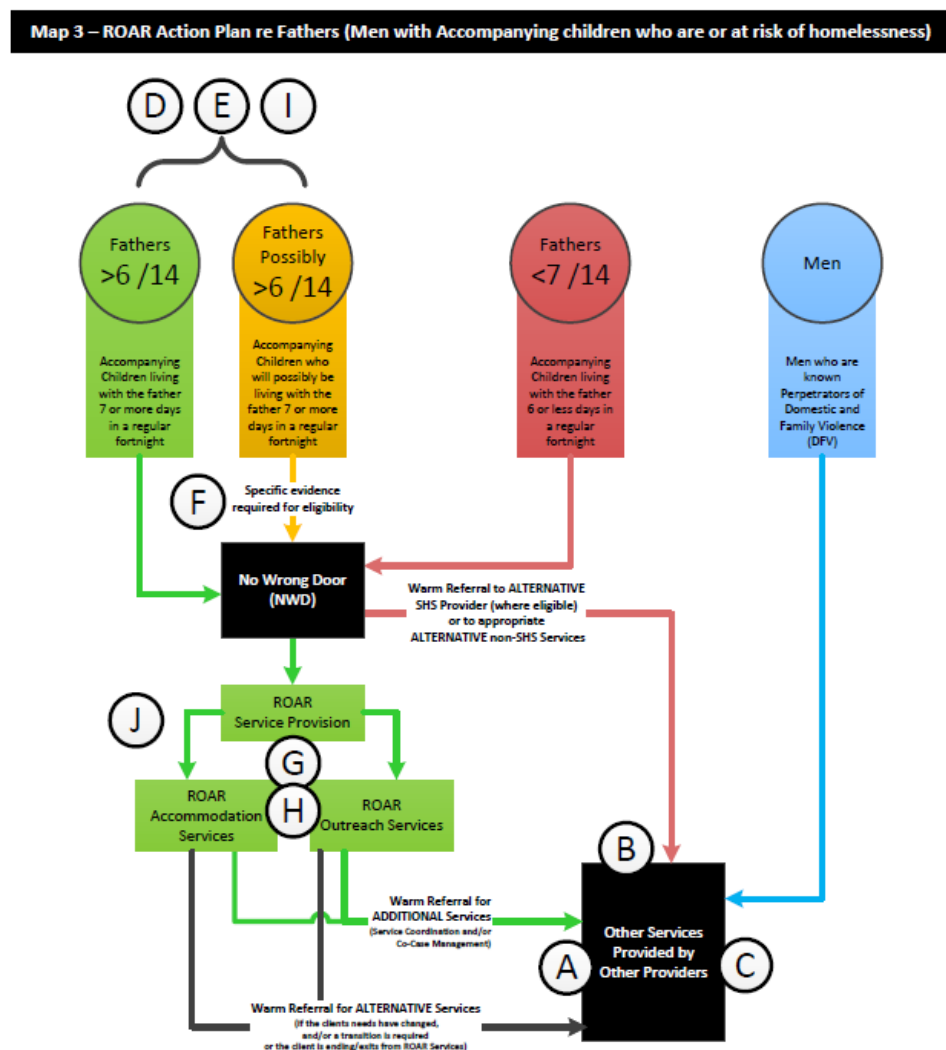
## Map 2 – A staged approach to service design and provision for ‘Fathers’ and for ‘Men’





## What next for ROAR?

A map was developed during the workshop to capture the discussion and agreements reached about what ROAR needs to do next for working with Fathers. Each action item is indicated in the map markers A-J on the concept map below ‘**Map 3 – ROAR Action Plan re Fathers (Men with Accompanying children who are or at risk of homelessness)**’.



The following table details the description of each agreed action against the corresponding map marker. The table also documents and the anticipated purpose/value of this action.

Map #3 Marker	Description of Agreed Action	Purpose/Value of this action
A	Build a localised service directory of Western Sydney services who provide to men with accompanying children living with their father for >6 days in a regular fortnight.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A localised directory expedites the time taken to achieve a warm referral, and/or service coordination or co-case management as needed.</li> <li>The process of building and maintaining the directory is an opportunity for ROAR staff to build and build on referral networks.</li> </ul>
B	Build a localised service directory of Western Sydney services who provide to men with accompanying children living with their father for <7 days in a regular fortnight.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fathers with accompanying children living with them for less than the number of nights set by ROAR's eligibility criteria used are quickly supported to access other SHS services or non-SHS services to match their needs.</li> </ul>
C	Build a localised service directory of Western Sydney services who provide support for men who have disclosed or known to be perpetrators of Domestic and Family Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Men seeking services who have self-referred to ROAR, or have been referred to ROAR in error, can be quickly and suitably referred to local services</li> <li>Fathers with accompanying children who access ROAR Services and later disclose the presence or history of Domestic and Family Violence (as the perpetrator) can be quickly and suitably referred to local services</li> </ul>
D	Review and re-brand our messages and materials for this client group. Setting consistent agreed language for Fathers in the overall DVSM publications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DVSM agreement to use the term 'Fathers' rather than 'men with accompanying...'</li> <li>A re-think is needed on the use of suitable and engaging images for fathers to use the project learning in practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential increase in self-referrals and</li> <li>Potential increase in referrals from within and out of catchment if our service offer and eligibility is better understood</li> </ul>
	➤ 'About Fathers' on the DVSM Website	
	➤ Revised 'Fathers with accompanying children' Brochure /Communications' Material for MOMO services, including the pop-up service	
E	Promote ROARs services for fathers with accompanying children through a 'referral in network' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the 'referral in' network</li> <li>Use the revised communications material and clear agreement on eligibility to promote to and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce referrals of ineligible fathers</li> <li>Increase the understanding of ROAR's service offer and client scope</li> <li>Increase the potential for referrals into ROAR</li> <li>Equip Referrers with information about ROAR ahead of their first contact with ROAR</li> </ul>



Map #3 Marker	Description of Agreed Action	Purpose/Value of this action
	inform referrers	
F	Define and document the evidence criteria that can be used to confirm whether a father has the possibility of his children living with him 7 or more days within the fortnight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear eligibility criteria manages client expectations, supports staff to provided consistent processes, and allows equitable access based on evidence</li> </ul>
G	Collate and adapt useful conversational tools when supporting fathers with accompanying children. Build a bank of these resources over time as a support for new staff and/or staff new to working with fathers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A coordinated approach to sharing tools and experience is a low/cost way for DVSM to build staff confidence and readiness to work with fathers with accompanying children</li> </ul>
H	<p>Feedback from fathers is invited, before during and after access to ROAR Service</p> <p>Questions are tailored, where required, to understand the needs/preferences of fathers with accompanying children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback from fathers with accompanying children can be used to inform continuous improvement for ROAR and DVSM broadly, as well as inform DVSMs shared learning with stakeholder networks.</li> </ul>
I	DVSMs overall message about working with fathers is updated and public for funders, referrers, stakeholders and directly for fathers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear communication about client scope and about service provision improves wider understanding of DVSMs work and reach</li> </ul>
J	<p>Staff competence and confidence in working effectively with fathers with accompanying children can be monitored over time and can inform</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the learning and development priorities of managers, teams and individuals as required</li> <li>the recruitment of new/additional staff in the future</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The quality of service provided to fathers with accompanying children will directly rely on the calibre and practices of DVSM staff. Investing in staff capacity to work with fathers, has the potential to impact fathers engagement in services</li> </ul>

## Broader sector and system recommendations

- (1) That the District Homelessness Interagency Group (DHIG) for Western Sydney region establish a *working group on sole fathers with accompanying children* to lead efforts in the region to quantify the need; identify and link services supporting this client group; and to promote service improvement.
- (2) That the relevant data repositories publish disaggregated data for families that specifically includes sole fathers with accompanying children, and that this data;
  - be available to NSW Department of Family and Community Services to inform service design and resource allocation for SHS contracts and other FACS funded services
  - be available to all SHS services with visibility of district and local data
- (3) That the NSW Department of Family and Community Services updates the SHS Practice Guidelines with; specific information about the impact of homelessness on sole fathers with accompanying children particularly as it pertains to contact with their children; to provide services with information regarding the best practice approach to supporting these clients.

## Bibliography

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Barker, J., & Morrison, T. (2014, March). Supporting fathers who are homeless. *Research to Practice Series - Australian Catholic University*.

Canberra Fathers and Children Service. (n.d.). *About Us/Our practices*. Retrieved from canfacs.org.au: <http://www.canfacs.org.au/about-us/our-practices/>

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Flood, M. G. (2012). 'Separated fathers and the 'Fathers' Rights' Movement', *Journal of Family Studies*, 18 (2-3), 231-241  
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## Appendix 1: About DVSM – Information for Clients and Referrers

### About DVSM

Domestic Violence NSW Service Management (DVSM) is a public benevolent institution which aims to empower clients to make permanent positive changes to improve their safety and wellbeing.

#### What does that mean for me?

DVSM understands that everyone has different needs and will make different choices about how they want to navigate challenges in their lives.

DVSM recognises that relationships can be complex and that your decision to start, stay or end a relationship is not simple and is unique and personal to you. Our service is designed to have an emphasis on respect for your personal self-defined needs regardless of your current accommodation choice. Our clients are always at the centre of how we work.

Our focus is to provide different services to help you to keep safe and to make informed choices about what's best for you and your family. We do this by providing services ranging from; temporary respite from a violent relationship; to providing in-community support and referral, and longer term assistance if you wish to leave the violent relationship for good.

Each child's experiences are important and we work with you to support your child's needs, development, wellbeing and potential.

Pets are an important part of the family. Wherever possible we can support you with making alternative arrangements for the safety and care of your pet/s.

DVSM works in partnership with other services to help you can gain access the full range of services you may need to improve or strengthen your safety, health, wellbeing, education, employability and parenting.

DVSM delivers three separate services from different locations across NSW including:

- Moving Out Moving On (MOMO)
- Refuge, Outreach, Action, Response (ROAR) – Blacktown and the Hills
- Wilcannia Safe House



## Appendix 2: About ROAR – Information for Clients and Referrers

### About ROAR

Domestic Violence NSW Service Management (DVSM) is a registered charity which aims to prevent and support recovery from domestic and family violence and homelessness. Refuge, Outreach, Action, Response (ROAR) Service located in the Blacktown and Hills Area Health Districts, provides advice, support and referral for men with accompanying dependent children who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Our mission is to work for families in NSW to eliminate domestic and family violence, and homelessness through policy, advocacy, service delivery and best practice. Our team will be part of your journey for as long as you require.

### Fathers Matter

The ROAR team acknowledges the social, emotional and financial consequences of homelessness on men and their accompanying children. Our aim is to assist our clients in attaining and/or maintaining sustainable housing and to improve the conditions and opportunities in people's lives through integrated outreach support

### How does ROAR support fathers?

At the Refuge, Outreach, Action, Response (ROAR) service we provide individualised support. Our aim is to assist you to secure or maintain long term safe accommodation. Our case workers will work with you on an individual basis to achieve change in your life. Throughout the time that you are with us we may assist you with:

- Support to complete documentation
- Access to emergency food, medication or clothes
- Access to training opportunities
- Help to understand property care requirements of landlords
- Support to gain permanent housing
- Advocacy with real estates, Government agencies or other individuals
- Financial assistance
- Support to access family law or apprehended violence orders
- Access to education for your children and yourself
- Help with parenting needs

This list is by no means exhaustive and is really dependant on each individual and their own unique needs and the type and level of support that you require at any particular time whilst we are supporting you. Please note, ROAR cannot provide men with crisis accommodation.

You can get an appointment with this mobile service by calling (02) 96210800 or visiting the mobile service location (for further details about locations and days can be access through [www.dvnsdsm.org.au/where-we-are/ROAR](http://www.dvnsdsm.org.au/where-we-are/ROAR)).

### Appendix 3: Workshop Records - Schedule & Outline- Sole Fathers with accompanying children

#### Workshop Schedule 10am – 4pm, Thursday 31 March 2016

##### Workshop Purpose:

The Purpose of the workshop is to bring together DVSM staff and decision makers in order to develop a common understanding of **who** are sole fathers with accompanying children (at risk of or experiencing homelessness) and to enable the organisation to make decisions about **how** and **why** we work with them.

##### Workshop Objectives:

- To build participants knowledge of the realities that sole fathers with accompanying children face; **who** they are; their needs and how to effectively support them.
- Create a space that enables participants to explore if we are best placed to work with sole fathers with accompanying children, if so **how** and **why** would DVSM do this?
- Develop recommendations that support DVSM to work with sole fathers with accompanying children.

##### Workshop Participants:

- 3 Case Workers, ROAR
- Service Coordinator, ROAR
- Area Manager, ROAR
- Service Manager, MOMO
- Finance Manager
- Sightlines Manager
- General Manager

##### Facilitators/Speakers:

- Executive Officer - Canberra Fathers and Children Service
- Consultant, Sightlines - DVSM



Time	Session
10 – 10:30	<b>Introductions, background, group agreement &amp; expectations</b>
10:30 – 11:15	<b>Where is DVSM 'at'</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vision, purpose &amp; values of DVSM</li> </ul> <b>Where is ROAR 'at'</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding where ROAR is at in terms of working with sole fathers with accompanying children. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Program scan that looks at client's, staff &amp; service capacity'</li> <li>Illuminate the broad perspectives of staff in regards to work with men</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Break 11:15 – 11:30	
11:30 – 12:45	<b>Exploring our motivations?</b> <b>Canberra Fathers and Children Service</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation from Canberra Fathers and Children Service on their programs and the drivers/motivators</li> </ul> <b>DVSM's motivations for working with sole fathers with accompanying children</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What are our motivations for working with sole fathers with accompanying children</li> </ul>
Lunch 12:45 – 1:30	
1:30 – 2:45	<b>Where is the Sector at:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The State of play of working with sole fathers with accompanying children.</li> </ul> <b>Working with sole fathers with accompanying children 101:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who are they, what are their needs &amp; how do we support them?</li> </ul>
2:45 – 3:45	<b>Moving this forward</b>
Closing 3:45 – 4:00	

#### Appendix 4: Where is ROAR 'at' - CIMS data

##### CIMS Data: Clients supported March 2014 – March 2016

Age	Males		Females		All clients	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>0-9</b>	96	65.30%	110	32.90%	206	42.80%
<b>10-14</b>	27	18.40%	32	9.60%	59	12.30%
<b>15-17</b>	9	6.10%	14	4.20%	23	4.80%
<b>18-24</b>	3	2.00%	32	9.60%	35	7.30%
<b>25-34</b>	5	3.40%	72	21.60%	77	16.00%
<b>35-44</b>	3	2.00%	59	17.70%	62	12.90%
<b>45-54</b>	3	2.00%	13	3.90%	16	3.30%
<b>55-64</b>	1	0.70%	2	0.60%	3	0.60%
<b>65+</b>	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
<b>Incomplete data</b>	4	-	5	-	9	-
<b>Total</b>	151	100%	339	100%	490	100%
<b>Total Adult:</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7.77%</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>92.23%</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>ATSI</b>	4	2.07%	24	12.44%	28	14.51%

# **CIMS Data: Clients Currently Supported March 2016**

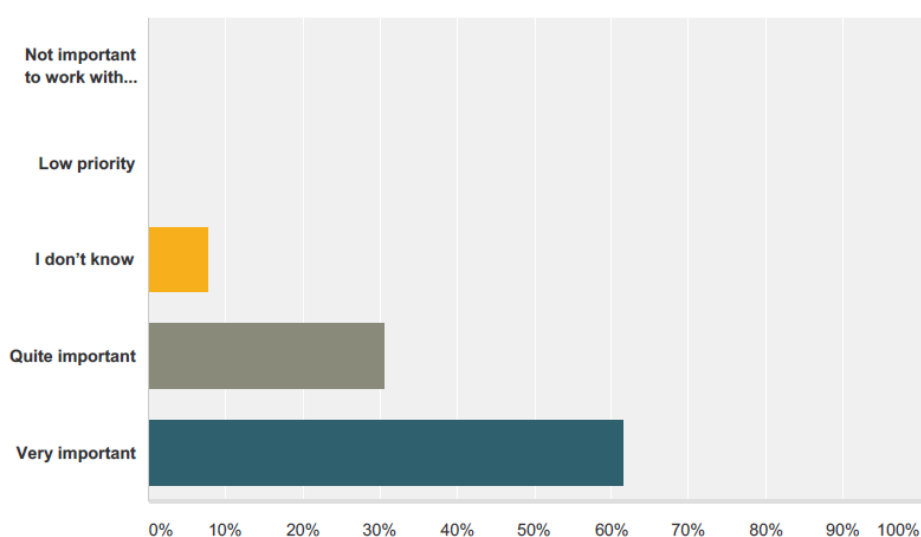
Age	Males		Females		All clients	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>0-9</b>	36	58.10%	47	38.50%	83	45.10%
<b>10-14</b>	11	17.70%	14	11.50%	25	13.60%
<b>15-17</b>	6	9.70%	2	1.60%	8	4.30%
<b>18-24</b>	1	1.60%	10	8.20%	11	6.00%
<b>25-34</b>	3	4.80%	28	23.00%	31	16.80%
<b>35-44</b>	3	4.80%	15	12.30%	18	9.80%
<b>45-54</b>	1	1.60%	5	4.10%	6	3.30%
<b>55-64</b>	1	1.60%	1	0.80%	2	1.10%
<b>65+</b>	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
<b>Incomplete data</b>	3	-	0	-	3	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Total Adult</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11.54%</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>88.46%</b>		<b>78</b>
<b>ATSI</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2.56%</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8.97%</b>		<b>11.54%</b>

## Appendix 5: Staff Survey Data

Men with children who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness

**Q1 If time and resources were unlimited, how important it is for DVSM to be working with men with children who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness?**

Answered: 13 Skipped: 0



### Question 1 – Comments

There are not many male centric services available to support men. I have a few male clients who feel this way and have said the same. Other comments such as "lots of services for women and children and if you are a male, it's like we don't matter, like we are not human".

If the men were at risk due to domestic violence situations, or were experience domestic violence it would be more relevant and in line with our organisation's expertise. If just at risk of homelessness, this is not.

I believe we should help as many men, women and children as possible. Men with children are just as important as women with children.

We are a specialist homeless service provider and we should not discriminate because of gender. Also by working with all areas of the community we gain a far better understanding of the complexities in working with all types of families in housing crisis.



**Questions 2: What are the opportunities/hopes in working with men with children at risk of/or experiencing homelessness?**

More services who can support men and the issues they are experiencing. It is really imperative to have male workers in DVSM to work with men as I have found that it can be a challenge to engage male clients with some of the issues they are experiencing. One client has said "it would be best to have a male worker as there is stuff that I am not comfortable in talking about to women. No offense". Men's refuge such as ROAR would be ideal which include their pets.

Reduced homelessness Better wellbeing outcomes for children

The hope in working with men with children would be to try and reduce their risks of experiencing homelessness. And to assist them to obtain safe affordable and sustainable accommodation.

To minimise homelessness for families, create a secure and stable environment for parents and their children to grow and develop as individuals.

To see increased support avenues for men with children leaving violence. To challenge social stigmas that exist about men as victims of DFV, especially where a woman is the perpetrator. To ensure that children can safely remain with the most appropriate and safe parent care-giver when there is Domestic and family violence.

To provide them with a brighter future for them and their children.

High possibility

Experience with a broader scope of clients which allows us to become a larger organisation in the long run.

That men with children seek out DVSM to assist them and that they are supported as a client (rather than a male) with the same level of support as women currently receive.

An opportunity would be that men often don't ask for help so if they have then the hope would be that the men leave our supported services with new skills and knowledge that they can and have put into practice in their life and that it's ok to ask for help.

In working with sole fathers previously there were limited NGO services, sole fathers in my experience do an amazing job but will go about the process in a far different way than a single mother but still with the same outcome. Opportunities are to be able to develop new links in the LGA's and to be able to reach a bigger and more diverse demographic. The children in a single parent family have already experienced a loss either recently or some time ago, there are now at risk or have already experienced another loss of a home - their security and the long term impact of this on the family unit and the stability and nurturing environment. Hopes are that we can halt this negative impact and create a stable environment for the family to flourish.

to be treated as a target client group equally

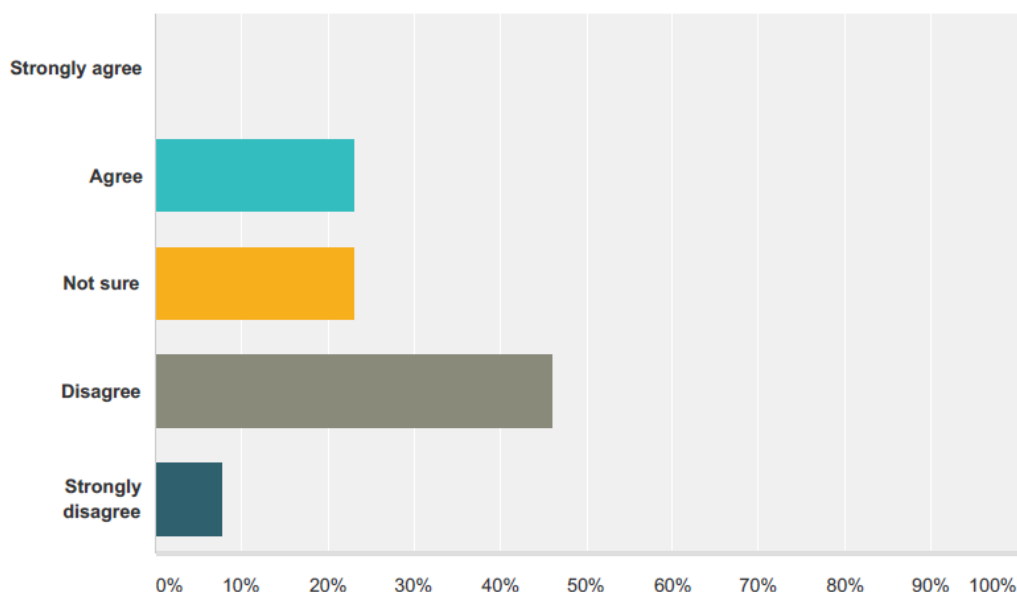
I currently have one male client on my caseload that is homeless due to dv from his wife and he has the sole care of his five youngest children. They are in Transitional accommodation for 3 months.





**Q3 Please state how you agree with this statement: Our organisations brand and image are conducive to working with men with children who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness?**

Answered: 13 Skipped: 0



**Questions 3 – Comments**

The men in my outreach case load are not at risk of homelessness due to domestic violence. I do not feel it reflect working with men in our organisation.

The branding is highly oriented to and about women

As an employee I know that we work with men with children. Although if I was a consumer wanting to access this service I believe that it may be difficult for men to realise we do work with them as our brochures do not really reflect that. And I also believe that a lot of men would think as we are a DV service that we wouldn't work with men.

Website may need some adjustments to highlight the fact that we also cater to assisting men and children experiencing homelessness.

We have always been focused on women, or women and children only, and always only accept clients if they are experiencing DFV.

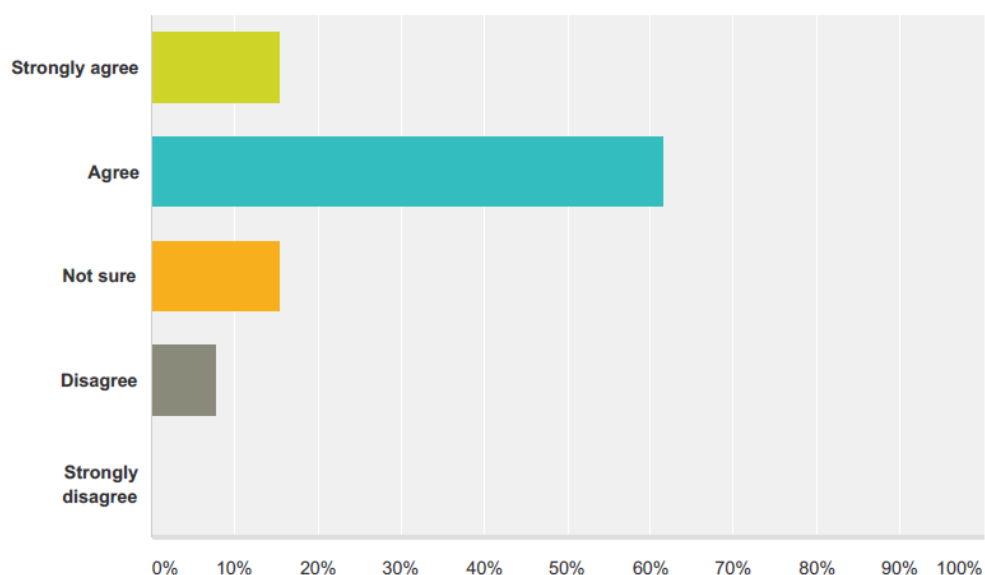
If we base this on current website and brochure branding it is not immediately obvious that DVSM provides services to men. The landing page of the website has pictures of women only and has a very "feminine vibe". As a man seeking assistance nothing would prompt me to look any further and I would assume this is a service for women.

Domestic Violence Service Management - even though many men support women who have experienced domestic and family violence they also are hesitant to be associated with a service that says DV as they do not want their peers to believe that they could be a perpetrator.



**Q4 How do you agree with this statement: Our organisations culture is conducive to working with men with children at risk of, or experiencing homelessness**

Answered: 13 Skipped: 0



**Question 4 – Comments**

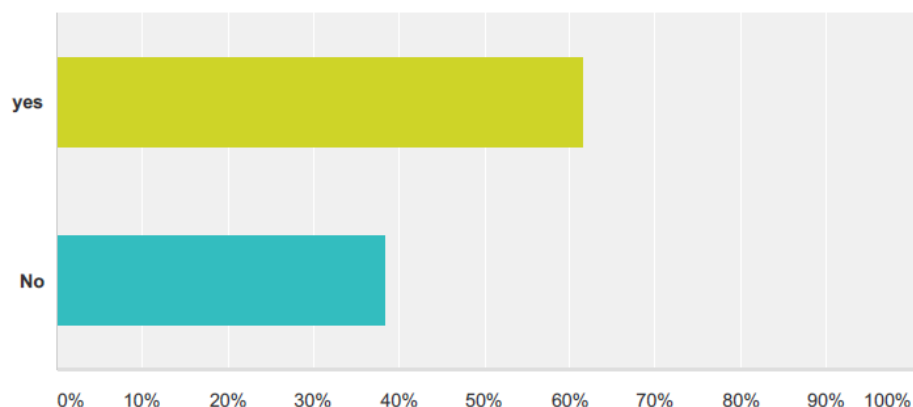
No wrong door policy...outreach...no judgement...equality of men and women requiring services and assistance.

Might need to work on what we would provide and do differently for men. Unsure of staff prior experience in working with men and if different training / supports needed



## Q5 Are you working directly with clients (Men or women)?

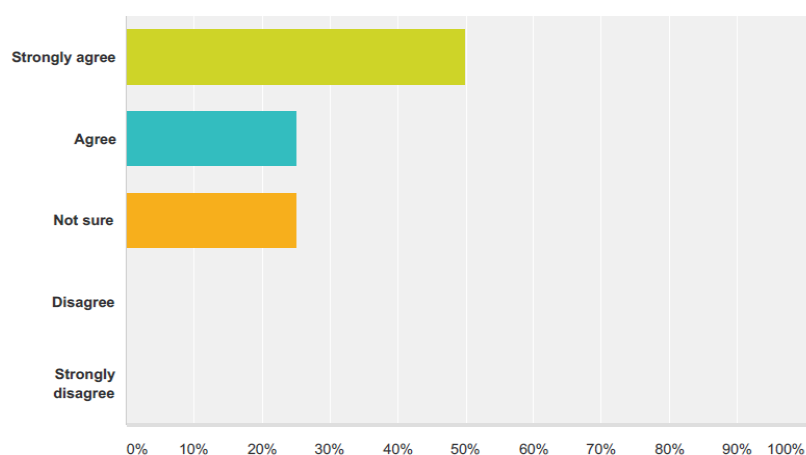
Answered: 13 Skipped: 0



(Only the 8 staff who responded yes to questions 5 answered this question)

## Q6 Please state how you feel about this statementI feel confident about my ability to work with men with children who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness.

Answered: 8 Skipped: 5



### Questions 6 – Comments

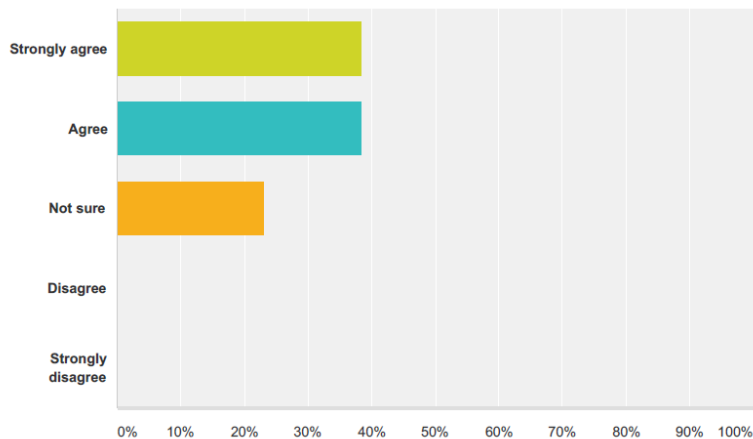
My social work career includes men with drug and alcohol abuse, mental health and homelessness however; I worked predominantly with women and children. Although I feel I have skills (tool box) and working organically across both, I strongly feel a male worker will have better outcomes with some male clients.

I am still picking up skills and learning although feel supported within my role



**Q7 Please state how you agree with this statementI feel confident about DVSM's ability as an organisation to work with men with children who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness.**

Answered: 13 Skipped: 0



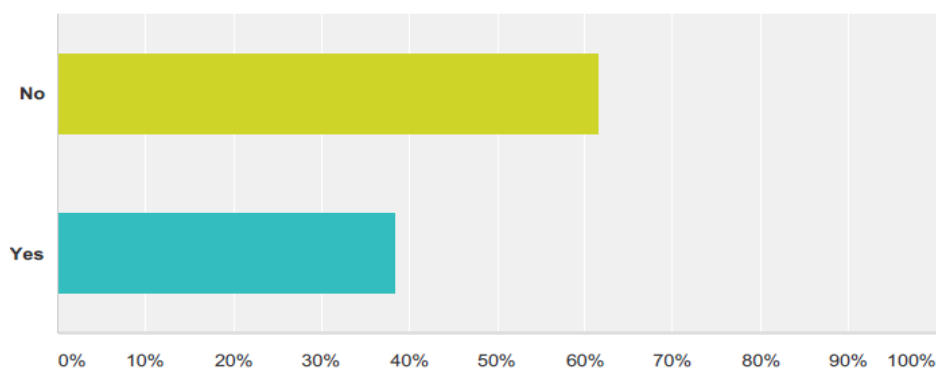
#### Question 7 – Comments

However, DVSM would benefit from having male workers.

Being client centred is foundational to any other work

**Q8 Do you see any risks or have any fears about working with men with children at risk of, or experiencing homelessness?**

Answered: 13 Skipped: 0



#### Questions 8 – Comments

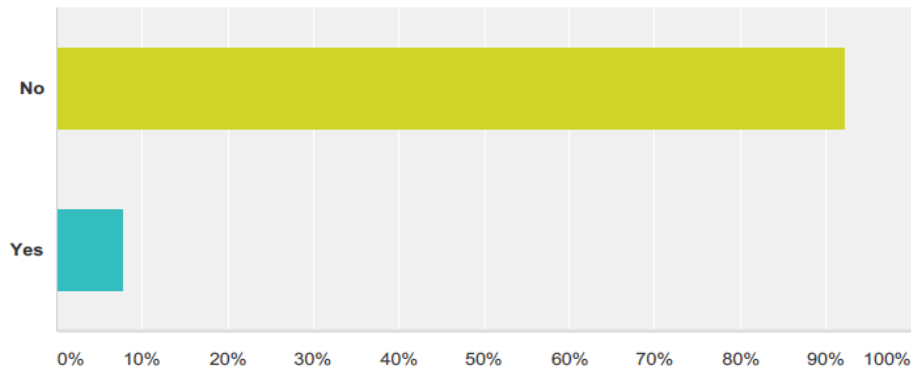
When working with men who may not consider women as equals.

Unclear about the potential cross over with supporting men and women at the same time and what this might mean. Also unclear about how possible / likely it is that some of this client group might also be perpetrators of DFV



**Q9 Is there anything else you would like to tell us in regards to working with men with children who are at risk of, or experiencing homelessness?**

Answered: 13 Skipped: 0



**Questions 9 – Comments**

Please fund us for male workers to work with men as not all male clients want to engage with women.

Provide them with the tools they need to be self-sufficient with their children Get them educated (further education) Get them presented with better workplace/housing opportunities Ensure the children do not suffer during this process Create an environment of trust Aligned to government models/institutions

Maybe not a risk but men are not as good as women with speaking out if they need help. Working with men and children may mean having to work with them longer

There will always be risks with any client when working in this sector - no matter what gender.

There might be more of a safety risk when doing solo home visits with men.

## Appendix 6: ROAR Client Case Study

### ***Case study: Supporting Peter (not his real name)***

Peter is a middle aged Aboriginal man, who was referred to us by another service. He had seven children (aged 17, 15, 13, 11, 8, 6 and 4), two of whom were living with him, the other three youngest were living with the mother and he had regular weekend access with the younger ones. He had intermittent access with his two other children. When he came to us he said he had worn out his welcome living with his dad and the two kids that were living with him were having issues at school. His main goal was to find housing and to move back to the Blue mountains/Lithgow area where his three youngest kids were. He engaged pretty quickly and we met the next day after his referral.

It was clear that there were series of barriers that made it difficult for him to meet his requirements such AOD issues, he was suffering from depression, he had a disability which stopped him working and he had been in prison in his youth. He also had motivational issues and I ended up taking Peter to the appointment (as he did not follow up on warm referrals) this was the same with Centrelink and housing to get him into the door. Once there he did the process himself. After 6 weeks of working with him we had lodged his application with Aboriginal Housing and had secured some temporary accommodation in Lithgow and then he just dropped off and we lost contact with him. I followed him up and we got no response then we received a letter from Centrelink that we no longer had access to his record.

If I had my time again, I would have committed more time with him like he was in crisis (like the clients at the crisis centre). The challenge was that he was harder to access because he was in outreach, not on site, so everything took longer. I would have gone with him more to support him to attend his appointments, to sort out his financial problems and also to accompany him to his meetings in Lithgow. This would have needed more time from a work perspective; and there are limits to the amount of support that could be provided, and traveling with him Lithgow would have been outside of a reasonable request. I also never got to meet the kids, and had I been able to it would have been good to provide the whole family support, not just Peter, but this was not really possible given the transient nature of working with Peter and the family.



## Appendix 7: Workshop Notes

### Session 1: Group Agreement

- Every opinion is equal
- Respect for others
- Non-judgemental, get biases out
- What is said in the room stays in the room
- Allow big thinking
- Focus on the important things, stay on track but also be flexible
- Have a carpark for issues that we can't deal with now

### Session 1: Expectations

- How do we define 'accompanying' when we talk about fathers with accompanying children
- Are we going to work with male victims of DFV?
- Who are we talking about
- To get more info on the needs of fathers with accompanying children
- Approaches/best practice. We need tools to break down barriers
- How to work with misogyny
- To be conscious of our obligations vs our motivations
- Best practice for working with different clients
- How long do we support this client group for
- Where are the clients and how do we reach them
- Explore our constraints (staff, organisation, skills, brand, clients)
- What else exists – what is appropriate
- Understanding what our clients want us to do
- Draw on our experience

### Session 3: Ideas for working with men with accompanying children

- Define "Accompanying"
- Ideas for referral pathways into ROAR
- In a DFV context who can we/can't we work with
- Working with fathers who are perpetrators of our clients
  - Using two separate caseworkers
  - This raises the question of who is our client (fathers or mothers)
- What issue are we addressing (DFV or fathers who are homeless)
- Working with perpetrators to prevent homelessness and reduce DFV
- We need to change the language we use from 'men' to 'fathers'
- Fathers with Children (who are homeless)
  - How many nights do they have to have their children? 1,2,3 etc.?
- We need to understand what happens to those who don't meet our criteria?



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- NSW Department of Family and Community Services  
Specialist Homelessness Services - Western Sydney District
- Homelessness NSW