Acknowledgments

This work was completed with the assistance of staff from Women NSW of the Department of Communities and Justice and the NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

We would also like to thank the many players and club leaders from the six participating rugby league clubs we visited, as well as other key community, service provider and program-level stakeholders. We thank them for their time and insights and trust that their views are adequately represented in this report.

ARTD consultancy team

Fiona Christian, Sue Leahy, Ruby Leahy Gatfield, Samantha Joseph, Jack Cassidy, Holly Kovac, Kieran Sobels and Pravin Siriwardena
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<td>ABS</td>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADVO</td>
<td>Apprehended Domestic Violence Order</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRL</td>
<td>Country Rugby League</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFV</td>
<td>Domestic and family violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCJ</td>
<td>Department of Communities and Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECAV</td>
<td>NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRL</td>
<td>National Rugby League</td>
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<tr>
<td>WNSW</td>
<td>Women NSW</td>
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<tr>
<td>BOCSAR</td>
<td>NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research</td>
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<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Area</td>
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Executive summary

The Tackling Violence program

Tackling Violence is a community education, early intervention and prevention program funded by Women NSW and delivered by the NSW Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV). It aims to ‘reduce the incidence of domestic and family violence (DFV) by building knowledge and awareness about DFV and promoting positive attitudes and behaviours towards women through engagement with Rugby League Clubs.’

The program is comprised of four core components:

- a Code of Conduct that commits clubs to penalising and supporting players who perpetrate DFV in return for $3,000 in sponsorship
- education sessions delivered to club players and members once annually
- community awareness activities, including attending community events and distributing online and traditional promotional materials
- referrals and support arrangements linking clubs to local DFV services.

The evaluation

Women NSW engaged ARTD Consultants to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program in its current form, establish baselines to measure outcomes and contract deliverables in the future, and accurately inform program redesign efforts.

The evaluation assessed the strengths and challenges of program delivery for 2017–18, outcomes achieved, and how the model can be improved in the future. It used a mixed-method design, drawing on:

- a literature scan of DFV prevention in sports settings
- a scan of program documentation, including previous evaluation reports, project reports submitted by ECAV and Women NSW, draft program logics, club sponsorship documents, administrative and contractual documents, and online video resources
- site visits to six participating clubs to interview players (n=17), club leaders (n=19), local police (n=3), and local DFV services (n=5)
- interviews with program-level stakeholders comprising ECAV staff (n=7); Department of Communities and Justice stakeholders from Aboriginal Outcomes (n=2), Women NSW (n=1) and District representatives (n=2); NSW Police (n=1), Country Rugby League representatives (n=3), and DFV peak body representatives (n=2)
- secondary program data comprising a results summary of ECAV’s 2018 online survey of players and club members and education session feedback forms, 2018 end-of-season club reports, and a record of club participation

population-level data including BOCSAR recorded crimes by offence by LGA and Australian Bureau of Statistics location demographic data

Despite data limitations, we are confident the evaluation is based on a sufficient set of evidence to support the conclusions and recommendations made.

Key findings and recommendations

Overall, Tackling Violence has had a successful reach and reputation across rural and remote NSW communities, with evidence to suggest it has contributed to positive impacts for individuals, clubs and wider communities. While the literature and evaluation findings support the program model overall, there is a need to develop a more robust and consolidated understanding of the program’s theories of change to inform any further refinements to the model as well as future data collection.

The focus of the program has been on primary prevention responses. There is scope to strengthen links to early intervention (secondary) and response (tertiary) interventions by improving reporting of and responses to breaches to the Code of Conduct, localising program promotional materials, and building stronger relationships and links between clubs and support services.

Our recommendations are made on the basis of the evidence provided in the evaluation. They build on the strengths of the program design and implementation, as well as opportunities for program refinement and consolidation.

Program design

The program model has remained largely the same since 2009, noting the removal of the school-based education component and inclusion of a ‘referral and support arrangements’ component, which involves providing clubs with details of local DFV services and establishing links between clubs and local DFV services.

While previous program logic models reference mechanisms of change underpinning the program, there is no readily available or comprehensive theory of change for Tackling Violence. To support a more robust and consolidated understanding of the program, there is a need to clearly articulate the expected theories of change for each component and the program overall in line with the updated outcome hierarchy developed in Chapter 9 and the most recent evidence available.

Overall, the literature on DFV prevention in sport settings supports the current program design. Our scan found that sport is an effective setting for DFV prevention activities; the Tackling Violence core components align with proven and promising DFV prevention techniques, particularly direct participation programs, organizational development, and communications activities; successful interventions are universally inclusive but targeted to
individual communities, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; and successful interventions combine multiple strategies targeting multiple audiences.\(^2\)\(^3\)

The program design focuses on primary prevention activities, rather than secondary or tertiary interventions, suggesting the need to strengthen the design of the referral and support arrangements component, in line with the findings presented in Chapter 6.

**We recommend that Women NSW:**

- Review the program in an ongoing way against the available evidence to ensure approach and activities align with best practice.
- Clearly articulate expected theories of change for each of the program components and the program overall in line with the updated outcomes hierarchy developed in Chapter 9 and the most recent evidence available.

**Program management**

The evaluation found that overall, the program was effectively delivered in 2017 and 2018, however management of the program could be improved through improved forward planning. Stakeholders indicated that the contracted provider’s background in DFV training and education and Aboriginal facilitators with DFV content expertise was key to the successful delivery of the program, particularly the education session component.

However, a lack of program documentation and briefing during the initial program handover caused early delays and tensions in some local communities. Ongoing challenges related to annual changes in funding amounts, which were communicated to the provider later than preferred, were also reported to impact their ability to effectively and efficiently plan the education sessions and coordinate longer-term community, police and service engagement.

Some stakeholders supported regionalising the delivery of Tackling Violence, with the contracted provider as a central management and quality assurance body, to improve community and service engagement. The providers’ current arrangements with Country Rugby League and Northern Sydney Local Health District provide useful case examples for future consideration to regionalise Tackling Violence, should opportunities or the need arise.

**We recommend that Women NSW:**

- Consider three-year rolling contracts to support longer-term planning and community engagement.
- Establish regular communication with the contracted provider to discuss emerging project management or funding risks or concerns.
- Review the extent to which longer-term funding certainty addresses local coordination issues and consider whether a regionalised model of delivery (per the examples provided in 4.2) would be a more effective delivery mechanism.

\(^2\) Our Watch, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia.

We recommend that the contracted provider:

- Take a proactive approach to forward planning, given the complexities and uncertainties of the operating environment. This may include identifying and leveraging other DFV-related programs in similar locations where Tackling Violence could also be delivered.

Program participation and reach

The number of clubs participating in Tackling Violence has continued to increase over time, with 30 clubs in 2017 and 43 clubs in 2018. Given the increasing interest in the program and mixed lengths of time in the program, a clearer vision for the target number of clubs and the nature of their involvement is needed.

Site visits suggested that the program’s opt-in model of support has meant clubs appear to have a pre-existing commitment to pro-social behaviours that drove their decision to participate in the program. However, sponsorship money was an important incentive, particularly for clubs in low socio-economic areas.

Most participating clubs were in regional and remote locations with high rates of DFV, low socio-economic conditions, and high Aboriginal populations, which the literature and program stakeholders indicated was appropriate.

We recommend that the contracted provider:

- Undertake a planning process to clearly specify and budget for the number of clubs to be involved in the program and the nature of their involvement.
- Use the opt-in model of program participation to leverage the commitment of club leaders.
- Provide sponsorship to clubs in lower socio-economic areas (per 5.2).
- Target communities in regional and remote locations with high rates of DFV, low socio-economic conditions, and high Aboriginal populations.

Program implementation: club sponsorship and the Code of Conduct

Players and club members were well-aware of the Code of Conduct and viewed it as an effective mechanism to incentivise non-violent behaviour. Requiring individual payers to sign and keep a copy of the Code would further increase awareness and commitment to the message.

Challenges remain in the processes for reporting and responding to breaches of the Code, which currently rely heavily on the goodwill of club leaders. In cases were incidents involving players are reported to police, a mechanism for informing club leaders of this is needed, taking care to consult club leaders about this arrangement so as not to erode trust, and ensure transparency about police involvement among players. Having local police attend education sessions may help build relationships and trust. Club leaders also require greater clarity regarding how to respond to breaches, including expectations for providing supports.

We recommend that Women NSW:

- Liaise with NSW Police to create mechanisms for local police to inform club leaders of any breaches to the Code of Conduct. Ensure clubs and players are consulted about this arrangement so as not to
erode trust. Ensure all privacy laws are upheld and players who sign the Code of Conduct are aware of any police involvement in the program and how this information will be shared.

- Update the contracted provider service agreement to include ‘regular communication with participating clubs to provide support and advice regarding how to respond to breaches’ as a deliverable.
- In collaboration with the contracted provider, update the Code of Conduct to clearly specify expected processes for clubs in providing supports in response to breaches, including mandatory linking of reported perpetrators (who are club members) to behaviour change services or helplines and providing support service information to reported victims.

We recommend that the contracted provider:

- Require individual players, in addition to club presidents, to sign the Code of Conduct as part of club registration and collect this data.
- Ensure all players who sign the Code of Conduct are provided a hard or soft copy for ongoing reference.
- Update the Code of Conduct to use plainer English and be framed as a pledge for players (separate to the Contract for club presidents).
- Invite local police to attend the education sessions in plain clothes to build relationships and trust, where relationships with local police are positive.
- Update end-of-season club reports to more accurately capture reported incidents, the time of year they occur, and who reported the incident.
- Update end-of-season club reports to more accurately capture responses to each individual breach (including deregistration as well as suspensions), such as an incident-level reporting template.
- Clarify with clubs that suspensions relate to breaches of the Code of Conduct, not other on-field incidents.
- Develop supplementary materials for participating clubs, such as a decision-making tree, to help club leaders interpret breaches and how to respond.
- Communicate regularly and proactively with clubs to provide them support and advice in responding to breaches.

Program implementation: education sessions

The number of education session participants increased considerably from 2017 to 2018 but reduced in 2019, with less than half of participating clubs receiving an education session due to funding restraints – a concern moving forward. Almost half of participants identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (this proportion increased in more remote areas), more than two-thirds were male, and about half were under 25 years of age.

Key strengths of the education session delivery included that facilitators were engaging and relatable and the statistics and stories were impactful. However, there is scope to better tailor the sessions to individual communities and better coordinate and plan sessions to ensure that they occur early in seasons, that local community and services are engaged, and that other programs (such as the Stronger Aboriginal Men and Women programs, also facilitated by ECAV in similar locations) can be leveraged. To align with the literature, the program may consider expanding delivery to younger players at clubs and consult with club leaders on their interest in a follow-up education session, given mixed views on program intensity.
We recommend that Women NSW:

- Update the contracted provider service agreement to ensure all clubs that sign the Code of Conduct receive an education session.

We recommend that the contracted provider:

- Consider expanding program delivery to junior rugby league players.
- Ensure Aboriginal facilitators continue to deliver the education sessions.
- Consider engaging additional facilitators to help deliver education sessions to particular population groups, such as culturally and linguistically diverse populations.
- Consult with clubs on their interest in a follow-up education session each year as part of an online, end-of-season survey in order to confirm program intensity in future.
- Review session content to ensure all statistics and content are up-to-date, including considering PowerPoint design principles.
- Tailor session content to individual communities, including length of time in the program and local demographic factors.
- Ensure all session content, including stories shared, upholds cultural and intellectual property rights.
- Explore mechanisms to commence program coordination prior to the season in order to ensure sessions are delivered at the start of each season.
- Invite local services to attend educations sessions at all sites with adequate notice.
- Consider how to better leverage other programs and resources in advanced planning.

Program implementation: community awareness

Site visit stakeholders indicated that attending community events was an effective way of raising community awareness about the program and DFV. The video resources have been promoted online, but there is scope to enhance and localise the program’s online presence. There is also scope to increase the distribution of traditional marketing materials that are localised to each club. These activities should be monitored.

We recommend that Women NSW:

- Consider updating the provider service agreement to include an increased number of community awareness events each year.
- In collaboration with the contracted provider, develop a multi-channel communications strategy that identifies targets for reach and impact of online and traditional media and marketing activities and data sources to monitor progress.

We recommend that the contracted provider:

- In collaboration with CRL, identify ways to increase the online presence of Tackling Violence, including through real-time and localised postings by clubs.
- Localise the promotional materials that are developed and distributed to clubs.

Program implementation: referrals and support arrangements

While providing clubs with information about support services was a contracted activity, engaging face-to-face with local services was not, and this did not happen consistently at all club locations in 2017 and 2018. Further, information provided to clubs about local services is not localised, and mechanisms for clubs to link victims and perpetrators to services are not clearly explained in the Code of Conduct or sponsorship documentation. Women NSW’s
expectations for service engagement activities by the contracted provider also need clarifying.

**We recommend that Women NSW:**
- Update the contracted provider service agreement to include clear expectations and deliverables related to local service and police engagement activities.

**We recommend that the contracted provider:**
- Develop site visit reports for facilitators to record local service engagement activities.
- Provide information about local services and supports in promotional materials for clubs, including service provider names, contact details and a description of services provided.
- Provide information about local services and supports in education session content and merchandise.
- Update end-of-season club reports to capture any supports and referrals provided or suggested to players by club leaders in response to incidents.

**Program impact**

Overall, Tackling Violence appears to have had a positive impact on players, clubs and the broader community in 2017 and 2018. The evidence available suggests that the Code of Conduct and education sessions have been the most impactful components within the program model. However, challenges inherent to measuring the impact of primary DFV prevention programs created some limitations to our assessment of impact, particularly at the community level.

Program activity data and stakeholder consultations indicated players have increased awareness and knowledge of DFV and confidence talking about and standing up to DFV. There was also some anecdotal evidence of reduced violent behaviours by players. This suggests the program is successfully contributing to its objective of building awareness of DFV, promoting positive attitudes towards women and fostering a zero-tolerance culture towards DFV in clubs. However, individual awareness of local support services remains a challenge, limiting the extent to which the program is meeting this objective.

Players and club members also indicated that women felt safe at clubs and that Tackling Violence had fostered an inclusive club environment. This suggests the program is successfully contributing to its objective to improve women’s safety and comfort and zero-tolerance culture towards DFV at clubs. Positive changes in the rugby league landscape, including the increasing participation of women and recent NRL interventions, such as Voice Against Violence and the No Fault Stand Down policy, are likely to have contributed to these positive outcomes.

At the community level, there was no data available to capture the impact of the program’s community awareness raising activities. Analysis of BOCSAR crime statistics data also found no clear pattern in the prevalence of DFV in LGAs that have hosted a Tackling Violence club between 2009 and 2018. This made it difficult to assess the extent to which the program is meeting its objective to build awareness and positive attitudes within the wider community.
However, stakeholder consultations provided anecdotal evidence of a positive impact on community awareness and reduced violence, despite having ‘concrete’ evidence of this.

**We recommend that Women NSW:**

- Develop an online, end-of-season survey for the contracted provider to distribute to players and club members to capture the impact of the program on individuals and clubs, in line with the outcomes hierarchy and matrix (see Chapter 9).

**We recommend that the contracted provider:**

- Collect education session feedback online or using iPads on site.
- Consider distributing and collecting the end-of-season club reports using an online/electronic system.

**Monitoring and evaluation framework**

Building on the evaluation findings, we drafted a high-level monitoring and evaluation framework to support future outcomes measurement in line with the data collection recommendations provided. This is not intended to be a prescriptive document, but rather a high-level framework to guide the development of more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plans.

The framework comprises an outcomes hierarchy and an outcomes matrix. Together, these identify the intended outcomes of Tackling Violence at different levels for each program component and how these outcomes can be measured. Descriptive theories of change to accompany the outcomes hierarchy are needed.
1. The program

In this chapter we outline the policy context for Tackling Violence and the program components and objectives.

1.1 The policy context

The NSW Government’s direction for domestic and family violence (DFV) service system reform is set out in the *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016–2021: Safer Lives for Women, Men and Children* (the Blueprint). Women NSW, within the NSW Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ), has overall responsibility for leading the reform program across all the Blueprint domains.

Tackling Violence is a key initiative under Blueprint Action 2 – Intervening early with vulnerable communities. This action area aims to ensure population groups at higher risk of experiencing and perpetrating violence are identified early and supported.

In the longer-term, Tackling Violence also aims to contribute to the NSW Premier’s Priority to reduce the proportion of domestic violence perpetrators reoffending by 25 per cent by 2023 (based on the 2019 cohort of perpetrators).

Tackling Violence was first established in 2009 under the *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan, Stop the Violence, End the Silence (2010–2015)*, forming part of the NSW Government’s (then) *State Plan* commitments to: strengthen Aboriginal communities by reducing levels of DFV, keep people safe by reducing rates of violent crimes, and embed the principle of prevention and early intervention into government service delivery.

Since 2009, the program has been the responsibility of Women NSW, which has transitioned through a number of government departments, moving first from the Department of Education to the Department of Family and Community Services, then to the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Ministry of Health, and now the Department of Communities and Justice.

1.2 The program

Tackling Violence is a community education, early intervention and prevention program funded by Women NSW and delivered by the NSW Education Centre Against Violence.

---


(ECAV). It uses men and women’s involvement in rugby league as a platform to change attitudes and behaviours towards DFV.

### 1.2.1 Program components

The program has four core components:

1. **Code of Conduct:** In return for $3000 in sponsorship, local rugby league clubs across rural and regional NSW sign a Code-of-Conduct that sets out the responsibilities of ECAV and clubs in implementing the program, describes what behaviours constitute a breach and the associated penalties, and commits clubs to a set of ‘ethical behaviours’, including reporting suspected or witnessed DFV, seeking to support those who disclose abuse or violence, and supporting non-violent attitudes and behaviours. As part of the sponsorship money, clubs display the Tackling Violence logo on their playing kit and at their home ground.

2. **Education sessions:** Clubs attend Tackling Violence educational sessions that focus on identifying and challenging DFV and developing supporting attitudes and behaviours towards women.

3. **Community awareness:** A targeted media campaign aims to inform and link the public to specialise DFV support services. This includes a community service announcement featuring clubs delivering anti-domestic violence messages that is broadcast on regional commercial television during NRL broadcasts and posted on social media.

4. **Referrals and support arrangements:** The program provides clubs with details of DFV support services in their community and establishes links between sponsored clubs and local DFV services.

### 1.2.2 Program objectives

ECAV has four contractual objectives for delivering Tackling Violence. These support the overarching intended outcome of the program to ‘reduce the incidence of DFV by building knowledge and awareness about DFV and promoting positive attitudes and behaviours towards women through engagement with Rugby League Clubs’. They are to:

1. increase local rugby league clubs’ commitment to addressing DFV and foster a zero-tolerance culture towards DFV within participating clubs
2. build awareness about DFV and promote positive attitudes toward women within rugby league clubs and the wider community
3. improve women’s safety and comfort within club environments
4. increase knowledge of support services available to victims and offenders.

---

2. The evaluation

In this chapter we describe the evaluation purpose, scope and focus; map how the report answers the key evaluation questions; and describe the methods for data collection and analysis and our confidence in the findings.

2.1 Purpose

Women NSW engaged ARTD Consultants to:

▪ determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program in its current form
▪ establish baselines to measure outcomes and contract deliverables in the future
▪ accurately inform program redesign efforts.

2.2 Scope and focus

The evaluation assessed the strengths and challenges of program delivery for 2017–18, outcomes achieved, and, how the model can be improved in the future. It drew on end-of-season activity and outcome data from 2017 and 2018 and qualitative consultations with program stakeholders in 2019. The evaluation timeframe precluded the incorporation of 2019 activity and outcome data.

2.3 Key questions

The evaluation was guided by the following questions.

Table 1. Key evaluation questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation question</th>
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<td>1. How is the program being implemented?</td>
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<tr>
<td>a. To what extent is the program being implemented as designed?</td>
<td>3, 4, 5, 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Is the program design culturally safe and inclusive of all groups, including</td>
<td>4.1.1, 5.1.1, 6.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>women and Aboriginal communities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Who is the program reaching and is this the right group?</td>
<td>5.1.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. What are the strengths/ success factors of program implementation?</td>
<td>4, 5, 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. What are the challenges for program implementation?</td>
<td>4, 5, 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. What has been the impact on the program delivery of the increased participation</td>
<td>5.1.1</td>
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<td>of women in rugby league clubs?</td>
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## 2. How well did the program work?

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<td>b.</td>
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<td>c.</td>
<td>What was the impact on particular population groups, particularly on Aboriginal people? 7.2</td>
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<td>d.</td>
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<td>e.</td>
<td>What has been the impact on the program outcomes of the increased participation of women in rugby league clubs? 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>Were there any unintended outcomes of the program (positive or negative)? NA</td>
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## 3. How can the program be improved?

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<td>b.</td>
<td>How can these be leveraged into less successful or new clubs? 8</td>
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<td>c.</td>
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<td>e.</td>
<td>How can the future program design ensure cultural relevance and safety? 4, 8</td>
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<td>f.</td>
<td>How can the program improve its secondary and tertiary prevention activities? 6.4, 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>How can program activities and outcomes be better measured and reported in the future? 8, 9</td>
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### 2.4 Methods

The evaluation used a mixed-method approach, synthesising primary, qualitative data collected by ARTD in 2019 and secondary program data collected and provided to ARTD by the contracted provider (see Table 2). We also scanned the literature relating to DFV prevention in sports settings and the existing program documentation. An Evaluation Advisory Group, with representatives across DCJ, was established to guide the evaluation throughout.

To collect data, we employed a case study design. These support participatory and realist-informed research approaches as they seek ‘to understand the distinctiveness of the
individual case’ (i.e. a participating club) to understand both common and unique factors underpinning outcomes.\(^7\)

We used a combination of purposive and convenience sampling to select clubs in order to reach a combination of metro, regional and remote clubs, with a range of years’ experience participating in the program. ECAV provided details of key club contacts, who then identified relevant club leaders\(^8\), players and, where possible, relevant local service providers to participate in the evaluation. Women NSW recommended and provided contact details for program-level stakeholders for consultation. ARTD also identified local police contacts to consult.

Qualitative interviews were recorded (with consent), transcribed and analysed, using a grounded theory approach – an established method for systematically analysing qualitative data.\(^9\) We developed a coding framework based on the evaluation questions and interview guides in order to identify key themes and findings. We then used Nvivo qualitative analysis software to code the data, starting with a small sample of transcripts to check inter-coder reliability and identify any issues and adjustments needed to the framework. We proceeded from open coding (applying initial codes to condense data), to axial coding (refining, organising and linking codes), to selective coding (reviewing previous coding and elaborating major themes). We ran queries on coded data to answer key questions and developed written summaries of key themes, which were integrated into the report where relevant. Direct quotes were also used to illustrate themes described and give voice to participants.

Qualitative data was synthesised with the secondary program, population-level data and the literature to triangulate findings and develop conclusions and recommendations.

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\(^8\) Club leaders refers to directors, presidents, board members, officials, coaches and other senior staff or volunteers within clubs.

## Table 2. Data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Notes</strong>: This was a scan only, not a systematic review. Scope included grey literature (e.g. the Change the Story framework and A Team Effort evidence guide) as well as scholarly literature (identified through Google scholar and academic databases).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFV research</td>
<td>Literature &amp; practice scan</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program documentation</td>
<td>Document scan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Notes</strong>: This was a scan only, not a systematic review. The club sponsorship documents and some administrative documents, including ECAV’s contract with Women NSW and Agreement for Funding of Services, were from 2019, which was out of scope for the evaluation. Versions of these documents from 2017 and 2018 were not provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual and quarterly reports</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ECAV Final Report – Output Measures – 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECAV Report – June 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>WNSW 2017-2018 Annual Reporting – July 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECAV progress report – Jan-Jun 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECAV progress report – Mar-Jul 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECAV progress report – Jan-Dec 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECAV progress report – Jan-Apr 2019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Midpoint Self-evaluation Report x 2 (dates unclear)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Previous evaluation reports</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Evaluation Report, 2010</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Evaluation Report, 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Evaluation Report, 2014</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Draft program logics</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Logic, 2018</td>
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<tr>
<td>Logic, 2019</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Club sponsorship documents</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Code of Conduct, 2019</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sponsorship Checklist, 2019</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative documents</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Primary data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Club site visits</td>
<td>Face-to-face interviews/ focus groups</td>
<td>N=44 interviewees across 6 sites&lt;br&gt;Players: n=17 interviews across 5 sites&lt;br&gt;Club leaders: n=19 interviews across 6 sites&lt;br&gt;Local police: n=3 interviews across 3 sites&lt;br&gt;Local DFV services: n=5 interviews across 3 sites&lt;br&gt;Observations of education sessions: n=2</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>We used a combination of purposive and convenience sampling to select clubs. We visited two metropolitan clubs (East Campbelltown Eagles and the Northern Sydney Local Health District Partnership involving the Avalon Bulldogs, Newport Breakers and Warringah Rats), three regional clubs (Lismore Northern United, Kurri Kurri Bulldogs and Nowra Bombaderry Jets) and one remote club (Moree Boomerangs).&lt;br&gt;At Moree, we were also able to interview the President of the Moree Boars, a seventh participating club.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECAV</td>
<td>Face-to-face interviews/ focus groups</td>
<td>N=7 interviewees&lt;br&gt;Management: n=2&lt;br&gt;Program facilitators: n=6</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>We conducted a focus group with four ECAV program facilitators as well as an additional individual interview with one of the facilitators from the focus group and an individual interview with the team leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCJ stakeholders</td>
<td>Telephone interviews</td>
<td>N=5&lt;br&gt;District representatives: n=2&lt;br&gt;Aboriginal Outcomes: n=2&lt;br&gt;Women NSW: n=1</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>DCJ District contacts were selected to align with the site visit locations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source</td>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Sample</td>
<td>Timing</td>
<td>Comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSW Police</td>
<td>Telephone interview</td>
<td>n=1 Senior Program Officer</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Rugby League</td>
<td>Telephone interviews</td>
<td>n=3 CRL representatives</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFV peak bodies</td>
<td>Telephone interviews</td>
<td>n=2 peak body representatives</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Secondary program data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ECAV online survey</td>
<td>Results summary</td>
<td>n=142 2018 Tackling Violence Awareness Session attendees from 36 of 43 participating clubs.</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>▪ Unit record data from this survey was not available for this evaluation. The figures that we have included were taken from an aggregated summary report written by ECAV for WNSW.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of season club reports 2018</td>
<td></td>
<td>N=29 Clubs</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>▪ Data from 2017 was not provided for the evaluation. ▪ There were some small inconsistencies in the 2018 end-of-season club reports and annual reporting from ECAV.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness Session Participant Evaluation Form data</td>
<td>Results summary, aggregated analysis, unit record analysis (where available)</td>
<td>2017: n=595 2018: n=905</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>▪ Unit record data from this source was not available for this evaluation. ▪ Unit record data on Awareness Session participant demographics was available for the 2017 season, but the equivalent data for 2018 was only available in an aggregated format (by club) and did not report on age. ▪ Data from items on the Participation Form that capture information on awareness and impact was only available in an aggregated format (by club) and was only available for 2018 participants. ▪ There were some inconsistencies between the total number of respondents reported in the outcome items and demographic items from the Participant Evaluation form.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Tackling Violence evaluation

### Source | Method | Sample | Timing | Comments
--- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Club Participation data | A record of all clubs that participated in Tackling Violence from 2009-17. | 2019 | ▪ A record of all clubs that had participated in Tackling Violence since its inception in 2009 was provided and used for data mapping in Tableau described below. 

| **Population-level data** |
|---|---|---|---|---|

### BOCSAR Recorded crime by offence, by LGA
Data mapping in Tableau

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The number of DFV-related assaults by local government area, 2001-2018</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>▪ We used this publicly available dataset to (1) see how well the program was targeted at LGAs with high rates of DFV-related assault and (2) investigate if Tackling Violence had any high-level impacts on the reporting/ prevalence rates of DFV related assault in LGAs with participating clubs. Data was aggregated from monthly to yearly to link with ABS population growth data to create a reliable estimate of the prevalence rate DFV-related assault by LGA.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
Data mapping in Tableau

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016 Census</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>▪ Used to (1) identify LGAs with high percentage of Aboriginal people and (2) identify the most recent overall population estimates of NSW LGAs to create a prevalence measure (offences per 100,000 people) for DFV-related assault.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data mapping in Tableau

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Postal Area, Indexes, SEIFA 2016</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>▪ Used to assess if 2017-18 Tackling Violence clubs were located in disadvantaged communities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data mapping in Tableau

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Timing</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2017 Postcode to 2016 Remoteness Area</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>▪ Used to assess if 2017-18 Tackling Violence clubs were primarily located in regional/ remote communities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, these were very small and wouldn’t have impacted the conclusions made in this report.
2.5 Confidence in the findings

We are confident the evaluation is based on a sufficient set of evidence to support the conclusions and recommendations made. Overall, there was a strong consistency in the findings across the range of stakeholder groups consulted, the previous evaluations, and the literature on DFV prevention in sport settings. The secondary program data provided additional information relating to the program reach and impact.

However, the evaluation found that the history of Tackling Violence, which has been the responsibility of a number of agencies and departments over its existence since 2009, has contributed to a lack of identification, measurement and recording of clear and consistent activity and outcomes data.

2.5.1 Limitations

Key data limitations for the evaluation relate to the following.

- **Site visit consultations**
  - Site visit consultations may not be representative of all views, but consistent findings across stakeholder groups and previous evaluation reports supports generalisability of findings.
  - We were unable to visit a second remote site (per the project plan) following a late cancellation. We selected a third regional site based on the timeframes available, existing contact with the club, and to ensure regional south coast coverage.
  - Despite follow-up with clubs, ECAV, Police NSW and FACS district offices as well as cold calling, we were unable to identify Police, service provider and community contacts at all sites.

- **Program-level stakeholder consultations**
  - We were unable to contact representatives from NRL, clubs that disengaged from the program, and all site visit DCJ Districts.

- **Program documentation**
  - Club sponsorship documents as well as the FACS Contract Management Plan and Agreement for Funding of Services were from 2019, which was out of scope for the evaluation. Versions of these documents from 2017 and 2018 were not provided, preventing any assessment of the program against contracted deliverables.

- **Secondary program data**
  - For almost all program data reported on, unit record data was not available. This meant that ARTD was unable to (1) verify the accuracy of data and (2) explore group differences in the data, especially for Education Session participants.
  - A significant proportion of 2017 data was missing for the years of Tackling Violence in scope for this evaluation. In particular, end-of-season club reports were not collected in 2017.
  - The validity of the existing data collection tools is limited – particularly the end-of-season club report. It is possible that the results reported are subject to ceiling effect caused by the use of binary or ‘yes/ no’ validation. Furthermore, the report is
part of a Tackling Violence club’s acquittal process which may have influenced how clubs responded.

- **Population level data**
  - Factors external to Tackling Violence are likely to impact population-level data, making it difficult to attribute any changes in these data to the program.
  - The prevalence indicator used – ‘DV-related assault’ – only captures intimate-partner assault but excludes (1) other abusive behaviours that are described as DFV and (2) incidents of non-intimate or family violence which make up a significant proportion of reported DFV incidents. AVO breaches could also have been used in an alternative analysis, however the available dataset does not distinguish between ADVOs (which are roughly 80% of all AVOs) and other AVOs.
  - BOCSAR do not report the prevalence estimates for DV-related assault for certain LGAs due to very low statistical confidence arising from lower population rates in these communities. Our intention was to look for changes within LGAs based on the presence of Tackling Violence clubs in the relevant calendar year, and we discourage the extrapolation of any conclusions about the comparative prevalence of DFV in these communities.
  - There are limitations to using LGAs as the unit of analysis. Firstly, there is significant variation in population size between the LGAs analysed – this means that the representation of Tackling Violence participants (players, club and community members) in their respective LGAs varies as well. It’s likely that some clubs represent significant portions of their LGAs, whilst others do not. Secondly, it is also plausible that some Tackling Violence participants primarily lived and worked in a different LGA to their club and travelled across jurisdictions to play and train – some players in regional/remote areas did comment that they sometimes travelled for two to three hours to do so. The LGA was chosen as the unit of analysis instead of postcode to better account for this variability. Thirdly, we did not have data on player numbers from each club – these are likely to have varied significantly, adding further variability in the representativeness of Tackling Violence participants in each LGA.
3. Program design

In this chapter we describe changes to the program model over time, unpack the existing evidence relating to DFV prevention, and assess how the program aligns with the public health framework for DFV prevention.

Key findings

The program model has remained largely the same since its establishment in 2009, noting the removal of the school-based education session component and inclusion of a ‘referral and support arrangements’ component, which involves providing clubs with details of local DFV services and establishing links between sponsored clubs and local DFV services.

While previous program logic models reference mechanisms of change underpinning the program, there is no readily available or comprehensive theory of change for Tackling Violence. To support a more robust and consolidated understanding of the program, there is a need to clearly articulate the expected theories of change for each program component and the program overall, in line with the updated outcome hierarchy developed in Chapter 9 and the most recent evidence available.

Overall, the literature on DFV prevention in sport settings supports the current program design. However, the program focuses on primary prevention activities, rather than secondary or tertiary interventions, suggesting the need to strengthen the design of the referral and support arrangements component.

3.1 Evolution of the program model

Since 2009, Tackling Violence has been the responsibility of Women NSW, which has transitioned through five government departments. Internal documentation from the period of 2009 to 2016 was not available for this evaluation, so our review of the program draws on previous evaluation reports. In this time, the program model has remained largely the same, with similar findings across three early evaluations.

The first Tackling Violence evaluation report (2010) identified three core program components: the Code of Conduct and associated sponsorship money; the education sessions; and a community awareness campaign. It found that the Code of Conduct and involvement of prominent NRL players were effective mechanisms. It also found that having central coordination, input from local committees, adequate lead-in time for planning and stakeholder engagement, and culturally-appropriate sessions were key enablers to success. Notably, it identified that local domestic violence organisations could have been more involved in the program and that the program was more impactful when it linked to other local anti-violence strategies.

The second evaluation report (2011) identified a fourth program component: school-based education sessions which involved facilitated DFV sessions at local schools. Again, it recommended commencing program planning early, developing local structures for community input, finding ways to expand program reach to the broader community, and strengthening links between the program and local services and other related initiatives.
The core program components remained the same in the third evaluation report (2014). This report identified that key to program success was: local community engagement; club locations, leadership and safe spaces; peer-led messages; and culturally-safe program design and delivery. It recommended that the program continue to expand and that support systems be maintained for clubs who complete the program cycle. It also cautioned the program not to over rely on clubs, so as not to erode their trust.

Women NSW contracted ECAV to deliver Tackling Violence between 2017–19. Under ECAV’s auspice, the school-based program component was removed, and a ‘referral and support arrangements’ component was added. This involves providing clubs with details of local DFV services and establishing links between sponsored clubs and local DFV services. The remaining core components stayed largely the same, noting a reduction in the sponsorship money from $5,000 to $3,000 (between the 2011 and 2014 evaluation reports), and ongoing updates to the education session content and changes to the community awareness strategies over time, such as the development of video resources to shared online, rather than television advertisements.

### 3.1.1 Current program model and theory of change

Minimal program documentation developed over the life of the program has meant that there is no readily available theory of change supporting the program model. However, a number of program logics have been developed (in previous evaluations) and drafted (by program staff in 2018 and 2019). These highlight that the program model rests on a range of theories of change. The draft 2018 logic references the incentive mechanism embedded in the Code of Conduct, the assumption that education is expected to generate behaviour change among education session participants, and that increased knowledge and links to local services are expected to increase opportunities to access these. The draft 2019 logic highlights the role of social norms in reducing negative attitudes and behaviours towards women.

While referenced in the draft logics, the theories of change understood to be underpinning the program have not been comprehensively articulated and are likely to differ for each program component as well as the program overall. This suggests the need to review the program model to clearly develop expected theories of change in line with the updated outcomes hierarchy developed in Chapter 9 and the most recent evidence available. This would support a more robust and consolidated understanding of the program design and expected outcomes and would help inform future monitoring and evaluation plans.

To support this exercise, our literature scan identified a number of behavioural change theories that align with the core program components, which Women NSW may draw or build on.

The first are **social and cultural norms theories**, which recognise the great degree of influence that social and cultural norms have on individual behaviours. Norms are commonly
understood as collective beliefs that exist within and are maintained by particular groups or networks. This means norms can create environments that either approve or disapprove of gendered attitudes and violence, as well as how individuals react to gendered attitudes and violence.\[^{10,11}\] DFV prevention activities in sport settings are broadly underpinned by social norms theories, as the literature recognises that as social institutions, sporting clubs have the capacity to shape and influence norms and drive cultural change.\[^{12}\] The use of ambassadors in Tackling Violence is also informed by theories of social norms, which posit that the views of prominent figures can influence social norms and that individual behaviours are influenced by what they believe others would do in similar circumstances.\[^{13}\]

The next are **individual behaviour change theories**. A systematic literature review of behaviour change frameworks identified three essential conditions for changes in individual behaviours: capability (physical and psychological), opportunity (physical and social) and motivation (automatic and reflective). It also identified nine interventions that are most commonly used to impact these conditions: education, persuasion, incentivisation, coercion, training, enablement, modelling, environmental restructuring and restrictions.\[^{14}\] It is promising that the Tackling Violence core components align with several of these intervention types (including education and incentivisation), and aims to impact individual’s psychological capabilities (through new knowledge), social opportunities (through service linkages) and reflective motivations (through new understanding and the Code of Conduct).

Finally, the use of communication and promotional materials is informed by **communications theories** about the processes people go through in reacting to campaigns. McGuire described a ‘communication/ persuasion matrix’:\[^{15}\] the processing steps that a person goes through, from being exposed to the content, attending to it, liking or having interest in it, comprehending it, acquiring skills, changing attitude, retaining changes, retrieving new attitudes, deciding to act in accord with retrieved attitude, behaving as desired, reinforcing behaviours, and post-behavioural consolidation. Tackling Violence recognises the early steps in this process, but has limited capacity to provide behavioural reinforcements, except in those communities that remain involved for multiple years.

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\[^{11}\] The Equality Institute (ibid).
We recommend that Women NSW:
- Clearly articulate expected theories of change for each of the program components and the program overall in line with the updated outcomes hierarchy developed in Chapter 9 and the most recent evidence available.

3.2 Evidence supporting the program model

The prevention of violence against women is a relatively new field of policy and program development. While there are few public, high-quality impact evaluations of these initiatives, particularly within sport settings, there is a growing body of evidence of emerging, promising and good practice from the past 10–15 years.¹⁶

In this section, we assess the extent to which the Tacking Violence model, in theory, is supported by the evidence available. We primarily drew on the Change the Story framework, which synthesises current evidence on the prevention of violence against women internationally and in Australia, and A Team Effort, the accompanying evidence guide for preventing violence against women through sport settings. Overall, we found the program model is greatly supported by the literature, with some areas for improvement.

**Sport is an effective setting for preventing violence against women**

Tackling Violence uses men and women’s involvement in rugby league as a platform to change attitudes and behaviours towards DFV. This approach is supported by the literature, which indicates that, to prevent violence against women, we need to engage and educate people where they “live, work, learn, socialise and play” and identifies sport as a key setting for generating change.¹⁷ This aligns with social and cultural norm theories of change.

Sporting institutions are considered key settings because they:

- are integral to the lives of many Australians
- can influence social norms, attitudes and behaviours
- are expected by communities to be safe
- function as workplaces that can provide support and refer members to services.¹⁸

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¹⁷ Our Watch, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia.

Sport also provides an environment to reach and engage men, a factor found to be key to preventing violence.\(^{19}\)

Increasingly, both internationally and in Australia, sporting organisations are delivering initiatives to prevent violence against women. Despite this growing interest, however, there are few evaluations available and no current, published evidence focused solely on the prevention of violence against women in sport settings.\(^{20}\)

**The Tackling Violence core components align with ‘proven and promising techniques’ for preventing violence**

The four core components of Tackling Violence align with the five archetypal ‘techniques’ found to be effective or promising in preventing violence against women—direct participation programs, community mobilisation and strengthening, organisational development, communications and marketing, and civil society advocacy.\(^{21}\)

**Direct participation programs** engage individuals or groups to build knowledge and skills, improve access to support resources, improve connects to social networks and institutions, or help address or prevent the impacts of other factors linked to violence. In Australia, they have operated at the community level, such as school-based education sessions, as well as the state and national level, such as educating elite sport players. They are generally underpinned by theories of individual behaviour change.

This is the most evaluated technique of violence prevention in sport settings, though most research comes from the United States. In particular, community workshops that promote changes in norms and behaviours and involve both men and women have been shown to be effective.\(^{22}\) Factors key to the success of direct participation programs include delivering multiple sessions (not one-off initiatives); focusing on primary prevention; considering organisational contexts, including that the content is targeted to the audience and that supports are in place for anyone who speaks out; partnering violence prevention educators with coaches, players or former players to act as role models; and having mixed-gender facilitators.\(^{23}\)

The Tackling Violence education sessions align most closely with this technique. It is positive that the sessions are open to men and women and delivered yearly by mixed-gender facilitators and in partnership with former players. However, the extent to which the sessions are tailored to individual clubs is unclear in the program design, and program intensity

\(^{19}\) Our Watch, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia.

\(^{20}\) Liston et. al., op. cit.

\(^{21}\) Our Watch (ibid).

\(^{22}\) Webster and Flood, op. cit.

\(^{23}\) Liston et. al., op. cit.
(currently at one education session per year) would better reflect the evidence if it were increased.

**Community mobilisation and strengthening** techniques involve engaging local communities to increase their access to supports and resources and address community-level factors contributing to violence against women. They are underpinned by communications theories.

These initiatives are less frequently evaluated in sport settings. Outside of sport, key success factors include engaging community leaders, promoting shared decision-making and ownership of initiatives and tailoring activities to individual communities.24

The Tackling Violence education sessions and community awareness components align with this technique, to a limited extent, by building awareness of information and resources among broader communities. However, the focus is not on engaging community leaders or the broader community, and there is a need to better tailor activities to individual communities in the program design.

**Organisational development** techniques involve organisations making changes to their policies and structures to foster a change in culture, such as new policies or gender audits.

Like community mobilisation, organisational development techniques are less frequently evaluated in sport settings, though they have shown promise outside of sport. Key success factors include starting where there is existing support to gain traction, ensuring support from senior leadership, targeting all levels of an organisation, and developing mechanisms to support those experiencing violence.25

That Tackling Violence is an opt-in program, and the Code of Conduct requires the support of leadership and applies to all players within a club, is positive, but the extent to which support mechanisms are established is not clear within the program design.

**Communications and social marketing** techniques use a range of traditional and online media to raise awareness and challenge norms, attitudes and behaviours. This is a common technique used by sporting organisations, particularly the use of themed uniforms, hosting fundraising and community events or using elite athletes as campaign ambassadors.

Despite their widespread use, the impact and effectiveness of these techniques are rarely evaluated in sports settings. Outside of sport settings, impact evaluations have shown these to have promise, but only when implemented using a range of media platforms and combined with other techniques. Single-component campaigns have been found to be ineffective at addressing the drivers of violence.26 Campaigns should also move beyond awareness raising to promote positive behaviours; develop simple, consistent and tailored

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24 Our Watch (ibid).
25 Our Watch (ibid).
26 Our Watch (ibid).
messages; have community-level support and involve an evaluation framework to track reach and impact overtime.27

The Tackling Violence community awareness component aligns with this technique, through the distribution of online and traditional promotional materials. In particular, the promotion of positive behaviours through the online video resources and use of consistent branding and messaging are promising. However, a review of program materials suggests that they are not locally tailored and there is no framework to measure communications activities.

Civil society advocacy involves organisations working with external agencies or known advocates to promote non-violence. This is a common technique used by sporting organisations, who work in partnership with external government or non-government agencies or use elite athletes as ambassadors.

Ambassador programs are under-evaluated in sport settings and other DFV prevention settings. More broadly, celebrity endorsement is considered an effective marketing tool and has been effective in public prevention campaigns related to cancer, smoking and mental health stigma.28 These approaches are underpinned by social norms theory related to the ability of prominent figures to influence others. To prevent violence against women, there is some emerging evidence of the effectiveness of advocacy and ambassador programs.29 Key success factors include providing training and ongoing support to advocates, ensuring advocates don’t have personal histories that undermines their position, and engaging advocates who are influential and respected by communities.30

Tackling Violence employs civil society advocacy, as clubs are supported by ECAV, a government agency, and the education sessions and community awareness campaign draw on respected Ambassadors who are provided training and support by ECAV.

Successful interventions are inclusive but targeted

Tackling Violence is a generalist program, in that the education sessions, community awareness campaigns and referral and support arrangements are open to people in all demographic groups. At the same time, the program broadly targets communities with high rates of domestic and family violence, as well as high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations (see 5.2). The program is delivered by ECAV’s Aboriginal Team.

The literature recognises the value of universal approaches that are inclusive of all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, ages, abilities, genders and sexualities, and locations for increasing reach, but stresses the importance of tailoring strategies to individual communities.

27 Our Watch (ibid).
28 Our Watch (ibid).
29 Our Watch (ibid).
30 Our Watch (ibid).
for increasing engagement. It finds that ‘a “one-size-fits-all” approach is likely to have limited effectiveness’.31

The literature also recognises that factors of intersectional disadvantage impact the extent to which different groups are affected by DFV and argues that program resourcing and efforts should be more intensive for these groups.32 In particular, the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 (the National Plan) highlights the need to focus resources and strategies on preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, given the prevalence, severity and complex nature of this violence.

A national survey found that three in five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have experienced physical or sexual violence perpetrated by a male intimate partner. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women report experiencing violence in the previous 12 months at 3.1 times the rate of non-Indigenous women and are 11 times more likely to die due to assault.33 It is important to note, however, that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is not an ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander problem’ and that violence is perpetrated by men of all cultural backgrounds. Rather, the ongoing impacts of colonisation for Aboriginal people and communities; legacies of racism, ignorance and disrespect in broader society; and gendered factors are identified as the three key drivers underlying higher rates of DFV in Aboriginal communities.34 That Tackling Violence targets locations with high proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, challenges the condoning of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as well as gendered drivers of violence more broadly is positive, as it aligns with key preventative actions prescribed in the literature.35

There is also evidence emerging that initiatives involving both men and women are more effective than those that only engaging one sex.36 The Tackling Violence education sessions take this approach (see 6.2.1).

**Effective interventions combine multiple strategies at multiple levels**

The literature indicates that successful interventions combine multiple strategies (rather than single-component strategies that are delivered in isolation) and target drivers of violence at

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31 Our Watch (ibid).
32 Our Watch (ibid).
33 Our Watch. (2018). Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children. Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia
34 Our Watch (ibid).
35 Our Watch (ibid).
more than one level of the social ecology.\(^{37,38}\) This is because factors that drive violence against women happen at the individual, interpersonal, organisational and community levels, and so, responses will be more effective if they mutually reinforce one another across these settings.\(^{39}\) This is also referred to as the social-ecological model, which ‘reinforces the importance of a comprehensive approach, in which actions at each level of the social ecology work to support the other levels’.\(^{40}\)

The literature indicates that DFV communications campaigns, in isolation, have shown limited effectiveness in effecting behaviour change, but show promise when combined with other activities. Similarly, there is limited evidence that awareness raising in itself is effective in preventing violence\(^{41}\), but is an important first step in engaging stakeholders for further prevention activities. It is positive, then, that Tackling Violence delivers a combination of education sessions, organisational policies, and communications and awareness raising activities.

It is also positive that Tackling Violence targets multiple levels of the social ecology through its core components – engaging individuals through education sessions, sporting institutions through the Code of Conduct, and the broader community through awareness raising activities.

**Programs targeting Aboriginal communities should uphold cultural rights**

The literature notes that current research and evidence relating to DFV prevention may not always be relevant or appropriate in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and initiatives should therefore be designed, governed and implemented by such communities themselves.\(^{42}\) It is positive, then, that Tackling Violence has been developed and delivered by Aboriginal facilitators since its inception.

Program funders should ensure that the stories and experiences shared by Aboriginal people in the development of the Tackling Violence program content have been formally recognised

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39 Our Watch, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, *Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia.

40 Australian Institute of Family Studies (ibid).

41 Our Watch (ibid).

42 Liston et. al., op. cit.
or compensated for to the satisfaction of those involved and in line with Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights.

**We recommend that Women NSW:**
- Review the program in an ongoing way against the available evidence to ensure approach and activities align with best practice.
- Ensure all session content, including stories shared, upholds cultural and intellectual property rights.

### 3.3 Situating Tackling Violence in the public health framework

The DFV literature draws on a public health framework to categorise prevention activities. The framework describes three levels of prevention and associated interventions for target groups (see Table 3).

**Table 3. Public health approach to preventing violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prevention level</th>
<th>Interventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary prevention:</strong></td>
<td>Addresses the drivers of violence to prevent it before it occurs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Universal interventions:</strong></td>
<td>Activities for the general population or specific groups, irrespective of risk, such as media campaigns of workshops in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Secondary prevention:</strong></td>
<td>Provides more immediate responses to change the trajectory people at risk of experiencing or perpetrating violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selected interventions:</strong></td>
<td>Activities for those at heightened risk of experiencing or perpetrating violence, such as early intervention services for at-risk families.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tertiary prevention:</strong></td>
<td>Provides longer-term care and responses following violence to prevent reoccurrence of violence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indicated interventions:</strong></td>
<td>Activities aimed at those who have demonstrated violent behaviour or coercive control.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The focus of Tackling Violence is on primary prevention, through its club-level policies, education sessions and community awareness raising activities. The program model also provides a bridge to secondary and tertiary interventions, through providing information about support services in the education sessions and promotional materials and supporting clubs to link players to support services. However, activities designed to link the program to secondary and tertiary responses are not clearly articulated in the program design, nor
contracted\textsuperscript{43}, suggesting the need to strengthen the referrals and support arrangements program component (see 6.4).

The literature points to the importance of integrating primary prevention activities with early intervention (secondary) and response (tertiary) efforts, for a comprehensive and holistic approach.\textsuperscript{44} Similarly, the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan highlights that while primary prevention is has the potential to have the largest impact on reducing the prevalence of violence against women and their children, secondary and tertiary prevention ‘are essential’. The NSW Premier’s Priority to reduce the proportion of domestic violence perpetrators reoffending by 25 per cent by 2023\textsuperscript{45} also requires programs such as Tackling Violence to consider secondary and tertiary activities to change behaviour and prevent re-offending.

It is through this lens that we have developed the recommendations provided throughout this report.

\textsuperscript{43} This refers to the 2019 Service Agreement. The 2017 and 2018 service agreements were not provided (see 2.4)
\textsuperscript{44} Our Watch, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia.
\textsuperscript{45} Available at: https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/premiers-priorities/reducing-domestic-violence-reoffending/
4. Program management

In this chapter we assess the strengths and weaknesses of the management of Tackling Violence in 2017 and 2018.

Key findings

The evaluation found that overall, the program was effectively delivered in 2017 and 2018, however management of the program could be improved through forward planning. Stakeholders indicated that the contracted provider’s background in DFV training and education and Aboriginal facilitators with DFV content expertise was key to the successful delivery of the program, particularly the education session component.

However, a lack of program documentation and briefing during the initial program handover caused early delays and tensions in some local communities. Ongoing challenges related to annual changes in funding amounts, which were communicated by the funder later than preferred, were also reported to impact the contracted provider’s ability to effectively and efficiently plan the education sessions and coordinate longer-term community, police and service engagement.

Some stakeholders supported regionalising the delivery of Tackling Violence, with a central management and quality assurance body, to improve community and service engagement. ECAV’s arrangements with Country Rugby League and Northern Sydney Local Health District provide useful case examples for future consideration.

4.1 Managing program delivery

Tackling Violence is delivered by ECAV, a state-wide unit of NSW Health responsible for workforce development for the prevention of and responses to violence, abuse and neglect. ECAV deliver worker training, community awareness and development programs, agency and policy consultation, clinical supervision and resource development across NSW, with a specific focus on Aboriginal and Cultural and Linguistically Diverse communities.46

In 2016, WNSW (then part of NSW Health), contracted ECAV to deliver Tackling Violence between 2017–19. Program-level stakeholders suggested that ECAV was chosen to deliver the program because they have expertise in DFV prevention education, existing relationships with and a positive reputation within Tackling Violence communities (building their other community development programs), Aboriginal staff to facilitate the education sessions, and are governed by NSW Health, reducing time and risks in procurement.

Through stakeholder consultations, the evaluation assessed the strengths and weaknesses of managing the delivery of Tackling Violence in 2017 and 2018.

4.1.1 Strengths of managing program delivery

Overall, the program documentation and stakeholder interviews indicated that the program was effectively delivered by the contracted provider.

Aboriginal facilitators with content expertise deliver the program

Site visits and program-level stakeholders indicated that a key strength of the program lies in the delivery of the education sessions. Site visit stakeholders spoke positively about the session content and facilitators (see 6.2.2) and described the program as culturally-safe.

The contracted provider also reported that the facilitators, all of whom are Aboriginal, are experienced, qualified and trauma-informed. That the facilitators have existing community connections is a strength because they can build on trusted relationships. DFV peak body representatives also agreed that the providers’ background in DFV training and education and Aboriginal facilitators was key to the successful delivery of the program.

In any re-modelling you’d have to be really careful not to lose how they engage with local people. They are respectful in terms of the way they go into community. They have strong Aboriginal men and women programs going in around the time so you’re really building community capacity and that’s powerful stuff – you can’t just recreate that with other providers... Its nuanced work, especially to do it at a state-wide level.

I mean you could just commercialise it and give it to a big sporting organisation or NGO, but it would lose its essence as a trusted organisation. I don’t think many people know what ECAV is or what it does, but the model and philosophy from which ECAV works is reflected in how Tackling Violence is being delivered. (DFV peak body representative)

That the contracted provider delivers other DFV-related programs in similar locations is also a strength, because there is potential to deliver other relevant programs in conjunction to Tackling Violence. These would reinforce and expand on the information provided in the education sessions and enable efficiencies in travel and community engagement. However, project management challenges described in 4.1.2 below have prevented leveraging such opportunities.

The design of core program components were enhanced

Formal progress reports, as well as interviews with key stakeholders, indicated that several improvements to the core program components have been made since 2017. These included refining the Code of Conduct in 2017, following meetings with Police47, and updating the education session content. They developed two distinct education sessions in response to feedback from longstanding clubs who did not want to receive the same content year-on-

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47 It is not clear what changes were made as this was not reported in progress reports and ARTD was only provided the most up-to-date version of the Code of Conduct (2019).
year—the first provides introductory information to all clubs in their first year receiving Tackling Violence, the second provides more detailed information about the impact of violence on children to clubs in their second year of the program. A third session is in development, which will emphasise the bystander approach and victim experience for clubs in their third year of the program.

In 2018, the contracted provider also developed 10 short videos for promotion through CRL’s website and social media in 2019. The decision to develop videos, rather than television advertisements (as done in the past), was for these to be used as educational resources within the education sessions and independently by all CRL clubs in NSW (beyond those participating in Tackling Violence) (see 6.3.2).

The provider has also established Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with Country Rugby League (CRL) and the Northern Sydney Local Health District’s (NSLHD) Drug Action Team to deliver the program regionally; these appear to be effective models of delivery (see 4.2).

4.1.2 Challenges for managing program delivery

The evaluation identified a number of key challenges in managing the delivery the program over 2017–18.

Limited program handover caused early challenges

Contracted provider staff reported that there was a lack of documentation and contextual briefing provided to them in the initial handover of the program. They indicated that this created delays in the delivery of the program components in 2017 as they needed to spend time learning the content and establishing relationships with clubs and other stakeholders. The handover was also thought to cause some tension among participating clubs, who were not aware of the transition. The transition of program facilitators from WNSW to the contracted provider, and some early staff turnover, was also reported to be challenging.

_The lack of hand over really affected ECAV and meant we stepped on toes without knowing it. We had no context or history._ (ECAV staff)

Funding cycles were uncertain

The evaluation identified a lack of clarity around the processes for communicating program funding. While ECAV was contracted to deliver Tackling Violence between 2017–19, ECAV staff reported that funding was non-recurrent and that changes to funding amounts each year were often communicated later than preferred.
This suggests the need for timely, three-year recurrent funding agreements. Regular communications between the funder and contracted provider would also help raise any emerging concerns or risks related to program funding and management.

**There were ongoing planning and coordination challenges**

Staff found that untimely funding cycles impacted their ability to effectively plan the education sessions early in the season and coordinate these in line with complementary programs in similar locations. They also reported that it affected the time they had available ‘to do the developmental work’ that requires longer-term planning and engagement, such as building linkages with local police and support services and relationships with community.

> We were on the backfoot so couldn’t do as much other work, like linking in with community services... Being able to forward plan for several years would make an enormous difference. (ECAV staff)

There was broad recognition – from the contracted provider and other program-level stakeholders – that the focus of program delivery to date has been on education sessions. Stakeholders noted the need for the contracted provider to play a stronger role in supporting clubs to enforce and manage the accountability of the Code of Conduct (see 6.1), promoting the program (see 6.3), and building relationships with support services (see 6.4). These are important for enhancing the program’s links to secondary and tertiary interventions that requires early and ongoing planning and engagement.

> It used to be more of a wraparound approach – service, media, service linking etc. I think this has been diluted given ECAV are education providers. (Program-level stakeholder)

> This isn’t ECAV’s bread and butter – education is one component of Tackling Violence, but not all of it. It’s really a project management role and I don’t think they have project managers looking after it... I’m not sure they are quite on top of the coordination of it all. (Club leader)

These concerns were also felt by some local club leaders, police and support services, who pointed to a lack of communication and face-to-face engagement from the contracted provider. Similarly, DFV peak body representatives and other program-level stakeholders highlighted the importance of face-to-face community engagement. They noted that community engagement would enable the contracted provider to understand and manage any community ‘gatekeeping’ behaviors, build stronger relationships with local support services, and provide ongoing engagement with clubs in addition to the yearly education sessions.

Several program-level stakeholders and club leaders reflected that prior to externally contracting program delivery, there was a dedicated project officer role within Women NSW. They highlighted the value that this position brought to program. In particular, having a ‘hands-on’ approach to engaging local communities, including police, through regular face-
to-face visits and telephone check-ins with club leaders. It remains to be seen whether the contracted provider can deliver this same level of program integration, coordination and engagement. Longer-term funding certainty is one enabler to improve planning and coordination of community, police and service engagement, however the findings also suggest that the contracted provider or a dedicated project officer needs to proactively engage in forward planning.

We recommend that Women NSW:
▪ Consider three-year rolling contracts to support longer-term planning and community engagement.
▪ Establish regular communication with the contracted provider to discuss emerging project management or funding risks or concerns.

We recommend that the contracted provider:
▪ Take a proactive approach to forward planning, given the complexities and uncertainties of the operating environment. This may include identifying and leveraging other DFV-related programs in similar locations where Tackling Violence could also be delivered.

4.2 Regional models of program delivery

Currently, the contracted provider has arrangements in place with two regional bodies to deliver Tackling Violence (see Examples 1 and 2 below). Stakeholders reported that these have been effective partnership models. Both demonstrate the capacity of regional contacts to draw on local knowledge and contacts to support the program implementation.

They pointed to the value of having regional contacts to support the delivery of the program. This would enable them to engage with clubs more frequently, build stronger relationships with services and community leaders, and leverage or ‘piggyback’ on other local initiatives and resources. However, most noted the need for a central body to oversee the program.

**Need those ongoing relationships – we are the victims of one-off pilots, so you need to keep the same person there engaging and building relationships.** (NSW Police)

**You could have a more localised, satellite approach to delivering in future. A DV Network could deliver, if ECAV gave us a template to roll it out. Then you have local contacts in local areas, and they can build rapport and have local knowledge. It’s much more sustainable that way too.** (Club Leader)

A DFV Peak body representative also noted the risks of ‘coming into town, opening up the conversation, then leaving’, suggesting the program either needs to ‘regularly circle back to really engage with community’ or ensure genuine buy-in and commitment from club leadership.

A few club leaders also suggested a train-the-trainer model of delivering the education sessions. Though others pointed to the value of having an external representative facilitate difficult conversations.
The current regional arrangements with Northern Sydney Local Health District’s Drug Action Team and Country Rugby League (below) demonstrate alternative models of delivery that Women NSW may consider in other locations, should the challenges related to program delivery discussed in 4.1.2 not be resolved or natural partnership opportunities such as these arise.

Example 1: Northern Sydney Local Health District partnership

In 2016, the Northern Sydney Local Health District’s (NSLHD) Drug Action Team contacted Women NSW, requesting to deliver Tackling Violence to rugby league and union clubs in the region.

In 2017, an MoU was developed, stipulating that ECAV would deliver the education sessions to participating clubs in the region, provide the Tackling Violence logo, and attend relevant events. The Drug Action Team, in return, would promote the program to local clubs, coordinate the signing of the Tackling Violence Code of Conduct and fund the sponsorship, and coordinate the education sessions.

In 2017, two clubs participated, and in 2018, three clubs participated. The key Drug Action Team contact indicated that the strength of their ‘satellite’ model was their ability to frequently engage with clubs – ‘I go out to games, I stay in touch with them, rather than ECAV going for one hour, once a year’. They stressed the value of having ‘someone who can engage with the clubs and the local services and can make those connections, that way the players and club see it’s not tokenistic, it’s an ongoing commitment – that’s been key for us.’

They also noted that the Drug Action Team reports regularly to the Northern Beaches Local Domestic Violence Committee, which includes approximately 20 local DFV support services. They believed that it would be ‘almost impossible for ECAV to make meaningful connections with all those services’ through one visit a year, and that, as in this model, linkages to local services ‘would have to come through the clubs or through satellite networks, with ECAV as a central point of contact for quality assurance.’

The DFV Committee chair reflected that having local services attend games ‘keeps the issue on the forefront of people’s mind’ and described the program as ‘one of the best community engagement things we have on the Northern Beaches’.

Example 2: Country Rugby League partnership

ECAV have an MoU with Country Rugby League (CRL) for the delivery of Tackling Violence to seven clubs involved in the Murdi Paaki Regional Rugby League Council in Western NSW.

It stipulates that ECAV fund the sponsorship of CRL clubs that sign the Code and support its compliance, provide a one-off sponsorship of $10,000 to support their activities, deliver education sessions, and promote Tackling Violence at Koori Knockout events. In return, CRL encourage clubs to join the program, support promotion at community events, coordinate the education sessions, identify and recruit NRL ambassadors, and distribute the online video resources.

CRL stakeholders explained that under this arrangement, they have a Tackling Violence coordinator who plays a significant role supporting the implementation of the program, including completing the program reporting, coordinating events, and enforcing the Code of Conduct. The coordinator has access to police data bases and checks for compliance – ‘if a matter arises, a letter would be sent to me and we send a letter to the club to suspend the player’.

Stakeholders noted the importance of engagement with community more than once a year and suggested ‘regionalising staff so they are more accessible to communities, giving them a better ability to mix with clubs and community to make it more practical’. Another noted that ‘training local people to deliver is a good idea, but you would need a body like ECAV overseeing it’.

However, they reported that club volunteers and CRL have limited capacity to link players to support services and suggested more support from ECAV was required to manage this process – ‘I get that its
CRL’s responsibility to stand players down if we hear about misconduct, but managing the rehab process is beyond our remit.

We recommend that Women NSW:

- Review the extent to which longer-term funding certainty addresses local coordination issues and consider whether a regionalised model of delivery would be a more effective delivery mechanism.
5. Program participation and reach

In this chapter, we assess the appropriateness of Tackling Violence’s reach across NSW rugby league clubs in 2017 and 2018.

**Key findings**

The number of clubs participating in Tackling Violence has continued to increase over time, with 30 clubs in 2017 and 43 clubs in 2018. Some clubs have been involved in Tackling Violence for many years, while others have recently started participating, and not all clubs who sign the Code of Conduct receive sponsorship money. Given the increasing interest in the program and mixed levels of program experience, a clearer vision for the target number of clubs and the nature of their involvement over the next three years is needed.

Site visits suggested that the program’s opt-in model of support has meant clubs appear to have a pre-existing commitment to pro-social behaviours that drove their decision to participate in the program. However, sponsorship money was an important incentive, particularly for clubs in low socio-economic areas.

Analysis of ABS and BOCSAR data found that participating clubs were in regional and remote locations with high rates of DFV, low socio-economic conditions, and high Aboriginal populations, which the literature and program stakeholders indicate is appropriate.

5.1 Program participation

Tackling Violence is an opt-in program. A club is defined as participating in Tackling Violence when the club’s president signs the Tackling Violence Code of Conduct.

The number of clubs participating in Tackling Violence has continued to increase over time. In 2017, 30 clubs participated in the program and 43 clubs participated in 2018 (see Appendix 1).

*Clubs have participated for a range of years*

Some clubs have been involved in Tackling Violence for many years, while others have recently started participating. In 2017, 30 clubs participated in the program. This comprised 21 clubs who were already engaged in previous years, and 9 clubs participating for the first time. In 2018, all 30 clubs from 2017 were retained and a further 13 were engaged, totalling 43 clubs (see Table 4). In 2018, 13 (30%) participating clubs had been involved in Tackling Violence for six years or more.
Table 4. Length of time that 2017 and 2018 participating clubs were involved

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Tackling Violence participation</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th></th>
<th>2018</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First year</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second year</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third year</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth year</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh year</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth year</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninth year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenth year</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Not all participating clubs receive sponsorship money

In 2017, all clubs (n=30) participated as part of a sponsorship agreement with the contracted provider (Table 5). In 2018, the number of sponsored clubs increased to 38, while 5 additional clubs signed the Code of Conduct without a sponsorship arrangement with ECAV (Table 5). Four of these clubs participated with a separate funding arrangement with Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD); the fifth club, the Redfern All Blacks, signed the Code of Conduct without sponsorship (the reason for this arrangement is not known to the evaluation).
Table 5. Club sponsorship status, 2017 and 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
<th></th>
<th>2018</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsored</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sponsored</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A strategy for future program participation is needed

Tackling Violence is a well-known and positively regarded program, that an increasing number of clubs have shown interest in. Given this, a clear vision for the target number of clubs Tackling Violence intends to reach is needed, to ensure appropriate resourcing is available for the provision of sponsorship money and delivery of education sessions.

There is also a need to clarify if and how clubs who have been involved for the three-year program cycle can continue to be involved, recognising the turnover of players in clubs would require ongoing delivery of education sessions, but that some clubs (particularly those in more affluent areas) may be committed to ongoing participation without sponsorship money.

We recommend that the contracted provider:
- Undertake a planning process to clearly specify and budget for the number of clubs to be involved in the program and the nature of their involvement.

5.1.1 Reasons for engagement

Interviews with club leaders indicated that clubs chose to participate in Tackling Violence because they recognised DFV as an issue in the community and felt the program message aligned with the values of their club. All the clubs visited appeared to have a pre-existing commitment to pro-social behaviours, and most noted that they were also involved in other programs, such as Headspace.

[The club] tends to align itself with programs which benefit the community, our club is highly community based. We are also involved with other programs like headspace, mental illness programs for our young people, state of mind programs, do something to help that social issue in our area. (Club leader)

This points to the value of the program’s opt-in model of engagement as club leaders are motivated to implement the program. The importance of senior leadership in implementing
organisational development interventions, such as the Code of Conduct, is established in the literature. 48

Most clubs also noted that the sponsorship money was an important incentive, particularly for community and volunteer-run clubs with limited resources and local sponsorship options.

*Saw it as sponsorship money at first, but realised along the way how important it was, has been educational.* (Club leader)

**We recommend that the contracted provider:**
- Use the opt-in model of program participation to leverage the commitment of club leaders.
- Provide sponsorship to clubs in lower socio-economic areas.

### 5.2 Program reach

Tackling Violence reaches clubs across NSW, but primarily targets those in regional and remote locations with high rates of DFV, low socio-economic conditions and high Aboriginal populations, which program participants and the literature indicate is appropriate.

**Most participating clubs are in regional and remote locations**

Clubs participating in Tackling Violence across 2017 and 2018 were located mainly in regional and remote areas (approximately 80%, Table 6). Five of the nine clubs located in Major Cities in 2018 were not sponsored by ECAV.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Club remoteness by postcode, 2017 and 2018</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(RA1) Major cities</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(RA2) Inner regional</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(RA3) Outer regional</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(RA4) Remote</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(RA5) Very remote</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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48 Our Watch (ibid).
Most participating clubs are in communities with high rates of DFV

Clubs that participated in Tackling Violence in 2017 and 2018 were primarily located in local government areas (LGAs) with higher prevalence of reported DFV-related assaults (Figure 1).

Figure 1. LGAs with clubs participating in Tackling Violence in 2017 and 2018 (left) and prevalence of DFV-related assault in LGAs (right)

Note: Some LGAs in the far west of NSW, such as Central Darling and Bourke, do not have their prevalence rates published by BOCSAR due to statistical confidence limitations arising from low populations

Most participating clubs are in communities with high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations

Tackling Violence Clubs that participated in Tackling Violence in 2017 and 2018 were primarily located in LGAs with a high proportion of people with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage (Figure 2).

This is positive, given the need to focus DFV resources and strategies on preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as a national priority (see 3.1).
**Figure 2.** LGAs with clubs participating in Tackling Violence in 2017 and 2018 (left) and the proportion of people with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage by LGA (right)


**Most participating clubs are in communities with low socio-economic conditions**

Clubs participating in Tackling Violence across 2017 and 2018 were also primarily located in communities with lower socio-economic conditions (Table 7). Clubs that did not receive sponsorship from ECAV were those located in the least socioeconomically disadvantaged communities – four clubs in deciles nine and ten (n=4) (the top two most advantaged areas\(^51\)) and one in decile five.

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\(^{50}\) ABS (2016). *Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.*
https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001

\(^{51}\) For more information about interpreting SEIFA data, see:
https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2033.0.55.001~2016~Main%20Features~FAQs%20-%20SEIFA%202016~4
Table 7. Club SEIFA decile (postcode), 2017 and 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEIFA decile</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th></th>
<th>2018</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<td>7%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Stakeholders agree Tackling Violence is reaching the right communities**

Most program-level stakeholders indicated that Tackling Violence was reaching the right target group. They spoke to the importance of regional and remote communities with high levels of DFV having access to supports and resources. Several also noted that targeting rugby league clubs was also an effective way of engaging young men, as they are a captive audience. These views align with the DFV prevention literature on the use of targeted interventions in sport settings (see 3.1).

*Yes, it reaches the right people definitely. In my region, its reaching people in isolated communities who don’t have access to a lot of services.* (DFV peak body representative)

*The framework of the program could work in any socio-economic area, any location, and so does DV. Everyone loves sport and it seems to engage with people and that’s the real strength.* (Club leader)

Several site visit stakeholders felt Tackling Violence could increase its reach and impact by engaging with a younger demographic. They suggested rolling out the program to junior leagues or in schools, as described in previous evaluation reports (2011 and 2014). This is

supported by the literature, which described childhood and adolescence as key life cycle stages for prevention, as this is when gender roles and identities are formed. The National Community Attitudes Survey (2013) also found that young people are less likely to have a good understanding of violence against women and more likely to hold attitudes supporting violence against women than their parents. It supported prevention strategies that target the settings of children and young people, such as schools, homes and sports and recreation.

A few thought the program could also be adapted and rolled out in other sports.

**We recommend that the contracted provider:**

- Target communities in regional and remote communities with high rates of DFV, low socio-economic conditions, and high Aboriginal populations.

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53 Webster and Flood, op. cit.
6. Program implementation

In this chapter we assess the strengths and challenges of implementing the four program components of Tackling Violence.

Key findings

Players and club members were well-aware of the Code of Conduct and viewed this as an effective mechanism to incentive non-violent behaviour. Requiring individual payers to sign and own a copy of the Code would further increase awareness and commitment to the message. Challenges also remain in the processes for reporting and responding to breaches of the Code, which currently rely heavily on the goodwill of club leaders. In cases were incidents involving players are reported to police, a mechanism for informing club leaders of this is needed, taking care to consult club leaders about this arrangement so as not to erode trust, and ensure transparency about police involvement among players. Having local police attend education session may also help build relationships and trust. Club leaders also require greater clarity regarding how to respond to breaches, including expectations for providing supports.

The number of education session participants increased considerably from 2017 to 2018 but reduced in 2019, with less than half of participating clubs receiving an education session due to funding restraints – a concern moving forward. Almost half of participants identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (this proportion increased in more remote areas), more than two-thirds were male, and about half were under 25 years of age. Key strengths of the education session delivery included that facilitators were engaging and relatable and the statistics and stories were impactful. However, there is scope to better tailor the sessions to individual communities and better coordinate and plan sessions to ensure that sessions occur early in seasons, that local community and services are engaged, and that other programs can be leveraged. To further align with the literature, the program may consider expanding delivery to younger players at clubs and consult with club leaders on their interest in a follow-up education session, given mixed views on program intensity.

Attending community events was seen an effective way of raising community awareness about the program and DFV. The online video resources have also been promoted online, but there is scope to enhance and localise the program’s online presence through social media. There is also scope to increase the distribution of traditional marketing materials that are localised to each club. These activities should be monitored.

The contracted provider seeks to engage face-to-face with local support services at each club location where possible, however, this was not a contracted activity in 2019 and did not happen consistently at all club locations in 2017 and 2018. Further, information provided to clubs about local services is not localised, and mechanisms for clubs to link victims and perpetrators to services are not clearly explained in the Code of Conduct or sponsorship documentation. Women NSW’s expectations for service engagement activities by the contracted provider also need clarifying.

6.1 Club sponsorship and the Code of Conduct

As described in Chapter 5, signing the Code of Conduct by the club president underpins clubs’ participation in Tackling Violence. The current (2019) Code of Conduct outlines the following.

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55 The 2018 and 2018 versions of the Code and Conduct were not provided for the evaluation.
- **An overview** of the program and what DFV is.

- **ECAV’s responsibilities**, including to issue the sponsorship money, assist clubs in promoting Tackling Violence, assist clubs in monitoring players’ behaviour and issue penalties, and offer an education session to club players and members.

- **Clubs’ responsibilities**, including to comply with the Code, undertake promotional strategies, coordinate hosting the education sessions, encourage players to access the promotional videos, monitor players’ behaviour and seek advice from ECAV on implementing penalties, and submit a final end-of-season report (mandatory for receiving the final sponsorship instalment of $1,000).

- **What constitutes a breach**, i.e. DFV proven by a court or reported by a club or community member or breaches to an existing ADVO.

- **Mandatory penalties**, i.e. formal counselling as well as a four-game suspension for the first offence and one-year de-registration for a second offence.

- **Ethical behaviours** that clubs must commit to, including advocating the messages of Tackling Violence and seeking to support those who disclose violence.

### 6.1.1 Embedding the Code of Conduct

In 2017, 30 club presidents signed the Code of Conduct and in 2018 this increased to 43 club presidents (see 5.1). Site visit interviews indicated that, at three clubs, players were required to individually read and sign the code when registering for the season. At others, only the club president signed the Code. Requiring individual players to read and sign the Code would help increase players understanding and awareness of the Tackling Violence message and sense of ownership over adhering to its commitments.

*We try to get individual players to sign – it’s not a legal document, but I think it’s good to make them aware. We do it through an online form.* (Club leader)

*They are aware of it. They all have to sign the agreement when they sign up, we explain to them why we take this stance – we want a family and community club... They are quite open to it when we explain it to them; we are there to help not scrutinise.* (Club leader)

The contracted providers’ 2018 participant evaluation forms found that almost all education session participants (99.5%) indicated that the session had helped them understand the Tackling Violence Code of Conduct. Similarly, the majority (78%) of respondents to the 2018 online survey agreed most of their club members know about the program. This was supported by site visit consultations, which highlighted that players were well-aware of the Code and its implications. Site visits also revealed a sense of pride among players to wear the Tackling Violence logo on the jerseys – the primary use of sponsorship money. This suggests the program has a positive reputation and visibility in participating communities.

However, one club leader and facilitators reported that some players have ‘tried to dodge the system by club hopping to avoid the Code of Conduct’. There was no data to indicate the extent of this issue, and there appears to be little the program can do to manage this within its remit of participating clubs. That the program operates in regional and remote
communities, which often have only one local team, will naturally minimise the risk of this occurring.

**We recommend that the contracted provider:**

- Require individual players, in addition to club presidents, to sign the Code of Conduct as part of club registration and collect this data.
- Ensure all players who sign the Code of Conduct are provided a hard or soft copy for ongoing reference.
- Update the Code of Conduct to use plainer English and be framed as a pledge for players (separate to the Contract for club presidents).

**Stakeholders view the Code of Conduct as an effective incentive mechanism**

Site visit consultations found that players and club leaders view the penalties imposed by the Code of Conduct as appropriate and effective incentives. They described the Code as the key program component, as it involves real and punitive measures, rather than ‘paying lip service’. This suggests the Code is an effective and impactful component of the program model.

*Code is definitely the key – without sanctions you wouldn’t have the success; it’s the accountability.* (CRL representative)

*Corner stone of the program is that Code. The clubs’ commitment and the sanctioning is a meaningful commitment, it’s not tokenistic.* (Club leader)

*I think because of the Code of Conduct, you can’t say ‘Oh I didn’t know…’* (Player)

Several noted the importance of rugby league to the lives of players, making suspensions an effective incentive. This aligns with the literature, which outlines incentivisation as a common intervention for generating individual behaviour change.56

*Being benched is absolutely a big enough incentive – it’s their life.* (Club leader)

*I think its effective. If they are getting dropped for those reasons, it’s not just themselves they are letting down, it’s their mates too.* (Club leader)

*Because it’s not just DV, it’s how a person holds themselves in the club and you know you sign the code of conduct and it puts a lot on that person’s shoulders, which is good.* (Club leader)

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6.1.2 Reporting breaches of the Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct (2019) defines breaches as DFV offences proven by a court, breaches to an enforceable Apprehended Domestic Violence Order (ADVO), self-reports by club members of their involvement in DFV, and reports by clubs or community that a club member committed DFV.

Clubs are then required to record breaches to the Code of Conduct in their end-of-season report. In 2018, 29 clubs (67%) submitted their report. Of these, four clubs reported that a player at the club had had an ADVO taken out against them during the season and three clubs reported that a player had breached an ADVO during the season.

These numbers are evidence that some clubs are aware of and acting on police involvement in DFV incidents for players and suggests that clubs are aware of matters where charges are not being laid. However, it is difficult to assess whether these are reasonable rates. Awareness raising can lead to increased reporting, which is a positive outcome. We also know most DFV incidents are underreported in the community and so it is hard to know whether low rates of reporting reflect low rates of violence or unreported incidents.

**Reporting breaches relies on goodwill**

Many raised concerns about managing accountability of the Code of Conduct, given the program does not embed formal partnerships with local Police or courts and so relies on the ‘goodwill’ of club players and leaders to report breaches.

In some clubs, the process of reporting breaches appears to be working effectively. End-of-season club reports from 2018, as well as interviews with club leaders, indicated that some clubs have strong systems in place to enforce the Code of Conduct, including communication with local Police to identify breaches. These were generally community-run clubs, strongly committed to promoting pro-social behaviours, highlighting the importance and value of club leadership in delivering the program.

*The Club has a] system in place where players are checked on a police database for any matters that “may not be in the spirit” of the Tackling Violence program. Clubs are notified formally in writing to stand players down.* (End-of-season club report)

Others felt confident that they would hear about breaches through word-of-mouth or from players self-reporting. Most players interviewed said they knew who they would talk to within their club if they needed to report an incident – often their coach – again, demonstrating the value of club leaders’ commitment to the program and local knowledge.

*We hear through word-of-mouth, you’d be surprised what you hear from the community.*

(Club leader)

The evaluation sought to understand whether the Code of Conduct had any perverse impacts on reporting violence (particularly close to important games). When asked, most stakeholders...
acknowledged that this was a possibility, but that they had no evidence to suggest it was happening and that the ‘fear of retribution’ from reporting DFV is not isolated to Tackling Violence. Most club leaders and players were confident that the Code would not deter them from reporting. This suggests the program is not having any unintended negative consequences that are unique to DFV prevention interventions.

*I wouldn’t be hesitant to report a player even if it gets them benched and I hope that others would too. Violence isn’t acceptable* (Club leader)

Many stakeholders were concerned about the inconsistent and informal mechanisms for enforcing the Code of Conduct. They thought that, in many cases, clubs would not be aware of breaches. Again, this highlights the reliance on the goodwill of club players, leaders and community members to report breaches within an opt-in program model.

*If ECAV think clubs will self-report, especially before a final or semi, they’re naïve.* (CRL representative)

*If it comes up to finals week, it would be hard, you’d have to think about it. Plus, we’d actually have to hear about it…* (Club leader)

*I have heard nothing this year, but I can guarantee you someone has had some problem at home this year. Unless it is something hectic where you know the police are involved and it becomes public then you just don’t know.* (Club leader)

**Stakeholders see a role for police in reporting breaches to clubs**

The majority of program-level stakeholders, as well as some club leaders and local Police contacts, indicated that local Police should play a clearer role in supporting clubs to enforce the Code of Conduct. They thought that the reliance on self-reporting was insufficient and greater accountability is needed.

*The Code is really key to this program... but the downside is that it has to be enforced and that depends on who is in the club and if they enforce it appropriately. If the police are involved, they keep the club honest.* (NSW Police representative)

It is not clear from end-of-season club reports who reports breaches to the Code of Conduct to club leaders. As noted, we know that in some cases, breaches are identified by club leaders through word-of-mouth or self-reporting. In others, club leaders have arrangements with local police, who inform them of any incidents involving a player that would constitute a breach.

In cases where incidents involving players are reported to police, a mechanism for informing club leaders of this is needed to improve the accountability of the Code. There is a need for Women NSW to liaise with NSW Police about how to establish this arrangement in participating communities.
Many stakeholders suggested doing this by engaging local Domestic Violence Liaison Officers (DVLOs) or Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers (ACLOs) in the program. They suggested that clubs provide local Police contacts with a list of registered players, so that police could inform clubs of any incidents that breach the Code. Several noted that this arrangement was in place prior to 2017 and is still in place for some clubs, but only informally through personal connections.

*I used to work in Bourke... I got all the names of everyone who played and if anyone was charged with DFV I would forward that to the manager or coach.* (Local DVLO)

*We’ve got a good relationship with the police and we’ve also got a police officer that plays for us... They are pretty good at notifying us if a player has got into trouble.* (Club leader)

Another example comes from CRL’s regional delivery of the program to Murdi Paaki clubs involves a police contact accessing the local police data bases to check for compliance. One stakeholder noted the importance of this for ensuring accountability and compliance with the Code (see 4.2).

However, some stakeholders stressed the need to be transparent about the role of Police in such an arrangement; players should be aware of how their personal information is being shared and used and all privacy laws should be respected. One local Police contact, and one club leader thought that police involvement would be a breach of confidentiality.

DFV peak body representatives also cautioned that arrangements would require positive relationships with police, which isn’t the case in every community, particularly in remote communities with high Aboriginal populations. This suggests the need to consider current relationships with Police for each club and work closely with NSW Police in establishing reporting mechanisms that are trusted and collaborative.

Two site visit stakeholders suggested that having police attend the Tackling Violence sessions and weekend games in plain clothes may start to improve relationships and build trust between the Police and community.

*We have major issues with the police like most country towns, systematic racism, so even if there was an issue you wouldn’t just go to the coppers, you would liaise with community* (Local DFV service)

We recommend that Women NSW:

- Liaise with NSW Police to create mechanisms for local police to inform club leaders of any breaches to the Code of Conduct. Ensure clubs and players are consulted about this arrangement so as not to erode trust. Ensure all privacy laws are upheld and players who sign the Code of Conduct are aware of any police involvement in the program and how this information will be shared.

We recommend that the contracted provider:

- Invite local police to attend the education sessions in plain clothes to build relationships and trust, where relationships with local police are positive.
Update end-of-season club reports to more accurately capture reported incidents, the time of year they occur, and who reported the incident.

### 6.1.3 Responding to breaches of the Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct (2019) commits club officials to enforce a four-game suspension in response to a club members first breach and that the club member undertake counselling with a qualified psychologist or counsellor prior to their return. After a second offence, it commits them to deregistering the club member for the remainder of the season.

Of the 29 clubs who submitted an end-of-season club report in 2018, a total of 14 players were reported to have been suspended across at least eight clubs. Further to this, a total of three players were reported to have been deregistered across two clubs; this data is not requested in the end-of-season club report template but was identified in qualitative feedback and annual reporting. It is also not possible to know if any players who received suspensions were also players who were deregistered, or if players who received suspensions were those who had breached the code. No data is collected relating to players undertaking counselling.

The was also evidence that some clubs did not understand the reporting requirements, sometimes including incidents of poor on-field behaviour and violent behaviour that was unrelated to DFV that resulted in them being ‘benched’ or suspended.

**Responding to breaches relies on goodwill**

Similar to reporting breaches, many stakeholders indicated that Tackling Violence relies on the goodwill of club leaders to respond to any reported breaches of the Code of Conduct. While the penalties are made clear within the Code, how breaches are interpreted and the extent to which penalties are imposed are not. This highlights the need for clearer information to be provided to clubs regarding how to interpret and respond to breaches and for proactive engagement with clubs by the contracted provider to offer support or advice.

Club leaders from all six sites indicated that if they heard about a breach, their first response would be to manage the incident internally through confidential conversations with those involved.

*Some people formally report to the club, like a phone call to a director, then it’s on us to chat to the player, try to keep it confidential between the player and the director.* (Club leader)

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57 13 suspensions were identified in the 2018 end-of-season club reports provided for this evaluation, while 14 suspensions were reported in ECAV’s report to WNSW in January 2019. It is not known which club this additional suspension was reported from.
Club leaders were also confident that they would suspend players should an incident be reported.

*"I'd have no hesitation to stand them down. It would be hard, but at the end of the day, talk is cheap and if you do the crime, expect the time."* (Club leader)

This was supported by end-of-season clubs reports, in which some clubs described their willingness to implement penalties harsher than those required by the Code.

*"[The club] went above the minimum standard and stood the player down for six weeks, ruling that player out of the entire season and setting a strong example to their entire club. A large show of strength from the club to go over and above the Tackling DV policy."* (End-of-season club report)

However, many stakeholders were concerned that there is a lack of accountability around whether club leaders choose to impose penalties. A few club leaders reported that they knew, anecdotally, of clubs choosing to ignore reports of violence, particularly before important games. There appears to be a reliance on club leadership to ensure the Code of Conduct is appropriately enforced.

*"[Clubs] have the power to make or break it. We've seen teams basically let go of their best players because of their commitment, when other clubs would try and hide it."* (NSW Police)

A few club leaders also raised concerns about knowing how to interpret and judge reported breaches where the courts were not involved. For example, one asked, ‘who is telling the truth, how do you know it happened for sure?’ and one noted ‘you need to consider the circumstances, because there’s an element of innocent until proven guilty’. This suggests the need for clearer resources and information to support clubs in interpreting breaches and how best to respond, such as a decision-making tree.

To support clubs to respond to breaches, the contracted provider indicated, ‘we do lots of checking in and catching up with clubs in the interim. For example, if there are issues raised or breaches of the Code, we talk them through it and follow up’. In 2017, they reported receiving three requests from clubs seeking advice; this data was not reported in 2018. Program-level stakeholders suggested that clubs need more support from the contracted provider to respond to breaches.

*"ECAV need to get in those communities when there have been breaches. They need to walk alongside the courts or police or whatever and be seen in communities. Can’t just do training and degrees, they need to actually be there and support the players."* (Program-level stakeholder)
There is a need to focus on supports rather than penalties

The current (2019) Code of Conduct commits clubs to ‘ensure that people who disclose abuse and/or violence are believed and supported, and actively seek support services for them’. However, the process for and extent to which this is done are not reported in the program activity data.

Club leaders indicated that if a breach was reported, they would encourage players to seek support. Most reported that they were aware of local support services that they would refer players to, however that this was not necessarily due to Tackling Violence, but rather personal community knowledge and networks (see 6.4.2). Only two clubs described examples of how they supported players that had been accused of or committed a DFV-related offence in their 2018 end-of-season report. One linked a male offender to multiple services to address his behavioural and other issues. The second supported a female player to successfully contest an AVDO taken out against her by a male complainant in court.

Program-level stakeholders highlighted the need for the Code of Conduct to have a clear focus on linking victims and offenders to support services. They noted that to prevent ongoing cycles of violence, responses to breaches should hold offenders to account but also offer them support. This is endorsed by the literature and the 2023 Premier’s Priority, which advocate that the provision of supportive interventions that change perpetrator behaviour is a necessary component of a multifaceted response to DFV.58

You’ve set up a structure that’s the Code of Conduct but can’t just expect them to go and get help for themselves, we know that doesn’t happen. We need to go back and go with them to the service. (ECAV facilitator)

...sometimes you just deliver and churn men through programs, but if you can’t do the other work to support them then you just put them through a machine, and it might do something but it won’t have a big, positive impact. (DV peak body representative)

However, we also know that many victims of violence do not engage with support services.59 And the process of linking victims or perpetrators to support services is made particularly challenging if the victim of a reported incident has no formal links to the club. The program has much greater capacity to influence the behaviour of club players or members.

Stakeholders also noted that clubs may not have the necessary knowledge or capacity to refer players to supports and services, and that this process may require significant support from the contracted provider. This suggests the need for more frequent and proactive


engagement with clubs by the contracted provider to provide any support or advice that may be needed.

Relying on the coach to connect people to services is a heavy burden. (Local police)

Players serve suspensions without going to see a counsellor, most of the time. (CRL representative)

Challenges related to the process of linking clubs to local support service are explored in more detail in section 6.4.2.

**We recommend that Women NSW:**

- Update the contracted provider service agreement to include ‘regular communication with participating clubs to provide support and advice regarding how to respond to breaches’ as a deliverable.
- In collaboration with the contracted provider, update the Code of Conduct to clearly specify expected processes for clubs in providing supports in response to breaches, including mandatory linking of reported perpetrators (who are club members) to behaviour change services or helplines and providing support service information to reported victims.

**We recommend that the contracted provider:**

- Update end-of-season club reports to more accurately capture responses to each individual breach (including deregistration as well as suspensions), such as an incident-level reporting template.
- Clarify with clubs that suspensions relate to breaches of the Code of Conduct, not other on-field incidents.
- Develop supplementary materials for participating clubs, such as a decision-making tree, to help club leaders interpret breaches and how to respond.
- Communicate regularly and proactively with clubs to provide them support and advice in responding to breaches.

### 6.2 Education sessions

As described in Chapter 4, the education sessions have been a focus and key strength of delivery of Tackling Violence. In 2017, clubs received the updated session content developed by the contracted provider. In 2018, clubs in their second year with the provider received new session content that was intended to build on, rather than repeat, the previous year.

#### 6.2.1 Reaching community

In 2017 and 2018, the contracted provider aimed to deliver education sessions at all participating clubs. In 2017, they delivered education sessions at 22 (out of 30) clubs to a total of 537 participants. In 2018, ECAV nearly doubled its reach by delivering sessions at 40 (out of 43) clubs to a total of 905 participants (see Table 8).

**Table 8. Education sessions delivered in 2017 and 2018**
### Table 9. **Education session participants by cultural status**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017</th>
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<td>%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-aboriginal</td>
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<td>Torres Strait Islander</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2017 and 2018 Participant Evaluation Form Data (ECAV)

Though out of scope, we understand that in 2019, the provider only delivered sessions to 20 clubs. This means that more than half of the total number of participating clubs (estimated n=45) did not receive an education session, in part due to budget restraints. This is of concern for the program moving forward, given the positive impact of education sessions, and should be reviewed to ensure all participating clubs receive a session.

**A significant number of session participants identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander**

Across 2017 and 2018, education sessions were attended by a significant proportion of individuals who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander (see Table 9). In 2017, 46 per cent (n=248) of education session participants identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. In 2018, this decreased slightly to 40 percent (n=365), though the total number increased.

The proportion of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander increased in more remote club locations. In 2017 and 2019, Aboriginal participants made up the majority of education session participants in Outer Regional, Remote and Very Remote Australia (see Table 10). Again, this suggests that the program is reaching the appropriate target group.
Table 10. Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants by remoteness, 2017 and 2018 education sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n*</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Cities of Australia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inner Regional Australia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outer Regional Australia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remote Australia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very Remote Australia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Aboriginal</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</td>
<td>248</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 58 participants did not state their Aboriginal status in 2017

Note: The format of 2017 and 2018 data was inconsistent, as noted in Section 2.4. For 2017, remoteness was calculated by the postcode for the suburb in which education sessions took place. In 2018, remoteness was calculated from the postcode of each club. It is unlikely that this affected the data reported above.

Source: 2017 and 2018 Education Session Participant Evaluation Form data

The majority of session participants were young males

The majority of education session participants in 2017 (72%) and 2018 (68%) identified as male (Table 11). The slight increase in the number of female participants from 2017 to 2018 may reflect a broader trend of increasing participation of women players in rugby league (see 7.1.1).
Table 11. **Education session participants by gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2017 n</th>
<th>2017 %</th>
<th>2018 n</th>
<th>2018 %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2017 and 2018 Participant Evaluation Form Data (ECAV)

Two Aboriginal program-level stakeholders were very concerned that having men and women attend the session together was culturally inappropriate. However, when asked, club players and leaders did not share this concern. Facilitators also reported that having more women in the room ‘hasn’t changed the way we deliver the sessions’ and spoke to the value of delivering the same message to both men and women with the chance for safe, open discussions. There is also emerging evidence that initiatives involving both men and women are more effective than those that only engaging one sex\(^60\) (see 3.1). One stakeholder suggested that the education sessions should be tailored to the context, offering separate sessions for men and women where needed for cultural safety.

In 2017, around half (49%) of education session participants were under the age of 25 (Table 12). Data for the age of education session participants was not captured in 2018.

Table 12. **Education session participants by gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 and above</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2017 Participant Evaluation Form Data (ECAV)

It is positive that the program engages young people, given the evidence that young adulthood is a time of heightened exposure to family violence, increasing the risk of male

perpetration and female victimisation later in life.\textsuperscript{61} One club leader also indicated that players are at the right age to influence or act as mentors for younger players.

These are young kids; we have been through relationships and when we were that age, we weren’t given this, and these kids are getting it at the right age so they can change what they are doing. (Club leader)

However, the literature also recognises childhood and adolescence as key life cycle stages for prevention and supports targeting settings of children and young people are effective (see 5.1).\textsuperscript{62} This suggests an opportunity to expand Tackling Violence to younger players within clubs.

\textbf{We recommend that Women NSW:}
- Update the contracted provider service agreement to ensure all clubs that sign the Code of Conduct receive an education session.

\textbf{We recommend that the contracted provider:}
- Consider expanding program delivery to junior rugby league players.

\section*{6.2.2 Delivering education sessions}

Overall, club leaders and players spoke very positively about the education sessions.

\textit{The facilitators were engaging and relatable}

Many club leaders and players spoke highly of the education session facilitators, commonly describing them as engaging and relatable. In particular, they highlighted that their ability to speak from personal experience was a key strength. One club leader noted personal stories were important because Aboriginal people ‘have a stronger connection to stories.’

\textit{Jay, he is gone through family things like this and he spoke from the heart tonight so it’s very relatable} (Club leader)

\textit{Players had lots of questions, lots of input. It was surprising coming from people that you wouldn’t think would ask questions about it. The interaction in delivery was spot on and it started discussion.} (Club leader)

Similarly, facilitators reported that by sharing their personal stories with the room, ‘they share back with us.’ They also noted that having connections to community ‘makes a big difference because community needs to be able to trust the facilitators.’ This highlights the importance

\textsuperscript{61} Webster and Flood, op. cit.

of having Aboriginal facilitators delivering the program, particularly given the program reach (see 5.2).

Several stakeholders commented that having recognisable former Rugby League players as facilitators was effective. They thought having “big names made a difference” (Regional Director) and meant participants were more engaged. Partnering violence prevention educators with sport coaches, players and former players is a key success factor noted in the literature on direct participation programs (see 3.1).

*Having high-profile NRL players engages the players, having David Peachy helped engage the players as well* (Club leader)

The contracted provider also noted that they try to ensure that the sessions are delivered by one male and one female facilitator – to engage the men and women in the room and to demonstrate how to have productive and positive discussions. Having mixed-gender facilitators is a key success factor in the literature relating to direct participation programs (see 3.1).

Several site visit and program-level stakeholders mentioned the positive impact of having Aboriginal facilitators deliver the sessions. This was particularly important for clubs with predominantly Aboriginal players, as Aboriginal facilitators were more relatable, and could help ensure cultural safety. Others, however, raised concerns that having only Aboriginal facilitators may reinforce attitudes that DFV ‘is an Aboriginal only issue.’ They suggested that having Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal facilitators deliver the sessions together would demonstrate that ‘DFV doesn’t discriminate.’ A few also suggested the need for culturally and linguistically diverse facilitators to effectively engage these communities. Given this, the program may consider engaging additional facilitators to help deliver education sessions to particular population groups.

**The ‘stats and stories’ were effective**

Most site visit stakeholders spoke positively about the content delivered at the sessions. This included statistics on rates of DFV in NSW, descriptions of the types and characteristics of DFV, and videos of personal experiences of DFV.

Many highlighted that the stories and personal experiences shared in the videos and by the facilitators were the most impactful elements of the sessions. They noted that the stories were important for relatability, but also to expose people to the ‘real’ impact that DFV has on people and families.

*That’s the best thing that happens with these nights we put on is that you hear real life stories, that’s the best thing, it puts things in perspective.* (Player)

*The video was a big eye opener, don’t think a lot of people realize how in-depth [DFV] gets* (Player)
However, a few players noted that some of the videos appeared out-of-date and needed review; this was also noted in the session observations. The stories and experiences shared by Aboriginal people in the session content should also be reviewed in light of cultural and intellectual property and data sovereignty rights (see 3.1.1).

Many also found the use of statistics impactful (see 7.2.1). One club leader indicated that statistics are not as useful as stories when speaking to people with lower numeracy or literacy levels.

_You can throw all the data and stats on the board, but what hits the guys and the girls is the real-life situations and the impacts._ (Club leader)

However, several commented that these needed updating and should be tailored to local contexts, where possible, highlighting the need to continue reviewing session content to ensure it is up-to-date, including the PowerPoint presentation format and design.

_There is scope to better tailor the session content_

Some club leaders and program-level stakeholders suggested that the session content could be better tailored to reflect local community demographics. For example, a few suggested that the content would need to be tailored to effectively engage culturally and linguistically communities. A few thought, as described above, that non-Aboriginal facilitators should accompany Aboriginal facilitators in locations with low Aboriginal populations and that separate sessions for men and women should be offered in locations with high Aboriginal populations. One suggested focussing on same-sex relationships in relevant communities.

_They need a bit more flexibility in the approach – who is presenting, what they are presenting, adapting content to those in the room. I sense that they feel assessed against presenting the direct content._ (Club leader)

Facilitators reported that they do not tailor the session content, except for the delivery of two separate courses based on clubs’ length of time in the program, as well as an open ‘question and answer’ component. Given stakeholder feedback and the literature on direct participation programs (see 3.1), there is a need to better target education session content by community.

A few site visit stakeholders also noted that the sessions focussed too strongly on male-on-female violence, and there is a need to better recognise other forms of DFV, including female-on-male and same-sex violence. However, observations of the sessions identified that this content was sufficiently covered, including the concept of coercive control, which reflected the expanding understanding of DFV in the sector more broadly.

Finally, a few club leaders and players suggested including more interactive activities in the sessions to increase engagement and facilitate dialogue.
**Coordinating educations sessions has been challenging**

The contracted provider management staff and facilitators indicated that coordinating the education sessions has been challenging (see 4.1.2). Program-level stakeholders also noted the importance of having adequate lead-in time to consult with community and local services before the sessions. They noted the importance of having support services at the sessions to provide support during and after to those who need it and to make warm referrals. This suggests the need for services to be consistently and formally invited to education sessions with adequate notice.

*You need sufficient support for both clerical and project management side of things, but also the face-to-face engagement and relationship building* (NSW Police representative)

*Community need to have faith in you – you need to keep coming back because they’re sick of blow ins. You need consultation with communities, not to tell them what’s best for them. That’s how I gain traction, I speak to elders, I include community.* (ECAV Facilitator)

The provider reported that when practicable, they engage and invite local services to the education sessions. However, it is not clear how consistently this is happening, and site visits suggested that local services rarely attended the sessions, unless they were playing for or invited by the club themselves.

The provider also noted that, through improved forward planning, they would be able to better align their delivery of Tackling Violence with other programs in similar locations, such as their Stronger Aboriginal Men and Women’s programs. They felt that longer-term funding certainty would support them to plan ahead (see 4.1.2).

Several club leaders noted the importance of delivering sessions early in the season to build knowledge and awareness and ensure all can attend. A few also noted that they would like more notice about when the contracted provider would be delivering the session to organise the venue and ensure as many people as possible can attend. Again, it was felt that improved program planning through long-term funding certainty would support this.

While some club leaders agreed that one session per year was sufficient, several suggested that the sessions be delivered more frequently to reinforce the message. This is supported by the literature, which recognises multiple sessions as more effective than one-off initiatives (see 3.1). However, a few recognised the resource constraints for delivering multiple sessions a year. Facilitators also pointed to the value of returning to clubs ‘year after year’ to engage community and reinforce the message, but that once a year was sufficient. This suggests the need to engage with clubs on their preferences for program intensity, balancing the potential value of a follow-up session to reinforce messages and provide ongoing support with the need to avoid overburdening clubs, which are often volunteer-run and involved in other programs in addition to Tackling Violence.
Two players commented that the sessions, which currently run for 1.5 hours, were slightly too long. Our observations also noted this, as some players began to disengage in the final 15–30 minutes.

**We recommend that the contracted provider:**

- Ensure Aboriginal facilitators continue to deliver the education sessions.
- Consider engaging additional facilitators to help deliver education sessions to particular population groups, such as culturally and linguistically diverse populations.
- Consult with clubs on their interest in a follow-up education session each year as part of an online, end-of-season survey in order to confirm program intensity in future.
- Review session content to ensure all statistics and content are up-to-date, including considering PowerPoint design principles.
- Tailor session content to individual communities, including length of time in the program and local demographic factors.
- Ensure all session content, including stories shared, upholds cultural and intellectual property rights.
- Explore mechanisms to commence program coordination prior to the season in order to ensure sessions are delivered at the start of each season.
- Invite local services to attend education sessions at all sites with adequate notice.
- Consider how to better leverage other programs and resources in advanced planning.

### 6.3 Community awareness

The community awareness component aims to inform the wider community about DFV and available DFV support services. In 2017 and 2018, this involved attending local community events, developing educational video resources and leveraging CRL’s website and social media, and distributing traditional media and merchandise.

#### 6.3.1 Attending community events

The provider is contracted to attend local or regional community events each year to engage with the wider community, provide information and merchandise, and promote the program.

In 2018, the contracted provider attended eleven community events, engaging with community through formal presentations, speeches and event stalls, as well as informal gatherings and conversations at games. They:

- delivered presentations/ speeches at
  - the Aboriginal Women’s Corroboree Event in Redfern
  - a home game of the MacIntyre Warriors (Boggabilla)
  - a community event at Dubbo Westside
  - Moree White Ribbon Day
  - a community event hosted by Berkeley Eagles
- distributed TV promotional resources at:
  - Wellington Cowboys Mental Health & Domestic Violence Round
  - CRL Country Championships Northern vs Southern (Port Macquarie), where the team also set up a stall to have private conversations about DFV
  - CRL Country Championship Finals (Charlestown)
NSW Aboriginal Koori Rugby League Knockout Carnival (Dubbo), attended by approximately 20,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

- hosted three Aboriginal workshops and stall at Lake Burrendong Women’s Camp
- engaged with club members and players at Lightening Ridge.

In 2017, ECAV attended the following eight events:

- Berkeley DV Round
- Broken Hill NAIDOC round
- Menindee Knockout
- Lismore Aboriginal Knockout
- Nambucca Roosters presentation
- Koori Knockout
- Nowra Southern DVLO Regional Forum
- Lightening Ridge Presentation.

Interviews with club members, players and CRL representatives, highlighted the value of the provider attending these events. A few club leaders suggested that they attend more community events throughout the year, describing them as an effective way to expand the program’s reach and embed the message in the community beyond the education sessions. They felt these were an important opportunity to engage, build relationships and foster a strong sense of community. The program should consider increasing the number of community events attended each year and collecting impact data for these activities, given these emerging positive findings.

*You can see the interaction with people – all day they were talking to people. So, they get a lot more respect for the program and can send that message.* (CRL representative)

We recommend that Women NSW:

- Consider updating the provider service agreement to include an increased number of community awareness events each year.

6.3.2 Promoting resources and messages online

To promote and expand the reach of Tackling Violence, the contracted provider was contracted to develop 10 short educational videos and leverage the CRL website and social media platforms. This reflects the literature, which suggests that online technologies should accompany all DFV prevention interventions, rather than exist in isolation.^^63^^

In 2017, the contracted provider launched the Tackling Violence Facebook page, posting 42 anti-violence and program messages, reaching 27,275 people.^^64^^ They also reported

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^^63^^ Our Watch, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia

^^64^^ It is not clear from annual reporting whether this is the reach of the top post, or the reach of all posts combined.
encouraging the 23 clubs who received an education session to post anti-violence stories and messages on their club Facebook pages, though no data is available on the reach and impact of this.

In 2018, ten educational videos were developed, promoting changes in community attitudes and behaviours toward DFV. The videos had a range of foci, from the nature and impact of DFV to information on how to ‘take a stand’ and support victims. They featured well-known men and women, as well as Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal players. The video approach is supported by the literature, which points to the value of simple and consistent messaging, as well as celebrity endorsement (see 3.1). The videos were made available on the CRL website in February 2019 (http://crlnsw.com.au/tackling-violence-video-resource/).

The contracted provider also reported 1,320 Tackling Violence posts on Facebook in 2018, with a reach of 120,558 people. At the time of this report, the Tackling Violence Facebook page has 856 followers.

Despite these online activities, most site visit stakeholders noted that they had not seen any promotion of Tackling Violence on their personal social media feeds and felt the program could do more online promotion, drawing on various social media platforms. A few noted that social media was an effective way of reaching and engaging young people. This highlights the need for a clearer communications strategy to enhance the program’s online promotion and monitor reach and impact.

Several also saw opportunities for the provider to develop more localised online content, and for clubs to upload content in real time at training and games for the provider to share more widely. This reflects the literature, which points to the need for DFV communications and marketing materials to have grassroots support and tailored messaging (see 3.1).

*I think they need to request that clubs send pictures or videos to promote. Often what they’ve done doesn’t resonate – people want to see their friends or players they know. They also need a comms strategy around target and reach, plus a project manager with a background in social media.* (Club leader)

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**We recommend that Women NSW:**
- In collaboration with the contracted provider, develop a multi-channel communications strategy that identifies targets for reach and impact of online and traditional media and marketing activities and data sources to monitor progress.

**We recommend that the contracted provider:**
- In collaboration with CRL, identify ways to increase the online presence of Tackling Violence, including through real-time and localised postings by clubs.

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65 It is not clear from annual reporting whether this is the reach of the top post, or the reach of all posts combined.
6.3.3 Distributing traditional media and merchandise

In 2017, the provider reported purchasing a range of Tackling Violence merchandise to distribute to education session participants and at community events, including 10,000 bags, drink bottles, coloured pencils, temporary tattoos, stickers and stress balls. They also developed localised posters for four clubs.

In addition to merchandise, the provider promoted the program in 2017 through local, traditional media channels—five newspaper articles, one interview on local Wilcannia radio, and one CRL Outback Newsletter publication.

In 2018, the provider reported purchasing Tackling Violence t-shirts for facilitators as well as sports caps for distribution at education sessions and community events. They reported that no posters were printed, but that arrangements had been made with CRL to assist clubs with posters in 2019.

Several club leaders noted that they would like to receive more Tackling Violence merchandise, particularly banners, posters and flyers, to promote the program at their club and home ground and to provide to their sponsors and partners. A couple also suggested having pre-recorded audio advertisements to play through the sound-system at games. A clear communications strategy to plan the development and track the distribution of traditional media and marketing activities is needed.

*I know TV ads cost a fortune, but even little things like banners help and other social media like Instagram, even club sponsors could endorse the message.* (Local police)

Again, stakeholders noted the need for communications materials to be localised. They also suggested that materials feature both men and women to reflect the increased participation of women in rugby league.

*Beyond social media, there is a role for traditional media – could do press releases to local sources around final nights e.g. State of Origin and get local quotes.* (Club leader)

Many respondents suggested promoting the program through television advertisements. They recalled the powerful impact of the previous Tackling Violence advertisements and suggested these be resumed. Program-level stakeholders cautioned, however, that these are very expensive and that the online video resources are intended as a more efficient way of expanding the reach of the program. This seem appropriate, particularly given the importance of online targeting among young people.

**We recommend that Women NSW:**

- In collaboration with the contracted provider, develop a multi-channel communications strategy that identifies targets for reach and impact of online and traditional media and marketing activities and data sources to monitor progress.
We recommend that the contracted provider:
- Localise the promotional materials that are developed and distributed to clubs.

## 6.4 Referrals and support arrangements

This component involves the program providing clubs with details of local DFV services and establishing links between sponsored clubs and local DFV services. Currently, this is done by the contracted provider connecting with local services before or after an education session, including information about generic support services in the education sessions and promotional materials, and committing clubs to supporting players through the Code of Conduct. Services should include supports directly related to DFV, as well for commonly associated issues, including drug and alcohol and mental health support services.

### 6.4.1 Engaging local support services

The contracted provider needs to connect and build relationships with local DFV support services in order to link clubs to these. To do this, they seek to engage with services at each club location during the day, before delivering education sessions in the evening. However, this is not a contracted activity and does not happen consistently at all club locations, nor is consistent data collected about who is contacted at each site.

In 2018, the contracted provider reported visiting support services in 27 club locations, including police, health services, local DV committees, family support agencies, Aboriginal Medical Services, and women’s services. In 2017, they reported engaging 42 services across 16 club locations.

Facilitators noted the importance of connecting to local services before the education sessions – ‘you need to build relationships; you can’t just go into a community with no one locally knowing about the program.’ DFV peak body representatives similarly pointed to the importance of engaging with communities before delivering the sessions – to understand community dynamics and how to manage any ‘gatekeepers’.

However, the provider also reported that the challenges related to organising the education sessions, impact the extent to which they can engage with local services at all club locations (see 4.1.2). Site visits also suggested that services had received minimal or no contact from the contracted provider. Again, this highlights the need for improved and longer-term program planning.

Interviews with local police, DFV services, club leaders and facilitators suggested the program should have a more explicit focus on engaging local support services. A few suggested attending local DFV alliance, committee or interagency meetings to inform services about the program and invite them to the education sessions. This is working effectively through the NSLHD partnership, which regularly connects to the Northern Beaches DV Committee of local services (see 4.2).
Not sure how well they link... but linking with services has potential to be of real benefit to TV... That’s the benefit of delivering through a wider, community-development lens – you can engage community and invite them to the sessions... Show them not just what DV looks like, but that it’s okay to seek help. (DFV peak body representative)

Interviews with FACS District representatives suggested there are opportunities to link Tackling Violence to existing programs and services in each District.

Fundamentally the elements of the program model are there, but better linking to local District networks will expose new opportunities. (FACS District representative)

To better engage local services, there is a need to include this as a contracted deliverable and for the contracted provider to engage in more forward planning (see 4.1.2).

You need to do the broader development work on the ground... either through a strong partnership with another organisation of a dedicated project officer within the team. I think that would have a really huge impact – it would create a container for the community and help the facilitators arrive well-prepared. (DFV peak body representative)

We recommend that Women NSW:

- Update the contracted provider service agreement to include clear expectations and deliverables related to local service and police engagement activities.

We recommend that the contracted provider:

- Develop site visit reports for facilitators to record local service engagement activities.

6.4.2 Linking clubs to local support services

Linking clubs to local support services is an important component of the program, given the evidence of the need to connect primary prevention activities to secondary and tertiary interventions for a holistic response. DFV service representatives also highlighted that ‘it’s not about criminalising and penalising perpetrators, it’s about giving them support, so, it’s really important to link to supports, not just run the sessions and the Code in isolation.’

However, information provided to clubs about local services is not localised, and mechanisms for the provider to connect clubs to services are not contracted as deliverables. It is not surprising, then, that stakeholder consultations identified this as the main area for program improvement.

Current information about support services is not localised

Currently, the provider links clubs to local support services by including generic information about support services, such as national hotlines, in their education session content and promotional materials, including the online video resources and the merchandise provided at sessions and community events.
However, club leaders pointed to the need for more local information about DFV supports and services in promotional materials (see 6.3.2 and 6.3.3). Interviews and education session observations also noted that the need for content to be localised to each club location (see 6.2.2). This would better support the program’s objective of increasing knowledge of supports for victims and perpetrators.

We would like a list of services in the area to refer to. (Club Leader)

We have our own connections to local Aboriginal services, but we don’t know the non-Aboriginal services and we have non-Aboriginal players. (Club Leader)

Participant evaluation forms (completed by education session participants in 2018), as well as ECAV’s 2018 online survey found high proportions of respondents who believed they knew about local support services (see 7.2.1). However, interviews suggested that only some players knew about local services, while others were less confident about what they could access. Those who did know about local services often noted that this was because of personal knowledge and connections, rather than Tackling Violence. This suggests the need for clearer information about locally available services.

We have a few people who work at a local service... we know about the services from the local community, not Tacking Violence. (Club Leader)

**Mechanisms to connect clubs to services are not clear**

The Code of Conduct commits clubs to supporting players who report violence or abuse. However, the process for clubs to refer victims and perpetrators to services is not clear, and data about referrals is not collected by clubs.

In 2018, the provider reported that 32 victims and one perpetrator were referred across the program and in 2017, they reported five referrals were made to victims’ services.

As discussed in section 6.1.3, responses to incidents of DFV relies on the goodwill of club leaders. Several club leaders suggested they would refer victims and perpetrators based on personal knowledge of local services, rather than because of the program. Most clubs had leaders with relevant professional backgrounds such as working for a local services or council.

We as a club, if someone needs support or guidance. We will push them in the right direction as mates. (Player)

Several stakeholders were concerned, however, that the ‘onus’ should not be on clubs to seek out referrals. And a few noted that this is particularly difficult in remote locations with limited services available.

I’m sure the program could link to services with effort, but when we are flat out running the competitions, we don’t have time to go and find people (CRL representative)
Relying on the coach to connect people to services is a heavy burden. (Local Police)

Given this, and that the program has much greater capacity to influence the behaviour of club players or members (rather than victims of reported incidents who are not linked to the club), there is a need to clarify the expectations of clubs in linking victims and perpetrators to services. The findings suggest that the program should require clubs to link any perpetrators that are club members to local men’s behaviour change services or helplines, and provide greater information about local support services for victims

We recommend that Women NSW:

- In collaboration with the contracted provider, update the Code of Conduct to clearly specify expected processes for clubs in providing supports in response to breaches, including mandatory linking of reported perpetrators (who are club members) to behaviour change services or helplines and providing support service information to reported victims.

We recommend that the contracted provider:

- Provide information about local services and supports in promotional materials for clubs, including service provider names, contact details and a description of services provided.
- Provide information about local services and supports in education session content and merchandise.
- Update end-of-season club reports to capture any supports and referrals provided or suggested to players by club leaders in response to incidents.
7. Program impact

In this chapter we assess the impact of Tackling Violence on individuals, participating clubs and the wider community in the context of the programs four objectives, to:

1. increase local rugby league clubs’ commitment to addressing DFV and foster a zero-tolerance culture towards DFV within participating clubs
2. build awareness about DFV and promote positive attitudes toward women within rugby league clubs and the wider community
3. improve women’s safety and comfort within club environments
4. increase knowledge of support services available to victims and offenders.

Key findings

Overall, Tackling Violence appears to have had a positive impact on players, clubs and the broader community in 2017 and 2018. However, challenges inherent to measuring the impact of primary DFV prevention programs created some limitations to our assessment of impact, particularly at the community level.

Program activity data and stakeholder consultations indicated players have increased awareness and knowledge of DFV and confidence talking about and standing up to DFV. There was also some anecdotal evidence of reduced violent behaviours by players. This suggests the program is successfully contributing to its objective of building awareness of DFV, promoting positive attitudes towards women and fostering a zero-tolerance culture towards DFV in clubs. However, individual awareness of local support services remains a challenge, limiting the extent to which the program is meeting this objective in all cases.

Players and club members also indicated that women felt safe at clubs and that Tackling Violence had fostered an inclusive club environment. This suggests the program is successfully contributing to its objective to improve women’s safety and comfort and zero-tolerance culture towards DFV at clubs.

Positive changes in the rugby league landscape, including the increasing participation of women and recent NRL interventions, such as Voice Against Violence and the No Fault Stand Down policy, are likely to have contributed to these positive outcomes.

At the community level, there was no data available to capture the impact of the program’s community awareness raising activities. Analysis of BOCSAR crime statistics data also found no clear pattern in the prevalence of DFV in LGAs that have hosted a Tackling Violence club between 2009 and 2018. This made it difficult to assess the extent to which the program is meeting its objective to build awareness and positive attitudes within the wider community. However, stakeholder consultations provided anecdotal evidence of a positive impact on community awareness and reduced violence, despite ‘concrete’ evidence of this.

The evidence available suggests that the Code of Conduct and education sessions have been the most impactful components within the program model.

7.1 The context

7.1.1 A changing landscape for rugby league

The rugby league landscape has undergone significant changes over the past decade, including the increasing participation of women and recent NRL interventions, that are likely
to have contributed to positive changes in attitudes towards women. These were raised by stakeholders as important contextual factors that help explain outcomes and were viewed as mutually reinforcing the efforts of Tackling Violence.

*Tackling Violence is one thing among many that dovetailed together to make change.*  
(NSW Police)

*Tackling Violence is part of high-level trends; it’s complementary.* (Club leader)

*Our work isn’t the silver bullet, will never fix it all, but its part of a bigger picture and ways of saying this isn’t okay... As a society we are having more conversations about violence than ever before.* (DFV peak body representative)

**Increased participation of women in rugby league has had a positive impact**

Women are the fastest growing cohort of players in rugby league in Australia. In 2018, 180,000 women and girls were playing rugby league, primarily across an estimated 110 female-only competitions. Around one-third (n=66,000) of women and girl players participated at a grassroots level.

Stakeholder interviews indicated that the increased participation of women and girls in the grassroots rugby league has been key to improving attitudes towards women and violence in clubs and making clubs safer for women by challenging gendered stereotypes and fostering more equal and inclusive spaces.

*Years ago, you still had that football life, you go and play and then have a beer with your mates. But now with the women it changes a bit, its more family-oriented... not just about the men.* (Club leader)

*I think having the league tag with girls playing has made a massive difference to the club and the footy. Men see them playing and see how tough they are. It has changed their attitudes.* (Club leader)

*I don’t have any measures, but I think grounds are much more inclusive spaces for women. Around the field and bars, people are much more respectful towards women.* (Local DFV service)

At the national level, the National Rugby League (NRL) is continuing to expand pathways to professionalisation for female players, with 19 players receiving central contracts from the NRL in 2019. Annually, there is also a round of NRL for the first-grade men’s teams that is

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dedicated to increasing the profile of women players, led by Women in League. The increased profile of women at the national level was also recognised by stakeholders.

*Now they have a first-grade women’s NRL league, it has really shifted attitudes. It tips the dominant culture on its head, it’s incredibly powerful – we aren’t observers, we are participants.* (Player, female)

*[Tackling Violence and the women’s league] started together. I feel respected and I don’t know whether it’s the program or our culture, but the program has formed part of it.* (Club leader, female)

### Recent NRL policies have put DFV on the broader agenda

Various NRL policies and initiatives have been implemented over the past decade that are likely to have increased the visibility and awareness of DFV in the rugby league community.

These include *Voice Against Violence*, a program similar in design to Tackling Violence, and the *No Fault Stand Down Policy*, which bans players charged with serious crimes, such as sexual assault or DFV from playing until their court appearance. Several stakeholders noted the importance of NRL having messages consistent to those of Tackling Violence in order to avoid any contradictory attitudes and responses across code.

*It’s probably because of Tackling Violence and the No Faults policy, but Tackling Violence is important – everyone is seeing the message that violence isn’t acceptable domestically, nor publicly.* (Club leader)

### 7.1.2 Challenges assessing impact

Measuring the impact of primary prevention programs in the DFV sector poses some challenges. It is well-established that DFV is more prevalent in the Australian community than crime statistics suggest, as many victims – for a range of different reasons – often don’t report incidents to the police or seek help from other support services. Although statistics on DFV-related crimes are available and can be analysed at an LGA-level, it is not possible to assess how much changes in the prevalence of DFV (1) reflect actual prevalence rates in the community and (2) are influenced by changes in a community’s willingness to report. Increases in reporting can also be interpreted as a negative outcome, or as a positive indication of increased knowledge, awareness and confidence. Assessing the impact of Tackling Violence is subject to these same caveats, as a mostly primary prevention program that aims to reduce prevalence of DFV in the longer-term.

Other relevant national monitoring data, such as the ABS Personal Safety Survey and the ANROWS National Community Attitudes Survey, are not publicly available at the LGA- or

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68 Available at: [https://www.nrl.com/community/voice-against-violence/](https://www.nrl.com/community/voice-against-violence/)

postcode-level. This prevented any further analysis of the impact of Tackling Violence on violence and attitudes towards violence in the broader community.

Program impact is best understood through data collection tools distributed to individuals involved by the contracted provided.

### 7.2 Impact on individuals

When asked, stakeholders tended to think that all four program components, combined, were important for generating change. However, the data available indicated the education sessions and code of conduct have been stronger mechanisms for changing knowledge, attitudes and behaviours, than the promotional materials and referrals and support arrangements. It was not possible to discern, from the data available, whether the program has had a great impact on certain groups than others.

#### 7.2.1 Knowledge and awareness

The education sessions appear to be the key program mechanism for increasing knowledge and awareness. This suggests the program has been successful in contributing to its objective of building awareness about DFV within participating clubs.

Stakeholders of all types were confident that Tackling Violence has significantly impacted players and club members understanding of DFV; this was supported by 2018 participant evaluation forms and ECAV’s 2018 online survey. Stakeholders were less confident about the extent to which the program increased awareness of local DFV support services.

**Education sessions increased participants' understanding of DFV**

Participant evaluation forms (completed at the end of education sessions in 2018), indicated that almost all participants took something away from the session, with 98 percent indicating that they had learned something new (Table 13). Before the session, 15 percent of participants said they had an advanced knowledge of DFV – after the session was completed the proportion of people who reported advanced knowledge of DFV increased to 52 percent. A large majority (over 90%) of participants indicated that their awareness of the experience of DFV victims had increased because of the education session; 57 percent of participants answered that this awareness had increased completely, with a further 38 percent answering that their awareness had increased substantially.
Table 13. 2018 participant evaluation form data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you learn anything from today’s session?</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ECAV Participant Evaluation Form data 2018

Similarly, ECAV’s online survey, distributed to session participants at the end of the 2018 season, found that most (89%) thought their participation in Tackling Violence and/or their attendance at an education session had improved their understanding of DFV. 61% reported that their understanding of DFV had significantly increased, 16% reported that their knowledge moderately increased and 11% reported that their knowledge had slightly increased.

All clubs who submitted end-of-season reports for 2018 (n=29) also reported that participation in Tackling Violence had increased the club members’ understanding of DFV, noting the limitations of this data (see 2.5.1).

Interviews with club leaders and players support these positive findings, with most being confident that the education sessions had raised their awareness of DFV. The sessions were often described as ‘eye-opening’ or ‘thought-provoking.’

Some highlighted that the sessions increased their understanding of the lasting and intergenerational impacts of DFV on victims and families.

*Makes fellas think, what the consequences of DV are, what it does to kids. Some have changed their lives around, don’t drink anymore, don’t go out anymore. Players have learnt.* (Club leader)

*It’s a family club so people relate it – their mother, sisters, daughters – so when you have those connections and you remove yourself and put yourself in that environment and imagine a family member going through that you get negative feelings and it’s pretty sad.* (Club leader)

*Treat your kids like that and they grow up with that in the back for their minds and repeat it. Think this is a way to stop it here and give out good role models.* (Club leader)

Others noted that they had increased their knowledge of the prevalence of DFV in their area and of the characteristics of DFV, several noting that ‘it’s not just physical.’

A few players also noted that the program helped them to better identify and know how to respond and report DFV.
People are more open now, no one is sitting back and taking it. They are more empowered to come forward. (Player)

I’ve been in situations before were neighbours were fighting, a pregnant partner and the bf and it sounded like they were punching on, so I went next door and knocked and said I’m calling the police but before Tackling Violence I wouldn’t have done that. (Club player)

**It is not clear how well Tackling Violence increased awareness of local services**

Almost all education session participants (99%) thought that the session had helped them understand DFV services available in their local community (Table 14).

**Table 14.** 2018 participant evaluation form data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Did this session help you to understand Domestic Violence support services available in your community?</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>613</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ECAV Participant Evaluation Form data 2018

Similarly, the 2018 online survey suggested that Tackling Violence has had a positive impact on participant’s knowledge of available services. A high proportion of respondents indicated that they would know a support service to refer someone who had experienced DFV (82%) and someone who had committed DFV (78%).

Despite these positive findings, interviews with club leaders and players suggested that only some players knew about local services, while others were less confident about what they could access. Those who did know about local services often noted that this was because of personal knowledge and connections, rather than Tackling Violence (see 6.4.2).

This suggests that the program is not met its objective to increase knowledge of support services available to victims and offenders in all cases.

**7.2.2 Attitudes and behaviours**

Combined, the education sessions and the Code of Conduct appear be the key mechanisms changing players attitudes and behaviours. Site visit consultations, participant evaluation forms, and the online survey all found that the program increased player’s confidence talking about DFV and standing up to, reducing and reporting violent attitudes and behaviours. This suggests the program has been successful in contributing to its objective of promoting positive attitudes toward women within rugby league clubs and fostering a zero-tolerance culture towards DFV.
Several noted that the program had fostered a sense of pride and ownership over the program among players. They described players wanting to represent the club and their peers well, as ‘good men’.

A couple of club leaders thought that violence was not a concern for their club prior to Tackling Violence, so it was hard to assess impact, but that the program had been useful overall.

*Education sessions increased players’ confidence talking about DFV*

Almost all (92%) 2018 education session participants reported increased confidence in talking about DFV as a result of the session; 49 percent thought that their level of confidence in talking about domestic violence had increased completely and 43 percent thought that their confidence had increased substantially.

This was evident during the site visits, as several club members and players commented that the education sessions were a catalyst for ongoing conversations about DFV in clubs. A couple noted they were surprised by the level of engagement of certain players, who asked questions or shared personal stories.

*Put it this way, I’ve been involved in football for 30-odd years, from juniors to seniors, and this is one program that I’ve heard the boys talk about, they’re aware of it. (Club leader)*

*Standing up to and reducing violent behaviours*

Almost all (95%) 2018 education session participants reported that the education session had increased their confidence to stand up for victims of DFV; 60 percent of participants answered that their level of confidence had increased completely, with a further 35 percent saying their confidence had substantially increased.

Similarly, the 2018 online survey found most (89%) of respondents had increased confidence in challenging violence against or poor attitudes towards women (74% are much more confident, 16% a little more confident).

Just under half (43%) of online survey respondents reported that, since participating in Tackling Violence, they have stood up to or intervened in a situation where someone was being violent, controlling towards their partner, former partner or other family member. A similar proportion (46%) reported that since participating in Tackling Violence they had intervened when someone who used derogatory or abusive language towards their partner, former partner or other family member.

All clubs who submitted season reports for 2018 (n=29) reported that participation in Tackling Violence had improved club members’ positive attitudes and behaviours towards women and increased their confidence to take a stand against DFV.
The online survey also suggested that Tackling Violence had a positive impact on the confidence of participants to report DFV. The majority of (89%) of respondents agreed that participation on in the Tackling Violence program had increased their confidence to report DFV to the local police (69% much more, and 20% a little more). Only 5 percent reported they were not confident to report to anyone.

A smaller proportion (28%) of respondents revealed that they had reported a person who has been violent or abusive towards their partner, former partner or other family member, to their local police and or club in the previous two years.

Several club leaders and players shared stories of standing up to violent attitudes and behaviours. Facilitators also indicated that ‘there are guys and women out there who were perpetrators who have put up their hand and are now taking responsibility.’

Though data on changes in players’ behaviour is not collected, site visit consultations suggested the program has reduced violent behaviours among some players, both on and off the field. A few club leaders described positive changes in particular players’ behaviour as a result of the club’s strong stance on pro-social behaviours. Similarly, a few players thought the program had improved the behaviour of their peers.

*I've heard stories about someone getting too drunk and so the other boys pulled them up on it.* (Club leader)

*There was an incident and everyone took a stand for it. It was powerful. And it can’t just be the women. They came together and held the perpetrator accountable and stamped it out for what it is – not just saying it but doing it.* (Club leader)

We recommend that Women NSW
- Develop an online, end-of-season survey for the contracted provider to distribute to players and club members to capture the impact of the program on individuals and clubs, in line with the outcomes hierarchy and matrix (see Chapter 9).

We recommend that the Contracted provider:
- Collect education session feedback online or using iPads on site.

### 7.3 Impact on clubs

There is evidence to suggest that Tackling Violence has positively impacted club culture, making participating clubs safe for women. This suggests that the program has been successful in contributing to its objective of improving women’s safety and comfort within club environments and fostering a zero-tolerance culture towards DFV.

Again, stakeholders tended to think that all four program components, combined, were important, but data analysis suggested the education sessions and code of conduct were stronger mechanisms. Stakeholders did not think that demographic factors (such as location)
effect the extent to which Tackling Violence impacted clubs, but rather the degree of commitment of club leadership.

The majority (80%) of respondents to the online survey thought their club was a much safer place for families as a result of programs like Tackling Violence, while 91 percent believed women felt safer knowing their club was involved in Tackling Violence (62% much safer, 29% somewhat safer). Similarly, all clubs who submitted season reports for 2018 (n=29) reported that participation in Tackling Violence had increased the safety of female club members.

Interviews with club leaders and players also indicated that women feel safe at participating clubs. However, it is difficult to discern the extent to which this is a result of Tackling Violence. Several clubs reflected that they are ‘community’ or ‘family’ clubs, where many players and members are personally connected or related.

Most of these women we have all grown up with, like a lot of our family, so I know these guys feel fine. (Club leader)

Have some women players in the club – never had any issues, I think they feel safe. My daughter has grown up there and she thinks of the boys as her big brothers. (Club leader)

Others spoke to a broader cultural shift within clubs towards more inclusive and supportive environments.

It’s more like a brotherhood/ sisterhood now. Everyone’s very respectful towards each other and other players and other teams. (Player)

Everyone’s on the same page where no one accepts it. There’s no tolerance for it here. We are going in the right direction and making progress... There is strong brotherhood and unity and Tackling Violence has been an add on. (Player)

**We recommend that Women NSW**

- Develop an online, end-of-season survey for the contracted provider to distribute to players and club members to capture the impact of the program on individuals and clubs, in line with the outcomes hierarchy and matrix (see Chapter 9).

**We recommend that the Contracted provider:**

- Consider distributing and collecting the end-of-season club reports using an online/ electronic system.

### 7.4 Impact on the wider community

The community awareness component has the greatest capacity to impact the wider community in club locations. In particular, stakeholders reflected on the value of the provider attending local events to reach and engage the broader community (see 6.3.1). However, there were no tools in place to capture the impact of the providers’ community awareness work at local events, and no online or traditional promotional data was provided for the
evaluation. This made it difficult to assess the extent to which Tackling Violence is meeting its objective of building awareness and promoting positive attitudes within the wider community.

To assess the impact of Tackling Violence on the wider community, we analysed publicly available crime statistics data in NSW from the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR) to identify any patterns in the prevalence of DFV in LGAs that have hosted a Tackling Violence club between 2009 and 2018. See 2.4 for details on the limitations of this exercise.

The results were inconclusive, with no clear pattern emerging in the prevalence rates when analysed over time and with respect to the Tackling Violence ‘status’ of an LGA (hosted at least one Tackling Violence club in a calendar year).

In most LGAs there was little change in the prevalence of DV-related assault between 2001 and 2018 (see Figure 3). In some small population LGAs, where the representation of Tackling Violence participants was likely to be proportionally higher than larger LGAs, there was no consistent change in prevalence rates over time. For example, in Bourke, there is little change in prevalence in the first year in which this LGA hosted a Tackling Violence club (2012) and little change in the following years. In Brewarrina, the first year of Tackling Violence (2013) saw a noticeable increase in prevalence before a noticeable decrease in prevalence in more recent years. In Central Darling, prevalence is initially flat before surging in the third year of Tackling Violence (2012). Prevalence in Bogan and Warren, in comparison, was much less variable over time.

While there were no consistent patterns in the rates of DV-related assault in participating communities that can be attributed confidently to Tackling Violence, several club leaders believed that violence had reduced in their community, noting, though, that they did not have ‘concrete’ evidence of this.

Other stakeholders noted that the program had raised awareness and initiated conversations in the broader community. While there is limited evidence that awareness raising in itself is effective in preventing violence\textsuperscript{70}, the literature notes it is an important first step in engaging stakeholders for further intervention (see 3.1.1).

\textit{It’s not a private conversation or matter, it’s a social matter that we are all responsible for. That’s what I like the most about it – having the topic represented at games makes it a community issue.} (Local DFV service)

\textit{Prior to this there was a stigma with resistance to try and stop it, but to think they are now actively talking about it, we have come a long way.} (CRL representative)

\textsuperscript{70} Our Watch, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Melbourne, Australia
A few program-level stakeholders, however, were concerned about a possible decline in the level of community engagement and program impact, following the transition of the program from the previous project officer.

**Figure 3. Prevalence of DV-related assault in Tackling Violence LGAs, 2001-2018**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LGA</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cessnock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarence Valley</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coonamble</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cowra</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dubbo Regional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eurobodalla</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forbes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawkesbury</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TV**

**No TV**
8. Conclusions and recommendations

8.1 Conclusions

Since its establishment, Tackling Violence has developed a positive reputation in regional and remote communities across NSW and there is evidence to suggest that it is contributing to positive outcomes for individuals, participating rugby league clubs, and wider communities. This has continued to be the case since 2017, with almost all stakeholders speaking positively about the program message, design and impact, which was supported by the secondary program impact data and relevant literature.

The number of clubs participating in Tackling Violence has continued to increase over time, with 30 clubs in 2017 and 43 clubs in 2018. Most clubs are in regional and remote locations with high rates of DFV, low socio-economic conditions, and high Aboriginal populations, which the literature and program stakeholders indicate is appropriate.

Overall, the program design (comprised of four core components) is supported by the literature on DFV prevention in sport settings. In particular, sport is considered an effective setting for DFV prevention activities; successful interventions are universally inclusive but targeted to individual communities, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; successful interventions combine multiple strategies targeting multiple audiences; the Tackling Violence core components align with proven and promising DFV prevention techniques. While the literature and evaluation findings support the program model overall, there is a need to develop a more robust and consolidated understanding of the program’s theories of change to inform any further refinements to the model as well as future data collection.

The evaluation concluded that the program was effectively delivered by the contracted provider. Key factors enabling successful program delivery were:

- having content expertise in DFV training and education and experience delivering programs across similar NSW communities
- having experienced and qualified Aboriginal facilitators who have local community connections and respect, training in DFV prevention, and personal stories to share
- strengthening the Code of Conduct penalties as an effective behaviour change mechanism
- strengthening the education session content to include impactful statistics and stories as well as stage delivery based on length of time in the program
- engaging local community members through community awareness events
- developing online, publicly accessible, and educational video resources
- developing effective partnerships with Country Rugby League and the Northern Sydney Local Health District’s Drug Action Team
- distributing online surveys and participant evaluation forms to capture impact data.
However, the focus of program delivery has been on the education sessions component. Further to this, the program design (through its club-level policies, education sessions and community awareness raising activities) is most closely aligned with primary prevention approaches.

Given the importance of integrating primary prevention activities with early intervention (secondary) and response (tertiary) efforts, as well as the NSW Premier’s Priority to reduce the proportion of domestic violence perpetrators reoffending by 25 per cent by 2023, there is a need to strengthen the accountability of the Code of Conduct, localise program promotional materials, and build relationships and links between clubs and support services.

8.2 Recommendations

Our recommendations build on the strengths of the program in relation to its primary prevention responses, including by maintaining and enhancing the delivery of education sessions and Code of Conduct and increasing promotional activities. They also identify opportunities to strengthen links to secondary responses—by building knowledge of local supports services available—and tertiary responses—by clarifying processes for reporting and responding to breaches of the Code and building links to local services.

The recommendations also recognise the need for improved timeliness of program planning and community-level engagement activities, as well as improved monitoring data collection to more consistently understand reach and impact of all components, in line with the program logic and outcomes matrix provided.

Program design

We recommend that Women NSW:

- Review the program in an ongoing way against the available evidence to ensure approach and activities align with best practice.
- Clearly articulate expected theories of change for each of the program components and the program overall in line with the updated outcomes hierarchy developed in Chapter 9 and the most recent evidence available.

Program management

We recommend that Women NSW:

- Consider three-year rolling contracts to support longer-term planning and community engagement.
- Establish regular communication with the contracted provider to discuss emerging project management or funding risks or concerns.
- Review the extent to which longer-term funding certainty addresses local coordination issues and consider whether a regionalised model of delivery (per the examples provided in 4.2) would be a more effective delivery mechanism.
We recommend that the contracted provider:

- Take a proactive approach to forward planning, given the complexities and uncertainties of the operating environment. This may include identifying and leveraging other DFV-related programs in similar locations where Tackling Violence could also be delivered.

**Program participation and reach**

We recommend that the contracted provider:

- Undertake a planning process to clearly specify and budget for the number of clubs to be involved in the program and the nature of their involvement.
- Use the opt-in model of program participation to leverage the commitment of club leaders.
- Provide sponsorship to clubs in lower socio-economic areas (per 5.2).
- Target communities in regional and remote locations with high rates of DFV, low socio-economic conditions, and high Aboriginal populations.

**Program implementation: Code of Conduct**

We recommend that Women NSW:

- Liaise with NSW Police to create mechanisms for local police to inform club leaders of any breaches to the Code of Conduct. Ensure clubs and players are consulted about this arrangement so as not to erode trust. Ensure all privacy laws are upheld and players who sign the Code of Conduct are aware of any police involvement in the program and how this information will be shared.
- Update the contracted provider service agreement to include ‘regular communication with participating clubs to provide support and advice regarding how to respond to breaches’ as a deliverable.
- In collaboration with the contracted provider, update the Code of Conduct to clearly specify expected processes for clubs in providing supports in response to breaches, including mandatory linking of reported perpetrators (who are club members) to behaviour change services or helplines and providing support service information to reported victims.

We recommend that the contracted provider:

- Require individual players, in addition to club presidents, to sign the Code of Conduct as part of club registration and collect this data.
- Ensure all players who sign the Code of Conduct are provided a hard or soft copy for ongoing reference.
- Update the Code of Conduct to use plainer English and be framed as a pledge for players (separate to the Contract for club presidents).
- Invite local police to attend the education sessions in plain clothes to build relationships and trust, where relationships with local police are positive.
- Update end-of-season club reports to more accurately capture reported incidents, the time of year they occur, and who reported the incident.
- Update end-of-season club reports to more accurately capture responses to each individual breach (including deregistration as well as suspensions), such as an incident-level reporting template.
- Clarify with clubs that suspensions relate to breaches of the Code of Conduct, not other on-field incidents.
- Develop supplementary materials for participating clubs, such as a decision-making tree, to help club leaders interpret breaches and how to respond.
- Communicate regularly and proactively with clubs to provide them support and advice in responding to breaches.
Program implementation: education sessions

We recommend that Women NSW:
- Update the contracted provider service agreement to ensure all clubs that sign the Code of Conduct receive an education session.

We recommend that the contracted provider:
- Consider expanding program delivery to junior rugby league players.
- Ensure Aboriginal facilitators continue to deliver the education sessions.
- Consider engaging additional facilitators to help deliver education sessions to particular population groups, such as culturally and linguistically diverse populations.
- Consult with clubs on their interest in a follow-up education session each year as part of an online, end-of-season survey in order to confirm program intensity in future.
- Review session content to ensure all statistics and content are up-to-date, including considering PowerPoint design principles.
- Tailor session content to individual communities, including length of time in the program and local demographic factors.
- Ensure all session content, including stories shared, upholds cultural and intellectual property rights.
- Explore mechanisms to commence program coordination prior to the season in order to ensure sessions are delivered at the start of each season.
- Invite local services to attend education sessions at all sites with adequate notice.
- Consider how to better leverage other programs and resources in advanced planning.

Program implementation: community awareness

We recommend that Women NSW:
- Consider updating the provider service agreement to include an increased number of community awareness events each year.
- In collaboration with the contracted provider, develop a multi-channel communications strategy that identifies targets for reach and impact of online and traditional media and marketing activities and data sources to monitor progress.

We recommend that the contracted provider:
- In collaboration with CRL, identify ways to increase the online presence of Tackling Violence, including through real-time and localised postings by clubs.
- Localise the promotional materials that are developed and distributed to clubs.

Program implementation: referrals and support arrangements

We recommend that Women NSW:
- Update the contracted provider service agreement to include clear expectations and deliverables related to local service and police engagement activities.

We recommend that the contracted provider:
- Develop site visit reports for facilitators to record local service engagement activities.
- Provide information about local services and supports in promotional materials for clubs, including service provider names, contact details and a description of services provided.
- Provide information about local services and supports in education session content and merchandise.
Update end-of-season club reports to capture any supports and referrals provided or suggested to players by club leaders in response to incidents.

Program impact

We recommend that Women NSW:

- Develop an online, end-of-season survey for the contracted provider to distribute to players and club members to capture the impact of the program on individuals and clubs, in line with the outcomes hierarchy and matrix (see Chapter 9).

We recommend that the contracted provider:

- Collect education session feedback online or using iPads on site.
- Consider distributing and collecting the end-of-season club reports using an online/electronic system.
9. Monitoring and evaluation framework

Reflecting on the evaluation findings and recommendations, we have drafted a high-level monitoring and evaluation framework to support future outcomes measurement. The framework is intended to more clearly articulate the intended program outcomes and relevant data sources to build the program evidence.

The framework was developed in consultation with the Evaluation Advisory Group. It builds on current program implementation, outcomes and data collection. It is not intended to be a prescriptive document, but rather a high-level framework to guide the development of more comprehensive monitoring and evaluation plans in future.

9.1 Monitoring and evaluation framework

The core components of a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework are a program logic (or ‘outcomes hierarchy’) and its associated theories of change and an outcomes matrix (see Figure 4). Together, these identify the intended outcomes of a program at different levels and for different stakeholders and how outcomes can be measured. M&E frameworks are intended to guide the development of monitoring and evaluation plans.

Figure 4. Situating M&E frameworks

9.1.1 Tackling Violence outcomes hierarchy

At the heart of an M&E framework is a outcomes hierarchy, based on theories of change that are supported by the evidence available. An outcomes hierarchy is a one-page diagram that
shows the important components of an intervention and its expected outcomes. The model begins at the bottom with the inputs over which you have a high degree of control, then progresses through the immediate, and intermediate outcomes that logically, if achieved, should contribute to the ultimate outcomes.

Outcomes hierarchies serve a range of purposes. They help stakeholders come to a shared understanding and easily communicate what a program is trying to achieve and how it contributes to long-term policy goals. They also help surface any assumptions about how a program is intended to work and whether changes to the program design are needed. Importantly, logic models provide a framework for all monitoring and evaluation activities, identifying key activities and outcomes to monitor and measure.

The Tackling Violence outcomes hierarchy (see Figure 5) starts with the bottom blue boxes, which describe the foundational elements for the successful implementation of the four core program components. Moving up, the green boxes outline the ‘process outcomes’, which demonstrate how the target audiences are exposed to each of the four components. If these are achieved, the orange medium and longer-term outcomes are expected; these relate to changes in knowledge and attitudes. If these are achieved, the program can expect to see long-term changes in behaviours and ultimately, reduced DFV in participating communities. The model also notes the Human Services Outcomes Framework domains that Tackling Violence contributes to.

The model should be treated as living document that is updated as program deliverables and objectives change or evolve.

### 9.1.2 Theories of change

Outcomes hierarchies are complemented by theories of change. Put simply, a theory of change describes why you expect an intended outcome to be achieved through your actions. They are generally written in narrative form. A program can have many theories of change—covering the project overall, as well as the program components or levels of the outcomes hierarchy. A theory of change is grounded in the research literature or practical experience of an intervention. It can be used to refine a program logic and assess the extent to which a program is evidence-informed.

As described in 3.1.1, there is no readily available theory of change for Tackling Violence. However, previous logic models reference mechanisms of change and this report provides evidence of relevant theories of change that align with the core components. There is a need to review the program model to clearly develop expected theories of change in line with the updated outcome hierarchy developed below and the most recent evidence available. This would support a more robust and consolidated understanding of the program design and expected outcomes and would help inform future monitoring and evaluation plans.
Figure 5. Tackling Violence outcomes hierarchy

HSOF domain

Ultimate program goal

- **Safety:** all people in NSW are able to be safe
- **Social and community:** all people in are able to participate and feel culturally and socially connected
- **Health:** all people in NSW are able to live a healthy life
- **Empowerment:** all people and communities in NSW are able to contribute to decision-making that affects them and live fulfilling lives

Tackling Violence reduces the incidence of domestic and family violence and increases women’s safety in participating communities

**Long-term outcomes**

- Players comply with the CoC by not engaging in DFV and reporting breaches
- Clubs respond to breaches with penalties and support referrals
- Players and club members reflect on and reduce and challenge violent behaviours and attitudes
- Players and club members access or refer local support services

**Medium-term outcomes**

- Players and club members support and advocate the CoC message
- Players and club members have increased knowledge of DFV and local support services available for victims and perpetrators that they can access or refer friends and family.

**Short-term outcomes**

- Players and club members are aware of and understand the CoC
- Attendees positively engage with the information provided
- Players, club members and communities positively engage with campaign messages
- Players and club members are aware of and build positive relationships with local support services

**Process outcomes**

- Players at participating clubs sign the CoC and clubs received sponsorship money
- Players, club members and community members and services attend sessions
- Players, club members and communities are exposed to targeted awareness campaigns
- Local support services are engaged in Tackling Violence activities and messages

**Program resourcing and design**

- Club sponsorship and Code of Conduct (CoC)
- Education sessions
- Community awareness campaign
- Referrals and support arrangements

Tackling Violence program components are evidence-informed, culturally-safe, sufficiently resourced and delivered effectively in appropriate clubs.
9.1.3 Tackling Violence outcomes matrix

Outcomes matrices systematically map how to measure each individual outcome identified in an outcomes hierarchy. They include a range of qualitative and quantitative indicators drawn from a range of sources to build a robust evidence base. They identify the indicators of success and data sources for each of the outcomes in a hierarchy, providing a framework for monitoring and evaluation data collection.

The Tackling Violence outcomes matrix (see Table 15) sets out the information needed to assess the impact of the program in the future. It follows the structure of the Tackling Violence outcomes hierarchy—for each outcome in the model, it includes indicators of success (what outcomes should look like when achieved), and the monitoring data to be collected. Data sources in *blue italics* are suggested sources to be developed and routinely collected. Data sources in **black** are existing sources, though these may need updating to capture each relevant indicator. More in-depth information about program implementation and outcomes could also be collected through future evaluations.
Table 15. **Tackling Violence outcomes matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Indicators of success</th>
<th>Data source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program design</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Tackling Violence program components are evidence-informed, culturally-safe, sufficiently resourced and delivered effectively appropriate clubs | ▪ Current evidence supports the program components  
▪ Program is designed and delivered by skilled and culturally-competent staff  
▪ Program has sufficient financial and human resources  
▪ Program targets clubs in communities with high rates of DFV | ▪ Literature on DFV prevention, including in sport settings  
▪ Program evaluations  
▪ Qualifications and experience of program delivery staff  
▪ Provider reporting/acquittals  
▪ BOCSAR incidence data |
| **Process outcomes** | | |
| Players at participating clubs sign the CoC and clubs received sponsorship money | ▪ Number (N) participating clubs  
▪ N players who sign the CoC | ▪ Provider administrative data  
▪ Club reports |
| Players, club members and community members and services attend sessions | ▪ N sessions delivered  
▪ Percentage (%) of participating clubs that receive a session  
▪ N and % of players of players who attend sessions  
▪ N club and community members who attend sessions  
▪ N local services who attend sessions | ▪ Provider administrative data  
▪ Club reports  
▪ **Provider site visit reports** |
| Players, club members and communities are exposed to targeted awareness campaigns | ▪ Communications strategy and monitoring framework developed  
▪ N community events attended  
▪ Online and traditional campaign materials developed  
▪ N and type of channels online and traditional campaign materials are distributed through  
▪ Reach of online and traditional campaign materials in participating communities and more broadly | ▪ Program documentation (i.e. *communications strategy* and monitoring framework)  
▪ **Provider communications data**  
▪ CRL social media and website analytics |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Indicators of success</th>
<th>Data source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ▪ N and type of physical promotional materials developed and distributed to clubs (e.g. N posters, banners etc.) | ▪ N support services contacted in-person and via telephone at each participating club at the start of the season to inform them about the program and their role in each of the four program components  
▪ Information about local services is provided to each club as part of signing the Code of Conduct  
▪ Information about local support services is included in education session content  
▪ N support services who attend education sessions  
▪ Information about local support services is included in traditional, online and physical promotional materials | ▪ Provider administrative data  
▪ Program documentation and materials  
▪ Provider site visit reports |
| Local support services are engaged in Tackling Violence activities and messages |                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | |

**Short-term outcomes**

| Players and club members are aware of and understand the CoC | ▪ CoC is explained upon signing  
▪ Players are reminded of the CoC throughout the season by club leaders and at the education session  
▪ Players report knowledge and awareness of the CoC | ▪ End-of-season player and club member survey  
▪ Program documentation and materials  
▪ Education session feedback form |

| Attendees positively engage with the information provided | ▪ Players and club members are engaged with the content presented  
▪ N and % players and club members speak positively about education sessions  
▪ Facilitators have the skills, cultural-competence and local knowledge to effectively engage attendees | ▪ Education session feedback form  
▪ End-of-season player and club member survey |

| Players, club members and communities positively engage with campaign messages | ▪ N and % players, club members and communities speak positively about community events attended by ECAV  
▪ Players, club members and communities use, share and speak positively about promotional materials | ▪ End-of-season player and club member survey  
▪ CRL social media and website analytics |

| Players and club members are aware of and build positive, | ▪ N and % players and club members report knowledge and awareness of local support service available for victims and perpetrators | ▪ Education session feedback form |

**ARTD Consultants**

strategy & evaluation
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Indicators of success</th>
<th>Data source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>relationships with local support services</td>
<td>▪ N relationships with local support services established at each club&lt;br&gt;▪ Clubs have promotional materials for local services available on premises</td>
<td>▪ End-of-season player and club member survey&lt;br&gt;▪ End-of-season club reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium-term outcomes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players and club members support and advocate the CoC message</td>
<td>▪ N and % players and club members agree with the need for and terms of the CoC&lt;br&gt; ▪ N and % players and club members report challenging violent behaviours or attitudes</td>
<td>▪ End-of-season player and club member survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players and club members have increased knowledge of DFV and local support services available for victims and perpetrators that they can access or refer friends and family.</td>
<td>▪ N and % players and club members report new knowledge about the characteristics and prevalence of DFV&lt;br&gt; ▪ N and % players and club members report knowing local support services available for victims and perpetrators&lt;br&gt; ▪ N and % players and club members report confidence knowing where to seek support or refer family/friends locally for victims and perpetrators</td>
<td>▪ Education session feedback form&lt;br&gt;▪ End-of-season player and club member survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Long-term and ultimate outcomes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players comply with the CoC by not engaging in DFV and reporting breaches</td>
<td>▪ N and % players to breach the CoC or ADVOs and total number of breaches at each club&lt;br&gt; ▪ How clubs are notified of breaches (i.e. players, club members, police/ courts)&lt;br&gt; ▪ Clubs maintain a register of reports (with dates) throughout the season&lt;br&gt; ▪ N players to self-report or report a peer</td>
<td>▪ End-of-season club reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clubs respond to breaches with penalties and support referrals</td>
<td>▪ N and % players suspended and total number of suspensions at each club&lt;br&gt; ▪ N and % players deregistered and total number of deregistrations at each club&lt;br&gt; ▪ Clubs provide appropriate support to players in need&lt;br&gt; ▪ Clubs seek support and advice from ECAV when needed&lt;br&gt; ▪ N referrals made by clubs in response to breaches for victims and perpetrators</td>
<td>▪ End-of-season club reports&lt;br&gt;▪ Provider administrative data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>Indicators of success</td>
<td>Data source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players and club reflect on and reduce and challenge violent behaviours and attitudes</td>
<td>▪ N and % players to breach the CoC or ADVOs and total number of breaches at each club ▪ N and % players and club members report standing up to violent attitudes and behaviours</td>
<td>▪ End-of-season club reports ▪ <em>End-of-season player and club member survey</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Players and club members access or refer local support services</td>
<td>▪ N and % club players and members report accessing a service ▪ N and % club players and members report referring a friend to a service</td>
<td>▪ <em>End-of-season player and club member survey</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tackling Violence reduces the incidence of domestic and family violence and increases women’s safety in participating communities</td>
<td>▪ Rates of DFV decrease in participating communities</td>
<td>▪ BOCSAR DFV incidence data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1. Participating clubs

Table 16. Participating clubs in 2017 and 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Club Name</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bateman's Bay Tigers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathurst Panthers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkley Eagles</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bourke Warriors</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brewarrina Golden Googars</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken Hill Saints</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken Hill United</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobar Roosters</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collarenabri Bulldogs</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coonamble Bears</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowra Magpies</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubbo WestSide</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Campbelltown Eagles</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forbes Magpies</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Griffith Black and Whites</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurri Kurri Bulldogs</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lightning Ridge Redbacks</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Macleay Valley Mustangs</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manly Marlins</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McIntyre Warriors (Toomelah/Boggabilla)</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menindee Wedgetail Eagles</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menindee Yabbies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moree Boars</td>
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<tr>
<td>Moree Boomerangs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mungindi Grasshoppers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newport Nasties</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newtown Wanderers</td>
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<td>North Sydney</td>
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<td>Northern Rivers United</td>
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<td>Nowra Jets</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nyngan RLFC</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<td>Old Bar Beach Pirates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parntu Warriors</td>
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<td>Redfern All Blacks</td>
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<td>Tingha Tigers</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toukley Hawkes</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wagga Brothers</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Walgett Dragons</td>
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<td>✓</td>
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<tr>
<td>Warringah Rats</td>
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<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington Cowboys</td>
<td>✗</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilcannia Boomerangs</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>