



eSafety DPO Grants Program Final Evaluation Report

January 2023

Acknowledgements

The University of Technology Sydney acknowledges the Eora Nation and the Dharug Nation, upon whose ancestral lands our university stands. We would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands

About the authors

The Institute for Public Policy and Governance (IPPG) at UTS is an independent institute focused on driving excellence in public policy and creating public good through advisory services, research, professional learning and capacity building solutions for all tiers of government, the not-for-profit sector and industry.

In order to ensure that all stages of the evaluation were conducted in a culturally safe and appropriate way, the IPPG evaluation team included an Aboriginal Engagement Lead and an Aboriginal Project Officer. Team members had expertise in a range of areas, including Aboriginal trauma and health, human rights, human services and public policy.

For further information about IPPG please visit our website: <https://www.uts.edu.au/ippg>

Contact

For further information about this report, please contact:

Liz Stephens
Senior Manager, Advisory Services
Institute for Public Policy and Governance, UTS
Tel: +61 2 9514 7884
Email: ippg@uts.edu.au

Contents

Acknowledgements	2
About the authors	2
Acronyms	3
1 Executive summary	4
1.1 Key findings: program design and management (inputs)	4
1.2 Key findings: program implementation and execution (outputs)	6
1.3 Key findings: program impacts and effectiveness (outcomes)	7
1.4 Summary of recommendations	8
2 Introduction	10
2.1 About this report	10
2.2 Definitions	10
2.3 The DPO Grants Program	11
2.4 Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)	13
2.5 Evaluation purpose	14
2.6 Evaluation Methodology	15
2.7 Limitations to this evaluation project	16
2.8 Strengths-based approach	17
3 Evaluation findings	18
3.1 Program design and management (inputs)	18
3.2 Program implementation and execution (outputs)	25
3.3 Program impacts and effectiveness (outcomes)	27
4 Conclusion	32
5 Recommendations	33
Appendix 1: Program Logic and Theory of Change Model for DPO Grants Program	38
Appendix 2: Evaluation Survey Instrument	39
Appendix 3: Literature Review	46
Domestic and family violence (DFV)	46
Technology-facilitated abuse (TFA)	46
Responses to TFA	48

References

52

List of figures

Figure 1: Timeline of the DPO Grants Program.....	12
Figure 2: ACCOs recommended for DPO grant funding by state	19
Figure 3: Online survey question – In which of the following ways could the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program be improved?.....	21
Figure 4: Online survey question – Based on your involvement with the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	26
Figure 5: Online survey question – As a result of your ACCO's work through the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	29
Figure 6: Perceived awareness compared to the beginning of the project.....	30

List of tables

Table 1: Objectives and intended outcomes of the DPO grant opportunity in the eSafety Grant Opportunity Guidelines.....	13
Table 2: Core evaluation domains for the DPO Grants Program evaluation.....	14
Table 3: DPO Grants Program evaluation engagement	16

Acronyms

ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DFV	Domestic and Family Violence
DPO	Dedicated Project Officer
FIFO	Fly In Fly Out
IPPG	Institute for Public Policy and Governance
KEQs	Key Evaluation Questions
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
QIFVLS	Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service
QLD	Queensland
RDE	Research Data and Evaluation Team (eSafety)
SA	South Australia
TAS	Tasmania
TFA	Technology Facilitated Abuse
ToC	Theory of Change
UTS	University of Technology Sydney
VIC	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

1 Executive summary

As part of the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2019-2022, the Australian Government established a grants program between 2020 and 2022 that funded the engagement of Dedicated Project Officers (DPOs) in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) on a part-time basis. The DPOs were to develop culturally appropriate resources and training to support women experiencing technology-facilitated abuse (TFA).

eSafety was tasked with administering and implementing the program, with the funding sitting as part of the \$2.5 million Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander TFA Resources Program within the eSafety Women program.

eSafety is Australia's national independent regulator for online safety. Its activities are governed by the Online Safety Act 2021 and include leadership, promotion, and coordination of online safety education for everyone in Australia.

The aim of this independent evaluation of the eSafety Dedicated Project Officer (DPO) Grants Program is to demonstrate the appropriateness of the grant for different types of organisations, understand how the grant funds were used by the ACCOs in the service of the project goals, evaluate the grant-making model, and recommend ways that future targeted grants programs could be improved.

This executive summary outlines the key findings and recommendations from the evaluation. For ease of reference, the key findings have been aligned with the Key Evaluation Questions (see Section 2.5 for more detail).

1.1 Key findings: program design and management (inputs)

1.1.1 Was the grant amount and funding model fit-for-purpose?

The DPO Grants Program had two 'buckets' of funding, one provided by the Commonwealth Government to cover the cost of funding the DPO positions within the ACCOs and a second 'bucket' provided by eSafety to cover the cost of the resources (outputs) produced by the ACCOs to raise awareness and understanding of TFA within their communities. Further discussion of this funding model is at 3.1.2.

The evaluation found that the grant funding provided by the Commonwealth Government was not enough to cover the costs of funding DPO positions within the ACCOs. ACCOs had to provide substantial in-kind contributions to meet the requirements of their respective projects, which they did because they saw the value of a TFA program for their communities.

The evaluation also found that the low funding amount was a barrier to applying for the grant opportunity for some ACCOs.

The funding amount also made it difficult for successful ACCOs to hire an additional team member as a DPO Program Officer, as recruiting and retaining a skilled

employee on a temporary, one day a week contract was not found to be feasible. Most ACCOs used the grant funds to add to the hours and responsibilities of an existing staff member.

Overall, many stakeholders agreed that funding a designated position – especially with the amount of funding provided – was not the best way to meet the program objectives. Providing more funding, with fewer restrictions on its allocation, would have been better – for example, so that the ACCOs did not have to recruit a DPO but could resource frontline staff to deliver TFA training to the communities they support.

1.1.2 How could the grant model be improved to better meet the program objectives?

ACCOs agreed the biggest change needed would be to provide enough grant funding to cover the indirect costs of the DPO position and the resources/materials/activities produced.

Providing a longer timeframe for application would have allowed ACCOs time to consult with community prior to applying, which would have led to more consistency between the resources envisaged in the ACCO's grant applications and what was developed at the end of the program. Other government stakeholders also suggested alternative methods for applying for the funding should be considered (e.g. pre-submission webinars/sessions and information packs, allowing joint submissions or submissions via voice recording or video).

Allowing more time for final reporting – or a follow-up assessment of work carried out after the close of the program – would have allowed for a more accurate assessment of the ongoing impacts of the program. Extending final reporting until after projects have delivered their outputs would also mitigate issues with the acquittal of grant funds.

All of these findings have been considered in the recommendations at Section 5.

1.1.3 Given the differences between ACCOs, are there more appropriate funding or implementation options?

ACCOs serving remote and large dispersed communities can incur more costs from projects due to the cost of travelling to communities and distributing physical resources. None of the Northern Territory ACCOs identified by NIAA as potential grant applicants applied for the DPO Grant Program funding because it was considered too low for them to be able to execute a project. This is something government may wish to consider for future grants programs.

1.1.4 How effective and appropriate was eSafety's engagement with ACCOs? How could this be improved?

Feedback from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal stakeholders on the engagement and communication between eSafety and the ACCOs throughout the DPO Grants Program was overwhelmingly positive. This positive feedback was provided during the stakeholder interviews, and in addition, all survey respondents (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that the involvement of eSafety staff through the program was sufficient.

1.1.5 Within the current eSafety and broader DFV policy environment, how could a future First Nations women and children TFA program be effectively rolled out?

Regardless of what funding model is chosen for any future TFA grants programs, the evaluation reinforced the future grant rounds should adhere to the following principles:

- Facilitate community-led projects and activities that are flexible to local needs and co-designed with the community
- Acknowledge the time it takes to build relationships with and within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (and fund accordingly)
- Consider broadening the intended audience of the grants program beyond Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children to acknowledge that TFA is an issue that involves the broader family, kinship and community networks.

1.2 Key findings: program implementation and execution (outputs)

1.2.1 Was the program implemented as intended? If not, why not?

All grant recipients worked with their communities to ensure that the resources created (outputs) met community need.

For some ACCOs, the planned outputs outlined in their grant application changed following the community co-design process. Ways that future grants programs could better manage this are discussed in the recommendations at Section 5.

The disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic also had impacts on the implementation of the program, with some grant recipients having to adapt their planned resources.

1.2.2 How efficient has the grants program been in the delivery of services and community education?

All survey respondents (100%) agreed that the program was efficient in delivering education to service providers and the community.

Some ACCOs were continuing to deliver ongoing TFA services and education ‘in-kind’ to communities beyond the term of the grant funding because of the need for TFA support in those communities. This need should be considered for future grants programs.

1.2.3 Did the program effectively reach/engage the target population?

The program did effectively reach and engage the target population. It also reached beyond the target population to non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the community.

In the interviews conducted with the ACCOs, IPPG’s Aboriginal Engagement Facilitator and Aboriginal Project Officer identified that the reach and impact achieved by the

program was likely greater than that captured in the end of grant reporting. This was because the timeframe for reporting was at the conclusion of the grant agreement, while many ACCOs chose to continue delivering their projects after the conclusion of the grant agreements.

1.3 Key findings: program impacts and effectiveness (outcomes)

1.3.1 How well did the program enable ACCOs to support their clients' needs?

The program reporting did not ask the ACCOs to report on the community behavioural change outcomes from the TFA training they provided in community. Anecdotal evidence provided by the ACCOs in the evaluation engagement suggests this was a significant benefit of the project. This is discussed in the recommendations.

Some of the main outcomes from the program included:

- Building community and ACCO staff awareness of TFA
- Greater understanding and awareness of eSafety among ACCO staff
- Increased ability to assist clients with help-seeking options and engage with local Aboriginal communities in relation to TFA
- Establishing new and strengthening existing community relationships [28,29,30].

1.3.2 What is the perceived impact of the grant funding from the perspective of the ACCOs? Were there any unintended consequences?

Overall, the evaluation findings suggest that the grant program was successful in achieving many of the outcomes articulated in the Theory of Change (Appendix 1). The grant funding enabled ACCOs to design, develop and deliver projects that had a positive impact on the awareness of TFA in their organisation and among the communities they serve.

In final reporting, seven out of eight grant recipients thought that staff in their organisation were more confident in supporting clients experiencing TFA and seven out of eight grant recipients reported that their organisation has changed policies and practices to include TFA or had plans to do so.

The main unintended consequence from the program was that the grant funding did not cover all the costs of running the program for the ACCOs.

1.3.3 How well is the program encouraging innovative, and fit-for-purpose service delivery?

The program encouraged culturally safe and appropriate service delivery and resources. All grant recipients provided evidence of using consultation and co-design processes during their projects to help shape the design, development, and promotion of resources to support their clients' needs and ensure cultural safety. ACCOs reported

that co-designing resources with their communities was vital to ensuring the messaging and language was culturally safe and the appropriate audiences were targeted.

1.4 Summary of recommendations

Based on the evidence gathered through the evaluation, the following recommendations have been developed to inform future grant rounds of the DPO Grants Program, or similar targeted Aboriginal-specific grant programs run by eSafety or other government agencies in the future. More detail on each recommendation is provided at Section 5.

Recommendation 1: That eSafety administer ongoing grant opportunities targeted at addressing TFA in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities because there is an identified ongoing need for investment to tackle the issue as part of the broader experience of DFV.

Recommendation 2: That eSafety continue working with other relevant Australian Government departments to identify future grant funding opportunities and potential grant applicants.

Recommendation 3: That future targeted grants programs provide funding that adequately covers costs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisation recipients.

Recommendation 4: That eSafety review the application timeframes for future targeted grants programs to enable initial consultation with community to occur.

Recommendation 5: That the Australian Government consider simplified funding models (to cover all project costs) for future targeted programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations.

Recommendation 6: That eSafety review the reporting processes and deadlines of future targeted programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to ensure consistency of reporting and that adequate time is allowed to report on the impacts of the projects.

Recommendation 7: That eSafety continue strong engagement and communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations in any future targeted eSafety grants programs, and in general, including through engaging Aboriginal officers in project governance roles.

Recommendation 8: That eSafety address issues related to Indigenous data sovereignty and intellectual property for future grants programs.

Recommendation 9: That eSafety provide allocated resourcing to support its own internal administration of future targeted programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations.

Recommendation 10: That eSafety invest in a robust evaluation and monitoring framework at the beginning of future targeted programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to support the measurement of program outcomes and impact.

Recommendation 11: That eSafety include in future grants contracts a requirement for grant recipients to conduct simple surveys of participants in face-to-face engagement activities they conduct as part of the program.

Recommendation 12: That eSafety continue to invest in research into the issue of TFA in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure future grant opportunities are evidence-based and responsive.

2 Introduction

2.1 About this report

This report outlines the findings of the independent evaluation of the eSafety Dedicated Project Officer (DPO) Grants Program. The evaluation was undertaken for the Office of the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) by the Institute for Public Policy and Governance (IPPG) at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) between August 2022 and January 2023.

2.2 Definitions

In this report, unless otherwise stated or qualified:

- **Domestic and Family Violence (DFV)** refers to a wide range of behaviours designed to create dependency, to isolate or control someone, or to monitor their activities. It occurs when a person tries to deny someone their freedom of action, as well as trying to frighten, humiliate, or degrade them [2]. DFV can happen in any kind of relationship, not just intimate partner relationships [3] and violence can take many forms, including physical and sexual, emotional and verbal, psychological, spiritual, financial, reproductive, and image-based [4]. While DFV can happen to anyone of any age, gender or sexuality, women experience DFV at far greater rates than men [5].
- **Technology-facilitated Abuse (TFA)** refers to the use of technology including smartphones, computers, cameras, and social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, to coerce, control, monitor, stalk or harass another person [6]. While these technologies may bring benefits to women experiencing DFV, such as by providing easy access to resources and support [3,4,5], they can also be used by perpetrators of abuse to facilitate, escalate and amplify abuse [7,8,9]. Technology plays a significant role in DFV settings [10]. TFA is also known by other terms such as technology-facilitated coercive control [11], digital coercive control [12], technology-facilitated domestic abuse [13] and cyber violence [15]. Sub-sets of TFA have also been described using terms such as partner cyber abuse [14] and image-based abuse [16]. In their scoping review of TFA against women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, Zamora et al. identified 12 different terms used to refer to adults' broad experiences of TFA [17].
- **Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO)** is defined in clause 44 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap: "...an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation delivers services...that builds the strength and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people and is: a) incorporated under relevant legislation and not-for-profit, b) controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, c) connected to the community, or communities,

in which they deliver the services, and d) governed by a majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander governing body” [18].

2.3 The DPO Grants Program

Background to the DPO Grants Program and the role of eSafety is provided in the Executive Summary section above.

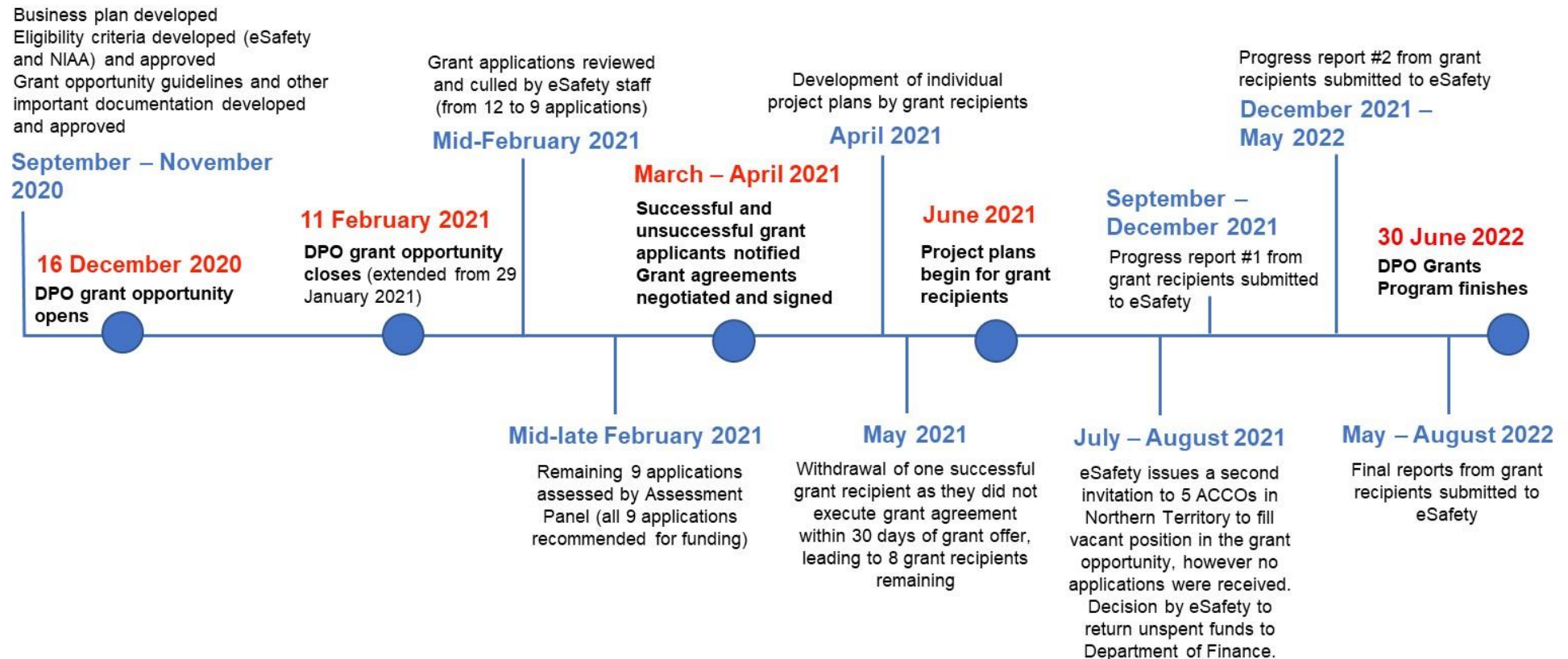
The DPO grants opportunity was a ‘targeted, competitive grant opportunity’ for ACCOs operating in select urban, regional and remote locations, and specialising in DFV service provision or otherwise working with women in vulnerable circumstances. The key milestones of the grants program can be found in the timeline outlined in Figure 1.

A total of \$368,550 was available as part of the grants program in 2020-21 and 2021-22. The eight successful grant recipients were:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service, trading as Djirra (VIC)
- Family Violence Legal Service Aboriginal Corporation (SA)
- Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service (QIFVLS) Aboriginal Corporation (QLD)
- Southern Aboriginal Corporation (WA)
- The Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation (TAS)
- Western Australian Family Violence Prevention Legal Service Aboriginal Corporation, trading as Aboriginal Family Legal Services (WA)
- Many Rivers Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (Gurehlgam Corporation Limited) (NSW)
- Karadi Aboriginal Corporation (TAS)

Each ACCO received between \$38,808 to \$40,950 to employ DPOs and run the program. The DPO Grants Program concluded on 30 June 2022 and this evaluation was commissioned.

Figure 1: Timeline of the DPO Grants Program



The aims and objectives of the DPO Grants Program outlined in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines developed by eSafety can be found in Table 1.

Table 1: Objectives and intended outcomes of the DPO grant opportunity in the eSafety Grant Opportunity Guidelines

Objectives of grant opportunity	Intended outcomes of grant opportunity
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fund ACCOs, located in targeted urban, regional and remote areas who are working with women in vulnerable circumstances, to engage a part time DPO (0.2 Full Time Employment) to work on the grant activity to develop resources and training 2. Build capacity and capability within the ACCO to deal with TFA in DFV settings 3. Enable ACCOs to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women within their community to identify, report and protect themselves and their children from TFA as an extension of DFV, and 4. Enable ACCOs to implement place-based approaches to address TFA in their community. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's community engagement on TFA and DFV 2. To facilitate the co-design, delivery and publication of a range of culturally appropriate, place-based training and resources, to support women experiencing TFA as an extension of DFV 3. To help reduce the consequences of TFA and DFV through leadership activities that address structural drivers of violence 4. To build capacity within ACCOs to support women in their communities experiencing TFA as an extension of DFV, and 5. To enhance the capabilities and capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to manage TFA.

Source: [19]

2.4 Key Evaluation Questions (KEQs)

The KEQs for this evaluation were developed by eSafety prior to the commencement of the project and are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Core evaluation domains for the DPO Grants Program evaluation

Program Design and Management (inputs)	Program Implementation and Execution (outputs)	Program Impacts and Effectiveness (outcomes)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the grant amount and funding model fit-for-purpose? How could the grant model be improved to better meet the program objectives? How did ACCOs experience the process of applying for and implementing the grants, and could this be improved? Given the difference between ACCOs, are there more appropriate funding or implementation options? How effective and appropriate was eSafety's engagement with ACCOs? How could this be improved? Within the current eSafety and broader DFV policy environment, how could a future First Nations' women and children TFA program be effectively rolled out? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was the program implemented as intended? If not, why not? How efficient has the grant program been in the delivery of services and community education? Did the program effectively reach/engage the target population? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well did the program enable ACCOs to support their clients' needs? How well is the program encouraging innovative and fit-for purpose service delivery? What is the perceived impact of the grant funding from the perspective of the ACCOs (with reference to the ToC)? Were there any unintended consequences?

Note: Prior to the evaluation, several key evaluation documents were developed by the eSafety Research Data and Evaluation (RDE) team to guide the evaluation process. This included a program logic and theory of change model for the DPO Grants Program, which can be found in Appendix 1.

2.5 Evaluation purpose

The following objectives guided the design and implementation of the evaluation:

1. Assess the appropriateness of the grant for different types of organisations
2. Understand how the grant funds were used by the ACCOs in service of the project goals




3. Evaluate the grant-making model and recommend ways that the administration of the grants program could be improved.

2.6 Evaluation Methodology

IPPG adopted a mixed methods approach to conduct this evaluation, employing the following methods:

- **Desktop review:** IPPG conducted an in-depth desktop review and analysis of peer reviewed and grey literature (e.g. journal articles, government reports, industry reports) to understand the current policy context and program approaches aimed at addressing TFA and violence against women and their children, including those specifically targeted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. This is provided at Appendix 3 of this report. IPPG also undertook a review and analysis of program documentation and resources that supported the design and implementation of the DPO Grants Program, including grant guidelines, successful grant applications, grant project plans, grant agreements, business cases and internal memos, progress reports and finals reports, and resources/materials produced by grantees for the program.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** IPPG conducted a range of in-depth semi-structured interviews by video or phone call with stakeholders connected with the DPO Grants Program. The interviews occurred between September and October 2022. IPPG also developed an anonymous online survey (included at Appendix 2) to supplement the interviews undertaken and provide an additional avenue to capture feedback from participants who were unable to be interviewed or preferred to express their opinions in this format. The survey was distributed to ACCOs via email from relevant eSafety representatives and the IPPG evaluation team. DPOs who had left the ACCOs for new roles were also forwarded the survey via email to give them an opportunity to participate. The results of these stakeholder engagement activities are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3: DPO Grants Program evaluation engagement

Method	Sample
Interviews with Aboriginal stakeholders 	A total of 10 participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 CEOs, 2 managers and 1 DPO from participating ACCOs • 2 CEOs and managers who did not take up the grant • 2 representatives from the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)
Interviews with non-Aboriginal stakeholders 	A total of 7 participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 eSafety representatives • 2 representatives from other federal government departments • 1 academic
Online survey 	9 online survey responses (as of 16 November 2022) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 identified as DPOs • 1 identified as ACCO frontline or support worker (but not DPO) • 1 person working in government policy • 1 eSafety staff member who is aware of program

- Data analysis and reporting:** At the conclusion of the stakeholder engagement phase, IPPG analysed all the data gathered using a range of quantitative and qualitative techniques. We assessed the responses to the short standardised survey instrument (which used both open ended and Likert scale responses) against the key evaluation questions to generate quantitative measures. Qualitative findings from the interviews, the literature and program documentation review were analysed thematically and compared with the findings from the online surveys to assess consistency of the findings and to make an evaluative judgement against the evaluation criteria.

Using the evidence gathered from the evaluation, IPPG made a number of recommendations to inform the future activities of the DPO Grants Program, or similar grant opportunities moving forward.

2.7 Limitations to this evaluation project

There were some limitations for this evaluation that should be noted.

Firstly, only one in-depth interview could be undertaken with a DPO as most DPOs had moved on to new roles after the program finished and so were unavailable for interview by the time of the evaluation. However, six people identifying as DPOs completed the online survey so IPPG is confident that the views of those employed as DPOs during the DPO Grants Program have been captured in this evaluation.

Secondly, a high rate of staff turnover across all stakeholder groups (including across the ACCOs, within eSafety and at NIAA) also meant that it was difficult in some cases for interviewees to provide much detail on the historical decision-making processes of

the DPO Grants Program, especially at program design and application stage. In particular, the NIAA staff members involved in both the original identification of suitable ACCOs and the assessment of applications for the DPO Grants had left the organisation and were not contactable. This meant the NIAA representatives interviewed for the evaluation had not had historic involvement in the DPO Grants Program and so were unable to provide much detail.

Notwithstanding these limitations, IPPG is confident that the report contains robust, evidence-based findings and a clear set of recommendations for future initiatives.

2.8 Strengths-based approach

IPPG has adopted a strengths-based approach for this evaluation. Such an approach acknowledges the positive and distinct skills, knowledge systems and capabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, organisations and communities. It recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be at the centre of projects that concern Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations (“nothing about us without us”). The evaluation further recognises that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is not only influenced by gender but is compounded by other systems of discrimination and racism, notably colonialism, dispossession and intergenerational trauma [1].

In order to ensure that all stages of the evaluation were conducted in a culturally safe and appropriate way, the IPPG evaluation team included an Aboriginal Engagement Lead and an Aboriginal Project Officer. All communication and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders was undertaken by these team members, and both played a key role in producing and reviewing the evaluation findings detailed in this report.

3 Evaluation findings

The following section provides an overview of the key findings from the program documentation analysis and stakeholder engagement activities undertaken for the DPO Grants Program evaluation. The findings are presented under the broad evaluation domains and presented according to the themes arising from the evaluation.

This section does not contain the literature review conducted by IPPG at the beginning of the evaluation, which can be found at Appendix 3. The literature review found that there are almost no publicly available evaluations of similar Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander targeted grant programs. There is also relatively little literature on TFA focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children as it is considered a 'new area' of research.

3.1 Program design and management (inputs)

3.1.1 Grant application, assessment and decision-making processes

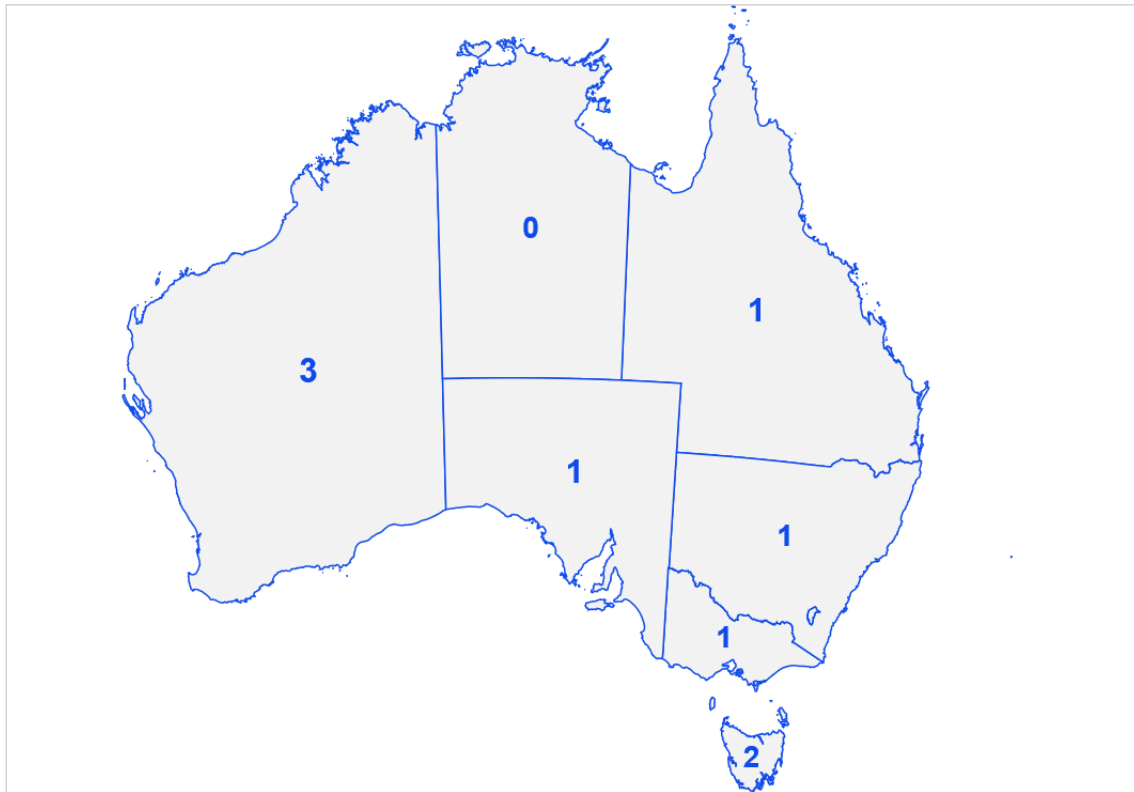
The DPO grants opportunity was a 'targeted competitive grants process', meaning that it was open to a small number of potential grant recipients based on specialised requirements such as location, but still assessed on several criteria described in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines. ACCOs were identified as the target organisations because they have established relationships with the community and are controlled by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people [20].

eSafety worked closely with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) to identify potential grant applicants [21]. eSafety representatives noted the importance of partnering with NIAA in identifying and assessing applicants, though they also noted that more ACCOs should have been originally identified for the number of grants available. The ACCOs interviewed also recommended eSafety continue working with NIAA to promote future grant opportunities.

Using an assessment and ranking process, a total of 23 ACCOs across urban, regional and remote locations around Australia were identified as eligible for the grant opportunity [26,27]. A total of 12 applications were received.

In mid-February 2021, eSafety staff reviewed all 12 applications to determine whether they met the eligibility criteria put in place by eSafety and NIAA [20]. Three applications were considered ineligible as two of the grant applicants were not invited to apply and the remaining application was not sufficiently aligned to the program's outcomes [27]. The remaining 9 applications were then assessed by each Assessment Panel member from mid to late February 2021, with each member scoring and making comments on each application based on the assessment criteria in the Grant Opportunity Guidelines [21]. The Assessment Panel recommended all 9 shortlisted applications for funding (See Figure 2 for breakdown by state). Eight out of the 9 applicants requested the full amount of funding on offer (\$40,950).

Figure 2: ACCOs recommended for DPO grant funding by state



Source: [21]; Sample: N=9. Note 0 successful applications were lodged in the ACT.

The ACCOs interviewed (successful grant recipients and those who did not apply for funding) liked the vision of the grant and identified TFA as a growing area of need:

“TFA is evident out in the communities particularly with the clients that we see...” (ACCO representative)

Most ACCO staff interviewed for this evaluation were not the original applicants, so limited feedback was provided on the experience of the grant application process. Those who did comment said they found it ‘simple’ and that it was ‘standard’ for a grant application. Of the survey respondents, 67% agreed that the grant application process was easy.

“I wasn’t involved in the application process, but when I’ve gone back and had a look at the grant proposal and the requirements, I felt that it was very fair. It was well laid out.” (ACCO representative)

The eSafety representatives interviewed also felt the grant application and assessment processes were standard for federal government grants. However, they felt the timing of the grant application over the Christmas and New Year period potentially hindered applications, though this was not raised by any of the ACCOs as an issue.

“December and January was not a great time as a lot of ACCOs have a reduced workforce... We did end up extending it slightly, but that didn’t help” (eSafety representative)

In March 2021, the 9 applicants were notified they had been successful in their DPO grant applications and were required to execute the grant offer within 30 days. Eight of the 9 successful applicants did so. An eSafety memo from May 2021 outlined that grant funding offered to one successful grant applicant had to be withdrawn as the organisation did not execute the grant offer within 30 days from the date of the offer [22].

eSafety issued a second invitation to five ACCOs in the Northern Territory (NT) to apply for the vacant position created in the grant opportunity as a result of the withdrawal of the initial grant applicant. eSafety made efforts to encourage applications from the NT ACCOs, but despite these efforts, eSafety did not receive any further applications for the grant opportunity. It was subsequently decided to return the available funds back to the Department of Finance [23].

3.1.2 Views on the funding model

The DPO Grants Program consisted of two 'buckets' of funding. The first 'bucket' was provided by the Commonwealth Government to the value of up to \$40,950 per ACCO to employ DPOs on a 0.2FTE basis. We do not know what the rationale for this grants model was because it was approved by Cabinet and is thus confidential in nature.

Once the DPO Grants Program was given to eSafety to implement by the Commonwealth Government, it was identified that the program did not include funding for resource creation (outputs) by the ACCOs. eSafety subsequently made the call to set aside some of its departmental funding to supplement the grant (the second 'bucket' of funding).

Having two buckets of funding (one to fund DPO positions and one to fund the development of resources) was seen by the non-Aboriginal interviewees as too complex, with many advocating for a project-based funding model:

"I think it was unnecessarily restrictive. Project based funding could have worked... I think it should have been pretty broad so that the ACCOs could have identified the best way to run the project and what their needs were for it"
(eSafety representative)

The eSafety representatives interviewed considered the funding too low to cover program costs or to attract potential grant applicants to apply:

"I thought the funding was low-ish... the program manager was on the phone quite a lot with potential applicants and there was quite a lot of persuasion... because there was a lot of form filling in for not very much money" (eSafety representative)

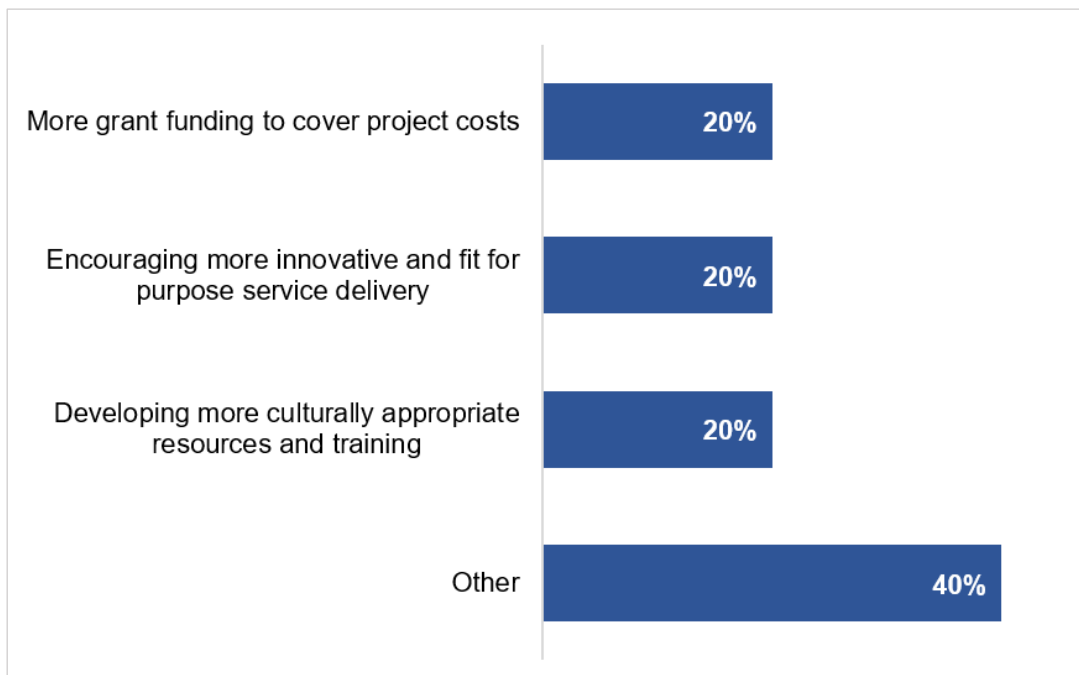
This was verified during the interviews by ACCO staff, who mentioned they incurred and absorbed substantial in-kind costs as the grant funding provided was not enough.

"We set up office for the Project Officer. You know, all our infrastructure was available... HR and corporate services." (ACCO representative)

Those from regional/remote areas also felt there was not enough money on offer to cover costs such as community engagement and travel. Of the stakeholders who

chose to do the online survey, 66% disagreed that the grant funding was enough to cover project costs. When asked about the ways in which the DPO program could be improved (See Figure 3 **Error! Reference source not found.**), survey respondents also identified more grant funding to cover project costs (20%) as an area of improvement.

Figure 3: Online survey question – In which of the following ways could the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program be improved?



Source: IPPG Evaluation Survey Results – via Qualtrics Platform (N=5)

Note: The ‘other’ responses provided by survey respondents (40%) also largely related to funding amounts.

However, the financial records showed challenges with underspending of grant funding throughout the DPO Grants Program. The total underspend of administered funding for the DPO Grants Program was \$59,782.46, due to the withdrawal of one of the successful grant recipients at the beginning of the grant period. One of the ACCOs also revealed that due to timing around the implementation of their grant activities, their organisation was delayed in resource creation and implementation, and so they needed to return funding back to eSafety [24].

“We were faced with an underspend... it’s not something that can be repurposed in government agencies, generally if grant money is not spent then it just has to go back into this big, consolidated revenue bucket that is across all of government” (eSafety representative)

Only 5 out of the 8 grant recipients accessed the second ‘bucket’ of funding for resource creation, totalling \$46,036.57 [25]. ACCOs said this was because the window for accessing the funding from the second ‘bucket’ did not align with the timeframe for identifying the resources required and the funding required to implement them. It is worth noting that administered grant funding allows the grantees to fully own the resources they create, but departmental funding traditionally is reserved for

government agencies to fund their own activities, so the agency usually owns the IP. This may have also presented issues for ACCOs wanting to access the money, although this was not raised during the evaluation engagements.

A detailed form for reporting was provided to each grant recipient, however information on expenditure was inconsistently reported across the progress and final reports, including in-kind contributions by organisations to the program.

Feedback about alternative funding models was limited from the ACCOs interviewed. Overall, interviewees thought an employee designated in the organisation was beneficial but advocated for a larger pool of funding to justify set up costs and support long term change and outcomes. ACCOs proposed further resourcing of the DPO position for a longer time period, which would give them more capacity to implement resources.

“We haven’t implemented it yet. We’re also going to put it on our website... so we don’t know how the implementation is going to go at this stage until we have our staff trained” (ACCO representative)

Other government and academic stakeholders also highlighted the need for future funding to support work already being done by ACCOs, and to broaden the target audience to include/acknowledge the role of family and community networks in First Nations communities for future rounds.

3.1.3 Program staffing – recruitment and retention

ACCOs that did not apply for DPO funding stated that this was because the funding was too low. High staff turnover (working in remote community and FIFO areas) and being at full capacity with existing staff and core business activities were also given as reasons for not applying for the grant funding.

Staff from ACCOs that received grant funding said they were either not able or not easily able to recruit and retain an employee for one day a week with the funding provided – and many also felt the work needed to deliver the project could not be done in one day a week. The small amount of funding meant that four out of five of the successful ACCOs extended the role of existing staff members to fill the DPO role.

“You’re not gonna hire someone for one day. I don’t think anyone wants to come in for one day because there’s not enough money in it, you know? I don’t know how we would have gotten the position if we didn’t already have [DPO name] here for three days as it was” (ACCO representative)

Three DPOs left their roles shortly before finalisation of grant activities and one organisation said their DPO finished before draft resources were completed [28,29,30]. The issue of ongoing retention of the DPOs in the ACCO workforce was highlighted by interviewees:

“One of the things that nearly happened was we nearly lost [DPO name]. And now we’ve also just received a grant to conduct a quality and continuous improvement project... and if we hadn’t been able to do that... we would have lost a really important employee.” (ACCO representative)

As funding was ending, the need for capacity to implement resources increased and ACCOs had to provide frontline worker resourcing to continue to roll out the program, which was not covered by the grant funding:

“I think at first it was OK [start of DPO role], but when you start getting down to the end of it, you really need to put in more time and more hours and we’re actually still rolling it out as well... [and] funding doesn’t cover the [frontline worker] training needed so workers know what they are implementing... we must do that internally” (ACCO representative)

3.1.4 Engagement between eSafety and ACCO’s and inputs from eSafety

ACCOs interviewed were positive about the ongoing, culturally appropriate support offered by eSafety during the program, particularly during COVID-19. eSafety interviewees also said the relationships with ACCOs were positive, but it was noted that these relationships took time to develop. Of those who completed the survey, 100% agreed that the involvement of eSafety staff through the program was sufficient.

“Our Project Officer talked very highly of [eSafety] and the support that she received there” (ACCO representative)

“I think the feedback was that to me it was a positive engagement and it helped to raise both visibility of the issue in Community and also community visibility of eSafety and what it offered” (eSafety representative)

eSafety ran two community of practice sessions to support grant recipients with their projects, one in July 2021 and the other in November 2021. The community of practice sessions were seen by eSafety as useful for information sharing, relationship building, and receiving feedback. ACCOs found them useful in connecting with other ACCOs who were participating in grant activities and were enthusiastic about them continuing in future grant programs.

“We had two communities of practice... all of the grantees could just chat about how their projects were going, how they were setting it up, share that kind of information. So I think those worked really well. A lot of the grantees, after the first one, were saying, ‘when’s the next one?’ because they all really wanted to learn from each other.” (eSafety representative)

eSafety Women also delivered 9 training workshops to ACCOs between August 2021 and June 2022. The workshops (mostly delivered online due to the COVID-19 pandemic) were aimed at building the knowledge of ACCO frontline staff in TFA and their capability to identify and respond to this type of behaviour. Documentation on these workshops was not provided during the evaluation or mentioned by interviewees during the engagement phase but was provided by eSafety as supplementary information during the reporting phase of this evaluation. As such, we cannot be sure how effective and appropriate this element of the engagement was.

3.1.5 Grant execution and reporting processes

Each grant recipient was required to submit individual project plans, two progress reports, ad-hoc reports when required, and a final report (accompanied with final resources/materials produced) during the grants program.

Some eSafety representatives felt that the two progress reports were overkill for the amount of funding available, and that the reporting could have been reduced to one progress report and one final report. The ACCOs interviewed thought the reporting was 'standard' and 83% of survey respondents agreed that the reporting requirements for the grant funding were reasonable.

However, ACCO interviewees noted that the timing of the end of program reporting was an issue, as some project work had not been completed. This issue was also raised by eSafety representatives, who noted that the ACCOs financial reporting was incomplete (at the time of the interviews). Some ACCOs revealed that this was because they were still incurring costs from the ongoing project work.

Another issue raised regarding project reporting was data sovereignty.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data sovereignty. Data collection must be culturally safe, and ACCOs must be resourced to collect, control and analyse their own data. This is self-determination.” (ACCO survey respondent)

Data sovereignty is an important part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, and this should be considered by eSafety and discussed with future Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grant program recipients. It is best practice to involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the interpretation of, and findings drawn from, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data.

eSafety and other government and external stakeholders noted the need to embed monitoring and evaluation at the beginning of all eSafety projects to improve program outcomes – both for eSafety and also for participants in the grant programs:

“[eSafety] having clearer direct evaluation goals up front would be good. Having that articulated at the outset so that it's clearer in terms of what is trying to be delivered” (eSafety representative)

“...I think supporting evaluation processes that sit alongside those projects and then looking at what's working, what's not working, the more effective ones and then continuing to support those projects that are showing to have some early signs of success and not expecting them to fix everything overnight” (Other stakeholder)

Among eSafety representatives, there was a belief that eSafety is not adequately resourced to administer the DPO Grants Program.

“We need to be clear about what eSafety can do and what we can lead and where we need to partner with other organisations or influence them, whether it's NIAA or DSS or ACMA” (eSafety representative)

To help address this, one interviewee suggested running grants in partnership with the eSafety women and grants team.

3.1.6 Strategic context

The need for broader policy and legislation reform to better respond to TFA, such as a whole of government strategy for TFA and consistency of legislation across jurisdictions, were identified as key areas of need by government and academic stakeholders interviewed, with findings from evaluations such as this informing broader government reforms and strategies. Other government and external stakeholders also identified a lack of public awareness around TFA and consistent definitions regarding TFA as key barriers to broader implementation and uptake of TFA programs.

**“...I don’t believe that the Commonwealth level, we don’t have a clear TFA strategy...I wouldn’t say there is actually a clear strategy that’s ever been developed... I don’t think TFA can solicit under the national plan, it’s too big... but I think there needs to be a greater overarching strategy across government”
(Government stakeholder)**

When asked what other changes could improve the effectiveness of initiatives that address TFA experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, survey respondents further stressed the importance of early intervention and prevention, co-design, and long term, community-driven projects:

“Early intervention and prevention are key. Increased long term investment from eSafety in specialist ACCOs to deliver culturally safe, community led responses that we know work to keep women safe.” (Survey respondent)

3.2 Program implementation and execution (outputs)

3.2.1 Meaningful resource creation and implementation

eSafety’s requirements for the project outputs, reach and impact were non-prescriptive and allowed ACCO’s to decide, in consultation with community, what outputs would be most beneficial. Outputs created included PowerPoint presentations, staff training handbooks and sessions, community posters, flyers and brochures, fact sheets, wallet cards, radio segments and short films/videos.

Co-design was vital in adapting the resources, ensuring the messaging and language was culturally safe and the appropriate audiences were being targeted [28,29,30]. In some instances, community feedback led to changes to individual projects to better meet community need and/or aid program delivery by ACCO staff.

Grant recipients reported working with a range of community groups, services and organisations, including schools, parent groups, health centres, local Aboriginal elders, and other ACCO staff specialising in community engagement, community legal education and counselling support. ACCOs said it was important to include frontline workers in the consultations so they had a suite of resources to continue discussions with community about TFA after the completion of the grant.

ACCOs engaged with their communities in various ways to develop resources specific to the community’s content needs, including through surveys, yarn-ups, informal discussions, and formal presentations. The number of communities engaged was

dependent on the size of the ACCOs footprint and how many communities were involved.

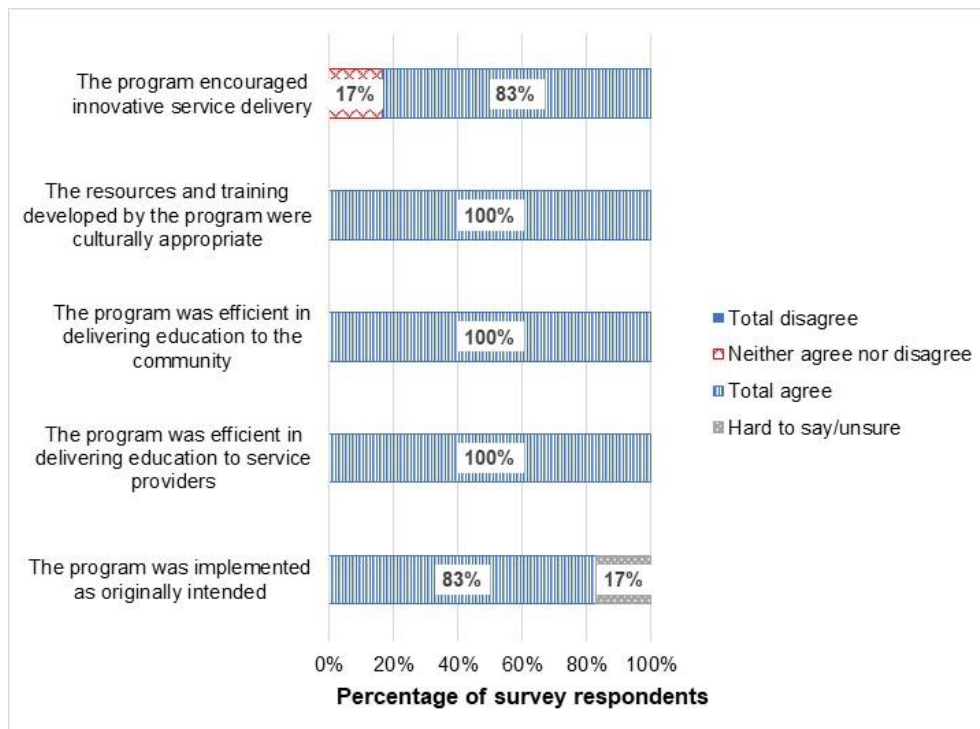
The documents reviewed by IPPG revealed a concerted effort by grant recipients to make resources and activities culturally and age appropriate, and adjusted to overcome language and reading barriers.

“Things like brochures are great, but if English is not your first language then there becomes issues there and then obviously, we just did not have the funds to be able to translate into a number of the active language groups that we have in this area” (ACCO representative)

Approaches included the creation of talking posters in English and Aboriginal languages, the use of Aboriginal writers and young people in online film/video segments, and the use of local Aboriginal businesses to create resources (e.g. graphic designers and interpreting services) [28,29,30].

The efficiency and effectiveness of the program was measured through the survey (See Figure 4), with 100% of respondents agreeing that the program was efficient in delivering education to service providers and the community, as well as the resources and training developed by the program being culturally appropriate. Eighty three per cent of respondents also agreed that the program was implemented as originally intended and that the program encouraged innovative service delivery.

Figure 4: Online survey question – Based on your involvement with the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Source: IPPG Evaluation Survey Results – via Qualtrics Platform (N=6)

3.2.2 Barriers to resource dissemination and delivery

The progress reporting provided a picture of some of the challenges faced by the grant recipients over the course of the projects. The projects were executed during the particularly challenging period of the COVID-19 pandemic and this was especially difficult for grant recipients servicing remote communities, impacting their ability to undertake planned face to face consultations in their regions. The COVID-19 pandemic also had impacts for eSafety, including staff recruitment and relationship building with ACCOs.

A number of barriers to program implementation were identified by ACCOs. These included the cost of language translation for multi-lingual communities, and the additional costs of IT support to undertake project activities remotely. There were also further costs associated with working in remote communities, such as travel and accommodation.

“But I've got 90 boxes. I gotta get [them] out [with our organisation] carrying that cost” (ACCO representative)

Other hidden costs of the program, such as legal costs for Intellectual Property (IP) considerations were also noted:

“We had to get some legal support to write up a contract for the artists that we used and so I don't think that had been thought about [by eSafety or previous ACCO CEO]...” (ACCO representative)

3.3 Program impacts and effectiveness (outcomes)

3.3.1 Program reach

The ACCOs reported the reach of their projects in their end of grant reporting [24]. It was estimated then that the projects undertaken for the DPO Grant Program:

- serviced 28 geographic areas/communities across Australia
- reached 496 people within ACCOs and 3,345 people outside ACCOs
- reached approximately 264,000 people via social media

However, it is likely that the number of people reached by the projects exceeds these figures. Social media reporting was also not undertaken by most grant recipients and therefore this incomplete data should be interpreted with caution.

In the interviews with the ACCOs it was discovered that both the reach and impact of the ACCOs projects was likely greater than reported because they were asked to report on the project reach, outcomes and impact before work had finished and resources had been fully distributed/implemented.

There was a strong desire by eSafety to share the resources created during the program to a wider audience, either through a resource bank or a new webpage on the eSafety website. However, this did not eventuate at the time of writing this report. This was partly because some ACCOs commissioned artistic works by third-party Indigenous artists as part of their program outputs and the IP of those works vested

with the artists, who provided permission for the ACCOs to use them, but not third-parties, such as eSafety. Potential remedies for this in future are discussed in the recommendations.

The original grant agreement had a clause stating that grant recipients should give the Commonwealth Government a non-exclusive, irrevocable, royalty-free license to use the materials (outputs) from the program. This was not practical or best practice and this was subsequently acknowledged by eSafety, and remedied by a non-legally binding statement from eSafety's Chief Operating Officer stating that resources will not be made publicly available without the consent of all authors.

“I think if we looked at what we would do differently, you probably wouldn't have that clause in the agreements around everything that you create should be made publicly available.” (eSafety representative)

ACCOs recommended eSafety work with NIAA in future to help raise awareness of any resources produced.

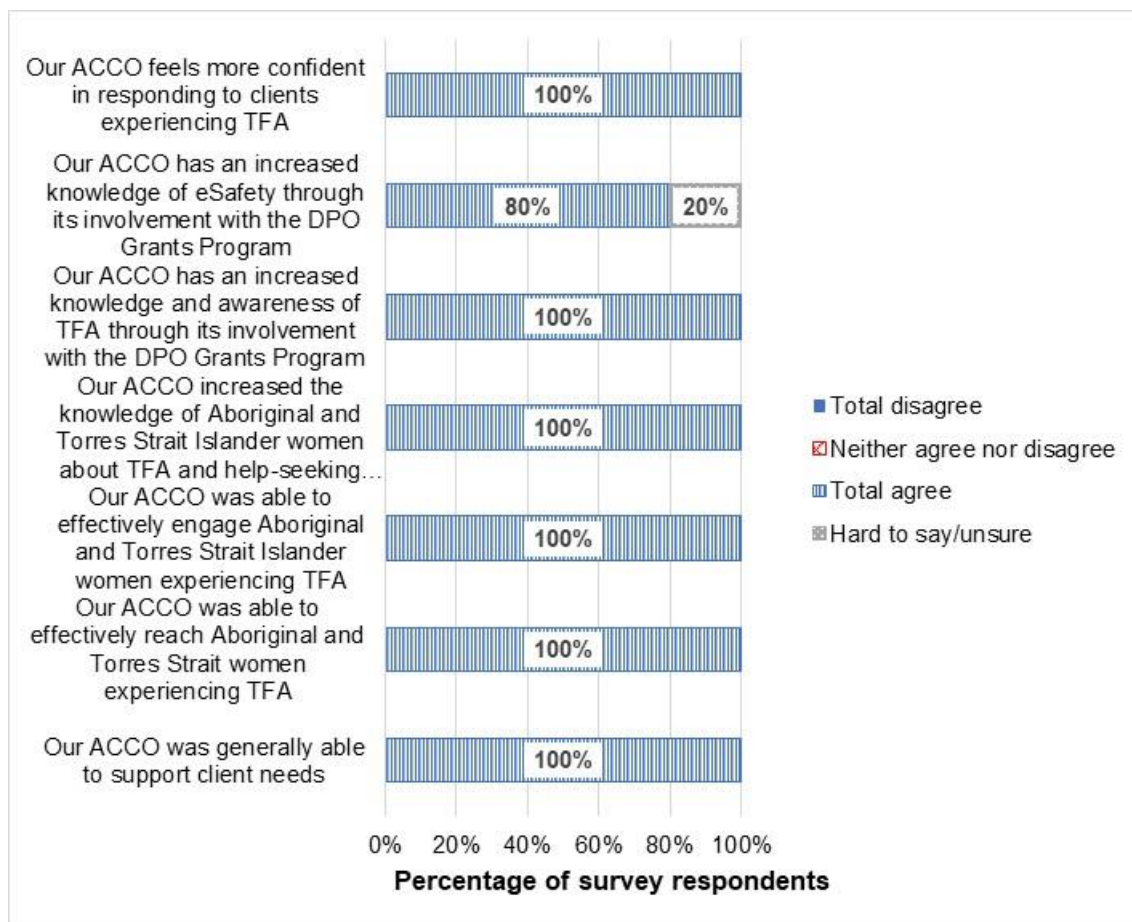
3.3.2 Program outcomes and impact

The program outcomes reported during the evaluation aligned with those articulated in the theory of change for the program (see Appendix 1). ACCOs and DPOs reported a range of positive outcomes from the program, including growth in knowledge for ACCOs to be able to respond to the growing need for TFA support within their communities, and the benefits of empowering clients to address TFA in their families and communities. It was generally agreed that there was a high need for the program and that Aboriginal communities were hungry for information and support to deal with TFA.

“Yes, some of them pleaded [for more information]. They just wanted more information. I remember, one woman said. You know, we need to hear this again, just to what aspects of safety that we can take. Which I thought was good” (ACCO representative)

The evaluation survey questions regarding the outcomes of the program aligned with the theory of change designed by eSafety. The survey responses strongly suggest that the respondents thought the outcomes of the program had been delivered. One hundred per cent of ACCO respondents agreed that their ACCO was now generally able to support client needs and effectively reach and engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experiencing TFA. All ACCO participants also agreed that their organisation had increased knowledge and awareness of TFA through its involvement with the DPO Grants Program (See Figure 5).

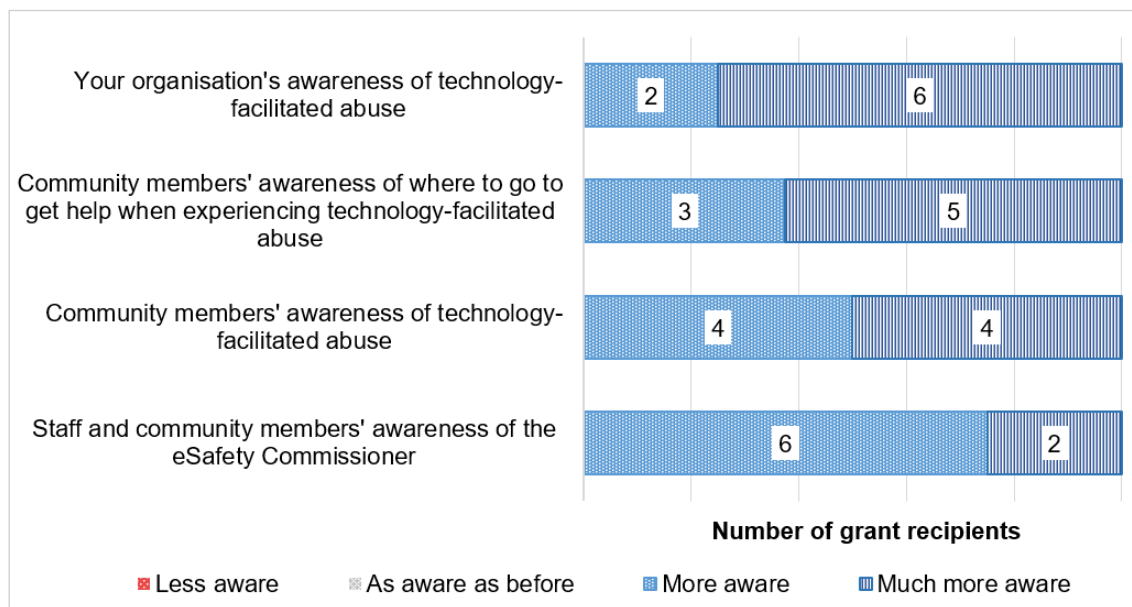
Figure 5: Online survey question – As a result of your ACCO’s work through the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Source: IPPG Evaluation Survey Results – via Qualtrics Platform (N=5)

Most grant recipients reported their project having a positive impact on their organisation’s and community member’s awareness of TFA and help-seeking options, as compared to the beginning of the project (See Figure 6). In final reporting, 7 out of the 8 grant recipients also thought that staff in their organisation were more confident in supporting clients experiencing TFA and reported that their organisation has changed policies and practices to include TFA or had plans to do so.

Figure 6: Perceived awareness compared to the beginning of the project



Source: [24]; Sample: N=8.

eSafety representatives also observed a range of positive outcomes, consistent with the outcomes anticipated in the theory of change for the program. These included producing community driven, community owned resources around TFA, increasing awareness of eSafety among ACCOs and their communities, and increased knowledge of help-seeking options among frontline workers.

The program was also found to be having ongoing impacts, with ACCOs continuing to use the resources as part of their existing community-based programs and embedding them into core business activities. One organisation noted that the knowledge the DPO program brought them was beneficial for future grant opportunities.

Participating organisations highlighted the ongoing need for funding for TFA activities as part of the ACCO service models, exacerbated by the resource deficit that some ACCOs work under to service a wide footprint across varying communities.

“You know, talking about technology abuse, but if staff, if people come in and want their staff to help them out about it, they need to understand it themselves. And delivering community legal education and support in those regions as well is hard because we've only got one community education worker or engagement worker” (ACCO representative)

When asked what they felt the main impact of the DPO Grants Program was, survey respondents’ open-ended answers mostly centred around increased awareness of TFA and a more skilled workforce, demonstration of self-determination and relationship building with First Nations communities, and expanded opportunities for future funding:

“Data from surveys at the commencement of the project indicated that a majority of community members were unaware / unsure of what constituted technology-facilitated abuse. By the end of the program, following information sessions, community engagements and distribution of developed resources, feedback

indicated that the community is now able to identify technology-facilitated abuse, and is confident in navigating the issue, including reporting to eSafety, Police and social media platforms.” (ACCO survey respondent)

“Perpetrators are now able to realise and acknowledge that some of their behaviours constitute technology-facilitated abuse. An example is a man who had been monitoring his partner's whereabouts on Snapchat and bombarding her with messages, but upon interaction with eSafety resources he realised and acknowledged the situation and stopped.” (ACCO survey respondent)

This qualitative evidence of behavioural change as a result of the program is promising. However, future grants programs would benefit from ensuring evidence is captured from community participants in the engagements carried out by ACCOs to enable eSafety to show the wider benefits of increased community awareness of TFA and behaviour change as a result of the program. This is discussed further at Recommendation 11.

One ACCO mentioned they were undertaking their own internal review as a result of the project to see what more they could do and to further embed the work in their business-as-usual operations – although this was not a requirement of the DPO Grants Program, or an outcome foreseen in the theory of change for the program. eSafety could consider making this a requirement for future grant rounds:

“[ACCO name] is committed to an internal review of the project in terms of lessons learnt and identifying opportunities for the project resources to be embedded into our practice. This review will also identify opportunities for eSafety to be embedded in our external work, including policy and advocacy and our influencing work with other family violence organisations. We are also looking at ways to expand the campaign and funding opportunities to continue to build upon the project.” (ACCO survey respondent)

eSafety also derived benefits from the program that were not related to the theory of change (which was focused on the outcomes for ACCOs and communities), including improved awareness of and communication with Aboriginal communities for eSafety. This was highlighted as a very positive outcome from the program by both ACCOs and eSafety.

“Creating authentic relationships with First Nations community... Great example of how Government can take a secondary role in First Nations community initiatives, hence empowering mob.” (Survey respondent)

4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this evaluation showed that the DPO Grants Program successfully allowed ACCOs to engage DPOs on a part-time basis to develop culturally appropriate resources and training to support women experiencing TFA. ACCOs provided significant return on investment, achieving a large number of outputs and successful outcomes considering the grant funding on offer.

Feedback from stakeholders indicates that the funding model could be improved in future. This includes providing more funding to cover the direct and in-direct costs associated with the Program.

Feedback from ACCOs during the evaluation highlighted that TFA is a serious issue in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia and requires ongoing investment. This includes the funding for further Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander targeted grant opportunities, and more research into the prevalence of and best practice responses to TFA for First Nation communities.

The findings of this evaluation also revealed that the DPO Grants Program facilitated a number of good relationships that should be built upon in future. Feedback on eSafety's relationship with ACCOs throughout the Program was overwhelmingly positive and continuing and strengthening these relationships will be important to the success of future programs to tackle TFA in communities.

The DPO Grants Program was a good example of a government grants program enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in designing the solutions that are right for their communities. It was clear from feedback provided during the evaluation that co-designing resources and activities with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities was vital in ensuring that they met community need and in aiding their delivery by ACCO staff. An alternative funding model which provides more flexibility for ACCOs to design program delivery that supports the needs of their communities would improve this yet further.

A number of recommendations based on the evidence gathered throughout the evaluation are outlined in the following section (Section 5) to inform the DPO Grants Program, or similar targeted Aboriginal-specific grants programs run by eSafety in the future. The IPPG team would like to thank all the stakeholders who took part in the evaluation, especially the ACCOs who gave generously of their time and thoughts throughout the process.

5 Recommendations

Based on the evidence gathered through the evaluation process, IPPG has developed recommendations to inform future grant rounds of the DPO Grants Program, or similar targeted grant programs run by eSafety in the future.

Recommendation 1: That eSafety administer ongoing grant opportunities targeted at addressing TFA in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities because there is an identified ongoing need for investment to tackle the issue as part of the broader experience of DFV.

The evaluation highlighted that TFA is a serious issue in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that requires ongoing investment to tackle. Rather than time-limited one-off grant opportunities, eSafety should consider ongoing grant opportunities that support prevention and early intervention activities that facilitate long term behavioural and social change. Future grant guidelines should also encourage ACCOs to embed TFA activities into their core business beyond the grant funding period, and support should be provided to grant recipients to demonstrate how they will do this.

Over the long term, the Australian Government will need to consider whether it continues a targeted grant funding model that funds a DPO within ACCOs to address TFA, or adopts another funding model. Consideration should be given to project-based funding models so that ACCOs can integrate projects within their existing operations and activities, or can collaborate with other organisations.

Recommendation 2: That eSafety continue working with other relevant Australian Government departments to identify future grant funding opportunities and potential grant applicants.

Feedback from program stakeholders revealed the importance of eSafety working with relevant Australian Government departments (notably the Department of Social Services and the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts) in identifying and securing grant funding through the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children*. This cross-departmental communication and collaboration should continue to ensure funding for future grant rounds is identified and utilised.

eSafety should also continue to work closely with NIAA to identify and assess potential grant applicants for the DPO Grants Program (or similar future grants programs) – and also post-program to help amplify community awareness of the existence of the TFA resources produced during the program. Consideration should be given to identifying a larger number of eligible ACCOs to facilitate a higher uptake of grant positions and potentially mitigate against underspending of future grant funds.

eSafety should also consider working with Aboriginal peak bodies and local ACCOs to assist with promoting future Aboriginal-specific grant opportunities.

Recommendation 3: That future targeted grants programs provide funding that adequately covers costs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisation recipients.

The amount of funding on offer discouraged some ACCOs from applying for the grant opportunity. ACCOs that did apply and were successful were required to provide substantial in-kind contributions in order to meet the requirements of their respective projects (for example, providing IT equipment and office space).

ACCOs also incurred additional costs related to producing the resources, such as legal advice for contracts with Aboriginal artists. In future, more grant funding should be provided to each grant applicant to cover the direct and indirect costs of running the program, as well as the resources/materials/activities produced, taking into account:

- Costs associated with regional and remote communities (e.g. travel, accommodation, and translation/interpretation expenses)
- The administrative on-costs incurred by ACCOs in delivering the project, including IT and legal costs for IP agreements
- Resource development
- Costs associated with frontline workers delivering training so the resources/activities developed can be effectively implemented.

Recommendation 4: That eSafety review the application timeframes for future targeted grants programs to enable initial consultation with community to occur.

The timeframe for application for the DPO Grants Program meant successful grant applicants were funded for an initial project idea before they had the chance to consult with community to ensure that idea was fit-for-purpose. After winning the grant funding, ACCOs then went to community to consult and co-design resources, at which point some outputs changed substantially.

This poses potential governance issues for the grant opportunity, and delays in start-up. Solutions such as funding consultation first and resources/activities thereafter, or extending the application period to allow for consultation, should be considered for future grants programs. Where possible, grant application deadlines should also not occur within summer holiday periods to encourage as many ACCOs to apply as possible.

Recommendation 5: That the Australian Government consider simplified funding models (to cover all project costs) for future targeted programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations.

The evaluation found that having two ‘buckets’ of funding (one from the Commonwealth Government for funding the DPO positions and one from eSafety to cover the costs of resource development) was complicated for grant recipients – and that the timeframe for the funding for resource development did not align well with the design and development of the resources for some ACCOs, meaning they could not apply for the funding but later went on to incur costs that were not covered. One pool of funding may be more suitable for future grant rounds.

To encourage more ACCOs to apply for future grant funding, additional ways to engage potential grant applicants and for ACCOs to apply for grants could be considered (e.g. pre-submission webinars/sessions and information packs, allowing joint submissions or submissions via voice recording or video). Overall, grant application and reporting processes should be quick and easy for ACCOs to complete

and be structured in a way that allows the incorporation of cultural knowledge, viewpoints and experience.

Recommendation 6: That eSafety review the reporting processes and deadlines of future targeted programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to ensure consistency of reporting and that adequate time is allowed to report on the impacts of the projects.

Overall, stakeholders generally accepted that longer lead times for all grant stages are required by ACCOs to allow for adequate community consultation and engagement. Final reporting should be extended so that it occurs after the program's outputs are complete and to mitigate any issues with acquittal of grant funds. We also recommend a follow up impact assessment of six-months to a year after the end of a targeted grants program and that this be a grant requirement.

In addition to the final report, feedback from stakeholders also recommended that progress reporting for future grant rounds should be reduced from two reports down to one report. This would reduce the reporting burden on time and resource-poor grant recipients and ensure that reporting requirements are more proportionate to the amount of funding available.

Recommendation 7: That eSafety continue strong engagement and communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations in any future targeted eSafety grants programs, and in general, including through engaging Aboriginal officers in project governance roles.

Feedback from evaluation stakeholders on the engagement and communication between eSafety and ACCOs throughout the DPO Grants Program was overwhelmingly positive. The culturally appropriate support and communication provided by eSafety representatives to ACCOs at key stages of the program should continue in future grant rounds. This includes the running of community of practice sessions by eSafety that allow grant recipients to collaborate and share information throughout the course of the grant program. Consideration should also be given to whether eSafety or ACCOs have the capacity to run and sustain these communities of practice outside grants processes.

To facilitate future grants programs, it would be good for eSafety to continue to strengthen its relationships with ACCOs.

Recommendation 8: That eSafety address issues related to Indigenous data sovereignty and intellectual property for future grants programs.

The evaluation revealed issues around data sovereignty and intellectual property (IP) that needed to be addressed at the beginning of the program.

Data sovereignty is an important issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination. It is best practice to involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the interpretation of, and findings drawn from, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data and eSafety should discuss and agree approaches to this with grant recipients for future targeted grants programs. We note that one ACCO decided to conduct their own 'lessons learned' evaluation of their experiences of the grants program and this should be supported and encouraged by eSafety.

eSafety should also discuss and agree approaches to the issues of resource sharing and IP with grant recipients at the beginning of any future targeted grants programs. This could be handled in future in a variety of ways, including by drafting three-way shared IP contracts for use of artworks (in consultation with and subject to the agreement of the artists), or by eSafety and NIAA promoting the existence of the resources on the ACCOs' websites, rather than hosting the artworks themselves (by agreement with the ACCOs).

Recommendation 9: That eSafety allocate more resourcing to support its own internal administration of future targeted programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations.

The evaluation highlighted that eSafety did not have adequate resourcing in place to administer the first grant round of the DPO Grants Program. More resourcing will be needed to administrate future grants programs targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations. This could include allocating more staff members and/or facilitating greater collaboration with other eSafety teams for additional support and capacity, and utilising existing internal grant processes and systems. eSafety should also ensure that their internal systems and processes facilitate the systematic capture of institutional knowledge related to the DPO grant opportunity, and future grants programs. This will prevent information being lost during periods of high staff turnover and assist with future evaluation activities.

Future targeted grant programs should also include broad consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to ensure eSafety's targeted grants programs and engagement with First Nations organisations continues to be culturally safe and appropriate.

Recommendation 10: That eSafety invest in a robust evaluation and monitoring framework at the beginning of future targeted programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to support the measurement of program outcomes and impact.

The evaluation findings revealed that the DPO Grants Program did not have a clear evaluation strategy from the outset of the program – and that the reporting information required from grant applicants changed during the program. This resulted in grant reporting that did not consistently track program inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts throughout the program.

It is recommended that eSafety develop clear evaluation goals and outcomes and measurement methods in advance of commencing future targeted grants programs. This includes, but is not limited to, clearly defined Key Evaluation Questions and a program logic /theory of change model. eSafety should also develop templates and guides concurrently to assist grant recipients in data collection and reporting.

It should be noted that eSafety is currently developing a broader evaluation framework for all eSafety projects which will provide guidance and direction to this work. As noted in Recommendation 8, eSafety should also provide ongoing support and resourcing to grant recipients to assist them in actively contributing to evaluation and monitoring activities throughout the program.

Recommendation 11: That eSafety include in future grants contracts a requirement for grant recipients to conduct simple surveys of participants in face-to-face engagement activities they conduct as part of the program.

This will provide quantitative data for eSafety on a) participant awareness levels of TFA after participating in the engagement session and b) evidence of planned behaviour changes as a result of what they have learned at the engagement session. The method of data collection and provision should be discussed and agreed between Aboriginal grant recipients and eSafety prior to the commencement of the grant, and it should be as simple and non-onerous as possible (for example, a simple 2-3 question anonymous survey – enabling verbal or written response options – would be sufficient).

IPPG is making this recommendation because, in the course of this evaluation, ACCO stakeholders provided anecdotal evidence during both the interviews and the survey that the program had led to increased community awareness of TFA and behaviour change. We suspect such positive impacts from the program were extensive but conducting participant surveys during future programs would provide further concrete evidence of the community benefits of such programs.

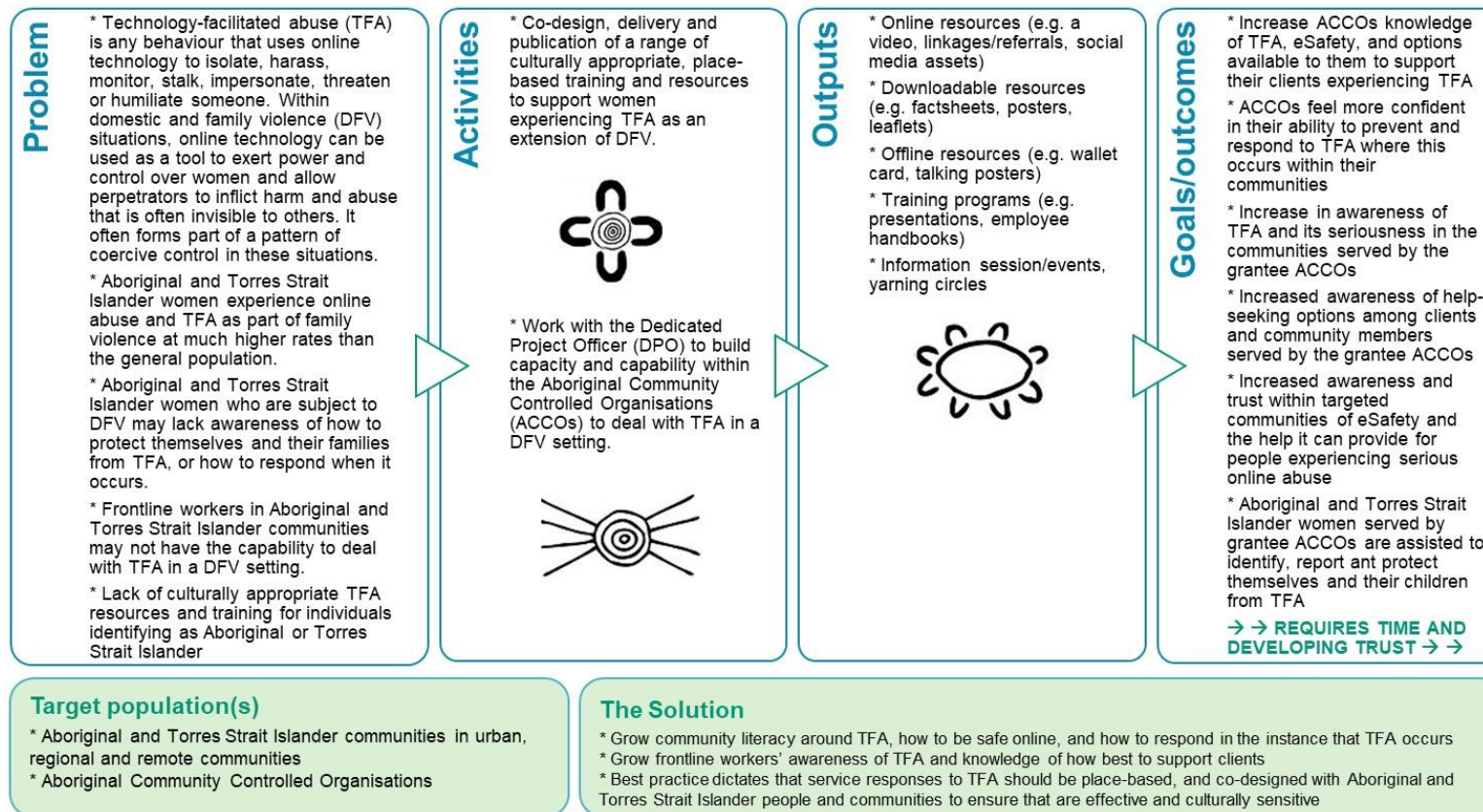
Recommendation 12: That eSafety continue to invest in research into the issue of TFA in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure future grant opportunities are evidence-based and responsive.

It is recommended that eSafety continues to invest in research on TFA in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (whether directly or through partnerships with other institutions and organisations) to ensure that the DPO Grants Program and other similar grant programs are grounded in a solid evidence base and are responsive to emerging community needs.

As highlighted in the literature review (See Appendix 3), research on the impact and lived experience of people experiencing TFA within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as well as best practice interventions across the service response continuum (prevention, early intervention, response and recovery), is still relatively under-researched. The feedback from Aboriginal stakeholders is that the prevalence of TFA in communities is high and is a serious issue.

Appendix 1: Program Logic and Theory of Change Model for DPO Grants Program

THEORY OF CHANGE eSafety Dedicated Project Officer grants program



Appendix 2: Evaluation Survey Instrument

Client	Office of the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety)
Version & Date	V5, 22 August 2022
Sample size	n=50 (small sample due to small program)
Length of survey	10 minutes
Survey open	September 2022

Overview of Survey Structure

Introduction page

Section 1: About you

Section 2: Your involvement in the DPO Grants Program

Section 3: Your views on the DPO Grants Program

Section 4: General feedback

Section 5: Any additional comments

End page

----- SURVEY SCRIPT STARTS HERE -----

Introduction page

The University of Technology Sydney (UTS) is doing an evaluation of the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program on behalf of the Office of the eSafety Commissioner.

The Dedicated Project Officer (DPO) Grants Program funded DPOs in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) on a part time basis. Through this program, DPOs have worked within ACCOs to develop culturally appropriate resources and training to support women experiencing technology-facilitated abuse (TFA).

This survey is open to all those who would like to provide feedback on the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program.

The survey should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete and all survey feedback is anonymous. Giving feedback will help eSafety to improve its programs in future so we encourage you not to hold back about your experiences and what you think!

More information about the evaluation and your participation can be found in the [Participant Information Sheet](#). *(hyperlinked to Participant Information Sheet)*

If you are happy to go ahead based on the information above, please start the survey.

Section 1: About you

ASK ALL

Q1. Which of the following best describes you? *(please tick ONE option)*

[SINGLE RESPONSE]

1	Dedicated Project Officer (DPO) who works or worked at an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) that was a recipient under the DPO Grants Program
2	CEO or senior management of an ACCO that received a DPO Grant
3	ACCO worker in frontline or support role (but not a DPO)
4	eSafety staff member involved in grant program design, administration or reporting
5	Peak body representative
6	Academic or research expert
7	Person working in government policy
8	ACCO that was unsuccessful in receiving funding through the DPO Grants Program
9	ACCO that was invited to apply for a DPO Grant but chose not to apply or accept a grant offer
10	Other (please specify)

Section 2: Your involvement in the DPO Grants Program

ASK ALL

Q2. Have you been involved in any way with the delivery of the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program? *(please tick ONE option)*

[SINGLE RESPONSE]

1	Yes
2	No
3	Don't know

Section 3: Your views on the DPO Grants Program

ASK IF RESPONDENT SELECTED 'YES' TO Q2

Q3. Based on your involvement with the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements *(Please tick ONE option per row)*:

[SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW | RANDOMISE ROWS]

Separate page for 'Program design and management' indicators

		1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree or disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	6 Hard to say/ unsure
A	The grant funding was enough to cover project costs						
B	The length of the grant funding was sufficient						
C	The grant application process was easy						
D	The grant model (funding the employment of a project officer) was fit for purpose						
E	It was easy to access the grant funding in a timely way						
F	The reporting requirements for the grant funding were reasonable						
G	The involvement of eSafety staff through the program was sufficient						

Separate page for 'Program implementation and execution' indicators

		1	2 Disagree	3	4 Agree	5	6
--	--	----------	-----------------------	----------	--------------------	----------	----------

		Strongly disagree		Neither agree or disagree		Strongly agree	Hard to say/ unsure
A	The program was implemented as originally intended						
B	The program was efficient in delivering education to service providers						
C	The program was efficient in delivering education to the community						
D	The resources and training developed by the program were culturally appropriate						
E	The program encouraged innovative service delivery						

ASK IF RESPONDENT SELECTED OPTION 1,2,3 in Q1

Q4. As a result of your ACCO's work through the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements *(Please tick ONE option per row)*:

[SINGLE RESPONSE PER ROW | RANDOMISE ROWS]

Separate page for 'Program impacts and effectiveness' indicators

		1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Neither agree or disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly agree	6 Hard to say/ unsure
A	Our ACCO was generally able						

	to support client needs						
B	Our ACCO was able to effectively reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait women experiencing TFA						
C	Our ACCO was able to effectively engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experiencing TFA						
D	Our ACCO increased the knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women about TFA and help-seeking options						
E	Our ACCO has an increased knowledge and awareness of TFA through its involvement with the DPO Grants Program						
F	Our ACCO has an increased knowledge of eSafety through its involvement						

	with the DPO Grants Program						
G	Our ACCO feels more confident in responding to clients experiencing TFA						

ASK IF RESPONDENT SELECTED 'YES' TO Q2

Q5. Based on your experience, what do you think the main impact of the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program has been to date? Please give any examples you want

[OPEN TEXT]

--

ASK IF RESPONDENT SELECTED 'YES' TO Q2

Q6. In which, if any, of the following ways could the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program be improved? *(Please tick all that apply)*

[MULTIPLE RESPONSE | RANDOMISE ROWS]

1	Improving reach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experiencing technology-facilitated abuse
2	Better engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experiencing technology-facilitated abuse
3	Developing more culturally appropriate resources and training
4	Better delivery of education to service providers
5	Better delivery of education to the community
6	Encouraging more innovative and fit for purpose service delivery
7	More grant funding to cover project costs
8	Different types of grant funding for TFA-focused projects
9	Improving the grant application process
10	Improving the grant implementation process
11	Improving engagement processes between eSafety and ACCO representatives
12	Other (please specify)
13	N/A – no improvements needed

Section 4: General feedback

ASK ALL

Q7. When thinking more broadly about initiatives that address technology-facilitated abuse experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (like the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program), what other changes could improve the effectiveness of these programs?

[OPEN TEXT]

ASK ALL

Q8. Thinking about **innovative** ways to address technology-facilitated abuse experienced by First Nations women (either in Australia or overseas), are there any examples you know of, or have come across? If so, please describe these in the box below.

[OPEN TEXT]

Section 5: Any additional comments

ASK ALL

Q9. Do you have any other comments or feedback on the Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program?

[OPEN TEXT]

End page

Thank you for responding to this survey.

Should you have any questions about the survey, please contact Liz Stephens from the UTS Institute for Public Policy and Governance on liz.stephens@uts.edu.au

Alternatively, this study has been approved by the University of Technology Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (UTS HREC, reference number ETH22-7402). If you have any concerns or complaints about any aspect of the conduct of this evaluation, please contact the Ethics Secretariat on +61 2 9514 9772 or at Research.Ethics@uts.edu.au, and quote the UTS HREC reference number. Any matter raised will be treated confidentially, investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix 3: Literature Review

Domestic and family violence (DFV)

National prevalence

DFV is defined at Section 2.2 of the report.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 1 in 6 women and 1 in 16 men aged 15 years and older have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or previous partner. One in 4 women and 1 in 6 men have experienced emotional abuse by a current or previous partner, and 1 in 5 women and 1 in 20 men have been sexually assaulted and/or threatened [33].

Some Australian research has identified certain populations to be at greater risk of experiencing TFA and its many forms. These include young people [37, 38, 39], sexuality and/or gender diverse people [37, 40], culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women [31, 41, 42] and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women [34, 36, 42].

In Australia, DFV occurs at higher rates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities than in the general population, a result of increased risk factors for DFV such as social stressors like poor housing and overcrowding, financial difficulties and unemployment [32]. The removal of Aboriginal land and cultural dispossession inflicted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over the past 200 years has resulted in social, economic, physical, psychological and emotional problems, and for that reason DFV must be understood as both a cause and an effect of social disadvantage and intergenerational trauma [32].

Technology-facilitated abuse (TFA)

International studies of TFA

TFA is defined at Section 2.2 of the report.

There have been very few prevalence studies of TFA conducted internationally, and almost none that include Indigenous women and girls in the research. In 2020 a study was published in Canada looking at the prevalence of DFV and TFA among Indigenous and non-Indigenous women living in the Territories (the remote northwest region of Canada). The study found that Métis women were proportionally more likely than non-Indigenous women to report having experienced unwanted behaviours online (36% compared with 21%, respectively). However, the proportion of other First Nation women and Inuit women who reported having experienced unwanted behaviours online was relatively similar to that recorded among non-Indigenous women. The study was limited as it concerned women with consistent internet access over 12 months and many Indigenous women living in the Territories in Canada do not have consistent access to the internet [58].

National studies of TFA

In 2013, the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria (DVRCV) conducted the first Australian study into the use of technology by perpetrators in the context of DFV [43] (the study calls it “technology-facilitated stalking”). The study included two surveys: one

with 152 DFV sector workers and one with 46 victim survivors who had experienced DFV. The study, which was limited to the Victorian context, also undertook a focus group with legal workers about what they were seeing in their work and consultations with DFV workers from four refuges in metropolitan Melbourne.

The DVRCV study found that women from culturally diverse backgrounds, particularly Aboriginal women, face particular challenges in relation to TFA. Respondents felt that perpetrators were using technology in specific ways to abuse Aboriginal women, particularly due to the importance placed on community and connection within Aboriginal cultures. This connection to communities also made it easier for perpetrators to humiliate victims. The report said, “Indigenous women may need to use technology to keep connected to their mob, culture and community but this can place their whereabouts known to the perpetrator if they also have the same connection” [43].

In 2020, WESNET’s 2nd National Survey Report [50] found “a lack of significant change between 2015 to 2020 in legal responses to other forms of TFA. WESNET recommended that priority needs to be given to training police, magistrates and other legal professionals about non-physical forms of violence such as TFA within a broader understanding of coercive control. The report said that training should be developed and conducted with DV specialist organisations in order to convey the consequences and impacts for victim-survivors.”

The report also recommended that technology companies and companies that use technology:

- build systems that include safety by design with a correct threat assessment, i.e. broader than cybersecurity and privacy aimed at prevention of fraud; and
- recognise that their customers/clients are very likely to be experiencing TFA on their platform and need to have dedicated customer service pathways for victims of TFA.

In 2021 and 2022, Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) published:

- A practitioner qualitative study (published 2021)
- A victim-survivor and a perpetrator qualitative study (published 2022)
- A national survey of adults’ experiences of TFA (published 2022)

The ANROWS national survey was the first prevalence study for TFA in Australia.

The study found that 1 in 2 Australian adults have had at least one experience of technology-facilitated abuse victimisation in their lifetime. Approximately one in three victims and survivors reported that their most recent experience of victimisation occurred in a current or former intimate partner relationship.

The ANROWS practitioner qualitative study [46] highlighted three priority areas for service sector development in response to TFA:

- working with diverse clients experiencing TFA (including those with disability; those from CALD, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and LGBTQIA+ and intersex communities; and sex workers);
- working with perpetrators to intervene in TFA; and
- working to prevent TFA before it occurs through community and education settings.

An over-riding concern was expressed by all participants regarding the amount of TFA they encountered in their work in the domestic violence sector.

TFA experiences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

There have been no TFA prevalence studies specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Australia. However, research suggests that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are experiencing TFA at higher levels and in different ways to other women experiencing TFA [34, 35, 36] In 2017, an eSafety report found Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were more than twice as likely as other Australians (25% vs. 11%) to experience someone sharing a nude or sexual image of them without their consent [59].

While the research on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's experiences of TFA is developing, there are several key gaps in our current knowledge.

In 2021, eSafety published a report on the experiences of TFA among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from regional and remote areas. Most commonly, victims experienced threats, harassment, monitoring and stalking, as well as impersonation, mostly from a current or former male partner. These were often facilitated through messaging, phone calls, fake social media accounts, and monitoring apps or platforms [30].

The report found that the factors increasing the risk for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were:

- Low digital literacy and difficulty accessing services
- Not knowing about TFA and how to identify it
- Close social networks that make it easier for the perpetrator to gather information and locate individual women

The report made the following recommendations for response and prevention:

- Awareness of and education about TFA and women's rights and education on digital literacy and online safety is pivotal to preventing TFA of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- To minimise the impacts of TFA, and to support women experiencing abuse, there needs to be culturally appropriate and accessible services, good relationships between the community and services and police
- There needs to be clear and consistent legislation explaining individual rights
- Good relationships between the community, services and police are vital. TFA must be taken seriously by the criminal justice system and addressed prior to the abuse escalating into physical violence
- Social media and technology companies must have some accountability and play a role in preventing online abuse
- Banks and financial services must be involved in addressing the financial aspects of TFA.

Responses to TFA

International TFA responses/initiatives

Responses to TFA on the ground in many countries have been localised and focused on education and training for victims and survivors of TFA, such as New York City and Cornell Tech's regular face-to-face Tech Abuse Clinics [47].

A 2022 American study into the limits and possibilities of tech-based “solutions” to TFA [48] found that technology-based responses to TFA are “necessary without being sufficient”, and that they have persistent limitations that need to be recognised. The study recommended ongoing emphasis on the development of human resources as a support for those experiencing TFA, particularly the use of professional DFV support workers.

There is documented evidence of some support services in America recommending ‘a technology detox’ or to disconnect as a response to TFA [44], but this has been criticised by many advocates as “unfair, problematic and impractical” [31].

National TFA responses/initiatives

Drawing on the research of eSafety, ANROWS and DVRCV, there is a body of work in Australia that establishes prevalence, the nature and characteristics of TFA perpetration, the lived experiences and help seeking patterns of women victims and survivors of TFA, and an evidence base to inform practice innovation and further development of prevention and responses to TFA [49].

One of the major challenges for service providers identified in this research is that DFV practitioners struggle to keep up with the many ways technology is used to abuse [35], meaning that responses to TFA can be inadequate or fall behind [36]. This is echoed in Powell and Henry’s (2018) study which found that for DFV providers, keeping up with the ever-changing landscape of the internet is one of the most significant challenges in responding to TFA [40].

There are a number of Australian resources to assist women in identifying and reducing their risk of TFA. The eSafety Women program was launched in 2016 and supports women and their children in domestic and family violence situations by training specialist frontline workers to recognise and deal with technology-facilitated abuse and through the provision of targeted online advice and resources.

Under the program eSafety has developed and launched resources and training to support women who are at particular risk of experiencing abuse, including women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities and women with an intellectual or cognitive disability. This included the release of research exploring the experiences of these women with technology-facilitated abuse.

eSafety also provides an [online checklist on steps to reduce the risk of TFA](#).

eSafety also runs a program called Women in the Spotlight Online, which helps women deal with online abuse experienced as part of their working lives. This includes Social Media Self-Defence Training: training and resources for women who are using technology in their professional lives to support them in countering online abuse. eSafety has also collaborated with Safe Work Australia to ensure that online harassment is designated a psycho-social workplace harm. This has included the release of co-branded guidance for all employers and workers.

The Women’s Domestic Violence Court Assistance Service has an [online safety check list for victims](#). Safe Steps provides [examples of TFA and include victims’ stories](#). 1800 RESPECT presents tips for [using websites and technology if you are being abused](#). WESNET also provides training and resources on TFA to support service providers through its Safe Connections program [51].

In their survey of support services stakeholders, Flynn, Powell and Hindes (2021) asked a series of questions to reflect their views of the adequacy, challenges and needs of the services and technology sectors in order to respond to and prevent TFA effectively. The highest levels of support for the adequacy of responses to meet the

needs of TFA victims “a lot of the time” were for the 1800RESPECT helpline (41.8%, N=87), followed by the community, domestic and sexual violence sectors (38.5%, N=80) [36].

The survey of support services stakeholders found that more than 80% thought that eSafety meets victims advice and options needs “sometimes” or “a lot of the time”. In the words of the report, the survey respondents showed “very little support for the adequacy of current responses by technology providers (including Facebook, Twitter, Google and dating apps)”. Fewer than 15% of those surveyed agreed that support responses in general meet the needs of diverse clients of all backgrounds “a lot of the time”.

Cross-sector responses to TFA experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

In 2019, eSafety published a report into online safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women living in urban areas [52]. The research highlighted that, given the complex circumstances facing many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women living in urban areas, a combination of responses is needed.

Service providers recommended:

- providing different types of media to get the message across about TFA. Videos, as an example, were a favoured format
- face-to-face contact, particularly for older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who need to learn about TFA
- using plain English and appropriate images; and
- providing information on how to change privacy and location settings, and targeting information specifically to Elders.

The research showed that combining responses of community leaders and place-based community groups with relevant agency responses, such as police and courts, will help to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to tackle TFA.

Currently, eSafety is working with ACCOs to:

- Identify how TFA is being used in the context of DFV
- Co-create specialist materials to empower frontline workers in the community to effectively support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women – this is primarily being done through eSafety’s DPO Grants Program; and
- Provide support to ensure the program can scale and support frontline workers across the country [45].

Targeted evaluation strategies for First Nations DFV response projects

In 2020, the Australian Government developed an Indigenous Evaluation Strategy [53], which provides a whole-of-government framework for Australian Government agencies to use when selecting, planning, conducting and using evaluations of policies and programs affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. **This strategy is particularly relevant to the evaluation of the eSafety DPO Grants Program.**

The Indigenous Evaluation Strategy aims to put Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at its centre. It recognises the need to draw on the perspectives, priorities and knowledges of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people if outcomes are to be improved.

Prior to this, AIFS and Child Family Community Australia produced a practitioner resource [54] outlining key considerations for community sector organisations and service providers who are thinking about evaluating the outcomes or impact of a program for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander families or communities. The Centre for Independent Studies also produced a toolkit for evaluating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs [55].

In 2022, ANROWS produced a series of Evaluation Quick Guides focusing on aspects of evaluation relevant to the violence against women (VAW) sector (comprising the DFV and sexual violence sectors). The Quick Guides are intended for use by practitioners as well as by independent evaluators who may need to become familiar with the particular sensitivities of evaluation in the VAW context [56].

In 2022, ANROWS published an evaluation report of two Aboriginal-run women's DFV projects in the Northern Territory [57]. The report provides a model for co-designed evaluation of community DFV projects, which is relevant for eSafety to consider if the organisation is considering co-designing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grants programs in future.

References

1. Blagg, H. et al. *Innovative models in addressing violence against Indigenous women: final report*. 2018: ANROWS.
2. Relationships Australia NSW. *What is domestic and family violence?*. 2022 [cited 2022 8 August]; Available from: <https://www.relationshipsnsw.org.au/what-is-domestic-and-family-violence-a-definition/>.
3. 1800Respect. *Domestic and family violence*. 2022 [cited 2022 8 August]; Available from: <https://www.1800respect.org.au/violence-and-abuse/domestic-and-family-violence>.
4. NSW Government. *Types of abuse in domestic and family violence*. 2019 [cited 2022 8 August]; Available from: <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/domestic-violence/about/types-of-abuse-in-dv>.
5. Hegarty, K., E.D. Hindmarsh, and M.T. Gilles, *Domestic violence in Australia: definition, prevalence and nature of presentation in clinical practice*. Med J Aust, 2000. **173**(7): p. 363-7.
6. Baym, N.K., *Personal connections in the digital age*. 2015: John Wiley & Sons.
7. Fiolet, R., et al., *Indigenous Perspectives on Using Technology as a Supportive Resource When Experiencing Family Violence*. Journal of Technology in Human Services, 2020. **38**(3): p. 203-225.
8. Douglas, H., B.A. Harris, and M. Dragiewicz, *Technology-facilitated domestic and family violence: Women's experiences*. The British Journal of Criminology, 2019. **59**(3): p. 551-570.
9. Douglas, H. and M. Burdon, *Legal responses to non-consensual smartphone recordings in the context of domestic and family violence*. University of New South Wales Law Journal, 2018. **41**(1): p. 157-184.
10. Freed, D., et al., *Digital technologies and intimate partner violence: A qualitative analysis with multiple stakeholders*. Proceedings of the ACM on human-computer interaction, 2017. **1**(CSCW): p. 1-22.
11. Dragiewicz, M., et al., *Technology facilitated coercive control: Domestic violence and the competing roles of digital media platforms*. Feminist Media Studies, 2018. **18**(4): p. 609-625.
12. Woodlock, D., et al., *Technology as a Weapon in Domestic Violence: Responding to Digital Coercive Control*. Australian Social Work, 2020. **73**(3): p. 368-380.
13. Afrouz, R., *The Nature, Patterns and Consequences of Technology-Facilitated Domestic Abuse: A Scoping Review*. Trauma, Violence, & Abuse, 2021: p. 15248380211046752.
14. Wolford-Clevenger, C., et al., *An examination of the Partner Cyber Abuse Questionnaire in a college student sample*. Psychology of violence, 2016. **6**(1): p. 156.
15. Al-Alosi, H., *Cyber-violence: digital abuse in the context of domestic violence*. University of New South Wales Law Journal, 2017. **40**(4): p. 1573-1603.
16. Flynn, A. and N. Henry, *Image-Based Sexual Abuse: An Australian Reflection*. Women & Criminal Justice, 2021. **31**(4): p. 313-326.
17. Leyton Zamora, C., et al., *Technology-Facilitated Abuse Against Women From Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds: A Scoping Review of the Literature*. Trauma Violence Abuse, 2022: p. 15248380221098045.
18. *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, 2020 [cited 2022 10 August]. Available from: https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-05/ctg-national-agreement_apr-21.pdf
19. eSafety Commissioner. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Technology-Facilitated Abuse Resources Program – Dedicated Project Officer Grants (Grant Opportunity Guidelines)*. 2020: eSafety.
20. eSafety. *Business Plan – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Technology-Facilitated Abuse (TFA) Resources Program – Dedicated Project Officer grants*. 2020: eSafety.
21. eSafety. *1a – Decision Memo – Chief Operating Officer 22112020*. 2020: eSafety.
22. eSafety. *Chief Operating Officer Memo – Withdrawing grant offer to Yorgum Healing Services*. 2021: eSafety.
23. eSafety. *COO Memo – 2021-22 Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program (DPOGP) underspend*. 2021: eSafety.
24. eSafety. *Final reports*. 2022: eSafety.
25. eSafety. *9 – Master Grantee Spreadsheet – updated 290822*. 2022: eSafety.

26. eSafety. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Technology-Facilitated Abuse Resources Program – Dedicated Project Officer Grants Selection of locations discussion guide*. 2020: eSafety.
27. eSafety. *Decision Memo - Eligibility of Dedicated Project Officer Grants Program (DPOGP) projects*. 2021: eSafety.
28. eSafety. *Grantee project plans*. 2021/22: eSafety.
29. eSafety. *First progress reports*. 2021/22: eSafety.
30. eSafety. *Second progress reports*. 2021/22: eSafety.
31. Baym, N.K., *Personal connections in the digital age*. 2015: John Wiley & Sons.
32. Douglas, H., B.A. Harris, and M. Dragiewicz, *Technology-facilitated domestic and family violence: Women's experiences*. The British Journal of Criminology, 2019. **59**(3): p. 551-570.
33. AIHW. *Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story*. 2019 [cited 2022 10 August]; Available from: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/b0037b2d-a651-4abf-9f7b-00a85e3de528/aihw-fdv3-FDSV-in-Australia-2019.pdf.aspx?inline=true>
34. Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Personal safety, Australia, 2016*. 2017 [cited 2022 8 August]; Available from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0>.
35. Brown, C., et al., "Can I just share my story?" *Experiences of technology-facilitated abuse among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in regional and remote Australia*. 2021. **5**.
36. Woodlock, D., et al., *Technology as a Weapon in Domestic Violence: Responding to Digital Coercive Control*. Australian Social Work, 2020. **73**(3): p. 368-380.
37. Flynn, A., A. Powell, and S. Hindes, *Technology-facilitated abuse: A survey of support services stakeholders*. 2021, ANROWS Research Report.
38. Powell, A. and N. Henry, *Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence Victimization: Results From an Online Survey of Australian Adults*. Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 2016. **34**(17): p. 3637-3665.
39. Brown, C. and K. Hegarty, *Development and validation of the TAR Scale: A measure of technology-facilitated abuse in relationships*. Computers in Human Behavior Reports, 2021. **3**: p. 100059.
40. Douglass, C.H., et al., *Correlates of in-person and technology-facilitated sexual harassment from an online survey among young Australians*. Sexual health, 2018. **15**(4): p. 361-365.
41. Powell, A., A.J. Scott, and N. Henry, *Digital harassment and abuse: Experiences of sexuality and gender minority adults*. European Journal of Criminology, 2018. **17**(2): p. 199-223.
42. Louie, Y.M., *Technology-Facilitated Domestic Abuse and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Women in Victoria, Australia*, in *The Emerald International Handbook of Technology-Facilitated Violence and Abuse*. 2021, Emerald Publishing Limited. p. 447-467.
43. Woodlock, D., *Remote control*. DVRCV Advocate, 2015(1): p. 37-40.
44. Woodlock, D., *Technology-facilitated stalking: findings and resources from the SmartSafe project*. 2014.
45. Australian Government, *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children*. Department of Social Services.
46. Australian Government. *Resources on technology-facilitated abuse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women*. October 2021 [cited 2022 17 August]; Available from: <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/initiative/resources-on-technology-facilitated-abuse-for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-women/>
47. Australia, et al., *National agreement on closing the gap*. 2020: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
48. Ramjit, L. *Understanding and Responding to Tech Abuse*. 2022 [cited 22 26 August]; Available from: <https://datatracker.ietf.org/meeting/114/materials/slides-114-hrpc-understanding-and-responding-to-tech-abuse-00>
49. Harkin, D. and R. Merkel, *Technology-Based Responses to Technology-Facilitated Domestic and Family Violence: An Overview of the Limits and Possibilities of Tech Based "Solutions"*. 2022 [cited 22 26 August]. Available from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35763542/>
50. ANROWS. *Technology-facilitated abuse: Extent, nature and responses in the Australian community*. 2022 [cited 2022 24 August]; Available from: <https://www.anrows.org.au/project/technology-facilitated-abuse-extent-nature-and-responses-in-the-australian-community/>

51. Woodlock, D., K. Bentley, D. Schulze, N. Mahoney, D. Chung and A. Pracilio. *Second National Survey of Technology Abuse and Domestic Violence in Australia*. 2020: WESNET.
52. WESNET. *Safe Connections*. 2016 [cited 2022 26 August]; Available from: <https://phones.wesnet.org.au/>
53. eSafety. *Online safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women living in urban areas*. 2019: eSafety Research.
54. Australian Government Productivity Commission. *Indigenous Evaluation Strategy*. 2022 [cited 2022 26 August]; Available from: <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/indigenous-evaluation/strategy>
55. Muir, S. and A. Dean. *Evaluating the outcomes of programs for Indigenous families and communities*. 2017: AIFS.
56. Hudson, S. *Evaluating Indigenous programs: a toolkit for change*. 2017: The Center for Independent Studies.
57. Koens, C. and P. Ninnies. *Evaluation quick guides* (ANROWS Insights, 7/2020). 2020: ANROWS.
58. Brown, C., S. Homan, C. Simpson and L. Leung. *Rante-rante ampe Marle and Urreye: "Safe, Respected and Free from Violence" projects evaluation* (Research report, 05/2021). 2021: ANROWS.
59. Perreault, S. *Gender-based violence: Unwanted sexual behaviours in Canada's territories, 2018*. 2020: Statistics Canada.
60. eSafety. *Image-Based Abuse National Survey: Summary Report*. 2017: eSafety.



Institute for Public Policy and Governance
University of Technology Sydney
15 Broadway, Ultimo
PO Box 123
Broadway NSW 2007
Australia
+61 2 9514 7884
ippg@uts.edu.au
uts.edu.au/ippg