Domestic and family violence protection orders in Australia: an investigation of information sharing and enforcement

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Project Overview Research Priority 4.1: Improving legal and justice responses to violence against women

The Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research (CDFVR) is investigating the enforcement of protection orders in Australia with a particular focus on information sharing and cross border enforcement issues. The research encompasses the perspectives of individuals and organisations that operate and intersect with protection order enforcement inclusive of cross-border considerations. In addition, the views of women who have experienced cross-border domestic violence protection order processes are being sought.

Mixed quantitative and qualitative methods have been employed to investigate the research questions. The design incorporates two distinct studies. The first study comprises a national on-line survey examining professionals’ experiences of the enforcement of protection orders. The second study comprises qualitative interviews with both victims, and service providers who support the victims, regarding cross border enforcement experiences. The purposive and snowball sampling for study two draws on populations from Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales and the Northern Territory. The study has been informed by an extensive scope of relevant research and writing primarily from Australia on enforcement of protection orders (Taylor, Ibrahim, & Wakefield, 2015).

Our research:
1. Examines factors that facilitate and hinder enforcement of protection orders including cross-border considerations from the perspective of professionals.
2. Explores the current functioning of cross-border registrations and sharing of information in cross-border application processes.
3. Explores mechanisms that warrant consideration for enforcement of protection orders from the perspective of victims.
4. Identifies risk factors evident for women experiencing cross-border protection orders.

Findings:
Preliminary findings from our survey indicate different professions primarily involved with enforcement of protection orders face diverse challenges in the enforcement process. Survey findings reinforce the critical role of policing in the registration and enforcement of the orders. This is also a theme emerging from the qualitative interviews along with the implications for systems for collaboration and information-sharing.