

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

For immediate release

### **QSuper supports new program for regional women fleeing domestic violence**

DVConnect, the State's only domestic and family violence hotline, is piloting a program to provide greater support to regionally based women fleeing domestic and family violence.

The pilot, which is being fully funded by QSuper, the State's largest superannuation fund, will provide greater access to counselling services for women placed in temporary motel accommodation in order to keep them safe.

Ms Michelle Wicks, Business Transformation Manager at DVConnect, says that women in regional areas who are temporarily placed in motel accommodation when fleeing their homes, can feel isolated and are at risk of returning to potentially life threatening situations.

"Unfortunately, emergency accommodation in a motel is often the first safe place for a woman and her children when fleeing domestic and family violence, until more appropriate safe arrangement can be found", she said.

The pilot will provide women access to a secure device to contact a specialist DVConnect crisis counsellor via a video call. The aim is to give women a 'face to face' experience to feel better supported while staying in motel accommodation.

As well as funding, QSuper will provide technology for the pilot which will be trialled in Gladstone and Bundaberg, areas which have limited or no after hours or weekend face to face support from specialist domestic violence counsellors. In 2017-18 there were 153 women and 231 children who spent 341 nights in motels in the Gladstone and Bundaberg areas.

"This is another example of QSuper making a real impact and standing up for victims of domestic and family violence. We couldn't provide this service without the funding and technology provided by QSuper, who are such a huge supporter of DVConnect".

In 2016, QSuper entered into a partnership with DVConnect providing financial support for the hotline to employ an additional full-time telephone support officer, to meet ever-increasing demand. The support officer role means that 4,000 more calls are answered each year. The Fund also offers in-kind support to DVConnect, as well as fundraising and volunteering by QSuper employees.

QSuper CEO Mr Michael Pennisi says that supporting the program was an obvious choice for the Fund, who are committed to combatting domestic and family violence.

"Domestic violence takes a significant social, emotional and financial toll on its victims, who are predominantly women. With women making up almost two-thirds of QSuper membership and more than half of our workforce we feel a great responsibility to act", he said.

Mr Pennisi also acknowledged the work of many QSuper members in supporting victims and families.

“Every day, thousands of our members either directly or indirectly support victims of domestic violence and their families – police, nurses, emergency services, teachers, child safety and legal officers, to name a few.

“We want to mirror their commitment to improving the lives of vulnerable Queenslanders. Our partnership with DVConnect is a demonstration of that,” he said.

**-ENDS-**

### **About QSuper**

QSuper is Queensland’s largest super fund according to the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority’s annual fund-level superannuation statistics issued on the 21 December 2018, with \$102 billion in funds under administration. From humble beginnings over a century ago, today QSuper manages the retirement savings of more than 577,000 members.

With membership previously restricted to current and former Queensland Government employees (and their spouses), QSuper opened its doors for the first time in 2017, with membership now open to anyone.

**Contact:** QSuper – 07 30299374 or [media@qsuper.qld.gov.au](mailto:media@qsuper.qld.gov.au)