SPEAQ Forum – Secretary Address – 23 October 2025

Good Morning everyone and thank you for being here.

I too want to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands and waters of Meanjin where we're meeting across the next two days, the Yaggera and Turrbal peoples. I pay respect to their elders, and ongoing connection to lands and culture. I also want to acknowledge the First Nations folks here today and in our network.

Last year, I took a moment to reflect on the ongoing violence of colonisation of First Nations people in this country while also acknowledging the ongoing violence of Indigenous peoples occurring globally, in particular the occupation of and killing of Palestinian people. A year later, and it's horrific to me the genocide of the Palestinian people that we've witnessed. At a forum centred on accountability and intervention of violence, men's violence in particular, it's hard not to consider both the local and global contexts which we're in. I've been doing a lot of personal reflections on what repair work looks like to me in terms of relationships, and what it means to have hope once something is so heartbreakingly broken. And my gosh, does the world feel broken. What does repair and peace building look like during times of conflict when the parties are not meaningfully equals. Over the next two days, I'll be striving to centre victim-survivors when I'm reflecting on meaningful relationship building and what that means for me in terms of individual and collective accountability and repair work.

I must admit, I'm feeling a bit stunned today at speaking to a room of 160 people at a SPEAQ Forum. When I first entered this sector nine years ago, I was the only dude in the office and when I started group facilitation, the men's behaviour change program was a small program of three service delivery staff – two facilitators and an advocate. And it was quite isolating. I do still think the wider domestic violence sector can at times be isolating for those doing perpetrator intervention work, and for gender diverse people in our still very binary sector. But we keep growing – teams are larger, more services are entering behaviour change work on its continuum, and there's more LGBTIQA+ folk in our sector! Here we are today with 160 people who want to connect and are passionate about this work. We have 160 people here that are passionate about best practice to transform lives and families. That are passionate about leadership and advocacy to end domestic and family violence. That are passionate about investing in opportunities for those using violence to change. That are passionate about everyone deserving a life free from violence. It doesn't feel isolating at all.

For those who don't know SPEAQ or our history well, SPEAQ is the collective voice representing practitioners and services in the field of interventions with persons using domestic and family violence in QLD. SPEAQ was established in the early 1990s, initially known as the "QLD Network of Men's Family Violence Service Providers", with our first Forum in 2005. So, for 30+ years, we've been supporting each other in our work. We also work to inform, educate and advise other professionals, government and the public as the voice of specialist professionals in the field of interventions with persons using violence with a strong focus on men's DFV behaviour change group programs. I remain honoured to be your Secretary, now in my second term, receiving Secretariat support from my predecessor of 16-years, Paul Monsour, and working in partnership with my fellow current SPEAQ Steering Committee members: Michelle, Alex, Lou, Chez, Sheena, Tess, Paul, and Verity form our auspicing organisation DVNQ. We thank all our members for their ongoing support for us to continue our mission.

This year has been another busy year for SPEAQ. We have facilitated five Community of Practice sessions throughout the year and put together another exciting 3-day professional development event for this year's

Forum. We have continued to advocate to WorkUP QLD to ensure professional development opportunities exist for our sector, and this year there were two deliveries of both the 4-day Art of Dialogue Training and Advanced Facilitator training, as well as a one-day Women's Advocacy training day through WorkUP QLD.

In terms of advocacy and consultation work, 2025 saw the Steering Committee develop its own Key Advocacy Priorities with contributions from members to drive our advocacy and consultancy work for the year, which was also shared with the key government stakeholders and sister networks. The Steering Committee made its own submission to the *Domestic and Family Violence and Other Protection Legislation Amendment Bill 2025.* We contributed to a forum led by the DFSV Commissioner Michaela Cronin to inform the *National Standards for Men's Behaviour Change Project.* We also participated in invited consultations on *Updating the National Risk Assessment Principles and Risk Factors for DFV,* and the *Service Needs of Children and Young People*, to name a few.

With SPEAQ's endorsement, this year I sat on the DFV Peak Body Advisory Group, along with the SPEAQ Steering Committee Co-Convenor Michelle, with DVConnect's endorsement. We were able to ensure the behaviour change intervention sector was represented in the development of the peak and in ongoing DFV policy advocacy led by QCOSS this year. We look forward to supporting QDVSN now as they establish themselves as the new DFV Peak Body for Queensland. Importantly, with the establishment of a DFV Peak Body in QLD, SPEAQ's voice will continue to be strong in advocating for our work and workforce and continue to be the point of contact for the specialist and practitioner lens that we provide. The SPEAQ Steering Committee has always intended to represent the diversity of our network and workforce. We're a unique segment of the DFV sector where we have different genders working closely side by side in practice and our network's steering committee and forum organisation has always reflected this. We encourage you to consider joining the SPEAQ Steering Committee when nominations open next to support these ongoing capacity building, leadership and advocacy efforts.

So, I thank you all for everyone who has contributed to the SPEAQ network in 2025, including those attending or facilitating our Community of Practice series, attending our General Members meetings contributing to SPEAQ's practice-led policy advice and submissions, and those attending this week's SPEAQ Forum. A huge shout out to those who have volunteered their time to develop a conference program to continue to move the sector forward. A big thank you in particularly to our SPEAQ Forum Organising Committee members, Paul (Anglicare), Belinda (Brisbane Domestic Violence Service), Tori (Pandora Projects), Jen (UnitingCare), Brett (Edon Place), and Skye (Brisbane Youth Service). Please give a big clap to these legends and their organisations for providing in-kind support to make this event happen. And a thank you to our financial contributors WorkUP QLD and CQU's QCDFVR. These forums create opportunities for connection, sharing insights on practice and leadership, and future-proofing the sector.

This year's theme is *We're in this together: Meaningful relationship as the basis for effective practice in DFV accountability and intervention work.* What a great opportunity to come together and reflect on how we show up for ourselves and others to partner in this important work. Whether that be partnering with clients, partnering with co-facilitators and colleagues, partnering with women's advocates, family safety workers, and victim-survivor support services, and partnering with stakeholders that support our work.

I'm still fanboying out about our invited presenters this year, including national legends Prof. Donna Chung, Rodney Vlais, Alan Jenkins, Tori Cooke, and Hala Abdelnour, as well as international presenter and founder of the

Caring Dad's program Tim Kelly. We are so fortunate to have you come talk to us and support the professional development and connection of our workforce. And we had so many members submit abstracts this year, which is absolutely fantastic to see. SPEAQ is a grassroots network that was built and continues to be maintained in large part by practitioners, and it's great to see so many current practitioners present on the innovative work and research they are currently doing.

Some of our conversations may be challenging, and we invite you to take a step away from the content when you need to. We have flyers at the resource table that show some nice places to go nearby outside for quiet reflection – including the beach and local park – and there is a number on the flyer that you can call to speak with a Counsellor, Lynda, who has made herself available to you across these two days.

Yesterday we had a big day with pre-Forum workshops by Rodney and Alan. So, many of you have already dove into deep reflective mode! Let's keep the energy going and I wish you an amazing next two days, and again, a sincere thank you to you all for contributing to the SPEAQ network and allowing me to serve as your Secretary.

Thank you,

Dr Brodie Evans
SPEAQ Secretary

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