

Women's Legal  
Service Queensland

# Evaluation of PENDA: a financial empowerment app for women escaping domestic and family violence

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Final Report

June 2018

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## ABOUT THIS EVALUATION

This evaluation was commissioned by Women's Legal Service Queensland with funding from Financial Literacy Australia. Its focus is Penda, a financial empowerment app for women experiencing domestic and family violence. The evaluation had three purposes:

- ▶ to inform the design and development of Penda (formative evaluation)
- ▶ to assess its usefulness, safety and user-friendliness (summative evaluation) and
- ▶ to draw conclusions relevant to future financial literacy programs via apps or programs for women affected by domestic and family violence, in recognition that an app of this nature is an Australian first (knowledge-generating evaluation).

The evaluation occurred in four stages from May 2016 to June 2018. The first three stages were formative, working with Women's Legal Service Queensland during the design and development stage with the aim of 'evaluating for success'. The fourth stage was summative, occurred after the app had been live for over six months, and sought to draw conclusions about the experience of app users. This is our fourth and final report and presents key findings and outcomes from stages one, two and three, in addition to findings and conclusions from stage four.

## THE HYPOTHESIS

Figure 1: The app's intended impact

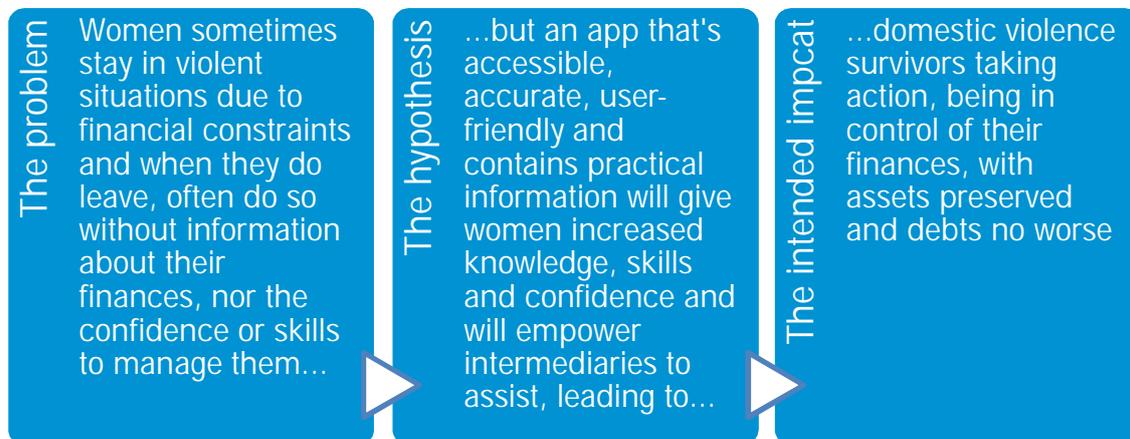


Figure 1 outlines the app's hypothesis and is drawn from a program logic model developed by Women's Legal Service Queensland prior to commissioning the evaluation. The intended reach of the app includes both direct beneficiaries (women experiencing domestic and family violence) and intermediaries (professionals, family or friends who may assist women experiencing domestic and family violence). This dual focus on beneficiaries and intermediaries informed every stage of the evaluation, with intermediaries an important information source given the evaluation constraints.

The original intent was for the app be marketed for women to use pre-, during and post-separation. However, the app was reoriented after user-testing to be marketed for women experiencing domestic and family violence, recognising that separation can be chaotic rather than linear, and women can take many attempts to leave an abusive relationship.

## SAFETY FIRST...

*“Due to the users being unknown, and often in a distressed and dangerous situation, there are severe constraints on any evaluation process for this project... We expect that an evaluation may be able to build up a picture from insights at disconnected points, combining data on reach and usage with a small number of case studies on women’s reaction and experience” Women’s Legal Service Queensland evaluation brief 2016*

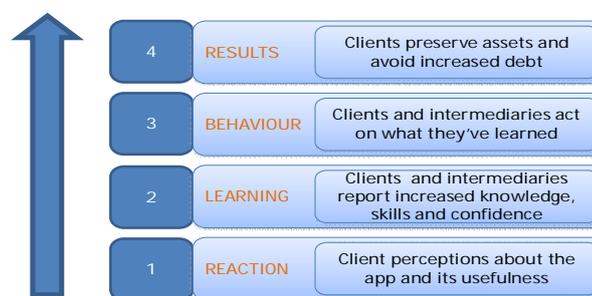
In an ideal world, this evaluation would be informed by the voices of the thousands of people who’ve used Penda. However, the research methods chosen for this evaluation ultimately prioritised safety. We explored a range of options with Women’s Legal Service Queensland to hear directly from women using the app. The most reliable ways of gathering feedback from women were considered unsafe (e.g. a ‘pop-up survey’ within the app with reminders to encourage responses could have been discovered by a perpetrator) or inappropriate (e.g. women could potentially be reached via refuges but approaching them during a time of trauma and distress was not considered ethical).

Nonetheless, we’ve been able to capture indicators of the app’s usefulness and limited user input:

- ▶ Survivors of past domestic and family violence worked closely with us during app testing and design, as a ‘proxy voice’ for women who might use the app
- ▶ Google analytics allowed us to analyse usage patterns
- ▶ A small number of beneficiaries (people using the app for themselves) completed an in-app feedback form
- ▶ A small number of intermediaries (those assisting people affected by domestic and family violence) worked with the evaluators during app testing and design, and also provided feedback on the app once it was launched.

Using the model below, our evaluation draws conclusions about reaction, learning and behaviour. However, due to safety considerations, the final question of whether the app has allowed women to take control of their finances (results) cannot be answered by this evaluation.

Figure 2: Potential areas for evaluation focus



Drawn from Kirkpatrick's model of evaluation focus

## STAGE 1: FINDINGS FROM THE LITERATURE

A scan of the international literature helped us to:

- ▶ identify priority topics for inclusion in the app
- ▶ validate the evaluation methodology and
- ▶ identify considerations for future research in this field.

The literature identified the topics that women reportedly found most helpful when leaving a domestic violence situation. This assisted in the development of evidence-informed app content.

The literature also highlighted the importance of talking with users during the design of financial literacy programs to understand what information users need, and the language they use. This validated the user-testing elements of our evaluation methodology (stages 2 and 3).

Finally, the literature also highlighted good practice for future domestic violence and financial literacy initiatives which we could not incorporate into our evaluation design due to the constraints outlined in 'Safety First'. Key findings include:

- ▶ segmenting clients and client outcomes using detailed demographic data assists in interpreting the impact of financial literacy initiatives and
- ▶ a report commissioned by Good Shepherd Australia (Corrie 2016) formulated possible indicators to measure financial security for survivors of domestic and family violence and incorporating these into future research could build a stronger Australian evidence base.

## STAGE 2: WIREFRAME TESTING

Stage 2 involved working with survivors of domestic and family violence, and service providers in this sector, to obtain feedback on the wireframe (a static, draft version of the app). This stage was conducted within an ethical research plan approved by Women's Legal Service Queensland. At this stage, the app was still envisaged as a tool for women in the period immediately prior to, during and after separation.

### Method

By mutual agreement, Stage 2 used more evaluation resources than originally proposed in our evaluation plan, as the design stage offered the best opportunity to involve survivors in a way that was safe and ethical.

We approached stage 2 by talking with survivors before they'd seen the wireframe. We conducted open-ended interviews to understand their stories, experiences and what would have helped them when they were separating from the perpetrator. We asked what sort of key-word searches they might have used if the app had been available at the time of separation. Our goal was to hear what mattered to women in their own words, before they'd become accustomed to the language in the wireframe. We also interviewed a small number of service providers to ask similar questions about what mattered to their clients.

We then moderated a small focus group of three survivors and a service provider to obtain detailed feedback on the wireframe, with follow up interviews with a survivor and two service providers who couldn't attend the focus group. Other service providers were invited to provide feedback and,

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although enthusiastic, were unable to contribute due to high workloads. This also emerged as a challenge later in the evaluation.

## Findings

In September 2016 we provided a Stage 2 report to Women's Legal Service synthesising the survivor and service provider feedback. Overwhelmingly, feedback was very positive and both survivors and service providers considered the app would be invaluable for women leaving domestic violence situations and for family and friends of survivors.

Our report focused on the key themes that emerged from user-testing, highlighted below, but also included specific user feedback about topics and content. The feedback significantly influenced the final design and content of the app.

### *The language used in the wireframe was not necessarily the language women use*

Survivors reported that they didn't necessarily perceive themselves to be in domestic violence situations when they were actually in those situations and the words and headings used in the wireframe were not words they would have used to describe their situation. Respondents suggested structuring app content within a larger number of headings, and wording the headings to better describe the concerns of women (e.g. Centrelink, children, safety, banking, money, crisis payment, income, food, legal issues). This was thought to be an approach that would reduce the risk of women missing vital information.

This feedback was thoroughly addressed in the final app, with topics aligned to women's concerns and inclusion of information about domestic and family violence to help women identify if this is what they're experiencing. As we note in the Stage 4 findings, this has been valued by app users.

### *Separation is not always a linear event*

Providers and survivors noted that separation for women in general can be a chaotic and unplanned process and some women take many attempts to leave an abusive relationship permanently. Structuring the app by topic rather than a linear model of pre/during/post separation was recommended. Additionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander domestic violence survivors were reportedly less likely to be intending to separate and more concerned with immediate safety and security for them and their children, which had implications for an app marketed for women undergoing separation.

In response to this feedback, the app in its final form was not marketed as a tool for women undergoing separation, but instead as a financial empowerment app with financial, personal safety and legal information and referrals for women who have experienced domestic and family violence. App content includes topics and specialist referrals identified as being more relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The inclusion of a favourites function also recognised that separation is not a discrete event, and women may need to return to the app repeatedly over a period of time.

### *Changes could make the app more accessible for women with intellectual disabilities*

The wireframe was considered to be inaccessible to women with intellectual disabilities (both by a service provider and eight women with intellectual disabilities) and specific suggestions for improvement were included in our report.

The final app incorporated much of this feedback, including making more use of icons, using less text, using plain English, and including links to phone numbers as women with

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intellectual disability wanted to be able to ring someone for advice. As noted in Stage 4 findings, these features have drawn positive user and service provider feedback.

*The app was not considered safe for use by most women in domestic violence situations*

Safety concerns were paramount, with near universal agreement that the app would not be safe to use for many women in domestic violence situations. Practical suggestions to address this concern were included in our report and addressed by Women's Legal Service Queensland.

Safety measures used in the final app include: using an inconspicuous icon and name for the app, a lock screen game function that can be accessed quickly by the tapping icon or shaking the device, an optional passcode setting to open the app, safety warnings before and after download, providing the content in downloadable form on a website to enable access to the information without creating a download history in an app store, and options to print content within the app or email it to a trusted friend. As we report in Stage 4, these safety features have been highly commended by users and service providers.

*Accessibility and user-friendliness could be improved*

Additional suggestions for improved accessibility included more use of plain English, having a search function and filtering/customisation options, using icons and pictures to break up text, making phone numbers, resources and referrals more prominent, and having 'read aloud' and page translation options to increase potential user groups.

The final app includes a favourites function, more icons and headings, prominent resources and referrals including links to multilingual assistance and instructions on how to use 'read text aloud' and increase font size.

## STAGE 3: BETA TESTING

### Methods

By this stage of the project, the broad structure and purpose of the app was largely settled. Stage 3 involved another round of user-testing but this time the purpose was to get feedback about the user-friendliness of the app, how to make it as safe as possible for women to use, and specific suggestions about content.

Respondents from Stage 2 were sent the beta version of the app (an interactive version they could download and explore on a mobile device). We conducted telephone interviews after testers had spent a few weeks using the beta version. The interviews comprised structured questions, hearing women's feedback, and conducting scenario testing to determine whether testers could find information quickly and easily.

### Findings

All testers agreed they would recommend the app to women in domestic and family violence situations, and even to women undergoing separation who weren't experiencing domestic or family violence. Testers agreed the information was valuable and the right 'kind' of information.

Survivors noted the app would have helped them when they were separating from their abusers, and one noted that the definitions would have helped her to understand that she was experiencing



domestic and family violence. Again, this foreshadows feedback from app users reported below in Stage 4.

We revisited the question of whether the app would be safe for women to use and concluded that when it comes to safety, it's 'horses for courses.' All respondents agreed that safety is context-dependent and something that must be judged by women according to their specific circumstances. One tester noted that there is already plenty of information in the public domain that women can readily access, and which could pose a risk if perpetrators found it. This tester felt that the app was simply another source of information that women could access, with attendant risks and benefits. The range of safety features built into the app and the app store are noted in Stage 2 findings.

Testers offered feedback to improve user-friendliness, and much of this was incorporated into the final app including more prominent and topic-based resources and referrals. Technical glitches were reported and fixed prior to app launch, and the in-app feedback form was restructured and simplified in response to tester feedback.

## STAGE 4: APP EVALUATION

The remainder of this report presents methods, findings and conclusions from the final and summative stage of the evaluation.

### Overview

The original evaluation plan proposed that the summative evaluation would be based on findings from google analytics and app store reviews, two focus groups with service providers (representing intermediaries and acting as a proxy voice for beneficiaries), and responses to a short in-app 'pop-up' survey which we had hoped could appear at time of first use and with reminders during later episodes of use. The final methods used for Stage 4 varied from this considerably.

First, as noted above, the proposed in-app pop-up user survey could not be safely developed. Although we were able to include an in-app feedback form, we could not include pop-up reminders to maximise response rates.

Further, the difficulty we had in engaging service providers in Stage 2 led us to vary the methodology in an effort to improve response rates from providers. As we'd had some modest success in interviewing service providers through direct phone contact, we agreed with Women's Legal Service Queensland to attempt to recruit 20 service providers to participate in telephone interviews during April-May 2018 (six months after the app's launch). The rationale was that telephone interviews would give us an opportunity to attempt contact multiple times and give service providers a choice of time in being interviewed (as opposed to attending a focus group at a fixed time and requiring travel).

Per an agreed variation to the method, the proposed data sources for this stage of the evaluation were identified as:

1. usage patterns from Google analytics
2. responses to the in-app feedback form from app users
3. telephone interviews with service providers
4. other in-app feedback
5. app store reviews.

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Findings from each of these methods is discussed in turn.

## 1. Usage patterns suggest good user engagement

At the time of writing (mid-June 2018), there had been a total of 5,376 downloads of the Penda app. Of these, 4,584 users (85 per cent) then went on to open and engage with the app. This is based on Google analytics data showing that 4,584 users initiated at least one session within the app. In total there have been 11,601 sessions at an average duration of 3 minutes and 38 seconds. Usage peaked with the start of national washroom advertising, with 915 users in September 2017, levelling to around 500 users each month in 2018 (ranging from 478 in January up to 607 in March).

Women's Legal Service Queensland engaged in an extensive and extended advertising campaign to promote the app, including paid social media advertising from December 2017 to the end of June 2018 and weekly Facebook and Twitter posts. Targeted washroom advertising occurred nationally in 55 shopping centres from 4 September - 27 November 2017, with 40 of these extended until the end of December 2017. This involved placing Penda posters on the back of toilet doors in female bathrooms to promote Penda and spread the message that domestic violence is not acceptable. Google AdWords was also trialed for one month but ceased as social media advertising, targeting age and gender, proved more successful and cost-effective.

There is strong evidence that the communication campaign increased downloads. As a comparison, Women's Legal Service Queensland released its Re-Focus app<sup>1</sup> in June 2015. There was no communication campaign associated with this app and over a three-year period it has been downloaded 1,206 times, as compared with 5,376 downloads of Penda in less than one year.

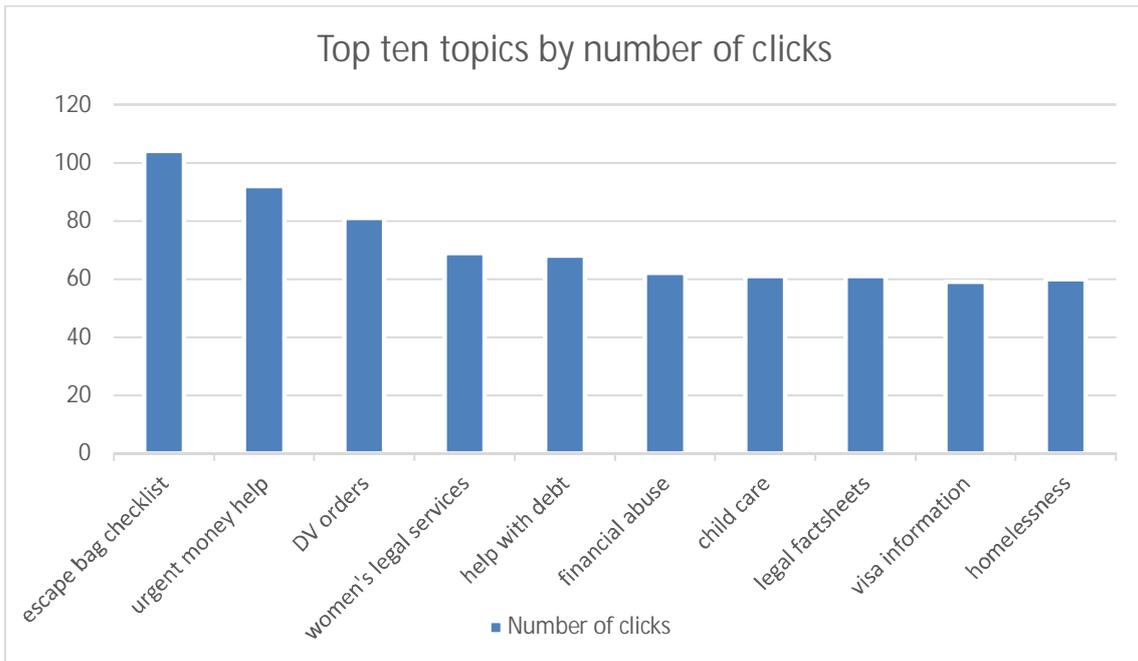
Other data suggests that users actively engage with the app after downloading it. Over the life of the app, the proportion of returning versus new users has remained fairly stable. On average, 60 per cent of users have been returning and 40 per cent new. The exception to this, as might be expected, was in September 2017 when washroom advertising attracted significant numbers of new users. At this time, the percentage of new users (54 per cent) was higher than returning users (46 per cent). Since its launch, Penda has also consistently had higher numbers of 28-day users than 14, 7 or 1 day users, another indicator of user engagement.

A further indicator of user engagement is 'click-through' data. Since the app's launch, there have been 3,404 unique clicks to other websites while using the app. We've presented this information in Figure 3 by topic rather than the name of each website, to allow comparison with the information about the top ten screen views (Figure 4). The top click-through topics relate to matters of safety, money and domestic and family violence.

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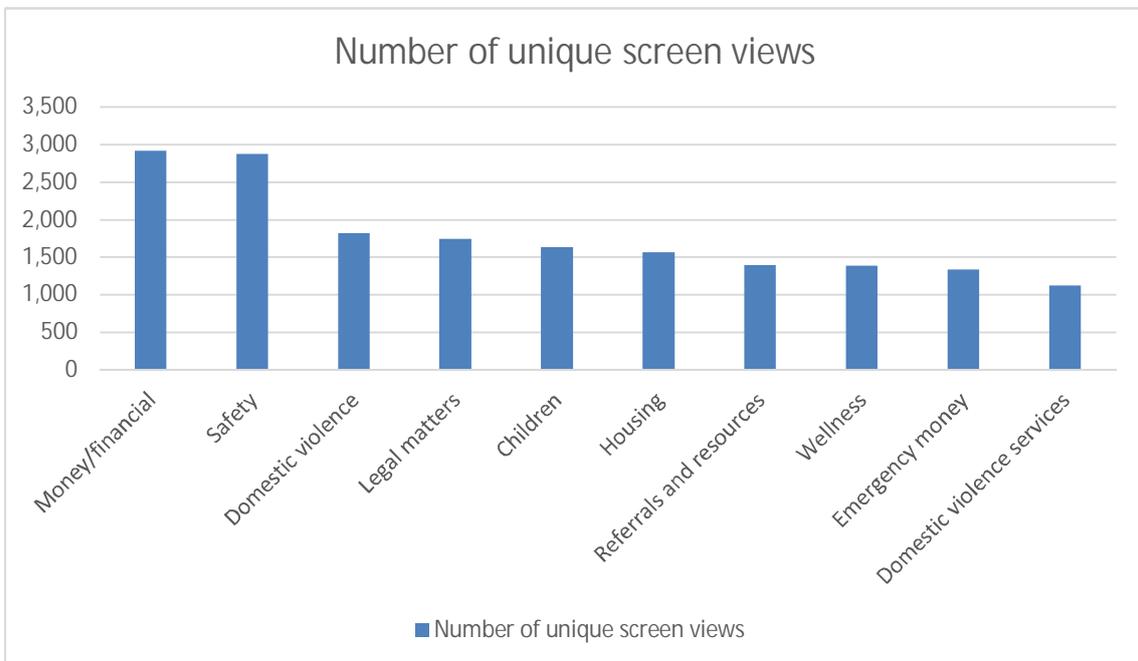
<sup>1</sup> Re-focus is an app for women who have separated or are thinking of separating and covers legal information for women.

Figure 3: Click-through data by topic



Analysis of screen views indicates those topics of highest priority to app users. Since the app's launch, there have been 40,982 unique screen views, with the top 10 topics identified in Figure 4, below, largely relating to money, safety and domestic and family violence. This mirrors priority topics based on clicks to other websites, shown in Figure 3.

Figure 4: Screen views by topic



## 2. App users are broadly positive (but it's a very small sample)

### Method

In line with the research constraints already noted we have only very limited data from a small number of people using the app for themselves. This information was collected via the in-app feedback form. The data is in no way representative or statistically valid and may be biased in line with users' potential motivation to complete the form due either to high levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the app.

### Findings

Amongst the ten respondents who identified that they were using the app for themselves, Penda has a net promoter score of +30, a good satisfaction rating.<sup>2</sup> No negative comments were made, and reasons for the rating included:

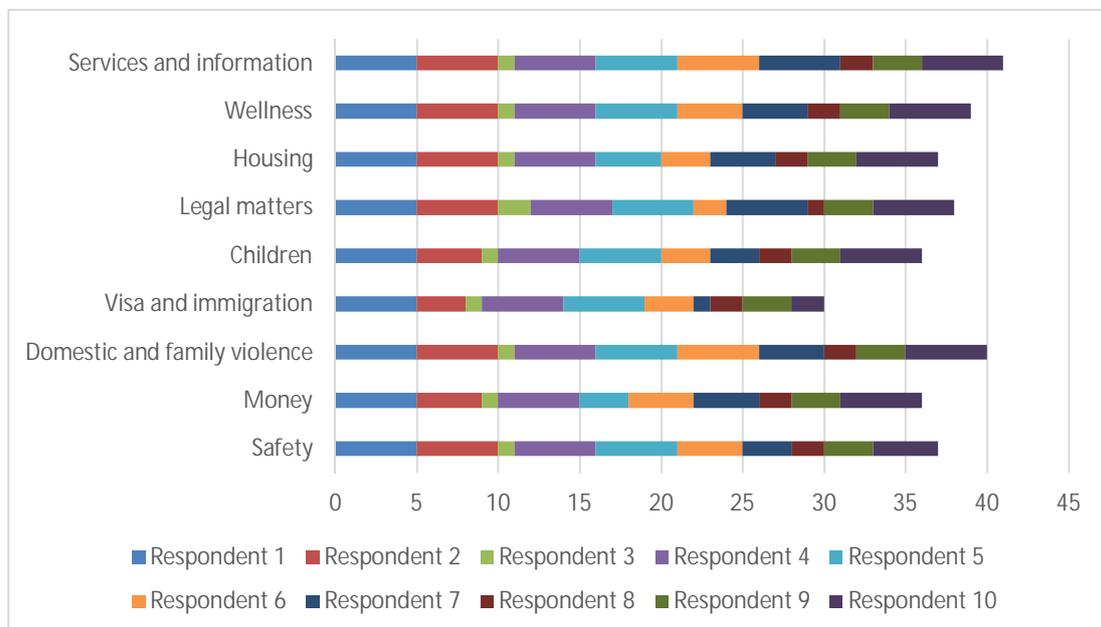
*Long overdue more help is needed to support women and children suffering*

*Built in safety features*

*Very good*

App users were asked to rate how helpful the information in the app is by topic (rating scale 5, extremely helpful to 1, not at all helpful). Figure 5 shows some divergence in responses. Respondent 1 rated all topics very highly, respondent 3 rated them all very poorly and the remaining respondents rated them well to moderately. User ratings of topic usefulness mirrors some of the usage patterns noted above, with higher ratings for topics related to services and information and domestic and family violence and the lowest rating for information about visa and immigration.

Figure 5: Helpfulness of information by topic, rated by individual respondents



<sup>2</sup> Using this methodology, scores range from -100 to +100; any score above zero is good and anything above 50 is considered excellent. The score is used internationally for rating customer satisfaction. Respondents are asked if they'd recommend a product or service to a friend or colleague, then asked the main reason for the rating.

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A follow up question asked users what the likelihood was that they would act on the information in the app. This question received a mix of responses, with four users extremely likely to act on the information, one likely, three unsure, and the remaining two either not likely or not at all likely to act.

This question was key to the summative component of the evaluation in terms of the *impact* of the app. The app hypothesis was that women would be more likely to act and take control of their finances if they had access to useful and user-friendly information in an app. In the absence of longitudinal studies of app users, this question was our best 'proxy' measure of whether the app was likely to achieve its intended goal. However, the sample size is so small that we can't draw valid conclusions, and we recognise that the process of leaving a domestic violence situation can be long, difficult and overwhelming.

### 3. Service providers are very positive (but difficult to engage)

#### Method

Women's Legal Service Queensland sent service providers information about the evaluation and our proposed telephone interviews via marketing material sent out in September 2017 when the app was launched, with a further email sent in March 2018 reminding services that we would contact them for a telephone interview.

Throughout April-May 2018 we engaged in an exhaustive process of telephoning and emailing service providers seeking a short telephone interview or offering them the option of completing an online survey. This included contacting over 40 services working in the field of domestic and family violence or women's services. When this did not yield many responses, Women's Legal Service Queensland assisted us with 'warm referrals' to approximately 50 individuals that had made direct contact about Penda (some individuals were from organisations we'd already contacted, so there's an overlap between the 40 services and the 50 follow up contacts).

We could not secure a telephone interview with any organisations, but we did receive 14 responses to our online survey, representing a response rate of approximately 15 per cent of the total number of organisations and individuals we contacted. The respondents came from a mix of service providers, including regional and metropolitan domestic violence services, women's legal services, a service for women with intellectual disability, a women's health service and an individual. The survey covered questions of safety, user-friendliness and usefulness of the information within the app. Some respondents skipped questions, so the total number of responses for each question is typically lower than 14.

We did have some brief telephone discussions with service providers, and the reasons for this low response rate seem to be a combination of the following:

- ▶ high workloads in community organisations, with workers reporting that they did not have time to participate
- ▶ some services noting that they were aware of Penda, thought highly of it, and recommended it to clients, but had not used it themselves
- ▶ some services reporting they had not heard of Penda
- ▶ the nature of the sector, whereby front-line phone staff, sometimes part-time volunteers, can be cautious in answering phone calls that are not from clients, due to the malicious and vexatious calls that the sector can receive.

## Findings

Seven survey respondents rated Penda using the net promoter score methodology. A further six respondents who identified as helping someone else to use the app also answered an identical question within the in-app feedback form. Combining these responses, the satisfaction rating of intermediaries (people helping someone else use the app) was +69, a very high satisfaction rating and higher than the beneficiary satisfaction rating of +30.<sup>3</sup> No negative feedback was given and reasons offered for ratings include:

*Relevant information that is easy to use*

*It's a useful app with many resources for women experiencing DFV*

*Women need this kind of information*

*I recommend Penda to almost all of my clients who are separating or trying to make decisions about separating and particularly who have concerns about children and parenting matters. There's so much good information and it's so easy to use.*

*Very helpful resource covering a lot of information with links to outside relevant resources*

*I'm a Counsellor specialising in DV at a Women's centre & think that it's a brilliant app & very easy to use. I will be promoting it with my colleagues & clients*

*Safety App looks like a game*

*Really useful and simple to navigate*

In relation to safety, survey respondents echoed the views of app testers in Stage 3 that this is context-dependent. In response to a question about whether Penda could be safely used by people experiencing domestic and family violence, one respondent thought it could be used in all circumstances while the remaining six thought it could be used in some circumstances (seven responses in total). Respondents identified circumstances where it may not be safe, including situations where perpetrators are controlling, monitor their partner, where there is technological surveillance, or where phone and internet access is restricted.

When asked how Penda could be made safer to use, some respondents noted there are already good safety features built into the app, while others suggested programming Penda so it could be hidden behind other apps (such as a calculator) or disguising it as a game or memo app. Another respondent suggested adding a password entry code but this is already a feature of Penda and suggests the respondent has not made use of all safety features and/or instructions about safety features were not sufficiently prominent (seven responses in total).

In relation to user-friendliness, all respondents (seven in total) rated Penda as very easy to use, with comments that it was intuitive, easy and made good use of pictorial features and clear links. Suggestions to make it more user-friendly included adapting it to better suit Aboriginal and Torres

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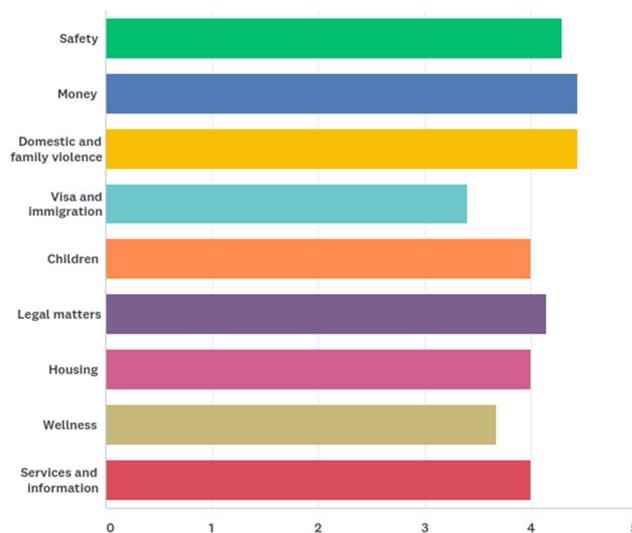
<sup>3</sup> Using the net promoter score methodology, scores can range from -100 to +100; any score above zero is good and anything above 50 is considered excellent. The score is used internationally for rating customer satisfaction.

Strait Islander women and including Siri type questions [this suggests instructions about the read aloud function may not be sufficiently prominent].

In relation to the usefulness of the information, respondents (seven in total) rated the content by topic area (rating scale 5, extremely helpful to 1, not at all helpful). Figure 6 shows the average rating across each topic area, with money and domestic and family violence rated highest, followed by safety and legal matters. This reflects the top topics identified in click-through data and screen views. Lowest rated topics were visa and immigration (similar to app users, who rated this lowest) and wellness (in contrast to app users, who rated this highly).

Figure 6: Usefulness of information by topic

Q10 These questions relate to how helpful the app is. How would you rate the information in the following topics on Penda (rating scale 1 not at all helpful to 5 extremely helpful, plus I didn't look at this topic)



Workers reported a variety of ways in which they use Penda, in some cases using it more than one way. Of seven respondents, five had advised clients to use it, four had used it as a reference for themselves, three had assisted clients to use Penda, and one reported that a client had acted on information in Penda with the worker's assistance.

We also asked about the suitability of an app for presenting this information for the target group. Six out of seven respondents selected the app as a suitable information format, when given a choice of possible formats.

#### 4. In-app user feedback is mostly positive and constructive

Additional user feedback was gathered from comments on specific pages within the app, which adds to the picture that the app is valued. Discounting 20 comments which were unclear, we sorted the remaining 52 comments into broad categories to give a flavour of user feedback: 18 were positive, 15 provided constructive suggestions (e.g. correcting a phone number or including additional information), eight reported technical glitches, seven were positive and could be characterised as 'personal identification' (see below) and four were negative. Women's Legal Service Queensland reports that it has monitored and acted on constructive suggestions and technical glitches reported via user feedback.



The positive and negative feedback doesn't tell us much about the user experience as it tended to be brief (e.g. 'great' 'thanks' or 'no' [not helpful]). One notable suggestion was that there could be more information in the app itself and less reliance on links. This raises a question about user-friendliness—that is, whether the app strikes the right balance between internal content and links to external sources for a target audience that may be using the app under time pressure. However, based on only one comment we can't draw conclusions about the extent to which this may apply to other users, nor speculate on what the ideal balance might be.

The seven comments that we categorised as 'personal identification' involved users reporting that the information about domestic and family violence had helped them to identify what they were experiencing. This echoes the findings from Stage 2 that people will not necessarily be able to name what they're experiencing, and information can empower people to identify that they're experiencing abuse. Examples include:

*It's a strange comfort in knowing other people have lived this hell, and to read so clearly all of your experiences that are difficult to explain.*

*Everything on this page is what I have had to live with for 22 years*

*This page was extremely helpful. I was able to identify what actually happened to me and I feel a lot better now that I know.*

## 5. App store reviews are positive (but small in number)

Limited data from app store reviews suggests a high satisfaction rating amongst app users. The Apple store received five reviews, with an average rating of 4.8, while Google Play received four reviews, all rated five out of five.

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# CONCLUSIONS

This evaluation was designed to answer three broad questions:

- ▶ was the app useful for beneficiaries and intermediaries?
- ▶ was the app safe, easy to use and suitable as an information channel for the audience?
- ▶ what are the lessons for improving the app and for future initiatives?

## What we know

### Conclusions about the app

There are several indicators that the app is useful. First, Google analytics suggests good user engagement, with users opening and subsequently returning to the app and clicking on links to other relevant information, rather than simply downloading it. Second, feedback from the small number of beneficiaries and intermediaries who've responded to surveys and feedback forms includes positive satisfaction ratings, high usefulness ratings for most topics within the app, and overwhelmingly positive comments where users have provided free text feedback. Further, we would expect the app to be useful given its content is evidence-informed from Stage 1 of the evaluation, and, from Stages 2 and 3, was informed by the lived experience of domestic and family violence survivors and service providers with expertise in the field.

Feedback about safety features has been positive and the fact that users are returning and continuing to engage with the app suggests that users feel safe enough to use it in an ongoing way. Again, the safety features were given careful thought and informed by survivors with lived experience of domestic and family violence and service providers with expertise in the field.

It's harder for us to draw a conclusion about the suitability of providing information via an app as opposed to other platforms such as websites, booklets or phone information. This is because our largest and most reliable data source (Google analytics) doesn't help us to answer this question, and the sample of people who answered our question about this in the in-app feedback form and online survey is so small that we're hesitant to answer this question based only on this data source. We can report that a small sample of intermediaries indicated that an app is a suitable information source, and note that the information is also available in downloadable PDF form on a dedicated Penda website.

### Findings for future initiatives

There are some lessons for future initiatives. First, for any future domestic violence or financial literacy initiatives or initiatives to develop self-help products, we can say that user-testing adds enormous value to the product developed. User-testing for this project directly influenced the final app design, navigation and safety features, information and topics, and we can demonstrate links between what our testers suggested and some of the specific positive feedback from app users. Women's Legal Service Queensland invested significant time as well as project budget in this process, and we would reaffirm the value of taking time and resources to 'get it right' prior to app launch.

Second, a targeted communication campaign is an important strategy for increasing app downloads. This was evidenced by the comparison of download numbers between Penda, which had a concerted communication campaign, and Re-Focus, an earlier app developed by Women's Legal Service Queensland which did not have a communication campaign.

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Third, for future financial literacy initiatives via apps which don't have to grapple with safety considerations, it would be valuable to collect demographic client data to assist in better understanding usage patterns and segmenting research findings. Additionally, the use of indicators to measure financial security developed by Good Shepherd Australia offers an opportunity for collecting shared data across multiple initiatives and building a better evidence base in this space.

Fourth, there are lessons for engaging with the women's and domestic violence service sectors. In this regard we had a lot of difficulty, despite having anticipated this and developed research methods aimed at maximising engagement. Despite multiple direct communications from Women's Legal Service Queensland to services in the sector advising them to expect our call, and establishing our bona fides, our direct approaches to services were nonetheless met mostly with non-responses, wariness or apologies that they couldn't assist.

To some extent, this will always be a challenge and there is no perfect solution. Women's Legal Service Queensland directly recruited service providers for Stage 2 and 3 testing and even then, we had difficulty obtaining feedback despite high levels of enthusiasm. However, for future research initiatives, we would suggest highly targeted and assertive recruitment methods, directly initiated and coordinated by the commissioning organisation rather than the research team. This still would not overcome capacity constraints within the sector, but may be more likely to achieve buy-in and overcome wariness. Another approach would be for the research team to seek out respondents at events where services and workers are likely to be in attendance and undertake very brief polling about key questions. We did explore this option, but couldn't identify a high profile domestic violence event within the available timeframe.

## What we don't know

All up, we've been able to analyse some solid data about app usage, supplemented by a very small number of impressions from app users and service providers. This has allowed us to draw some summative evaluation conclusions, but, as foreshadowed from the start, this evaluation was not designed to measure long-term impact. Ultimately, we can't answer the question of whether the app has resulted in women achieving financial empowerment or independence.

There is another big 'unknown' from this evaluation—and that is whether any app users have had their safety compromised by downloading or using the app. We know that safety considerations were paramount in the design of the app and safety features were designed based on direct advice from survivors of domestic and family violence and service providers. However, it's not possible to make a definitive assessment of whether the app has in fact been safe for users. A promising sign is that service provider feedback has been positive, and no incidents have been reported to Women's Legal Service Queensland via service providers.

Our conclusion is that the app is safe to use with the caveat that nothing is completely safe in the context of domestic and family violence. Our overall impression is that the app is a valued and useful self-help tool and 'one-stop information shop' which has filled a niche for people affected by domestic and family violence, and those working with them.



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