



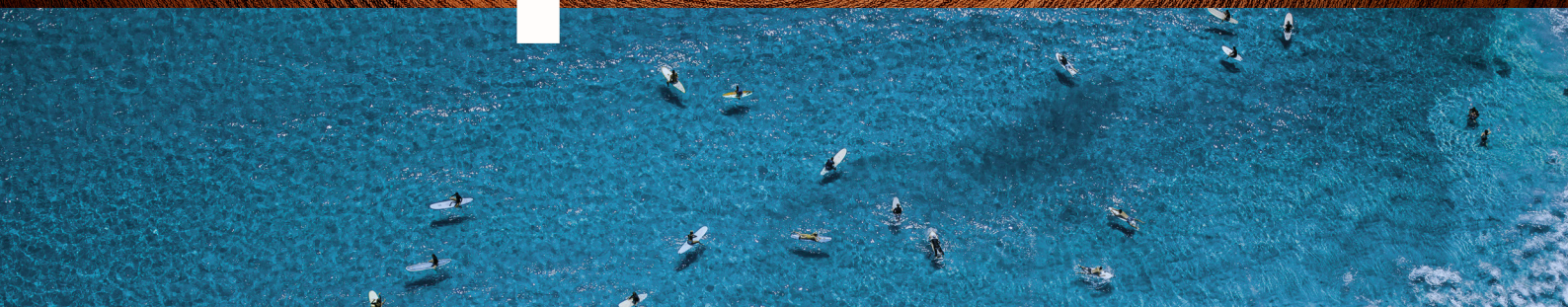
Australian Government

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission

October 2025



Yearly Report



Yearly Report to Parliament

October 2025

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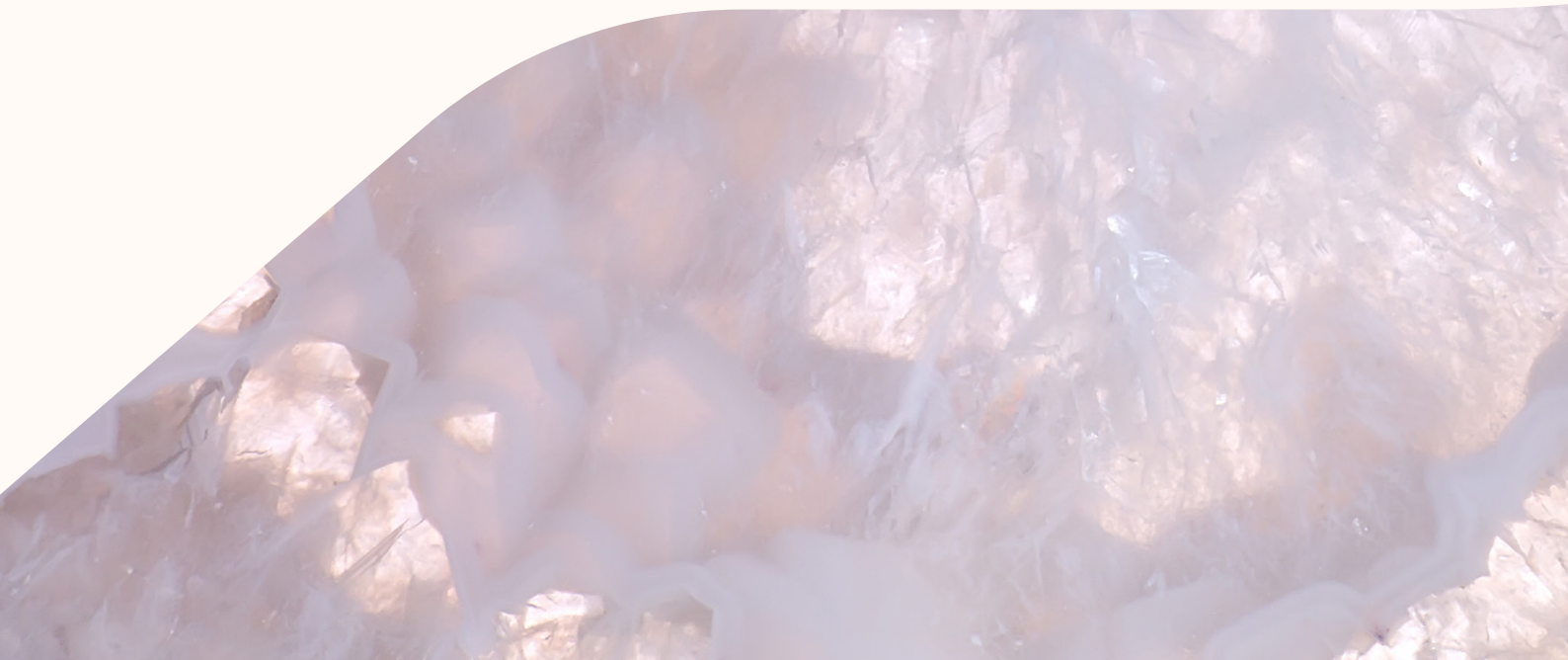


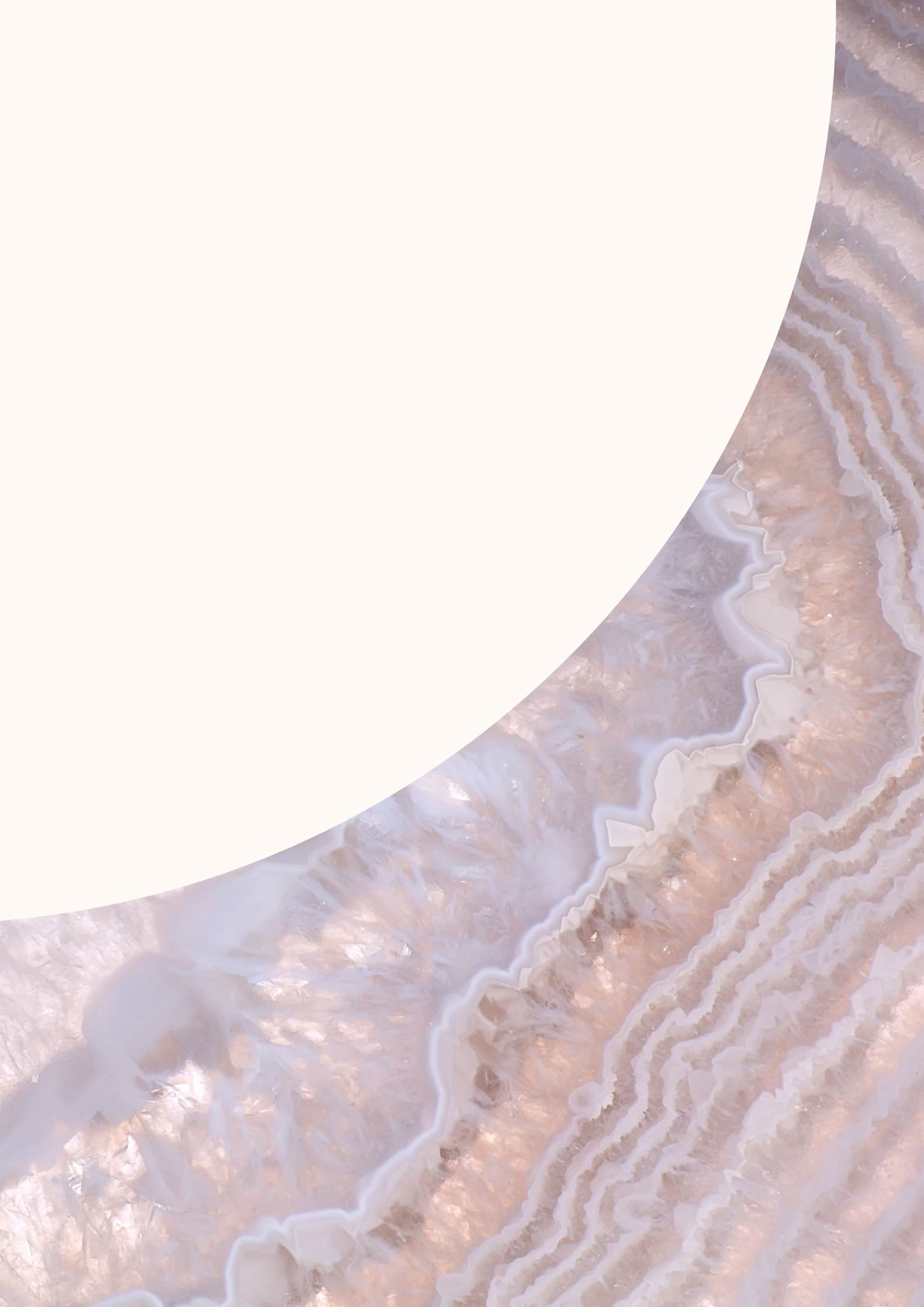
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Part 1

Introduction and executive summary





Commissioner's foreword

From crisis to action – building on Australia's path to 2050



Micaela Cronin

Australia's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner

October 2025

The pathway for ending gender-based violence exists. While we still have work to do, in many instances the evidence is clear. Our communities want to see real change. The question is whether we have the will to act differently.

In April 2024, the Prime Minister declared violence against women a national crisis (PMC 2024a). By that time, 28 women had already been killed by intimate partners or family members (Watson 2024). The Australian Institute of Criminology has since confirmed what many of us feared: 2023–24 saw a 35% increase in the number of women killed by intimate partners, following a 31% increase from the previous year (AIC 2025). Behind these statistics are shattered families, women, children and young people living with violence, and communities left questioning how we continue to fail those most in need of protection.



Yet as I reflect on this second year of reporting to Parliament, I am struck not by despair but by a profound sense of possibility – and urgency. The gap between what we know needs to be done and what – and most critically how – we are implementing at scale has never been more apparent. This report identifies the specific actions needed to bridge that gap and highlights the work that is already underway.

As we come towards the end of the first Action Plan, 3 years into the 10-year *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (National Plan) (DSS 2022), we are at a critical juncture. We have stood at crossroads like this before. The murders of Luke Batty in Victoria by his father, of Brisbane woman Hannah Clarke and her children Aaliyah, Laianah and Trey by their father, of Samantha Murphy, Rebecca Young and Hannah McGuire in Ballarat in the space of 2 months, and the 4 women killed by men in their lives in South Australia in one week – these events have catalysed waves of community advocacy and government reform. Each tragedy has generated comprehensive reports with evidence-based recommendations. Each has called for systemic change.

As Northern Territory Coroner Elisabeth Armitage observed in November 2024 as she handed down her findings into the tragic and preventable deaths of 4 Aboriginal women Kumarn Rubuntja, Kumanjayi Haywood, Ngeygo Ragurk and Miss Yunupingu, who were killed by men in their lives, ‘I have made 35 recommendations today and I don’t think any of them are radical. None of them are new’ (Northern Territory Coroners Court 2024).

The challenge is not generating solutions. It is creating the systems and accountability mechanisms to implement comprehensive and sustainable solutions in a way that enables agility in the face of complexity and emerging issues.

We have seen increasing government investment and action over the past decades. This includes the introduction of legislation, critically important research and data collection, and the ongoing development of the domestic, family and sexual violence (DFS) service system.

Australia’s first *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (DSS 2010) commenced in 2010. Since that time, 3 Royal Commissions have focused on domestic, family and sexual violence: Victoria’s Royal Commission into Family Violence was completed in 2015, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse’s final report was submitted in 2017, and the most recent, the South Australian Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, concluded in August this year.

The Commission’s analysis of more than 1,000 recommendations across 8 major royal commissions, inquiries, coronial inquests and reviews reveals strikingly consistent recommendations, which are echoed throughout this report.

In 2020 the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs conducted an inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence. They found that ‘Governments across Australia came together in 2009 to establish the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*. Many achievements have flowed from the National Plan. It is clear that the National Plan has not achieved its objective of a significant and sustained

The challenge is not generating solutions. It is creating the systems and accountability mechanisms to implement comprehensive and sustainable solutions in a way that enables agility in the face of complexity and emerging issues.



reduction in violence against women and their children. ... It is clearly not for want of trying' (House of Representatives on Social and Legal Affairs 2021 ix).

The committee published its report on 1 April 2021 and made 88 comprehensive recommendations. These influenced the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*. Many of the recommendations are mirrored in other inquiries and reviews, detailed in later chapters.

We have made domestic, family and sexual violence a national priority. A national cabinet meeting was called in the wake of community outrage at a horrific spate of domestic and family violence homicides at the end of 2023 and beginning of 2024. On 1 May 2024, the Prime Minister announced a Rapid Review into Prevention Approaches (Rapid Review). The Rapid Review final report was released 24 August 2024 (PMC 2024a), and made a series of concise and targeted recommendations, which are highlighted throughout this report.

We now have both a grave responsibility and an opportunity we must not waste. There is political will across all governments. There is a national focus through the National Cabinet and leadership from the Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council. While there are clearly areas that need further investment, we have seen dramatic increasing in funding.



We now need a razor-sharp focus on coordinated, accountable and agile delivery – to move beyond fragmented responses to embrace comprehensive, community-led systems change.

What the evidence shows

The Commission's engagement across the past year has reinforced 5 critical insights that must shape our next Action Plan:

1. Prevention must begin in childhood.

More than 80,000 educators have been trained across regional and metropolitan schools and now use trauma-informed education models. This demonstrates that when children learn emotional intelligence alongside academic skills, they accelerate their learning while developing the relationship capabilities that prevent violence. We need a generation that grows up knowing love without fear, identity without shame and power without violence.

2. The most effective solutions come from those most affected by violence.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, people living with disabilities, LGBTIQ+SB communities and multicultural communities have been developing sophisticated responses to violence for generations. Yet they remain largely excluded from decision-making at critical points. This is not about giving people a voice – they already have voices. It is about those in power learning to listen and respond in a systemic way.

3. Our systems must stop working in silos.

When child protection, family law, health services and justice systems operate separately, people fall through gaps that are too often exploited to cause harm. The segregation and siloing that characterises too many of our responses enables violence against the most vulnerable.

4. Our institutions must move from control to care.

Too many of our institutions – from hospitals to police stations to aged care facilities – operate from mindsets that replicate the very power dynamics that enable violence. When someone in crisis calls for help, they should be met with care, not force or judgment.

5. Safety must be a right, not a privilege.

Currently, safety often depends on luck – having the right postcode, the right support network, the ability to navigate complex systems. We must move beyond seeing people as 'vulnerable' and instead recognise that our systems often create vulnerability.



The path forwards

This report outlines concrete recommendations that can accelerate progress if implemented with the urgency this crisis demands. These are not new ideas requiring years of development – they are evidence-based solutions ready for implementation.

We must immediately commence the next Action Planning process. This includes embedding shared decision-making from the outset, not as a postscript. The second Action Plan must be a living mechanism that actively engages all governments, is updated regularly against evidence and emerging needs, with measurable targets and transparent and regular public reporting on progress.

We must establish a Commonwealth implementation and delivery oversight mechanism that provides quarterly reporting dashboards to Cabinet, ensures DFSV remains a priority for Secretaries of all departments, and drives cross-government coherence across all relevant national plans.

We must be accountable to children and young people through a DFSV Youth Advisory Council that provides both input to the Action Planning process and accountability during implementation.

We must implement the directions from the Rapid Review on engaging men and boys. This includes establishing a national, coordinated approach to healthy masculinities and violence prevention, and developing a national response to online misogyny and radicalisation.

We must strengthen the Commission itself as a statutory authority. This includes expanded powers to gather timely information, data and evidence to enable the Commission to monitor and assess progress and outcomes of the National Plan. We also need to consolidate the role of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) as the national evidence convenor.

The choice before us

We can choose to implement these recommendations with the urgency this crisis demands.

We can choose to embed lived experience voices in decision-making from the outset.

We can choose to ensure shared decision-making is embedded and drives real, suitably resourced change.

The National Plan commits us to ending violence against women and children in one generation. We have 7 years remaining within the life of this plan to demonstrate this commitment.

The recommendations in this report bring together the roadmap, which many others have already articulated.

What gives me hope is that our biggest challenges are completely within our control to change.

Government institutions, policies and systems can be changed by governments – and there are passionate people in every institution working hard to bring about these changes.

What also gives me hope is that as a system, we are embracing accountability. In that spirit, I look forwards to the government publicly responding to this yearly report by addressing each of our recommendations and expediting implementation.

The question is not whether we can create a future where all Australians live free from violence. The question is whether we choose to.

Micaela Cronin

Australia's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner

October 2025

Lived Experience Advisory Council Co-Chair's foreword



The past 12 months have seen shocking rates of domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) across the country. In 2023–24, 46 women and 9 men were killed by their intimate partner, and 6 children were killed by a parent (Miles and Bricknell 2025).

Children remain profoundly affected by this violence, yet access to DFSV services is limited, and system barriers often keep them in harmful situations. Aboriginal homicides remain alarmingly high, with 20% of female intimate partner homicide

victims being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women (ADRVN and ANROWS 2022). Culturally and linguistically diverse communities face similar barriers to support, including language, cultural stigma and limited access to culturally safe services.

Reports of sexual violence are at unprecedented levels, with a 10% increase since 2023 (ABS 2024). People with disabilities face particular challenges, with women with a disability 3 times more likely than men to experience intimate partner violence (AIHW 2022). For LGBTIQ+SB people, 52% report experiencing sexual violence in both childhood and adulthood (Salter et al. 2024). These disparities between vulnerable groups and the wider population continue to grow, highlighting the urgent need to address intersecting vulnerabilities and ensure that all communities – including children – have access to the support they need.

DFSV is a community issue – and communities hold the solutions. The Lived Experience Advisory Council (LEAC) ensures that these voices are not only heard by all Australians but are recognised as experts in this space, holding key seats at the decision-making table, shaping policies and actions that create real, lasting change, and playing a pivotal role in holding government, the sector and the community to account.



Leading the LEAC comes with challenges. By naming these challenges, we honour the journey, strengthen our purpose and lay the foundation for the council to continually improve and achieve greater outcomes.

The first year and a half has been about building this foundation. Much of the work happens behind the scenes – necessary, deliberate and often invisible. Establishing relationships, creating meaningful partnerships, and providing advice on critical issues has been slower than the urgency demands; this is something LEAC is committed to improving.

As a proud Aboriginal woman, I carry the expectation to engage with my community regularly, ensuring as many voices as possible are heard and represented at the table. We are a very diverse population, and it is difficult to do this justice when there are only 2 female Aboriginal members of the council. I know that other members experience similar challenges in different ways. To uphold our integrity and respect within our communities, and to avoid the stress or backlash that comes from feeling compromised, we need to explore new ways of working.

Moving forwards, we commit to reflecting, learning and improving – so each step is stronger than the last. Representing the voice of community carries deep responsibility. Serving on the inaugural council during a time of national crisis has heightened this responsibility, strengthening our commitment to meaningful change and creating opportunities for lived experience voices to shape decisions with lasting impact.

As the inaugural group, we have a vision for the council to set the standard for best practice, openly sharing what works – and what does not. We challenge ad hoc approaches that risk token consultations and little real change. We explore new ways of doing things, seeking opportunities for voices that have been excluded or minimised to hold equal power and bring new ideas to the table. We see diversity as a strength, and each of us has witnessed its transformative power in the work we have done together.

This work requires asking difficult questions. As Co-Chair, I have challenged the group and the Commission to be guided not by expectation or precedent, but by the communities we represent. We ask: What is our role? What do our communities need from us? How can we create meaningful, lasting change now while building a firm path for the future – change that saves lives and reduces lifelong harm?

What we know is that all work cannot sit with people experiencing violence if we are going to significantly improve the situation. Resources must also be directed to those using violence so that this harm stops. We must go upstream to the problem rather than continually dealing with the symptoms. In all my years working in this space, and through my own personal experiences, I have not met a single person who was abusive to their family members who had not experienced trauma – many of them victims of DFSV themselves. This does not in any way excuse their behaviour, but it tells us that if we intervene early and provide support as soon as possible, we can prevent harm from being perpetuated.

As I finish my term as the inaugural Co-Chair, it has been a huge honour to hold this position and to work alongside such dedicated, knowledgeable and generous people. My hope is that I have encouraged members to be bold, to ask the difficult questions and to never settle for the status quo. DFSV is a huge challenge, but it is not insurmountable. Together, by listening to lived experience, acting early and addressing the root causes, we can create meaningful change – change that saves lives, strengthens communities, and builds a safer future for all Australians. Nothing changes when nothing changes. It is through our courage to act that we can shape a better future.

Alison Scott

Co-Chair, Lived Experience Advisory Council, Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission

October 2025

About this report

This report is the Commission's second yearly report to Parliament and provides direction for priority activities over the next 12 months to work towards the objectives of the National Plan. Case studies have been provided by jurisdictions to highlight examples of effective programs or projects being implemented that demonstrate positive outcomes for communities. In many examples, the evidence of impact and outcomes is still being evaluated.

The Commission requires timely information, data and evidence to effectively assess progress and outcomes under the National Plan. This report draws on data that was available to the Commission through a range of sources at the time of its preparation.

In order to exercise our functions and objectives, the Commission engages with many stakeholders. We consider the views and needs of different groups within the community.

By putting lived experience perspectives alongside what we know from data, research, practice and sector knowledge, this second report to parliament forms a critical component in fulfilling the Commission's role to provide independent advice to government and the community (refer to Figure 1).

This included engaging with people with lived and living experience of domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSX) from across the priority populations identified within the National Plan:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children
- women and children living with a disability
- women and children from culturally diverse, migrant and refugee backgrounds
- children and young people
- LGBTIQ+SB people
- older women
- women and children living in rural, regional and remote communities.

The Commission also recognises the importance of engagement with men and boys who experience violence and sexual assault and on people who use or are at risk of using violence.

This report discusses the needs of all these priority populations across a range of themes. It provides specific examples of people from these priority populations, including through personas and case studies.

In recognition of the unique needs and current activities in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples under the National Plan, this report focuses on reporting on these activities.



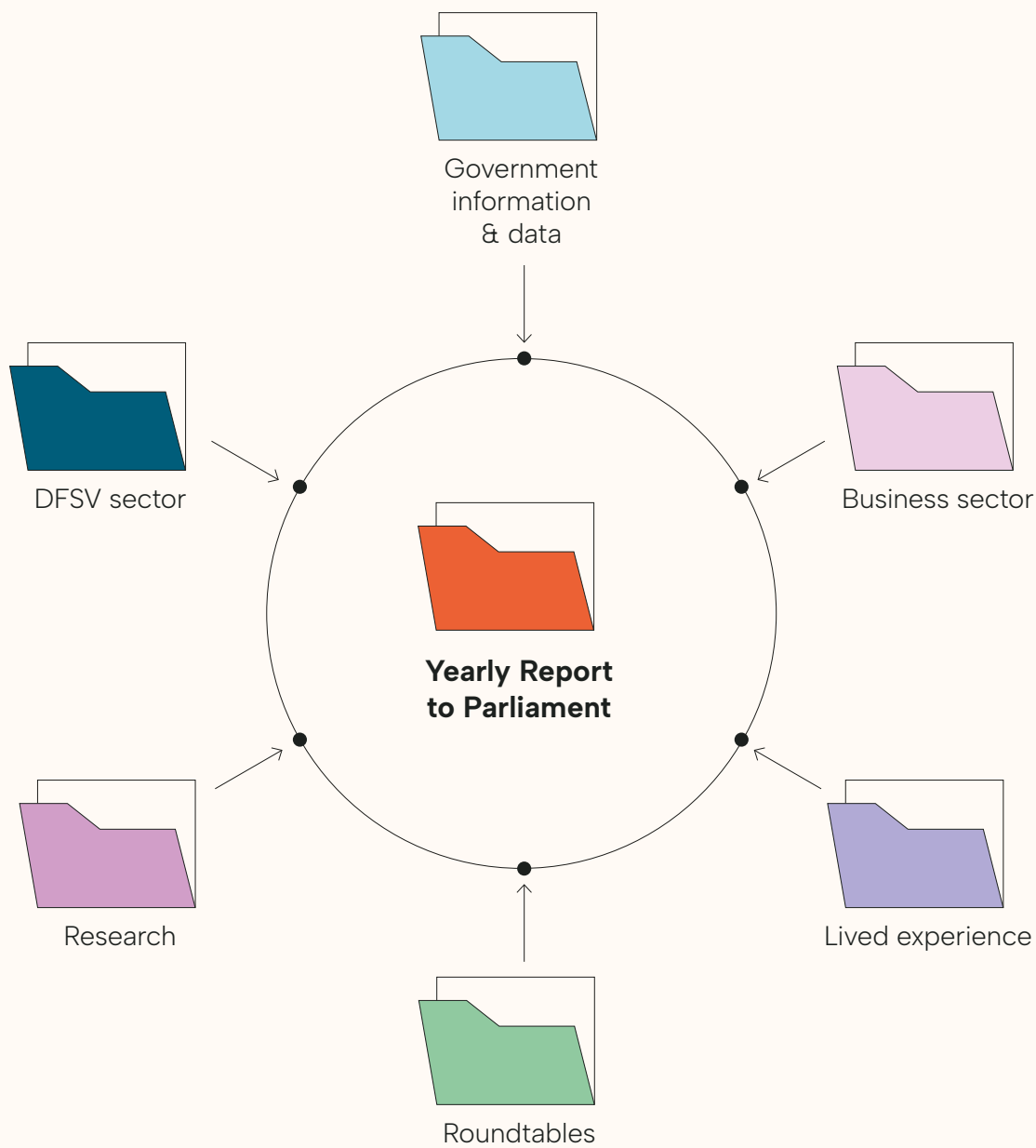


Figure 1: Sources of information for this report

Acknowledgment of Country

The Commission acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country through Australia on which we gather, live, work and stand. We acknowledge all traditional custodians, and their Elders past and present, and pay our respects to their continuing connection to land, waters and community.

The Commission acknowledges and honours the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to end family violence and is committed to partnering with First Nations people in this work.

We acknowledge that we have a great deal to learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of working. The Aboriginal concept of Dadirri informs our approach (Atkinson 2002). Dadirri refers to a deep contemplative process of listening to one another in reciprocal relationships. The word Dadirri is of the Ngangikurungkurr people of the Daly area of the Northern Territory. The activity of Dadirri has an equivalent in many other First Nations communities across Australia.

About the artist

Rachael Sarra's vibrant and varied creative practice embodies her experience as a proud mixed race, First Nations woman from Goreng Goreng Country. Driven by a belief that art and design are vital to communication, connection and culture, Rachael invites us to see the world through her eyes with bold colours, dynamic contours and thought provoking conversations.





Acknowledgment of people with lived and living experience of domestic, family and sexual violence

The Commission acknowledges the individual and collective expertise of people with experience of domestic, family and sexual violence. The Commission recognises their vital contribution at all levels, and values the courage of those who share this unique perspective for the purpose of learning and growing together to achieve better outcomes for all.

The Commission values the unique experiences, protective factors and strengths of children and young people and acknowledges they are also affected by domestic, family and sexual violence.



Support is available

Support for domestic, family and sexual violence is available

If you, or someone you know is in immediate danger, please contact the police on Triple Zero (000).

If you or someone you know needs help, the following services are available to assist.

- 1800 Respect is a 24-hour free information and counselling service for people impacted by domestic, family or sexual violence. They can be contacted on 1800 737 732, 7 days a week or www.1800respect.org.au (telephone and online crisis support).
- MensLine Australia is a free telephone and online counselling service offering support for Australian men. They can be contacted on 1300 789 978 or you can visit www.mensline.org.au
- Lifeline is a 24-hour telephone crisis support service. They can be contacted on 13 11 14 or you can visit www.lifeline.org.au
- 13YARN is a 24-hour national crisis support line that offers a confidential one-on-one yarning opportunity with a Lifeline-trained Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They can be contacted on 13 92 76 or you can visit www.13yarn.org.au
- QLife is a free peer support and referral service for LGBTIQ+SB people via telephone and webchat. They can be contacted on 1800 184 527 between 3pm and 12am, 7 days a week or you can visit [www.qlife.org.au](http://www qlife.org.au)
- Kids Helpline is a 24-hour free counselling service for young people aged between 5 and 25. They can be contacted on 1800 55 1800 or you can visit www.kidshelpline.com.au
- Elder Abuse Helpline is a free service that can provide referrals and assist anyone who experiences, witnesses or suspects that an older person is being abused. They are available 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday at 1300 651 192.
- Suicide Call Back Service offers free professional counselling services and can be contacted on 1300 659 467 or you can visit www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au
- Beyondblue is a 24-hour free mental health service and can be contacted on 1300 224 636 or you can visit www.beyondblue.org.au Need help in your language?



Need help in your language?
Call 1800 512 451 and ask for an interpreter.

Executive summary

Overview

This report presents critical recommendations to set Australia up for success during the 7 years remaining in the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (the National Plan). Immediate action is required over the next 12 months to keep building the systems that will drive implementation and deliver better outcomes.

Recent royal commissions, inquiries, coronial inquests and reviews that focus on domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) have delivered strikingly consistent recommendations.

This has resulted in significant investment, systemic reform and political will, including exceptional examples of effective work and a commitment from the sector to improve outcomes for people experiencing DFSV.

However, there is still a lot of work to do to eliminate gender-based violence within a generation.

Key findings

The success of the National Plan to end violence against women and children by 2050 depends on the design, implementation, monitoring and review of the next Action Plan. The Commission recommends that the Commonwealth, with all states and territories, should immediately start developing the next Action Plan. This should be a live planning mechanism that brings coordinated and focused attention to agreed priorities.

Prevention must begin in childhood. We must have a razor-sharp and united focus on addressing children's and young people's needs. This means centring what children and young people tell us they need, and listen to them about their experiences of change as we implement. Too many times, our plans refer to the specific and unique needs of children, and yet we fail to implement programs or change systems. We need to invest in creating the conditions for a generation that grows up knowing love without fear, identity without shame and power without violence.



Priority recommendations

Immediate action required

Action planning process: Begin the next action planning cycle immediately for commencement by end of 2026. The Action Plan must be a living plan with regular reviews every 12–18 months and transparent public reporting. It must be co-designed with relevant stakeholders from all jurisdictions. This includes key knowledge holders: lived experience voices, the sector, policy leaders and academics.

Driving coordinated implementation: Establish a Commonwealth implementation and delivery mechanism with responsibility for cross-government coordination, quarterly Cabinet reporting dashboards and ensuring DFSV remains a priority on the Secretaries Board agenda.

Informing and overseeing implementation: We must strengthen the Commission itself as a statutory authority. This includes expanded powers to gather timely information, data and evidence to enable the Commission to monitor and assess progress and outcomes of the National Plan. We also need to consolidate the role of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) as the national evidence convenor.

Strategic focus areas

Embedding lived experience: The Commission's Lived Experience Advisory Council will lead development of an engagement framework and toolkit and evaluation framework, while the Commission conducts a national audit of lived experience engagement mechanisms to establish effectiveness metrics.

Children and young people: Establish a DFSV Youth Advisory Council to embed young voices in action planning, drive increased activities, amend service contracts to count activities addressing children's needs and expand funding for programs targeting unaccompanied young people and child sexual exploitation prevention.

Men and boys engagement: Implement a national, coordinated approach to engaging men and boys on healthy masculinities, develop targeted responses to online misogyny and radicalisation, and expedite national standards for men's behaviour change programs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: Embed shared decision-making in governance structures, the four Priority Reforms under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, increase long-term flexible investment in Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) and urgently invest in data to monitor Closing the Gap Target 13.

People with disabilities who experience violence and use violence: Prioritise learning from the experience of people living with a disability, including people who experience violence and those who use violence. Progress future-focused work under the National Plan and release the *Disability lens to the First Action Plan* in 2025 to ensure we can act to eliminate violence for women living with a disability and to meet desired outcomes of the National Plan.

Sexual violence: Include a roadmap for implementing Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) recommendations (ALRC 2025a) as well as actions and investments to progress sexual violence reforms outside the scope of the ALRC inquiry with clear timeframes and responsible agencies, while focusing specifically on child sexual exploitation prevention within education systems.

Economic and systems abuse: Undertake systematic mapping of recommendations across reviews and inquiries, particularly addressing misuse of family law, tax and child support systems, with clear signposts for delivery timelines and responsible agencies.

Institutional strengthening

Research and evidence: Build on the leadership position of ANROWS in relation to practice-led, lived experience informed evidence while taking the role of system convenor to set national research priorities and align efforts across jurisdictions.

Funding framework: Develop a national funding mapping framework with agreed definitions, consistent categories and embedded reporting in bilateral agreements to enable visibility of DFSV funding nationally.

Workforce development: Activate the health system as a prevention lever, continue to grow specialist DFSV workforce capacity and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specialist workforce, and upskill migrant and multicultural organisations for DFSV competency.

Time for transformational action

The Commission's recommendations represent an urgent call for coordinated, immediate action to maximise the value of the work that has already been undertaken and the foundations that have been laid –

and to drive real change in the remaining 7 years of the National Plan. Success requires genuine commitment to lived experience engagement, strategic focus on priority cohorts, robust implementation mechanisms and sustained investment in capability building across all levels of government and the community sector.

The time for incremental change has passed – Australia needs transformational action now to end violence against women and children. This means focusing on systems that keep women, children and communities safe – at the same time prioritising action to end violence, predominantly men's violence.

Recommendations

The Commission makes the following recommendations to ensure progress towards the outcomes under the National Plan. The Commission will report on progress of these recommendations in the next yearly report. The Commission welcomes all agencies to respond publicly on their activities.

Effective lived experience engagement

Recommendation 1

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission's Lived Experience Advisory Council will lead the development of a Lived Experience Engagement Framework and Toolkit for agencies and sector stakeholders to guide safe, respectful and productive engagement with people with lived experience.



Recommendation 2

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission, in collaboration with the Lived Experience Advisory Council, will develop a Lived Experience Evaluation Framework for agencies and sector stakeholders to implement to assess the integrity and effectiveness of lived experience consultations.



Recommendation 3



The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission will undertake an audit of lived experience engagement mechanisms across the country and report in next year's report to Parliament on what is in place nationally, and establish metrics to report against effectiveness of engagement processes.

Effective implementation and achieving outcomes: from evidence to action

Recommendation 4



The Department of Social Services is currently developing the National Plan Evaluation Strategy and Information Development Plan. This work should be strengthened by incorporating consultation with the DFSV Commission and its Lived Experience Advisory Council, sector stakeholders and governments. The consultation and feedback process should also be used to review and update the current Outcomes Framework and Performance Management Plan.

Recommendation 5



The Commonwealth should establish an Implementation and Delivery Oversight Mechanism with responsibility for Action Plan delivery and cross-government coordination. This should:

- map and align relevant Commonwealth Plans, across all government portfolios, as to how they contribute to the National Plan (i.e. Safe and Supported – National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the National Housing and Homelessness plan, Australia's Disability Strategy, National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People, etc.) to ensure cross-government coherence
- embed lived experience, community leadership and sector representation into governance for Action Planning design, implementation and review
- provide quarterly reporting dashboards to Cabinet to track Action Plan progress
- ensure that DFSV is an ongoing priority on the Secretaries Board agenda and reflected in their KPIs.

Recommendation 6



The Commonwealth to immediately commence the next National Plan Action Planning cycle, with a living plan in place by the end of 2026.

The Action Planning process needs to:

- establish mechanisms to include all pertinent stakeholders in action planning activities including but not limited to lived experience, priority population representation, the specialist services sector and academia
- embed the needs and perspectives of priority populations identified in the National Plan as core elements with clear targets and measurable outcomes
- become a Living Plan, with a structured stocktake every 12–18 months, regularly updated against evidence and emerging needs
- bring all governments together on an agreed short list of shared priorities
- engage and bring into alignment other relevant national plans
- build in evaluation including measurable targets, and consolidated year three evaluation
- share findings and outcomes with the DFSV Commission and ANROWS, which should be released publicly to ensure transparency. Where evaluations are unable to be shared publicly as they contain sensitive information, a summary of the findings and insights should be published.

Recommendation 7



The Commonwealth should work with states and territories and in partnership with the Commission's Lived Experience Advisory Council to develop a national funding mapping framework to enable visibility and reporting of DFSV funding and expenditure nationally to inform and guide ongoing Action planning. The framework needs to:

- establish agreed definitions of DFSV funding
- create consistent categories for recording DFSV funding to enable services to report on DFSV work undertaken in other funding streams (e.g. homelessness, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, health) that contributed to improved outcomes for people experiencing DFSV
- embed reporting requirements into bilateral agreements under Federation Funding Agreements
- capture actual expenditure for reporting.



Recommendation 8



As outlined in the Rapid Review, the Commonwealth, with state and territory governments, should expedite a needs analysis to determine unmet demand in DFSV crisis response, recovery and healing (excluding police), with the view to develop a pathway to funding demand. This should take into consideration the work being undertaken by Safe and Equal *Measuring Family Violence Service Demand* project and consider:

- Aboriginal community-controlled organisations capacity and capability (the National Agreement on Closing the Gap)
- funding for priority populations and community-led solutions and responses
- workforce growth, and increased stability, reduced burn out
- learning from activities and sharing of those learnings across the sector.

Recommendation 9



The Commonwealth should expand the functions and powers of the National Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission and establish it as a statutory authority (in line with the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs and Rapid Review recommendations). The Commonwealth should empower the Commission to compel all government agencies to provide data and information to enable monitoring of the implementation and funding associated with the National Plan.

Recommendation 10



The Commonwealth should empower ANROWS to build on their national leadership role to:

- build practice-led, lived experience informed evidence that responds directly to practice needs and communities' experience
- bring together and disseminate evidence, learnings and good practice models from across all 8 jurisdictions
- take a lead role as a system convenor of evidence – setting national research priorities, identifying gaps and aligning efforts across jurisdictions.

The workforce implementation challenge: building comprehensive response capacity

Recommendation 11

The Commonwealth should implement Rapid Review recommendations 11 and 14 in full to strengthen the specialist workforce and improve the capacity, cultural capability and safety of adjacent workforces.



Recommendation 12

All governments must invest in growing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specialist workforce in relevant sectors (including but not limited to health, justice, education, housing and policing).



Recommendation 13

All governments must ensure that all workforce development activity includes resourcing the workforce that works with men and boys, across the life course (e.g. respectful relationships, men behaviour change, fathering, early intervention, Aboriginal healing etc.).



Recommendation 14

As part of the Action Planning process, all governments must identify strategies to upskill migrant and multicultural organisations to become more DFSV competent and address issues of cultural safety and race within DFSV organisations.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Recommendation 15

The Commonwealth must, as an urgent priority, invest in data to monitor Closing the Gap Target 13.



Recommendation 16

The Commonwealth should ensure governance established to oversee the implementation of *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence* must embed shared decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, leaders and communities.



Recommendation 17



As the key mechanism for government accountability to the National Plan, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission should be empowered to work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to increase consistency of monitoring across government efforts and ensure amplification of real-time feedback into the Action Planning processes.

Recommendation 18



The Commonwealth should increase long-term, flexible investment in Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have authority in designing, delivering and evaluating responses to DFSV.

Children and Young people

Recommendation 19



The Commonwealth should establish a national Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Youth Advisory Council to ensure the voices and perspectives of young people are embedded in the national Action Planning process and provide an accountability mechanism during the implementation of the Action Plan.

Recommendation 20



The Commonwealth should work with states and territories to amend existing and develop new service models, including through amending contracts, to ensure that services are designed and reformed to directly address the needs of children and young people. Activity directly addressing children and young people should be counted and reported on, with the objective of understanding levels of need, highlighting gaps and ensuring that children and young people's needs are met in timely and effective ways.

Recommendation 21



All governments should expand funding for programs that specifically address the needs of children and young people, including programs that meet the needs of unaccompanied young people, and programs to address child sexual exploitation.

Men and boys

Recommendation 22



The Commonwealth should build on existing work to further implement the following directions outlined in the Rapid Review report:

- as part of the next Action Planning process establish a national, coordinated and co-designed approach to engaging with men and boys on healthy masculinities and violence prevention, with expertise across disciplines (health, education, technology)
- leverage available datasets, such as the Australian Institute of Family Studies *Ten to Men* study, on boys and men to measure healthy relationships and masculinities throughout men's life transitions to facilitate assessment of the effectiveness of responses
- develop a national response to the rise of online misogyny and radicalisation through targeted investment in research and programs
- expedite the establishment of National Men's Behaviour Change Program Standards and a quality assurance monitoring framework.

Recommendation 23



As an element of refreshed governance arrangements for the National Plan and for the *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan*, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Men's Advisory Body should be established.

Recommendation 24



The Commonwealth should build on existing work to further implement the following direction outlined in the Rapid Review report:

- develop a national response to the rise of online misogyny and radicalisation through targeted investment in research and programs.

Recommendation 25



The Commonwealth should build on existing work to further implement the following direction outlined in the Rapid Review report:

- expedite the establishment of National Men's Behaviour Change Program Standards and a quality assurance monitoring framework.



Combatting economic and systems abuse

Recommendation 26



The Commonwealth should work with states and territories to undertake the following activities as part of the ongoing National Plan Action Planning process:

- undertake a systemic mapping and consolidation exercise, drawing together recommendations across reviews and inquiries, identifying areas of overlap and reinforcing themes (e.g. misuse of family law, tax, and child support systems)
- align and translate these consolidated recommendations into specific, measurable actions under the forthcoming Action Plan ensuring reforms are not siloed or duplicated
- set clear signposts within the Action Plans that specify what will be delivered, timelines, milestones and the responsible agencies.

Recommendation 27



The Attorney-General's Department should instigate an independent audit of the family law system to identify and address the potential for systems abuse, including the use of section 102NA of the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth).

Sexual Violence

Recommendation 28



The Commonwealth should ensure the second Action Plan includes a roadmap for implementing recommendations from the Australian Law Reform Commission report including identifying timeframes and responsible government agencies.

Recommendation 29



The Department of Social Services, in partnership with the Attorney-General's Department, should ensure the Action Plan includes actions and investments to progress sexual violence reforms that lay outside the scope of the Australian Law Reform Commission inquiry, including a stronger focus on prevention, priority cohorts, specialist capacity and adjacent workforce capacity.

Recommendation 30



All governments should take a specific focus on child sexual exploitation, including prevention activities embedded within the education system, including a focus on addressing grooming and forced marriage.



The National Press Club of Australia

Photographer: Fernanda Pedroso



The Commission's year in review

One of the Commission's key roles is to ensure the voice of lived experience is heard and included alongside specialist domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) organisations, Commonwealth and jurisdictional governments and the broader DFSV sector. The Commission plays an integral role in enabling collaboration and coordination to ensure that all stakeholders work towards realising the outcomes desired from the National Plan.

The Commission undertakes a coordinated engagement and action approach that supports each of the Commission's 4 objectives:

- promote the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* commitment to end gender-based violence and monitoring impact
- amplify the voices of people with lived and living experience for meaningful engagement in shaping policy design and service delivery
- foster collaboration and coordination across government and communities to enhance connection and reduce fragmentation to improve outcomes
- provide strategic advice to inform strengthened policy and practice, and improved outcomes.

In the past year, the Commission has undertaken over 400 engagements.

Commission activities against its objectives



1. Promote the National Plan objectives to end gender-based violence and monitor impact

The Commission continues to have a very public presence through the media, social media, meetings and public events to promote the National Plan, while also prioritising an ongoing focus on data and research to monitor impact.

- The Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner continued to promote the National Plan across over 80 public speaking engagements in media, roundtables, conferences and other public forums.
- The Commission significantly increased its online presence through greater use of social media, updates to its website and the release of the podcast *Voices Towards 2050*, which promotes the National Plan.
- Almost 1 in 8 of the meetings held by the Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner related to data and research, a key mechanism in monitoring impact.
- 1 in 4 of all meetings undertaken were with specialist sector organisations, a key method to understanding what is happening in real time on the frontline.

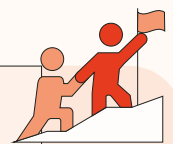


2. Amplify the voices of people with lived and living experience for meaningful engagement in shaping policy design and service delivery

Lived experience is central to the work of the Commission, which continues to refine its approach to lived experience engagement to maximise impact.

- The Commission hosted 7 formal meetings with the Commission's Lived Experience Advisory Council and held formal meetings with the Co-Chair. Council members participate in Commission working groups and regularly meet with Commission staff to inform their work and receive briefings and updates.
- The Commission's enquiries inbox received 249 emails, the majority of which related to lived experience of DFSV.
- The Commission continues to develop and implement new and better ways to incorporate lived experience advocates and their insights into its work, including taking a stronger lead role in the implementation of roundtables.
- Approximately 60% of all phone and email enquiries to the Commission relate to experiences of DFSV. The most common issues reported relate to inadequate police responses, family court and coercive control.
- The Commission engaged the Attorney-General's Lived Experience Expert Advisory Group to inform its response to the Australian Law Reform Commission's report (2025a).





3. Foster collaboration and coordination across government and community, to enhance connection and reduce fragmentation to improve outcomes

While roundtables continue to be an important mechanism for coordination and collaboration, a number of other approaches have been implemented.

- Working closely with specialist sector organisations continues to be a focus for the Commission to understand the challenges of service delivery and gain insights into what is happening at the frontline of responding to DFSV.
- The Commission held 5 national roundtables in the reporting period on: sustainable workforce, men and boys, jurisdictional governments, multicultural communities and an online forum on developing national standards for men's behaviour change programs.
- The Commission convened a meeting in March 2025, hosted by the Governor-General, with relevant federal Commissioners and Ambassadors on addressing DFSV.
- The Commission engaged deeply this year with federal government agencies to progress reforms across the DFSV sector, particularly with supporting briefing to the new Minister and Assistant Minister and new Department of Social Services (DSS) Secretary.



4. Provide strategic advice to inform strengthened policy and practice, and improved outcomes

The Commission's strategic advice to government is informed by its engagement with stakeholders, and this input is critical to improving action under the National Plan.

- The Commission continues to provide advice to federal and jurisdictional governments through formal and informal mechanisms.
- The Commission's *Yearly Report* remains its primary vehicle for providing strategic advice and reflecting the voices of the many people who have engaged with the Commission.
- The Commission engages with formal governance mechanisms across government, the non-government sector and lived experience in order to share lessons learned and other forms of advice across sectors.

Roundtables

The Commission held fewer roundtables this year than the previous year, primarily due to caretaker conventions surrounding the national election in May 2025. Roundtables and other similar mechanisms remain important engagement opportunities for the Commission.

In the past year, the Commission held 4 formal roundtables and one online forum, including:

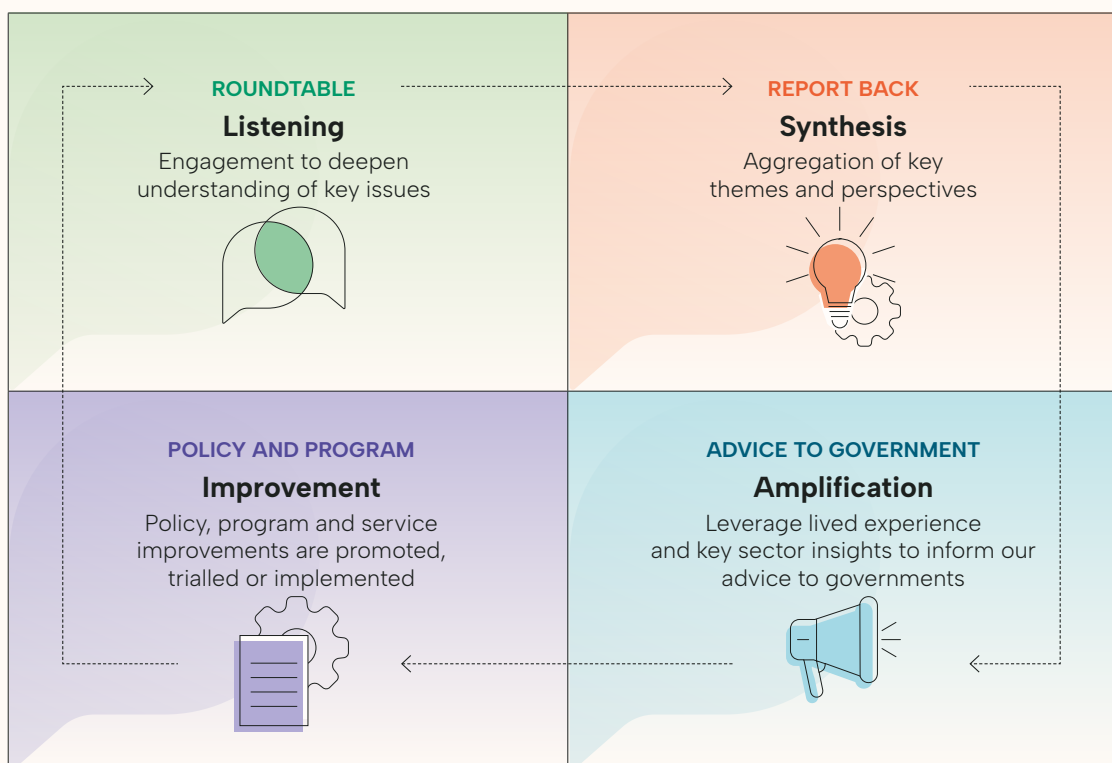
- roundtable on developing a sustainable workforce (September 2024)
- roundtable on men and boys (November 2024)
- roundtable with jurisdictional government representatives (February 2025)
- roundtable on addressing DFSV in multicultural communities (August 2025)
- online forum on developing national standards for men's behaviour change programs (August 2025).

The Commission has also established advisory groups to support the development and future delivery of roundtables in the policy areas of sexual violence and children and young people. These roundtables will be delivered in the coming months.

The Commission continues to refine its processes in the development and delivery of roundtables, including improvements to centring lived experience advocacy, ensuring diverse representation from priority populations and geographic locations, and improving delivery of hybrid meetings, where people can attend face to face or online, to maximise accessibility.

Ongoing development of the roundtable reporting processes works to ensure that the voices of participants, and their priorities and needs, are reflected as accurately and as impactfully as possible. These roundtable reports can be found on the DFSV Commission's website (www.dfsvc.gov.au).

How roundtables inform our work



2025 Data snapshot

Data is crucial to understanding the problem of gender-based violence, measuring our progress towards ending it, and informing decisions about funding, service design and delivery.



(National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 p. 27)

The DFSV Commission plays a central role in strengthening Australia's response to domestic, family and sexual violence by ensuring accountability and supporting improvements in how we collect, coordinate and use data. One of its key responsibilities is to monitor progress under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*. To do this, the Commission works with governments, researchers and service providers to ensure that data is consistent, comparable, and focused on outcomes that matter.

An integral function of the Commission is to support the development of a national evidence base on DFSV. This means identifying where major gaps exist – such as around service effectiveness, perpetration and priority groups – and working with partners to fill them. It also means amplifying the voices of people with lived experience, ensuring that data reflects not just numbers but the realities of those most affected. Through its monitoring, reporting and accountability functions, the Commission monitors and reports on progress under the National Plan. Importantly, the Commission's role is not only technical but cultural: embedding a practice of evidence-based decision making, while respecting principles such as Indigenous data sovereignty.

What we know

In 2025, DFSV remains a significant social, economic and health issue in Australia, with devastating consequences for individuals, families and communities. Despite decades of policy attention, the data shows that the problem is both widespread and deeply entrenched. The data paints a picture of a problem that is enduring, gendered, and unevenly distributed across the population. Young women, children, Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander peoples, and other marginalised groups experience disproportionate rates of harm. While there have been some shifts in patterns, Australia in 2025 still faces a profound challenge: domestic, family and sexual violence continues to undermine safety, equality and wellbeing, demanding sustained prevention, targeted support for those at greatest risk, and systemic reforms to break intergenerational cycles of harm.

Headline data



**1 in 6 women
and 1 in 18 men**

have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or previous cohabiting partner since the age of 15.

**1 in 5 women
and 1 in 16 men**

have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.

1 in 8

people aged 18 years or over witnessed violence towards a parent by a partner before the age of 15.

1 in 3 men

have used emotional-type abuse, physical violence and/or sexual abuse against an intimate partner as an adult.

**23% of women
and 14% of men**

have experienced emotional abuse by a current or previous cohabiting partner since the age of 15.

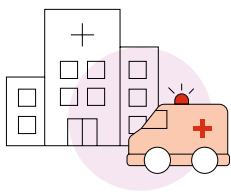
**16% of women
and 7.8% of men**

have experienced economic abuse from a current or previous cohabiting partner since the age of 15.

Almost 1 in 2

women who had experienced physical and/or sexual violence from a current partner did not seek advice or support about the violence.

In 2023–24



**46 females
and 9 males**

were killed by their intimate partner.

**6 incidents
of filicide**

(a parent killing their child).

76%

of all domestic and family violence hospitalisations were for females.

79%

of offenders proceeded against by police for at least one family and domestic violence offence were male.

93%

of all offenders recorded by police with a principal offence of sexual assault were male.

39%

of all people who received a specialist homelessness service had experienced domestic and family violence.

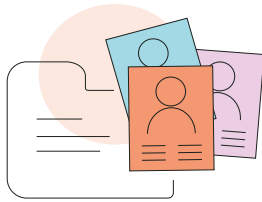
Half

of all hospitalisations that involved treatment for assault were due to domestic and family violence.



What we know

In 2024



81%

of victims of sexual assault recorded by police were female.

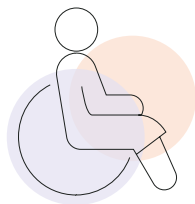
Around 2 in 5

of all sexual assaults recorded by police were family and domestic violence related.

86%

of recorded victims of domestic and family violence related sexual assaults were female.

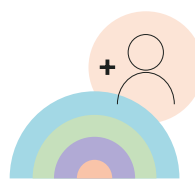
Women with disability



3x more likely

Women with a disability are 3x more likely than men with a disability to have experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 15.

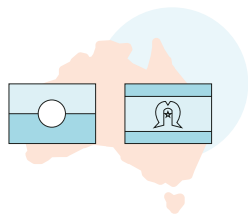
LGBTIQA+SB



52% of LGBTIQA+SB

survey participants reported experiencing sexual violence in both childhood and adulthood.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



Between 67% and 74%

In 2024, between 67% and 74% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of assault were recorded by police as domestic and family violence related.

Between 36% and 47%

In 2024, between 36% and 47% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims of sexual assault were recorded by police as domestic and family violence related.

20%

In 2023–24, 20% of all female victims of intimate partner homicide were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander females.

27x more likely

In 2023–2024 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were 27x more likely to be hospitalised for family violence than non-Indigenous women.

Children and young people



In 2021, of those surveyed:

Around 3 in 10

had experienced sexual abuse by any person

Around 3 in 10

had experienced emotional abuse by a parent or caregiver

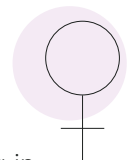
1 in 11

had experienced neglect by a parent or caregiver

2 in 5

had experienced exposure to domestic violence

Older women



15.9%

of older women living in community have experienced elder abuse in the previous year.

What has changed?

Since the 2024 Yearly Report was released, Australia continues to face persistent challenges in addressing DFSV with recent data indicating both long-term trends and alarming short-term spikes. While rates of female intimate partner homicide have decreased over the longer term, 2023–24 saw a sudden and concerning increase. Sexual assault also remains a major concern with DFSV-related sexual assaults on the rise, highlighting ongoing risks for women within their own homes. Other indicators of DFSV impacts show similarly troubling patterns. Among clients of specialist

homelessness services, the proportion experiencing DFV has steadily increased, reflecting the continued and growing intersection between violence and housing insecurity. Taken together, these data illustrate a complex picture: although long-term trends may show declines in some areas, short-term spikes and rising victimisation rates signal persistent risks, uneven progress, and the urgent need for targeted prevention, early intervention, and robust support systems for those affected by DFSV.

Intimate partner homicide (2023–24)



Compared with

2022–23: **Increased by 12**

The number of intimate partner homicide incidents perpetrated against a female increased by 12 from 34 to 46.

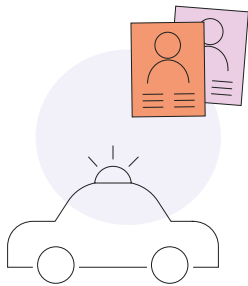
Increased by 5

The number of intimate partner homicide incidents perpetrated against a male increased by 5 from 4 to 9.

This is the **largest single year increase** in female intimate partner homicide in over a decade.

However, rates of intimate partner homicide perpetrated against a female have decreased over the longer term.

Sexual assault



In 2024:

40,087 victims

there were 40,087 victims of sexual assault recorded by police, increasing by 10% from 2023.

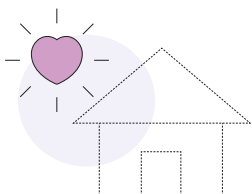
Highest rate recorded

The victimisation rate also increased from 136 to 147 victims per 100,000 persons, the highest rate recorded over 30 years.

16,281 victims

There were 16,281 victims of domestic and family violence related sexual assault recorded to police, increasing by 16% from 2023.

Homelessness



In 2023–24:

34% to 39%

Between 2011–12 and 2023–24, the proportion of specialist homelessness service clients who have experienced DFV increased from 34% to 39%.



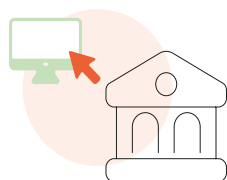
What we don't know

Australia's DFSV data landscape has grown over time, but it remains fragmented and incomplete. Data is currently drawn from a wide mix of population surveys, service systems, and research studies. Together, these sources give us important insights into prevalence, experiences of victim-survivors, and some aspects of service use. Yet significant blind spots remain. The data is often unable to be compared or linked across jurisdictions and sectors, and it tends to underrepresent key populations such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, children, people with disability, LGBTIQ+SB communities, migrant and refugee groups, and those living in rural or remote areas. Information on perpetrators is lacking, with limited

longitudinal evidence to understand patterns of offending or engagement with the justice system. Compounding these issues is the lack of timely data and an over reliance on 4-year national surveys to provide information and updates.

These challenges become more pressing when considered against the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*. It sets out an ambitious framework for measuring progress through outcomes and performance measures, however, due to key and critical data gaps, we cannot ascertain a clear picture of what change is occurring under the National Plan.

Extent and nature of DFSV



Unique forms

of violence specific to certain groups (e.g. migration-related abuse)

Coercive control

Systems abuse

Tactics

for perpetrating abuse (e.g. technology facilitated abuse)

Hidden impacts

(e.g. mental health and suicide deaths among people impacted by DFSV)

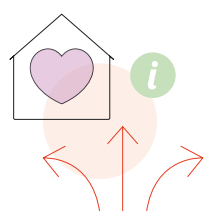
Pathways

into and out of DFSV

Changing nature

of use and experiences of DFSV

Services



Support

The range of health, welfare and other support services.

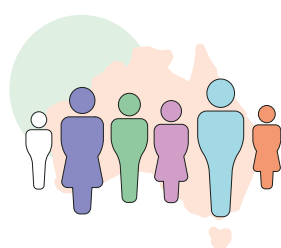
Quality

Information on the quality and integration of service responses.

Impacts

Service pathways, impacts and outcomes for victim-survivors, perpetrators and families.

How DFSV impacts select population groups



- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children
- Rural and remote women and children
- Children and young people
- Older women
- LGBTIQ+SB people
- People with disability
- Culturally and linguistically diverse, migrants and refugee women and children
- People who use violence

DFSV impacts on suicide, self-harm and mortality

Critical to addressing harm from domestic, family and sexual violence is building a clearer understanding of how it intersects with mental health, wellbeing, and suicidality. Lived experience advocates and services have highlighted this link, which is supported by emerging evidence showing the profound impact of DFSV on individuals. For example, in 2019 intimate partner violence was the second highest contributor to years of healthy life lost due to suicide and self-inflicted injuries among women (AIHW n.d.). A 2024 Coroners Court of Victoria report found that in 24.5% of suicides recorded between 2009–2016, there was evidence that the deceased had experienced family violence.

Work being undertaken by the Survivors and Mates Support Network (SAMSN) highlights the need for greater research and support for male survivors of child sexual abuse. Australian studies show male survivors experience suicidality at 10 times the rate of

community samples. The Australian Child Maltreatment Study (Haslam et al. 2023) found nearly 1 in 5 men reported experiences of child sexual abuse. Male victim-survivors of child sexual abuse are an under-researched population, despite evidence that they are often overrepresented in institutional and extra-familial contexts of abuse.

While improvements have been made in data collection in areas such as intimate partner homicide, significant gaps remain in our understanding of the full impact of DFSV on mortality. Strengthening the evidence base will support more effective prevention and recovery efforts and enable services and governments to respond to the scale of need. A clearer picture of how DFSV contributes to suicide and self-harm will inform the resources, interventions and healing supports required to end gender-based violence.



Policy context

Successive government inquiries and reviews agree on the policy priorities and government actions required to tackle domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV).

DFSV has been part of the policy landscape in Australia since Federation, with increased attention and focus since landmark reviews of the 1970s. Some of the critical service delivery infrastructure for safety has been in place since this time, with Elsie and Beryl women's refuges opening in Sydney in 1974 and Canberra in 1975, Sydney Rape Crisis Centre (now Full Stop) opening in Sydney in 1974, the first Aboriginal women's refuge in Victoria's Elizabeth Hoffman House in 1975 and the first funded sexual assault service opening at Queen Victoria Medical Centre (later Centre Against Sexual Assault) in Victoria in 1979. Governments have responded to calls for change from people with lived experience, activists and advocates, often catalysed and galvanised by specific incidents that escalate the community's sense of urgency for action.

Each of these inquiries has provided important lessons. Most deliver advice to government, while each experienced the challenge of grappling with the immensity and complexity of the problem. Tracking these inquiries across the past decades makes it clear how changes in government and community perceptions of DFSV have helped shape responses. The process of inquiring into such complex issues has also

improved over time, particularly with regard to engaging people with direct, lived experiences.

Sexual violence has gradually been integrated into the domestic and family violence landscape. There has also been an increase in attention to children and young people, heightened awareness of the systems as enactors of harm, recognition of diverse experiences in policy design, a persistent need to grapple with accountability for those who perpetrate harm, and a growing understanding of our shared responsibility for healing and recovery.

Even considering these changes, it is nevertheless remarkable that over the past 15 years and over 1,000 individual recommendations by independent and government inquiries, a series of themes has emerged as focus areas for government. Consistent priority policy areas have included:

- institutional safeguarding across all vulnerable populations
- cultural safety for First Nations peoples
- prevention of systems abuse
- action on economic abuse
- combatting technology-facilitated abuse
- a need for specific action on sexual violence
- prevention efforts targeting men and boys.

Refer to Part 4 for a timeline of independent and government inquiries.

The enduring nature of these policy priorities is educative. It shows not only that there is strong evidence for well-established interventions, but also that our efforts in implementation have not yet achieved the changes we aspire to.

Solutions proposed for government have been just as consistent, with successive reviews recommending:

- sustained engagement of people with lived and living experience
- whole-of-government action and accountability
- increased and sustained investment in specialist and generalist services
- robust and transparent evaluation which contributes to evidence-based policy
- independent monitoring mechanisms accountable to Cabinet, Parliament and the community.

Each of these measures requires collaboration, not only within governments but also across governments, and in partnership with the community. Each successive review has identified persistent themes as priorities, which suggests that challenges in implementation have impeded progress.

An evaluation of the first National Plan offers an instructive insight into missed opportunities. The evaluation, conducted by KPMG (2022), provided recommendations that suggest clear and concrete improvements – however, some of these are yet to be significantly progressed. The report found that ‘despite improvements in data collection and reporting, the National Plan did not adequately track performance of initiatives and actions in achieving national outcomes’ (KPMG 2022, p. 12). While the current plan

sets out actions that should address this critique, there is not enough evidence of improved access to data or processes to support this intention (for more information on this, refer to the ‘Effective implementation and achieving outcomes: from evidence to action’ chapter).

This perceived lack of progress towards understanding the impact of government’s efforts and investment has resulted in the establishment of key organisations to guide national efforts:

- the Australian National Research Organisation on Women’s Safety (ANROWS) established in 2013
- Our Watch established in 2013
- Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission (the Commission), established in 2022.

The Commission and ANROWS have a responsibility to ensure that national efforts are informed by the best available information. Both have a designated and community-conferred responsibility to hold governments accountable to the task of achieving the objectives of the National Plan.

The Commission, like other mechanisms established to monitor government’s performance, has a clear role to ensure governments are implementing swift, thoughtful and well-evaluated programs to prevent, address and respond to DFSV.

The Commission is also a critical part of governance infrastructure, and an ongoing mechanism for inquiry, analysing the effectiveness of efforts towards achieving the National Plan objectives while amplifying opportunities for collaboration and coordination.



Lived experience

Lived experience is the heart of accountability in our response to domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV). The voices of people who have experienced violence have revealed the scale of harm, shown how systems can entrench disadvantage, and pushed governments to act where silence once prevailed. All work undertaken by the Commission and the Lived Experience Advisory Council will review what resources are currently available and ensure diversity of lived experience perspectives.

Every major piece of work – from the Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria (2016) to the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (2023) and ANROWS' *Towards meaningful engagement* (Wheildon and ANROWS 2023) – has been legitimised and advanced through the courage of people with lived experience sharing their stories.

Without these voices, the full picture of violence and its consequences across our systems would remain hidden.

For the Commission, embedding lived experience is not symbolic participation, it is a systemic requirement. Engagement must be safe, consistent and influential if policies and services are to be credible and effective. Inquiries and reviews have repeatedly shown that including lived experience prevents policy mistakes,

strengthens service design and ensures reforms meet the needs of those most affected.

The next Action Plan must therefore establish a clear authorising environment and the necessary mechanisms where lived experience is treated as expertise, where its impact is visible in decision-making and where governments are accountable for embedding these voices at every level of reform.

Survivors with lived experience of gender-based violence are increasingly asking to be involved in developing and reforming public policy, and governments are beginning to engage survivors in co-production efforts.



Wheildon and ANROWS 2023, p. 2

The [SA] Commissioner's report powerfully reflects the voices of South Australians with lived experience. We know that people with lived experience, and the specialist sector, need to be around the table and working closely with government.



Mary Leaker, CEO Embolden

Recommendation 1



The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission's Lived Experience Advisory Council will lead the development of a Lived Experience Engagement Framework and Toolkit for agencies and sector stakeholders to guide safe, respectful and productive engagement with people with lived experience.

The commitment to engage people with lived experience is growing. Yet the way this engagement occurs varies greatly. Some initiatives set high standards for safety, recognition and influence, while other processes can feel inconsistent or tokenistic. The Commission sees an opportunity to strengthen practice by co-designing a lived experience engagement framework and toolkit with the Lived Experience Advisory Council.

The Commission recognises that there has been a great deal of work done to inform lived experience engagement, by many different individuals and organisations – across different sectors. The framework and toolkit will bring together this work. It will be informed by existing best practice examples, including:

- Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) national principles for co-production
- the Australian Human Rights Commission's guidance on engaging children and young people
- Our Watch's prevention work that demonstrates how survivor voices reshape culture and practice.

It will also draw on examples such as the WEAVERS project, a group of women with lived experience working alongside researchers and practitioners, including as co-researchers, at the University of Melbourne's Safer Families Centre. WEAVERS has shown how people who have experienced violence can be partners by co-designing frameworks such as the Experts by Experience Framework (Lamb et al. 2020) and the Australian Framework for Ethical Co-Produced Research and Evaluations (Lamb et al. 2023).

The toolkit will provide practical guidance on important issues such as psychological and cultural safety, recognition and payment, accessibility, consent, debriefing and, crucially, influence.

Templates and examples will support agencies to demonstrate what changed because of the engagement. In this way, the toolkit will offer a resource that helps services and governments embed safe, respectful and impactful practice as a matter of course.

Placing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's lived experience at the centre of system reform

Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) (AHRC 2020) led by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner placed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's lived experiences at the centre of systemic reform. This resulted in a landmark national plan for change.

Lived experience can inform practice to support LGBTIQ+SB people to disclose family violence

In LGBTIQ+SB communities, the Private Lives 3 study showed that disclosure of family violence is often limited because services lack cultural safety and highlighted the importance of lived experience informed practice.



Recommendation 2



The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission, in collaboration with the Lived Experience Advisory Council, will develop a Lived Experience Evaluation Framework for agencies and sector stakeholders to implement to assess the integrity and effectiveness of lived experience consultations.

Good practice must also be visible and measurable in ways that enable it to be built upon and shared. The Commission will create a lived experience engagement evaluation framework for organisations to reflect on whether engagement is occurring with integrity, quality and influence. This is not a compliance mechanism but a learning tool. It is designed to help the Commission, and those we work with, to continually strengthen engagement and influence.

The framework will be co-designed with the Lived Experience Advisory Council and shaped by existing evidence. ANROWS highlights the importance of safety and reciprocity in lived experience engagement (Wheildon and ANROWS 2023); Our Watch demonstrates how embedding lived experience strengthens prevention frameworks (Our Watch 2018; 2022); and WEAVERS shows how co-research can transform both research and practice (Lamb et al. 2020). These principles will be translated into clear indicators that allow engagement to be assessed consistently across settings.

The framework will focus on 3 areas:

1. whether processes are safe and respectful
2. inclusion of diverse voices such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, women and children from culturally diverse, migrant and refugee backgrounds, LGBTIQ+SB people, women and children living with a disability, children and young people, older women, women and children living in rural and remote communities
3. how, and the extent to which, they influence policy, service delivery or community outcomes.

The approach taken by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2015) set a standard for hearing the voices of those who have been harmed by systems to drive change. The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (2023) drew heavily on lived experience testimony to highlight coercion and abuse in care settings. The Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (2021) showed how young peoples' lived experience shaped service redesign.

The Commission will apply the framework to our own Lived Experience Advisory Council initially, publishing findings to model transparency. Over time, the framework can guide capability-building more broadly, encouraging reflection and continuous improvement across the system.

By approaching evaluation in this way, the Commission will help shift the culture from simply consulting to embedding lived experience as expertise that shapes decisions and reforms, and keeps implementation on track.

Recommendation 3



The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission will undertake an audit of lived experience engagement mechanisms across the country and report in next year's report to Parliament on what is in place nationally, and establish metrics to report against effectiveness of engagement processes.

While governments and organisations are engaging people with lived experience, there is no national picture of how these efforts are unfolding or what difference they are making. The Commission proposes a national audit of lived experience engagement to bring this knowledge together and to build a stronger evidence base.

The audit will map existing advisory councils, co-design forums and consultation processes across government, services and systems. It will explore how safe, inclusive and influential these mechanisms are. It will recognise their strengths and capture feedback on gaps and opportunities for improvement. Case studies will highlight what works such as Safe and Equal's Expert Advisory Panel, WEAVERS' co-research partnerships in the health sector, Our Watch's survivor-informed prevention frameworks, and culturally safe engagement led by First Nations communities.

The audit will also examine inclusion of multicultural communities. The Australian Multicultural Women's Alliance's work has shown how migrant and refugee women's lived experience is often marginalised, yet when their voices are centred, service design can change in ways that recognise the role of visa insecurity and community stigma (Vaughan et al. 2020). In LGBTIQ+SB communities, lived experience has informed inclusive practice guidelines that are shifting how services respond to the experience of violence in diverse families (Carman et al. 2022).

This will not be about compliance or criticism. Instead, the audit will celebrate good practice, identify gaps and duplication, and provide references to

practical tools that governments and services can adapt. This will provide insights about how other groups have addressed common challenges. Importantly, it will be publicly available, ensuring transparency for communities, services and decision-makers alike.

By shining a light on the breadth of approaches and mechanisms in place and the impact they are having, the audit will help to ensure that safe, inclusive and influential engagement becomes a standard feature of Australia's response to domestic, family and sexual violence.

Enabling the sector to move from consulting to embedding lived experience expertise

Lived experience is essential to designing systems that respond to the realities of violence, prevent unintended harm and build trust with communities. However, embedding lived experience engagement and processes requires more than recognition – it requires practical tools, transparent evaluation and a shared evidence base.

The Commission's activities to develop an engagement framework and toolkit, create an evaluation framework and undertake a national audit will contribute to our collective efforts to lift the quality of engagement nationally. It will ensure that the voices of those most affected are heard, recognised as experts and embedded in decisions that shape Australia's response to domestic, family and sexual violence.



CASE STUDY

Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency



Health practitioner regulators across Australia are working collaboratively on the issue of family violence. Regulators have formed a Co-Regulatory Family Violence Working Group (Working Group). Membership of this group includes the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), National Boards, the Health Professional Councils Authority and New South Wales (NSW) Councils, the NSW Health Care Complaints Commission and the Office of the Health Ombudsman in Queensland.

Early in 2025, AHPRA held a workshop with the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission's Lived Experience Advisory Council to seek feedback on a joint statement on family violence being considered by the Working Group.

Lived Experience Advisory Council members provided feedback on the joint statement and the broader issue of how health practitioners can support people experiencing DFSV, including:

- the use of family violence as a broad term (with the explanation included in the statement), noting it can include carers

- the importance of also focusing on medical practitioners who perpetrate violence (zero-tolerance approach)
- how practitioners may validate or invalidate trauma through language
- the importance of recognising intersectionality
- the need to build relationships with women's centres.

This input was incorporated into the *Joint position on family violence* (<https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Resources/Joint-position-on-Family-Violence.aspx>). The Lived Experience Advisory Council was acknowledged for their input in the media release (<https://www.ahpra.gov.au/News/2024-11-27-joint-media-statement.aspx>).

AHPRA has held a second workshop with Advisory Council members to inform community engagement to guide implementation of approaches outlined in the Joint Position. Based on the quality of discussion and input, AHPRA has engaged with the Lived Experience Advisory Council on other matters related to their work.

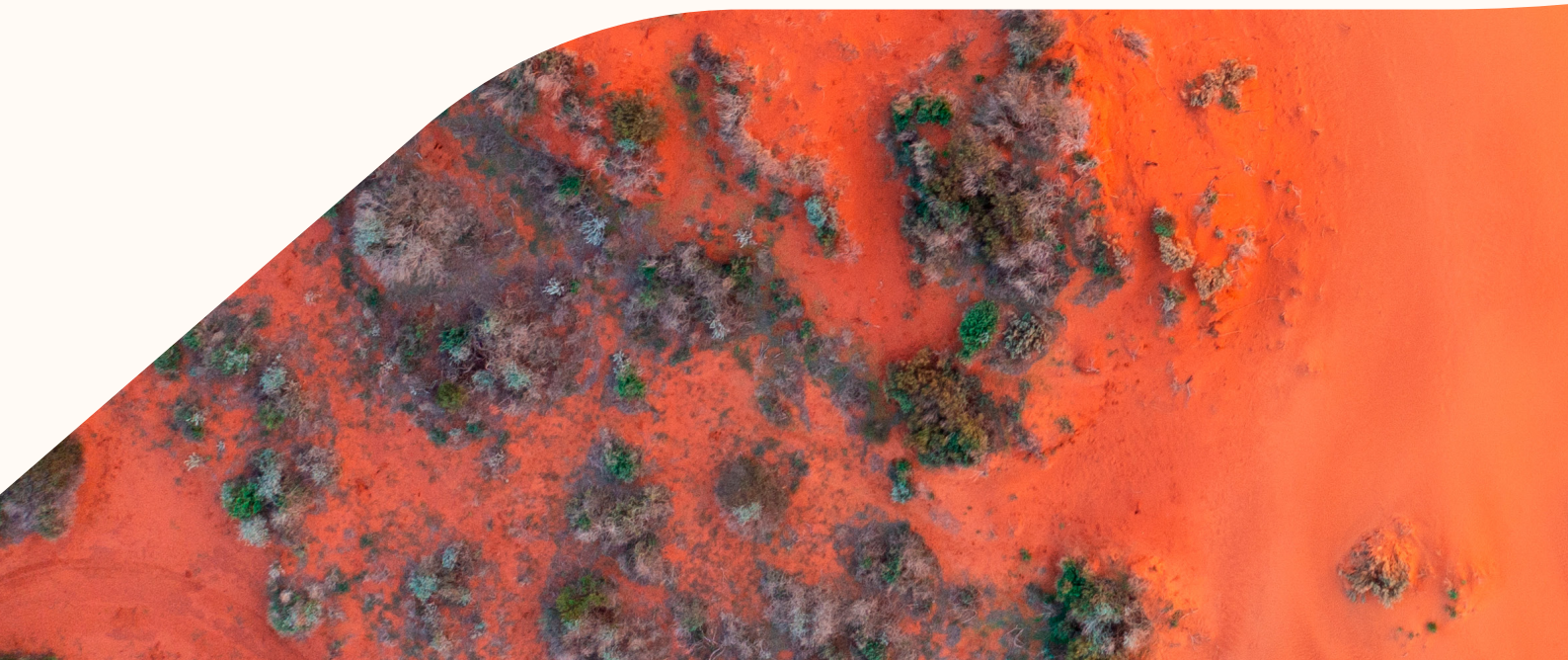
Health professionals have a responsibility to meet the needs and concerns of survivors in a way that mitigates harm and supports recovery. Consulting with lived experience advocates allows the sector to strengthen its responses and close important gaps in our existing systems. Professionals can more confidently respond to disclosures and provide appropriate advice when they are equipped with information backed by lived expertise.



Amani Haydar, Lived Experience Advisory Council member

Part 2

Effective implementation and achieving outcomes: from evidence to action





Effective implementation and achieving outcomes: from evidence to action and monitoring outcomes

Despite decades of inquiries, substantial government investment and remarkably consistent recommendations, Australia is not seeing commensurate progress towards ending violence against women and children. The focus must turn to closing the gap between evidence and implementation.

There are pockets of excellence across the country, but we must work together to share, learn, coordinate and scale effective interventions and supports to end gendered violence within a generation.

From evidence to action: the implementation paradox

Over the past 15 years, Australia has built a strong evidence base on domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSVM). Since the first National Plan in 2010, more than 1,000 recommendations have been made across royal commissions, inquiries and taskforces.

The findings are consistent. Effective implementation responses require:

- integrated governance
- multi-agency coordination
- investment in all 4 domains of the National Plan: Prevention, Early Intervention, Response, Recovery and Healing
- specialist courts
- enhanced police training that builds capacity for trauma-informed responses
- comprehensive victim support services that are culturally safe and community-led
- robust risk assessment frameworks
- men's behaviour change programs
- sustainable investment in a skilled workforce.

These are not contested ideas – they have been repeated in report after report, from metropolitan courts to remote communities.

The *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* reflects this maturity.



Governments have strategically invested in action on domestic, family and sexual violence. In September 2024, National Cabinet agreed to a comprehensive \$4.7 billion package to prevent violence and support legal services. It also agreed to renew a 5-year Federation Funding Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses from 1 July 2025 to deliver over \$700 million in matched investments from the Commonwealth, states and territories.

There have been significant investments by the Australian Government to contribute to improved safety, economic security and independence for people who have experienced violence. Following the Escaping Violence Program trial, the Australian Government invested \$925.2 million over 5 years to permanently establish the Leaving Violence Program. The program enables recipients to access up to \$5,000 in financial support, along with referral services, risk assessments and safety planning.

Significant government investments have yielded meaningful progress. Victoria's implementation of all 227 recommendations from its Royal Commission established 13 Specialist Family Violence Courts and embedded the Common Risk Assessment Framework statewide. Queensland's Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce has driven the creation of specialist courts and the introduction of coercive control legislation.

The result is a paradox: the gap is not in evidence but in implementation and monitoring outcomes. We know what is needed. There has been increased funding and improvements in service delivery – all too often in fragmented ways – but we have not consistently delivered reforms at the scale or speed necessary.

Why implementation continues to fall short

Fragmented accountability architecture

Every major inquiry has stressed the need for clear governance and accountability. The Victorian Royal Commission called for

a Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor to track delivery. The South Australian Royal Commission highlighted the need for Cabinet-level leadership to drive whole-of-government reform. The Queensland Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce called for stronger cross-agency accountability, with agencies jointly responsible for outcomes. The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) emphasised harmonisation of justice and safety responses through the Standing Council of Attorneys-General (ALRC 2025a).

The risk is that activity is mistaken for progress. Without a clear line of accountability, duplication persists, agencies can defer responsibility and systemic reforms stall.

Implementation architecture

The National Plan is supported by an implementation architecture (Figure 2) that includes the dedicated *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025*, the *First Action Plan 2023–2027*, the *Activities Addendum to the First Action Plan 2023–2027* and the *Outcomes Framework*. Critically, a number of key elements of this architecture are still under development, including the Evaluation Strategy and Information Development Plan, which have both been committed to under the National Plan.

Despite this, accountability remains fragmented. Reporting largely occurs through the Activities Addendum, which lists activities under Action Plans. While it demonstrates activity – 463 activities were recorded in the 2024 update – it does not show whether reforms are improving safety, access to services or justice outcomes. Communities report that change on the ground is uneven and difficult to track.

Since 2024, DSS has worked with jurisdictions to strengthen transparency and accountability, with further improvements to reporting expected from 2025 including: an investment report, designed to provide clearer insights into funding and investment under the National Plan, and a National Plan Highlights Report, which will showcase key achievements at a national level.

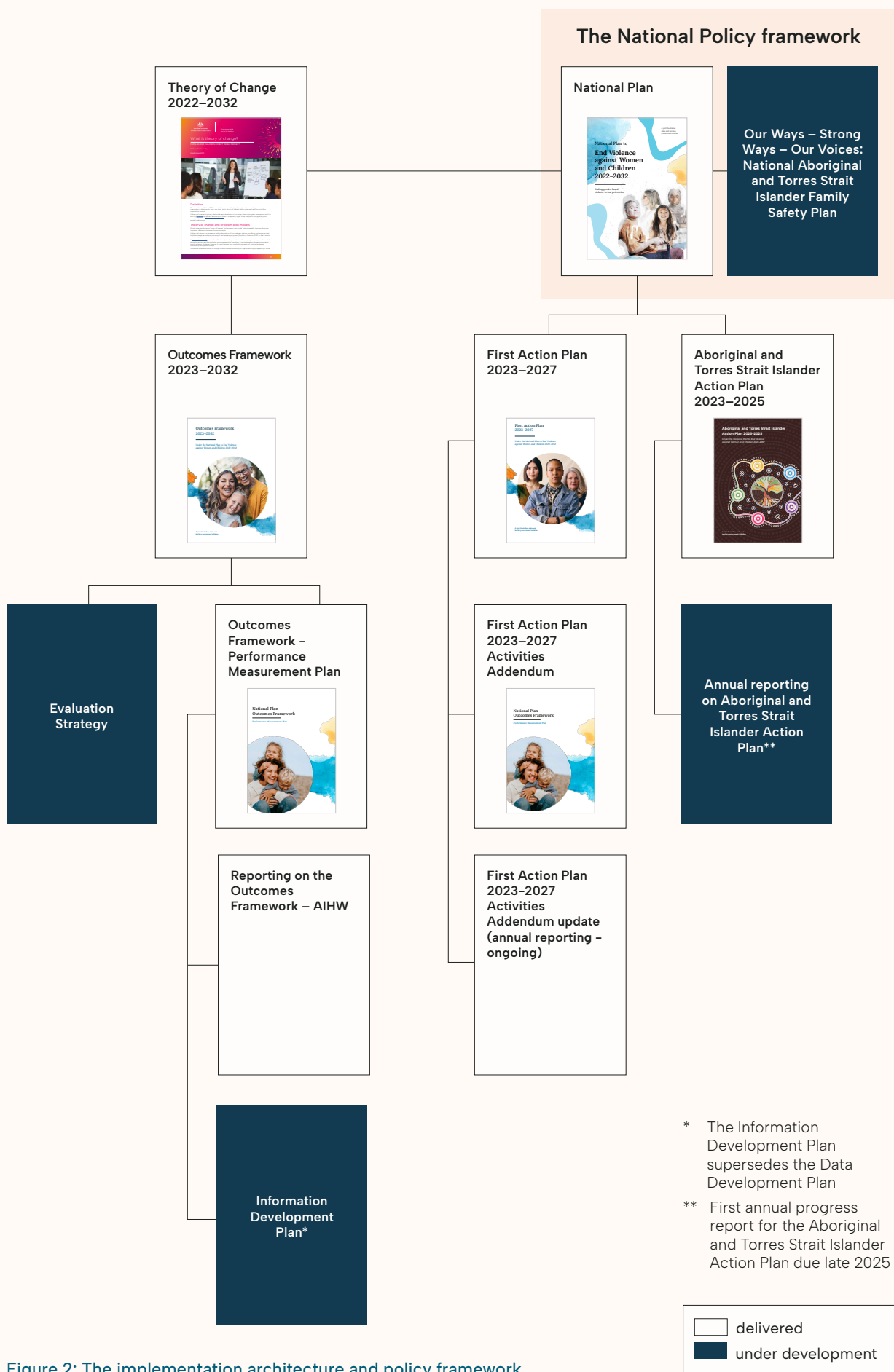


Figure 2: The implementation architecture and policy framework



Recommendation 4



The Department of Social Services is currently developing the National Plan Evaluation Strategy and Information Development Plan. This work should be strengthened by incorporating consultation with the DFSV Commission and its Lived Experience Advisory Council, sector stakeholders and governments. The consultation and feedback process should also be used to review and update the current Outcomes Framework and Performance Measurement Plan.

Important elements of the National Plan architecture are still to be delivered. The Commission looks forward to the publication of *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence (Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices)* by the end of 2025. To ensure implemented activities can be evaluated and outcomes of the National Plan measured, the final components of the

implementation architecture – the Evaluation Strategy and Information Development Plan – need to be delivered.

Strengthening this framework – with clear measures, integration with evaluation and more transparent reporting – will help ensure substantial government investments translate into meaningful change for women, children and families.

Recommendation 5



The Commonwealth should establish an Implementation and Delivery Oversight Mechanism with responsibility for Action Plan delivery and cross-government coordination. This should:

- map and align relevant Commonwealth Plans, across all government portfolios, as to how they contribute to the National Plan (i.e. Safe and Supported – National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the National Housing and Homelessness plan, Australia’s Disability Strategy, National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People, etc.) to ensure cross-government coherence
- embed lived experience, community leadership and sector representation into governance for Action Planning design, implementation and review
- provide quarterly reporting dashboards to Cabinet to track Action Plan progress
- ensure that DFSV is an ongoing priority on the Secretaries Board agenda and reflected in their KPIs.

Driving delivery and coordination

The Australian Government should establish a Commonwealth implementation and delivery mechanism to drive delivery and coordination. Such a mechanism would:

- map and align Commonwealth plans across portfolios, including the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Australian Government 2020), *Safe and supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* (DSS 2021), housing and homelessness, and disability with the National Plan
- ensure that strong governance is in place, embedding lived experience and sector representation
- provide quarterly dashboards to National Cabinet
- establish DFSV as a standing priority for all Secretaries, including at the Secretaries Board, with shared performance measures.

Action planning without real-time responsiveness

Australia's fixed 5-year action plans provide structure but not agility. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how quickly the context – and needs – can shift. Service demand surged, workforce capacity was disrupted, and responses had to adapt rapidly. Governments did. COVID-19 was declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020. National Cabinet was established on March 13, 2020. COVID-19 response became a shared and compelling priority; decisions were made collectively and action taken speedily.

Inquiries such as the ALRC's 2025 *Report into justice responses to sexual violence* (ALRC 2025a), continue to recommend urgent reforms that cannot wait for the next 5-year cycle.

The annual Activities Addendum update lists projects but it does not provide a mechanism for governments to recalibrate together. This undermines responsiveness and limits transparency.

The evidence has shown the need for implementation frameworks that can adapt to emerging evidence and changing circumstances – including ongoing planning cycles across all jurisdictions. The Victorian Royal Commission emphasised the importance of adaptive implementation frameworks that could respond to new evidence and evolving understanding of effective practice. The South Australian Royal Commission's Recommendation 12 specifically called for regular review and adaptation mechanisms to ensure that implementation remains aligned with best practice and emerging needs. Queensland's Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce highlighted the value of iterative improvement processes that allow for course correction based on experience and evaluation. The ALRC's recommendations acknowledge the need for flexible approaches that can accommodate different contexts and circumstances across jurisdictions.

Frameworks, such as the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Australian Government 2020) and *Safe and supported* (DSS 2021) include annual updates and reviews. They show the value of dynamic planning. DFSV reform must follow this lead. An issue as urgent and complex as DFSV – which has also been called an epidemic – cannot be constrained by static planning cycles. Instead, governments must embed mechanisms that allow them to learn, adapt and act in real time.



Recommendation 6



The Commonwealth to immediately commence the next National Plan Action Planning cycle, with a living plan in place by the end of 2026. The Action Planning process needs to:

- establish mechanisms to include all pertinent stakeholders in action planning activities including but not limited to lived experience, priority population representation, the specialist services sector and academia
- embed the needs and perspectives of priority populations identified in the National Plan as core elements with clear targets and measurable outcomes
- become a Living Plan, with a structured stock take every 12–18 months, regularly updated against evidence and emerging needs
- bring all governments together on an agreed short list of shared priorities
- engage and bring into alignment other relevant national plans
- build in evaluation including measurable targets, and consolidated year three evaluation
- share findings and outcomes with the DFSV Commission and ANROWS, which should be released publicly to ensure transparency. Where evaluations are unable to be shared publicly as they contain sensitive information, a summary of the findings and insights should be published.

The next action planning cycle should commence now, with a living plan in place by the end of 2026. This approach would introduce structured reviews every 12–18 months, align action plans with other national frameworks, embed evaluation with measurable targets, provide transparent dashboards, centre the needs of priority cohorts and track landmark reforms such as family violence leave. All jurisdictions should use the action planning process to come together to agree a short list of agreed priorities for action.

Evaluation must be embedded from the outset of this new cycle, with measurable targets clearly articulated and progress tracked through both quantitative indicators and qualitative evidence of impact. A consolidated year-3 review would provide a major checkpoint for assessing progress and making significant adjustments if required. Transparency would be strengthened through publicly available findings presented in accessible formats that enable community members, including those with lived experience of violence, to understand progress and hold governments accountable.

Co-design principles must be central to this Action Planning process, bringing together lived experience voices, sector expertise, academic research, all jurisdictions and relevant Commonwealth agencies in genuine partnership to develop implementation approaches that are both evidence-based and grounded in practical experience.

Towards effective implementation: strengthening action planning and governance

Strengthening governance and reporting

Addressing family, domestic, and sexual violence requires a long-term commitment and sustained effort. There are a significant number of initiatives and activities in the early stages of implementation and these will need time to achieve change and evaluation to identify scalable opportunities.

Enabling resources for best practice evaluation in the DFSV sector

One of the Commission's functions is to promote coordinated and consistent monitoring and evaluation frameworks by all governments for the National Plan. Evaluation is vital to the goal of ending gender-based violence. It provides an evidence base of what works, for whom and in which contexts. This in turn can support programs and policies to be more effective, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of people impacted by violence, and those who use violence.

In the context of domestic, family and sexual violence services, the way evaluations are implemented can have a significant impact on the safety and wellbeing of participants of the evaluation and users of the service. Clear guidance is necessary to promote safety, establish standards and therefore build trust in evaluation processes.

The Commission is working with Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) to develop a set of best practice evaluation principles to guide the evaluation of DFSV programs, promoting the importance of safety, lived experience, diverse perspectives, accessibility and transparency. To develop these principles, ANROWS is exploring existing evaluation frameworks and principles that inform practice internationally and across Australia. ANROWS will also consult with experts and stakeholders, including DFSV service providers, people with lived-experience of DFSV and researchers and evaluators, to test and refine the principles and develop guidance on applying them.

The DFSV best practice evaluation principles and guidance will be published in 2026.

Governance must connect directly to evaluation, creating a cycle of plan–deliver–evaluate–adapt. Current reporting focuses on activity, but it does not consistently demonstrate performance, assess outcomes or measure impact. Communities and stakeholders seek plain language updates, supported by both quantitative indicators and stories of change. Without this, trust in government delivery erodes.

Federation Funding Agreement: enabling national delivery

The Commonwealth has invested more than \$4 billion in women's safety since the launch of the National Plan in 2022.

In September 2024, a \$4.7 billion package was committed to prevent violence and support legal services. As part of this comprehensive package, First Ministers agreed to negotiate a renewed 5-year Federation Funding Agreement schedule for Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence

Responses (the Agreement), which commenced on 1 July 2025. The renewed Agreement will deliver more than \$700 million in new matched investments from the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to support critical frontline services.

In September 2024, a \$3.9 billion package was also committed through the National Access to Justice Partnership 2025–30. This National Agreement, which commenced on 1 July 2025, has a focus on uplifting legal assistance services responding to gender-based violence.

This will be directed towards specialist services, supports for children and young people, and programs working with men. For the first time, transparency requirements will mandate public release of state project plans and progress reports from 2026.



Recommendation 7



The Commonwealth should work with states and territories and in partnership with the Commission's Lived Experience Advisory Council to develop a National Funding mapping framework to enable visibility and reporting of DFSV funding and expenditure nationally to inform and guide ongoing Action Planning.

The framework needs to:

- establish agreed definitions of DFSV funding
- create consistent categories for recording DFSV funding to enable services to report on DFSV work undertaken in other funding streams (e.g. homelessness, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, health) that contributed to improved outcomes for people experiencing DFSV
- embed reporting requirements into bilateral agreements under Federation Funding Agreements
- capture actual expenditure for reporting.

Recommendation 8



As outlined in the Rapid Review, the Commonwealth, with state and territory governments, should expedite a needs analysis to determine unmet demand in DFSV crisis response, recovery and healing (excluding police), with the view to develop a pathway to funding demand. This should take into consideration the work being undertaken by Safe and Equal Measuring Family Violence Service Demand Project and consider:

- Aboriginal community-controlled organisations capacity and capability (the National Agreement on Closing the Gap)
- funding for priority populations and community-led solutions and responses
- workforce growth, and increased stability, reduced burn out
- learning from activities and sharing of those learnings across the sector.

A better understanding of unmet demand, funding, investment, expenditure with clearer links to impact

To address widely held concerns about fragmented funding and lack of visibility, the Commonwealth should work with states and territories to develop a national funding mapping framework. This framework would establish consistent definitions of DFSV

funding, create shared categories for reporting investment and embed these requirements into bilateral agreements. This would provide a clearer picture of where money is going, prevent duplication and link investment directly to outcomes. Including the voice of people with lived experience in this process will assist with identifying urgent gaps within communities.

Institutional capacity gaps

The Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches highlighted the critical importance of both specialist workforce capacity and adjacent workforce activation. The Victorian Royal Commission emphasised the need for sustained institutional capability that could maintain momentum across political cycles and changing governments. The South Australian Royal Commission specifically highlighted the importance of building sector capacity as a foundation for effective service delivery and system coordination.

Australia has created strong institutional foundations, but capacity gaps remain. The DFSV Commission is in place, yet its powers are limited. It cannot compel data, monitor funding flows across jurisdictions or require agencies to respond to findings. ANROWS continues to provide world-leading research but resourcing is uneven and its ability to convene data custodians and set national research priorities is limited.

In order to conduct its monitoring function, the Commission needs access to timely information that will allow it to analyse the significant amount of activity against the strategic aims of the National Plan. While there can be no doubt of a vast array of investments and programs funded by government, the linkages between the National Plan's objectives and priority areas and investment in these programs is not always clear. In particular, it can be difficult to ascertain how goals requiring transformational approaches can be met by baseline service delivery – what some might describe as 'business as usual'.

Other oversight bodies provide a model. The Productivity Commission can compel information and publish independent reviews of government performance. The National Indigenous Australians Agency is resourced to monitor progress against the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Australian Government 2020). DFSVC and ANROWS need comparable authority and support to fulfil their roles.

Recommendation 9



The Commonwealth should expand the functions and powers of the National Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission and establish it as a statutory authority (in line with the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs and Rapid Review recommendations). The Commonwealth should empower the Commission to compel all government agencies to provide data and information to enable monitoring of the implementation and funding associated with the National Plan.

Recommendation 10



The Commonwealth should empower ANROWS to build on their national leadership role to:

- build practice-led, lived experience informed evidence that responds directly to practice needs and communities experience
- bring together and disseminate evidence, learnings and good practice models from across all 8 jurisdictions
- take a lead role as a system convenor of evidence – setting national research priorities, identifying gaps and aligning efforts across jurisdictions.



In order to fulfill its accountability

functions, the Commission should be established as a statutory authority with powers to gather and share information, monitor funding and outcomes. ANROWS should be resourced to lead a national research agenda, convening custodians such as the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Australian Institute of Criminology, and ensuring the evidence base reflects lived experience and practice-led knowledge.

Monitoring and reporting implementation and achievement of outcomes under the National Plan

The Department of Social Services and the Commission both have responsibilities for monitoring the implementation and outcomes of the National Plan.

One of the Commission's key functions is to promote coordinated and consistent approaches to monitoring and evaluation across all governments, recognising that

these are essential for measuring progress and evaluating the impact of the National Plan.

The Department of Social Services has a national leadership role with all governments on the National Plan, and leads the coordination, governance and reporting on its implementation, along with reporting under the National Plan's Outcomes Framework.

There are a range of internal processes which Commonwealth, state and territory governments undertake to monitor activity under the National Plan. This includes interdepartmental committees, national projects and forums within the governance structure that drive national progress on women's safety and implementation of the National Plan. There is a need to strengthen interconnectivity between these processes and publicly available reporting requirements under the National Plan, to enable greater transparency and accountability. The Commission has relied on publicly available reporting mechanisms that are part of the National Plan's implementation architecture.

Roles and functions of the DFSV Commission under its Executive Order

The Commission exists to amplify the voices of people with lived experience of domestic, family and sexual violence. We provide evidence-informed policy advice and promote coordination and accountability across governments and sectors to help end gender-based violence in Australia.

Established on 1 July 2022 as a non-statutory Executive Agency within the Australian Government Department of Social Services and listed as a non-corporate Commonwealth entity on 1 November 2022, the Commission is one of only three such bodies globally dedicated to this purpose.

The executive order issued by the Governor-General on 17 March 2022 outlines our core functions:

- Advise the Minister for Women's Safety on strategic policy.
- Promote coordination across governments, sectors and communities.
- Support consistent monitoring and evaluation of the National Plan.
- Develop structured approaches to victim-survivor engagement.
- Inform national priorities for policy, research and data.
- Champion the objectives of the National Plan across society.

As an executive agency, the Commission operates independently from the department. This independence enables us to monitor progress under the National Plan and advocate for meaningful, lasting change.

Once the Evaluation Strategy is finalised as part of the National Plan's implementation architecture, it will provide a foundation for measuring progress under the National Plan. Alongside information collected through annual reporting processes, the Commission will draw on this information to monitor outcomes and assess the effectiveness of actions taken across all Australian governments.

Activity reporting progress

Annual reporting under the National Plan is a critical mechanism for tracking progress, identifying emerging opportunities, ensuring accountability and progress towards outcomes.

The National Plan is intended to be implemented through two 5-year Action Plans. The first five-year action plan was released in August 2023 and provides specific Commonwealth, state and territory government actions and investment to implement the objectives across each of the four domains: prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing.

The Department of Social Services is responsible for coordinating and reporting against the first 5-year Action Plan, with the first annual update (*the First Action Plan 2023–2027 Activities Addendum Update 2024*) published in November 2024. This report provided the first update on the implementation of activities, highlighting the efforts underway and partnership across sectors and Commonwealth, state and territory governments towards the vision of the National Plan (DSS 2024).

The Activities Addendum update is an annual progress update on each of the activities that Commonwealth, state and territory governments are progressing under the *First Action Plan 2023–2027* (the First Action Plan).

The 2025 Activities Addendum will be finalised around the time of tabling of the Commission's Yearly Report to Parliament. This second annual progress update will introduce two new components: an *Investments Report*, designed to provide clearer insights into funding and investment under the National Plan, and a *National Plan Highlights Report*, which will showcase key achievements at a national level.

Importantly, the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan progress report will be released in late 2025.

The Commission has not been able to draw upon the information in these reports in the development of this yearly report as the information available was incomplete.

The Commission's yearly report calls for immediate commencement of the second action planning cycle to develop the Second Action Plan as a living plan to be in place by the end of 2026 (see Recommendation 6). This will enable the action planning process to be responsive to emerging evidence and needs, and to both inform and align with all jurisdictional planning processes and activities. Such a live action planning process would also provide an improved vehicle to include relevant stakeholders from lived experience, priority populations, specialist services and academia as well as other process inclusions to enhance coordination and collaboration across the sector.

Challenges in measuring progress through the current Activities Addendum reporting mechanism

Current reporting is focused on activities and funding commitments, and there are several limitations inherent with this style of reporting as outlined below:

- There are inconsistencies in reporting across jurisdictions, with varying levels of detail, timeframes and transparency.
- Activities Addendum updates show considerable variation across jurisdictions with a high level of discretion for jurisdictions in determining what and how to report, resulting in inconsistent data quality and limiting comparability across jurisdictions.
- Currently, reporting is not strongly tied to a National Plan Evaluation Strategy or the Performance Measurement Plan. This reduces the ability to link investment to long-term outcomes.
- The annual update cycle limits its ability to reflect emerging issues or opportunities, real-time developments or support timely decision-making, limiting its effectiveness as a transparent and responsive implementation tool.



Outcomes Framework Reporting and the Performance Measurement Plan

The National Plan is supported by a 10-year Outcomes Framework. This framework establishes the shared vision of what governments, services, and communities must collectively achieve to reduce and ultimately end gender-based violence. It provides the long-term outcomes against which progress can be assessed, supported by the Performance Measurement Plan.

AIHW provides regular updates to publicly report against the Outcomes Framework on the AIHW FDSV website.

While the Outcomes Framework represents a significant step towards national accountability, its capacity to measure progress is hindered by gaps in the data, reporting timeliness, and challenges in measuring change.

The Outcomes Framework

The Outcomes Framework sets out 6 interdependent, long-term outcomes:

1. Systems and institutions effectively support and protect people impacted by gender-based violence.
2. Services and prevention programs are effective, culturally responsive, intersectional and accessible.
3. Community attitudes and beliefs embrace gender equality and condemn all forms of gendered violence without exception.
4. People who choose to use violence are accountable for their actions and stop their violent, coercive and abusive behaviours.
5. Children and young people are safe in all settings and are effectively supported by systems and services.
6. Women are safe and respected in all settings, and experience economic, social, political and cultural equality.

The Performance Measurement Plan

The Performance Measurement Plan operationalises the Outcomes Framework by linking outcomes and sub-outcomes to indicators, measures and data sources. The Performance Measurement Plan groups measures into four Tiers to identify those for which data is available and those where data development is needed.

Understanding the Performance Measurement Plan

In 2024, the department published its Outcomes Framework Performance Measurement Plan (PMP). The PMP describes the measures, indicators and data sources that are being used to assess progress against each of the 6 outcomes and 34 sub-outcomes that constitute the Outcomes Framework.

The measures in the PMP have been categorised into four tiers.

Tiers 1 and 2 consist of measures where an existing data source is in place and data is collected at the national level. More specifically:

- Tier 1 refers to headline measures which are based on the 6 national level targets listed in the Outcomes Framework.
- Tier 2 consists of measures where an existing data source is in place and data is collected at a national level.

Tiers 3 and 4 have been identified as important elements to measure, however, there is currently no available data source that collects exactly what is required to measure progress.

Data gaps and limitations

Whilst recognising it will take time to identify data sources for some measures, the majority of Performance Measurement Plan measures do not have a current data source. In total, there are 131 measures under the Performance Measurement Plan and 89 of these (68%) cannot be measured.

- Only one measure under Outcome 2 assesses whether services are culturally responsive, intersectional and accessible.
- National data on people who use violence is minimal, with limited evidence on pathways into and out of violence, or on the effectiveness of interventions.

- Priority cohorts such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, children and young people, people with disability, LGBTIQ+SB communities, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds remain underrepresented.

Figure 3 demonstrates available data sources in 2025 to measure progress against the National Plan Outcomes.

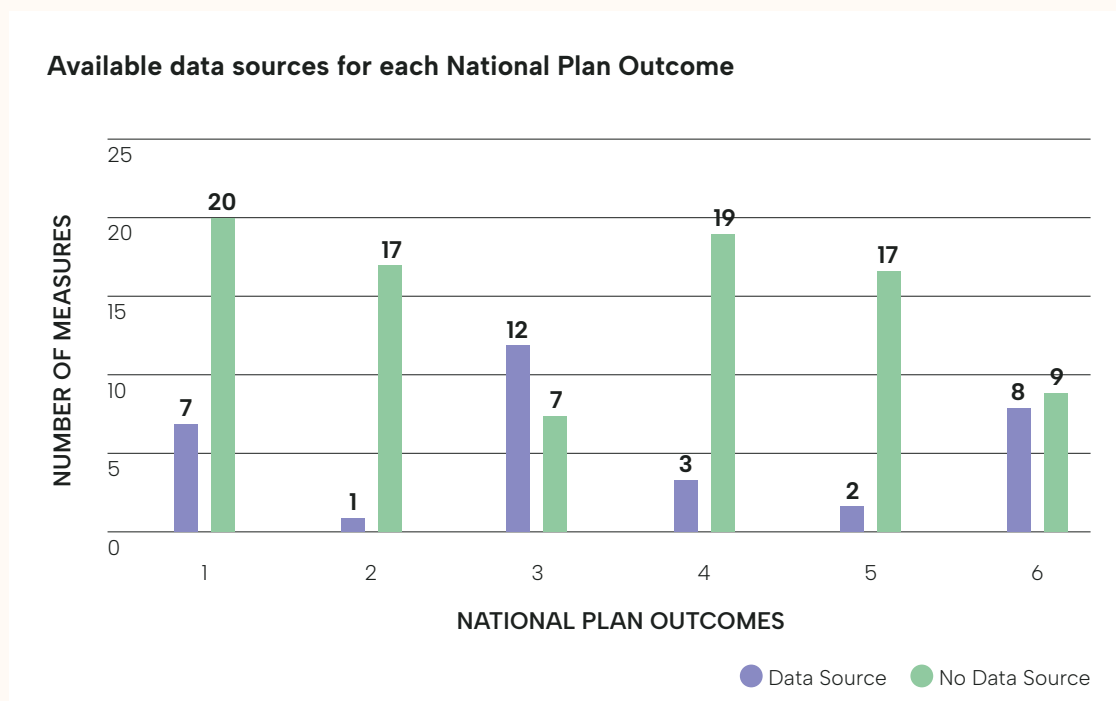


Figure 3: In 2025, what data do we have to measure progress of each National Plan Outcome?

Timeliness and responsiveness

The Performance Measurement Plan relies heavily on large-scale surveys conducted every 4 years, such as the ABS Personal Safety Survey, the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey, the National Student Safety Survey and the AHRC National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces. Data on female victims of intimate partner homicide is available quarterly.

Of the 42 measures where data is available, over half ($n = 22$) rely on data collected through 4-year national surveys.

This creates long delays in understanding whether initiatives are effective, reducing the ability of governments to respond to unintended consequences or adapt strategies in real time.



Service outcomes and client experience

Although significant investment has been made in services, there is currently limited national data on:

- service quality and integration
- client pathways and experiences
- long-term outcomes for victim-survivors and families.

This limits the capacity to assess whether services are meeting community needs and achieving change.

Priority cohorts and data sovereignty

The exclusion of priority cohorts remains a persistent gap. For example,

- Indigenous status is not collected in the ABS Personal Safety Survey, limiting understandings of First Nations experiences of violence
- reports such as the Rapid Review into Prevention and the Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children inquiry have emphasised the need for culturally appropriate, disaggregated data and for Indigenous data sovereignty principles to be embedded in national monitoring.

Limited agility

While annual updates on gender equality indicators are provided, these offer only a partial view of broader social and cultural change. The existing data sources available for the Performance Measurement Plan lack the agility to track change on a year-to-year basis and cannot provide governments with timely insights into what is working — and what is not — to reduce violence.

Current work to address data gaps and opportunities for better data

The Department of Social Services is in the process of developing an Evaluation Strategy and Information Development Plan (see Recommendation 4). These initiatives are intended to build a more responsive, inclusive, and reliable evidence base to track progress against the National Plan. The Evaluation Strategy will provide a framework and strategic direction for how the National Plan will be evaluated and the Information Development Plan (previously the Data Development Plan) is expected to

fill the significant gaps in the Performance Measurement Plan.

Strengthening data collection and research activities in relation to DFSV

A number of activities are underway to strengthen the collection and reporting of data and research activities related to DFSV. These activities will continue to build evidence and improve capacity to monitor progress against outcomes under the National Plan.

Enhancing data collections

The Commonwealth Government has invested \$15 million into First Nations-led research on domestic and family violence. This investment will be delivered over 5 years and aims to develop a data set to support measuring progress on Closing the Gap Target 13 and to show a national picture for First Nations women and children, while being nuanced for community differences and embedding culturally sensitive data collection and reporting practices (DSS 2023). It is essential that work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is prioritised to determine a community led approach to data collection that accounts for Indigenous data sovereignty principles. This project will be delivered in full by 30 June 2028.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) delivers the reporting of data under the Performance Management Plan for the Outcomes Framework on the AIHW FDSV website. AIHW is also conducting 2 data projects:

- prototype data collection on specialist crisis FDV services
- FDSV integrated data system.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics is conducting 2 data projects:

- Personal Safety Survey 2025–26
- Criminal Justice Data Asset.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) is expanding its collection of data on men's use of violence through the Australian Longitudinal Study of Male Health (AIFS 2025).

The Department of Social Services has commissioned a Workforce Survey to understand and define the DFSV specialist workforce.

Research

The Commonwealth government has provided \$27.6 million for the National Priority Research Fund to support ANROWS to continue its work including:

- 14 projects to focus on building the evidence base on pathways into and out of perpetration of FDSV
- 8 research projects to inform policy and practice design for prevention and early intervention
- 6 projects focused on engaging sectors beyond those that specialise in FDSV, including health education and LGBTIQ+SB.

There is a need to continue to build datasets to better understand the broader problems and solutions that contribute towards achieving the outcome of the National Plan to eliminate gender-based violence over the next decade. Recommendation 3 of the *Speaking from Experience* report calls for resourcing the Australian Human Rights Commission to conduct the 6th National Survey on Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces in 2026 (AHRC 2025). To conduct this survey, specific funding is required for intersectional data collection, reporting and analysis. The National Survey to date has been invaluable in understanding the prevalence of workplace sexual harassment in Australia, what it can look like, and rates of reporting. The 6th National Survey provides the opportunity to understand the prevalence of workplace sexual harassment following the implementation of the Respect@Work and the Commission strongly supports the government's investment in this dataset.

Embedding priority cohorts: ensuring inclusive implementation

Implementation must work for everyone. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, people with disability, migrant and multicultural communities, LGBTIQ+SB communities and children

and young people experience violence in distinct ways. Too often, reforms have been designed around a 'mainstream' model that does not account for these realities. This limits effectiveness and perpetuates inequity.

Government has made commitments through the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* (Australian Government 2020), the *Australian Government Response to the Disability Royal Commission* (DHDA 2024b) and *Safe and supported* (DSS 2021). These commitments must be translated into DFSV reform. That means tailored outcomes and indicators for priority cohorts, disaggregated data, and direct investment into community-led organisations with the cultural authority to deliver services.

Action Plans should embed the needs of priority cohorts as core elements. This means resourcing Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) to lead in their communities, funding diverse organisations to deliver inclusive supports, and ensuring transparent reporting across cohorts. Without this, national progress will remain uneven, and vulnerabilities remain.

From evidence to implementation: the path forward

The evidence is clear. Inquiries have mapped what is required. Funding has been committed. Institutions exist to provide oversight. What is missing is consistent and coordinated delivery. To achieve the vision of the National Plan, governments must commit to the following priorities.

Immediate action required

Action planning process: Begin the next action planning cycle immediately for commencement by end of 2026. The Action Plan must be a living plan with regular reviews every 12–18 months and transparent public reporting. It must be co-designed with relevant stakeholders from all jurisdictions. This includes lived experience voices, the sector and academics.

Driving coordinated implementation: Establish a Commonwealth implementation



and delivery mechanism with responsibility for cross-government coordination, quarterly Cabinet reporting dashboards, and ensuring DFSV remains a priority on the Secretaries Board agenda.

Informing and overseeing implementation:

Strengthen the Commission itself as a statutory authority. This includes expanded powers to gather timely information, data and evidence to enable the Commission to monitor and assess progress and outcomes of the National Plan. We also need to consolidate the role of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) as the national evidence convenor.

Strategic focus areas

Embedding lived experience: The Commission's Lived Experience Advisory Council will lead development of an engagement framework and toolkit and evaluation framework, while the Commission conducts a national audit of lived experience engagement mechanisms to establish effectiveness metrics.

Children and young people: Establish a DFSV Youth Advisory Council to embed young voices in action planning, drive increased activities, amend service contracts to count activities addressing children's needs, and expand funding for programs targeting unaccompanied young people and child sexual exploitation prevention.

Men and boys engagement: Implement a national, coordinated approach to engaging men and boys on healthy masculinities, develop targeted responses to online misogyny and radicalisation, and expedite national standards for men's behaviour change programs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities: Embed shared decision-making in governance structures, increase long-term flexible investment in ACCOs, and urgently invest in data to monitor Closing the Gap Target 13.

People with disabilities who experience violence and use violence: Prioritise learning from the experience of people living with a disability, including people who experience violence and those who use violence. Progress future-focused work

under the National Plan and release the *Disability lens to the First Action Plan* in 2025 to ensure we can act to eliminate violence for women living with a disability and to meet desired outcomes of the National Plan.

Sexual violence: Include a roadmap for implementing ALRC recommendations (ALRC 2025a) as well as actions and investments to progress sexual violence reforms that lay outside the scope of the ALRC inquiry with clear timeframes and responsible agencies, while focusing specifically on child sexual exploitation prevention within education systems.

Economic and systems abuse: Undertake systematic mapping of recommendations across reviews and inquiries, particularly addressing misuse of family law, tax and child support systems, with clear signposts for delivery timelines and responsible agencies.

Institutional strengthening

Research and evidence: Build on ANROWS' leadership position to build practice-led, lived experience informed evidence while taking the role of system convenor to set national research priorities and align efforts across jurisdictions.

Funding framework: Develop a national funding mapping framework with agreed definitions, consistent categories and embedded reporting in bilateral agreements to enable visibility of DFSV funding nationally.

Workforce development: Activate the health system as a prevention lever, continue to grow specialist DFSV workforce capacity and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specialist workforce, and upskill migrant and multicultural organisations for DFSV competency.

Australia does not lack evidence or goodwill. What is needed now is resolve — we need greater accountability at the same time as focused activity, and a shift from fragmented reforms to systemic change. With effective implementation, the goal of ending violence in a generation can move from aspiration to reality.

The workforce implementation challenge: building comprehensive response capacity

Workforce capability is central to ending DFSV

Across a decade of inquiries, one message is consistent: workforce capability is central to ending domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV). The Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches (the Rapid Review) reinforced that the health system is a key prevention lever. It called for general practitioners, perinatal and mental health services, and alcohol and other drug services to be equipped to recognise and respond to violence. Other inquiries – including the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence and Queensland’s Women’s Safety and Justice Taskforce – highlighted the same needs: better training, stronger cultural safety and more secure workforce resourcing.

These findings are clear. Without investment in the specialist DFSV workforce, and without activation of adjacent workforces, Australia will remain unable to deliver the coordinated, whole-of-system response envisioned in the National Plan.

Supporting the DFSV workforce requires recognising the interrelated issues of stability, burnout, and capability. Improvements must extend beyond funding levels to include service structures and systemic settings. This includes considering the unique needs of specific communities (refer to ‘Voices from the regions’ and ‘Multicultural roundtable’ boxes in this section).



Voices from the regions: understanding domestic, family and sexual violence in rural and remote Australia



Domestic, family and sexual violence remains a critical issue across Australia, with particularly high rates of violence observed in rural, remote and regional communities. Around 7 million people – or 28% of the Australian population – live in rural and remote areas, which encompass many diverse locations and communities (AIHW 2024a).

Women living in rural, remote and regional areas experience significantly higher rates of intimate partner violence compared with those in capital cities. In 2023–24, the rate of family and domestic violence hospitalisations was highest in ‘very remote’ parts of the country, highlighting the heightened vulnerability and severity of violence in geographically isolated regions.

The context in which violence occurs is shaped by a combination of social, cultural, economic and geographic factors. For individuals in these communities, these dynamics often intersect in ways that increase risk and limit access to support.

Over the past year, the Commission has undertaken extensive engagement with a broad range of stakeholders and service providers across rural, remote and regional Australia. This process has revealed critical insights into the unique challenges and complexities faced by those delivering services to people experiencing violence in isolated areas.

Key challenges include persistent service gaps, short-term and fragmented funding models, and significant workforce shortages. Many services report difficulty recruiting and retaining skilled and culturally informed staff, which severely impacts their capacity to respond. Addressing these systemic issues requires sustainable, place-based funding and workforce strategies tailored to the needs of these diverse communities.

The Commission remains committed to engaging meaningfully with people living in rural and remote communities to better understand their experiences of domestic, family and sexual violence, improve outcomes, and amplify their voices in national policy and reform efforts.

Multicultural communities roundtable

On 7 August 2025, the DFSV Commission convened a national roundtable on preventing and responding to DFSV in multicultural communities.

Over 70 participants attended, including representatives from multicultural and settlement organisations, faith communities, frontline health and education services, specialist domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) providers, academics, government agencies and lived experience advocates.

The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for Social Services, and the Hon. Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Social Services and the Prevention of Family Violence, attended a session in the afternoon to hear directly from participants.

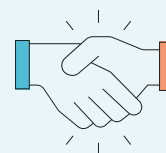
The roundtable provided a valuable opportunity for the Commission to hear directly from those delivering essential services to both individuals experiencing violence and those using violence within multicultural communities.

The discussions were insightful, highlighting key priorities essential for enhancing service delivery within multicultural communities to better address their unique and diverse needs.

Priority areas for action include:

- **cultural capability and anti-racism:** embed anti-racism and cultural safety
- **diversity, intersectionality and lived-experience:** invest in lived experience mechanisms to ensure service design and delivery is appropriate and responsive to local needs
- **community-led solutions:** resource multicultural communities to lead prevention and response efforts
- **migration system settings:** update visa and residency systems to improve access to services
- **workforce development and leadership:** build sustainable, supported pathways for bicultural and multicultural staff
- **funding, investment and collaboration:** longer term funding that focuses on collaboration and is based on service outcomes, not just numbers and outputs.





Priorities for the sector include:

- **representation and leadership:** ensuring pathways for bicultural staff into senior roles, with a focus on retention
- **cultural capability:** increased collaboration between mainstream, settlement, and multicultural services
- **equitable partnerships:** pursuing equitable collaboration between mainstream DFSV and multicultural and settlement services, learning from each other's expertise
- **embedding lived experience:** support ongoing involvement of lived experience advocates throughout the service delivery system.

The Commission remains committed to working in partnership with multicultural organisations, settlement services, specialist DFSV services and lived experience advocates to amplify diverse perspectives and drive systemic reform within multicultural communities.

We are experiencing significant fatigue at having to repeat our demands when the issues are already well-identified. We want tangible, long-term solutions that allow marginalised women to access the culturally appropriate support they need to escape and recover from domestic, family, and sexual violence. These must be delivered through an anti-racist framework to minimise further harm.



Amani Haydar, Lived Experience Advisory Council member

The adjacent workforce opportunity: expanding response capacity

DFSV affects millions of Australians, with profound personal, social and economic impacts that reverberate through health, education and housing systems. The broad cost is stark: violence was estimated to cost the Australian economy \$22 billion in 2015–16, with more than half of this borne by those directly affected (KPMG 2016).

Specialist DFSV workers provide critical expertise. The specialist DFSV workforce is difficult to measure because DFSV services are provided through a range of organisations by people with a diverse set of qualifications. While efforts are being made to survey and better understand the workforce, our estimate is that there are fewer than 9,000 specialist DFSV workers nationwide.

This specialist workforce is too small to meet demand alone. The much larger health, justice, education, housing and policing workforces, with far larger footprints, encounter people affected by violence every day. This represents a major opportunity for early identification, intervention and prevention. In many communities the only services will be the local police station, and a health centre. Figure 3 shows the relative sizes of the specialist DFSV, police and health workforces, demonstrating the huge potential of an activated broader workforce as a driver of change.



Comparative size of response sectors in Australia:

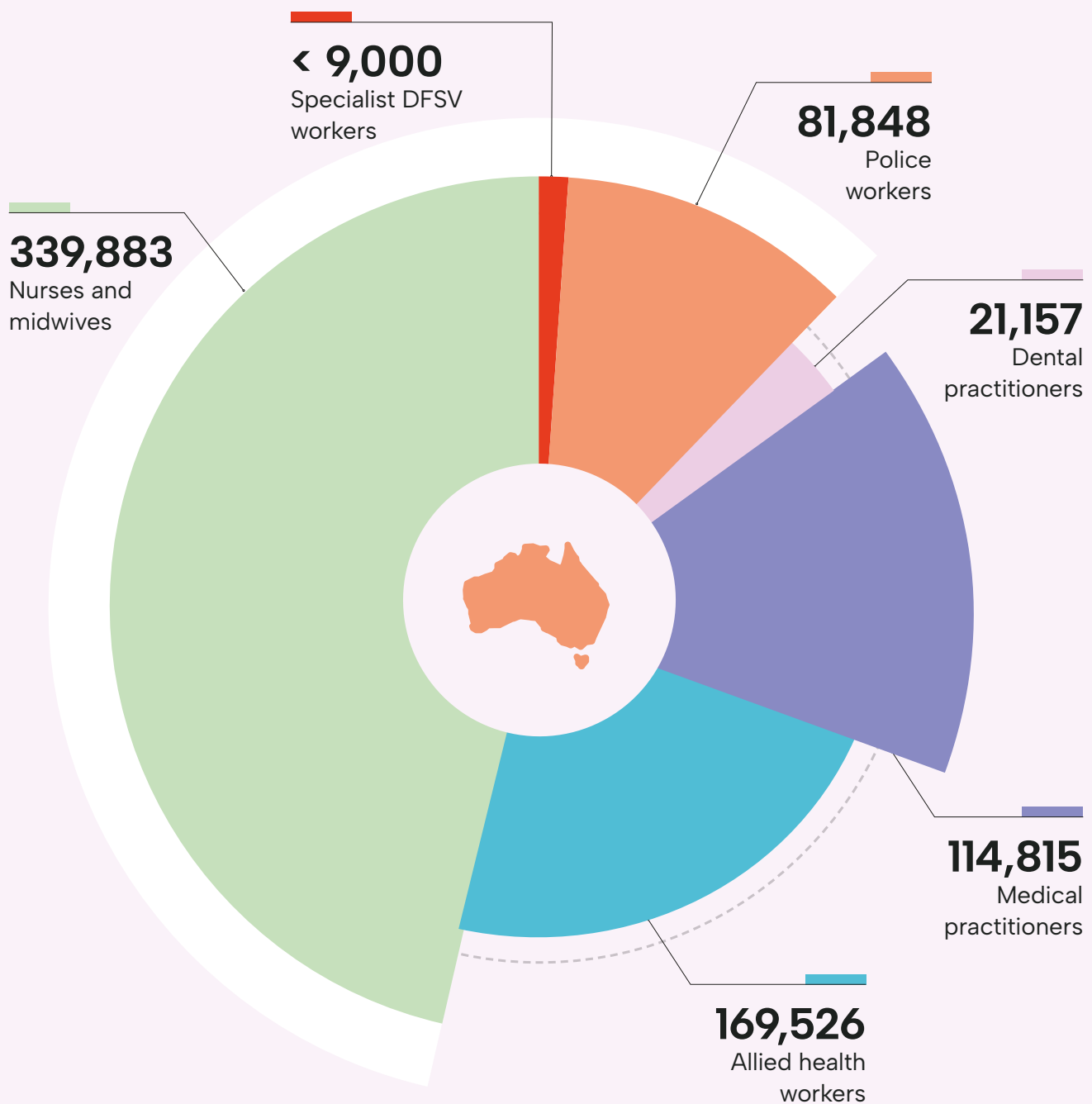


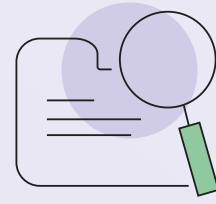
Figure 3: Comparative sizes of the specialist DFSV, police and health workforces

Notes:

- Apart from the DFSV specialist workers figure, all figures are full-time equivalent.
- Dental, medical, allied health and nurses and midwives data came from AIHW (2024).
- Police data came from Productivity Commission (2025).
- Data in this figure has been updated with corrected information since the previous *Yearly report*.

CASE STUDY

Supporting Recovery pilot program



The Commonwealth Government has committed \$67.2 million over 4 years to trial the Supporting Recovery pilot program, which uses healing and recovery approaches for people who have experienced DFSV. The program is offered in 6 primary health networks (PHNs) across Australia.

Rather than focusing only on crisis interventions, it is designed to support victim-survivors over the longer term with both mental health care and coordination of support for related needs.

The pilot was designed to deliver place-based responses, adjusted to complement the existing services in the region. As such, the model is being tested in different contexts. In the Hunter New England and Central Coast (HNECC) PHN and in the Moree region.

A central feature of the program is the establishment of Local Care Teams embedded in existing service organisations. These teams do intake, case management, care coordination and referrals to trauma-informed services. This includes referrals to DFSV specific mental health services, which are available free for up to 2 years.

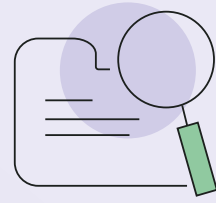
Designed to respond to the specific needs of the regions in which it is running, the HNECC PHN program uses a whole-of-family approach, ensuring that children and young people are viewed as victim-survivors in their own right and assisted to access appropriate support services. In July 2025, the program introduced a virtual mental health service option, providing an additional avenue through which people aged 12 and above can access support.

Each site in the Supporting Recovery pilot program collects data to inform an iterative, ongoing evaluation to ensure their program is operating effectively. The pilot program is set to conclude in June 2026. An independent evaluation will assess the effectiveness of the pilot in achieving its outcomes and determine whether the model is cost-efficient and scalable for wider implementation across Australia.



CASE STUDY

Victoria Central Information Point



The Central Information Point (CIP) consolidates information about a perpetrator of family violence into a single report.

It was established with the aim of providing certain information sharing entities with combined, up-to-date information relevant to family violence risk identification, assessment and management.

The CIP is one of the key recommendations made by the Royal Commission into Family Violence. The Royal Commission into Family Violence recognised that 'timely information sharing is crucial to effectively managing the risk posed by the perpetrator and to ensuring strategies are in place to keep victims safe' (p. 195). The CIP was envisioned, and is viewed by many, as one of the key enablers for effective and timely information sharing.

The CIP brings together workers and information from:

- Court Services Victoria
- Victoria Police
- Corrections Victoria
- the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

CIP reports currently provide a service to family violence practitioners working in The Orange Door. Work is being done to increase the number of services that can request CIP reports.

CIP reports are used to: assess and manage the risk of a person who uses family violence, help services keep the person in view and hold them accountable, and keep people safe.

Practitioners working with family violence victim-survivors reported that CIP reports make a significant difference to identifying the level of risk to adult and child victim survivors and provide for greater understanding of what is happening. A survey of practitioners found that 100% of respondents said the CIP report was either useful, significant or essential, with 72% of respondents saying that the CIP report had changed their risk assessment level (Victorian Government 2020, p. 33).

Health

The health system is often the first point of contact. In 2023–24 one in 2 assault-related hospitalisations were linked to family violence, with women comprising nearly three-quarters of cases (AIHW 2025c). Women affected by intimate partner violence face on average \$50,000 more in lifetime health costs, adding up to an estimated \$8.1 billion nationally (William et al. 2024).

Governments are beginning to respond. In 2023, the Commonwealth invested \$103 million in primary health network (PHN) pilots, including initiatives to strengthen primary care responses and long-term recovery support. In 2024, the Australian Health Practitioner Registration Agency (AHPRA) and 16 National Boards issued a joint statement recognising family violence as core business for health practitioners, setting clear expectations for practice.

Research such as the *Ten to Men* study highlights that focusing on men's mental health could be an important focus area in preventing their use of intimate partner violence, underscoring the critical need for health workers to be prepared to address DFSV in routine care (AIFS 2025).

Police

Domestic and family violence is the largest single demand on police services. In Queensland, it accounts for up to 180,000 calls annually — the highest demand activity for the service (QPS 2025) (refer to the case study in this section). In the Northern Territory, it takes up to 80% of police time (Coroners Court of the Northern Territory 2024). In New South Wales, police respond to an incident every 3 minutes (NSW Police 2025).

While this demonstrates the scale of police involvement, evidence also highlights concerning practices: minimisation of harm, misidentification of those experiencing violence and structural bias against Aboriginal women and women from culturally diverse backgrounds (Malins and Caulfield 2025). There is work underway across some jurisdictions to drive reform from within but without systemic reform and accountability, policing will remain both a critical site of intervention and a potential site of harm.

Men with moderate or severe depressive symptoms were 62% more likely to use intimate partner violence by 2022, compared to men without these symptoms.

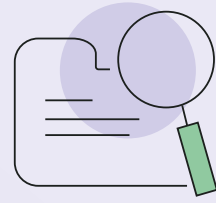


AIFS 2025, p. 1



CASE STUDY

Queensland Police Service 100-Day Review



In 2025, the Queensland Police Service (QPS) conducted a 100-Day Review, with an aim to assess the service's alignment with its legislative mandate and guide improvement to better support its workforce and meet the needs of Queensland communities.

The report found that domestic and family violence calls represent the greatest single demand activity for the QPS. The service has seen an exponential increase in domestic and family violence demand over approximately 10 years.

Over time, changes to legislation mean the way that Queensland police officers respond to domestic and family violence has changed, now requiring complex and resource intensive approaches that extend beyond traditional law enforcement activities. Police currently spend an average of 6.5 hours for every domestic and family violence job. These heightened demands have increased stress and burnout among officers.

At the same time, the report highlights a perception among officers that some dimensions of DFV response should not be considered core work of the police. The report notes: 'Most members, both staff and police, feel a strong sense of purpose in the work they do for the community. However, there is widespread frustration and despair over the inability to "serve their purpose" and support the community effectively, attributed to DFV legislation, staff shortages, and additional responsibilities perceived to belong to other agencies' (Queensland Government 2025).

Housing and homelessness

Domestic and family violence is the leading cause of homelessness. In 2023–24, nearly 40% of clients of specialist homelessness services had experienced violence, with a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children (AIHW 2025d). Between 2022 and 2025, the number of women and girls experiencing homelessness rose by 20%, with nearly half reporting violence as a driver (Homelessness Australia 2025).

These figures make clear that housing and homelessness responses cannot be separated from violence prevention and response. Addressing DFSV requires coordinated investment across housing, homelessness, and specialist service systems.

The National Plan recognises that housing is essential to ending gender-based violence in a generation. The need to improve and expand housing outcomes for people experiencing violence is a recurring message heard by the Commission through extensive engagement with communities, sector stakeholders and people with lived and living experience.

Delivery of crisis, transitional, social and affordable housing for vulnerable Australians, continues through initiatives such as the recently launched \$1 billion National Housing Infrastructure Facility – Crisis and Transitional Housing, the \$100 million Crisis and Transitional Accommodation Program under the Housing Australia Future Fund, and \$175.1 million provided under the Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program.

The Commission looks forward to the finalisation of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan, which will inform future housing and homelessness policy in Australia and unite efforts to improve housing and homelessness outcomes across the board.



Implementation solutions: comprehensive workforce development

Recommendation 11



The Commonwealth should implement Rapid Review recommendations 11 and 14 in full to strengthen the specialist workforce and improve the capacity, cultural capability and safety of adjacent workforces.

The Rapid Review recommendations provide a clear roadmap for workforce reform. These include:

- activating the health system as a prevention lever by –
 - resourcing GPs, perinatal and mental health, and alcohol and other drug services to identify and respond to DFSV
 - introducing a Medicare item for DFSV consultations
 - mandating training in safeguarding through AHPRA
 - increasing collaboration between alcohol and drug services and DFSV services
- building the specialist workforce and adjacent capacity through –
 - a national workforce development strategy
 - labour market analysis
 - secure funding for specialist services
 - capability uplift across justice, health, child protection and legal sectors.

Governments are beginning to act. In 2025, New South Wales launched a 10-year domestic and family violence workforce development strategy, investing \$2.5 million in capability, training, wellbeing and cultural responsiveness. The Northern Territory has committed \$1 million annually to a workforce and sector development plan, including a resource centre to support workers in remote areas. At the national level, the Department of Social Services has funded a \$1.39 million national workforce survey to better understand job types, recruitment, retention and capability needs. These initiatives provide building blocks for a comprehensive national approach.

The Commonwealth Government set a goal and provided the funding to generate 500 new jobs for frontline and community sector workers over four years from 2022–23 to 2025–26. These roles will provide support for victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence. There have been challenges in the progress of this initiative. However, as of 30 September 2025, significant progress has been made and there are now 459.3 full-time equivalent workers recruited through the scheme (DSS 2025).

Pathways for reform

Recommendation 12



All governments must invest in growing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specialist workforce in relevant sectors (including but not limited to health, justice, education, housing and policing).

Recommendation 13



All governments must ensure that all workforce development activity includes resourcing the workforce that works with men and boys, across the life course (e.g. respectful relationships, men behaviour change, fathering, early intervention, Aboriginal healing etc.)

Recommendation 14



As part of the Action Planning process, all governments must identify strategies to upskill migrant and multicultural organisations to become more DFSV competent and address issues of cultural safety and race within DFSV organisations.

Workforce reform requires coordinated action across 5 areas:

- a national workforce strategy — consolidate state and federal initiatives into a unified strategy that identifies opportunities for specialist and adjacent workforce capability development, and the levers to make them happen. Develop career pathways, cultural safety requirements, embed DFSV training and accountability in health, policing, housing, education and justice systems
- sustainable resourcing — extend and expand initiatives such as the 500 Workers Initiative, shifting from short-term grants to long-term, indexed funding
- diversity and inclusion — resource Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to lead workforce growth and build capacity in multicultural, disability and LGBTIQ+SB services
- evidence and innovation — strengthen workforce data collection through the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Department of Social Services, support practice-led research through Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), and trial innovative workforce models such as regional shared roles and digital supervision.

These reforms must be embedded in the next Action Plan to ensure a sustainable, skilled, and inclusive workforce. The scale of investment must match the scale of the challenge.



The DFSV specialist workforce needs to grow with support from other sectors

The challenge is clear: the workforce required to end domestic, family and sexual violence is larger than the specialist sector alone (refer to the case study in this section). Governments must ensure that their workforce planning and implementation includes health, justice, housing, education and community services – all of which are already engaging with people affected by violence.

Governments have begun to respond through targeted investments, workforce surveys and new strategies in states and territories. But progress is uneven, and momentum must be consolidated into a national approach.

Implementing the Rapid Review recommendations, resourcing the growth of specialist and adjacent workforces, and embedding cultural safety across systems will be critical. Without this, Australia cannot achieve the vision of the National Plan. With it, we can build a workforce capable of delivering safety, equity and justice in every community.



Part 3

Priority areas for Action





Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

[T]he underlying causes of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples are different to that of non-Indigenous Australians. In particular, some of the underlying causes are based on the ongoing impacts of colonisation, including the forced removal of children and intergenerational trauma ... and include institutional and systemic racialised abuse and marginalisation



(DSS 2023, p. 18)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples bring deep cultural knowledge, strong community leadership and enduring traditions of care that are central to preventing and responding to domestic, family and sexual violence (DSSV).

These strengths sit alongside the unique challenges shaped by colonisation, systemic racism, child removal and intergenerational trauma, which influence both the drivers and impacts of violence in First Nations communities.

For decades, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, leaders and communities have led the way in advocating for change and designing solutions that are culturally safe and effective. Governments now have the opportunity to honour this leadership by ensuring responses are guided by self-

determination, long-term investment in Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs), and shared decision-making at all levels.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025* marked a shift towards a more tailored and community-led approach. Building on this foundation, the forthcoming standalone national plan, *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices*, provides a chance to fully embed self-determination in governance, planning and implementation. Its success will depend on governments working in true partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, supported by strong accountability mechanisms and investment in sustainable, community-designed responses.



The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Closing the Gap) includes 4 priority reform areas for joint national action aimed at improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

- **Priority Reform One** – Formal partnerships and shared decision-making
- **Priority Reform Two** – Building the Community-controlled Sector
- **Priority Reform Three** – Transforming Government Organisations
- **Priority Reform Four** – Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level.

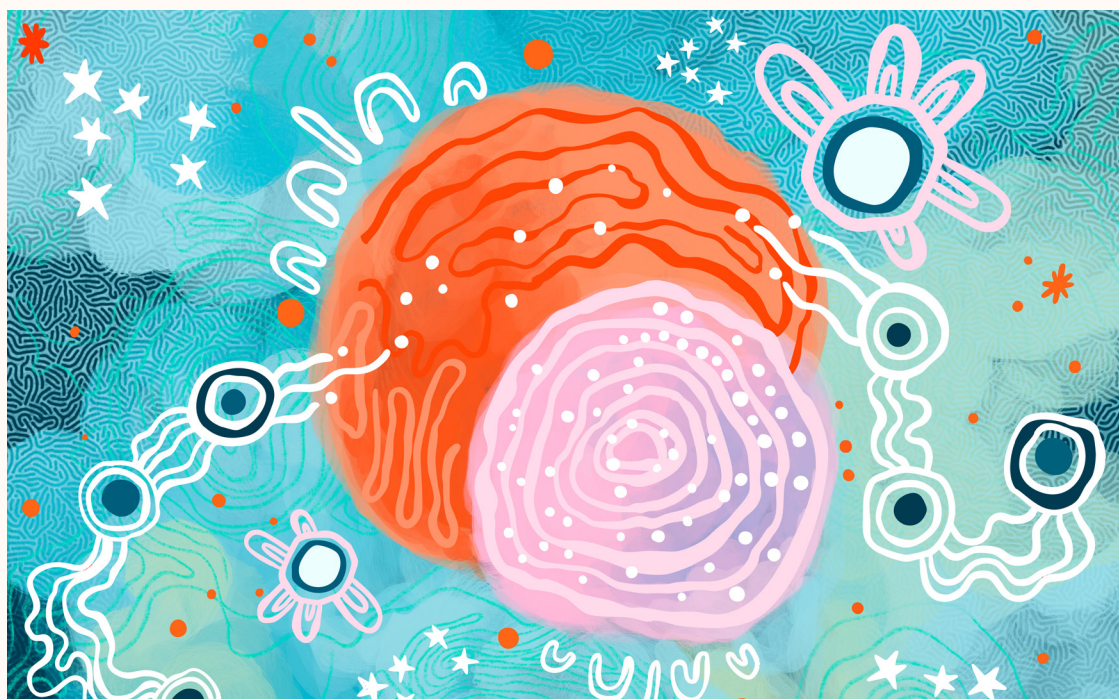
The recommendations made in this report support embedding the above four Priority Reforms to progress actions to achieve targets under Closing the Gap.

Achieving Closing the Gap Target 13 will require governments to move from commitment to action: embedding shared governance, strengthening data systems, and resourcing community-led approaches. By building on the resilience, expertise and solutions already present in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Australia can work towards reducing violence, supporting healing, and creating safe futures for children, families and communities.

Refer to the case study in this section.

Closing the Gap Target 13

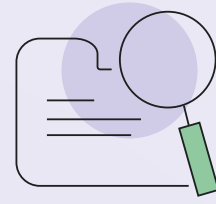
Closing the Gap Target 13: By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50%, as progress towards zero.



Artist: Rachael Sarra

CASE STUDY

Kumangka Program



The Kumangka Program (meaning 'together') is a culturally grounded recovery and healing initiative that is designed, led and delivered in partnership by Kornar Winmil Yunti (KWY) Aboriginal Corporation and First Nations Healing Incorporated in metropolitan Adelaide.

The program supports families who are experiencing or have experienced DFSV by providing a holistic family response focused on long-term healing and recovery. The program prioritises safety and culture, and it addresses trauma and the underlying causes of harmful behaviour.

Case management support is provided by Aboriginal practitioners to individual family members and for the family as a whole. A practitioner is also available to link families with disability support and National Disability Insurance Scheme funding, where needed.

As Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) in South Australia, KWY and First Nations Healing Incorporated design and deliver services in consultation with Aboriginal people and communities, and deliver services that recognise, and centre on, the diversity, vibrancy and wisdom of Aboriginal culture.

The Kumangka Program highlights the collaboration between the Commonwealth and South Australian governments towards the collective vision of the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*.

The Kumangka program receives funding through the Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses 2021–30 Federation Funding Agreement, an agreement between the Australian, state and territory governments that provides funding and support for domestic and family violence services.

Kumangka stands as a powerful example of collaboration between two ACCOs to deliver Aboriginal-designed and led services to support Aboriginal people and strengthen families and communities.



Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan

The Australian Government's commitment to the first ever First Nations National Plan *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices* is a powerful recognition of the need for an urgent, targeted response to the burden of DFSV experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and that this will only be effectively addressed through leadership from within these communities. The Commission is pleased to note the work of the Steering Committee for *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices* to end DFSV in First Nations communities, with the plan nearing completion. Of particular note is the incorporation of a mechanism ensuring the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the steering committee lead the process and that self-determination has been embedded in the plan's development.

The establishment of a national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety will complement this governance structure, providing an opportunity for ACCOs to undertake shared planning, identify and prosecute sector priorities.

The Commission strongly supports the release of *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices* before the end of 2025 to be prioritised by government, noting that any delays will hamper our ability to achieve outcomes.

The Commission notes that the Commonwealth Government response to the Senate Inquiry report on Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children was tabled in November 2024. The Government is continuing to work with states and territories to ensure that the report informs practical action, including in the development of *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices*.

What we know

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women carry a disproportionate burden of DFSV. This violence often goes unrecognised by the broader community. The current population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is estimated at 3.2% of the Australian population, and yet:

- in 2023–24, Indigenous women experienced an intimate partner homicide victimisation rate seven times greater than the rate for all Australian women (AIC 2025)
- 2 in 3 (67%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 15 and over who had experienced physical harm in the last 12 months reported the perpetrator was an intimate partner or family member (AIHW 2025a)
- nearly 3 in 4 (72%) hospitalisations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples involving treatment for assault were due to family violence (AIHW 2025a).

Refer to the case study in this section.

I want to see little girls of today able to grow into strong women of the future because of the work that we're doing today, that they have been able to tell their stories of survival, and tell us the things that they've changed in order to get to a safer 2050.



Muriel Bamblett, Co-Chair, *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices* Steering Committee.
Quote from Commission's Voices Towards 2050 podcast

CASE STUDY

Northern Territory Coroners Court



Inquest into the deaths of **Miss Yunupingu, Ngeygo Ragurk, Kumarn Rubuntja, and Kumanjayi Haywood.**

In November 2024, Northern Territory coroner Elisabeth Armitage handed down her findings in the inquest into the deaths of four Aboriginal women – Miss Yunupingu, Ngeygo Ragurk, Kumarn Rubuntja, and Kumanjayi Haywood – who were killed by their domestic partners between 2018 and 2021. Each case, along with reviews of 68 other DFSV-related deaths of Aboriginal women, revealed long histories of DFSV, systemic failures across government agencies and missed opportunities for intervention.

The inquiry identified a serious crisis related to DFSV in the Northern Territory (NT). It heard that the NT has the highest rate of DFSV-related homicide, assault and imprisonment in Australia. DFSV accounts for over 60% of assaults and a significant proportion of NT police and justice system activity. And Aboriginal women are disproportionately affected, with hospitalisation rates 40 times the national average.

The coroner found failures across policing, child protection, health, justice and community services. Women were frequently not believed, not protected and punished for seeking help. The inquiry found a lack of culturally safe support services and repeated missed opportunities for coordinated intervention contributing to preventable deaths.

The resulting recommendations covered areas such as governance and coordination, workforce development, community-led responses, justice and accountability, and funding and sustainability. Recommendations included a call for a DFSV peak body in the NT, implementation of DFSV screening protocols in health settings, expansion of men's behaviour change programs, including for those in custody, and specialist DFSV courts.

The coroner's findings align with what the Commission hears from sector experts, people with lived experience and other stakeholders: the need for improved collaboration and coordination, increased funding for specialist services and improved service responses in mainstream services such as health, education, child support and police.





COMMISSION REPORT ON

Northern Territory visit and engagements

In November 2024, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission undertook a visit to the Northern Territory (NT), aligning with the coronial inquest into the deaths of 4 Aboriginal women between 2018 and 2021. Commissioner Micaela Cronin provided expert testimony during the inquest and committed to attending the handing down of the findings.

The coroner's recommendations call for increased investment in frontline emergency services, women's shelters and men's behaviour change programs.

In addition to participating in the inquest, Commissioner Cronin and Assistant Commissioner Roberts engaged with key stakeholders across Alice Springs, Darwin and Katherine to deepen their understanding of systemic issues and explore collaborative opportunities to address DFSV in the NT.

These engagements revealed critical insights into the challenges and opportunities in responding to DFSV in the NT, including:

- funding and service delivery gaps
- workforce shortages and the role of Aboriginal medical services
- support for men and trauma-informed approaches
- the intersection of trauma, alcohol use and housing insecurity
- the impact of child protection policies on help-seeking behaviours.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the NT continue to bear the burden of intergenerational trauma resulting from colonisation, systemic racism and historical interventions. This trauma is compounded by disproportionately high rates of domestic, family and sexual violence experienced by Aboriginal women and children.

Addressing these intersecting harms through culturally safe, trauma-informed services is essential to improving outcomes, supporting healing and ensuring long-term change. Sustainable investment in community-led responses, prevention initiatives, and holistic support systems is critical to breaking cycles of violence and restoring safety, dignity and wellbeing.

In 2023, First Nations victims of sexual assault were predominantly female, ranging from 77% in New South Wales to 91% in South Australia (AIHW 2025a). In most states, the rate of sexual assault among women and girls under 18 was higher than in the adult population (AIHW 2025a).

We know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more likely to be

placed in out-of-home care. Between 2019 and 2023, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care increased from around 18,000 to around 19,700 children. In 2023, rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were 12.1 times higher than non-Indigenous children (AIHW 2025b).

Closing the Gap

Recommendation 15



The Commonwealth must, as an urgent priority, invest in data to monitor Closing the Gap Target 13.

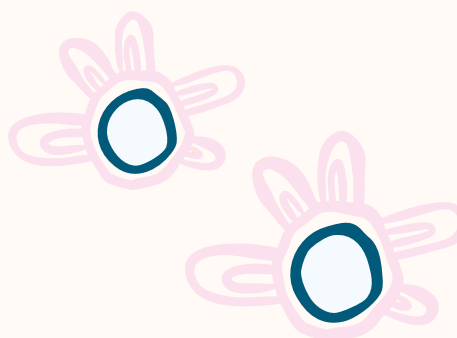
Governments must urgently invest in robust and timely data collection to monitor Closing the Gap Target 13, ensuring progress towards halving the rates of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children can be transparently tracked and acted upon.

This target will be informed by a number of indicators and contextual information. To date there is no publicly available data to support this target or the indicators.

In 2018–19, a baseline for assessment was set at 8.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females aged 15 years and over

experienced domestic physical or face-to-face threatened physical harm (Productivity Commission n.d.).

The Commission is deeply concerned that there has been no update to this data since the baseline year of 2018–19. With only 6 years left to achieve this target, there is currently no way to judge progress towards this goal. While acknowledging the significant complexities in collecting population-level data, this is unacceptable. The community should – and does – expect better from its data custodians, and from government.



Recommendation 16



The Commonwealth should ensure governance established to oversee the implementation of *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence* must embed shared decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, leaders and communities.

Implementation of *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices* must embed shared decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, leaders, and communities, with the DFSV Commission empowered to ensure consistent monitoring and amplification of community feedback.

Self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is a key principle that must be replicated at all levels of governance, implementation and

evaluation. Direct accountability to the community is not only a human rights responsibility, but has also been shown to improve outcomes for families and individuals.

The Commission notes that there is a need to ensure that culturally safe and appropriate approaches include recognising the opportunities presented by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' approaches to prevention, crisis response, healing and justice.

The right to self-determination is not about the state working with our people, in partnership. It is about finding agreed ways that Aboriginal people and their communities can have control over their own lives and have a collective say in the future well being of their children and young people.



Professor Megan Davis (DSS 2024, p. 4)

Nargneit Birrang Partnership Framework

One example of self-determination is the flexible investment designed and implemented with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) in Victoria under the Nargneit Birrang Partnership Framework. It is designed to be Aboriginal-led and co-designed, informed by the principles of self-determination, safety, and cultural connection.

It guides ACCOs to work in partnership with communities, and to design and implement services and supports which

provide adults, children, young people and families who are impacted by family violence with holistic healing. The Framework notes that 'Traditionally, Government has funded time-limited Western models to address family violence and used rigid approaches to reporting and compliance. It is recognised that there is a gap between the development and piloting of culturally appropriate responses to family violence, and the long-term, sustained support required to ensure enduring change and accountability approaches.'

Recommendation 17



As the key mechanism for government accountability to the National Plan, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission should be empowered to work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to increase consistency of monitoring across government efforts and ensure amplification of real-time feedback into the Action Planning processes.

As the key existing mechanism for government accountability to the National Plan, the Commission should be empowered to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to embed consistent monitoring across government efforts. Real-time monitoring will amplify local voices into national action planning processes and provide early warning when systems are not working as intended. Consistent monitoring improves accountability and ensures that reforms respond to community-identified needs and lived experience.

Despite significant effort and commitment by leaders, progress on planning, evaluation and, by extension, impact, has been disappointing. Government efforts to establish reporting mechanisms for programs of work and population-level indicators to assess the impact of that work are lacking and in need of urgent attention.

The Commission recognises there is an opportunity for *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices* to prioritise data development in a way that centres Indigenous data sovereignty, and builds shared understanding of the many ways to gain insight into policy and program effectiveness through engagement of lived experience.

The Commission has not been provided with sufficient progress reporting to assist in its assessment of the effectiveness of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025*. Indeed, it is unclear if mechanisms to determine whether the actions contained within the plan have been implemented or achieved. This is not to suggest that a body of work is not being undertaken to support the objectives of the National Plan and the Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander Action Plan, nor to make any judgement on the work of governments, ACCOs, not for profit agencies and communities. Rather, the materials that would allow for a meaningful analysis have not been provided. The lack of information is disappointing on 2 fronts: first, it reduces the transparency of governments, and second it misses an opportunity to share promising practice and improved outcomes.

This lack of reporting, combined with unclear connectivity of governance between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan and the First Action Plan, represent a missed opportunity for government to demonstrate transparency and accountability to the important activities contained within this plan, the first of its kind.

Similarly, effective measures to assess the effectiveness of this first plan would have been of assistance in the development of *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices*, and allowed this plan to commence with critical governance, data development and performance measurement frameworks both tested and evaluated.

What the Commission will do

The Commission looks forward to working in partnership with a newly established governance body to support:

- evaluation of the effectiveness of *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices*
- improved data collection and reporting
- promoting connections between the 2 National Plans
- championing best practice for the benefit of all communities.



Recommendation 18



The Commonwealth should increase long-term, flexible investment in Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have authority in designing, delivering and evaluating responses to DFSV.

Governments should provide long-term, flexible funding to ACCOs, recognising their authority and capability to design, deliver and evaluate culturally safe and effective responses. This must include supporting prevention, crisis response, healing and justice pathways.

We know that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples choose not to engage with mainstream services. There is a well-founded fear of misidentification, compounding trauma, child removal or institutional racism that is compromising safety, justice and healing.

In 2023, a landmark study found that systemic racism had contributed to the deaths of 151 Indigenous women in Australia, with almost all of these women engaging in the justice or service system in some way prior to their deaths (Cripps 2023). Indigenous women also experience higher rates of misidentification by police, and are more likely to be described as 'difficult to engage' (Buxton-Namisyk et al. 2022).

It is incumbent on all services to provide culturally safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including children. This means ensuring co-design with First Nations communities, and ongoing engagement with communities in implementation and evaluation.

ACCOs and community partnerships: responding to the challenge of a sparse population across a large area

The Big Rivers Region spans approximately 322,000 km², accounting for 25% of the Northern Territory's landmass, and is home to approximately 8,600 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, representing 48% of the region's population. To service such a large area, a consortium has been established to address DFSV between 3 Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations: Katherine West Health Board, Sunrise Health Service and Wurli Wurlinjang Health Service, and NT Health. The 2-year pilot program will provide individualised, culturally safe, DFSV-specific care and support to DFSV victim-survivors as part of their longer-term recovery and healing from the impacts of DFSV. The secondary aims of the program are to:

- deliver health promotion and awareness about DFSV for the families and communities affected by DFSV
- develop and support aligned work processes, connections and partnerships across healthcare and DFSV service providers in the Big Rivers region
- embed DFSV-specific, trauma-informed, culturally appropriate care within existing and new DFSV services and programs
- promote the safety, wellbeing and retention of staff supporting DFSV victim survivors.

Actively engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in solutions

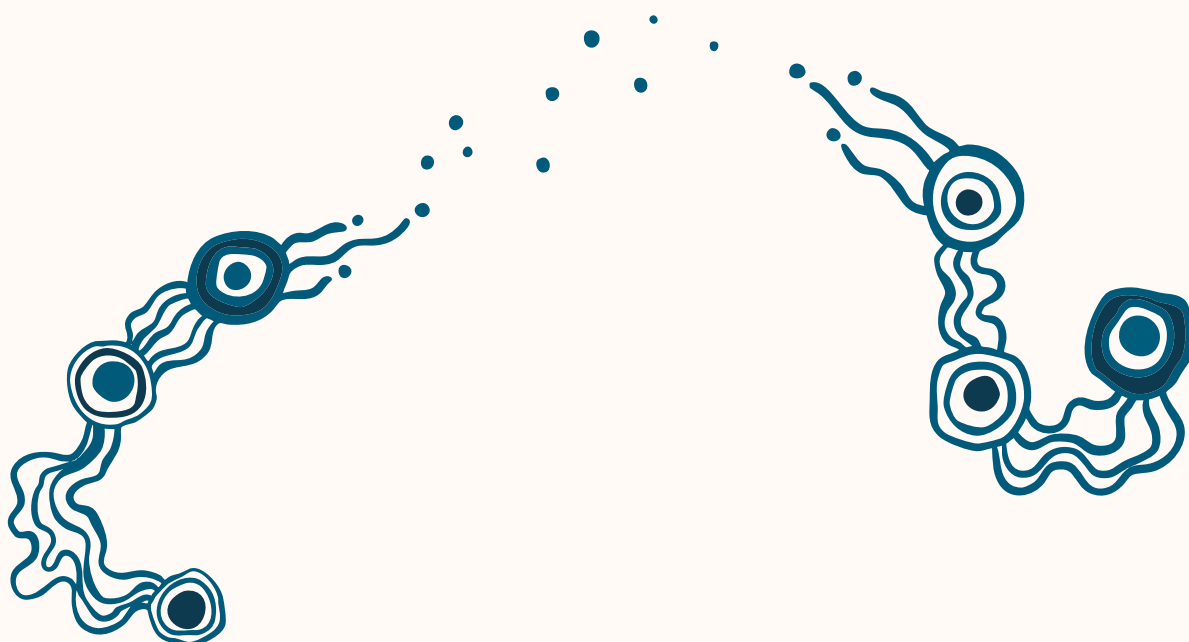
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men hold a vital role in creating and sustaining safe families and communities. When men are engaged as leaders in prevention and healing, they help shift community attitudes, challenge harmful behaviours and provide strong role modelling for younger generations (refer to the case study in this section).

As highlighted in the 'Men and boys' chapter of this report, the DFSV Commission recommendation to establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Men's Advisory Body will inform prevention and early intervention strategies, acknowledging the important role of men in leading change within families and communities.

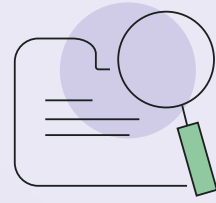
The Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches (Rapid Review) highlighted the importance of engaging men and boys as a critical pathway to ending gender-based violence, calling for greater investment in culturally safe and community-led initiatives. In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts, programs such as Dilly Bag (a men's cultural healing and leadership program), Yarning Up on Men's Health, and men's groups facilitated through ACCOs demonstrate how culturally grounded approaches can strengthen identity, build accountability and support intergenerational healing.

Establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Men's Advisory Body would build on this evidence and operationalise the Rapid Review's recommendation, embedding men's voices and leadership in national policy and program design.

By recognising and resourcing men as central to the solution, governments can support long-term cultural change and create the conditions for safer futures for children, families and communities.



CASE STUDY



THE STAND: enabling community responses to prevent domestic and family violence

NO MORE is an Aboriginal initiative that works across the Northern Territory (NT) to address domestic and family violence through a whole of community approach. NO MORE works with communities to develop local responses to domestic and family violence and improve the safety of women and children.

In August 2025, NO MORE launched THE STAND, a campaign designed to honour the more than 90 women lost to domestic and family violence in the NT since 2000 by calling on groups and organisations to create 90 Domestic Violence Action Plans (DVAPs) in 90 days. They conducted free community workshops across the NT and online to introduce the initiative, exploring the underlying causes of domestic and family violence and helping participants shape DVAPs tailored to their group's values and community context.

NO MORE also showcases DVAPs shared by various organisations to celebrate leadership, inspire others to participate and to build momentum.

By calling on organisations like sporting clubs, workplaces, community groups and businesses to create DVAPs, NO MORE is helping to establish practical changes across the community and instilling the idea that it is the responsibility of the whole community to prevent domestic and family violence.

Children and young people

To end domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) within a generation, Australia must put children and young people at the centre of reform. They experience high levels of DFSV in their own right, but they are often overlooked in data, policy and service systems.

Urgent action is needed to close gaps in support, particularly for those most at risk, and to ensure services are child safe, trauma-informed and accessible. Most importantly, children and young people must have a genuine voice in shaping the responses that affect them. Embedding their perspectives through mechanisms such as a DFSV Youth Advisory Council will ensure that reforms are accountable, inclusive and effective in meeting their needs.

If we are serious about ending DFSV within a single generation, we must focus on children and young people.

The next generation could be the first to grow up without the shadow of DFSV – but only if we act decisively. The next 12 months are critical. We need to:

- embed child-safe cultures in early childhood education and care
- address online harms and grooming
- close service gaps for 15–17-year-olds who fall between systems
- embed children and young people in governance and decision-making
- collect better data on DFSV impacts for children and young people
- prioritise responses for children at greatest risk – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children living with a disability, LGBTIQ+SB young people and those from migrant and refugee communities.

As a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Australia has an international obligation to protect children from all forms of violence, including in their homes.



What we know

Children and young people in Australia experience high rates of DFSV. This has devastating consequences for their safety, wellbeing and development.

Approximately one child is killed as a result of family violence every fortnight in Australia (Brown et al. 2019).

The Australian Child Maltreatment Study identified, for the first time, how many Australians in the general population have been exposed to the 5 types of child abuse and neglect. It found that:

- 62% of Australians reported experiencing at least one form of child maltreatment (including physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect, or exposure to domestic violence)
- 40% were exposed to domestic violence between carers, which was the most common form of maltreatment and frequently co-occurred with other types
- maltreatment is highly gendered. Girls experienced sexual abuse at 2.4 times the rate and emotional abuse at 1.5 times the rate of boys (Haslam et al. 2023).

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) found that 76% of filicides (child deaths by a parent or caregiver) between 2010–18 occurred in the context of DFSV (ANROWS 2024).

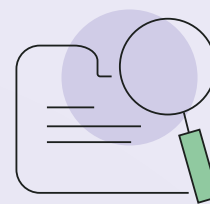
In addition:

- 29% of 18–19-year-olds reported experiencing intimate partner violence in the previous year (O'Donnell et al. 2023)
- 72% of young people aged 18–24 have experienced technology-facilitated abuse — the highest of any age group (Haslam et al. 2023)
- the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) found that in 2024, around 2 in 5 (39%) of victims of sexual assault were between 10 and 17 years of age at the date of the incident (ABS 2025b).

The effects of child maltreatment and the experience of DFSV on children have lifelong consequences, affecting mental and physical health, substance use and socioeconomic outcomes (Haslam et al. 2023). Emerging research also highlights the connection between children's exposure to domestic and family violence and the likelihood of those children going on to use violence in their own relationships and homes (Fitz-Gibbon et al. 2022a; 2022b). Refer to the case study in this section for an example initiative addressing harmful sexual behaviours among young people.

CASE STUDY

Turning Tides Allambee



Established in 1993, Allambee is a specialist service providing therapeutic interventions and support for people affected by DFSV. They deliver a range of initiatives targeted towards young people, including case management for children at risk and community-led prevention and gender equality programs in schools throughout the Binjareb (Peel) region in Western Australia.

Turning Tides is a specialist service that focuses on addressing harmful sexual behaviours among young people. These behaviours fall outside of what might be culturally accepted or expected for their developmental stage, and that may cause harm to a young person or others. Turning Tides provides direct support to young people who have displayed such behaviours, as well as their parents, caregivers and families.

Turning Tides is available to young people generally aged between 12 and 18 years. The young person must be based within south and south-east metropolitan areas of Perth or the Binjareb region to take part. The program is not intended for young people who have been convicted of a sexual offence.

The support provided by Allambee through Turning Tides aims to reduce or cease the harmful sexual behaviours, improve wellbeing and build safety for both the young person and those around them. Specific support services available through the program include:

- comprehensive individual and family assessment
- risk management and safety planning
- counselling and therapeutic interventions for both the young person and their family members or caregivers
- collaborative case management with linkages to other services
- education, including in relation to the role of pornography and consent
- advocacy support.



Recognising children and young people as victims in their own right

There is strong recognition that children and young people are victims of DFSV in their own right, not merely as witnesses.

The National Plan embeds this principle in one of its 6 long-term outcomes, specifically to ensure 'children and young people are safe, supported and able to thrive' (DSS 2022). This recognition provides a clear mandate: responses must prioritise children's immediate safety while also supporting recovery, healing and the development of safe, respectful relationships across the life course.

Under the National Plan, all governments have committed to actions across prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing. Initiatives identified under the First Action Plan (2023–2027) include respectful relationships and consent education, early mental health supports, specialist services for child sexual abuse survivors, and expanded access to recovery programs. The Action Plan emphasised the importance of culturally safe, age-appropriate services and calls on states and territories to tailor initiatives to children and young people.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025* acknowledges the unique challenges faced by Indigenous communities and the role of DFSV in the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in child protection and justice systems.

Other national frameworks – *Safe and supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031*, the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030* and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap – all reinforce the need for coordinated, child-centred responses.

In September 2024, National Cabinet announced a major package of investment, including \$80 million to expand trauma-informed supports for children and young people. This funding is being directed to specialist family violence services, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs), child sexual abuse services and programs supporting children after separation.

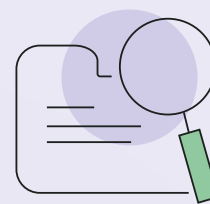
These commitments show progress but also highlight the need for sustained system-wide reform.

In 2024, the Commission identified children and young people as a priority, highlighting the importance of lived experience voices, frontline services and the need to draw upon priorities identified by ANROWS (Gillfeather-Spetere and Watson 2024). They also align with recommendations from the Australian Human Rights Commission's child and young person consultation report *Do things with the information we tell you* (AHRC 2024).

Refer to the case study in this section.

CASE STUDY

Safe and Well Kids program



The Safe and Well Kids (SAWK) program is a recovery and healing initiative delivered in partnership by Relationships Australia South Australia (SA), Women's Safety Services SA and the Legal Services Commission of SA.

The 12-week program supports women and children aged 0 to 18 years who are affected by DFSV by delivering services that promote safety, stability and recovery.

Since the program began in 2021, service providers have developed an integrated practice model that ensures a coordinated and collaborative approach to family support, recognising children as experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence (DSFV) in their own right. Services are committed to collaboration underpinned by ongoing relationship building, joint learning and continuous improvement.

Safety, stability and recovery for women and children is secured through access to holistic and coordinated service responses that include a focus on the needs of children, the caregiving relationship, improved family functioning, legal information and advice, and case management.

As part of the program, children and their mother/caregivers are given the opportunity to engage in therapy to understand the impact of domestic violence and improve their social and emotional health through strengthening bonds.

The SAWK program receives funding through the DFSV Responses 2021–30 Federation Funding Agreement, an agreement between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments that provides funding and support for DFSV services.

The SAWK program highlights the united vision held by the South Australian DFSV service sector, South Australian and Commonwealth Governments in working towards outcomes under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*. This program is an excellent example of an integrated service model that recognises and responds to children as victim-survivors in their own right.



Focusing on the early years is crucial

Children spend significant periods in early childhood education and care, health, sporting and faith-based contexts where adults hold positions of authority and trust.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017a) revealed how weak governance, unsafe cultures and poor oversight allowed abuse to occur unchecked in too many institutions where the community had a right to expect that children would be safe and cared for. The Child Safe Standards developed by the Royal Commission – including requirements for child participation, family engagement, staff training and continuous improvement – are directly transferable to early childhood education and care as well as primary health environments. They should be regarded as baseline regulatory expectations rather than discretionary initiatives (Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2017b).

Addressing the risks of grooming and educating workforces that engage with children and young people, and families and carers, to identify and prevent grooming must be a priority. The National Office for Child Safety defines grooming as ‘gradual behaviours that manipulate and control a child, as well as their family, kin

and carers, other support networks, or organisations, in order to perpetrate child sexual abuse’ (National Office for Child Safety 2021). The Royal Commission’s research showed that grooming is often poorly understood, with staff and institutions failing to identify boundary violations – such as secrecy, favouritism or breaking rules – until after harm as occurred (Royal Commission 2017).

Training and policy need to equip staff and carers to recognise grooming behaviours early and escalate concerns before harm takes place. The Grace Tame Foundation has focused national attention on this issue, stressing the need for explicit, age-appropriate education on grooming as part of respectful relationships curricula. Grooming is often misinterpreted as mentorship or care, yet it is a structured and manipulative process that requires consistent, cross-sector prevention frameworks (Tame 2022).

A comprehensive approach requires schools, early childhood education and care providers, health and sporting bodies and online platforms to adopt a shared language, establish clear referral pathways and identify red-flag behaviours. Such measures go beyond a sole reliance on consent education and create a coordinated system response to the risk factors underpinning child sexual abuse.

Recommendation 19



The Commonwealth should establish a national Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Youth Advisory Council to ensure the voices and perspectives of young people are embedded in the national Action Planning process and provide an accountability mechanism during the implementation of the Action Plan.

Children and young people's voices are not being heard

Although governments acknowledge the importance of lived experience, children and young people are still not meaningfully included in the design of systems intended to protect and support them.

ANROWS has highlighted that responses have historically been built without the perspectives of children and young people (ANROWS 2025). Where engagement has occurred, it has frequently been tokenistic rather than genuine co-design, limiting their ability to shape policies and services that directly affect their lives. ANROWS highlights that engagement mechanisms often fail to be safe, accessible or inclusive – especially for marginalised groups.

When children and young people are excluded from shaping policy and service design, systems lack critical insights into what makes them feel safe and supported. Evidence from ANROWS' *In their own right* review reinforces this point, showing that engagement is too often conducted on adult terms, limiting the ability of children to genuinely influence outcomes (Gillfeather-Spetere and Watson 2024).

Similarly, the Australian Human Rights Commission's report *Do things with the information we tell you* emphasises that young people want their voices taken seriously and acted upon, but too often they face systemic barriers. These include requirements for parental consent that prevent children – particularly those without a protective parent – from accessing services, inaccessible consultation processes that are not designed with adolescents in mind and

unsafe disclosure environments where young people risk further harm if they speak up. Both reports highlight the consequences of failing to provide safe, consistent and child-centred mechanisms for engagement: services and systems continue to miss critical insights about what children and young people need in order to be safe and supported.

These findings align with advice from the Commission's Lived Experience Advisory Council and other sector experts, which collectively call for embedding genuine co-design, reducing barriers to participation and ensuring that children and young people's perspectives are treated as central to building effective and responsive systems.

Engagement must be safe, accessible, culturally inclusive and embedded as a routine practice across services and governments. Continuous improvement processes should ensure children and young people's feedback is sought and acted on. Frameworks such as the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People's *Child and youth engagement framework* (Victorian Commission for Children and Young People 2025), the Y-Change initiative (Berry Street n.d.), and resources such as *Doing good business* (ICPS 2018) on working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children provide practical guidance.

Governments and organisations could be better supported in this work through the creation of a resource repository that brings together good practice principles, frameworks, tools and other materials, through the leadership and sharing function of ANROWS.



Despite evidence clearly demonstrating that young people need to be involved in designing youth-focused solutions and in a way that holds authority and is sustained, the possibilities enabled by a youth-specific service system have also not been developed in a consistent way.



PMC 2024a, p. 48

Recommendation 20



The Commonwealth should work with states and territories to amend existing and develop new service models, including through amending contracts, to ensure that services are designed and reformed to directly address the needs of children and young people. Activity directly addressing children and young people should be counted and reported on, with the objective of understanding levels of need, highlighting gaps and ensuring that children and young people's needs are met in timely and effective ways.

Identifying and addressing gaps in service responses for children and young people

Research by Safe Steps (2025) has highlighted that no single service in Australia currently provides an end-to-end response for children and young people experiencing family or intimate partner violence. Instead, they are forced to move between the homelessness, DFSV and mental health service systems with inconsistent eligibility rules and uneven trauma-informed practice, significantly increasing the risk that they will fall through the cracks.

The results are alarming – Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data shows that children who received specialist homelessness support accounted for 1 in 13 deaths among children in Australia through 2012–13 to 2022–23 (AIHW 2025).

Those aged 15–17 face particular vulnerability due to being caught between service thresholds.

Young people who fall into these 'in-between' years of service eligibility often face systemic barriers to safety and support. Age cut-offs mean that young people may be considered too old for child

protection intervention – particularly if there is no protective parent to anchor statutory involvement – yet too young to access adult DFSV or refuge services.

Most DFSV and refuge services are designed primarily around adult women with dependent children, not young people seeking help on their own. As a result, young people who present alone often find that safe accommodation, tailored therapeutic support or guidance in navigating legal and statutory systems are unavailable or inappropriate for their needs (AIHW 2025b).

The scale of unmet demand is clear. In 2023–24, more than 13,000 unaccompanied children aged 12–17 sought help from homelessness services (AIHW 2025d). Without adult advocacy, these adolescents must navigate complex systems alone. Many cycle between homelessness, ad hoc crisis responses and ongoing exposure to violence.

Despite this high demand for services and assistance, the system lacks capacity to support unaccompanied children. The AIHW found that 3 in 4 unaccompanied children experiencing homelessness when support began were still homeless when support ended in 2023–24 (AIHW 2025d).

We need to count children and young people

Despite what we know, children remain under-counted and under-seen in national data collections. Major surveys rely on adults recalling childhood experiences and are not designed to capture the full extent of violence affecting those under 15. Much of our contemporaneous understanding comes from administrative data and small studies focusing on specific cohorts. This produces a fragmented picture that obscures both prevalence and pathways to support.

The recent Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into data on people who use violence (Parliament of Victoria 2025) identified the need for improved data on children and young people's experience of DFSV and use of problematic or harmful behaviours. Examples of data gaps include:

- children present at DFSV incidents attended by police – Victoria Police record when children are present at incidents, but national data is not available
- children who are bereaved by domestic homicide – there is no national data on the number of children whose parent is killed as a result of domestic violence
- youth suicide in the context of domestic, family and sexual violence – while there are national figures on children killed as a result of family and domestic violence, comparable figures are not available for youth suicides despite research indicating that DFSV is a significant contributor
- breadth of children's experience – there is currently a piecemeal picture of children and young people's experiences of different forms of violence (for example, intimate partner violence, technology-facilitated abuse, sibling and parental violence and abuse).

Despite clear evidence of harm, many young people continue to fall through the cracks of existing systems. The South Australian Royal Commission's *Silence and inaction* study documented how young people aged 13–18 often felt dismissed or ignored even after disclosing violence. These included schools not acknowledging visible signs of harm (bruising, crying, withdrawal from school) and interpreting trauma as behavioural problems (Fitz-Gibbon 2025).

Some described services as treating them as simply extensions of their caregivers, not individuals with their own voices, rights or experiences, leaving them feeling 'invisible' inside systems that were 'adult-centric'.

In spite of our best efforts and those of other organisations providing services to children, young people and families critical service gaps remain.



Safe Steps 2025, p. 6



Recommendation 21



All governments should expand funding for programs that specifically address the needs of children and young people, including programs that meet the needs of unaccompanied young people, and programs to address child sexual exploitation.

The scope of the work under this recommendation will need to include recognition of other national work, including *Safe and Supported the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children* and the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse* which are also anticipated to have new action plans commencing in 2026.

Supporting ACCOs to design and deliver tailored responses

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people experience DFSV at disproportionately high rates. This exposure is a significant contributor to their overrepresentation in child protection and youth and adult justice systems. Responses must therefore prioritise culturally safe, community-led approaches that reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of healing.

ACCOs play a central role in delivering effective supports. They are best placed to provide holistic, family-centred services that respond to both immediate safety and long-term healing needs. Yet their work is often constrained by short-term, inflexible funding from multiple funding sources. This creates reporting burdens and fails to match the scale of the issue.

Safety, consent and respect education

Safety, consent and respect education is a cornerstone of prevention. In 2023, the Australian Government committed \$77.6 million to expand consent and respectful relationships education in schools, building on earlier state and territory initiatives. While this investment signals progress, young people and educators report that myths about sexual violence persist, peer-on-peer sexual harm is increasing and teachers are facing higher levels of sexual harassment from students.

Further prevention activities should be broadened to include programs that meet the needs of unaccompanied young people and programs to address child sexual exploitation and grooming.

The South Australian Royal Commission recommended stronger national approaches, including a standalone curriculum delivered consistently across the schooling system. It also stressed that teachers need more support – not only to deliver consent and respectful relationships education confidently, but also to respond appropriately when violence is suspected or disclosed.

Youth advocates have highlighted the profound influence of technology in shaping attitudes and behaviours, with boys and girls often inhabiting very different online spaces. To be effective, education must engage young men directly and foster a shared understanding of safety and respect between young people, parents, educators and communities. Cultural context also matters. Concepts such as healthy masculinity must be defined and taught in partnership with the relevant cultural communities to ensure relevance and impact.

In May 2024, National Cabinet announced a range of measures to tackle factors that exacerbate violence against women, such as violent online pornography and misogynistic content targeting children and young people. From December 2025, social media platforms will be required to prevent Australians under the age of 16 from having social media accounts through age verification of users.

Importantly, schools are a critical site for early intervention. Stakeholders consistently report that intervention usually comes only after a crisis, and that very few culturally relevant, trauma-informed early responses are available. The National Plan acknowledges that early intervention remains the least developed domain. Scaling up promising models, investing in evaluation, and building new approaches with schools and families is essential if children and young people are to thrive.

I think if we're actually to do this, if we're really to end gender-based violence in a generation and live up to our self-concept that we're a society that values children and young people, that values victim-survivors in all of our diversity ... we wouldn't still be having to go into rooms and telling our stories of systemic failures, not only of the abuse that we've experienced, but the systemic exclusion that we've experienced as children and young people.

... I think in a future, hopefully much sooner (than a generation away), children will be safe, and that safety wouldn't come conditionally. It wouldn't be if they're lucky or if they can self-advocate or if they are articulate. Safety would be a starting point.



Conor Pall, survivor, advocating with and for children and young people



Men and boys

We cannot end violence against women and children if we don't engage men in this work.



ANROWS 2025

Ending violence against women and children is not possible without men. They can contribute to shaping safer, more respectful communities by modelling positive behaviours, challenging harmful norms and supporting one another to be accountable. Prevention starts early through the role-modelling of fathers, teachers, faith leaders and coaches, through education that builds healthy masculinities, and through addressing the risks of online harm.

System-wide reform is vital, including national standards for behaviour change programs, workforce development and culturally led responses. This will ensure men who use violence are held accountable while fostering pathways to change. By engaging men and boys as collaborators in this work, Australia can move closer to the goal of ending violence in a generation.

Engaging men and boys is a key focus in our efforts to end gender-based violence. Most violence is disproportionately perpetrated by men – against women, children, other men and themselves. This

means men are a crucial part of the solution. Evidence clearly shows that most violence – including domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) – is perpetrated by men against women and children they know. This includes intimate partners, ex-partners or family members.

Ending gender-based violence cannot be considered a women's issue or women's work. It demands men's leadership, advocacy and active participation to challenge harmful behaviours and create safe spaces for conversations about masculinity, respect and violence.

What we know

In 2023–24, 84% of intimate partner homicides were perpetrated against female victims by male offenders (Miles and Bricknell 2025). The same year had the second highest rate of female victims of intimate partner homicide in the past 10 years.

Boys and young men are deeply influenced by the men in their lives. They often look to the male figures in their lives – fathers, uncles, older brothers, teachers and coaches – as role models for understanding

gender roles, expectations and behaviours. Role-modelling of healthy, trusting relationships with adults is critical to development during childhood and early adolescence (Mellberg et al. 2025).

The influence of men on young boys and adolescents is profound and can ultimately

determine the kind of men they grow into. Men who reject harmful stereotypes of dominance and aggression can show boys and young men that true strength is not about control or violence, but about kindness, emotional intelligence and mutual respect.

It is a strong message to men that whether they're fathers, teachers or sporting coaches, the way they behave is really significant for the young men they influence.



Minister for Social Services, the Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP on ABC Radio National Breakfast, 3 June 2025

Addressing the health and wellbeing of men and boys is essential to break cycles of DFSV.

Emerging research has highlighted the importance of improving the way we address the health and wellbeing of men and boys within broader efforts to prevent violence. By adopting a holistic approach that supports men's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing throughout their lives – particularly during critical life transitions – we can foster the development of healthier men who are better equipped to engage in positive, non-violent relationships and promote safer communities.

We are still developing our collective understanding of the risk factors associated with domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV), including the role of alcohol and other drugs. The relationship between alcohol and DFSV was explored in the Northern Territory Coroner's Inquest into the deaths of Miss Yunupingu, Ngeygo Ragurk, Kumarn Rubuntja and Kumanjayi Haywood. At paragraph 361 of her findings, Coroner Elisabeth Armitage accepted that

'while alcohol doesn't cause domestic and family violence, it is a major enabler of it and increases the probability, frequency and severity of violence' (Coroners Court of the Northern Territory 2024, p. 106).

The Commission is committed to continuing engagement with communities and sector stakeholders to better understand the relationship between alcohol, drug use, and DFSV, and to identify prevention opportunities. The DFSV Commissioner has been engaged by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) to participate in a Framework Advisory Committee for the review of the framework for addressing alcohol as part of a comprehensive approach to prevent family violence. This project will deliver an updated framework, considering a range of inputs, to the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DoHDA) in 2027.

Among its key findings, the Ten to Men Study (O'Donnell et al. 2025) highlighted the importance of strong social support and paternal affection during the development of young men.

Men who strongly agreed that they received affection from a father or father figure during childhood were 48% less likely to ever use intimate partner violence compared to men who strongly disagreed.



O'Donnell et al. 2025, p. 1



Recommendation 22



The Commonwealth should build on existing work to further implement the following directions outlined in the Rapid Review report:

- as part of the next Action Planning process establish a national, coordinated and co-designed approach to engaging with men and boys on healthy masculinities and violence prevention, with expertise across disciplines (health, education, technology)
- leverage available datasets, such as the Australian Institute of Family Studies *Ten to Men study*, on boys and men to measure healthy relationships and masculinities throughout men's life transitions to facilitate assessment of the effectiveness of responses
- develop a national response to the rise of online misogyny and radicalisation through targeted investment in research and programs
- expedite the establishment of National Men's Behaviour Change Program Standards and a quality assurance monitoring framework.

Meaningful engagement with men and boys

Meaningful engagement with men and boys is essential to building a future free from violence. This means recognising that men and boys are not a homogenous group, and their experiences and perspectives are shaped by intersecting and overlapping factors such as culture, religion, race, socioeconomic status, disability, ethnicity,

sexual orientation and gender identity. Therefore, responses must reflect this diversity with targeted prevention and intervention efforts that genuinely meet men where they are and respond to their needs, contexts and diverse experiences. To address this need and realise change, there must be sustainable investment to expand prevention efforts across the DFSV service system.

For First Nations communities, there are unique intersections between contemporary forces which influence gender inequality and the ongoing impacts of colonisation and dispossession.



Jesuit Social Services 2024, p. 6

Recommendation 23



As an element of refreshed governance arrangements for the National Plan and for the *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan*, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Men’s Advisory Body should be established.

First Nations communities bring deep cultural knowledge, resilience and strengths. However, they also face distinct challenges shaped by a history of colonisation and systemic racism that must be acknowledged in efforts to prevent and respond to violence.

While all communities are affected by DFSV in Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people are significantly overrepresented in the experiences of violence (AIHW 2025).

Addressing this requires an acknowledgement of the unique challenges and systemic factors that First Nations communities face – entrenched in the ongoing impacts of colonisation, intergenerational trauma, systemic racism and the resulting breakdown of cultural and kinship structures. Effective solutions must be community led, grounded in cultural knowledge, and tailored to the diverse experiences and strengths within and across First Nations communities.

Over the past year, the Commission has conducted extensive engagements to explore the role of men and boys in addressing and preventing gender-based violence (refer to the ‘Men and Boys Roundtable’ box in this section).

The state engendered violence in the missions, in the boys’ homes, in the institutions where Aboriginal children were beaten for speaking their language, where they grew into men who had never been given the space to grieve or heal.



Yoorrook Justice Commission 2025, p. 124



Men and Boys Roundtable

On 12 November 2024, the Commission convened a national roundtable to explore more effective approaches to engaging men and boys in efforts to prevent and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence (DfSV).

More than 40 participants attended, including representatives from community organisations, government agencies, and academia. The roundtable provided an opportunity to explore a critical question: What does it mean to engage men and boys?

Discussions with attendees revealed key insights and actions for governments to prioritise.

Priority areas for action:

1. Increase engagement and learning opportunities

We must learn more from men and boys and from practitioners doing the work.

2. Diversity and intersectionality

Better recognition of the diversity among and within men and boys is critical for better engagement and outcomes. We need to increase funding to community-specific men's behaviour change programs.

3. Men's behaviour change programs

We must diversify the service options available to men using violence.

4. Prioritise boys and young men

This is particularly important in early intervention programs targeting risk factors such as childhood experiences of abuse or men and boys who are at risk of using violence.

5. Activate the health sector

Acknowledge the role the health sector already plays in supporting men and boys, while also further integrating their support into DfSV-specific programs.

The Commission recognises that engaging men and boys in efforts to prevent and respond to DfSV is critical to addressing violence against women and children and realising the vision of the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*. It is key to promoting accountability and achieving long-term, systemic change.

The Commission remains committed to ongoing dialogue and action to work effectively with men and boys – disrupting and preventing the attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence. As part of this commitment, the Commission seeks to amplify the voices and lived experiences of men and boys, alongside the insights of practitioners and community organisations working with people who use violence, to ensure that responses are informed, inclusive and impactful.

How we work with men and boys

A strengths-based approach recognises the positive potential of men and boys to foster equality, challenge harmful gender norms and build respectful relationships within their families and communities. Supporting men and boys to explore healthier expressions of masculinity, emotional wellbeing and connection can lead to stronger, more caring individuals and communities. To meet this need, there must be an increased focus on expanding programs that promote healthy masculinities and respectful relationships among men and boys, particularly during key life transitions such as adolescence, relationship breakdown and for new fathers.

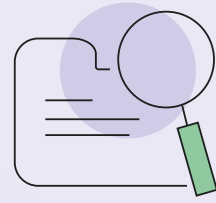
Existing services are often limited in scope, under-resourced or disconnected from broader systems of support. To address this gap, there must be a dedicated approach to co-designing services, systems of support and a workforce strategy that enables all frontline professionals to play a role in prevention and early intervention efforts.

Meaningful engagement involves meeting men and boys where they are through schools, sports, workplaces, cultural programs and online – and providing safe, culturally appropriate spaces for reflection, learning and growth (refer to the case study in this section).



CASE STUDY

Tackling Violence



Tackling Violence is a New South Wales Government community education, prevention and early intervention program delivered via local rugby league clubs.

The program uses rugby league as a platform to change harmful attitudes and behaviours that can contribute to gender-based violence. For example, it encourages men to be leaders and role models in the campaign against domestic and family violence in their communities.

The program includes:

- a Code-of-Conduct that commits rugby league clubs to eliminate and stand against violence
- use of clubs and facilities to host education workshops and support broader community awareness campaigns
- support principles of best practice when working with Aboriginal communities including being community led, strengths based, whole of community and promoting non-violent norms.

Tackling Violence has been running in communities across New South Wales since 2009. A 2019 evaluation found it had successful reach and a strong reputation across rural and remote NSW communities, with evidence to suggest it has contributed to positive impacts for individuals, clubs and wider communities.

Tackling Violence was a finalist in the New South Wales Premiers Awards for strengthening the communities and was a finalist in the New South Wales Institute of Public Administration Australia Awards for public value.

Efforts to prevent and reduce men's use of violence must be embedded within a broader, whole-of-system response that supports men's accountability, while also addressing the social and structural drivers of violence.

Since the release of the National Plan, considerable efforts have been made to strengthen the evidence base, including investments into understanding pathways into and out of perpetration, and the development of national standards for men's behaviour change programs. However, significant knowledge gaps remain. In September 2024, National Cabinet agreed to a number of measures focused on responses to people who use violence including:

- developing national best practice risk assessment principles
- enhancements to the National Criminal Intelligence System
- extending and increasing nationally-consistent, two-way information sharing
- trialling new focused deterrence models and Domestic Violence Threat Assessment Centres (PMC 2024c).

There is an urgent need for greater, targeted investment in research to understand the true scale of the perpetration of violence, as well as pathways into and out of perpetration. Addressing these gaps is vital to designing more effective, targeted and future-facing policy responses.

Recommendation 24



The Commonwealth should build on existing work to further implement the following directions outlined in the Rapid Review report:

- develop a national response to the rise of online misogyny and radicalisation through targeted investment in research and programs.

The digital environment

The evolving digital environment has become a critical factor in shaping the health, wellbeing and identity of young men and boys and has created both risks and opportunities.

The digital age has provided a new and evolving platform in which young men and boys are shaped, influencing how they learn about masculinity, gender roles and identity during their formative years. While the rise of new technologies and social media has created opportunities for supportive environments, it also presents risks and serious challenges for efforts to address gender-based violence. Among the most

urgent are technology-facilitated abuse (tech-based abuse) and the rising threat of online harm and radicalisation.

Tech-based abuse – using digital technology to harm or control – is an increasingly common component of DFSV. It often occurs alongside other forms of abuse and is evolving as new digital technologies emerge (eSafety Commissioner 2023). Research has highlighted that it is overwhelmingly men who carry out tech-based abuse, while women are disproportionately the targets of sexual and gendered abuse that happens online or uses digital technology (Woodlock et al. 2020).



On 24 July 2025, the eSafety Commissioner awarded \$3.5 million to 10 new projects under the Commonwealth's \$10 million Preventing Tech-based Abuse of Women Grants Program. This includes a dedicated First Nations funding stream and targeted investments for the prevention of abuse of women with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse women and LGBTIQ+SB women. Six of the projects will directly engage with boys and men, addressing the influence of misogynistic online narratives on teenage boys and involve men in the co-design of prevention resources.

Emerging research has shown that extremist groups are using platforms that enable chat and livestreaming during video games to recruit and radicalise vulnerable users, particularly young men and boys (Allchorn and Orofino, 2025). These environments reinforce gender inequality and harmful views and drive the potential radicalisation of young men and boys, highlighting the urgent need for robust moderation policies for online platforms, increased education and early intervention strategies.

Efforts to address gender-based violence must include developing a national response. This should address the rise of online misogyny and radicalisation by focusing on the experiences of men and boys. It should include targeted research into risk factors and harms, collaboration with frontline educators and increased regulation in the tech industry (PMC 2024a). We note the work being led by the Office of National Intelligence to fund research investigating the prevalence of misogyny among young Australians; relationship between misogyny and violent extremism, risk and protective factors for radicalisation; and the role of digital pathways. This research will provide vital insights into the links between misogyny and radicalisation to inform ongoing work in this space.

As we develop national responses, we must also investigate ways to measure and monitor their effectiveness. This includes leveraging available datasets on boys and men to measure healthy relationships and masculinities throughout men's life transitions. This will help us determine the effectiveness of our responses.



Recommendation 25



The Commonwealth should build on existing work to further implement the following directions outlined in the Rapid Review report:

- expedite the establishment of National Men's Behaviour Change Program Standards and a quality assurance monitoring framework.

Men's behaviour change programs

Men's behaviour change programs are important, but they cannot stand alone. National standards, a skilled and trauma-informed workforce, and integration across health, housing, justice and domestic violence services are needed to hold men accountable and reduce violence. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally grounded, community-led approaches must be supported and resourced.

To maximise impact and work towards long-term change, men's behaviour change programs must be delivered as part of a broader infrastructure required to address men's use of violence – a coordinated, whole-of-system response that integrates and aligns with the wider human services system. This includes specialist victim-survivor services, child protection, housing, mental health, alcohol and other drug services, and general health and wellbeing supports.

To improve the effectiveness, consistency and accountability of men's behaviour change programs, there must be comprehensive national standards that ensure program quality and participant safety.

Work has commenced on development of national standards. The Commission recommends these should outline program goals, evidence-based practice guidelines and compliance measures, while embedding culturally informed approaches. Ultimately, national standards will provide a foundation that supports program providers, protects participants and contributes to the vision of the National Plan, while reducing violence and promoting respect and accountability.

The Commission also supports the exploration of models (such as peer assessment and feedback, evaluation methodologies) to develop a quality assurance process, as a matter of priority, that ensures these programs are leading to better outcomes.

Men and boys must be engaged alongside women and girls – as part of a collective response towards prevention efforts that reflects the makeup of our communities. Unless we change how we engage with men and boys, we will not reach the goal of ending violence against women and children in a generation.

Men's behaviour change programs need to be embedded collaboratively within the broader domestic, family and sexual violence ecosystem so they can work together with other services towards improved outcomes for victims and survivors including children, as well as improved outcomes for meaningful behaviour change, accountability, increased visibility and risk management.



Helps et al. 2025



Combating economic and systems abuse

Economic and systems abuse is a deliberate form of control that leaves women and children facing ongoing financial harm and instability. Economic and financial abuse is broader than systems abuse, and systems abuse does not always result, or does not always exclusively result, in economic harm. Financial, legal and government systems are often manipulated in ways that continue harm and deepen inequality.

We now have a clear evidence base and recommendations to enable us to act immediately to start embedding safety into our systems and strengthen them against deliberate misuse. Coordinated reform, grounded in lived experience, that builds systems designed for safety, accountability and prevention is required. By embedding

these changes into the National Action Plans, governments can move beyond inquiry to action, ensuring that systems protect people from harm rather than being used against them.

We are only speaking more openly about economic and systems abuse because of the courage of those with lived experience and the persistence of advocates who have brought hidden forms of harm into public view. For issues of economic abuse, their voices have exposed how abuse is carried through child support, debts, legal loopholes and financial systems. They have pushed governments and institutions to recognise economic safety as central to addressing domestic and family violence.

The voice of lived experience has identified additional areas of system abuse including the family law system and visa/immigration systems abuse.

While my ex-husband can no longer physically abuse me, he is now killing me slowly through destroying my mental health and my finances. My ex-husband has limited ways of abusing me now, so he uses government systems to do so.



Letter to the Commission

Building the evidence

A growing body of research and inquiries has revealed the extent of economic and systems abuse:

2014–15

Early documentation of child support misuse

Research by WIRE (2014) and submissions to the 2015 Parliamentary Inquiry into the Child Support Program revealed how non-payment and income-minimisation tactics were used deliberately to maintain control.

2018–19

Family Law System Inquiry

The Australian Law Reform Commission's 2019 inquiry documented systemic misuse of family law processes (ALRC 2019a). Through over 700 lived experience contributions, it found that financial abuse was embedded in structural barriers, with one respondent describing court proceedings as more distressing than terminal illness (ALRC 2019b).

2020

Economic costing of abuse

Deloitte Access Economics and Commonwealth Bank of Australia estimated financial and economic abuse in 2020 alone cost victim-survivors \$5.7 billion and the economy more broadly \$5.2 billion (Deloitte Access Economics 2022).

2022

National Plan recognition

The *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children* formally identified economic and financial abuse as key reform priorities, marking a national policy shift.

2021–25

Expanded evidence base

The ABS Personal Safety Survey (PSS) estimated 1.6 million women and 745,000 men had experienced partner economic abuse since age 15 (ABS 2023). *Opening the black box of child support: shining a light on how financial abuse is perpetrated* (Cook et al. 2024) showed how perpetrators manipulate financial systems, particularly child support and taxation, leaving women with debt and instability. The Rapid Review (PMC 2024a) recommended a systemic audit of government systems to address these vulnerabilities. The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) Ten to Men study has recently collected data on men's use of economic abuse with data due to be available from late October 2025 (AIFS 2025).

Child support is one of the few tools that really malicious ex-partners can use to have ongoing control of their ex-partner.



Professor Kay Cook (ABC 2023)



2024–25

Government response (ongoing)

In September 2024, the Australian Government commenced an audit of Commonwealth systems to identify and address how perpetrators of family and domestic violence weaponise government systems, with an initial focus on the tax, social security and child support systems. The government is also taking steps to apply safety by design principles through the audit (PMC 2024b). As an immediate response to the audit, the government has committed to embed safety in Commonwealth systems and close financial abuse loopholes by:

- preventing perpetrators from using tax and corporate systems to create debts as a form of coercive control and making perpetrators accountable for these debts if they do
- looking at making perpetrators liable for social security debts that a victim-survivor incurs due to coercion or financial abuse
- looking at how to stop perpetrators receiving their victim's superannuation after death.

In August 2025, the Australian Government announced measures to extend Service Australia's powers to waive social security debts incurred due to domestic and family violence, including coercion or financial abuse.

2025

Oversight and sector reviews

- The Inspector-General of Taxation and Tax Ombudsman found financial abuse was being perpetrated through the tax system, with Australian Tax Office staff often missing warning signs (IGTO 2025).
- The Commonwealth Ombudsman (2025) found the Child Support Program lacked clear strategies, with some processes compounding harm (for example, Family Tax Benefit debts when payments were withheld).
- The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services identified financial abuse as a 'hidden epidemic' and called for stronger obligations on banks, insurers and superannuation providers.

These inquiries have been consistent in their findings: systemic vulnerabilities are well documented, but reforms remain fragmented and accountability has not been adequate.

Too often, perpetrators of family and domestic violence exploit and manipulate government systems to control, threaten or harass a current or former partner. This 'systems abuse' is often part of a pattern of coercive control and financial abuse that perpetrators use to control or punish their victims.



PMC 2024a

Given that violence is the backdrop to many single mothers' lives, there is a moral obligation to ensure that this often-mandatory system – one that was originally designed to reduce child poverty – lessens rather than exacerbates financial harm.



Cook et al. 2024, p. xxiii

Something is very wrong when the perpetrators of economic abuse receive their victim's superannuation earnings.



'Chair's foreword', Parliament of Australia 2024

The tax system is being used to perpetrate financial abuse. Victim-survivors are often unaware it is happening until it is too late, usually after they receive notifications of tax debts that have accrued in their names.



IGTO 2025, p. 4



Recommendation 26



The Commonwealth should work with states and territories to undertake the following activities as part of the ongoing National Plan Action Planning process:

- undertake a systemic mapping and consolidation exercise, drawing together recommendations across reviews and inquiries, identifying areas of overlap and reinforcing themes (e.g. misuse of family law, tax, and child support systems)
- align and translate these consolidated recommendations into specific, measurable actions under the forthcoming Action Plan ensuring reforms are not siloed or duplicated
- set clear signposts within the Action Plans that specify what will be delivered, timelines, milestones and the responsible agencies.

Need for a consolidated view of economic and systems abuse

Governments need to consolidate existing findings, close loopholes that enable misuse and embed reforms into the National Plan's Action Plans with clear timelines, milestones and transparent accountability. Safety by Design principles should underpin all system reforms to anticipate misuse and prevent harm. Refer to the case study in this section.

Safety by Design

The concept of Safety by Design, first articulated by the eSafety Commissioner in 2019, offers a framework that can be applied beyond technology. The 3 overarching principles are:

- service provider responsibilities – this ensures the service provider contributes to ensuring safety for users, calling on them to address known and anticipated harms in their service design and provision
- user empowerment and autonomy – this prioritises the dignity of users, ensuring that design features and functions preserve consumer and human rights
- transparency and accountability – this recognises transparency and accountability as key to a robust approach to safety, calling for accessible and easy to understand policies and processes, as well as establishing accountable complaints mechanisms.

When calling for a review of government systems, the Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches suggested that the Safety by Design principles guide work to reform systems (PMC 2024a).

These principles can and have been adapted to different sectors for the minimisation or prevention of abuse. For example, the *Financial safety by design framework* was developed to address financial abuse in the finance and essential services sectors (Fitzpatrick 2025).

Applying these principles will help minimise and prevent systems abuse in Australia.

In addition to the formal inquiries listed above, activities have commenced in responding to women and children who have migrant or refugee backgrounds. At the Commission's Multicultural Communities Roundtable, participants highlighted how visa status is weaponised through threats of deportation. The Department of Home Affairs has expanded Family Violence Provisions to support some applicants, and the Department of Social Services extended its Leaving Violence Program to temporary visa holders. The Australian Red Cross pilot program documented ongoing barriers, reinforcing calls for bridging visa pathways and broader access to supports.

A systemic consolidation process would bring these threads together, preventing duplication, highlighting intersections (for example, between tax and child support) and producing a coherent reform agenda that is transparent to both government and community. Consolidation is not only efficient, it is essential to prevent duplication and ensure that policy settings across child support, taxation, financial

services and family law work together. A coordinated blueprint, grounded in lived experience, will provide the foundation for the next Action Plan and a pathway to sustained reform.

Improving accountability in the Action Plan

Recognition of economic and systems abuse within the National Plan has been an important step forward. Yet recognition without accountability risks leaving reform unfinished. The next Action Plan must be the vehicle that moves governments from acknowledgment to delivery.

This requires embedding consolidated recommendations into the Action Plan as specific and measurable commitments, with responsibilities clearly assigned across agencies, timelines set, and resources allocated. Progress must be made visible through clear signposts that detail what will be delivered, by whom and by when. These signposts will allow communities, advocates and governments alike to track progress and hold systems accountable.

The ABS PSS is the principal source of prevalence data for economic abuse. It captures behaviours such as restricting access to money, withholding financial information, or incurring debts in a partner's name. In 2023 the ABS estimated that 1.6 million women (16% of women) and 745,000 men (7.8% of men) have experienced partner economic abuse since the age of 15.



ABS 2023

He does cash in hand and does not lodge tax returns ... Evidence was provided that he lied and misled NDIS, CSA and Centrelink and he received no penalty for this. Domestic Abuse is allowed to thrive.



Cook et al. 2024 p. 110



Preventing abuse and mistreatment of older women



The Commission recognises that violence against women occurs across all stages of life, and that older women experience distinct and often overlooked forms of gender-based violence. This includes elder abuse, intimate partner violence, economic abuse, and mistreatment by carers or in institutional settings such as residential aged care. Perpetrators are often individuals in positions of trust, including intimate partners, adult children, and care providers.

Older women are also among the fastest-growing groups at risk of homelessness in Australia, which highlights the complex intersection of gender, ageing, and housing insecurity, and underscores the need for targeted, gender-responsive policies and services.

In December 2024, the Australian Government released the consultation draft of the *National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People 2024–2034*, developed by the Attorney-General's Department. Building on the foundations of the *National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians 2019–2023*, the new plan places strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention – marking a shift towards ending abuse and mistreatment.

The draft plan focuses on 4 priorities: increasing community awareness, strengthening legal and policy frameworks, enhancing service capability, and addressing data and evidence gaps.

It complements the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*, providing a key mechanism to prioritise actions that improve outcomes for older people – particularly older women – experiencing abuse.

The Commission is pleased to see this important work progressing and looks forward to the release of the final version of the plan. The Commission welcomes its commitment to achieving better outcomes for older women experiencing abuse, including domestic, family and sexual violence.

Recommendation 27



The Attorney-General's Department should instigate an independent audit of the family law system to identify and address the potential for systems abuse, including the use of section 102NA of the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth).

Family law system

The family law system remains one of the clearest examples of how laws, policies and processes can be turned into tools of abuse, reinforcing the importance of continued reform. It also illustrates how reforms with good policy intent can cause harm if the voices of those most affected are not embedded in design and implementation. Repeated applications, misuse of parenting orders, and delays in court proceedings place additional strain on individuals already experiencing violence and separation. These challenges have been consistently identified across inquiries, including the Australian Law Reform Commission inquiry into the Family Law System (ARLC 2019a), the Rapid Review (PMC 2024a), and the South Australian Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (2025).

Significant court reforms

Over the past 5 years, the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (Division 1 and Division 2) (FCFCOA) have implemented significant reforms to improve safety, consistency and cultural responsiveness in

cases involving family violence (refer to the case study in this section). Notable initiatives include:

- **Lighthouse Project and Evatt List** – introducing risk-screening tools and differentiated case management to ensure higher-risk matters are identified early and managed through appropriate pathways
- **Safe and Together training** – delivered to judges, registrars and court staff, building capability to recognise coercive control and the tactics of systems abuse
- **Indigenous Family Liaison Officers (IFLOs)** – providing culturally safe engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and improving trust in court processes.
- **Commencement of information sharing reform** – the *Family Law Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2023* established new information sharing orders to allow the family law courts to quickly seek information from child protection, police and firearms agencies about family violence, child abuse and neglect that could place children at risk.



CASE STUDY

Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia's groundbreaking family violence initiatives



The Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia (Division 1 and Division 2) (the Courts) have implemented a suite of family law-related practices to better identify and respond to risk, improve safety, and achieve safe outcomes for families. These include Lighthouse and the Evatt List, Specialist Indigenous Lists and Indigenous Family Liaison Officers, and comprehensive training for all judges, registrars, court child experts and staff.

Lighthouse and the Evatt List

The world leading Lighthouse program uses bespoke risk screening at filing, the triaging of matters based on the level of risk, and specialist case management pathways, including the high-risk Evatt list to identify and respond to the highest risk cases which include risk relating to family violence, child abuse and neglect, mental health, and drug and alcohol misuse. External evaluation of Lighthouse found that the program improved the way the Courts identify and respond to risk in family law matters, and since the expansion, Lighthouse is now a fully integrated part of the Courts' safety and case management model. A number of reports have recommended Lighthouse be expanded, including to all regional and remote registries and circuits, and to property-only matters.

Proactive Safety at Court and System Navigator Pilot

In 2025, the Courts commenced the Proactive Safety at Court and System Navigator Pilot in Parramatta and Canberra as a way to further address systems abuse and improve safety and support outcomes. The trial is assessing whether sustained, proactive contact with both victim-survivors and people using

violence can reduce reliance on self-advocacy, prevent misuse of court processes, and ensure safety and support needs are met as risk profiles change. The Commission looks forward to reviewing the results towards the end of 2025.

Specialist Indigenous Lists and Indigenous Family Liaison Officers

Approximately 1 in every 15 applications filed in the Courts seeking parenting and/or property orders involves a First Nations party and/or child. In response to the systemic barriers faced by First Nations families accessing the court system, the Courts have expanded the Specialist Indigenous Lists and introduced the Indigenous Family Liaison Officer program. These officers bring professional expertise and lived cultural knowledge, with currently funded positions enabling culturally grounded support for approximately 47% of all identified First Nations matters.

Education and professional development

The Courts have developed a comprehensive education and professional development program for judicial officers and staff, including training on family violence, trauma-informed practice, vicarious trauma, coercive control, sexual violence, responding to men who use violence, and cultural competency.

These initiatives, combined with a number of other elements of the Courts' practice and procedure, are reducing systems abuse, improving safety, and delivering more effective outcomes for families engaging with the family courts.

The Judicial Family Violence Committee has developed the updated Family Violence Plan 2023–2026 and the Family Violence Best Practice Principles (FCFCOA 2023a; 2023b), which set out the FCFCOA's commitments in improving responses to family violence and provide guidance to those engaging within the Courts on protection from violence, safety at court and communication with vulnerable parties.

Delivering on these commitments, the FCFCOA through the Family Violence,

Access, Equity and Inclusion Team and the Cross-Agency Working Group on Safety and Accessibility, has implemented improvements to safety-at-court procedures and facilities, enhanced referral pathways, introduced consistent safety planning protocols, and provided training in family violence identification and response, non-collusive practice working with people using violence, trauma-informed practice, vicarious trauma awareness, inclusive practice and cultural responsiveness.

Family Advocacy and Support Services

The Family Advocacy and Support Service (FASS) represents another important reform, jointly delivered by Legal Aid Commissions and family violence support services and funded by government. FASS provides an integrated model of assistance by combining legal advice with specialist social supports. The service is available to both people experiencing violence and people who use violence, recognising the need for tailored interventions on both sides of proceedings. FASS includes:

- immediate legal advice on parenting, property and safety issues through duty lawyer services
- risk assessment, safety planning and referrals to family violence, housing and counselling services
- culturally safe support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and people from multicultural communities
- coordinated assistance that helps families navigate the legal system while addressing their broader safety and wellbeing needs.

Independent evaluations of FASS have demonstrated positive outcomes, including greater confidence among victim-survivors in engaging with the courts, improved access to safety planning, and stronger integration between legal and social services (AGD 2018). However, the service is not consistently available across all registries, and resourcing constraints limit its reach. Ensuring sustainable funding and broader coverage would extend its benefits and embed integrated, trauma-informed support across the system.

Under the National Access to Justice Partnership, FASS will receive ongoing funding.



The FCFCOA, under the leadership of the Chief Justice, has also created new mechanisms for consultation with court users and the family violence sector to inform continuous improvement, including through the delivery of a Family Violence Symposium in 2024, the establishment of a Family Violence Reference Group in 2025 and through regular engagement with individual stakeholders, including peak First Nations organisations and bodies.

Strengthening front-end risk identification

Work is currently underway by the FCFCOA to strengthen risk identification at the point of filing, including improvements to the functionality of the systems that support Lighthouse and the Family DOORS Triage risk screen, to make risk screening more efficient and easier to use for parties.

The significant work that was completed in 2023 on the development and implementation of changes to the existing Family DOORS Triage risk screens is now being closely monitored. The changes include:

- amendments to the questions to better capture coercive control through expanding the types of questions asked about family violence to better identify concerning behaviours
- amendments to the questions to better capture risks to children, expanding the questions to ask about specific risk types (physical, sexual, emotional/psychological safety), identifying whether the current parenting arrangements are working and asking about areas of increased vulnerability and risk, such as serious health or developmental problems
- to introduce a new non-parent Family DOORS Triage risk screen for non-parent parties such as grandparents, aunts, uncles or kinship carers.

These changes were made in close consultation with Professor Jennifer McIntosh and also respond to feedback received by parties, particularly non-parent parties. The changes are anticipated to improve the risk screen's identification of types of family violence and enhance the voice and experience of children in the risk screen.

The FCFCOA will also be reviewing the Notice of Child Abuse, Family Violence or Risk form to ensure it is fit for purpose. In addition to identifying opportunities for form redesign and subject to resourcing, the FCFCOA is considering how workflows, data collection, and digital systems can be enhanced to ensure that safety and accessibility considerations are systematically captured and addressed.

Reforms must continue to build upon:

- embedding evidence-based risk factors into standardised forms at filing
- capturing risks of financial abuse and litigation abuse in property and financial matters
- ensuring forms are accessible and written in plain English.

These improvements will enable enhanced risk identification, safety planning, and stronger protections against systems abuse.

There is also an opportunity to further strengthen information sharing across systems and jurisdictions (refer to case study in this section). In September 2024, National Cabinet committed \$82.4 million over 4 years to strengthen justice responses to high-risk and serial perpetrators of domestic and family violence, including:

- a commitment to work with states and territories to expand and increase nationally consistent, two-way information sharing between family law courts, state and territory courts, child protection, policing and firearm agencies
- an investment in enhancing the National Criminal Intelligence System to improve information sharing.

In August 2025, the Standing Council of Attorneys-General endorsed funding arrangements to extend information sharing under the National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems and Co-location program.

Independent audit of the family law system

While significant reforms have been implemented as described above, opportunities remain for broader system-wide consistency and oversight. Safeguards such as s. 102NA of the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth), which restricts direct cross-examination in family law matters involving family violence have produced mixed outcomes, with evidence of unintended consequences in practice. People continue to report experiences of intimidation, systems abuse and inconsistent access to protections across the family law system.

Unlike other systems – such as child support, taxation and social security, which are subject to periodic systemic audits – the family law system has not undergone a comprehensive review of its vulnerability to systems abuse. A review could logically build on the 2019 ALRC Inquiry into the Family Law System and recent relevant reports prepared by the Family Law Council

(ALRC 2019a). Both the Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches (2024) and the South Australian Royal Commission (2025) identified this as a priority.

Such an audit would complement the Commonwealth Government's legislative reforms, the FCFCOA's initiatives, and build on the lessons of FASS and other integrated initiatives to ensure that the family law system is fully aligned with the objectives of the National Plan. It would strengthen transparency, promote accountability, and ensure that reforms are evaluated not only for their policy intent but also for their practical impact on the safety and wellbeing of families.

In addition, the Commission encourages research to be undertaken to understand the impact of recent changes to the Family Law Act in practice. Gathering insights from people with lived experience of the family court system and practitioners who work with families in the system will be essential to gain perspectives on what is working, where gaps and challenges remain and what further reform may be required.

Coercive control

In light of recent legislative and policy developments relating to coercive control across Australia, including the development of National Principles, the Commission has been keen to explore emerging issues and developments across Australian jurisdictions in relation to coercive control legislation and related reforms. To support this work, the Commission contracted ANROWS to develop a brief 'coercive control snapshot', which outlines the current state of legislation and implementation of efforts to counter coercive control.

Australia has seen significant momentum in addressing coercive control since the tragic murder of Hannah Clarke and her children in February 2020. While approaches vary across jurisdictions, there is a clear

trajectory toward legislative reform regarding coercive control that encompasses both criminal law amendments and enhanced civil protection measures. Currently, 3 states have legislated standalone criminal offences (New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia). Other jurisdictions have taken varying approaches, from enhanced civil protections to continued consultation processes.

In 2025–26, the Commission will engage with states and territories, specialist and adjacent workforces, and people with lived and living experience to broaden the understanding of the impact of an increased emphasis on coercive control by government systems.



Sexual violence

Although the National Plan identifies sexual violence as a priority, the level of investment, leadership and reform has not yet matched the scale of the issue.

Too often, responses are fragmented, crisis-driven, and shaped by community attitudes such as disbelief and victim blaming, which continue to influence how justice and service systems respond.

Consistent priorities have been identified: cultural change in policing and justice, equitable access to forensic and legal supports, stronger prevention measures, better data and accountability, and workforce capacity across both specialist and adjacent services.

The second Action Plan offers a critical opportunity for governments to act on this evidence. By committing to a coordinated roadmap grounded in the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) recommendations (ALRC 2025a) and extending to broader systemic reform, progress can be achieved. This must be supported by transparent reporting, meaningful targets and accountability mechanisms.

Through decisive and sustained action, governments can move towards a system that promotes safety, supports healing,

delivers justice and prevents sexual violence over the long term.

The National Plan defines sexual violence as sexual activity that happens where consent is not freely given or obtained, is withdrawn or the person is unable to consent due to their age or other factors. It includes being forced, coerced or manipulated into any sexual activity (touching, assault, rape, harassment, etc.) and non-physical forms (DSS 2022, p. 39).

The eSafety Commissioner describes sexual violence as sexual behaviour that occurs without the informed and freely given agreement of everyone involved. It can be physical or non-physical and may occur online or through technology.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare frames sexual violence similarly, with the absence of consent as central, and includes non-physical forms.

What we know

Sexual violence remains one of the most prevalent yet hidden forms of harm in Australia. It is experienced across the life course, in homes, workplaces, institutions and online. The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that 1 in 5 women and 1 in 16 men have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, people living with a disability, children and young people, LGBTIQ+SB communities, and

migrant and refugee women, the prevalence and impacts are even higher. Lived experience accounts remind us that sexual violence is not only about individual trauma but also about systemic failures to protect, respond and deliver justice.

Rising incidents of sexual violence nationally place ever increasing strain on an already over-stretched specialist sexual violence service system. While the importance of timely access to specialist supports in reducing the trauma and health impacts of sexual violence is well documented, the economic costs however of unaddressed sexual violence have until now been less clearly articulated. The soon to be released Allambee and UWA Public Policy Institute report, *The Lifetime Price of Harm: Economic Costs of Sexual Violence and the Case for Timely Intervention in Australia*, seeks to address this gap by quantifying the

ongoing individual and economic impacts of sexual violence across health, justice, welfare, and productivity systems, establishing a clear economic rationale for future investment in specialist sexual violence services responses. Governments have increasingly acknowledged these failings. The ALRC's Inquiry into Justice Responses to Sexual Violence (ALRC 2025a) provided a blueprint for reform. *The National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030*² sets out a long-term prevention agenda. The South Australian Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (2025) and multiple state inquiries have reinforced the need for coordinated, systemic change. These inquiries consistently highlight the centrality of lived experience in designing responses that are safe, trauma-informed and effective.

Where are the gaps: limitations of the criminal justice system addressing the needs of people who have experienced sexual violence

The Commission has noted a series of recommendations from the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) relating to the limitations of the criminal justice system in addressing the needs of people who have experienced sexual violence. The ALRC report notes that 'for individuals and society to benefit from the justice system, people who have experienced sexual violence need to have access to it. But 9 out of 10 women who have experienced sexual violence do not report to the police. Where there is engagement with the justice system, that engagement is usually short-lived' (ALRC 2025a, p. 62).

Of particular interest to the Commission is the significant gap between the community prevalence of sexual violence and the low rate not only of reporting, but also of achieving criminal justice outcomes in sexual violence cases. To this end, the Commission has sought the advice of Professor Rachael Burgin of Swinburne University of

Technology and Associate Professor Lyndal Bugeja of Monash University to conduct a feasibility study which will establish a methodology for determining a national perspective on attrition points within the justice system.

The project is a pilot study commissioned by the Commission to determine the sufficiency of current data sources, and to conduct a single jurisdiction study of rape and sexual violence attrition, and to guide the development of terms of reference for a future national research study. The objective of this pilot study is to identify the relevant data sources and data items available on rape and sexual assault in Australia to examine the attrition rate, proportion of incidents that receive a criminal justice outcome and outline the methods and considerations for the above-mentioned national study.

The pilot study will be completed in early 2026.

² Under the National Strategy the definition of child sexual abuse is that children cannot consent, and that some but not all responses to sexual violence are applicable to both adult and child victims.



In addition, the recent public reporting of child sexual assaults occurring within the childcare system has highlighted systemic issues relating to the need for a national approach to Working with Children Checks (WWCC) solution. Nearly a decade after the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2015) called for a national WWCC system, jurisdictions still operate 8 separate schemes. At the August 2025 Standing Council of Attorneys-General meeting, Ministers agreed to a series of ambitious reforms to deliver a national approach and address systems gaps in WWCCs. This includes:

- urgently working towards implementation, by the end of 2025, of mutual recognition of negative notices (declines and revocations)
- strengthening and improving consistency for a national approach to WWCCs, based on mutual recognition
- removing barriers to information sharing
- the Australian Government has also committed to establishing a National Continuous Checking Capability (NCCC), which will be a secure system that continuously monitors WWCC holders against new criminal history information from national and state/territory datasets.

Ensuring equality for all

Every issue within the system responding to sexual violence is amplified in marginalised communities.

There must be an urgent broadening of the voices informing policy relating to sexual violence to include those most likely to be targeted, and least likely to be heard, such as people with disabilities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, older women, and LGBTIQ+SB people (refer to the case study and 'Improving health and wellbeing outcomes for LGBTIQ+SB communities' box in this section).

Older women's experience of sexual violence is largely invisible. Systems are not screening effectively for, and therefore not collecting data on rates of, sexual violence against older women.

Women living with disabilities are more than twice as likely to experience sexual violence yet these experiences are not always recognised by the legal system. Frontline services are rarely accessible to people with disabilities, and accessibility is considered in narrow terms.

Transmisogyny is having a significant impact on sexual violence experienced by trans women, driving both targeting of trans women by perpetrators and a lack of inclusive and responsive services.

People who have experienced sexual violence perpetrated by someone of the same gender find it difficult to access a service that understands their experience.

Improving health and wellbeing outcomes for LGBTIQ+SB communities

The *National Action Plan for the Health and Wellbeing of LGBTIQ+ People 2025–2035* (DHDA 2024a) sets out a bold and inclusive vision: that LGBTIQ+SB people achieve equitable health and wellbeing outcomes through access to safe, respectful and inclusive services.

Developed in partnership with LGBTIQ+SB communities, the Action Plan acknowledges the unique and complex ways in which gendered violence, stigma and discrimination impact health outcomes.

The Action Plan intersects with the vision of the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*, which acknowledges that LGBTIQ+SB populations are impacted by gendered violence in unique and complex ways.

Survey data included in the Action Plan reveals that 60.7% of LGBTIQ+SB people have experienced intimate partner violence, underscoring the urgent need for trauma-informed, culturally safe responses.

LGBTIQ+SB communities have long faced disparities in physical and mental health, often compounded by experiences of isolation and systemic

exclusion. The Action Plan responds to these challenges with 16 targeted actions aimed at improving access to care, embedding preventive health across the life course, and supporting self-determination in health decision-making.

Importantly, the Action Plan highlights the vibrancy, resilience and diversity of LGBTIQ+SB communities, while also recognising the serious health risks they face.

The Commission is pleased to see the release of the Action Plan, a significant step toward improving health equity and safety for LGBTIQ+SB communities. Over the next year, the Commission remains committed to engaging meaningfully with LGBTIQ+SB people to better understand their experiences of domestic, family and sexual violence, improve outcomes, and amplify their voices in national policy and reform efforts.

Ensuring that LGBTIQ+SB perspectives are embedded in responses to domestic, family and sexual violence is essential to building inclusive, trauma-informed systems that promote dignity, safety and wellbeing for all.



CASE STUDY

National Survey of LGBTIQA+SB Experiences of Sexual Violence



The National Survey was designed to gather data on experiences of sexual violence among LGBTIQA+SB adults in Australia. This data includes prevalence, social norms, attitudes, beliefs, bystander actions and help-seeking behaviours to inform LGBTIQA+SB sexual violence prevention and service delivery.

The National Survey is the first large-scale study of LGBTIQA+SB experiences of sexual violence in Australia or internationally. The study focused specifically on experiences of sexual violence over the lifespan, distinguishing between different forms and contexts of sexual violence in childhood and adulthood for different gender categories, with particular attention to the experience of First Nations LGBTIQA+SB peoples.

The findings of the National Survey have emphasised the importance of examining experiences of sexual violence based on gender identity and sexual orientation.

- Gender identity and sexual orientation were found to have impacted the risk of experiencing different types of sexual violence, the age of first onset, the risk of revictimisation, the context or reason for this violence, and the identity of perpetrators.
- Sexual violence victimisation was associated with significant impacts on health, wellbeing, financial security, and workforce participation, particularly where sexual violence occurred or began in childhood.

The report highlights that many LGBTIQA+SB people experience long-term impacts from sexual violence, albeit in ways that are often mediated by their sexual orientation, gender identity, cultural background, geographical location and other intersectional considerations.

While First Nations participant experiences often aligned with the experiences of other participants, the study identified distinct patterns and circumstances of victimisation for some First Nations communities.

Despite barriers to disclosure and help-seeking, many research participants actively sought informal and formal modes of care, support and redress for their experiences of sexual violence.

The proactive stance of the majority of LGBTIQA+SB people in intervening in situations of sexual risk and danger to others, strongly suggesting that community norms are a pivotal resource to include in future sexual violence prevention efforts.

Recommendation 28



The Commonwealth should ensure the second Action Plan includes a roadmap for implementing recommendations from the Australian Law Reform Commission report including identifying timeframes and responsible government agencies.

Australian Law Reform Commission report

The Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC) *Safe, informed, supported: reforming justice responses to sexual violence* (ALRC 2025a) sets out a coherent national blueprint spanning cultural change in policing and courts, trauma-informed practice, improved evidence law and procedure (for example, pre-recorded testimony) and stronger pathways to support.

Converting this into practice now requires a timebound national roadmap that allocates actions to specific agencies, sequences reforms and reports progress publicly. A roadmap would also align shared, cross-jurisdictional items (for example, education for legal actors on myths and misconceptions, as well as coordinated data and evaluation settings) so that states and territories move together, rather than in fragments.

This approach reflects what recent evidence has made clear: recorded sexual assault victims rose 10% in 2024 (to 40,087) (ABS 2025a) yet justice outcomes do not reflect prevalence, underscoring the need for system-level reform rather than piecemeal initiatives.

Embedding the ALRC recommendations in the Second Action Plan, with timelines, accountabilities and transparent monitoring would move governments from commitment to measurable implementation.

The Commission has heard regularly from people with lived and living experience of sexual violence that the individual positioning of a relevant officer – the police officer who dismissed a report, the prosecutor who failed to communicate with them about the progress of their case, the judge who allowed a respondent to aggressively cross-examine them – have not only affected their best chance at achieving an outcome through the justice system, they have also contributed to significant re-traumatisation.

Overwhelmingly, people who have experienced sexual violence do not engage with the justice system for understandable reasons including fear, lack of trust or lack of information and support. The community rightly expects, and the rule of law requires, a justice system that is safe and accessible, yet we heard time and again from people who do not trust the system enough to engage in the first place, or were let down when they did.



The Hon. Justice Mordy Bromberg (ALRC 2025b)



The Australian Law Reform Commission's 64 recommendations are aimed to address the barriers that prevent victim-survivors of sexual violence from engaging with the justice system. The recommendations strengthen the justice system processes and accountability and expand available justice pathways.

In the 2025–26 Budget, the Commonwealth Government committed \$21.4 million over three years to improve victim-survivor engagement with the justice system and inform a broader response to the Australian Law Reform Commission report. This package includes investment in expanding trauma-informed legal services, piloting culturally safe Justice System Navigators, and exploring restorative justice pathways. The Commonwealth Government has undertaken to work closely with states and territories and experts, including people with lived experience, to consider a longer-term response to report recommendations.

All governments must articulate their full response to the recommendations. This means not limiting their response to the recommendations aimed exclusively at their jurisdiction. In particular, the Commission calls for the specific recommendations that relate to shared action by jurisdictions to be elevated to the Activities Addendum for specific reporting under the National Plan's governance and accountability frameworks.

The Commission proposes that consideration of the recommendations of the ALRC report be undertaken in partnership with those who experience highest prevalence rates of sexual violence, and those for whom additional barriers are currently in place, including LGBTIQ+SB people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, people with a disability, young people and older women.

Building safer futures for women living with a disability

The *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (National Plan) acknowledges that the findings of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability must inform future efforts to end violence against women and girls living with disability.

In August 2023, the National Plan's *First Action Plan 2023–2027* (First Action Plan) was launched, outlining 10 key actions to address gendered violence against women and children.

As part of its response to the Disability Royal Commission, the Australian Government committed \$0.5 million to apply a disability lens to the First Action Plan. This initiative aims to identify how each action addresses the specific needs of women and girls living with a disability.

In June 2024, the Department of Social Services engaged Pragma Partners to develop the *Disability lens to the First Action Plan*. Between September 2024

and June 2025, extensive stakeholder engagement was undertaken to inform its development. This included consultations with state and territory governments, people living with a disability and representatives from both the DFSV and disability sectors.

The Commission acknowledges that women living with a disability face unique challenges and are at heightened risk of experiencing particular forms of violence. It welcomes this future-focused work under the National Plan and impresses on the Department of Social Services that it is essential to release the *Disability lens to the First Action Plan* in 2025 to ensure we can act to eliminate violence for women living with a disability and to meet desired outcomes of the National Plan.

Over the next year, the Commission remains committed to engaging meaningfully with people living with a disability to better understand their experiences of DFSV, improve outcomes and amplify their voices in national policy and reform efforts.

The Commission notes that the ALRC report makes a series of recommendations regarding data collection and analysis as well as evaluation of programmatic responses. The Commission urges governments to ensure that any resourcing of initiatives is adequately supported by funding for evaluation. Any evaluation

should be co-designed with people with lived and living experience, and findings made publicly available.

While the ALRC report contains a series of policy and legislative reform proposals, the scope of the review meant that the full range of issues relevant to sexual violence in Australia were not considered.

Recommendation 29



The Department of Social Services, in partnership with the Attorney-General's Department, should ensure the Action Plan includes actions and investments to progress sexual violence reforms that lay outside the scope of the Australian Law Reform Commission inquiry, including a stronger focus on prevention, priority cohorts, specialist capacity and adjacent workforce capacity.

Reform efforts must extend beyond the justice system to address the full range of settings where sexual violence occurs. This requires targeted investment in prevention initiatives, strengthening the capacity of specialist sexual violence services, and building the skills of adjacent workforces such as health, education and housing. Ensuring these reforms include priority cohorts is essential to achieving equitable outcomes.

A number of research and review activities demonstrate the evidence for early intervention and prevention:

- Our Watch's prevention frameworks highlight the role of cultural change, education and community-led action (Our Watch 2021)
- Universities Australia's 2024 National Student Safety Survey revealed high rates of sexual harassment and assault in higher education, prompting Education Ministers to commit to sector-wide reforms (Heywood et al. 2022)
- AIFS research (2024) found the prevalence of sexual harassment for young people in Australia was higher for not only females, but also young LGBTIQ+SB people, and that more needs to be done to address the experience of sexual harassment in the school environment, social settings and online

- the Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches (PMC 2024a) calls for a surge in prevention activity, including engaging men and boys, addressing context-specific drivers, and strengthening coordination across systems. It also highlights gaps created by relying on a narrow primary/secondary/tertiary model.

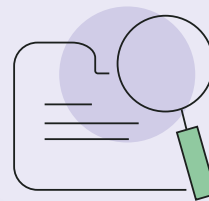
In parallel, the South Australian Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence urges system integration, better supports for vulnerable witnesses, and whole-of-system responses that reach health, education and housing, areas where many people first disclose.

National higher-education reforms illustrate what broader, non-justice action looks like in practice: the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence is now legislated and enforceable, with a dedicated Gender-Based Violence Reform Branch and the National Student Ombudsman to drive compliance, data and trauma-informed responses in universities. Refer to the case study in this section for more information about responses to sexual violence in tertiary environments.



CASE STUDY

The Tertiary CaRE Program and Partners in Prevention of Sexual Violence



Tasmania's Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) has partnered with the University of Tasmania to implement the Tertiary Consent and Relationships Education (CaRE) Program. CaRE was designed for students living in university residences and aims to prevent sexual harm by addressing its underlying drivers, including power dynamics, privilege and harmful social norms.

It consists of a multi-session intervention that teaches students about the prevalence of sexual harm, consent laws and bodily rights. It includes communication practice around intimacy and consent, strategies for navigating situations of non-consent, and bystander intervention skills. The program is intended to achieve and measure not only attitudinal but also behavioural change among university students.

The program was funded by and co-designed with La Trobe University's Partners in Prevention of Sexual Violence Project, which is also conducting an evaluation of the program. The evaluation will use a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the program's effectiveness and will be assessed within a parallel 3-arm cluster non-randomised-controlled trial, complemented by a Realist evaluation for triangulation. By identifying the

outcomes of this project, the evaluation will provide useful evidence to inform efforts to reduce sexual violence in tertiary education settings.

This evaluation is one project among several that are being run through the Partners in Prevention of Sexual Violence project, which aims to deliver high-quality evaluations of interventions designed to address the drivers and reinforcing factors of sexual violence. Other projects cover a range of interventions including prevention, education, support and behaviour change, and are operating in locations across Australia.

The project is being run by the Reducing Gender-based Violence (ReGEN) Research Group at La Trobe University and is funded by the Australian Government.

These measures show how standards, oversight and workforce capability can be lifted in large service systems and similar levers should be adapted across other sectors as part of the Second Action Plan.

Governments are already progressing initiatives. The National Plan positions prevention as a priority. The *National strategy to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse 2021–2030* includes a commitment to education and workforce training. The Department of Social Services is funding capacity-building for specialist and mainstream workforces, while the National Office for Child Safety is leading cross-sector prevention initiatives.

The Commission emphasises that reforms must reach those often excluded from mainstream systems. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have called for self-determined approaches, as set out in *Wiyi Yani U Thangani* (AHRC 2020). LGBTIQ+SB communities report barriers to disclosure when services lack cultural safety. Migrant and refugee women describe how visa dependence and community stigma silence reporting. Embedding diverse lived experience is key to ensuring reforms are inclusive.

South Australian Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

The South Australian Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence made several recommendations to address a system that was described as fragmented, crisis-driven, siloed and not meeting the needs of marginalised populations such as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, the LGBTIQ+SB community, people with disability, children, culturally and linguistically

diverse and male victim-survivors. Recommendations included calls for:

- changes to consent laws and intervention orders
- establishment of vulnerable witness suites in courts
- a 24-hour central hub for crisis help
- efforts to tackle online and societal drivers of sexual violence.

Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches

The Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches highlights that sexual violence is not confined to domestic or family settings. However, due to divergent clinical, community and justice responses, it often receives inadequate attention compared to domestic and family violence. It identified that the traditional primary, secondary and tertiary prevention framework fails to reflect the complexity of lived experiences and creates gaps, especially for individuals who experience sexual violence intersect with other forms of abuse.



Recommendation 30



All governments should take a specific focus on child sexual exploitation, including prevention activities embedded within the education system, including a focus on addressing grooming and forced marriage.

Child sexual exploitation requires specific and sustained national attention. Prevention must be embedded across education and early intervention systems, with coordinated responses that protect children and young people, disrupt perpetrators and provide long-term recovery support for those affected.

Australia has foundational architecture through the *National strategy to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse 2021–2030*, led by the National Office for Child Safety, which emphasises culture change, early identification, and trauma-informed supports. The *National review of child sexual abuse and sexual assault legislation* (2024) further recommends greater consistency in offences and affirmative consent models to reduce confusion and barriers to justice. Education systems are a critical prevention platform recent higher-education reforms (the mandatory National Code) show how standards, incident management, data reporting and accountability can be mandated at scale.

Tailored equivalents for school systems (age-appropriate consent and safety education, staff training, clear referral pathways) should be strengthened and consistently implemented with evaluation.

Integrating these elements into the Second Action Plan linked to Strategy actions, justice reforms, and child protection would

create a clearer national spine for CSE prevention and response. Ensuring lived experience of children, young people and survivors informs this work is essential to building responses that are safe and effective.

Accelerating reform to support people who have experienced sexual violence

Sexual violence is a national crisis. It is lived daily in homes, workplaces, institutions and online. While governments have taken important steps through the Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry, the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse, and multiple state inquiries, reform remains fragmented and uneven.

The Commission believes that 3 steps are critical:

- implementing a national roadmap for Australian Law Reform Commission reforms
- expanding reforms beyond justice to prevention, workforce and inclusion
- establishing a specific national focus on child sexual exploitation.

These actions would consolidate evidence, accelerate reform, and build responses that are inclusive, survivor-centred and accountable.

Time to Act, —— Commit to Change

Institutional change is slow —
we've seen it drag, we've watched it grow.
We've marched, we've spoken, raised the sound,
yet still these walls don't come down.

Institutions know the score:
siloed care can't serve us all.
They've read the research, felt the weight,
yet still they stall, they hesitate.

They say, "We're sorry, we know the need, but its hard."
But sorry is not safety, not reform, not change in law, policy or practice.
Apologies don't shield from harm,
don't build safe beds, don't raise alarm.

What good are words when systems fail,
when victims walk a paper trail,
and fall through cracks again, again —
as duty shifts from pen to pen?

It takes true fire to name the wrong,
to break the silence held so long.
Conviction sharp, a voice that dares
to hold to task the ones who care
in words alone — but not repairs.

Lived experience lights the way:
elders, young ones show each day
where trust breaks down, where safety bends,
how real reform begins — and ends.



Kyllie Cripps

Professor Kyllie Cripps is a Palawa woman and Director of Monash's Indigenous Studies Centre. She is a member of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee developing the standalone Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan to address domestic, family, and sexual violence.

But change must prove itself in time,
with clear accountability by design.
Measured outcomes, data tracked,
evidence showing progress, fact.
Yet numbers alone can't tell it true —
context matters, stories do.
Behind each chart, each line, each rate,
a voice, a face, a heavy weight.
Victim-survivors must be seen,
their witness shaping what change means.

Yet too many papers gather dust,
promises broken, betraying trust.
Links that fade, intentions stray,
while harm goes on, day after day.

We must be bold, we must commit,
not half a step, but all of it.
It takes engagement, deep and wide,
with truth and courage side by side.

It takes us all to make this stand —
institutions, services, industries, many hands.
Women, men, non-binary too —
each with a role, each with work to do.
Let's be clear — this is not women's work alone:
men must stand, not just apart,
but part of the change, with open heart.
Accountable, present, willing to hear,
to act with respect, to draw others near.

As it takes a village to raise a child,
to nurture hope where care runs wild,
so too it takes community care
to build real safety, strong and fair.

Too many lives hang in the balance.
No more delay, no more silence.
The reckoning's here, long overdue —
institutions, we're looking at you.

Lives matter — that's what this is for:
the right to safety, nothing more.
To live beyond the reach of harm,
not bound by fear, false threat, alarm.

We won't accept excuses thin,
or broken systems dressed as "win."
No more trust in threads that fray —
we need bold care that does not sway.

We can do better — we must begin.
The will to change must rise within.
Push past the tired, the stalled delay,
and rise for those cast far away.

For women, children, families too,
whose voices show what must be true:
that change is more than sympathy —
it's action shaped by lived reality.

So here's the call, fierce and loud:
we are many, we are proud.
No more waiting, no more "we tried" —
justice, safety, healing now — bold action,
not broken words.

Kyllie Cripps

Part 4

Supporting materials





2010

Domestic Violence Death Review Team (DVDRT) established to review deaths occurring in the context of domestic violence in New South Wales

2012

Inquiry by the Standing Committee on Social Issues into Domestic Violence Trends and Issues in NSW, conducted by the Legislative Council of the Parliament of New South Wales

2013

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, a national inquiry established by the Australian Government in response to allegations of child sexual abuse in institutional contexts

2014

Inquest into the Death of Luke Batty, conducted by the Coroner's Court of Victoria

Australian Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Inquiries and Reviews (2010–2025)



2015

Royal Commission into Family Violence, established by the Victorian Government

2016

The Royal Commission into Family Violence delivered its final report to the Victorian Government

Domestic and Family Violence Inquiry Report delivered to the South Australian Government by the Social Development Committee

Appointment of the Board of Inquiry into System Level Responses to Family Violence in the ACT, following the tragic death of Bradyn Dillon one week earlier, and report delivered

2017

Final Report of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse by the Australian Government

2018

Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety established by the Australian Government

National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, delivered by the Australian Government

Data Report delivered by the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network



2019

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability established by the Australian Government

Report delivered from Inquiry into the Family Law System by the Australian Law Reform Commission

2020

Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs

Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control appointed by the NSW Government

2021

Final Report delivered from the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety

Final Report delivered from the Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs

The Queensland Government establishes the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce

Report One of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce presented to the Queensland Government

Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings established

Report presented to the ACT Government by the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Steering Committee

Findings delivered from Inquest into the Death of Bradyn Dillon by the Coroner's Court of the Australian Capital Territory

2022

Senate Inquiry into Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children established

Queensland Government response to Report One of the Queensland Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce

Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service responses to domestic and family violence announced and report delivered

Sexual Assault (Police) Review established by the ACT Government



2023

Final Report of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

Coronial inquests into the deaths of Miss Yunupingu, Ngeygo Ragurk, Kumarn Rubuntja, and Kumanjayi Haywood, conducted by the Northern Territory

Report Two of the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce presented to the Queensland Government

The South Australian Government announced a Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, following the deaths of four women in domestic violence incidents within a single week

Western Australia establishes a Family and Domestic Violence Taskforce

Report delivered from the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings

2024

South Australia commenced the Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

Inquiry into Family Violence Orders conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs

Inquiry into Financial Services Regulatory Framework in Relation to Financial Abuse by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Corporations and Financial Services

The Australian Government commits to and delivers a rapid review of evidence-based approaches to prevent gender-based violence

Report delivered from Senate Inquiry into Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children

Queensland Government introduces legislation criminalising coercive control

The Northern Territory Coroner delivers the report from the Inquests into the deaths of Miss Yunupingu, Ngeygo Ragurk, Kumarn Rubuntja, and Kumanjayi Haywood

Final Report delivered from the ACT Sexual Assault (Police) Review

2025

Final Report delivered from Inquiry into Family Violence Orders conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs

Final Report delivered from Inquiry into Justice Responses to Sexual Violence by the Australian Law Reform Commission

Final Report from the Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence delivered by the South Australian Government

Final report delivered from the Review of Identification and Management of Financial Abuse within the Tax System by the Australian Government Inspector-General of Taxation and Tax Ombudsman (2025)

Report delivered from the Investigation into the Child Support program by Commonwealth Ombudsman (2025)

The Queensland Office of the Independent Implementation Supervisor presents a Biannual Progress Report responding to recommendations arising from the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce Reports and the Inquiry into Queensland Police Service Responses

This timeline represents major inquiries and reviews. It does not include all local, coronial, or specialised reviews that may have occurred during this period. The scope includes related Royal Commissions and critical coronial inquests that have shaped Australia's approach to preventing violence against vulnerable populations, with over 1,000 recommendations delivered across all inquiries and reviews.

Definitions, terminology and acronyms

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations)

There are a wide range of nations, cultures and languages across mainland Australia and throughout the Torres Strait. 'Aboriginal' is a broad term that groups nations and custodians of mainland Australia and most of the islands, including Tasmania, K'gari, Palm Island, Mornington Island, Groote Eylandt, Bathurst and Melville Islands.

'Torres Strait Islander' is a broad term grouping the peoples of at least 274 small islands between the northern tip of Cape York in Queensland and the south-west coast of Papua New Guinea. Many Torres Strait Islander peoples live on the Australian mainland. There are also two Torres Strait Islander communities at Bamaga and Seisia, within the Northern Peninsula Area of Queensland (APSC, 2023).

ANROWS (Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety)

ANROWS was established as an initiative of Australia's first national plan (2010–2022) by the Australian Government and all state and territory governments.

Its primary function is to build the evidence base that supports ending violence against women and children in Australia. ANROWS is embedded in the National Plan architecture and will continue to deliver and develop this function across the next decade under the National Plan for 2022–2032

Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)

A term usually used in government policy in Australia. It means a person who has one, some or all the following characteristics or identities:

- are from, or have a parent from, a country/ies other than Australia
 - have a diverse cultural background whose heritage/ancestry, or race, is from places other than England, Scotland, Ireland, or Wales
 - may speak other languages at home besides English, or
 - follow religions, traditions, values, and beliefs outside of the majority Christian and atheist beliefs in Australia.
-



Child sexual abuse	Child sexual abuse refers to sexual violence experienced by a person under the age of 16.
Coercive control	Coercive control is often defined as a pattern of controlling behaviour, used by a perpetrator to establish and maintain control over another person. Coercive control is almost always an underlying dynamic of family and domestic violence and intimate partner violence. Perpetrators use coercive control to deprive another person of liberty, autonomy and agency (Cortis and Bullen 2015; ANROWS 2021). The Commission adopts the definition of 'coercive control' by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
Data	Data is information such as facts and numbers used as a basis for reasoning, discussion or calculation.
Domestic, family and sexual violence (or DFSV)	The Commission uses the definition of domestic, family and sexual violence in the <i>National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032</i> (the National Plan). Domestic violence refers to any behaviour within a past or current intimate relationship (including dates) that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm. Family violence is a broader term that captures violence perpetrated by parents (and guardians) against children, between other family members and in family-like settings. Sexual violence refers to sexual activity that happens where consent is not freely given or obtained, is withdrawn, or the person is unable to consent due to their age or other factors. It also occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any sexual/sexualised activity. Sexual violence can be non-physical and include unwanted sexualised comments, intrusive sexualised questions or sexual harassment. The Commission uses the term 'domestic, family and sexual violence' (or DFSV), however, this may be referred to as 'family, domestic and sexual violence' (or FDSV) in other contexts.
Economic abuse	Economic abuse is a form of domestic and family violence that involves controlling, exploiting or sabotaging a person's ability to acquire, use and maintain economic resources and threatens their economic security and self-sufficiency (DSS 2022; CWES 2025). It can include restricting access to cash and bank accounts, restricting access to work or study, hiding financial information or assets, incurring debts in the victim-survivor's name, or manipulating systems to avoid or reduce Child Support payments (CWES 2025; Parliament of Australia 2024).

Financial abuse	Financial abuse is a subset of economic abuse that encompasses behaviour that affects a person's ability to acquire, use or maintain money or finances (CWES 2025). While the terms financial abuse and economic abuse are sometimes used interchangeably, the term economic abuse will be used in this report as it recognises that the impacts of this abuse can extend beyond money or finances to domains such as housing, employment, healthcare and education (WLSA 2024).
Gender-based violence	The National Plan uses the terminology 'violence against women and children' to acknowledge the high prevalence of men's violence against women and children. Wherever possible, the Commission uses the term 'gender-based violence' to recognise the impact of domestic, family and sexual violence on people of all ages, genders, sex characteristics and sexualities. This language recognises gendered violence is primarily perpetrated by men against women, while recognising higher rates of domestic, family and sexual violence experienced by LGBTIQ+SB communities and other cohorts are underpinned by patriarchal norms.
Intersectionality	In the context of addressing gender-based violence, an intersectional approach recognises the way people experience gender and inequality can be different based on a range of other cultural, individual, historical, environmental or structural factors including (but not limited to) race, age, geographic location, sexual orientation, ability or class. This approach also recognises that the drivers, dynamics and impacts of violence women experience can be compounded and magnified by their experience of other forms of oppression and inequality, resulting in some groups of women experiencing higher rates and/or more severe forms of violence, or facing barriers to support and safety that other women do not experience. This definition has been adopted from the National Plan.
Intimate partner violence	Violent or intimidating behaviours perpetrated by current or former intimate partners, including cohabiting partner, boyfriend, girlfriend or date.
LGBTIQ+SB people	The term LGBTIQ+SB is used throughout this report to refer to people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual, sistergirls, brotherboys, or people otherwise diverse in gender, sex or sexual orientation. This definition has been drawn from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare family, domestic and sexual violence glossary. The Commission recognises that language continues to evolve and can change over time.



Lived experience (or people who have experienced violence)	The Commission recognises and respects the terminology used by people who identify as victims and/or survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence (DHSV). The Commission recognises there are many perspectives of the experience of HSV and in using the term 'people with lived experience' we seek to be inclusive of the breadth of experiences. The Commission also recognises there are many people who may have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence but do not identify with the terminology of victim-survivors.
Measure	A measure provides an objective and standardised quantification of the size, amount or degree of the change achieved. They provide a more granular detail of what has changed along with a specific measurement of progress.
Men's behaviour change programs (MBCPs)	MBCPs are designed for men who have used violence, coercion or control in their relationships with their partner, children or other family members. These programs aim to encourage men to take responsibility for their behaviour and provide them with the skills and tools necessary to change their behaviour and maintain respectful relationships. This definition has been adopted from No to Violence.
Monitoring	Monitoring is the regular collection and analysis of information to provide indicators of progress towards objectives. It includes monitoring inputs, activities, outputs and progress towards outcomes. Monitoring answers the question: 'What is going on?'
National Plan	Refers to the <i>National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032</i>. When the report refers to other national plans, this is outlined in the report.
Outcome	Outcomes represent a desired condition that should exist at the end of an activity, process or program. Outcomes should be specific enough to be measured. They are clear and unambiguous high-level statements that allow measurement of success.
People who use violence	The phrase 'people who use violence' refers to the individual who uses domestic, family and sexual violence to cause harm to another. People who use violence are sometimes referred to as 'perpetrators'. The term perpetrator aims to hold people who use violence accountable for their behaviour, and we respect the broad use of this term in the sector. The term can also be alienating and a barrier to seeking support for some people who use violence. The Commission chooses to use the term 'people who use violence' where possible.

Performance measure	Performance measurement is the process used to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of projects, programs and initiatives. It is a systematic approach to collecting and analysing how 'on track' a project/program/initiative is to achieve its desired outcomes, goals and objectives.
Sexual violence	Sexual violence refers to the occurrence, attempt or threat of sexual assault by a current or former intimate partner, known person or stranger, experienced by a person over the age of 16 who does not or cannot give consent. Can include sexual abuse, sexual assault and sexual harassment.
Specialist and non-specialist workforces	The National Plan and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare categorise workforces who have roles in relation to domestic, family and sexual violence as: • specialist workers whose daily work involves responding to those who have experienced and/or used violence, as well as professionals who may work directly with these workers, such as trainers or specialist consultants in policy • non-specialist workers whose work may intersect with domestic, family and sexual violence as part of their wider role in the community, such as health professionals, police officers and teachers. The Commission has adopted this terminology while acknowledging that different categorisations and terminology are in use across the country (AIHW 2024c).
Specialist Homelessness Service (SHS)	Assistance provided by a specialist homelessness agency to a client aimed at responding to or preventing homelessness. Includes accommodation provision, assistance to sustain housing, domestic/family violence services, mental health services, family/relationship assistance, disability services, drug/alcohol counselling, legal/financial services, immigration/cultural services, other specialist services and general assistance and support.
Systemic barriers	Policies, practices or procedures that result in unequal access or exclusion for some people (e.g. poverty, racism, a lack of culturally appropriate services).



Systems abuse	Systems abuse refers to the way that systems, such as legal, immigration, child support, and child protection systems, are weaponised/manipulated to harass, intimidate, discredit, threaten or otherwise exert control over a current or former partner (Australian Government 2025; Douglas 2018; DSS 2022; FCFCOA 2023; PMC 2024; PMC 2024a; Reeves 2018). It can include making multiple legal applications in multiple systems, making false reports to child protection agencies, or applying for a protection order against someone (FCFCOA 2023; Reeves 2018).
Technology-facilitated abuse (or tech-based abuse)	Technology-facilitated abuse or 'tech-based abuse' refers to harmful actions carried out online or through digital technology. These include harassment, making threats, stalking and coercive or controlling behaviour. The Commission adopts the definition by the eSafety Commissioner.
Trauma-informed practice	The integration of an understanding of past and current experiences of violence and trauma in all aspects of service delivery. The goal of trauma-informed systems is to avoid re-traumatising individuals and support safety, choice and control to promote healing.
Women and men	The use of 'women' and 'men' in this report is inclusive of both cisgender and transgender women and men. Where we refer to information specific to cisgender, transgender and/or non-binary people, this is indicated in the report.
Victim-survivor	See ' <i>lived experience</i> '.

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