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Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission's Yearly Report calls for earlier intervention, stronger action on sexual violence, and addressing harms caused by family law and justice systems

The Commission's Yearly Report to Parliament finds that efforts and investment to address domestic, family and sexual violence are not yet delivering the impact needed to change the trajectory for people affected by it. In 2024, reports of sexual violence in Australia were at their highest level in 33 years. In the past year, we have seen an average decrease of less than 1% nationally, the first decrease in 15 years.

Today, Australia's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner, Micaela Cronin, released the Commission's third Yearly Report to Parliament, bringing together what the Commission has heard from more than a thousand individuals, services, researchers and advocates from across Australia this year, including through consultations to help shape priorities for the Second Action Plan under the [*National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*](#).

Domestic, family and sexual violence continues to have a devastating impact on individuals, families and communities across Australia. The Commission's report finds that Governments and communities have made important progress – but not yet at the scale or pace required to change the trajectory for people affected by it and save lives.

The Commission has identified two persistent areas where Australians continue to experience unacceptable levels of harm: the family law and justice systems, and sexual violence. The report lands amid intense public and political conversation around institutional responses to sexual violence, harmful and misogynistic content influencing young people, funding decisions and the justice system's handling of violence – underscoring the Commission's call for sustained, rather than episodic, national attention to both.

Reports of sexual violence have increased by 64% over the past 15 years, reaching the highest level since national recording began 33 years ago in 2024, with an average decrease of less than 1% nationally in the past year. This demands attention from all governments – Commonwealth, states and territories – to increase investment and strengthen efforts to prevent and respond to sexual violence and learn from what is working. Almost 6 in 10 sexual assaults recorded by police occur outside family and intimate partner relationships, underlining that this is a distinct national problem, not simply an extension of domestic and family violence. The Commission welcomes the Commitment from National Cabinet to addressing sexual violence as a priority under the Second Action Plan.

"The scale of sexual violence in Australia demands sustained national investment and action, commensurate with the scale of the problem," said Commissioner Cronin. "Collectively, we must send a clear message that these behaviours are not acceptable, and that people who have experienced sexual violence will be heard, treated with dignity and respect, and supported through their justice and healing journey," Commissioner Cronin said.

The Commission also found that the family law and justice systems continue to be a site of ongoing weaponisation and harm. "What I have consistently heard from people who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence is that family law and justice systems can, and too often do, become another source of harm," said Commissioner Micaela Cronin. These systems can be weaponised to compound

trauma, continue coercive or other controlling behaviours and prolong recovery. "When people seek protection, accountability and support, the systems around them should help keep them safe. Too often, that is not what is happening," she said.

Alongside these two priority areas, the report includes six recommendations to strengthen the foundations of the National Plan and mature systems. These recommendations focus on intervening earlier, improving safety and recovery, strengthening accountability and building a clearer picture of whether investments and reforms are making a difference. "We must expand our focus to begin work earlier – earlier in children's lives, and earlier when we see patterns of violence emerging. We must take every possible opportunity to intervene and make our communities safer – not wait until the crisis has occurred and the harm is done," said Commissioner Micaela Cronin.

Drawing on the Commission's [Monitoring and Reporting Framework](#), the report calls for all governments – Commonwealth, states and territories – to build on existing collaboration and ensure consistency of definitions, practice and standards to deliver effective coordinated action. It also calls for better use of evidence to track investment and outcomes, so governments can remain accountable, understand what is working and where action is needed.

Commissioner Cronin emphasised that Australia has an opportunity to build a more mature and effective response to violence. "The conversations we've had across the country this year are both deeply confronting, and at the same time give me hope. People have brought forward practical ideas, hard truths and a shared determination to do better through the consultation process for the Second Action Plan. This has provided a strong foundation to turn that input into real-world change for women, children, families and communities.

"With this Second Action Plan, we must continue to commit to taking measurable actions to achieving that change. We can enable our communities, services and systems to intervene earlier, keep people safer and achieve the goal of making domestic, family and sexual violence rare, brief and non-recurring. I am determined not to be having these same conversations in five years' time. Collective national efforts, guided by this plan, can ensure that we aren't," said Commissioner Micaela Cronin.

The insights of people who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence are central to this report, and continue to be essential to improving systems and delivering meaningful reform for everyone. The Commission's [Lived Experience Advisory Council](#) was central to informing this report. Co-Chair, Holly Supple-Gurruwiwi, said "the lens we choose matters. What we choose to see shapes what we choose to do, and whose knowledge we value shapes the solutions we build. When lived experience is treated as expertise, we see not only where systems are failing, but what safety requires. This report carries that knowledge into national decision making. The test is not simply whether people were heard, but whether what they shared changes decisions, directs investment and saves lives."

The report's eight recommendations, in brief:

- Two recommendations demand sustained national attention on sexual violence, and the justice and family law systems.
- Six recommendations advise on how to build a more mature national system: strengthening whole-of-government capability to identify and manage risk; co-designing policies and services with people who face the greatest barriers to safety; targeting new investment towards early intervention; investing in the conditions that enable safety and recovery; establishing a National Evidence Collaboration; and strengthening monitoring, accountability and continuous improvement across the National Plan.

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission's 2026 Yearly Report to Parliament has been tabled and is available at: <https://www.dfsvc.gov.au/yearly-report-parliament-2026>



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If you or someone you know is experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, domestic, family or sexual violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732, chat online via www.1800RESPECT.org.au, or text 0458 737 732.

If you are concerned about your behaviour or use of violence, you can contact the Men's Referral Service on 1300 766 491 or visit www.ntv.org.au.

Feeling worried or no good? No shame, no judgement, just a safe place to yarn. Speak to a 13YARN Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Crisis Supporter, call 13 92 76. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.