



# Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA)

Second Action Plan consultation report

# Purpose of the session

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This roundtable, arranged at the request of the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA), focused on policing responses to domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV). Stated objectives included:

- Drawing on ANZPAA's cross-jurisdictional connections to identify priority risks and opportunities for national action over the next five years; and
- Identifying practical, system-level levers to address pressure on police while improving outcomes for people experiencing DFSV.

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## Executive summary

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Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA) participants emphasised that growing domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) demand is positioning police as the default 24/7 responder, and that the Second Action Plan should clarify policing as a crisis response focused on immediate safety, risk and perpetrator accountability. Key priorities include stronger cross-sector accountability, earlier intervention, integrated non-police support, as well as national leadership on technology-facilitated abuse.

# What we heard

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**Note:** Jurisdictions have not been identified in this summary. Participants represented policing agencies across multiple jurisdictions, and terminology may vary accordingly. The terms “victim-survivor” and “perpetrator” are used to reflect the law enforcement context of the discussion, while recognising that people with lived experience may have different preferences regarding language.

## Overarching themes

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- Police are experiencing growing and increasingly complex DFSV demand, driven by increased reporting, growing public awareness, recidivist offenders, technology-facilitated abuse and the absence of other 24/7 responses.
- Participants consistently emphasised the need to clarify the scope of policing within the broader DFSV system. There was strong support for partnerships that enabled police to focus on immediate safety, risk, perpetrator accountability, protection orders and criminal investigations.
- Participants highlighted the importance of integrated models, including embedded workers, specialist units and stronger partnerships, to support victim-survivors while allowing police to focus on their core role.
- The system needs stronger early intervention and prevention, particularly for people using violence and for children and young people, to reduce escalation and long-term demand. Particular attention should be paid to contexts such as out-of-home care and priority populations who may be reluctant to engage with policing agencies.
- Technology-facilitated abuse is outpacing legislative frameworks, digital infrastructure and police capability, creating a strong case for national consistency and capability uplift. Gathering and managing digital evidence, including in coercive control matters, requires significant investment in storage, infrastructure, and capability.
- There was concern that mandatory intervention policies can reduce police discretion, increase workload and may not always align with victim-survivor choice or safety needs.
- Jurisdictional context matters, including differences in legislative settings, service maturity, technology capability and the realities of regional and remote service delivery where police may be the only available service.

# Clarifying the role and scope of police within the DFSV system

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## What participants told us

- Police are increasingly the default response agency for DFSV-related matters, including for behaviours well below criminal thresholds that may be better addressed by specialist, health, child protection or community services.
- Increased public awareness and reporting are driving demand, alongside the practical reality that police are available 24/7 and often become involved when other services are unavailable or after hours.
- A significant proportion of demand is associated with prolific and recidivist offenders, repeated court and breach processes, and ongoing management of escalating risk.
- Participants emphasised that police are best placed to respond to immediate safety risks, perpetrator accountability, protection orders and criminal investigations.
- Coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse, financial abuse and systems abuse are adding complexity, including in the context of gathering and storing digital evidence.
- Regional, rural and remote contexts intensify demand where police may be the only available service and specialist support is limited or only available online.
- Some participants raised concerns that reduced police discretion and mandatory responses can create additional workload and may not always align with victim-survivor preferences or safety needs.

## What participants said needs to change

- Define the scope of policing responsibilities within the broader DFSV system, including where police should lead and where other agencies should take primary responsibility.
- Strengthen role clarity and accountability across agencies so the right service responds at the right time.
- Ensure non-police services can provide sustained safety, support and system navigation once immediate safety concerns are addressed.

# Strengthening early intervention and prevention

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## What participants told us

- Police often become involved after harm has escalated, reinforcing the need for earlier intervention before situations reach crisis point.
- Participants identified gaps in interventions for people using violence, including limited options before violence escalates and repeated cycling through police and courts.
- Participants also highlighted the importance of prevention and education for children and young people, as well as men and boys, including clearer accountability for who leads this work.
- Some participants emphasised the need for government-led prevention and education, while others highlighted community activation.

## What participants said needs to change

- Increase investment in early intervention for people using violence, including behaviour change and justice or corrections-led pathways where appropriate.
- Clarify responsibility for prevention and education, particularly for children and young people.
- Build community capability to recognise abuse, support people experiencing DFSV and contribute to prevention before police intervention is required.

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# Children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right

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## What participants told us

- Participants noted that responsibilities are clearer when children are the primary victim-survivor, but less clear when they are secondary victim-survivors.
- Ownership of therapeutic support for children sits across human services, child protection and other support systems, meaning further clarity required about roles and responsibilities.
- Children in out-of-home care, residential settings or complex family contexts may experience significant risk but may not identify as victims or want police intervention.
- Participants acknowledged the link between childhood experiences of violence, abuse and exploitation and future victimisation and youth offending, reinforcing the need for earlier and more integrated responses.
- Some participants asked about the broader work being done to engage with children and young people through the Second Action Plan process, with one participant highlighting a need to engage with children and young people with lived experience.

## What participants said needs to change

- Improve collaboration between police, child protection, education, human services and specialist DFSV services.
- Strengthen specialist skills for engaging children and young people.

# Technology-facilitated abuse and emerging forms of harm

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## What participants told us

- Technology-facilitated abuse, financial abuse and systems abuse are significant and growing drivers of police demand.
- Police are encountering increasingly complex digital evidence, online abuse, coercive control-related online evidence and emerging harms, such as deepfakes.
- Current digital investigation capability, storage, infrastructure and device analysis capacity are not keeping pace with the scale and complexity of offending.
- Legislative settings were described as lagging behind contemporary technology-enabled offending and community expectations.
- Some participants emphasised national legislative reform, while others focused on operational capability and technology investment.
- A related discussion, noted below, highlighted the potential of technology to increase efficiencies and reduce administrative burdens. This reinforces that technology can both drive demand and enable more effective operational responses.

## What participants said needs to change

- Invest in digital investigation capability, workforce skills, evidence storage and supporting infrastructure.
- Modernise and improve national consistency of legislative frameworks for technology-facilitated abuse and emerging online harms. This is an area where Commonwealth leadership can add value.
- Develop technology-enabled tools that support evidence collection, improve victim-survivor experience and reduce administrative burdens on police.

# Workforce sustainability, integrated responses and potential efficiencies

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## What participants told us

- Specialist investigative units, embedded worker models and justice navigator-style supports were identified as valuable for triage, victim-survivor engagement, risk management and more effective use of police capability.
- Participants noted that policies and legislation can limit police discretion, requiring them to issue protection orders irrespective of victim-survivor preferences and generating significant ongoing workload through breaches and court processes.
- Family violence and sexual violence responses within the DFSV sector can be artificially separated despite significant overlap in victim-survivor experiences and service needs.
- Workforce and funding pressures affect the whole system, including specialist services, child protection and other agencies that police rely on to provide sustained support. Participants also recognised that other parts of the service system also experience significant demand and limited resourcing.
- There are certain operational realities in rural and remote areas that influence the demand on policing. They are often the only service available, especially as police operate as a 24hr service.

## What participants said needs to change

- Strengthen integrated service models so police can focus on enforcement, immediate safety and risk while other agencies provide ongoing safety, housing, financial, legal and therapeutic support.
- Maintain and support specialist capability while ensuring models are adaptable to different jurisdictional contexts, including the specific challenges arising in regional and remote areas.
- Reduce unnecessary compliance and administrative burden through improved discretion, better technology and system-wide productivity measures.

**We sincerely thank everyone who generously shared their time and insights with us.**

