

A joint Australian,  
state and territory  
government initiative

# National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032

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*Ending gender-based  
violence in one generation*



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*Artwork by Carmen Glynn-Braun*



## Acknowledgements

We acknowledge and pay respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia, who are the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and waters and of the oldest continuous living culture on Earth. We pay respects to Elders past and present. We acknowledge the positive legacy left by ancestors – which is lore and strength of culture.

We acknowledge that the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (National Plan) was conceived, written, and will be implemented on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land.

We honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ongoing connection to sea, waterways and Country and respect their unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas on which we live and work.

The national response to ending family violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must be led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We acknowledge and respect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to self-determination and agency.

We recognise the leadership role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have played in the development of the National Plan and the role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will play in the implementation and monitoring of the National Plan.

This includes thanks to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence which has worked in partnership with government to inform the development of this plan and is leading the development of the underpinning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan.

We would also like to thank members of the National Plan Advisory Group for their input to the development of this plan and their participation in the consultation activities that informed its design.

# Our shared vision is to end gender-based violence in one generation.

Endorsed by:

**The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP**

Minister for Social Services

**The Hon Justine Elliot MP**

Assistant Minister for Social Services  
Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence

**The Hon Yvette Berry MLA**

Australian Capital Territory  
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Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

**The Hon Natalie Ward MLC**

New South Wales  
Minister for Women's Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence

**The Hon Kate Worden MLA**

Northern Territory  
Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services  
Minister for Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence  
Minister for Sport  
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Minister for Women and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

**The Hon Katrine Hildyard MP**

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Minister for Recreation, Sport and Racing

**The Hon Jo Palmer MLC**

Tasmania  
Minister for Primary Industries and Water  
Minister for Disability Services  
Minister for Women

**The Hon Ros Spence MP**

Victoria  
Minister for Prevention of Family Violence  
Minister for Multicultural Affairs  
Minister for Community Sport  
Minister for Youth

**The Hon Simone McGurk MLA**

Western Australia  
Minister for Child Protection  
Minister for Women's Interests  
Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence  
Minister for Community Services



## Dedication

The National Plan is dedicated to each and every victim and survivor of gender-based violence. We acknowledge their resistance and resilience.

We thank the victim-survivors who have spoken out and shared their stories. Their work to share their experiences continues to inspire us and drive us to do more.

We mourn those who have been murdered and the children we will not see grow up. We recognise those with lived experience who continue to recover from violence and manage the life-long impacts of trauma. We acknowledge the life-long disabilities and impairments that many live with as a direct result of violence against women.

We acknowledge and thank all the people and organisations who work tirelessly every day to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women and children, and whose advice and advocacy have informed this plan.



# A statement from victim-survivors

It is time to transform our pain into action. There can be no more excuses – that it is too hard, we don't know what to do, it's too complex.

It is everyone's responsibility to end the perpetration of violence against women and children, and all victims of gendered violence.

We are your mothers, your sisters, your brothers, your aunties, your uncles, your cousins, your children, your partners, your colleagues, your friends, your family, your kin, your community.

Do not continue to shame us for what other people have done to us. We did not ask for abuse. We have resisted violence, or done what we needed to do – to protect ourselves, our families. To survive.

Stand with us, do not look away when we show you our pain. See what is happening all around you everyday, from the sexist comment or homophobic joke, to the excuse 'boys will be boys'.



Discard the intuition that just because you know someone, they could not possibly hurt or abuse another. The people who use violence and abuse against their families, partners, children, colleagues, friends or dates are people you already know. People you like. People you love.

The people who have abused us are people we knew; people we liked; and most often people we loved.

Too many of us are being re-traumatised trying to engage with systems that are meant to 'protect' us but fail. Systems that create barriers to access and have costs beyond our means because services are not designed for the realities of our lives. Instead, they perpetuate the same dynamics of power and control as our abusers. Systems that wait until the worst has happened before they respond, then blame us for not reporting or leaving.

We should not have to die to get your attention.

We should never be forced to choose between violence in our homes or being homeless and facing violence on the streets, or having our families torn apart in ways we never wanted and that cause further harm.

This is not safety.

The time is now to remove the inequalities that allow perpetrators to exercise power over others because our society:

- does not believe women
- does not value all women equally
- does not hear the voices of First Nations women and learn from their diverse experiences
- does not reward women equally for work
- does not value women's unpaid labour
- does not believe children can be trusted to tell the truth about abuse

- does not view people with disability as equal or able
- punishes those who do not conform
- creates disadvantage and poverty as a problem of individuals.

It is time to stop people and institutions choosing to use violence, feeling entitled to control and dominate, to degrade others' value based on their sex, gender, sexuality or perceived 'rights'.

We are not damaged goods. We are not incapable or less than you because we experience trauma. We are survivors. We will not be silenced, pushed into the shadows nor spoken for any more.

We hold knowledge and answers that others simply do not.

We are diverse but galvanised by a common cause. We know what needs to change. No meaningful solutions can be made about us without us.

Stopping our suffering depends on all of us choosing to do something differently. We cannot repeat more of the same and expect to achieve change.

Abuse and violence is a problem for victims, but it is not the victims' problem. Genuine change begins with a willingness to listen. We must stop protecting perpetrators with our silence, and through inaction. We must be willing to sit in discomfort. It is time to be brave.

### **Members of the Independent Collective of Survivors**



# Help and support

Violence against women and children can be hard to discuss and reading this document may cause distress.

Help is available.

**If you or someone close to you is in distress or immediate danger, please call 000.**

## Family, domestic and sexual violence support

For information, support and counselling, you can contact:

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| <b>1800RESPECT</b>   | National sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service. This service is free and confidential. Available 24/7.   | 1800 737 732<br><a href="http://www.1800respect.org.au">www.1800respect.org.au</a> |
| <b>Full Stop Australia</b>                                   | National trauma counselling and recovery service for people of all ages and genders experiencing sexual, domestic and family violence. This service is free and confidential. Available 24/7. | 1800 943 539<br><a href="http://www.fullstop.org.au">www.fullstop.org.au</a>       |
| <b>Rainbow Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline</b> | For anyone from the LGBTIQ+ community whose life has been impacted by sexual domestic and/or family violence. This service is free and confidential. Available 24/7.                          | 1800 497 212   |
| <b>Well Mob</b>  | Social, emotional and cultural well-being online resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.   | <a href="http://www.wellmob.org.au">www.wellmob.org.au</a>                         |
| <b>Men's Referral Service</b>                                | For anyone in Australia whose life has been impacted by men's use of violence or abusive behaviours. Available 7 days.  | 1300 766 491<br><a href="http://www.ntv.org.au">www.ntv.org.au</a>                 |
| <b>My Blue Sky</b>   | Provides free legal and migration support to people experiencing forced marriage and other forms of modern slavery in Australia.  | 02 9514 8115<br><a href="http://www.mybluesky.org.au">www.mybluesky.org.au</a>     |
| <b>Say it out Loud</b>                                       | A national resource for LGBTQ+ communities and service professionals working with people who have experienced sexual, domestic and family violence.   | <a href="http://www.sayitoutloud.org.au">www.sayitoutloud.org.au</a>               |

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| <b>Department of Home Affairs</b> | The Domestic and Family Violence Support team can provide information and assistance on immigration matters and work with victims of domestic and family violence to resolve visa issues. | <a href="https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/domestic-family-violence-and-your-visa/overview">https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/domestic-family-violence-and-your-visa/overview</a> |
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## Crisis support and suicide prevention

For information, support and counselling, you can contact:

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| <b>Lifeline</b>                              | A national charity providing all Australians experiencing emotional distress with access to 24-hour crisis support and suicide prevention services. Available 24/7. | 13 11 14<br><a href="http://www.Lifeline.org.au">www.Lifeline.org.au</a>  |
| <b>National Suicide Call Back Service</b>    | A nationwide service providing telephone and online counselling to people affected by suicide. Available 24/7.  | 1300 659 467<br><a href="https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/">https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/</a>   |
| <b>Thirrili Postvention Response Service</b> | The Indigenous Suicide Postvention Response Service supports individuals, families and communities affected by suicide or other significant trauma. Available 24/7. | 1800 805 801<br><a href="https://thirrili.com.au/postvention-support/postvention-services">https://thirrili.com.au/postvention-support/postvention-services</a> |

## Mental health support and advice

For information, support and counselling, you can contact:

|                           |   |  |
|---------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Beyond Blue</b>        | Provides information and support to help anyone in Australia achieve their best possible mental health. | 1300 224 636<br><a href="http://www.beyondblue.org.au">www.beyondblue.org.au</a> |
| <b>Head to Health</b>     | Digital mental health services from some of Australia's most trusted mental health organisations.       | <a href="http://www.headtohealth.gov.au">www.headtohealth.gov.au</a>             |
| <b>13 YARN</b>            | Support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping. Available 24/7.           | 13 92 76<br><a href="https://www.13yarn.org.au/">https://www.13yarn.org.au/</a>  |
| <b>ReachOut</b>           | Online mental health service for young people and their parents in Australia.                           | <a href="http://www.au.reachout.com">www.au.reachout.com</a>                     |
| <b>MensLine Australia</b> | A telephone and online counselling service offering support for Australian men.                         | 1300 78 99 78<br><a href="http://www.mensline.org.au">www.mensline.org.au</a>    |



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| <b>Kids Helpline</b> | Free, confidential online and phone counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25. Available 24/7. | 1800 551 800<br><a href="http://www.kidshelpline.com.au">www.kidshelpline.com.au</a> |
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| <b>1800 ELDERHelp</b> | A free call phone number that automatically redirects callers seeking information and advice on elder abuse with the phone service in their state or territory. | 1800 353 374 |
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| <b>Open Arms – Veterans &amp; Families Counselling</b> | Mental health support for Navy, Army and Air Force personnel, veterans and their families. | 1800 011 046<br><a href="http://www.openarms.gov.au">www.openarms.gov.au</a> |
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## Other support

For information, support and counselling, you can contact:

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| <b>Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)</b> | Provides access to phone and on site interpreting services in over 150 languages. | 131 450<br><a href="http://www.tisnational.gov.au">www.tisnational.gov.au</a> |
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| <b>Aboriginal Interpreter Service (AIS)</b> | Helps to address language barriers faced by Indigenous people in the Northern Territory. Interpreters are trained to work in a wide range of settings and environments including legal and justice systems, health care, education, social services and community engagement. | (08) 8999 8353 (24 hours)<br>Fax (08) 8923 7621<br>Email <a href="mailto:ais@nt.gov.au">ais@nt.gov.au</a> |
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| <b>National Relay Service (NRS)</b> | Allows people who cannot hear or do not use their voice to communicate with a hearing person over the phone. | Voice relay number 1300 555 727<br>TTY number 133 677<br>SMS relay number 0423 677 767 |
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| <b>eSafety Commissioner</b> | A complaints based reporting scheme for cyberbullying of children, serious adult cyber abuse, image based abuse (sharing, or threatening to share, intimate images without the consent of the person shown) and illegal and restricted content. | <a href="https://www.esafety.gov.au/report">https://www.esafety.gov.au/report</a> |
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| <b>NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission</b> | An independent agency that was established to improve the quality and safety of NDIS supports and services. The NDIS Commission works with NDIS participants to ensure they have access to services and supports that promote choice, control and dignity. | 1800 035 544 (free call from landlines)<br>TTY number 133 677<br>Interpreters can be arranged |
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| <b>National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline</b> | A free, independent and confidential service for reporting abuse and neglect of people with disability. Anyone can contact the Hotline, including family members, friends, service providers or a person with disability. | 1800 880 052 (toll free)<br>NRS<br>Dial 1800 555 677 then ask for 1800 880 052<br>TIS number 13 14 50<br>Email: <a href="mailto:hotline@workfocus.com">hotline@workfocus.com</a> |
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## Find services near you

The following directories show available support services, which can be filtered by jurisdiction:

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|---|--|
| Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Support Directory | <a href="http://www.anrows.org.au/support-directory">www.anrows.org.au/support-directory</a> |
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| National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence – Sexual Violence Support Directory | <a href="http://www.nasasv.org.au/support-directory">www.nasasv.org.au/support-directory</a> |
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| Ask Izzy is a website that connects people in need with housing, a meal, help with money, family violence support, counselling and much more. Ask Izzy is free and anonymous. | <a href="http://www.askizzy.org.au">www.askizzy.org.au</a> |
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| The Disability Gateway assists all people with disability, their families and carers to locate and access services across Australia. The Disability Gateway helps people find relevant information and navigate services more easily and provides access to services in the health, housing, employment and transport sectors. | 1800 643 787<br>NRS 1800 555 677<br>Interpreter 13 14 50 |
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# Our vision - *Ending violence in one generation*

This National Plan is our commitment to a country free of gender-based violence – where all people live free from fear and violence and are safe at home, at work, at school, in the community and online. This is a human right for all people and we commit to ending violence against women and children in Australia in one generation.

**Violence against women and children is a problem of epidemic proportions in Australia.** One in 3 women has experienced physical violence since the age of 15, and one in 5 has experienced sexual violence.<sup>1</sup> On average, a woman is killed by an intimate partner every 10 days.<sup>2</sup> Rates of violence are even higher for certain groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.<sup>3</sup> A woman is also more likely to experience violence at particular life stages, such as while pregnant or while separating from a relationship.<sup>4</sup> In 2021, girls aged 10 to 17 made up 42% of female sexual assault victims.<sup>5</sup>



**These are not just statistics. They represent the stories of real people, and everyday realities.**

The impact of this violence ripples out across Australian families, communities and society as a whole. Intimate partner violence is the main preventable risk factor that contributes to illness and death in women aged 18 to 44.<sup>6</sup> It is the leading driver of homelessness and incarceration for women.<sup>7</sup> Children exposed to violence experience long-lasting effects on their development, health and well-being. Violence against women and children also costs the economy \$26 billion each year, with victim-survivors bearing approximately 50% of that cost.<sup>8</sup>

**Violence against women and children is not inevitable.** By addressing the social, cultural, political and economic factors that drive this gendered violence, we can end it in one generation. While our focus for this National Plan is the next 10 years, we know that we will need to continue to prioritise ending violence against women and children as we strive to build a community that is safe for all.

To achieve this, we must reshape the social, political and economic aspects of our society that allow gender inequality and discrimination to continue. Across Australia – in cities and regional, rural and remote communities alike – every individual's humanity and worth must be respected and valued, regardless of their age, gender identity, sexuality, sex characteristics, disability, race and culture.

**This is an ambitious vision, yet we can achieve it, if we all work together.** If we address gender inequality, rigid gender norms, and discrimination, we can prevent this kind of violence. Gender inequality, compounded by other forms of discrimination including racism, is at the heart of the problem. Advancing gender equality must be central to the solution. Everyone has a meaningful

role to play – as families, friends, work colleagues, employers, businesses, sporting organisations, media, educational institutions, service providers, community organisations, service systems and governments.

**We have more work to do and we must do better.**

The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (2010–2022 National Plan) was established to coordinate efforts across all levels of governments to address violence against women. Over the past 12 years, the 2010–2022 National Plan has:

- helped bring family, domestic and sexual violence to the nation's attention
- demonstrated the collective commitment by the Commonwealth, states and territories to address family, domestic and sexual violence
- supported increased collaboration including between organisations, government departments and services, including services, that respond to groups disproportionately impacted by violence<sup>9</sup>
- supported the development of a world-leading approach to prevention, including through the development of *Change the story*.

The 2010–2022 National Plan also established key infrastructure and strengthened service responses. Its achievements include establishing Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), the 1800RESPECT helpline and the *Stop it at the Start* campaign. It has also supported specialised services, including legal services for women, emergency accommodation and safe at home programs.

Since the 2010–2022 National Plan, fewer Australians hold attitudes that support violence against women, and most Australians support gender equality.<sup>10</sup> Women report that they are increasingly feeling safer in private and in community settings.<sup>11</sup>

Despite this progress, the 2010–2022 National Plan did not succeed in its goal of reducing violence against women and children. The prevalence of violence against women and children has not significantly decreased during the last 12 years and reported rates of sexual assault continue to rise.<sup>12</sup> While increases in reporting may be due to women feeling more supported to come forward and seek help, we must reduce the prevalence.

It is vital if we are to end violence against women and children that the Commonwealth, states and territories are all pulling in the same direction and are united in our vision to achieve this within a generation.





# The ripple effects of violence against women and children

## Example impacts

- The cost of violence against women and their children\* is estimated at **\$26 billion** a year
  - \*This cost applies to women and their children only. If all forms of violence against children were included, the cost would be significantly higher.
- Domestic and family violence is a **leading driver of homelessness** for women
- Women who experience partner **violence during pregnancy are 3 times** as likely to experience **depression**
- Children exposed to domestic and family violence may experience trauma symptoms, including PTSD. There may also be **long-lasting effects on children's development, behaviour and well-being**
- **Intimate partner homicide** is the most prevalent homicide type in Australia
- In 2019–20, there were **4,706 hospitalisations** of young people aged 15–24 due to assault
- Violence represents 10.9% of the **burden of disease** for Indigenous women
- Among women 18 to 44 years, violence against women is the **single biggest risk factor** contributing to disease burden; more than smoking, drinking or obesity

# About the National Plan

This National Plan builds upon a history of leadership and action by victim-survivors, advocates and women's and community organisations including legal services, health care professionals, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations, the family, domestic and sexual violence sector, academics, law enforcement, agencies, the justice sector, and all governments and community members.

The National Plan commits to 10 years of sustained action, effort and partnership across sectors and levels of government towards our vision of ending violence against women and children in one generation. It outlines what needs to happen to achieve our vision. This includes building the workforce, growing the evidence base and strengthening data collection systems, while delivering holistic, coordinated and integrated person-centred responses. To achieve this, we must listen to and be guided by victim-survivors and people with lived experience.

The National Plan puts in place a national policy framework to guide the work of governments, policy makers, businesses and workplaces, specialist organisations and family, domestic and sexual violence organisations and workers in addressing, preventing and responding to gender-based violence in Australia.

The National Plan will be implemented through two 5-year Action Plans. These will detail 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.

In the longer-term, a standalone First Nations National Plan will be developed to address the unacceptably high rates of violence Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children experience.<sup>13</sup> This violence happens alongside the multiple, intersecting and layered forms of discrimination and disadvantage affecting the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. A deliverable under this National Plan is a dedicated action plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family safety, which will provide the foundations for the future standalone First Nations National Plan.

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission will work with Commonwealth, state and territory governments and community organisations to promote coordinated and consistent monitoring and evaluation frameworks and will provide annual reports to the Parliament measuring progress against the National Plan.

On the national agenda

Growing evidence base

Improvements in community attitudes

Progress towards gender equality

Improvements in community knowledge

Improved workforce skills

Improved access to quality supports and services

Improved responses

An increase in reporting

Greater coordination and improved standards



# National Plan - At a glance

Our vision is to end gender-based violence in one generation

Violence against women and children is a problem of epidemic proportions in Australia.

## Principles



## Domains

### Prevention

Stopping violence before it starts

- Challenge the condoning of violence against women and embed prevention activities across sectors and settings
- Advance gender equality and promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships
- Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships between all people in public and private spheres
- Listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices
- Support men and boys in developing healthy masculinities and positive, supportive relationships with their male peers
- Harness technology in the prevention of violence against women and children
- Invest in making workplaces safe and preventing sexual harassment
- Elevate the voices of children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right

### Early intervention

Stop violence escalating and prevent it from reoccurring

- Reduce the long-term impacts of exposure to violence and prevent further exposure
- Address adolescent violence in family settings
- Improve timely responses to newly identified cases of violence, attitudes and behaviours that may lead to violence perpetration
- Enhance accountability of people who choose to use violence and address misidentification of perpetrators
- Build sector and community capacity to identify and support women and children at increased risk of experiencing gender-based violence and to intervene early to stop violence from escalating

## Implementation

### Implementation through Action Plans

Developed for and by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to lead culturally appropriate and trauma-informed efforts to achieve the Closing the Gap target.

1<sup>st</sup> 5-year Action Plan

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan

2<sup>nd</sup> 5-year Action Plan

First Nations National Plan

↑ Outlines the specific actions to contribute to achieving the National Plan outcomes.

This National Plan is our commitment to a country free of gender-based violence with our vision of ending violence against women and children in Australia in one generation. The National Plan puts in place a national policy framework to guide the work of governments, policy makers, businesses and workplaces, specialist organisations and

family, domestic and sexual violence organisations and workers in addressing, preventing and responding to gender-based violence in Australia. The National Plan takes a holistic and multi-sectoral approach and builds upon the progress made, and lessons learned over the last 12 years.



Accountability



Intersectionality



Person-centred coordination and integration

Response

Efforts and programs used to address existing violence

- Ensure frontline services provided by states and territories are coordinated and integrated and appropriately resourced with a skilled and qualified workforce to support all victim-survivors
- Incorporate an understanding and appropriate response to the specific challenges diverse communities face in relation to family, domestic and sexual violence
- Ensure women and children escaping violence have safe and secure housing, from crisis accommodation to longer-term, sustainable social housing
- Improve justice responses to all forms of gender-based violence

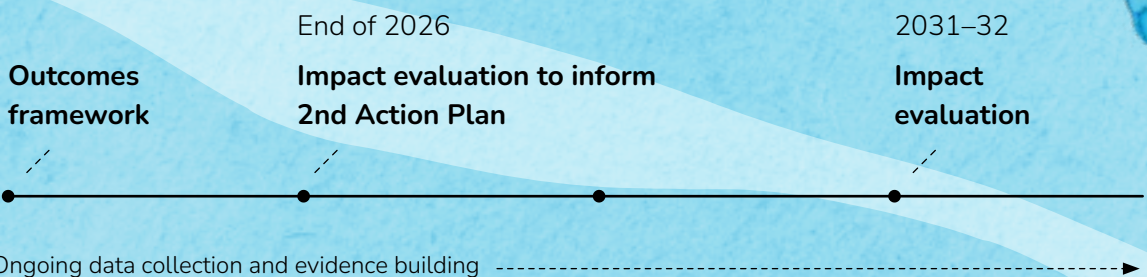
Recovery and healing

Helping to break the cycle of violence and reduce the risk of re-traumatisation

- Ensure victim-survivors are well supported in all aspects of their daily lives through trauma-informed, culturally safe and accessible services that support long-term recovery
- Design recovery services and supports that are tailored to the specific needs of diverse populations and individuals, and women and children of all ages and in all locations
- Ensure everyone impacted by sexual violence receives specialist recovery and healing services
- Recognise children and young people as victim-survivors of violence in their own right, and establish appropriate supports and services that will meet their safety and recovery needs

Victim-survivor advisory group will guide implementation

Evaluation approaches



The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFS) Commission will promote coordinated and consistent monitoring and evaluation frameworks by all governments.

## Responding to sexual violence in all settings

The prevalence of intimate partner violence has remained consistent since the 2010–2022 National Plan was launched, and so there is still work to do to end violence in intimate relationships. But we have also seen an increase in sexual violence in all settings, including online, and perpetrators using new mechanisms, including violence facilitated by technology.

This National Plan aims to bring addressing sexual violence out of the shadows. Sexual violence includes – but is not limited to – sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, stalking and image-based abuse. It occurs within intimate relationships, and between people who are dating, friends, acquaintances and strangers.

Women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people are exposed to the risk of sexual violence in every domain of their lives, across both public and private settings including educational settings, sporting clubs and other organisations they may be involved with, their workplaces, through their personal relationships and even at times as children within their own families.

Lifetime prevalence data indicates that 51% of women in their twenties have experienced sexual violence.<sup>14</sup> Women with disability or illness are more likely to report having experienced sexual violence in their lifetime than those without disability. Women identifying as bisexual, or as mainly or exclusively lesbian, are more likely to report having experienced sexual violence in their lifetime than those who identify as mainly or exclusively heterosexual.

Myths about who perpetrates sexual violence – including that it's mostly perpetrated by strangers – continue to influence how the community

responds to it. 'Stranger danger' education and messaging reinforce the idea that women are most at risk of being sexually assaulted by a stranger when they are walking to their car alone late at night – when in fact they are at the greatest risk from someone they know.<sup>15</sup> There is also a significant part of the population who mistrust women's reports of sexual violence. Four in 10 people question the truth of these reports, despite evidence clearly showing false allegations are extremely rare.<sup>16</sup>

The implementation of respectful relationships education in schools, campaigns on consent and the #MeToo movement show a readiness to talk about sexual violence, but there is still a long way to go. There needs to be education and training across the community to bust myths about sexual violence and challenge the victim-blaming narratives that surround it. We must also confront some people's belief that sexual violence cannot happen within an intimate relationship. Despite being common across the community, sexual assault continues to be under-reported to police. Victim-survivors fear not being believed, and there is a particular stigma and shame associated with sexual violence that act as a barrier to reporting. When it is reported, attrition rates are high, and prosecution and conviction rates against alleged offenders are low. Over time, our awareness of the prevalence and impact of sexual violence in all settings has grown, and justice and policing responses have begun to evolve with it.

Sexual violence perpetrated against children below the age of consent is child sexual abuse. Although these issues are interrelated, the Commonwealth's child sexual abuse response is covered by the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030*. The drivers and impacts of child sexual abuse can be vastly different to those of adult sexual abuse, and they require different responses.



## How this National Plan was developed

The National Plan has been developed and agreed by Commonwealth, state and territory ministers with responsibility for women's safety.

The Australian Government established the National Plan Advisory Group and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence (Advisory Council) to provide expert guidance and advice on the development of the National Plan.

The Commonwealth and state and territory governments were guided by a multi-faceted consultation process in developing the National Plan. Other inputs to the National Plan include:

- the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence
- the Statement from Delegates from the 2021 National Summit on Women's Safety, as well as feedback captured through all sessions at the Summit
- key findings from the public consultation and targeted workshops and interviews (including with victim-survivors)
- *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report* (2020); *Set the Standard: Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces* (2021) and the *Australian Human Rights Commission's Change the Course: National Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment at the Australian Universities* (2017)
- the existing evidence base, including *Change the story*, *Changing the picture*, *Changing the landscape*, and the *Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices): Securing Our Rights Securing Our Future Report* (2020).



# Statement from delegates at the 2021 National Summit on Women's Safety

The 2021 National Summit on Women's Safety brought together a diverse range of speakers, panellists and roundtable participants to provide insights and ideas to inform the development, and implementation, of the National Plan. Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, the Summit was delivered virtually. Roundtables were held on 2 and 3 September 2021 and panel sessions and keynote speeches on 6 and 7 September 2021.

Each state and territory government nominated approximately 20 delegates from diverse backgrounds, including people with lived experience of violence, to represent varied perspectives, experiences and expertise. Members of the National Plan Advisory Group and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence were members of the Commonwealth delegation.

The Summit provided a national platform for discussions about issues affecting women's safety and focused collective attention towards solutions. Summit outcomes were captured in a Summit Delegates Statement that was presented to Commonwealth, state and territory ministers at the Summit's conclusion.



The Summit Delegates Statement called for the National Plan to work on the following priorities:

- Build on our strong base in primary prevention to stop violence before it starts.
- Be backed by long-term bipartisan investment by all governments across prevention, intervention, response, and recovery.
- Recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must lead responses for their communities and deliver those responses through a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan.
- Work with men and boys to disrupt and prevent the attitudes and behaviours that can lead to violence.
- Listen to, engage with and be informed by diverse lived experiences, particularly those of victim-survivors.
- Support gender equality and address the complex intersection of gender inequality with other forms of discrimination, inequality and disadvantage.
- Emphasise the critical role of effective research, data and evaluation.
- Recognise the importance of justice and healing from trauma.
- Emphasise that addressing men's violence against women and children must be targeted across all settings including work, education, public, institutional settings and other community spaces, as well as at home.
- Focus attention and support on the disproportionate impact of technology-facilitated abuse on women and their children, including increased education and training.
- Ensure there is training and workforce development across sectors such as police, justice systems, health care and frontline services.
- Provide affordable, culturally appropriate and accessible health services so that all women and children can access holistic, integrated and tailored services across a range of sectors.
- Continuously improve the justice system to ensure people impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence can achieve justice and people using violence and abuse are held to account.
- Recognise the importance of community-led and place-based responses by promoting lasting partnerships with community organisations.
- Acknowledge children and young people as victims and survivors of violence in their own right.
- Link with other national strategies and initiatives to ensure there is a coordinated approach to ending all forms of gender-based violence across sectors.
- Recognise that ending violence against women and children is everybody's business.

See the full Summit Delegates Statement at [womenssafetysummit.com.au](http://womenssafetysummit.com.au).



# Specific and measurable targets

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.

Since 2010, the evidence base on family, domestic and sexual violence has grown. We know more about those who perpetrate violence and those who experience it. We understand more about the diverse experiences of victim-survivors and how the system responds. Governments have invested substantially to build the evidence base over the course of the 2010–2022 National Plan. For example:

- there have been notable improvements to the accessibility and availability of key data
- nationally representative surveys on experiences of violence and community attitudes towards violence are now conducted every four years
- key data is collected each year, including:
  - national statistics recorded by police on family, domestic and sexual violence victims and offenders and collated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS)
  - data on family and domestic homicide incidents, victims and offenders recorded through the National Homicide Monitoring Program and collected by the Australian Institute of Criminology.

The vision for this National Plan is to end violence against women in one generation. This commitment will drive action beyond the life of the plan and short-term political cycles. This must be a shared national commitment.

To ensure accountability, the National Plan requires ambitious and measurable targets to demonstrate progress over time towards ending gender-based violence.

In addition to measuring our progress against reducing prevalence, indicators under each of the National Plan's four domains of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing, will help to demonstrate real change towards ending gender-based violence.



Continuing to build a strong evidence base is central to the success of the National Plan. Our ability to provide quality responses to victim-survivors, hold perpetrators accountable and keep women and children safe is predicated on addressing data gaps and building strong data-sharing mechanisms. Recognising that data is complex and there are differences between jurisdictions, a key focus of the National Plan is to improve data collection, coordination and consistency.

Currently, data and data-sharing mechanisms are inadequate to provide quality measurements in relation to outcomes for victim-survivors and holding people who choose to use violence to account. Australia has limited data collection on perpetration and there are differences in measures and legal terms between jurisdictions. Data disaggregation is limited and we lack the evidence to understand the experiences of certain communities, such as the LGBTIQ+ community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Steps towards reducing prevalence

To support progress towards reducing the prevalence of gender-based violence, the following steps need to be achieved:

- strengthen the capacity of the prevention workforce
- strengthen the capacity of specialist family, domestic and sexual violence services
- improve access to support services
- better coordinate and integrate systems and services
- deliver services in a culturally safe way
- improve community attitudes and norms
- advance gender equality
- increase women’s feelings of community safety
- ensure people have positive experiences when reporting experiences of violence to police and specialist services
- ensure victim-survivors have more positive experiences with, and outcomes through, the justice system, including family law
- ensure men’s behaviour change programs and perpetrator interventions are effective

- strengthen accountability for people who choose to use violence
- reduce reports of systems abuse
- reduce rates of perpetration
- increase the capacity of generalist services to identify, respond and treat violence against women and children
- improve social, economic and health outcomes for victim-survivors
- ensure women, children and LGBTIQ+ people feel safer in all settings.

## Outcomes Framework

The National Plan will be supported by an Outcomes Framework that will increase our ability to track, monitor and report change over the life of the National Plan. It will help us continuously improve our work and respond to new or emerging areas of need.

The Outcomes Framework will include four outcome levels, recognising the importance of action at the individual level, the service level, the system level and the community level. By including these four levels, the framework represents relevant, meaningful and effective outcomes for a broad range of stakeholders who will be impacted by or involved with the National Plan.

There is still more data and evidence development work to be done to measure sustained population level changes in attitudes about gender-based violence.

That is why, in addition to continuing support for key national survey collections, we are implementing new data collections and data development projects.

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission will work with Commonwealth agencies, states, territories and community organisations to promote coordinated and consistent monitoring and evaluation frameworks by all governments.

# A whole-of-society effort

*To reach our goal of a country where all people live free from fear and violence we need sustained, collective action across society.*

## All governments: shared delivery

Support and deliver national organisations such as ANROWS and Our Watch

Support behaviour change campaigns and interventions

National strategies such as the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement and Closing the Gap

### Australian Government

Support and deliver national services and organisations such as 1800RESPECT and DV-alert

Make improvements to the justice system, including family law, to improve legal responses to better protect victim-survivors and prevent re-traumatisation, and support family violence legal services

Support the prevention of gender-based violence which includes through the delivery of campaigns as well as early intervention

Advance gender equality through leading the development a National Gender Equality Strategy



### State and territory governments

Support in the delivery of frontline domestic, family and sexual violence services that support response, recovery and healing

Deliver housing services  
Deliver court systems and correctional centres

Support improvements to the justice system and legal representations

Improve police responses to gender-based violence

Invest in prevention and early intervention projects, including through education, and building community awareness through campaigns

Deliver of perpetrator interventions and programs

### Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission

Work with governments and community organisations to promote coordinated and consistent monitoring and evaluation frameworks

Provide a national approach to victim-survivor engagement, ensuring the diverse lived experiences of victim-survivors are informing policies and solutions

### Family, domestic and sexual violence sector

Deliver expert care and support that is trauma-informed, culturally safe, integrated and coordinated

Advocate for victim-survivors of gender-based violence

Provide perpetrator interventions and services for men using violence, holding them to account and supporting them to change their harmful behaviour

### Businesses and workplaces

Prevent gender-based violence through fostering gender equality in the workplace

Design products and services that are safe and prevent misuse, while also focusing on perpetrator accountability

Provide leave entitlements for victim-survivors, such as paid family and domestic violence leave and paid parental leave

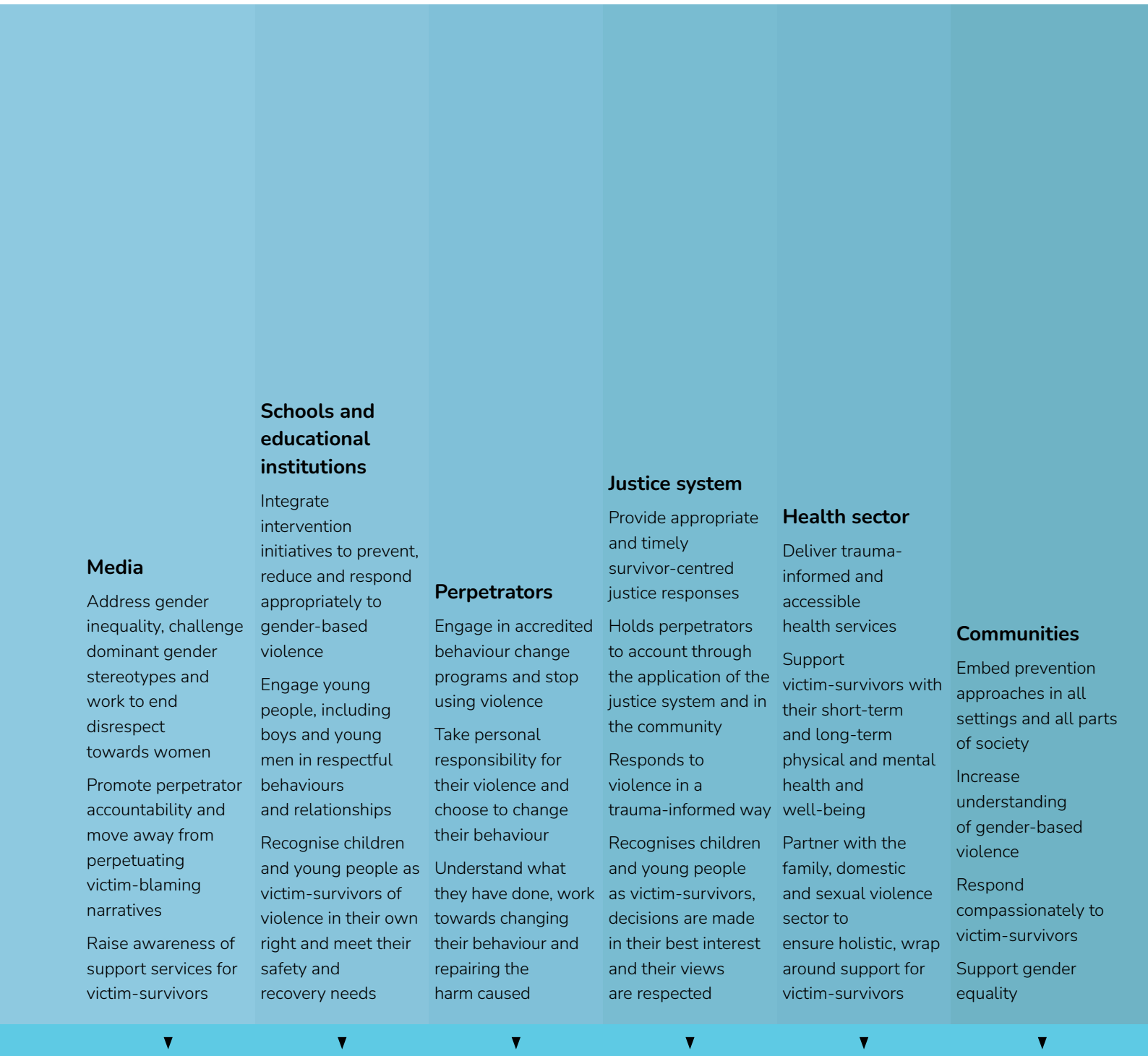


## Vision: Ending gender-based violence in one generation



Governments alone can't shift the dial – every part of Australia needs to work with us to address the drivers and reinforcing factors of gender-based violence. Everyone must work together to better

support and protect victim-survivors and their families. This includes holding those who choose to use violence to account and support them to change their behaviour.



This includes reducing the prevalence of all forms of gender-based violence against all people

# Indicators of success

*Measuring our progress is not as simple as just looking at the prevalence rates of domestic, family and sexual violence.*

The increased effort and awareness that this National Plan will generate is likely to mean that reporting of all forms of gender-based violence will increase in the short-term, as individuals feel more safe and supported to come forward and seek help. As we have seen with the impact of


COVID-19 on the rates of violence against women, factors beyond our control (such as pandemics, financial recessions and natural disasters) may also impact on the prevalence of gender-based violence throughout the life of this National Plan.

## Examples: Prevention indicators


- Reduction of attitudes that are associated with violence against women (These may include attitudes that mistrust women’s reports of violence, objectify women and disregard consent, and attitudes that minimise violence and shift blame from perpetrators to the victim-survivor.)
- Reduction of attitudes that are associated with gender inequality (These may include increased rejection of attitudes that deny gender inequality experiences, normalise sexism, limit women’s personal autonomy in relationships, undermine women’s leadership in public life and reinforce rigid gender roles.)

## Examples: Recovery and healing indicators

- Increase in proportion of victim-survivors who self-assessed their health as positive
- Reduction in proportion of victim-survivors who experienced financial stress in the last 12 months
- Increase in proportion of victim-survivors reporting they feel safe and supported
- Increase in proportion of victim-survivors reporting they have been supported by their workplaces



Prevention  
key indicators



Recovery and  
Healing key  
indicators

Example indicators across the domains of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing are complex and often interdependent – a shift in one indicator may have an effect on another. Unless we all work together on key actions across each domain, we will not see a reduction in the number of people that experience gender-based violence. Key dependencies include adequate data and data-sharing mechanisms, strengthened accountability for perpetrators and workforce considerations.



The National Plan will be supported by an Outcomes Framework, which will determine how we measure relevant, meaningful and effective outcomes to achieve our vision of ending gender-based violence in one generation. Below are indicative National Plan indicators of success that can assist in conceptualising how we will monitor change beyond measuring changes in prevalence. The Outcomes Framework will provide a focus on continuous quality improvement, it

will ensure an interdependent relationship to the National Plan and underpinning Action Plans and determine opportunities for improved data collection, coordination and consistency. More work will be done to validate and establish final indicators and prevalence measures, as well as to develop measurable and meaningful targets through the Outcomes Framework and Action Plans.

### Examples: Early intervention indicators

- Increased understanding of violence against women (This may include unequivocal recognition of physical and non-physical forms of violence against women including coercive control, psychological abuse, technology-facilitated abuse and financial abuse, and understanding of the gendered nature of domestic violence that defines both the experience and perpetration of violence against women)
- Increased community-wide intention to intervene when witnessing disrespect and violence against women
- Increase in proportion of population that know where and how victim-survivors can access support

### Examples: Response indicators


- Increase in proportion of victim-survivors receiving suitable housing
- Increase in proportion of victim-survivors seeking advice and support
- Increase in capacity of frontline services to meet demand
- Reduction in numbers of perpetrators who breach court orders
- Reduced victimisation rates of children as victim-survivors
- Increase in the proportion of perpetrators held accountable through the justice system

### Reducing prevalence

- Reduction in prevalence of family, domestic and sexual violence over the life of the National Plan
- A reduction by 50% in all forms of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls by 2031, as progress towards zero

- Reduction in the prevalence of workplace sexual harassment over the life of the National Plan
- Reduction, as progress towards zero, in the rate of intimate partner homicide over the life of the National Plan

- Reduction in the prevalence of children who witness an incident of intimate partner violence
- Reduction in the number of people who choose to use violence
- Improvement in community attitudes towards violence against women



# What we know about violence against women and children

## **A shared understanding**

Violence against women and children is one of the most widespread violations of human rights worldwide. International human rights law condemns violence against women and children in all its forms, whether it occurs in the home, schools, in institutions, the workplace, the community or in other public and private institutions, and regardless of who perpetrates it.<sup>17</sup>

Violence against women and girls is a manifestation of inequality and discrimination based on gender, race and other power imbalances. It is rooted in historically unequal power relations that view women and girls as subordinate to men and boys.<sup>18</sup> Overwhelmingly, violence against women in Australia is perpetrated by men.<sup>19</sup>



Ninety-five per cent of people who have experienced physical or sexual violence name a man as the perpetrator of at least one incident of violence and around 4 in 5 family and domestic violence offenders are men.<sup>20</sup> While men can also be victim-survivors of family, sexual and domestic violence, they are more likely to experience violence perpetrated by a male stranger.<sup>21</sup>

Men's violence against women has particular gendered dynamics. It seeks to exert patriarchal forms of power and control that privilege men's role in decision-making, in private and public life, and access to resources, exploiting women's unpaid labour associated with traditional gender roles. *Change the story* shows there are strong links between socially dominant forms and patterns of masculinity, men's sexist attitudes and behaviours, and men's perpetration of violence against women.<sup>22</sup>

While men can also be victim-survivors of family, domestic and sexual violence, men's violence against women, including intimate partner violence, is more prevalent, more often used repeatedly and more likely to lead to serious injury, disability or death.<sup>23</sup> In instances where women do use violent behaviours, research shows that it is usually motivated by fear, and is used in self-defence to protect them against violence that their male partners are already perpetrating.<sup>24</sup>

Male perpetration is a feature of the violence that some members of the LGBTIQ+ community experience. Eighty-four per cent of respondents in an Australian study of LGBTIQ+ people who had experienced sexual assault said their most recent experience of sexual assault was perpetrated by a cisgender man.<sup>25</sup>

Men have a critical role to play in ending gender-based violence. It is important that men challenge sexism and attitudes that support violence. They need to be active bystanders in situations where women are experiencing sexual harassment or discrimination on the basis of their gender.<sup>i</sup> There are opportunities for more men to model and highlight positive forms of masculinity, including in online and digital environments.

Our shared understanding of violence against women and children must be informed by the stories of victim-survivors and their supporters, as well as the evidence base, so that the policies and solutions are appropriate and work effectively to improve outcomes for people experiencing violence.

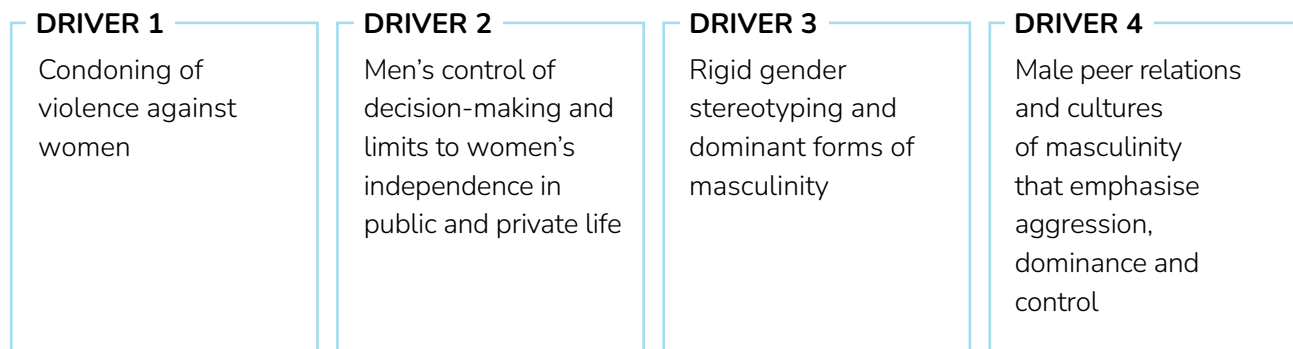
It is also important that all people experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence, including men, are supported to access support and services and to leave violent relationships if and when they choose to do so.

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<sup>i</sup> A bystander is someone who witnesses an incident of sexism or sexual harassment without taking part in it, or someone who is later told about or shown images of an incident. An 'active bystander' is someone who responds to the incident with some sort of action that communicates their disapproval.

# Violence against women is serious, prevalent and *driven by gender inequality*

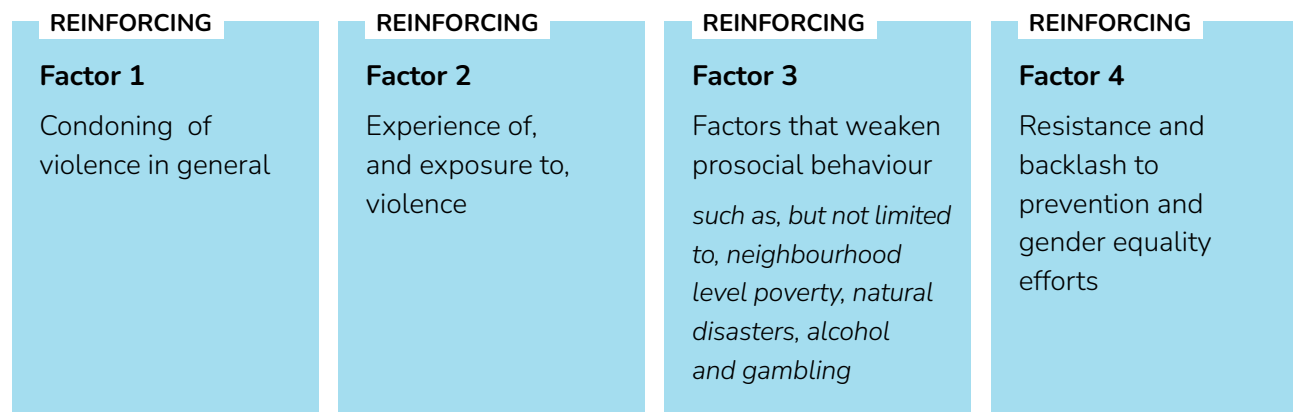
Gendered drivers of violence against women as outlined in Our Watch's *Change the Story*



 Underlying **social context** for violence against women

Social context  
**Gender inequality** and other forms of **oppression** such as *racism, ableism, ageism, classism, cissexism and heteronormativity*

Factors that reinforce violence against women



**These drivers and reinforcing factors play out at every level of society:** from individual attitudes and behaviours, to social norms, organisational cultures and practices, policies, laws, and institutions.

Source: Our Watch. (2021). *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia* (2nd ed.). Melbourne, Australia: Our Watch.



## Scope of the National Plan

This National Plan addresses the issue of gender-based violence in Australia and outlines the pathway to improvement in the domains of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing.

Throughout this plan, we mostly use the term of 'violence against women'. This reflects the term used in the international human rights context, and recognises that women make up the overwhelming majority of victims of gender-based violence. The term 'woman' includes both cis and trans women. We also recognise that women are not a homogenous group.

This plan uses binary language such as 'men' and 'women' in many places. We recognise that gender is socially constructed and does not exist simply in binary categories, however, these categories continue to have real effects on the lives of Australians and thus can be useful to frame discussions about gendered violence. We acknowledge that there are people whose experiences are not captured by the use of binary language, and that many of the experiences covered in this National Plan may be experienced by others in the Australian community.

We also acknowledge that LGBTIQ+ populations are impacted by gendered violence, as we explore within the plan. For this reason, the experiences and needs of LGBTIQ+ people of all genders are included within the plan.

The terms 'violence against women' and 'gender-based violence' encompass a broader range of violence than the term 'family, domestic and sexual violence'. They include additional forms of violence and abuse including sexual harassment, online abuse, and trafficking of women and children. They also include violence perpetrated in settings that are not domestic, such as violence against women in institutions.

Terminology used to discuss family, domestic and sexual violence, gender-based violence and violence against women is evolving and this

language does not work for all people impacted by violence. The Glossary and definitions throughout the plan are intended to build knowledge and awareness and do not serve as legal definitions.

## Violence against women and children

The National Plan's definition of 'violence against women' is aligned with the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), which defines violence against women as 'any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.'<sup>26</sup>

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women General Recommendation No. 35 makes explicit the gendered causes and impacts of violence against women. It states that gender-based violence is specifically 'directed against a woman because she is a woman, or violence that affects women disproportionately'. It further strengthens the understanding that gender-based violence against women is a social, rather than an individual problem, and it requires comprehensive responses that go beyond specific events, and individual perpetrators and victim-survivors.<sup>27</sup>

The term 'violence against women' encompasses all forms of violence, harassment and abuse that women (and often young women and girls) experience.<sup>28</sup> Violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, social, cultural, spiritual, financial and technology-facilitated abuse (including image-based abuse), and stalking.<sup>29</sup> Women can experience multiple and intersecting forms of violence, harassment and abuse in all settings, including at home, at school and university, in the workplace, in prisons, institutions and other segregated settings, online or in the community. Violence can be a one-off incident,

or an ongoing pattern of behaviour where a perpetrator acts in a coercive way to exert control over a person's life.

Violence against women and children often occurs together in homes and family settings, and can be driven by the same factors. Children may witness domestic and family violence between other family members, or be subjected to violence by other family members. This can have a range of effects on their health, wellbeing, and social and emotional development.<sup>30</sup> Experiencing child abuse, including witnessing abuse between other family members and experiencing targeted abuse as a child, increases the probability of using violence in the home. A recent study found young people who had witnessed abuse between family members and been subjected to targeted abuse were more than 9 times more likely to use violence in the home than those who had not experienced any child abuse.<sup>31</sup>

Violence against women from an intimate partner does not necessarily stop when a relationship ends. Coercive control behaviours including intimidation, harassment and stalking, threats and endangerment to children, legal abuse, economic abuse, isolation and discrediting can continue for years after separation. In many cases, violence will escalate, with women more at risk of being killed by a partner or former partner in the period leading up to and immediately following separation.<sup>32</sup>

## Gender-based violence

'Gender-based violence' refers to violence that is used against someone because of their gender. It describes violence rooted in gender-based power inequalities, rigid gender norms and gender-based discrimination. While people of all genders can experience gender-based violence, the term is most often used to describe violence

against women and girls, because most gender-based violence is perpetrated by heterosexual, cisgender men against women, because they are women.

Gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, can include specific forms of violence that may disproportionately impact women and girls from culturally, ethnically, religiously and linguistically diverse communities and migrant and refugee women, such as migration-related abuse, dowry abuse, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and trafficking of women and girls. Women with disability experience specific forms of gender-based violence including reproductive coercion, forced sterilisation and forced medical interventions. Violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ people, particularly by those who are gender diverse such as Brotherboy and Sistergirl communities, is also gender-based violence and shares some of the drivers of violence against women.

### Building our understanding of national definitions

Our understanding of the ways in which violence can be perpetrated and the impact it has on victim-survivors has developed and evolved since the 2010–2022 National Plan. While this understanding will continue to change, further alignment and greater consistency of national definitions will support a shared understanding of, and consistent response to, gender-based violence in Australia.

The definitions used in the National Plan reflect what we have learned so far, acknowledging that learning will continue over the life of the plan. This will include further work with states and territories in areas where we do not yet have consistent national definitions.



## Key terminology and definitions: Working towards national consistency

Definitions of gender-based violence are a whole-of-system issue. Nationally consistent definitions should be used to inform and support program design, public and private sector policies, as well as legislation across states and territories to ensure that all people in Australia have equal access to support and justice. They can also inform everyday working and social experiences as this consistent understanding is applied to workplaces and community, online and government settings.

The National Plan uses the following terms that form the basis for national discussion on consistent definitions:

**Intimate partner violence**, also commonly referred to as '**domestic violence**', refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship (including current or past marriages, domestic partnerships or dates) that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm. This is the most common form of violence against women. Intimate partner violence can also occur outside of a domestic setting, such as in public and between 2 people who do not live together.

**Family violence** is a broader term than domestic violence, as it refers not only to violence between intimate partners but also to violence perpetrated by parents (and guardians) against children, between other family members and in family-like settings. This includes for example elder abuse, violence perpetrated by children or young people against parents, guardians or siblings, and violence perpetrated by other family members such as parents-in-law. Family violence is also the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prefer because of the ways violence occurs across extended family networks. Family violence can also constitute forms of modern slavery, such as forced marriage and servitude.

**Coercive control** is often a significant part of a victim-survivor's experience of family and domestic violence. It describes someone's use of a pattern of abusive behaviours against another person over time, with the effect of establishing and maintaining power and dominance over them. Abusive behaviours that perpetrators can use as part of their pattern of abuse include physical abuse (including sexual abuse), monitoring a victim-survivor's actions, restricting a victim-survivors freedom or independence, social abuse, using threats and intimidation, emotional or psychological abuse (including spiritual and religious abuse), financial abuse, sexual coercion, reproductive coercion, lateral violence, systems abuse, technology-facilitated abuse and animal abuse.

**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 occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any sexual activity. Such activity can be sexualised touching, sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment and intimidation and forced or coerced watching or engaging in pornography. Sexual violence can be non-physical and include unwanted sexualised comments, intrusive sexualised questions or harassment of a sexual nature. Forms of modern slavery, such as forced marriage, servitude or trafficking in persons may involve sexual violence.

**Consent** is where a person freely and voluntarily agrees to participate in an interaction. While consent applies to a broad range of issues, in this context it is most often physical or sexual in nature. Consent requires ongoing and mutual communication and decision-making, and can be withdrawn at any point. Legal definitions of sexual consent vary between states and territories, with reforms occurring in a number of jurisdictions to amend the legal definitions of consent, for example, to adopt an affirmative model of consent that requires a person to take active steps to say or do something to find out whether the other person consents to the sexual activity. While the age of consent differs between jurisdictions, children under the age of consent cannot consent to sex or sexual acts. A person must also have the cognitive capacity to consent to the sexual activity at the time and must not be:

- misled about the nature or purpose of the sexual activity
- influenced by someone abusing their position of authority, trust, or dependency.

In the context of forced marriage, a person does not freely or fully consent to the marriage because of threats, deception or coercion, or because they are incapable of understanding the nature and effect of the marriage ceremony, or the individual is under the age of 16 years.

*Other definitions and terminology are provided in the Glossary.*





## Prevalence and patterns of violence against women and children

While all experiences of violence, abuse or harassment are unique, evidence clearly shows most perpetrators of gender-based violence are men, and most victims and survivors are women.<sup>33</sup>

- One in 2 women has experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime.
- One in 3 women has experienced violence by a partner, other known person or a stranger since the age of 15.
- One in 4 women has experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 15.
- One in 4 women has experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner since the age of 15.
- One in 5 women has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.
- One in 6 women and one in 9 men has experienced physical or sexual abuse before the age of 15.<sup>34</sup>

## Violence affects women across all life stages

We recognise the different needs of women and children at different points of their lives.

**Girls and younger women** can experience gender-based violence in the same way as adult women.<sup>35</sup> Girls experience specific forms of violence including female genital mutilation or 'cutting', forced sterilisation, forced contraception and forced marriage and pregnancy. Young women aged 18 to 34 were almost three times as likely as those aged 35 and over to have experienced intimate partner violence in the previous 12 months.<sup>36</sup> Young women aged 18 to 24 are more likely than any other age group to have had an experience of stalking and are more likely to have experienced image-based abuse.<sup>37</sup>

**Women** of all ages experience gender-based violence, including sexual abuse and harassment

and technology-facilitated abuse, in every setting. Intimate partner violence is the main preventable risk factor contributing to illness and death in women aged 18 to 44.<sup>38</sup> Some relationship factors are associated with the onset or escalation of intimate partner violence, including financial stress, pregnancy, relationship breakdown and separation or divorce.<sup>39</sup> Forty-eight per cent of women who were pregnant while living with their violent previous partner experienced violence during pregnancy, including 24% who experienced violence for the first time while pregnant.<sup>40</sup> Violence against women affects all aspects of their lives. For example, it can have a negative impact on their capacity to attend work, with 48% of women who had experienced violence saying that it reduced their attendance at work.<sup>41</sup> Violence against women and children is also a leading cause of homelessness for women and children.<sup>42</sup>

For **older women**, gender-based violence includes forms of elder abuse, intimate partner violence, economic abuse and control perpetrated by an adult child or another family member, and violence that occurs in non-family or domestic settings such as violence from carers and sexual violence in residential aged care facilities. Many older women experience the compounding negative effects of taking on multiple unpaid caring roles, which can affect their employment and economic security and mean they have limited control over finances and decision-making.<sup>43</sup> The National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study identified that 62% of people who experience elder abuse do not seek help or advice regarding their situation, meaning that this often remains a hidden problem.<sup>44</sup>

Older women are also the fastest growing group of people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, increasing 31% between 2011 and 2016, and domestic and family violence is the primary reason for older women seeking specialist homelessness services nationally.<sup>45</sup>

# Violence affects women at every life stage

*Not an exclusive list*



## Childhood

- Infanticide
- Female genital mutilation
- Forced marriage
- Sexual harassment at school
- Technology-facilitated abuse
- Child sexual abuse



## Adulthood

- Dating violence
- Sexual violence
- Intimate partner violence
- Forced marriage
- Sexual harassment at work, in public, and university
- Technology-facilitated abuse
- Economic abuse
- Intimate partner homicide



## Older age

- Sexual violence
- Economic abuse
- Physical violence
- Violence in institutions
- Violence perpetrated by intimate partners, family members and carers



The *National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians (Elder Abuse) 2019–2023* outlines how Commonwealth, state and territory governments will build our understanding of abuse of older people, strengthen our service responses and strengthen safeguards for older people.<sup>46</sup>

## **The impacts of violence against women and children**

Violence against women and children has significant short-term and long-term effects on victim-survivors' physical and mental health and well-being. In addition, the profound impacts of violence against women and children ripple out across families, communities and society as a whole.

The common impacts of violence against women and children can include poorer health; mental health issues such as depressive and anxiety disorders; early pregnancy loss; alcohol use disorders; economic insecurity; reduced capacity to study; and poorer language skills.<sup>47</sup>

Victim-survivors can experience physical injuries, including lifelong disability and traumatic brain injuries.<sup>48</sup> Experiences of violence can be the catalyst for anxiety, depression, fear and other negative mental and physical health issues that can continue to affect women and children throughout their lives.<sup>49</sup>

Many victim-survivors will not disclose their trauma and it may remain unresolved. This happens for a range of intersecting and sensitive reasons including personal stigma and lack of access to, or poor experiences with, service systems.<sup>50</sup>

Complex trauma, also known as cumulative trauma, refers to multiple, repeated forms of interpersonal victimisation.<sup>51</sup> One quarter of women who experience gender-based violence

in Australia report at least three different forms of interpersonal victimisation.<sup>52</sup>

Complex trauma results in health problems and psychosocial challenges that can persist throughout someone's life and after the violence has stopped. It is commonly associated with a wide range of psychiatric diagnoses and misdiagnoses, functional impairments and an array of educational, vocational, relational and other health problems.<sup>53</sup>

People affected by complex trauma are often in frequent contact with police and other crisis services. They are regularly hospitalised as a result of additional experiences of family, domestic and sexual violence and the associated trauma effects.<sup>54</sup>

## **Violence impacts people in different ways**

No two women's or children's experiences of violence are the same. Violence against women and children can be exacerbated in certain settings and where gender inequality intersects with other forms of disadvantage and discrimination. Violence is less visible and less understood for some groups in the community.<sup>55</sup>

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children**

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, family violence, sexual assault and abuse is a major cause of personal harm, family and community breakdown, and social fragmentation.<sup>56</sup> This violence is compounded by the ongoing effects of colonisation and racism, for example from non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners and their families, and is perpetrated by men of all cultural backgrounds. Continuing impacts of colonisation include displacement from Country and kin and disruption or loss of culture. These are driving factors of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and families.

Across the board, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience disproportionately higher rates of violence than non-Indigenous women. Indigenous women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised because of violence than non-Indigenous women. They report 3 times as many incidents of sexual violence as non-Indigenous women, and are more likely to be killed due to assault.<sup>57</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men also experience extremely high rates of violence, as both children and adults. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are removed from their families at disproportionately higher rates than non-Indigenous children.

Family violence is a significant factor contributing to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.<sup>58</sup> Fear of child removal remains one of the greatest deterrents for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to report violence or seek assistance.<sup>59</sup> This can be due to a fear of involvement by the child protection system, a fear strengthened by the current over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, ongoing institutional racism and the history of the Stolen Generations.

Too often, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are being misidentified as perpetrators when they seek assistance. The legal and justice systems are not well adapted or informed to respond effectively to the interlocking and compounding forms of violence Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience. More work is needed to educate and develop the legal and justice systems, particularly at the frontline of policing.

*Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, developed by Our Watch under the 2012-2022 National Plan, identifies the specific*

underlying drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. It points to the intersection of racism, gendered factors, and the ongoing impacts of colonisation.

*“Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is not an ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander problem’. Nor should Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples bear sole responsibility for addressing it. This violence is an Australian problem, and it is perpetrated by men of all cultural backgrounds.”<sup>60</sup>*

Addressing the disproportionate rates of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is an urgent national priority, which is why the commitments in the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* are embedded across the National Plan. A future standalone First Nations National Plan will outline strategic approaches to addressing violence against women and children.





## Women with disability

Women with disability were more likely to have experienced a range of violent behaviours over a 12-month period.<sup>61</sup>

- Sixty-four per cent of people with disability report experiencing physical violence, sexual violence, intimate partner violence, emotional abuse or stalking from the age of 15, compared to 45% of people without disability.<sup>62</sup>
- People with disability are at nearly twice the risk of all types of violence in comparison to people without disability.<sup>63</sup>
- Women with an intellectual or psychological disability are nearly three times more likely than women with a physical disability to experience violence.<sup>64</sup>

Violence against women and girls with disability tends to occur more frequently, over a longer period of time and across a wider range of settings.<sup>65</sup> It can also be perpetrated by a greater range of people than violence against women and girls without disability, including by carers, guardians and support workers, in both home and institutional settings.<sup>66</sup> In addition, women with intellectual or cognitive disability can also be particularly susceptible to various types of technology-facilitated abuse.<sup>67</sup>

Violence against women with disability is also more diverse in nature. The National Plan is aligned with *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031*, which sets out practical changes Australia can make to improve the lives of people with disability, including ensuring that people with disability are safe and feel safe from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.<sup>68</sup> The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, which commenced in 2019, will also guide future work under this National Plan towards ending violence against women and children with disability.

Beyond the actions outlined in *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031*, there is a need to address gender-based violence for victim-survivors with disability. While women with disability face many of the same forms of domestic, family and sexual violence as other women, they also experience and are at more risk of particular forms of violence. For example, women with disability may experience forced sterilisation, seclusion and restrictive practices, and violence in a range of institutional and service settings such as residential institutions and aged care facilities.<sup>69</sup>

There are additional ableist drivers of violence against women and children with disability including:

- negative stereotypes about people with disability
- accepting or normalising violence, disrespect and discrimination against people with disability
- controlling people with disability's decision-making and limiting their independence
- social segregation and exclusion of people with disability.<sup>70</sup>

## Women and children from culturally diverse, migrant and refugee backgrounds

Women and children from diverse cultural, ethnical, religious and linguistic backgrounds and migrant and refugee women and children, including those on temporary visas, can face specific challenges. These include the impact of their visa status (for example, depending on partners for residency in Australia and having restricted eligibility criteria for access to government support and services); the absence of trusted social networks or families in Australia and linguistic and cultural barriers in seeking help and reporting violence.<sup>71</sup>

It is well recognised that temporary visa holders have specific experiences in relation to family and domestic violence, including perpetrators using a women's visa status to control and abuse them. A 2021 study indicated that one in 3 migrant and refugee women had experienced some form of family and domestic violence, with temporary visas holders consistently reporting proportionately higher levels of family and domestic violence, including controlling behaviours.<sup>72</sup>

In addition to the barriers outlined above, women on temporary visas may not access support services for violence due to fears that doing so will affect their ability to stay in Australia. The *Migration Act 1958* (Cth) includes provisions that enable certain temporary visa holders and applicants, who experience family violence, the ability to access a permanent visa. Additionally, for some women on temporary visas, the inability to access services can increase their exposure to violence and poverty, minority status, and disrupt their family and community support systems.<sup>73</sup>

Culturally and linguistically diverse women's experiences of violence have some distinct contributors that relate to other intersecting forms of inequality and discrimination, and may also include culturally specific norms about gender and relationships.<sup>74</sup> International students and those travelling on working holiday visas may experience increased risk of violence including sexual violence due to exploitation and lack of accommodation and employment opportunities; economic abuse; lack of support from educational institutions; and control over their mobility.

## **The need to recognise children in their own right**

Children can witness violence but children can also experience violence directly. A child's worldview is shaped by the violence they see, hear and experience each day. These experiences affect their perception and understanding of the world, which can have long-term and ongoing impacts.

The current evidence base highlights how the mental health, well-being and relationships children depend on for their development are impacted by domestic and family violence. These experiences can have serious lifelong negative consequences and can result in ongoing profound physical and mental health impacts, poor relationships and housing outcomes, developmental challenges, and barriers to effective participation in education and employment.<sup>75</sup>

In 2019–20, there were 376 hospitalisations of children aged zero to 14 for assault injuries perpetrated by a parent (277 hospitalisations) or other family member (99 hospitalisations).<sup>76</sup> Over the longer-term, children who are victims or witnesses of intimate partner violence can be twice as likely to have a psychiatric diagnosis, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and impaired language skills at age 10.<sup>77</sup>

Recent longitudinal data showed that any exposure to domestic and family violence from infancy to 10 years was associated with poorer health outcomes.<sup>78</sup> Reports of child abuse and neglect indicate that violence often happens when parents have alcohol and other drug issues and mental health issues. These 3 risk factors often precipitate child protection involvement.<sup>79</sup> Fear of intervention from child protection services can be a reason why women and children experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence may be reluctant to access support services and to report violence.<sup>80</sup>

The National Plan acknowledges children, including LGBTIQ+ children and young people, as victims of gender-based violence in their own right. It identifies actions to prevent and address violence against children in each of the four domains, from prevention through to recovery and healing. Making sure that all children in Australia can access age-appropriate consent and respectful relationships education and supporting recovery from childhood trauma are important strategies for ending gender-based violence.



Recent research also highlights the link between adverse childhood experiences and those victim-survivors using violence themselves in the future.<sup>81</sup> Young people who use violence often start using violence at a young age.<sup>82</sup> A national study of prevalence and history of childhood victimisation found that on average, young people started using violence at 11 years old, with approximately two in 5 young people reporting they had started using violence at age 10 or younger.<sup>83</sup> Young people's use of violence is largely retaliatory, either in response to previous or current violence from their abuser or in defence of actual or anticipated violence.<sup>84</sup>

This underlines the importance of preventing and intervening early when children are experiencing violence, abuse and neglect. Supporting children as victim-survivors in their own right and addressing the impacts of developmental trauma will help break future cycles of violence.

Prevalence data and information about children's experiences of family, domestic and sexual violence is difficult to obtain due to the sensitivity of the subject. Administrative sources such as police, child protection and hospitals are only able to identify reported cases. Most large-scale population surveys focus on adult experiences or adults' perceptions of children's experiences. While these sources can provide some insights, they are likely to underestimate the true extent of children's exposure to family violence.<sup>85</sup> The Australian Child Maltreatment Study, being conducted from 2019 to 2023, is the first national study of child abuse and neglect in Australia. It seeks to identify how many Australians have experienced child abuse and neglect, including exposure to family violence. Findings from this study will inform policy and practice reforms to reduce child abuse and neglect in Australia.<sup>86</sup>

The concurrent national initiative *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031*, which targets the maltreatment of children and young people, acknowledges that many of the risk factors and experiences of child abuse and neglect

align closely with violence against women and children. Experiences of child sexual abuse will be addressed through the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030*.

## Gender-based violence against LGBTIQ+ people

Building on evidence and practice developed over the life of the 2010–2022 National Plan, the National Plan seeks to explicitly include LGBTIQ+ people and children as part of Australia's commitment to ending all forms of gender-based violence.

LGBTIQ+ people can experience violence due to homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and intersexphobia. This stems from cisgenderism and heteronormativity, and the stigmatisation of bodies that do not fit medical and social norms.<sup>87</sup> A key driver of violence against LGBTIQ+ communities is rigid gender norms, which can result in prejudice-driven violence and harms against LGBTIQ+ people.<sup>88</sup> There is considerable crossover between the drivers of violence against LGBTIQ+ people and the drivers of violence against women, particularly regarding the binary and inequitable constructions of gender.<sup>89</sup>

LGBTIQ+ people experience violence within their intimate partner relationships at similar levels to those in cisgender heterosexual relationships. LGBTIQ+ people also experience significant violence within their families of origin, particularly as children and young people.



LGBTIQA+ people with disability experience higher rates of intimate partner, family and sexual violence than LGBTIQA+ people without a disability.

The largest national study of the health and well-being of LGBTIQA+ people found that:

- 61% of participants reported ever experiencing intimate partner violence
- 65% of participants reported ever experiencing family violence
- 43% of participants who had experienced intimate partner or family violence reported that they felt they were targeted because of their sexuality, gender or intersex variations
- 49% of participants reported having been coerced or forced into sexual acts they did not want to engage in.<sup>90</sup>

LGBTIQA+ people experience all forms of violence that affect cisgender women and children.

In addition, LGBTIQA+ victim-survivors also experience unique forms of violence sometimes referred to as identity-based abuse. Identity-based abuse can include actions such as:

- pressuring a person to conform to gender norms or undergo surgery they do not want
- homophobic rape<sup>ii</sup>
- threatening to ‘out’ the person’s gender, sexuality or HIV status
- exiling a person from the family due to their sexuality or gender
- forcing a family member into conversion practices.

Intersex people may also experience body shaming and forced and coercive medical interventions as infants as a result of stigma and misconceptions about intersex variations.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>ii</sup> *Homophobic rape, sometimes referred to as corrective rape, is a hate crime in which one or more people are raped because of their perceived sexual orientation such as homosexuality or bisexuality.*

Longitudinal data and evidence about the prevalence and experiences of violence rarely include indicators to distinguish diverse sexualities and gender, or intersex variations. Every effort should be made to include LGBTIQA+ people in mainstream data collections using the 2020 ABS Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables, where appropriate. Dedicated research needs to occur across the duration of this National Plan to build a picture of the unique, intersecting and lifelong impacts of violence and abuse against LGBTIQA+ people.

LGBTIQA+ people who are also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse, or have migrant or refugee experiences, report experiencing violence in their communities as well as prejudice and discrimination in LGBTIQA+ community settings. That is, they experience multiple and intersecting barriers to obtaining support or even identifying that they are experiencing violence. However, relatively little is known about what culturally safe and effective responses for people in these circumstances look like. More needs to be done to understand and respond to this issue.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are gender diverse might use the terms Sistergirl and Brotherboy. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ and Brotherboy and Sistergirl communities experience a number of significant and intersecting points of discrimination and marginalisation.<sup>92</sup> It is important that actions to prevent and respond to gender-based violence against Brotherboy and Sistergirl communities are culturally responsive and tailored to their needs.

LGBTIQA+ people experiencing or recovering from violence must have access to safe, inclusive and affirming services, and have choice and control over the services they access. To achieve this, the National Plan promotes increased investment in sexual, domestic and family violence services and programs led by LGBTIQA+ specialist services across Australia. It also promotes building the capacity of the broader service system to respond to the needs of LGBTIQA+ people.



# Other experiences that impact on the prevalence and unique forms of violence against women

## **Incarceration**

The majority of women in prison are victims of domestic and family violence, with evidence suggesting 70% to 90% of incarcerated women have been physically, sexually or emotionally abused as children or adults.<sup>93</sup> This form of violence is often compounded by intergenerational trauma and entrenched in intersectional discrimination. Further, women in prison are widely considered to be at particular risk of ongoing victimisation after they are released. Their support needs often go unrecognised and it is likely that barriers exist that prevent ex-prisoners from accessing services.<sup>94</sup> Over the past decade the number of women being incarcerated has increased by 64%.<sup>95</sup> Indigenous women account for much of that growth – they are incarcerated at 21 times the rate of non-Indigenous women.<sup>96</sup>

## **Sex workers**

Sex workers, like any other workers, deserve respect and a safe work environment, including online settings. Sex workers can be exposed to gender-based violence, as well as violence in their work settings perpetrated by clients, client procurers and managers or owners of establishments and online platforms. Due to the stigma associated with sex work, victim-survivors in this industry face significant barriers in reporting, accessing services and getting justice if they experience violence. Trans sex workers may experience violence that is driven by gender inequality, their insecure work context and transphobia.



## The COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is having and will continue to have a serious and lasting impact on all people. Women and men have experienced the pandemic differently, with women being disproportionately affected. These differences can be partly explained by the existing gender inequalities that drive violence against women.

The COVID-19 pandemic created a range of situations, like lockdowns, that amplified existing inequalities and exposed new cohorts of women and children to increased levels of violence. Two thirds of women who experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former co-habiting partner since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic reported the violence started or escalated after the pandemic began.<sup>97</sup>

COVID-19 related social restrictions exacerbated the isolation of victim-survivors from their workplaces, extended families and friends. The restrictions also increased known risk factors for family, domestic and sexual violence, such as financial stress, job loss, poor mental health and alcohol consumption. These factors interacted with existing drivers and inequalities to increase the overall risks of gender-based violence.<sup>98</sup>

With many forms of work, education and social life moving online, women and children were also exposed to forms of technology-facilitated abuse. The move to hybrid working models and the integration of technology into ways of living and socialising means the risk of technology-facilitated abuse remains heightened.

Specific groups of women were more likely to have physical and sexual violence perpetrated against them during this time, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women aged 18 to 24, women with a restrictive health condition, women with disability, pregnant women, migrant and refugee women including those on temporary visas, and women in financial stress.<sup>99</sup>

Better understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on all forms of gender-based violence will support better responses to national health and economic crises. More needs to be done to support individuals, families and communities impacted by the current pandemic, many of whom are experiencing family and domestic violence.

Times of stress can see an increase in men's violence against women and children. As well as health and economic crises like the pandemic, natural disasters and their aftermaths are times when women and children can face a greater risk of violence, displacement, injury, and death.

The 2019 bushfire crisis in Australia, for example, saw an increase in referrals to domestic violence support services, and studies found a similar increase in domestic violence both during and after the 2009 Black Saturday fires.<sup>100</sup>

While we know disasters do not directly cause men's violence, they do increase stress, disrupt support networks and social norms, and exacerbate existing inequalities, all of which increase the likelihood and severity of violence against women and children. Grief, trauma, social isolation and loss of support networks can also amplify women's experiences of violence during and following a disaster. We need to make sure that addressing men's violence against women forms part of our emergency response strategies, and that preventing this violence is integral to our work to build community resilience.

# Key areas of focus for addressing *gender-based violence* in Australia

## Coercive control

Coercive control is characterised by a pattern of behaviours used by a perpetrator over time that has the effect of creating and maintaining power and dominance over another person or persons. A perpetrator may use physical and non-physical behaviours to regulate and control the day-to-day lives of victim-survivors, including through threats, humiliation, isolation from friends and family, restricting a person's movement, rigid rules, financial abuse, stalking and monitoring.<sup>101</sup> Non-physical abusive behaviours frequently co-occur with serious forms of physical violence, including non-fatal strangulation, and are closely linked to intimate partner homicides of women.<sup>102</sup> For example, the NSW Coroner's Court found 99% of family and domestic violence homicides between 2008 and 2016 occurred in relationships characterised by the offender's use of coercive and controlling behaviours towards the victim.<sup>103</sup>



In recent years, there has been increased community awareness and recognition that coercive control is often a significant part of a victim-survivors' experience of violence. Some states and territories are progressing legislative reforms to recognise coercive control through their criminal justice systems. The Commonwealth, state and territory governments are also co-designing National Principles to Address Coercive Control (National Principles). The National Principles aim to develop a common understanding of coercive control and to raise awareness of the issue. They also aim to ensure that the community better understands the full range of physical and non-physical tactics used by perpetrators of family and domestic violence, and their impacts. The National Principles will also help to inform more effective and consistent responses to coercive control – for example within training and education.

The National Principles will consider the impact of coercive control on diverse groups of people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It will also consider the barriers different people face in accessing support and how to develop effective, accessible, inclusive and culturally appropriate system responses.

## **Intimate partner homicide**

Approximately one in 4 women and one in 13 men have experienced violence by an intimate partner.<sup>104</sup> Intimate partner violence contributes to more death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 years than any other preventable risk factor.<sup>105</sup> Intimate partner homicide is also the most prevalent type of domestic homicide in Australia, accounting for 45 deaths in 2019–20.<sup>106</sup> On average, one woman is killed by an intimate partner every 10 days.<sup>107</sup> Intimate partner homicide rates have been consistently decreasing for women and men since 1989–90 as a result of increased awareness of family and domestic violence, although the rate of intimate partner homicide remains alarmingly high.<sup>108</sup>

Some of the risk factors for intimate partner homicide include:

- offender experiences of childhood trauma, including witnessing intimate partner violence and being the target of family violence
- offender mental health
- the presence of non-fatal strangulation events within the relationship between the victim and offender
- sexual violence perpetrated against the victim by the offender
- offender jealousy.<sup>109</sup>

Perpetrators are more likely to escalate their violence in the weeks and months leading up to and directly following separation from a partner. Services and first responders need to recognise patterns of abusive and controlling behaviour in a domestic violence relationship that extend beyond physical violence. To ensure the rate of intimate partner homicide continues to decrease, it is essential we remain committed to collecting data and evidence that inform effective risk and safety assessment practices.

## **Sexual violence and harassment**

The true prevalence of sexual violence is unknown as the majority of incidents go unreported. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 23% of women and 8% of men in Australia have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime.<sup>110</sup> In a 2020 national study on the health and well-being of LGBTIQ+ people in Australia, 48.6% of participants reported having been coerced or forced into sexual acts they did not want to engage in.<sup>111</sup> Victimization rates continue to rise, and are higher for younger women, women in financial hardship and women with disability. Importantly, while sexual violence can occur in the context of domestic and family violence, it can also be perpetrated by other people known or unknown to the victim-survivor, and may be perpetuated or amplified online, such as through image-based sexual abuse.



Sexual assault is a crime that also contributes to major health and welfare issues in Australia and worldwide. For many victim-survivors, the effects can be wide-ranging and lifelong. People can experience physical injuries, health impacts such as unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infection and long-term mental health and trauma impacts that lead to disruption to everyday activities such as eating and sleeping habits. Victim-survivors of rape or sexual assault may delay disclosing and reporting or never disclose their experiences.<sup>112</sup> The *2016 Personal Safety Survey* found that only 13% of women reported their most recent incident of sexual assault by a male perpetrator to police.<sup>113</sup> Myths and misconceptions about sexual violence can result in victim-survivors fearing they will not be believed, and this fear is one of the main reasons why women do not report sexual violence.

Many victim-survivors do not disclose or report to law enforcement for a range of reasons, including due to often re-traumatising experiences, such as long delays, failures in communication and the fear or experience of being disbelieved, disrespected or blamed. Law enforcement and legal processes can create environments where victim-survivors can be subjected to victim-blaming, re-traumatisation and unfair treatment. This is intrinsically linked to harmful community attitudes about sexual violence. For example, the *2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey* found that as many as 4 in 10 Australians mistrust women's reports of sexual violence.<sup>114</sup> In a focus group study where participants were asked to estimate the proportion of sexual allegations that are false, the average estimate was 21%.<sup>115</sup>

Some groups of women experience particular barriers when reporting sexual assault, including women with disability, women from diverse backgrounds, women with limited English

proficiency, women with uncertain visa status and sex workers. Institutional responses to victim-survivors seeking to report or seek help following a sexual assault have often been underpinned by barriers of unfair social stigma, discrimination or promoting feelings of shame preventing them from seeking appropriate support services.

Sexual harassment is part of the continuum of sexual violence and abuse and is predominantly experienced by women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people. Sexual harassment is experienced in a range of settings including workplaces, educational settings, sporting clubs, public places and online. Nearly 3 in 4 Australians report having experienced sexual harassment at some point in their lives, with women being twice as likely as men to experience sexual harassment.<sup>116</sup> Significantly, the *2018 National Survey of Sexual Harassment in Australia* revealed almost 2 in 5 women have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the previous 5 years.

However, out of those affected, fewer than one in 5 had lodged a formal report or complaint. This study also found that people of diverse sexualities were more likely than heterosexual people to have experienced workplace sexual harassment in the previous 5 years.



## Respect@Work

In parallel to implementing the National Plan, the Australian Government will implement all 55 recommendations of the *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report* delivered in 2020 by the Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner. This work is critical to ensuring safe and respectful workplaces for everyone and putting an end to sexual harassment at work.

In 2021, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner also delivered *Set the Standard: the Report on the Independent Review into Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces*.

It is crucial that Commonwealth parliamentary workplaces, as a standard for all Australian workplaces, are safe, respectful and reflect best practice in the prevention and handling of bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault. The Australian Government will work to implement all recommendations of *Set the Standard*.

## Pornography

Pornography often depicts physical and verbal aggression towards women, male dominance and female submission, and non-consensual behaviours. The relationship is complex, but research suggests there are links between people's pornography use and their attitudes about relationships, sex, and men's and women's roles and identities. For example, greater pornography use is associated with less progressive attitudes about gender roles, with a belief that women are sex objects and with acceptance of myths about rape. It is also associated with victim-blaming attitudes such as the belief that if a woman is affected by alcohol or drugs, she is at least partly responsible for whatever happens to her.<sup>117</sup> Viewing pornographic material that showcases violence can have negative impacts on a young person's development with regard to their well-being and relationships and it can influence their attitudes and beliefs about sex, intimacy and consent.<sup>118</sup> The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children found

the more often young men consume pornography, the more likely they are to enact sexual behaviour that the other person does not want.<sup>119</sup>

With pornography now overwhelmingly consumed online and via mobile devices, it is both prevalent and pervasive, perpetuating sexist, misogynistic and degrading views about women. This is a serious concern in addressing the drivers of violence against women and children.

## Economic abuse including financial abuse

Economic abuse involves a pattern of control, exploitation or sabotage of money and finances and economic resources, which affects a person's ability to obtain, use or maintain economic resources, threatening their economic security and potential for self-sufficiency and independence.<sup>120</sup> Financial abuse is a common form of domestic and family violence. It is perpetrated by intimate partners or family members, and also occurs in the context of elder and carer abuse. It manifests in different ways but generally it is a type of

controlling behaviour where the perpetrator controls finances and assets to gain power and control in a relationship. Tactics can include controlling access to or taking/spending someone's money without permission, pressuring someone to loan money and refusing to pay back loans, forcing someone to transfer their assets into someone else's name, and preventing someone from gaining employment, thereby limiting their financial autonomy. Financial abuse is a powerful form of abuse and it is often the reason why women find it difficult to leave an abusive relationship. It can also occur after a woman has left an abusive relationship, through forms of technology-facilitated abuse, such as sending threatening and abusive messages via banking transactions or withholding online access to money.

For many women with disability and older women, economic abuse can be further complicated because there are insufficient legal safeguards in substitute decision-making, an arrangement that allows a guardian or caregiver to make financial or other decisions on another person's behalf.

Financial abuse is an intersectional, gendered issue. A 2017 study on economic abuse between co-habiting partners found 16% of women and 7% of men had experienced financial abuse in their lifetimes.<sup>121</sup> The study also established that age, disability, financial stress, and health status were significant risk factors, especially for women. For example, 63% of women who experienced high financial stress and 24% of women with disability or long-term health condition had experienced financial abuse. Middle aged and older women also more commonly experienced financial abuse.

A 2021 study found Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience financial abuse in distinct ways.<sup>122</sup> Evidence suggests they may experience financial abuse not only in intimate partner relationships, but in wider family relationships as well. Cultural norms about sharing wealth, caregiving and broader support systems based on reciprocity increase the risk

of financial abuse. One form of this abuse is 'humbugging', pressuring family members into giving financial assistance to the extent it is bothersome.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further increased the risks and experience of financial stress and financial abuse. In one study into Australian women's experiences of intimate partner violence during the pandemic, one in 5 women reported they had experienced financial abuse from their partner in the previous 12 months. Of these, one in 3 reported that their partner pressured them to give them money or access to their money, of whom 43% said that this had included their superannuation.<sup>123</sup> Sixty-six per cent of respondents who had been in a relationship longer than 12 months, and who experienced non physical abuse in the 12 months before the survey, said it was the first time it had happened or that it had become more frequent or severe. This indicates that pandemic-related stressors were a factor in the abuse.

More evidence and holistic solutions are needed to understand and address this pervasive form of domestic and family violence. Researchers and practitioners have called for greater attention to be paid to those groups more at risk, such as elders, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women with disability and long-term health conditions. There is also the need to:

- address financial stress as a major priority for women leaving an abusive relationship
- develop a nationally consistent definition of financial abuse
- train more financial specialists about financial abuse and its effects
- adopt a holistic approach to addressing financial abuse, including working with banks, credit, utility and housing providers and welfare services
- build evidence on the types of financial abuse experienced by different women and children, including the intersections with forms of technology-facilitated abuse.



## Technology-facilitated abuse

Technology-facilitated abuse is widespread and increasing, often taking the form of stalking, surveillance, tracking, threats, harassment and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images.<sup>124</sup>

Perpetrators can misuse devices (such as phones or computers), accounts (such as email) and software or platforms (such as social media) to control, abuse, track and intimidate victim-survivors.<sup>125</sup> Research shows that mobile phones are the most frequently used technology, and texting and social media (such as Facebook and Snapchat) are the most common services perpetrators use to make unwanted contact with, or abuse, a partner or ex-partner.<sup>126</sup>

By controlling technology in the home, perpetrators can cut women off from family and friends, vital pathways for assistance, and access to government services and funding. This isolates women and makes them dependent on the perpetrator. This has a particular impact for migrant and refugee women who rely on social media to contact family and friends, as well as for women with disability who may rely on technology for everyday services and interactions.<sup>127</sup> Women and girls have the right to the multiple economic and social opportunities offered online and through emerging technologies, and limiting their access contributes to gender inequality. Studies also show that children are being exploited through the use of technology particularly in co-parenting situations, with some abusers using their children's devices to gather information about a former partner's whereabouts and activities.<sup>128</sup>

Perpetrators are also exploiting new and emerging technology and services, such as drones, artificial intelligence, online dating apps and the 'Internet of Things' to perpetrate sophisticated technology-facilitated abuse that can be difficult for victim-survivors to detect.<sup>129</sup> Perpetrators are increasingly using spyware as a common tactic of technology-facilitated abuse which significantly interferes with safety planning for women and children. Online platforms can also be used to perpetrate cyber abuse, in which perpetrators share seriously harmful content with or about a person. These forms of abuse are gendered. More than two thirds of complaints received by the eSafety Commissioner (eSafety) about cyber abuse and image-based abuse are from women.<sup>130</sup>

The gendered abuse is also intersectional. eSafety research shows Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, women who identify as LGBTIQ+ and women with disability are at greater risk of online abuse.<sup>131</sup>

Technology-facilitated abuse can cause victim-survivors to feel increased levels of fear and trauma, a sense of being trapped and also a fear of or disengagement from technology. This can compound isolation, restrict access to support and services and further reduce their full economic and social participation.<sup>132</sup> Technology and internet access are essential for victim-survivors of gender-based violence to access vital health and social services, as well as law enforcement and legal services.<sup>133</sup>



# Addressing structural barriers to achieving change

## Strengthening the sector, building the workforce

To end violence against women and children in one generation, multiple sectors need to work together in areas of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing. Across these domains, there must be a workforce comprised of people with the skills to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.

Workers in the specialist family, domestic and sexual violence sector are often under-recognised and undervalued, and there are few clear career pathways into the sector. Specialist skills are often learned on the job and under immense pressure, and can often result in worker burn out, vicarious trauma and risks to worker safety. Providing access to counselling, supervision, mentoring and de-briefing are some ways to ensure specialist staff stay in the sector. There are additional challenges and barriers to attracting, developing and retaining skilled and qualified staff in regional, rural and remote communities, including the availability of adequate infrastructure and housing, which need to be reflected in funding models.

*“Workforce capacity and investing in that is really, really, really critical and that has a direct impact on the capacity for women and their families to receive good services and to be able to recover well, and that’s what we want”*

Advocate, Monash Consultation Report, 2021

Outside of the specialist family, domestic and sexual violence sector are a range of workers across the justice system, the health system, educational institutions, workplaces and the media who come into contact with victim-survivors and perpetrators. But there is a significant gap in knowledge and understanding of the drivers of gender-based violence and in knowing how to respond safely, respectfully and compassionately.

The police force, the legal system and the judiciary, for example, are not specifically designed to deal with violence against women and children. Yet, responding to gender-based violence constitutes a large proportion of police work in many jurisdictions. The legal system and judiciary are involved in defending and prosecuting cases and sentencing offenders.

Healthcare workers are not consistently trained in responding to domestic, family and sexual violence, but the health sector provides much of the frontline support for victim-survivors. Evidence shows that a general practitioner is often the first person a victim-survivor turns to for advice and support.<sup>134</sup>

Child protection knowledge has been integrated into qualifications, policies and procedures across a range of professions and industries. Following this example, education on the drivers of gender-based violence – and how to safely and ethically respond to and report it – must be integrated into the foundational training of the non-specialist workforce as part of gaining their qualifications. This will also help to prevent future incidences of gender-based violence by increasing community awareness and reinforcing that everyone has a role to play in ending violence against women and children.

In order to meet the need and work towards Australia's vision of ending gender-based violence in one generation, the sector also needs to grow. Building the sector, both in size and capability, will help to ensure that victim-survivors can access the support they need no matter where they live.

Having a workforce that is adequately skilled to *respond* to violence is just one side of the coin. There must also be an expert workforce to *prevent* gender-based violence. Like the response workforce, the prevention workforce needs to be multidisciplinary. It requires technical and content experts whose focus is on systems change, and sector-based professionals who tailor and deliver prevention initiatives within their organisations. To end gender-based violence in one generation, prevention needs to be embedded in every setting and sector.

Beyond receiving foundational training, non-specialists should receive ongoing, expert training and learning and development on preventing and responding to gender-based violence. Every victim-survivor should feel there is 'no wrong door', and workplaces have a role in stopping violence before it starts. To build this workforce, it is important that the specialist domestic, family and sexual violence sector and the non-specialist workforce work hand-in-hand. Mechanisms that support specialists to share their knowledge and expertise with other sectors and services will assist in developing and maintaining an inclusive, culturally safe and trauma-informed non-specialist workforce.

Collaboration and partnerships between specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services and other services such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, LGBTIQ+ community organisations, and organisations supporting people with disability and culturally diverse communities are critical in increasing the ability to provide tailored, expert care and support.

Every sector has a role to play in preventing, intervening and responding to those who experience gender-based violence. Schools, early years learning and childcare education staff may come into contact with family violence as a child protection matter and require appropriate



training to safely support women and children experiencing violence. Staff at all levels in tertiary education settings also need training to prevent and respond to incidents of sexism, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape in their communities.

The media have a critical role in shaping how the community thinks and talks about violence against women. Currently, there is limited evidence-based education for journalists on the drivers of violence or how to safely and ethically report it, either as part of their formal qualifications or on the job. News reports often reinforce community attitudes that condone or tolerate violence. However, the media can also work in a positive way to raise awareness of support services for victim-survivors and provide supportive messaging about holding those who choose to use violence accountable.<sup>135</sup>

Businesses and workplaces more broadly also have a role in preventing gender-based violence, as well as providing a workplace environment that is safe and free from harassment and abuse. One in 3 people has experienced workplace sexual harassment.<sup>136</sup> Changing the culture in a workplace starts at the top, with the leadership demonstrating a strong commitment to gender equality and respect, taking instances of violence seriously and responding appropriately. Effective processes and policies can also enable employees experiencing gender-based violence to seek support and receive assistance from their employers.

### **Housing is essential to ending gender-based violence in a generation**

Domestic and family violence is the main reason women and children leave their homes in Australia and is the leading cause of homelessness for children.<sup>137</sup> Women and children who had experienced family and domestic violence made up 42% of Specialist Homelessness Services clients in 2020–21.<sup>138</sup>

Women and children experiencing violence are often faced with significant financial costs of moving homes, including paying bond, rent,

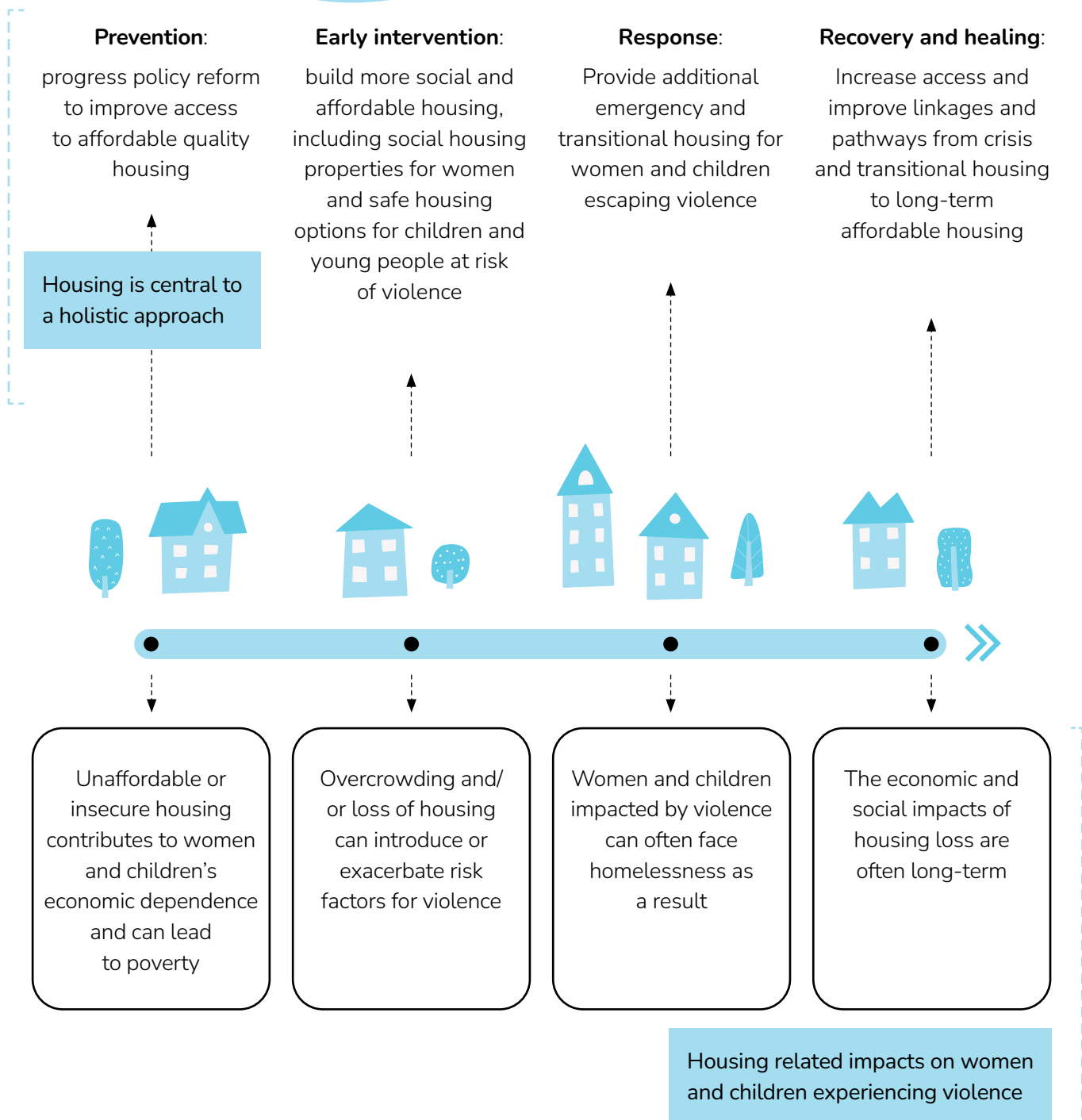
transport and purchasing new furniture and white goods. Unaffordable, inadequate and insecure housing results in over 7,000 women each year returning to violent homes because they have no place to live.<sup>139</sup>

Unaffordable or insecure housing is a major barrier for victim-survivors to re-establish their lives after leaving a violent situation and a key consideration in their decision to leave. A shortage of transitional and long-term social and affordable housing means some women and children exiting crisis accommodation are faced with a choice of returning to a violent home or becoming homeless. This is further complicated by overcrowding in crisis accommodation, particularly prevalent in regional, remote and very remote areas. Women on temporary visas experiencing violence face additional barriers to accessing crisis, transitional and longer-term housing as these housing options are often limited to people with permanent residency or citizenship status.

Inadequate housing options limit women's and children's ability to leave violent situations and present barriers to accessing help and support. Inadequate housing has both social and cultural implications for victim-survivors. Escaping violence may force women and children to move towns or states, leaving country, community and support networks behind. This has significant effects on families' ability to recover and heal.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children have strong family values that extend well beyond the loyalties within a nuclear family and are not represented by a mainstream understanding of households. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, the effects of homelessness are especially profound.<sup>140</sup> Connection to Country and community are key sources of support and are fundamental to identity, a sense of belonging and feeling safe. It is important to understand kinship relationships to understand the need for culturally appropriate dwellings. Inadequate housing can further compound experiences of social exclusion and

# Safe, affordable, and accessible housing is key to ending violence against women and children



disadvantage. Women from migrant and refugee backgrounds have similar needs.<sup>141</sup>

Housing is central to personal safety and its role in policy responses must be considered across the continuum, from prevention to recovery and healing. Some emergency accommodation (particularly in older dwellings) is not designed to maximise privacy, security and dignity for clients, resulting in additional barriers for some people – such as mothers accompanied by adolescents, people with disability, transwomen and pet owners.

Improving housing outcomes for women and children experiencing violence requires both an increase in housing stock and better access to housing options. Affordable and secure housing fosters independence of women and children and assists in their recovery. The housing system can be difficult to navigate in times of crisis, particularly for women, children and families with low literacy levels and English as a second language. Housing across the spectrum must be adequate, accessible and fully resourced.

While improving pathways to long-term affordable and appropriate housing is central to supporting the long-term recovery of victim-survivors, it is critical to implement and expand programs that support women and children to remain safely in their own homes if that is their wish. People who choose to use violence need to be held accountable, and providing the option for women and children to stay safely in their homes – and retain their connections to Country and community – must be part of a holistic response.

## **Addressing barriers to create safety for victim-survivors**

Leaving a violent intimate partner relationship is the most dangerous time for a victim-survivor and their children.

In addition to the safety implications, women face multiple and systemic barriers when

leaving a violent relationship, which can lead to homelessness, economic insecurity, social isolation and the loss of employment, income, assets, and support networks.<sup>142</sup> These impacts can be much worse for women living in areas where there has been underinvestment in local services and institutions, as well as insecure housing, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children living in certain communities. There is a need to have adequate services and infrastructure with culturally safe options for victim-survivors.

These barriers, risks and impacts faced by women and children experiencing violence show why we need to reframe our approach. The onus and burden to leave violent relationships should not be placed on women and children experiencing violence. Rather, we need to focus on removing barriers so that women and children have a choice, their agency is respected and those who choose to use violence are held to account. This approach also involves recognising that leaving the violent relationship is not always the most appropriate or desired outcome.

Work on addressing barriers should include an emphasis on providing safe and affordable housing. This should include transitional housing to support women and children moving from crisis accommodation, and those who are recently separated. Other ways to remove barriers include providing:

- paid domestic and family violence leave, so women do not have to choose between their personal safety and their economic security
- affordable local public transport, so women and children can travel to safety and access services, employment and their social networks
- affordable childcare, to support women's economic security and social inclusion, and remove a significant obstacle to seeking help.



Strategies such as these reinforce that women and children should not face poverty and exclusion when leaving violence. Rather, they should be able to continue to access opportunities, employment and housing, and to maintain connections with their social supports and communities.

## Improving service systems and eliminating systems abuse<sup>iii</sup>

The existing system has largely prioritised crisis, legal responses and mainstream responses to violence. However, systems, legislation and services can unintentionally promote women's dependency on men and perpetuate discrimination. For example, perpetrators can abuse legal systems to exert power and control over victim-survivors. Systems abuse affects victim-survivors' health and well-being as well as having social and economic impacts. It undermines confidence in the legal system, denies victim-survivors support and may inadvertently help the primary perpetrator further control the victim-survivor.<sup>143</sup> These factors may prevent the victim-survivor from reporting abuse, while poor or inadequate legal penalties for the perpetrator and reduced accountability can present additional barriers to reporting. The services on offer may lack a specialised approach, and may not be culturally safe or appropriate, which can further undermine victim-survivors' confidence in the system.

The inappropriate use of legal penalties against victim-survivors who have used violence in response to violence perpetrated against them has been of concern for decades.<sup>144</sup> This often stems from a systems failure, which responds to violence as single incidents. For example, a person using violence in a single incident may be considered the perpetrator, but when viewed more broadly, it is clear that they are the victim of a pattern of coercive control and are using retaliatory or pre-emptive violence. Failure to correctly identify

the perpetrator disproportionately affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, who are also more likely to encounter structural racism in their interactions with the criminal legal system.

## Social security

Australia's social security system supports victims and survivors to not only leave a violent relationship, but also to establish a life free from violence. Examples of support include:

- Crisis Payment, which is available to victims of family and domestic violence up to four times a year
- Rent Assistance
- higher single rates of social security payments.

Further, there a number of policy settings in place to ensure the social security system is designed to support victim-survivors, including exemptions from mutual obligation requirements and assets tests. Building on work with Economic Justice Australia, amendments have been made to the Social Security Guide to ensure Services Australia staff are well equipped to offer this greater flexibility and support, and to ensure that family and domestic violence is considered in assessing payment eligibility, including when a person is considered as a 'member of a couple'. The Australian Government will continue to ensure the needs of women and children experiencing family and domestic violence are taken into account in the delivery of government services.

There have been calls to ensure the adequacy of some social security payments to reduce the financial pressure on people experiencing domestic violence and improve their ability to re-establish a home free of violence. The situation for some women has been improved by the

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<sup>iii</sup> *Systems abuse refers to the manipulation of legal and other systems by perpetrators of family violence, done so in order to exert control over, threaten and/or harass a current or former partner*

availability of the Escaping Violence Payment, which provides financial assistance to people forced to change their living situation due to violence. However, it is acknowledged that this support is one-off and only available once a year.

The Australian Government has committed to review the adequacy of the JobSeeker payment at each Budget. This will consider the circumstances and needs of all Australians who need this support, including sole parents and those who have experienced violence will be part of these deliberations.

Services Australia is committed to providing assistance and support to victim-survivors through its own Family and Domestic Violence Strategy. To reinforce this commitment, a range of strategies have been implemented to ensure the safety of customers and their families, including providing staff with regular training and guidance materials to help identify when customers may be experiencing violence. Training and guidance materials are regularly reviewed to ensure they are up to date and appropriate.

Services Australia continues to build and maintain strong relationships with external referral services, other government agencies, and community service providers to link people to the best support and care services available. There are a number of well-established, specialist teams in place to provide targeted services to those who require it. Additionally, insights from a current agency pilot program is helping to ensure that a more integrated service response is in place for mutual customers who are at significant or immediate risk of family and domestic violence.

In addition to this, there are other initiatives focused on enhancing the customer experience for Child Support customers by simplifying existing processes and providing staff with the tools they need.

## Improving the family law system

While states and territories share responsibility for addressing family and domestic violence, the Commonwealth is responsible for the federal family law system.

It is critical that the system protects those at risk of violence – including children and young people – who are victims and survivors of family violence in their own right. The community continues to look to its legal systems to provide accessible and efficient processes when a decision has been made to dissolve a partnership. These systems also need to provide assurances of safety during those processes, particularly where children are involved. While much has been done, work will continue to help more separating families resolve disputes in a timely and safe manner, so that litigation is a last resort.

Since the 2010–2022 National Plan was developed, there have been a series of initiatives within the family law system to help families separate in a safe, child-centred, supportive, accessible and timely way. The aim of these initiatives has been to provide better coordination and awareness of family safety issues in Australia's family law system, and increase the protections and support available to victim-survivors as they move through the court system. Pilot programs within the courts such as the Lighthouse Project and the co-location of child protection and policing officials within family law court registries across Australia have improved the family court system's capacity to recognise and respond to violence against women and children in a timely manner.

When families separate, they are encouraged to settle matters out of court, where it is safe to do so. The Australian Government funds family relationship services that provide free and low

cost assistance to help families manage their family separation and relationship issues. Most notably, as separation is a risk factor for family violence, services help women make decisions about post-separation arrangements, including where financial abuse is present. Children's best interests are always the main consideration in resolving parenting disputes, and a range of services are available to meet the diverse needs of families to help them achieve this outcome. The vast majority of family law matters are settled outside the court system.

When matters proceed to court, they are usually heard by the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia or the Family Court of Western Australia. Of the small minority of matters that end up in court, the majority involve allegations of family violence. From 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022, data from the Notices of Child Abuse, Family Violence or Risk, which are filed with applications for final orders in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, indicates that:

- in 70% of matters, one or more parties alleged that a child had been abused or was at risk of child abuse
- in 80% of matters, one or more parties alleged that they had experienced family violence
- in 74% of matters, one or more parties alleged that a child had experienced family violence
- in 53% of matters, one or more parties alleged that drug, alcohol or substance misuse by a party had caused harm to a child or posed a risk of harm to a child
- in 58% of matters, one or more parties alleged that mental health issues of a party had caused harm to a child or posed a risk of harm to a child
- in 66% of matters there were four or more risk factors alleged by either party.

Despite the progress that has been made, there is still work to do, particularly in relation to improving victim-survivors' experiences of the family law court system and through the provision

of safe, accessible, and adequate restorative justice processes and family dispute resolution.

Guided by the recommendations of 2 recent comprehensive reviews of the family law system, more will be done to make the family law system, safer and easier to use, and to ensure safer outcomes for women and children.<sup>145</sup>

## **Improving criminal justice responses**

Under our federal system of government, each jurisdiction is responsible for administering its own criminal justice system, including criminal laws, policing, courts and corrections. This includes the determination of domestic, family and sexual violence crimes and the provision of police and court ordered intervention orders. While state and territory governments are primarily responsible for criminal justice responses to family, domestic and sexual violence, the scale and prevalence of this violence, and the associated barriers to justice, make it an issue that requires national collaboration.

Key areas for improvement throughout the life of the National Plan include enhancing access to equitable justice outcomes for all victim-survivors; identifying and removing barriers to reporting violence and engaging with the criminal justice process; investigating and prosecuting violence against women and children including sexual violence; ensuring police and prosecutors have the tools and training they need to respond effectively to the use of violence; and strengthening our responses to perpetrators of violence. Capacity building for legal services, including Women's Legal Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Services, police, the judiciary and community corrections is also a priority.

Characteristics of the criminal justice system, including the use of legal terminology, complex processes, the adversarial system and long trials, can act as barriers to victim-survivors accessing



justice. This is particularly true for people whose ability to participate in the criminal justice system may be impaired due to trauma or mental, physical or emotional factors.

We also recognise that victim-survivors have diverse lived experience, and can experience violence and trauma differently, meaning they may also have different needs in relation to justice outcomes.

Governments are exploring alternative pathways and strategies to address violence, especially for victim-survivors who do not wish to engage directly with law enforcement or the formal court process. For example, in some jurisdictions, victim-survivors who do not wish to formally report their sexual assault to police can report it in an anonymous, informal way.<sup>146</sup> The National Plan also complements work governments are undertaking under the *Work Plan to Strengthen Criminal Justice Responses to Sexual Assault 2022–2027*.

## **Access to justice for different communities**

Currently, many communities do not have safe and equitable access to justice. This may be due to geographic barriers. For example, family dispute resolution services are not available in many regional and remote areas. Cultural and linguistic barriers may mean that communities that speak languages other than English may find justice systems confronting and difficult to navigate.

Moreover, negative experiences with the police and the judiciary, and concerns about giving evidence against family members for reasons including shame, stigma and fear of retaliation, may mean that some victim-survivors are reluctant to engage with the criminal legal system.

There have been some initiatives to overcome these barriers to access, such as family violence specialist courts, virtual outreach legal services and intermediary schemes for victim-survivors and

witnesses. To improve equitable access to justice, more needs to be done to ensure justice systems are safe, accessible and easy for victim-survivors to navigate.

## **Journey through the justice response**

Alternative approaches, such as restorative justice, family dispute resolution, roundtable conferencing and community courts (such as the Koori courts and Murri courts), also need to be available and accessible. Some communities, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, have experienced disproportionate levels of institutional violence at the hands of police, corrections and the Australian legal system, and therefore, alternative, trauma-informed and culturally safe justice pathways may be more appropriate. Other communities, such as LGBTIQ+ communities, where acts like consensual sex between men have historically been criminalised, have also faced discrimination and violence at the hands of the justice system that impact their trust and engagement with these systems.

Alternative and culturally appropriate community driven systems should be available, where Elders and whole communities can be involved in processes that create safety for victim-survivors and support their restoration and healing, while holding perpetrators to account and facilitating rehabilitation.

In addition to providing culturally safe approaches, access to justice involves making sure that systems are culturally, linguistically, physically and geographically accessible to diverse communities – for example, migrant and refugee women including those on temporary visas, who may have a first language other than English, and victim-survivors living in remote areas. These systems should be equally responsive and accessible to people with disability and older women, which may involve providing outreach to institutions and aged care facilities.

The adversarial criminal justice system can also be an unsafe place for victim-survivors. This can be through unsafe practices, such as shared waiting rooms, or through inappropriate lines of questioning for sexual assault survivors. If victim-survivors choose to seek justice through the legal system, the system must provide a safe environment and ensure victim-survivors are prepared, know what to expect and are able to make informed choices. This should be supported by trained legal services and judiciary who are educated about:

- the drivers, forms and dynamics of domestic, family and sexual violence
- trauma-informed court practices
- the impact of these crimes on victim-survivors, including how perpetrators may use the system against them.

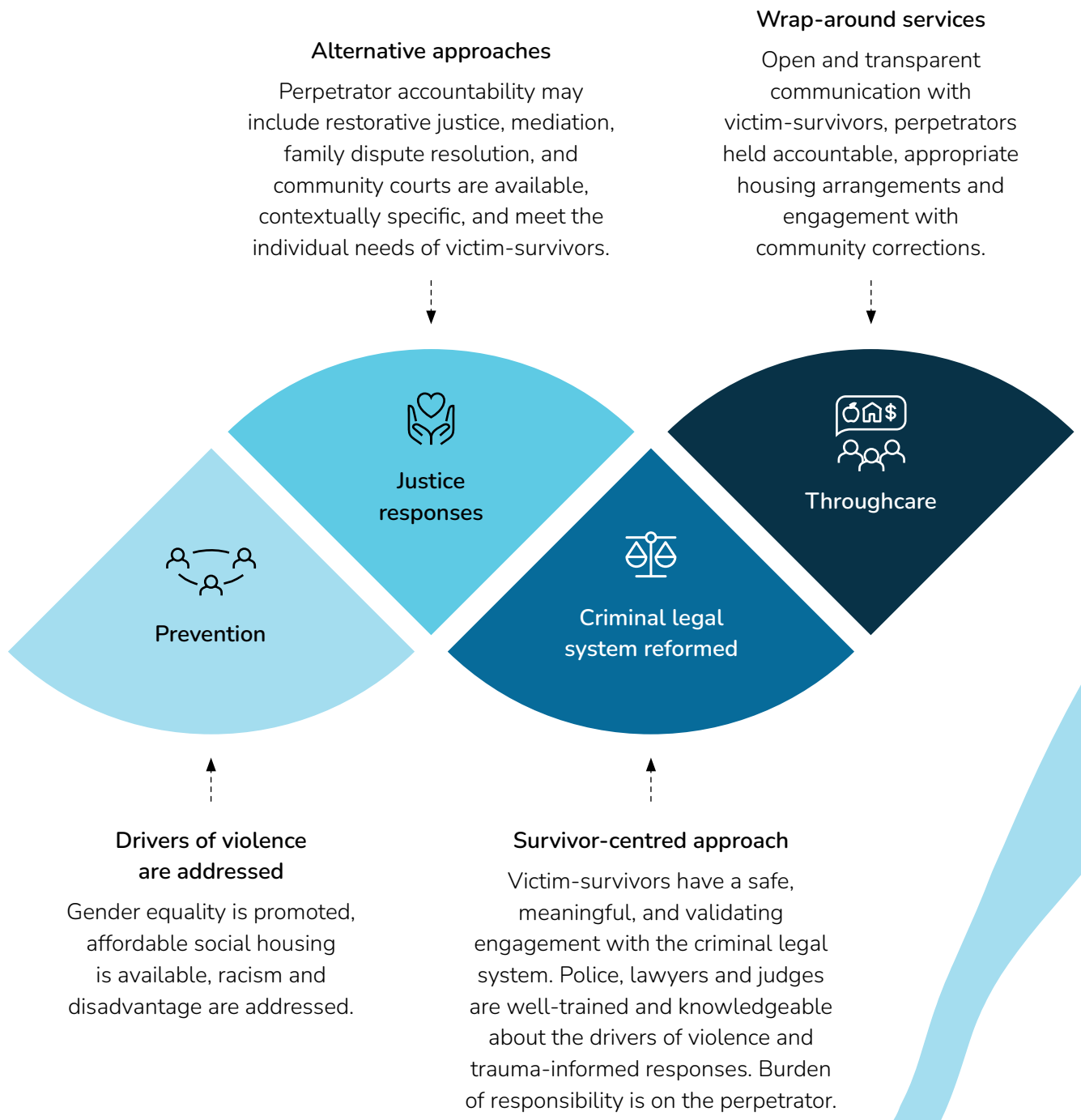
Justice responses should also seek to accommodate the different needs and interests of victim-survivors and employ, where appropriate and safe to do so, different forms of accountability for perpetrators. These might include community sanctions and restorative processes, alongside legal sanctions and perpetrator interventions.

Restorative justice processes should also be available where appropriate to young people and children who have experienced violence. These processes can promote healing and provide victim-survivors with a validating engagement with the justice system. However, these must be delivered by trained specialist services skilled in trauma-informed restorative justice processes.



# Journey through justice response

Co-ordination, integration, accompaniment





# Cross-cutting principles





# Advance gender equality

*“Achieving gender equality is key to preventing violence.”*

Delegate Statement, 2021 National Summit on Women’s Safety

Everyone, regardless of gender, identity, ability, race and sexuality, has the right to live and work free from violence and harassment. To achieve this, we must address gender inequality and other forms of discrimination, because these create the social context in which violence against women and children occurs. Evidence shows that higher levels of violence against women are consistently associated with lower levels of gender equality in both public life and personal relationships.<sup>147</sup>

Attitudes that deny gender inequality is a problem and support rigid gender roles are the strongest predictors of attitudes that support or condone violence against women.<sup>148</sup> Evidence also shows that more gender equal societies have far lower rates of violence against women, and that people with gender equitable views are much less likely to use violence.

Gender inequality is present when unequal value is afforded to women and men and there is an unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity between them. While progress has been made through policies and laws to support women’s rights and opportunities, there is more work to be done to advance gender equality in Australia. Gender inequality is maintained through:

- social norms such as rigid gender norms and stereotypes
- systems and institutions such as policies that limit women’s economic participation
- differences in child-rearing practices for boys and girls

- structures and practices that limit women’s participation in the workforce and perpetuate the gender pay gap and the superannuation gap.

Gender inequality does not exist in isolation. It intersects with other forms of structural and systemic discrimination. This means that some women face higher rates of violence, are at a heightened risk of experiencing or being exposed to certain forms of harassment, and can experience greater barriers to accessing support and recovery.

To end violence against women and children, we must address gender inequality in all its forms and expressions. This includes improving women’s representation in leadership and decision-making roles and addressing barriers to women’s economic and financial security. Work to address violence against LGBTIQ+ people should be led by organisations and individuals within those communities, based on their own frameworks and priorities.

The National Plan will intersect with and be complemented by a National Gender Equality Strategy as well as with existing state and territory strategies on gender equality.

## **Gendered drivers of violence against LGBTIQ+ people**

Gender inequality is underpinned by rigid, binary and hierarchical constructions of sex, gender and sexuality. These also have a significant impact on the violence that LGBTIQ+ people and communities experience.<sup>149</sup>

Addressing gender inequality is thus key to addressing multiple forms of gender-based violence. However, work to address violence against LGBTIQ+ people should be led by organisations and individuals within those communities, based on their own frameworks and priorities.



## The diverse lived experiences of victim-survivors are informing policies and solutions

No effective solutions can be developed without the people most affected by them, and whom this National Plan intends to serve. Victim-survivors must be at the heart of solutions. Victim-survivors have specific and contextual expertise that comes from lived experience of abuse and violence. They have intimate first hand knowledge of services, systems, and structures that are meant to support them but have sometimes failed them. They know from experience the weaknesses and strengths of interventions in practice.

The National Plan commits to working with victim-survivors and recognises the value of lived experience in informing appropriate and effective initiatives. To achieve this the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission will establish a formal mechanism for embedding victim-survivor engagement at the national level.

This will mean:

- making sure the diverse views and perspectives of victim-survivors are central in developing the Action Plans that will underpin this National Plan
- setting up mechanisms for ongoing engagement and consultation with victim-survivors to support implementation of the National Plan and its Action Plans
- supporting victim-survivor led advocacy groups to contribute to policy development and implementation
- recognising trauma as a normal response to abuse and as an injury of gender-based violence. Trauma recovery and actions to redress the lifelong impacts of violence and abuse on victim-survivors are embedded in the Action Plans.

*“For the National Plan to be successful ... it needs to be something that upholds and preserves the dignity of women. And we do that by centring her as the expert in her life and stepping away, stepping out of the way and allowing her to have choice and agency, that is essential.”*

Advocate, Monash Stakeholder Report, 2021

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## Closing the Gap

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Closing the Gap) is an agreement by all Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations. The objective of Closing the Gap is to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, so they achieve life outcomes equal to those of all Australians.

In addressing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, it is vital to recognise the continuing trauma and intergenerational effects of colonisation. It is also essential to make sure responses to violence address these ongoing effects.

The National Plan will reinforce and support the Closing the Gap framework by taking a strengths-based approach to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



Further, it will align with the Priority Reforms:

- Formal partnerships and shared decision-making
- Building the community controlled sector
- Transforming government organisations
- Shared access to data and information at a regional level.<sup>150</sup>

In alignment with Closing the Gap, the National Plan supports measures designed to achieve 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.*<sup>151</sup>

The National Plan also directly and indirectly supports Closing the Gap Targets contributing to addressing over-representation in the justice and out-of-home care systems and reducing suicide (Targets 9, 10, 11, 12 and 14).

Putting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at the forefront of the National Plan is critical to achieving real change. This will mean:

- measuring and reporting on how the National Plan is contributing to the achievement of Closing the Gap Target 13
- developing solutions with and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Elders and communities
- Aboriginal organisations delivering family, domestic and sexual violence services, healing, men and boys services and recovery services to their communities
- ensuring there are mechanisms and genuine partnerships to make sure mainstream services embed cultural safety at their core and meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- establishing prevention-focused services that support and strengthen families, and recognising trauma-informed responses for children impacted by violence

- ensuring specialist programs and services are designed with, by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities
- developing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and prioritising opportunities for Indigenous workers to build their capacity
- organisations, businesses, and governments collaborating and sharing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in a process of two-way learning to deliver localised best-practice responses
- ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities retain ownership of their cultural knowledge and intellectual property, and integrating mechanisms to promote data sovereignty into the underpinning Action Plans and future standalone First Nations National Plan.

*“The Aboriginal community controlled health services sector and other Aboriginal community controlled organisations have a central role in their communities in strengthening families, preventing violence at an individual and community level, and supporting healing from intergenerational trauma and operationalising Aboriginal self-determination.”*

Delegate Statement, 2021 National Summit on Women’s Safety



# Person-centred coordination and integration

Ending violence against women and children requires a holistic multi-sectoral and culturally informed approach and the coordinated efforts of multiple stakeholders.

The National Plan acknowledges the vital role that specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services have played in supporting, advocating for, and uplifting their clients for decades.

A cross-cutting focus of the National Plan is to ensure that all stakeholders, from governments right through to locally based specialist service organisations, communicate effectively and share information. This will support them to coordinate their work and reinforce each other's efforts. Better coordination and integration of a range of systems that assist and support women and children experiencing, or at risk, of violence is integral to creating a person-centred service system.

Mechanisms are needed that enable coordination and collaboration across jurisdictions, sectors and settings, and promote consistency between legislative and policy reforms, programs, and other response and prevention efforts.

These mechanisms respond to and manage risk, and provide a pathway for victim-survivors to aid their recovery. This may include:

- establishing safety and security – for example, through access to police, shelters and transitional housing
- providing health care and treatment – for example, through hospitals and general practitioners, and through socio-emotional support

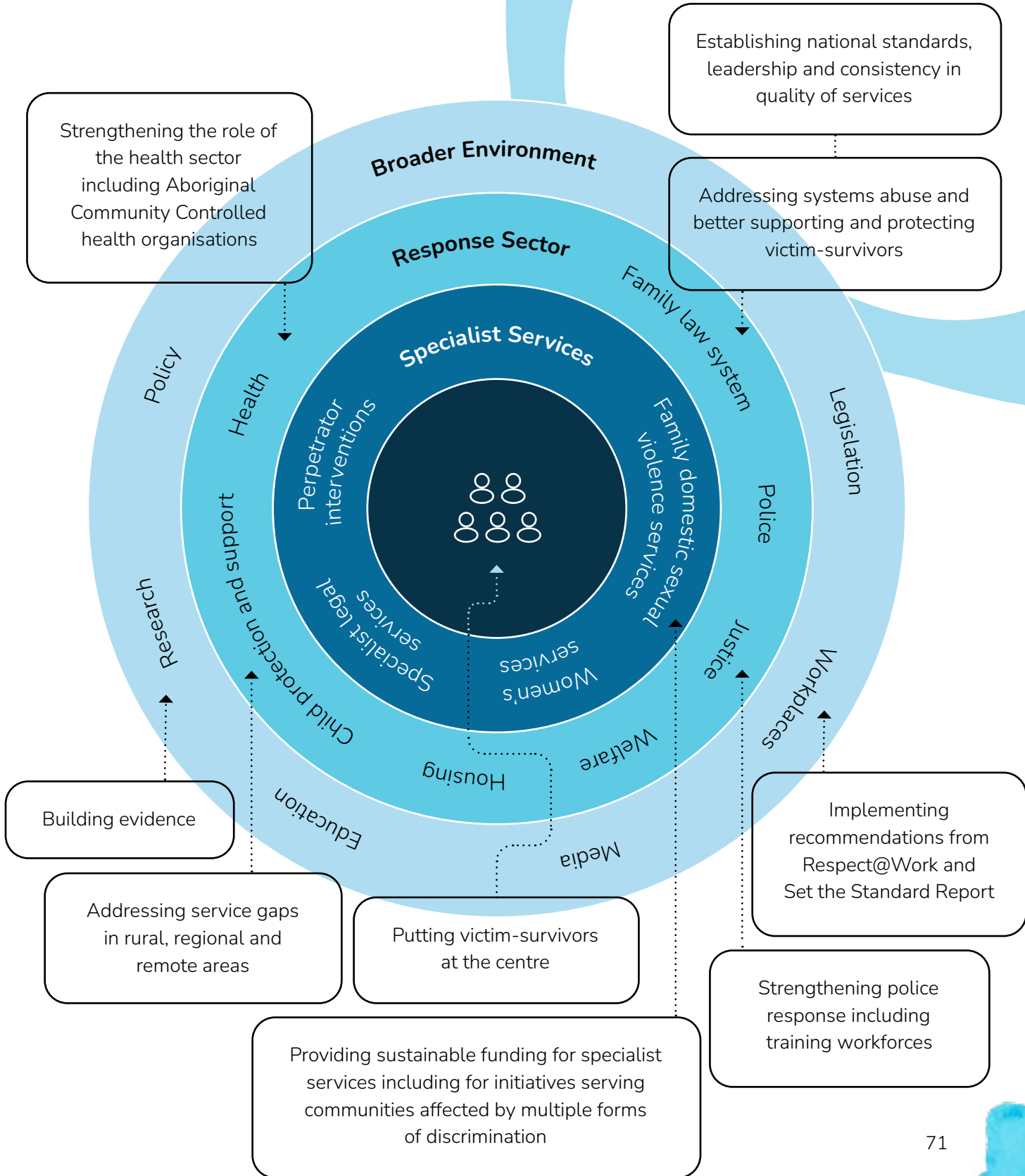
- holding people who choose to use violence accountable – for example, through perpetrator interventions, legal responses and child protection
- providing additional and ongoing support – for example, through case management, advocacy and long-term housing
- establishing referral pathways to make sure the victim-survivor receives follow-up and ongoing support
- making sure follow-up responses acknowledge and manage potential ongoing risk to victim-survivors.

A person-centred service system requires minimum standards to ensure quality and consistency. Under a person-centred system approach, services are aware of each other, and referral pathways are clearly established. This upholds victim-survivors' confidentiality and limits the number of times they must retell their story.

A person-centred service system is timely, safe, inclusive, tailored and accessible, and it delivers integrated specialised services that reinforce the need to work together to end gender-based violence.

# Person-centred service system

Delivering a safe, inclusive and accessible service system





# Intersectionality

Women and children are not a homogenous group. They have many and varied personal identities, backgrounds, experiences and social positions. The National Plan takes an intersectional approach to addressing men's violence against women, children and LGBTIQ+ people because it is critical to success across all efforts.

This approach recognises that violence and gender inequality exist in relation to multiple and intersecting structural and systemic forms of discrimination, such as racism, colonialism, ableism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia and ageism. Class discrimination and poverty also compromise the health and safety of women and children. These affect the prevalence, dynamics and severity of violence against women. Not only do these systemic and structural intersections affect women's experiences of violence, both as individuals and as groups, but they also have an impact on how gender and gender inequality are constructed and experienced.<sup>152</sup> They can also limit or undermine the consequences perpetrators face for choosing to use violence.

While gender inequality and gendered drivers of violence are always relevant in explaining its use against women, they may not be the most significant factors in every context. The probability of experiencing violence (or particular forms of violence) is higher for some women. This is not because some women are inherently 'vulnerable'. Rather, it is because of the intersections between the social, political and economic processes of gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural inequality.

Some examples of intersections are as follows:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children face complex barriers that are compounded by the ongoing legacies of colonisation including racism, systemic barriers, social and economic disadvantage resulting from intergenerational and ongoing experiences of trauma and culturally unsafe service provision.<sup>153</sup>
- Refugees and migrants, including those on temporary visas and in particular those of colour, experience racism, sexism and other specific forms of discrimination that intersect to drive increased levels of violence against women from these groups – violence that is both gendered and racialised. Women from migrant and refugee backgrounds are less likely to report violence against them due to language barriers, cultural stigma, concerns about visa and residency status, and financial insecurity.<sup>154</sup> Migrant women, including those on temporary visas, also face structural barriers other women do not, such as the impact ending a relationship has on their visa status and eligibility for social security.<sup>155</sup> Granting migrant women access to support services, regardless of their visa status, will help ensure they are not left out.
- Sexism and ableism intersect and compound to drive high levels of violence, and particular forms of violence, against women and children with disability.<sup>156</sup> For example, family members and/or carers and guardians may control the decision-making for and limit the independence of women with disability, making it difficult for them to access help when they need it. They are further excluded when services are not designed with accessibility in mind.<sup>157</sup>
- Cisgenderism and heteronormativity, including rigid gender norms, drive and normalise violence against LGBTIQ+ people of all genders.



- The systems and structures of military service and the deeply held cultural views relating to veterans in Australian society mean veterans and their families can be isolated and face complex barriers to help seeking – both as victim-survivors and perpetrators – during and after military service has ended.

The National Plan promotes actions across the domains of prevention through to recovery and healing that respond to the diversity of women and children, while addressing the underlying drivers of gender-based violence.

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## People who choose to use violence are held accountable

Violence against women and children will not end without a clear and sustained focus on perpetration. Victim-survivors are never responsible for the violence they experience, yet too often the public and institutional response to women experiencing violence is “Why doesn’t she just leave?”. This attitude, pervasive in media reporting and throughout society, places the onus on victim-survivors to end the violence they are experiencing and to seek safety, with little consideration given to the social, economic and safety implications for women and children. Most notably, the act of violence, and the person choosing to use violence, is not the focus of scrutiny, with questions like “Why doesn’t he stop?” almost never asked in tandem. This results in inadequate attention on the role this system must play in holding people who choose to use violence accountable for their behaviours.

Holding people who choose to use violence accountable means the responsibility to stop using violence belongs to the person using it.

The persistent misconception that violence ends once a woman leaves her violent partner can place victim-survivors at further risk, because it ignores the power and control that underpin gender-based violence. Responses to violence must take into account that separation is a risk

factor for the escalation of violence, especially in intimate partner homicide.

Nearly one in 3 Australians agree that women who do not leave a relationship in which violence is occurring hold some responsibility for the abuse continuing and just over one in 6 “don’t believe it’s as hard as people say it is for women to leave a violent relationship”. These attitudes and beliefs create the conditions where violence against women and children is dismissed, condoned or justified.

Violent and abusive behaviour rarely occurs as a single incident. Instead, domestic violence is characterised as a pattern of violence, abuse and control that occurs over a period of time. For some women, the experience of domestic violence can span many decades. For some men, their use of violence and abuse can be repeated from one intimate partner to the next. Responses that focus exclusively on single acts of violence do not adequately consider the broader pattern of violence and abuse, meaning that individual acts can seem less significant and may not be taken seriously. This view also means that an escalation in violence and risk to the victim-survivor can be minimised and overlooked. Responses to violence against women and children must be designed to recognise and respond to the pattern-based nature of violence and abuse.



It is also vital that services, and the law enforcement and justice systems, are equipped to accurately identify the person using violence. Misidentification of the victim-survivor as the perpetrator can occur when only single events or incidents of violence are considered (for example, a single act of physical violence) rather than those events or incidents forming a pattern over time or being considered within a certain context (like leaving). Victim-survivors who retaliate for their own safety and protection, or act to keep their children safe from harm, are more likely to be misidentified as a perpetrator and be charged with an offence or have a co-responding protection order issued against them. The safety of victim-survivors should be prioritised and upheld within all service and support systems, including in harm-based risk assessments.

Misidentification often results in inappropriate legal sanctions against the victim-survivor, including domestic violence orders.<sup>158</sup> Other negative consequences for victim-survivors can include safety risks, involvement by child protection agencies, loss of housing and income support, mistrust of police and legal systems, long and complicated court proceedings, and negative effects on their health and wellbeing.

Misidentification can also result from biases including inequality, and/or racial and other forms of social discrimination. For example, people can hold gendered stereotypes about how an 'ideal victim' should act. However, a victim-survivor may appear to be agitated (which is a normal response to trauma) or may appear 'uncooperative', meaning they are misidentified as the perpetrator.

Perpetrators, on the other hand, may appear to be calmer, more cooperative, more convincing and more in control. Victim-survivors from diverse groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTIQ+ people and people with disability, are at risk of being misidentified as the perpetrator if assessments

are based on stereotypes, the miscategorisation of family and domestic violence, or a misunderstanding of the use of violence, power and control.

The recidivism rates of people known to have committed family, domestic and sexual violence must be addressed. Research from 2016 suggests around 50% of offenders commit a further domestic violence offence within 4 years of their initial offence.<sup>159</sup> Effective early intervention strategies not only aim to prevent perpetrators from reoffending with current partners, but seek to address repeated patterns of behaviour with future partners. Being able to safely share information across services and jurisdictions about an individual's history of engaging in violent and abusive behaviour would support a coordinated approach to holding people who choose to use violence responsible.

It is important that there is a diverse range of perpetrator interventions available both in community and justice settings to promote behaviour change and stop violence from occurring again. To ensure safety outcomes are achieved, it is vital that there are services available that respond to the unique and varied needs of perpetrators, beyond men's behaviour change programs. For example, early intervention services engage with people who are at risk of using violence before they do so. Perpetrator interventions can be delivered across mainstream and specialist services, including drug and alcohol services, police interventions, and court mandated interventions and responses. Monitoring and evaluation of all perpetrator interventions, including legal and justice interventions, should indicate whether they uphold victim-survivor safety and reduce or stop a perpetrator's use of violence.



### **What does accountability mean?**

To focus attention and expectations on the actions of people who choose to use violence, we need a better understanding of accountability. Accountability can take different forms and can involve:

- victim-survivors being heard and believed, and the person who committed the violence facing appropriate consequences
- victim-survivors never being held responsible for addressing the violence they face
- people who have used violence taking personal responsibility for their violence and choosing to change their behaviour
- people who have used violence understanding what they have done, working towards changing their behaviour and repairing the harm caused
- people who have used violence face legal, justice or other consequences
- services and systems correctly identify the perpetrator
- improved community understanding of gender-based violence
- social and societal accountability for people who use violence.

It is critical that tailored and culturally safe services and system responses are available to men who seek to address their use of violence.




# Violence against women

is tragically common across all Australian communities.


The term 'intersectionality' was originally coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw using the metaphor of an traffic intersection. She explained:

"Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination."

Source: From the article in *Feminist Theory and Anti-Racist Politics* (1989).

**1** in 3 

women has experienced physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by a man they know.

**1** in 2 

women has experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime.

Biphobia

Cisgenderism

Gender inequality creates the conditions in which this violence occurs, is tolerated, justified and condoned.

Homophobia

Racism

Intergenerational trauma

Colonisation

Ableism

Workplace sexual harassment was higher among those identifying with

**diverse**

sexual orientation (52%).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are

**11** times more likely

to be killed due to family violence compared with non-Indigenous women.

To end violence against women, multiple intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage must be disrupted.

**Driver 1** Condoning of violence against women

**Driver 2** Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life

**Driver 3** Dominant forms of masculinity and rigid gender stereotyping

**Driver 4** Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control



Women living in regional and remote areas experience

## *higher rates*

of intimate partner violence compared with women in capital cities (21% compared to 15% since age 15).

Domestic violence is a

## *leading cause*

of homelessness in Australia.

**80%** of incarcerated women

reported prior experience of family, domestic and sexual violence.

In 2017–18, more than

## *10,900 calls*

were made to elder abuse helplines across Australia.

In 2017, young women

## *aged 15–34*

accounted for more than half of all police-recorded female sexual assault victims.

**2 in 5** ●●●●●

women with disability have experienced physical violence after the age of 15.

### Geographic disadvantage

Systemic discrimination



This results in higher rates of violence being perpetrated against particular women and gender diverse people, often in complex ways, with severe impacts. This can also make it more difficult for these women to access support.

Housing insecurity



Ageism



Immigration law and uncertain visa status result in unique patterns of abuse among

*migrant and refugee women.*





# A holistic approach: Focus areas across the continuum

The National Plan takes a holistic and multi-sectoral approach to ending violence against women and children in one generation. This builds upon the progress made, and lessons learned over the last 12 years. We acknowledge where we have come from and where we have more work to do.

The priority areas for action are evidence-based and span the continuum of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing. The priorities are interconnected, with each action reinforcing the effectiveness of others. For example, recovery and healing from childhood trauma contributes to long-term prevention by addressing one of the factors that reinforce violence against women. High-quality and accessible response services hold perpetrators accountable, and in turn reduce the recurrence of violence.

Suggested focus areas for action for each of the domain objectives outlined below can be found in Appendix 1.





# Prevention

Our national vision is a country free from violence against women and children. The only way to achieve this is to stop violence from happening before it starts, through prevention efforts.<sup>160</sup> Prevention is a long-term national priority, and focuses on ending violence in one generation.

## What is prevention?

Prevention means stopping violence against women from occurring in the first place by addressing its underlying drivers. This requires changing the social conditions that give rise to this violence; reforming the institutions and systems that excuse, justify or even promote such violence.<sup>161</sup> Effective prevention requires integrated and cohesive work that builds mutually reinforcing action at all levels, together with clearly defined and well-supported implementation.

Comprehensive prevention aims to influence laws, policies, and the practices and behaviours of organisations, groups and individuals. This whole-of-society approach engages people of all ages in all the places they live, work, learn, socialise and play. It includes a broad range of activities such as:

- employer-led workplace initiatives to embed respect and gender equality in organisational structures, policies and cultures
- efforts to encourage more respectful and informed reporting on violence against women in the media
- respectful relationships and consent education in schools
- gender-responsive policy analysis and development processes to identify ways to address the gendered drivers of violence in public policy.

## Current state

Throughout the life of the 2010–2022 National Plan, promising progress has been made in prevention.

This includes the establishment of 2 key independent organisations:

- Our Watch – set up to develop and lead a national approach to prevention
- ANROWS – set up to produce and disseminate evidence on violence against women and their children.

Prevention programming has expanded, with proven and promising techniques implemented across a range of settings. Positive shifts towards gender equality more broadly have been achieved, including increased paid hours of work for women and increased representation of women in the public and private sectors.

Unfortunately, mistrust of women’s reports of violence persists, and a concerning number of Australians hold attitudes that disregard the need for sexual consent.<sup>162</sup>

Australia has also seen only modest improvements in women’s decision-making power and little evidence of substantial change in the rate of men taking up non-stereotypical caring roles in the home or workforce. Economic inequality for women, manifesting in the gender pay gap and superannuation gap, remains. Many women also continue to experience discrimination on the basis of race, religion, indigeneity, disability, sexuality, migration, lone parenthood, trans experience and socioeconomic status.

There are however positive signs, such as the success of the national primary prevention campaign *Stop it at the Start*, which is leading to a sustained change in attitudes across broad groups of society.<sup>163</sup>

*Tracking progress in prevention*, a national monitoring report on progress towards the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, identifies some areas that require greater focus and investment, namely:

- actions to drive institutional, systemic and structural change
- research and evaluation strategies to evaluate the impact of prevention initiatives across Australia

- masculinity – in particular, an expansion of prevention initiatives that challenge rigid attachment to dominant norms of masculinity
- systemic reform that addresses intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality – such as racism or ableism – that play a role in driving violence against women.<sup>164</sup>

### Our evidence-based approach

The National Plan’s approach to prevention is founded on Australia’s world first guides produced by Our Watch under the 2010–2022 National Plan:

- *Change the story (2nd edition)*: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and children in Australia<sup>165</sup> (Recommendation 7 of the *Respect@Work* report requires that all Australian governments base their strategies for preventing violence against women on *Change the story*)
- *Changing the picture*: a national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children<sup>166</sup>
- *Changing the landscape*: a national resource to prevent violence against women and girls with disability<sup>167</sup>
- *Counting on change*: a guide to prevention monitoring.<sup>168</sup>

There is a focus on addressing the drivers of violence through evidence-based strategies. Targeted measures need to be directed across a wide range of settings and sectors where people live, work, learn, socialise and play. Focusing on changing attitudes, norms and behaviours is critical to preventing violence.

### The importance of engaging men and boys

Research shows there are strong links between socially dominant forms and patterns of masculinity, men’s sexist attitudes and behaviours, and men’s perpetration of violence against women.<sup>169</sup>

Men have an important role to play in constructively engaging with and challenging views that condone gender inequality and gender-based violence against women, children and LGBTIQ+ people. Changing social attitudes and structural norms that condone violence against women and children, such as passive bystanding and victim-blaming, is a key focus. National awareness campaigns aim to do this at a whole-of-population level, supported by other prevention and education initiatives led by schools, workplaces, businesses and communities.

Men and boys play an important role across all parts of society, as people who will work to embed prevention approaches in all settings, not just homes. Men as educators, employers and employees, frontline workers (including police and health care providers), journalists, legal professionals, sports players, parents and carers, citizens and leaders (including faith and community leaders) can champion change, as well as create the conditions that prevent violence, abuse, discrimination and harassment. Similarly, professional development across a range of sectors will better equip men to engage and support victim-survivors when they report violence.

Boys and men are diverse with respect to their race, ethnicity, culture, migration status, age, socioeconomic status, ability status, sexuality, trans experience and religious affiliation. Each of these social identities contributes uniquely and in intersecting ways to shape how men experience masculinity. This in turn contributes to how they relate to others, to their behaviour and to their psychological health in both positive and negative ways. Although boys and men, as a group, tend to hold privilege and power based on their gender, they can also experience discrimination and violence, including sexual violence and disproportionately harsh discipline as children. Gender stereotypes and harmful expectations



of masculinity can mean that men experiencing mental and physical health issues do not seek help when they need it.

Parents, caregivers, teachers and the broader community have a role in raising children to be healthy, resilient, caring and respectful members of society. Countering stereotypes and long-standing cultural notions of what it means to be a boy or how boys should behave will take concerted effort. Having conversations with boys about healthy masculinity and self-expression are important steps, as is role-modelling, healthy relationships, positive masculine expression and respectful ways to be a boy and a man. Strength-based parenting can also provide children the tools and techniques they need to deal with their emotions and express themselves in healthy ways.<sup>170</sup>

The National Plan, and the national organisations driving change, will continue to build community awareness of the role harmful expressions of masculinity play in driving men's violence against women, children and LGBTIQ+ people.

For men who seek help to address their own harmful behaviours and use of violence, the National Plan outlines early intervention and response measures that incorporate and are responsive to their stage in life, lived experience, career, language, faith, residency status and cultural background.



## Prevention objectives

- 1 Challenge the condoning of violence against women and embed prevention activities across sectors and settings.
- 2 Advance gender equality and promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships.
- 3 Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships between all people in public and private spheres.
- 4 Listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices.
- 5 Support men and boys in developing healthy masculinities and positive, supportive relationships with their male peers.
- 6 Harness technology in the prevention of violence against women and children.
- 7 Invest in making workplaces safe and preventing sexual harassment.
- 8 Elevate the voices of children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right.

# Early intervention

Early intervention is an important part of a holistic approach to ending men's violence against women and children. It is vital in stopping violence from escalating and protecting victim-survivors from both immediate and long-term harm.

## What is early intervention?

Early intervention, also known as 'secondary prevention', aims to identify and support individuals and families experiencing, or at risk of, gender-based violence in order to stop violence from escalating, protect victim-survivors from harm and prevent violence from reoccurring.

## Current state

Early intervention is now recognised as an important part of a holistic approach to ending violence against women and children, and we have made some progress. Programs for children and young people that aim to address the impacts of exposure to violence against women have shown success. A number of health settings have introduced training and guidance for healthcare professionals to identify and support people at risk of gender-based violence.

However, early intervention is perhaps one of the least developed areas of work and needs greater attention. Early intervention requires efforts across multiple sectors and settings, yet our current capacity to identify and intervene in a timely, safe and supportive way to assist those at risk of gender-based violence is limited.

To date, early intervention activities have focused primarily on intimate partner violence. Less has been done to address other forms of violence including technology-facilitated abuse, sexual harassment in the workplace and sexual violence outside of relationships. Further, there is a considerable gap in our understanding of what works to address violent behaviours perpetrated by young people in family settings and online.

## Our evidence-based approach

Effective intervention approaches need to be embedded in a variety of settings and sectors. Early intervention strategies will aim to address all forms of gender-based violence including domestic, family and sexual violence, sexual harassment, financial abuse, technology-facilitated abuse, migration related abuse, trafficking and forced marriage.

Health service providers such as general practitioners, maternal and child health services, care and support service providers, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, mental health and suicide prevention services, drug and alcohol services, pharmacists, hospitals and ambulance officers will be supported to identify and respond to those at risk of gender-based violence. This will include a review of safety and quality frameworks to ensure a nationally consistent approach to how health services recognise and respond to victim-survivors and perpetrators of gender-based violence. Similarly, policing and justice systems will be equipped to provide trauma-informed, culturally safe and person-centred responses that prioritise the safety of individuals and families who come into contact with the criminal justice system.

Workplaces and educational settings, including universities, should integrate intervention initiatives to reduce, prevent and respond appropriately to sexual harassment and violence.<sup>171</sup>

Appropriate interventions for children and young people at different ages and stages are needed to address existing trauma and stop harm from escalating and continuing into their adult relationships.



## Early intervention objectives

- 1 Reduce the long-term impacts of exposure to violence and prevent further exposure.
- 2 Address adolescent violence in family settings.
- 3 Improve timely responses to newly identified cases of violence, attitudes and behaviours that may lead to violence perpetration.
- 4 Enhance accountability of people who choose to use violence and address misidentification of perpetrators.
- 5 Build sector and community capacity to identify and support women and children at increased risk of experiencing gender-based violence and to intervene early to stop violence from escalating.



# Response

A comprehensive and person-centred response system is essential for holding perpetrators to account, helping to keep women and children safe and reducing the reoccurrence of violence.

## What is response?

Response refers to efforts and programs used to address existing violence – for example, services such as crisis counselling, financial, housing or medical assistance as well as police and justice responses including family law services and perpetrator interventions. Also known as ‘tertiary prevention’, these efforts aim to prevent the reoccurrence of violence by holding perpetrators of violence to account and supporting victim-survivors.

## Our evidence-based approach

Victim-survivors need survivor-centred, holistic responses involving multiple sectors that will meet their diverse needs.

Services and justice responses must also support victim-survivors by holding perpetrators accountable.

Frontline response services are delivered by states and territories and local government and are supported at Commonwealth level with national programs and investment.

The National Plan envisages a future where our comprehensive and coordinated crisis response system:

- minimises the number of times a victim-survivor must share their experience, and shares information with those the victim-survivor has consented to share their experiences with. Where the victim-survivor is a child, the system shares information in line with the child’s needs and interests

- operates perpetrator interventions as part of an ecosystem of programs and in partnership with women’s services
- addresses the underlying trauma of participants in men’s behaviour change programs to ensure men are prepared and able to engage with these programs and that programs adhere to minimum standards
- facilitates safe and quick resolutions of family law matters through an accessible and easy to navigate family law system and family law services. These ensure victim-survivors can obtain fair outcomes and maintain their safety and economic security following family separation
- delivers perpetrator programs that engage with men who have used violence and that monitor and assess risk in an ongoing way, communicating this information to other services as part of a multi-agency response. Such programs keep perpetrators in view, hold men accountable for their use of violence, and challenge the harmful attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate violence
- provides ongoing specialist education, training and professional development to staff in specialist sectors that address the drivers of violence against women and children, how to identify domestic, family and sexual violence, and how to respond in trauma-informed ways to victim-survivors
- recognises the need for clear policy and programs that prevent and mitigate the work health and safety risks related to vicarious trauma, worker burnout and worker safety
- hears and validates victim-survivors, and supports and empowers their choices
- holds people who choose to use violence to account and gives them the opportunity to work to change their harmful behaviours and attitudes



- where the criminal justice system requires or seeks a response, centres the response around victim-survivors and their families to ensure they receive appropriate support throughout the process, particularly where a victim-survivor is a child or has complex needs
- has strong mechanisms for information sharing that safeguard women and children’s confidentiality
- considers local place-based models of service to meet the needs of victim-survivors including in remote and rural communities, and those delivered by local governments.

### Response objectives

- 1 Ensure frontline services provided by states and territories are coordinated, integrated and appropriately resourced with a skilled and qualified workforce to support all victim-survivors.
- 2 Incorporate an understanding and appropriate response to the specific challenges diverse communities face in relation to family, domestic and sexual violence.
- 3 Ensure women and children escaping violence have safe and secure housing, from crisis accommodation to longer-term, sustainable social housing.
- 4 Improve justice responses to all forms of gender-based violence.



# Recovery and healing

Victim-survivors of violence experience a range of physical impacts, sometimes permanent disability, as well as trauma-related mental health problems, financial hardship and social isolation.<sup>172</sup> Recovery is an essential component of the holistic approach under the National Plan as it recognises that victim-survivors need additional, often lifelong, supports to recover and heal from trauma and the physical, mental, emotional and economic impacts of violence.

## What is recovery?

Recovery is an ongoing process that enables victim-survivors to be safe, healthy and resilient and to have economic security and post-traumatic growth. Victim-survivors require support to recover from the financial, social, psychological, emotional and physical impacts of violence. Recovery also includes addressing the short-term, long-term and lifelong health impacts for victim-survivors, which may include physical injuries, reproductive and sexual health issues and poor mental health. Recovery also relates to the rebuilding of a victim-survivor's life, their ability to return to the workplace and community, as well as obtaining financial independence and economic security. However, it must be acknowledged that victim-survivors recover and heal in different ways, with some people being unable to return to work and requiring access to ongoing support.

In cases of gender-based violence, the victim-survivor may still be in contact or live with the perpetrator. In these situations, the family as a whole may need support to recover. Moreover, in some cases, people are both victim-survivors and perpetrators of violence – for example, some adolescents using violence. People in this situation must be supported to both recover from their experiences of violence and address their own use of violence to prevent further harm.

## Trauma and healing

Trauma is a normal emotional, psychological and physical response to abuse.<sup>173</sup> Trauma can occur immediately after an event, or many years later. Within the context of gender-based violence, victim-survivors often experience multiple traumatic events over time. This can result in complex trauma and the mental, emotional and physical impacts can extend over the long-term. Trauma extends to children and other family members who may experience or witness violence. Children's exposure to multiple types of violence increases the likelihood that they will experience post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>174</sup> Trauma can also be experienced vicariously by people supporting others who have experienced violence or abuse.

Traumatic stress reactions can include anxiety, depression, dissociation, flashbacks, hypervigilance and difficulty forming relationships and connections, as well as physical symptoms like difficulty sleeping, headaches or nausea.<sup>175</sup> Trauma looks different for each victim-survivor and how it affects someone depends on many factors, including their personal characteristics and the nature of the traumatic experiences, and sociocultural factors.<sup>176</sup>

Some victim-survivors may clearly display trauma response behaviours, while others may have delayed responses to trauma. Underlying trauma can go unrecognised and unidentified, which can result in long-term impacts on the person's physical and mental health.<sup>177</sup>

The impacts of trauma, whether acknowledged or not, may surface at any time, and affect people's ability to connect, study, work and live. While these impacts are significant, they can be managed with the right support and access to culturally responsive and trauma-informed response and recovery services.

Victim-survivors of violence who continue to experience the impacts of trauma may pass on their trauma to further generations. In Australia, intergenerational trauma particularly affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, especially the children, grandchildren and future generations of the Stolen Generations.<sup>178</sup>

### **Current state**

Due to ongoing research and efforts from specialist services, there is greater understanding of the long-term impacts of violence on victim-survivors, including intergenerational trauma, and the need to plan and develop ongoing support for women, children, men and LGBTIQ+ people.<sup>179</sup>

Australia has seen progress in efforts to support victim-survivors' recovery through a focus on enhanced, trauma-informed service delivery. This has been coupled with an increased focus and investment in mental health as a public health issue.

Furthermore, there is greater understanding of desistance of violence,<sup>180</sup> the coping mechanisms of women who have experienced violence, and the importance of healing the parent-child relationship and attachment in the aftermath of violence.<sup>181</sup> Despite advancements, gaps remain.

### **Our growing understanding of recovery**

It is well known that family, domestic and sexual violence can often be perpetrated over many years, in many forms, and has lifelong effects.<sup>182</sup> Yet little is known about the ongoing impacts of violence on victim-survivors that may manifest later in life. In particular, little is known about the impacts of violence and trauma on children over time, and how these impacts may present as they become adults. There is a considerable gap in how services respond to child sexual abuse, support the recovery of child sexual abuse victim-survivors and prevent further harm. There is also further work to do in supporting the recovery efforts of adolescents who use violence, who may also be victim-survivors of gender-based violence.

Women and children experiencing violence can suffer traumatic brain injury. Further, studies have found that the rate of brain injury among samples of male perpetrators of intimate partner violence is around 60%.<sup>183</sup> While analysis indicates that brain injury is a risk factor for family violence, it is not inevitable that a person with a brain injury will become a perpetrator.<sup>184</sup> More research is needed to inform response and recovery efforts to be able to identify and treat traumatic brain injuries.<sup>185</sup>

Many victim-survivors also sustain permanent disabilities from physical violence. The extent of long-term injuries caused by family violence is largely unknown, which has implications for preventing violence and for post-injury rehabilitation and recovery. Similarly, mental health conditions like eating disorders are common among victim-survivors.<sup>186</sup> More evidence is needed to understand these linkages and how to assist victim-survivors to recover.

Recovery services are still lacking in many areas, particularly regional, remote and very remote areas.<sup>187</sup> There are also gaps in appropriate support and recovery for victim-survivors experiencing multiple compounding traumas such as from racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and intergenerational trauma.

### **Our evidence-based approach**

Recovery from family, domestic and sexual violence can be a difficult and long-term process. It takes tremendous strength and resilience. We must look beyond the crisis response to ensure that women and children who have experienced violence can access support for their recovery and healing – and in doing so, achieve long-term improvements in their health and well-being. Recovery and healing takes time and victim-survivors will, in many cases, require life-long support through dedicated and tailored services and interventions.



*“It’s integral that we link recovery to prevention, [and to recognise] that where there is a high trauma burden in a person’s life or in their family or in their community, they are at increased risk of re-victimisation. So they’ve been victimised in the past, they’re not supported to recover, they’re at increased risk to being victimised in the future.”*

Advocate, Monash Consultation Report, 2021

Victim-survivors who leave abusive or violent relationships must be supported to transition from being controlled, to being in control of their lives, while acknowledging they are often also managing feelings of fear, shame and grief.<sup>188</sup> Women’s self-esteem, trust in others, view of self and sense of justice may also be negatively impacted during and after experiences of family, domestic and sexual violence.<sup>189</sup>

It is not a woman’s responsibility to leave a relationship, nor is it their responsibility to end the violence they are experiencing. Recovery is challenging, especially when the victim-survivor has ongoing contact with the perpetrator, such as through shared care arrangements of children, or legal or financial connections. This ongoing relationship can perpetuate the abuse and trauma. Moreover, some victim-survivors may still live with the perpetrator, so there is a need to consider what recovery looks like for each individual and their circumstances.

Recovery services must be tailored to the needs of victim-survivors of sexual violence including sexual assault, rape and sexual harassment from non-intimate partners and outside of family structures. They must also be sensitive to the age and circumstance of the victim-survivor and their cultural and religious needs. An intersectional approach is required to support recovery efforts that cater to the diverse needs of victim-survivors, including children, who face multiple and

intersecting forms of discrimination. When victim-survivors are not supported to recover, they are at higher risk of being subjected to continued harm, experiencing poorer health and well-being, and being targeted by another perpetrator.

Trauma-informed and person-centred approaches are needed to address barriers to recovery and healing and to minimise the possibility that victim-survivors will be re-traumatised and harmed when using services and systems.

### Recovery and healing objectives

- 1 Ensure victim-survivors are well supported in all aspects of their daily lives through trauma-informed, culturally safe and accessible services that support long-term recovery.
- 2 Design recovery services and supports that are tailored to the specific needs of diverse populations and individuals, and women and children of all ages and in all locations.
- 3 Ensure everyone impacted by sexual violence receives specialist recovery and healing services.
- 4 Recognise children and young people as victim-survivors of violence in their own right, and establish appropriate supports and services that will meet their safety and recovery needs.



# Working together to achieve change

The 2010–2022 National Plan saw the establishment of key national organisations that form the foundational infrastructure for Australia’s response to family, domestic and sexual violence – Our Watch, ANROWS and 1800RESPECT. Since their establishment, they have played crucial and interlocking roles using investment from Commonwealth, state and territory governments to provide a consistent, national focus on family, domestic and sexual violence.

In recognition that we are all responsible for understanding family, domestic and sexual violence, these organisations share expertise and support across governments, business, the family, domestic and sexual violence sector and the broader public, to promote change. Their work will continue under this National Plan, and be augmented by the work of the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission, which will have a strong focus on accountability and ensuring activities and initiatives are appropriately aligned and collaborative.





## **Our Watch**

Our Watch is an independent not-for-profit organisation established in 2013 by the Australian and Victorian governments. Since then, all state and territory governments have become members.

Our Watch is a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia, and has created policy frameworks such as *Change the story*, *Changing the picture* and *Changing the landscape* that underpin government commitments to prevent violence against women.

Our Watch compiles evidence, develops advice, tools and resources, and works in partnership with governments, corporate organisations, civil society and communities to drive shared efforts to address the drivers of violence against women.

## **Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety**

Established in 2014, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) delivers research and associated reports, research synthesis papers, tools and resources across all priority areas of the National Plan. The principal work of ANROWS is to influence how we prevent and respond to violence against women and children, by providing an evidence base for policy and practice design.

To achieve these objectives, ANROWS:

- delivers high-quality, innovative and relevant research
- ensures the effective dissemination and application of research findings
- builds, maintains and promotes collaborative relationships with and between stakeholders
- is an efficient, effective and accountable organisation.

## **1800RESPECT**

1800RESPECT is the national family, domestic and sexual violence counselling service, and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It provides counselling, online referral, resources, information services and supports for people experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, violence, as well as their friends, family and professionals.

1800RESPECT is supported by not-for-profit family, domestic and sexual violence partner organisations that provide trauma-informed specialist counselling.

## **The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission**

The Australian Government has established the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission to provide national leadership and promote national coordination across a range of domestic, family and sexual violence policies and system interactions. It will act as an independent, accountable and transparent agency that amplifies the voices of victims and survivors and promotes the coordination and consistency of data and evidence on best-practice. The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission will also provide a national approach to victim-survivor engagement, ensuring the diverse lived experiences of victim-survivors are informing policies and solutions.


# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family safety

## **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family safety**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience higher rates of family violence, child removal, suicide and incarceration, and poorer outcomes in relation to mental health, employment and housing.<sup>190</sup> These social harms have lingered for so long and can often be seen as normal. If action is not taken to address these issues they threaten to become permanent.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are less likely to seek help or report violence because of past government practices, and mistrust of police and mainstream services arising from previous experiences of reporting violence, misidentification of victims as perpetrators, incarceration and child removal. These structural and social inequalities are now also manifesting in higher rates of technology-facilitated abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.<sup>191</sup>

Artwork by Carmen Glynn-Braun



For some time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, particularly women, have been calling for innovation and investment in measures that will address violence.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are essential to the strength, protection and revitalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and families. As with the National Plan, everyone must play a role in stopping men's violence against women and children, meaning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men also play a key role in bringing about change and ensuring safe places for families to grow and thrive.

### **Driving culturally appropriate, community-led solutions that recognise truth-telling**

The *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, which came into effect in July 2020, charted the way forward to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.

Closing the Gap highlights that strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are fundamental to improved life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' strength in their identity as a critical protective factor. The National Plan acknowledges the connections between, and impact of, social and economic disadvantage as a result of intergenerational and ongoing experiences of trauma, including racism, dispossession and violence, and the ongoing impacts of these experiences on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

All governments have a role to play in addressing the broader drivers of violence – including to improve rates of economic participation, education

and housing security – which support communities and families and in turn drive reductions in violence against women and children.

Furthermore, remote and very remote communities, specifically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in those geographic settings, face challenges in preventing and addressing violence against women and children. These include limited or no phone and network coverage, few transport options and limited housing options. Specifically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities disproportionately experience overcrowded housing and severe shortages of appropriate housing.<sup>192</sup>

The National Plan commits to improving and building capacity in mainstream government institutions, services and responses in line with Priority Reform Three of Closing the Gap, so that these are culturally safe and can better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. The National Plan also simultaneously supports building the community controlled sector to enable community-driven, strengths-based, localised approaches to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in line with Priority Reform Two.<sup>193</sup>

### **Developing a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence (Advisory Council) is leading the development of the dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan. The Advisory Council will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, Elders, communities, community-led organisations and governments to build effective pathways, services and responses for both victim-survivors and perpetrators of family violence.



The Action Plan will be developed and implemented under the 4 Priority Reforms of Closing the Gap. It will embed a focus on equality and diversity to ensure all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are represented, including but not limited to Elders, LGBTIQ+ people, Brotherboy and Sistergirl communities, people with disability, and those who live in urban, regional or remote areas.

The Action Plan will promote healing-informed, strength-based and trauma-aware approaches to addressing family violence that are culturally safe and community-led. It will build on the commitments made through the Closing the Gap, particularly in relation to the 4 Priority Reforms and 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.*

The Advisory Council has developed the following principles to guide the development of the Action Plan:

- Voice, self-determination and agency
- Strength, resilience and therapeutic healing
- Re-forming institutions and systems
- Inclusion and intersectionality
- Evidence and data eco-systems

The Advisory Council notes that the Fourth Action Plan under the 2010-2022 National Plan and *Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices): Securing Our Rights, Securing Our Future Report* called attention to the impact of violence on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, as well as the key protective factors that are essential if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are to be free from violence.

*“First things learnt are hardest to forget, from one generation to another, we need to change.”*

Non-identified person

## Setting the foundations for the standalone First Nations National Plan

The Australian Government has also committed to delivering a standalone First Nations National Plan. In order to address the complex and sensitive factors driving violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and communities, both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan and the standalone First Nations National Plan will explore solutions linked to the principles of truth telling and self-determination. They will also highlight the need to transform current prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing efforts so that they:

- counter systemic racism
- promote culturally safe practices and holistic approaches that respond to deeply held historical trauma and improve the well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.


These principles, along with continued work to establish meaningful partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, communities and those sectors involved in the broader family violence system, are required if Australia is to achieve the Closing the Gap Target 13.

*“We have to be very cognisant that there is no quick fix to the experiences that we have in our communities and so I think that the solutions that are available in the non-Indigenous community are not the solutions that are necessarily going to work for us. Too often I think the solutions are often thought of that they will work for us and that is often a big mistake that hurts our community.”*

Advocate, Monash Consultation Report, 2021







# *Business and industry responses to violence against women and children*

Addressing violence against women and children requires the support of the whole community, with businesses and the corporate sector playing a vital role.

The Parliamentary Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence noted business and industry play a vital role in addressing and preventing violence against women and children.<sup>194</sup> The Inquiry's final report noted that businesses often bring an entrepreneurial and innovative flair to their initiatives and this could be used to help implement strategies and initiatives to address and prevent gender-based violence.





The Champions of Change Coalition's *Framework for Workplace Action on Domestic and Family Violence*, which was developed by specialist sector experts is one example of using evidence to underpin and guide industry action. It sets out four key ways in which industry can make a difference:

- supporting employees who are experiencing violence
- responding to employees who use or may use violence
- helping prevent domestic and family violence by progressing gender and other forms of equality
- extending responses to clients, customers and communities in which a business operates.<sup>195</sup>

Recently, businesses have demonstrated their capacity to support population-level change by investing in public awareness raising about issues like the COVID-19 pandemic.

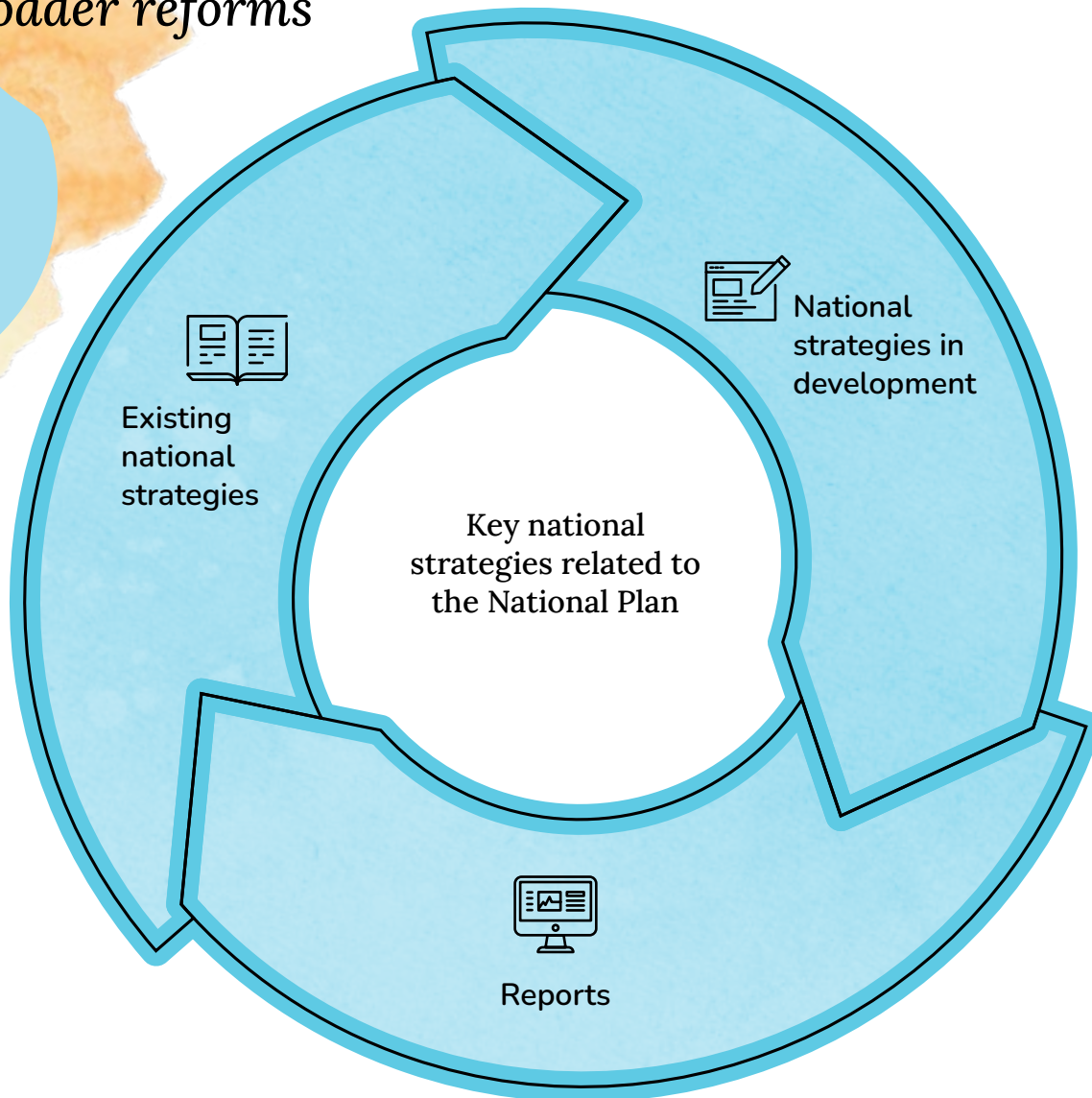
Businesses can work to prevent and address gender-based violence through fostering gender equality in the workplace, and providing support for individuals experiencing violence and the ongoing impacts of trauma. Evidence points to the importance of taking a whole-of-organisation approach that works holistically across every level of an organisation, across policies and processes and with staff to drive long-lasting change. There are a number of models and tools available to support businesses and industries to promote gender equality in the workplace, such as Our Watch's Workplace Equality and Respect approach, which offers resources to workplaces to take a whole-of-organisation approach to addressing gender inequality and preventing violence against women.

Key industries, like banking and utilities, as well as businesses that have contact with people at their homes – like delivery services – are leading the way by changing their business practices and the way staff respond to family, domestic and sexual violence. This has included recent initiatives to better respond to, and support victim-survivors. There is more to do to take advantage of the commitment industry has shown. A positive step forward is the introduction of 10 days paid family and domestic violence leave for victim-survivors. In addition, we must continue to work with the digital technology industry to implement eSafety's Safety by Design principles and the Basic Online Safety Expectations under the *Online Safety Act 2021* (Cth).

The Safety by Design principles guide organisations in incorporating user safety into their platforms and services, and in assessing and enhancing existing user safety measures. The principles are:

- Service provider responsibility – the burden of safety should never fall solely upon the user.
- User empowerment and autonomy – products and services should align with the best interests of users.
- Transparency and accountability – transparency and accountability are hallmarks of a robust approach to safety.

## Alignment to broader reforms



### Reports

#### **Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Report**

– Strength and resilience of women and girls leading solutions for safer communities and families

#### **Respect@Work Report**

– Sexual harassment

#### **Parliamentary Inquiry into Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence**

– Made recommendations to inform development of the National Plan

#### **Set the Standard Report**

– Ensuring Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces are safe and respectful

## Existing national strategies

### **National Agreement on Closing the Gap**

- Target 13: at least 50% reduction in violence and abuse, towards zero
- Target 12: 45% reduction in children in out-of-home care

### **National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020–25**

- Intersections between FDSV and modern slavery, such as forced marriage

### **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013–2023**

- Family violence as a social determinant of health outcomes

### **National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030**

- Women and children are disproportionately victims and secondary victims of child sexual abuse

### **National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians (Elder Abuse) 2019–2023**

- Violence against older women

### **National Women’s Health Strategy 2020–2030**

- Health impacts on violence

### **Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021–2031**

- Safety of women with disability

### **Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021–2031**

- FDSV experienced by children and intersections with the child protection system

### **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy**

- Supporting children to grow up in safe homes supported by strong families

### **National Preventive Health Strategy 2021–2030**

- Violence and abuse as a social determinant of health outcomes

### **Work Plan to Strengthen Criminal Justice Responses to Sexual Assault 2022–2027**

### **National Drug Strategy 2017–2026**

### **National Alcohol Strategy 2019–2028**

## National strategies in development

### **National Injury Prevention Strategy**

- Injury incurred through violence

### **Early Years Strategy**

- New integrated, holistic, whole-of-government approach to the early years

### **National Gender Equality Strategy**



# International context

The Australian Government is committed to the international human rights framework and undertakes to ensure the commitments guide our work in this National Plan. The National Plan reinforces Australia's leadership in promoting gender equality and the human rights of women and girls in all their diversity around the world. This includes eliminating sexual and gender-based violence. The human rights, safety and well-being of LGBTIQ+ people are acknowledged through the Yogyakarta principles.<sup>196</sup>



## **Australia is advancing gender equality and the rights of women and girls**

Achieving gender equality is vital to realising the human rights of all people and sustainable development. Australia is strongly committed to working with the international community to advance the rights of women and girls across the world.<sup>197</sup> Gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment are key priorities in the assistance Australia provides other countries to aid their development.

Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls is a lead advocate for Australia's work on gender equality and the human rights of women and girls. The Ambassador engages in international advocacy, public diplomacy and outreach in support of Australian Government policies and programs.

## **Australia's international commitments and engagements**

Australia is a party to 7 core international human rights treaties.

Australia also engages in a range of international forums to advocate for adequate responses to, and the elimination of, sexual and gender-based violence.

Australia advocates for gender equality, and specifically for tackling discrimination and violence against women and girls, in a range of international and regional forums. For example, Australia works with like-minded countries on commitments and negotiations that refer to violence against women and girls, trafficking in persons, forced marriage and access to sexual and reproductive health services in UN bodies. Australia also leads efforts in multilateral forums including ASEAN, the Commonwealth and the OECD to tackle existing and emerging forms of violence against women and girls such as technology-facilitated abuse and to support the need to address women's safety as fundamental to women's economic security and health and well-being. Australia is also a founding member of the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse.

## **Global movements and international days of recognition**

Women across the world continue to publicly share their experiences of violence including family, domestic and sexual violence. As shown by the #MeToo movement, women have harnessed the power of social media to have a global conversation between victims and survivors, highlighting their experiences of sexual harassment and sexual violence. In doing so, they have faced attempts to suppress and silence their voices, including through abuse and harassment online, as well as threats of legal action.

Days of recognition such as International Women's Day and International Day of the Girl Child further highlight the ongoing importance of action. Since 2020, 28 May has marked LGBTQ Domestic Violence Awareness Day, a campaign started in Australia. The International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, 19 June, calls for the end of all forms of conflict related sexual violence and honours the victims and survivors of these crimes. The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, an annual international campaign that starts on 25 November (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women), and runs until 10 December (International Human Rights Day) also raise awareness of, and calls for continued action on, preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls.



# Violence against women and children is a *human rights* issue

*The National Plan reinforces Australia's leadership internationally to promote gender equality and eliminate gender-based violence in all its forms. Australia's Ambassador for Women and Girls' advocacy includes highlighting the urgency of ending gender-based violence.*



**Internationally, Australia is committed to advancing gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment is at the centre of our international efforts, including through our advocacy, partnerships, multilateral engagement as well as our overseas development assistance and humanitarian programs.**

In particular, Australia invests in and advocates for:

- ending all forms of sexual and gender-based violence
- women's economic empowerment

- enhancing women's voices in decision-making, leadership, and roles in peace processes, and
- women and girls having access to, using and helping shape delivery of quality education, social protection, justice, and health services, including sexual and reproductive health services.

## **UN Women Partnership**

Ending violence against women and girls is a strategic priority for Australia's partnership with UN Women.

## **Generation Equality Forum**

Australia has joined the Gender-based Violence Action Coalition, one of 6 Action Coalitions established by the GEF and is a member of the United Nations Group of Friends on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.



## **Australia supports the Women, Peace and Security Agenda**

In April 2021, Australia released its second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021-2031), which sets out Australia's long-term strategy to realise gender equality and human rights of women and girls in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

## **Call to action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies**





## **Australia has international obligations to tackle discrimination and violence against women and girls**

### **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women**

Under CEDAW, Australia has committed itself to being a country that promotes policies, laws, organisations, structures and attitudes that ensure women are guaranteed the same rights as men.

### **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child**

Australia is a signatory and is committed to upholding the rights of children. This includes taking all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse (Article 19).

### **United Nations Commission on the Status of Women**

Australia participates in CSW, the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, demonstrating our commitment to international engagement on gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment.

## **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a global consensus for action across 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Australia tracks and reports on each of the components of SDG 5 targets including the proportion of women and girls who have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence, or have undergone female genital mutilation.

### **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is the most comprehensive international soft law instrument on the rights of Indigenous peoples. It establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world and it elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the situation of indigenous peoples.



## **Australia is a party to 7 core international human rights treaties**

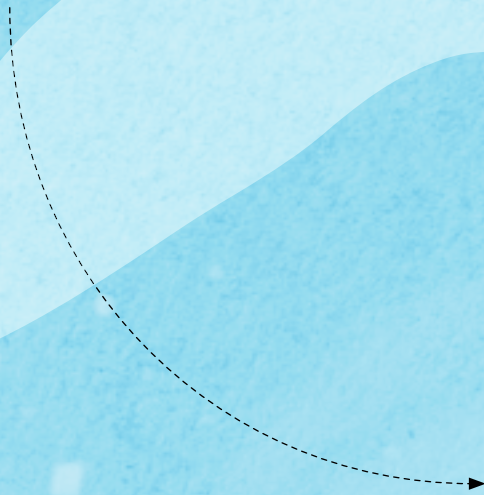
- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

- The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability



# Appendix 1: Actions to achieve the objectives of the National Plan

Below are suggested focus areas for action that will help us achieve our objectives under each of the four domains of the National Plan: prevention; early intervention; response; and recovery and healing. These will guide the development of the underpinning Action Plans.





#### **Challenge the condoning of violence against women and embed prevention activities across sectors and settings.**

- Shift community attitudes and social norms that justify, excuse, trivialise, normalise or downplay violence against women and children, and challenge the condoning of other forms of violence based on discriminatory attitudes.
- Shift community attitudes that place the onus on women and children to end the violence, and instead cultivate a focus on perpetrator accountability and challenge their use of violence.
- Embed prevention approaches in all settings including in homes, educational institutions, care and health settings, workplaces, law enforcement, media, online, the justice system, the arts, sports and community organisations.
- Recognise and champion the critical role the corporate sector plays in preventing gender-based violence by fostering gender equality in the workplace and designing products and services that are safe and prevent misuse, while also focusing on perpetrator accountability.
- Challenge sensationalised or stereotyped views, as well as views informed by sexism, racism, and other types of discrimination, that contribute to a culture that condones gender-based violence and enables victim-blaming.
- Continue to develop, implement and evaluate targeted primary prevention activities designed by, and tailored for, the specific communities they are intended to support – including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, LGBTIQ+ people, women and children with disability, children and young people, older women, migrant and refugee women, women on temporary visas and people in remote and rural communities.
- Support resource development and primary prevention initiatives that focus on accountability, including encouraging initiatives that engage men and boys.
- Develop guidance and training materials for journalists and media outlets reporting on family, domestic and sexual violence cases to help them avoid victim-blaming narratives and hold people who choose to use violence to account.
- Focus on integrated and coordinated prevention activities across multiple levels and settings.
- Encourage awareness-raising activities and campaigns about preventing violence against women and children that reflect diversity and are culturally responsive and safe.



**Advance gender equality and promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships.**

- Deliver a National Gender Equality Strategy that addresses the structural, social and economic barriers to advancing gender equality in Australia.
- Progress policy reform to address the gender pay gap and superannuation gap and to improve access to affordable high-quality housing and early childhood education.
- Strengthen women's economic security, independence, social, political and economic participation and decision-making in public life so all people have equal access to power and resources.
- Challenge attitudes and social norms that normalise male control and dominance, privilege masculine behaviours and character traits, and promote male control over decision-making in public life and in relationships.
- Support women to make decisions about their own lives, particularly women with disability.

**Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships between all people in public and private spheres.**

- Ensure programs are available for people of all ages, particularly young people, that promote positive, equal and respectful relationships, between people of all genders, in all contexts – for example, respectful relationships education, comprehensive consent education and emotional literacy programs.
- Build digital literacy among children, young people and adults, including skills they need to engage respectfully online.
- Give people the tools and confidence to act as prosocial bystanders to challenge sexism, harassment, inequality, disrespect and hostility towards women and attitudes that support violence in their personal and professional lives and in all settings, including online.
- Give women and girls with disability the tools and confidence to challenge sexism, harassment and the specific forms of violence and abuse directed at those who rely on carers and support so they can challenge violence in those contexts.
- Address the role of pornography and social media in contributing to harmful sexual behaviours and reinforcing stereotyped attitudes among adults, children and young people.



4

#### **Listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices.**

- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities have the resources to lead, design, implement and evaluate culturally safe, trauma-aware and healing-informed work to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.
- Address intergenerational trauma for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by truth-telling and capacity building, as well as by strengthening connections to culture, language, knowledge and identity – including through partnerships consistent with Priority Reform Two under Closing the Gap.
- For regional, rural and remote communities, consider funding models that address complexity of services, workforce challenges and access issues on a community-by-community basis.

5

#### **Support men and boys in developing healthy masculinities and positive, supportive relationships with their male peers.**

- Support primary prevention interventions that support and encourage men and boys to have respectful and equal relationships, challenge dominant forms of masculinity, and engage all men to be part of the change.
- Develop and promote healthy masculinities and representations of men and boys, and normalise respectful, fair, ethical, safe and supportive behaviours within relationships by modelling these behaviours.
- Engage those in leadership positions across the community, including men, and help them to become agents of change, while balancing this with transparency and accountability.
- Ensure programs are available to those who want to challenge or reform their behaviours and attitudes, before they escalate to using violence.
- Challenge people who promote homophobic and transphobic views as an expression of masculinity at an individual, relationship, peer, organisational and institutional level.
- Support bystander interventions specifically targeted at men and boys.
- Support programs that work with men who have changed their behaviours alongside men who don't use violence.



- Engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and boys outside the criminal justice system through cultural healing led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders and Elders and by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- Engage fathers or those in caring roles and support and encourage them to build the skills to be a good father and to develop healthy attitudes about parenting, including shared responsibilities.

### **Harness technology in the prevention of violence against women and children.**

- Build on the work of eSafety to better support individuals when they experience technology-facilitated abuse to ensure they can use technology without the fear of it being a vehicle for violence and can safely participate in online spaces.
- Expand bystander training and resources to develop campaigns and tools that help various individuals, community groups and sectors become active online bystanders and online allies.
- Leverage and highlight best-practice from industry, including responsible program design and Corporate Social Responsibility programs.
- Encourage the technology industry to include proactive safety features and functions in online products and services, drawing upon eSafety's Safety by Design initiative, and to embed the Safety by Design principles of service provider responsibility, user empowerment and autonomy, and transparency and accountability in all products and services.
- Expand work within the financial sector to identify and act against the misuse and weaponisation of banking platforms, as well as providing access to eSafety resources.



- Provide the investment sector with eSafety’s suite of resources for financial entities. Also assist with their implementation, ensuring early stage technology companies put safety and ethical considerations at the heart of their design processes.
- Engage directly with the start-up community to enhance their awareness of online harms, providing solutions to combat abuse through the use of eSafety’s Safety by Design principles and assessment tools.
- Embed safety principles in all products and services as part of the ongoing whole-of-government digital transformation of services.

**Invest in making workplaces safe and preventing sexual harassment.**

- Implement all 55 recommendations of the *Respect@Work* report.
- Implement all recommendations of *Set the Standard*.



### **Elevate the voices of children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right.**

- Ensure children and young people are able to access services and supports that are appropriate for their needs.
- Recognise that children and young people are victims in their own right and work with them in age-appropriate ways to inform polices and services.
- Ensure age-appropriate and accessible resources are developed for children and young people.

### **Reduce the long-term impacts of exposure to violence and prevent further exposure.**

- Strengthen early intervention mechanisms for children and young people that aim to address the impacts of exposure to violence against women and promote alternative models of healthy, equitable and non-violent relationships, characterised by respect and equality (also see Recovery and healing domain).
- Strengthen mental health supports for children and young people as an early intervention mechanism in recognition of the mental health impacts of gender-based discrimination on children.
- Support healing strategies and other efforts to mediate the impacts of past and ongoing violence such as child abuse, colonial violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, racist violence, violence against women with disability, war-related trauma and torture experienced by refugees and asylum seekers, or violence occurring in prisons and detention centres.
- Strengthen the promotion of non-violent parenting, which helps in preventing child abuse, ensuring that interventions are culturally safe, community owned and tailored to different community groups.
- Adopt initiatives that target life stages where individuals are most at risk, such as during pregnancy and after relationship breakdown.
- Provide culturally safe early intervention family support services.



- Create formal partnerships between specialist services and child protection systems to promote joint interventions that support families to recover from trauma.
  - Build the data and research base to understand the factors correlated with men perpetrating violence, including the role of their own lived experience of violence and trauma and the impact of alcohol and other drug use.
  - Address the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural inequality and discrimination, with a view to promoting broader social justice.
- Address adolescent violence in family settings.**
- Expand the availability of support services for children and young people who use violence in the family setting, and other ‘family-like’ settings such as out-of-home care, to address and change their behaviour and divert them away from the criminal justice system.
  - Build the evidence base to increase understanding of effective rehabilitation approaches for children and young people who use violence in family settings and intimate partner relationships.



## 3

**Improve timely responses to newly identified cases of violence, attitudes and behaviours that may lead to violence perpetration.**

- Improve timely identification of and responses to at-risk behaviours or attitudes, including harmful sexual behaviours.
- Provide effective early engagement, referral pathways and treatment programs to assist individuals to change their behaviour, prior to interactions with criminal justice systems.
- Build the capability of those who work with men and boys to address and change their behaviours in recognition of the highly specialised nature of this work, including through consistent standards.

## 4

**Enhance accountability of people who choose to use violence and address misidentification of perpetrators.**

- Develop best-practice programs that focus on accountability and deterrence, including new approaches to monitoring, and ensure perpetrators understand the impacts of their offending.
- Maximise opportunities within the correctional system to identify and respond to all cohorts of people who may use family, domestic or sexual violence as a part of offending behaviour.
- Embed victim-survivor support in all programs, including ongoing risk assessment and mitigation, to ensure that victim-survivors understand the actions being undertaken and there are no unintended consequences for their safety or well-being.
- Build capacity in mainstream frontline services responding to gender-based violence, such as health and policing, including the ability to accurately identify the ‘person most in need of protection’ and prevent misidentification of the victim-survivor as the perpetrator.
- Help integrate or create datasets that could identify patterns of violent behaviour.
- Support the establishment and expansion of evidence-based programs to work with people using violence, and make these programs available to individuals who are concerned about, and want to change their behaviour, not only to those already using violence.



- Promote the upskilling of professionals in a range of different sectors and services, such as general practitioners and other healthcare professionals, to respond to men using violence.
- Increase specialist and targeted training for police, the judiciary and the legal profession on family, domestic and sexual violence, including coercive control and misidentification, to support a transition to pattern-based responses.

**Build sector and community capacity to identify and support women and children at increased risk of experiencing gender-based violence and to intervene early to stop violence from escalating.**

- Build the capacity of the services in contact with women and children at risk of experiencing violence, including health professionals, police, justice and correctional systems and other family, domestic and sexual violence services to support diverse groups. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, women from regional and remote areas, women from migrant and refugee backgrounds, LGBTIQ+ communities and military and veteran families.
- Build the capacity of maternal health professionals to understand and identify the signs and risks of violence against pregnant women, assist and have difficult conversations, and support and refer women to specialist family, domestic and sexual violence services.
- Increase support for children and young people experiencing or at risk of using violence including dating violence, online harassment and image-based abuse, trafficking in persons and forced marriage.
- Increase awareness and build capacity in response services to better understand and identify violence in all its forms against older women and women with disability, including in institutions.



- 
- Support settlement services, multicultural, ethno-specific and faith-based organisations to identify and respond to women, children and LGBTIQ+ people at risk of gender-based violence.
  - Equip emergency service workers and first responders to recognise the signs of violence during and following natural disasters and other emergency situations and support them in referring victims to support services.
  - Ensure early intervention strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations are co-designed, culturally safe and community owned and delivered, by prioritising funding for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
  - Explore the need for specific prevention activities targeted at financial practices to help identify older women experiencing violence.
  - Recognise the increased risk and unique forms of violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, migrant and refugee women including those on temporary visas, LGBTIQ+ people, young women, older women and women in rural and remote communities, while recognising the intersections with other forms of discrimination experienced by women across a range of backgrounds and experiences.
  - Ensure referral services for people with disability, their families and carers can identify and respond appropriately to women, children and LGBTIQ+ people at potential risk of gender-based violence.
  - Expand data collection and data disaggregation efforts to embed the ABS 2020 Standard on Sex, Gender, Variations in Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables, as well as to include demographics such as disability, ethnicity, visa and residency status, language barriers, age and other relevant demographic characteristics, to enable a nuanced understanding of different women's experiences.



**Ensure frontline services provided by states and territories are coordinated, integrated and appropriately resourced with a skilled and qualified workforce to support all victim-survivors.**

- Ensure service arrangements take into account the increased costs of providing services in remote communities.
- Support workforces to access training and information to build their ability to deliver evidence-based and trauma-informed services to victim-survivors and perpetrators, including in areas of emerging forms of family, domestic and sexual violence, such as technology-facilitated abuse that uses new and emerging technologies.
- Establish consistency in support across jurisdictions, with mechanisms for quality assurance.
- Ensure family, domestic and sexual violence services are able to support people with disability without relying on the individual being accompanied by a family member or a support worker.
- Train services in perpetrator risk assessment, which informs structured professional judgement and ‘risk, needs, responsivity’ models of risk assessment and response. Enhance services in regional, remote and very remote locations – for example, provide perpetrator interventions and other services for men using violence, hold them to account for their use of violence and support them to change their harmful behaviour.
- Explore the need for national minimum standards for men’s behaviour change programs.
- Invest in the development and sustainability of a specialist workforce to work with men using violence, including in men’s behaviour change programs and other perpetrator interventions.
- Ensure services understand and are equipped to respond appropriately to victim-survivors who are experiencing the complex interplay of gender-based violence, alcohol and other drug use and poor mental health.
- Increase access to frontline recovery services for children and young people who have experienced domestic, family or sexual violence.



**Incorporate an understanding and appropriate response to the specific challenges diverse communities face in relation to family, domestic and sexual violence.**

- Recognise that intergenerational trauma and past policies and practices of governments create complex barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children in accessing services.
- Recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children know what their priorities are. Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations must have autonomy to prioritise their own capacity building to enable services to be developed and delivered in culturally appropriate ways.
- Understand and address the unique forms of gender-based violence experienced by women with disability.
- Build the capacity of services to recognise and respond to the gendered drivers of violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ communities, and the over-representation of trans people (binary and non-binary) as victim-survivors.
- Break down the systemic barriers that directly impact women from migrant and refugee backgrounds and recognise the diversity of their experiences.
- Build the capacity of cultural and faith-based services to work with specialist family violence services in providing family violence support, including identification and response.
- Build the evidence base on the effectiveness of men's behaviour change programs and other perpetrator interventions.
- Ensure services and materials are produced in language to reduce barriers for culturally and linguistically diverse communities.
- Build capacity and integrate supports to assist in translation services in order to meet the needs of all victim-survivors in a culturally sensitive way.
- Increase cultural awareness and safety training for frontline police and throughout the justice system to recognise and respond to the interrelated and compounding forms of violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.



**Ensure women and children escaping violence have safe and secure housing, from crisis accommodation to longer-term, sustainable social housing.**

- Expand options for women and children to stay safely in their own home, rather than being made to leave as a default, and consider how to maximise the opportunities for women and children to stay at home. This includes ensuring there are effective policing practices to support victim-survivors to stay in their own home safely.
- Build more social and affordable housing for women and children, including more social housing properties.
- Provide additional crisis and transitional housing options for women and children, including adolescent males escaping violence and older women on low incomes who are at risk of homelessness.
- Enhance linkages between emergency accommodation, transitional housing and long-term housing to support the housing needs of victim-survivors through the continuum of housing needs through to the recovery stage.
- Support victim-survivors to find safe housing options in the private market where they are able to do so.
- Recognise the particular housing challenges faced by women and children with disability, LGBTIQ+ communities, migrant and refugee women, women in remote and regional communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Ensure housing and infrastructure plans respond to these challenges by including the voices of people with lived experience from the early design phase to completion.
- Deliver safe housing options for children and young people experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence, including respite services.
- Enhance accommodation options for perpetrators and adolescents using family violence to increase their compliance with court orders so victim-survivors can remain safely in the family home should they choose to.



**Improve justice responses to all forms of gender-based violence.**

- Ensure victim-survivors have access to appropriate and timely survivor-centred justice responses. This may include alternative and complementary interventions to criminal justice pathways and family courts to identify and implement responses for domestic and family violence.
- Ensure victim-survivors have access to timely forensic examinations, medical care and trauma specialist crisis counselling.
- Improve alternative civil justice and non-criminal pathways for holding perpetrators to account.
- Explore enhancement of Women’s Legal Services when supporting victim-survivors experiencing gender-based violence, including capacity building for Women’s Legal Services for diverse cohorts including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Promote greater consistency across all states and territories in terms of laws, justice responses and support offered to victim-survivors when they interact with the justice and court systems.
- Enhance the response to family violence in family law matters, including by strengthening information sharing and inter-agency collaboration between the family law courts and state and territory police and child protection systems.
- Increase and improve training and awareness about gender-based violence for police, lawyers, family law professionals and the judiciary.
- Embed trauma-informed and culturally safe response models to minimise re-traumatisation of victim-survivors of sexual violence through the criminal justice system and increase how often victim-survivors feel they have been believed and treated with sensitivity and empathy.
- Implement culturally safe policing and justice responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In particular, work to prevent all cases where Aboriginal women experiencing intimate partner violence and other forms of gender-based violence are misidentified as the perpetrator.
- Respond to the serious impacts on children, young people and women of technology-facilitated abuse, in which perpetrators misuse common devices and platforms such as mobile phones, texting and social media. Use this knowledge to inform policy, legislative and program decisions and research agenda setting.
- Consider the impact of domestic and family violence and financial abuse in the context of the *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth).
- Support building capacity in the police forces, justice system, health services, educational institutions and other frontline services (including settlement and multicultural services) to identify all forms and experiences of violence and provide appropriate responses.



## Recovery and healing

1

### **Ensure victim-survivors are well supported in all aspects of their daily lives through trauma-informed, culturally safe and accessible services that support long-term recovery.**

- Undertake research related to the long-term impacts of gender-based violence and best-practice pathways to recovery for people with a range of lived experiences of violence.
- Develop policy guidelines with reference to best-practice for providing integrated, trauma-informed services to support victim-survivors to recover and heal, and fully participate in society, both socially and economically.
- Support mental health and other health practitioners to identify and treat mental health and trauma impacts of gender-based violence, including intergenerational trauma. This support should be integrated with access to relevant support services including legal and workforce support.
- Ensure victim-survivors have access to the range of health, welfare and legal services they may need in the recovery process. Develop service navigation and coordination functions to support this.
- Support communities of practice at a national, state and territory and local level to enhance networking, skill sharing, research and the improvement of healthcare pathways.
- Enhance recovery services so they are accessible to women with disability, noting they may require specialised services or benefit from having access to services managed by people with disability.
- Develop whole-of-family approaches to healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, underpinned with an understanding of complex and intergenerational trauma. This includes supporting the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led services to deliver healing-informed services and approaches.
- Develop approaches to healing for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including refugees, migrants and those on temporary visas, that are underpinned by trauma-informed and culturally safe healing approaches.
- Resource services to contribute to victim-survivors' longer-term recovery and healing by addressing a range of complex needs. This could include care coordination, psychological and mental health support and assistance with substance use.
- Integrate with other relevant strategies such as the *National Preventive Health Strategy*, the *National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement*, the *National Children's Mental Health and Well-being Strategy*, *National Drug Strategy 2017–2026* and *National Alcohol Strategy 2019–2028*.



**Design recovery services and supports that are tailored to the specific needs of diverse populations and individuals, and women and children of all ages and in all locations.**

- Recognise the recovery needs of older people. This includes the accumulated economic disadvantage older women experience and the need to increase access to safe and affordable long-term housing.
- Provide trauma-informed recovery support for people impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence, including people who have experienced violence and people who choose to use violence.
- Support migrant and refugee women and children to access culturally appropriate services in their language.
- Support the recovery of victim-survivors who are in contact or live with a person who has perpetrated violence against them. This includes those who are unable to leave or who choose to remain in a relationship or household.
- Support LGBTIQ+ communities to access inclusive and affirming recovery support. This should recognise that tailored services are most effective when developed and delivered by, and in collaboration with, specialist LGBTIQ+ services.
- Recognise the distinct needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors in recovery and healing, including connection to culture and understandings of social and emotional well-being.
- Support military and veteran families to access support that understands and can respond to their experiences.



3

**Ensure everyone impacted by sexual violence receives specialist recovery and healing services.**

- Ensure that services and support practices work to prevent future re-victimisation by supporting ongoing healing and building resilience.
- Provide trauma-informed and person-centred care through counselling and health services that are respectful of, and responsive to, the preferences, needs and values of victim-survivors and that minimise the risks of re-traumatisation.
- Acknowledge that domestic violence and sexual assault can co-occur at the same time as part of victim-survivors' complex lived experience.
- Provide specialist support for child sexual abuse survivors, both as children and as adults.
- Increase availability of trauma recovery services and include care coordination that addresses practical and material needs, as well as trauma specialist counselling and other allied health services.
- Develop national standards similar to the Standards of Practice Manual for Services Against Sexual Violence, and service evaluation to support a model of best-practice, evidence-based recovery and healing services for victim-survivors that recognises and responds to intersectionality.

4

**Recognise children and young people as victim-survivors of violence in their own right, and establish appropriate supports and services that will meet their safety and recovery needs.**

- Provide children and young people with access to holistic and flexible care models that are responsive to the needs of diverse population groups and local communities and that focus on repairing the often undermined mother-child relationship.
- Support integrated specialist family, domestic and sexual violence services and programs for children and young people who have been impacted by violence that focus on addressing trauma impacts, disrupting violence and reducing potential future re-victimisation or perpetration.
- Support recovery efforts for adolescents who use violence who have also been victim-survivors of violence.
- Support children who have been removed from their families due to violence, and extend this support throughout any reunification, noting the impact child protection can have on recovery.
- Create laws, structures and processes that embed the best interests of the child at the centre of decision-making in relation to family and domestic violence matters, including in the family law system, and respect the views of that child.



# Appendix 2: Roles and responsibilities

Everyone has a role to play in ending violence. This table shows the services and supports relevant to family, domestic and sexual violence. These are mainly delivered by the Australian Government and state and territory governments, but there is shared delivery in some areas. This is not an exhaustive list but provides an overview of how the different levels of government work together to end violence against women and children.

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## Australian Government services and systems

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- Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission
- 1800RESPECT
- DV-alert
- eSafety Commissioner
- Employment services
- Services Australia income and support payments and programs
- Paid Parental Leave
- Taxation and superannuation
- Federal justice system including family law
- Australian Federal Police
- Child Care Subsidy
- Medicare, primary care, mental health services and health workforce
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled primary healthcare organisations
- Universities
- National Disability Insurance Scheme
- Migration system
- Settlement services
- International obligations and engagement
- Aged Care

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## Services state and territory governments deliver

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- Frontline domestic, family and sexual violence services
  - Crisis accommodation
  - State-based support lines
  - Public hospitals
  - Community health services
  - Public transport services
  - Men's behaviour change programs
  - Public primary and secondary schools
  - TAFE/Vocational Education and Training (VET)
  - Kindergartens and pre-schools
  - Jurisdictional court systems and correctional centres and community corrections
  - State/territory police
  - Child protection
  - State and territory human rights/anti-discrimination bodies
  - Prevention of violence against women lead agencies
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### Initiatives with shared delivery

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- Closing the Gap
  - Our Watch
  - ANROWS
  - Primary prevention activities, including behaviour change campaigns
  - Perpetrator interventions
  - Counselling and recovery supports for victim-survivors
  - Community services, including family support.
  - National Housing and Homelessness Agreement
  - Legal services, including legal aid commissions, community legal centres (including women’s legal centres), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services.
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# Appendix 3: Membership of National Plan advisory bodies

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence

Membership as at 1 October 2022

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Professor Sandra Creamer AM                      | CEO, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance   |
| Professor Muriel Bamblett AM                     | CEO, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, and Secretariat of SNAICC, National Voice for our Children                            |
| Shirleen Campbell                                | Coordinator, Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group   |
| Professor Bronwyn Carlson                        | Head of Department of Indigenous Studies, Macquarie University   |
| Emily Carter                                     | CEO, Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre  |
| Susan Cook                                       | Board member, Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network (ICAN)  |
| Fiona Cornforth                                  | CEO, Healing Foundation  |
| Rachel Dunn                                      | CEO, Karadi Aboriginal Corporation   |
| Damian Griffis                                   | CEO, First Peoples Disability Network (Australia) Sydney   |
| Professor Victoria Hovane                        | Centre for Indigenous Peoples and Community Justice, University of WA and Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of SA |
| Donnella Mills                                   | Chair, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO); Director, Wuchopperen Health Service.                |
| Phillip Sariago                                  | Executive Officer for 2Spirits, Queensland Council for LGBTI Health  |
| Robert Skeen                                     | CEO, Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW   |
| Geiza Stow                                       | Board member, Mura Kosker (Torres Strait Islands)  |
| Michael Torres                                   | Counsellor, Darwin Indigenous Men's Service under Darwin Aboriginal and Islander Women's Shelter (DAIWS)                           |
| June Oscar AO<br>(Special Advisor)               | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. Leader of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) project.    |
| Professor Marcia Langton AO<br>(Special Advisor) | Associate Provost, University of Melbourne   |



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## National Plan Advisory Group

Membership as at 1 October 2022

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|                             |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Gulnara Abbasova            | Executive Officer, Harmony Alliance                                  |
| Karen Bentley               | CEO, WESNET  |
| Professor Sandra Creamer AM | CEO, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance |
| Frances Crimmins            | CEO, YWCA Canberra   |
| Lula Dembele                | Survivor Advocate and lived experience                               |
| Catherine Fitzpatrick       | Member, National Plan Advisory Group                                 |
| Hayley Foster               | CEO, Full Stop Australia   |
| Carolyn Frohmader           | Executive Director, Women with Disabilities Australia                |
| Maria Hagias                | CEO, Women's Safety Services SA                                      |
| Anne Hollonds               | National Children's Commissioner                                     |
| Patty Kinnersly             | CEO, Our Watch   |
| Eloise Layard               | Program Coordinator, ACON  |
| Donnella Mills              | Chair, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation  |
| Padma Raman PSM             | CEO, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety   |
| Dr Michael Salter           | Associate Professor, UNSW  |
| Joanne Sheehan-Paterson     | Chair, National Association of Services against Sexual Violence      |
| The Hon Dale Wakefield      | Former Minister for Territory Families, NT                           |
| Jacqui Watt                 | CEO, No to Violence  |

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# Glossary

| Term                  | Definition   |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1800RESPECT           | The national telephone and online counselling and support services for people affected or at risk of domestic, family and sexual violence. Services are available online at <a href="http://1800respect.org.au">1800respect.org.au</a> or by telephone on 1800 737 732, 24 hours 7 days per week.  |
| Ableism               | A term used to capture the way that the construction of social systems with able bodied people as the norm results in the systemic, structural, intersecting and individual forms of discrimination against, and exclusion of, people with disability. <sup>198</sup>  |
| Abuse of process      | Abuse of process is the exploitation of rules or processes to control, financially damage or abuse another person. It includes vexatious behaviour by the other party, controlling parties through the emotional and economic toll of ongoing court proceedings. These tactics are also referred to as malicious, frivolous, vexatious or querulous. Some examples include the perpetrator failing to appear in court, repeatedly seeking adjournments, or appealing decisions on tenuous grounds. |
| ANROWS                | Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, a not-for-profit independent national research organisation. ANROWS was established by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments to produce, disseminate, and assist in applying evidence for policy and practice addressing violence against women.   |
| Backlash / resistance | The resistance, hostility or aggression with which gender equality or violence prevention strategies are met by some groups. From a feminist perspective, backlash can be understood as an inevitable response to challenges to male dominance, power or status, and is often interpreted as a sign that such challenges are proving effective. <sup>199</sup>   |
| Bisexual/Bi+          | Someone who is sexually and/or romantically attracted to more than one gender.   |
| Brotherboy            | A term used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to describe gender diverse people who have a male spirit and take on male roles within the community. <sup>200</sup>  |



|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Cisgender        | A term used to describe people who identify their gender as the same as what was presumed for them at birth (male or female). 'Cis' is a Latin term meaning 'on the same side as'.   |
| Cisgenderism     | Cisgenderism (sometimes referred to as cisnormativity and cissexism) is a structural stigma that denies, ignores, and pathologises the trans experience and trans people – binary and non-binary. Cisgenderism positions expansive expressions of gender as a problem, ignores the validity of non-binary genders and seeks to enforce traditional gender roles and inequalities. <sup>201</sup>   |
| Class            | A system of structured inequality based on unequal distributions of power, education, wealth and income that determine social position and status.   |
| Coercive control | <p>Coercive control is often a significant part of a person's experience of family and domestic violence and describes someone's use of abusive behaviours against another person over time, with the effect of establishing and maintaining power and dominance over them.</p> <p>Abusive behaviours that perpetrators can use as part of their pattern of abuse include physical abuse (including sexual abuse), monitoring a victim-survivor's actions, restricting a victim-survivor's freedom or independence, social abuse, using threats and intimidation, emotional or psychological abuse (including spiritual and religious abuse), financial abuse, sexual coercion, reproductive coercion, lateral violence, systems abuse, technology-facilitated abuse and animal abuse. A focus on coercive control reflects a shift from specific, isolated incidents (of primarily physical violence) to a recognition that individual acts can be used by perpetrators to form a broader pattern of abusive behaviours that reinforce and strengthen the control and dominance of one person over another.</p> |
| Consent          | <p>All state and territory laws require consent to sexual activity be either "freely and voluntarily given" or that consent involves "free" or "free and voluntary" agreement.</p> <p>However, legal definitions of consent vary between Australian state and territory jurisdictions. There are ongoing reforms in a number of states and territories to amend the definition of consent to require affirmative communication of consent.<sup>202</sup></p>   |
| Evidence-based   | Describes models, approaches or practices found to be effective through evaluation or peer reviewed research. Evidence is usually published and may be found in full or summarised in academic research documents, organisational reports, program evaluations, policy papers and submissions. There is a strong evidence base for strategies to prevent gender-based violence. As our understanding of what drives violence against women and children in different population groups and settings increases, the evidence base will continue to evolve.  |



|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| Family                       | The use of the term 'family' acknowledges the variety of relationships and structures that can make up family units and kinship networks. It can include current or former partners, children (including adolescent or adult children), siblings, parents, grandparents, extended family and kinship networks and carers.   |
| Forced marriage              | A modern slavery crime where someone is married without freely and fully consenting to the marriage because of threats, deception or coercion, or the individual is incapable of understanding the nature and effect of the marriage ceremony, or the individual is under the age of 16 years.  |
| Forced sterilisation         | Refers to the process of removing or compromising an individual's reproductive organs without their free and full consent.  |
| Gender                       | Refers to the economic, social, political, and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being women and men. The social definitions of what it means to be a woman or a man vary among cultures and change over time. Gender is a sociocultural expression of particular characteristics and roles that are associated with certain groups of people with reference to their sex and sexuality. Rigid gender roles leave no space for acknowledgement or celebration of gender diversity. <sup>203</sup> |
| Gay                          | Describes a person whose primary emotional and sexual attraction is toward people of the same gender. The term is most commonly applied to men, although some women use this term. <sup>204</sup>   |
| Gendered drivers of violence | The underlying causes that are required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women, children and LGBTIQ+ people occurs. They relate to the particular structures, norms and practices arising from gender inequality in public and private life, but which must always be considered in the context of other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage.   |
| Gender equality              | Involves equality of opportunity and equality of results. It includes both the redistribution of resources and responsibilities between men and women and the transformation of the underlying causes and structures of gender inequality to achieve substantive equality.  |
| Gender inequality            | A social condition characterised by unequal value afforded to men and women and an unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity between them. It is the direct result of patriarchal systems that privilege the needs, interests and behaviours of men over women, and that permeate many aspects of Australian society and institutions. <sup>205</sup>  |



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| Gender identity          | A person's deeply felt sense of being male, female, both, in between, or something other.  |
| Gender norms             | The dominant beliefs and rules of conduct that are determined by a society or social group in relation to the types of roles, interests, behaviours and contributions expected from girls and boys, men and women. Norms are not neutral in their effect, but rather create and maintain unequal relations of power.   |
| Gender stereotypes       | Gender stereotypes are simplistic assumptions and generalisations about the attributes, skills, behaviours, preferences and roles that people should have or demonstrate based on their gender. These attributes are often perceived as natural or innate, but are actually the result of people of different genders being socialised in different ways. Gender stereotypes are not necessarily negative assumptions or generalisations. <sup>206</sup>   |
| Heteronormativity        | Heteronormativity includes a suite of cultural, legal and institutional practices that work to explicitly privilege relationships between 'men' and 'women' as the only 'normal' and 'natural' form of relationship.   |
| Homophobia               | Refers to the fear and hatred of lesbians and gay men and of their sexual desires and practices that often leads to discriminatory behaviour or abuse. <sup>207</sup>  |
| Image-based abuse        | When an intimate image or video is shared, or threatened to be shared, without the consent of the person shown. This includes images or videos that have been digitally altered. <sup>208</sup>  |
| Intergenerational trauma | A form of historical trauma transmitted across generations. Survivors of the initial experience who have not healed may pass on their trauma to further generations. In Australia, intergenerational trauma particularly affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially the children, grandchildren and future generations of the Stolen Generations. <sup>209</sup>   |
| Intersectional approach  | In the context of addressing violence against women and children, an intersectional approach recognises that the way women 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. <sup>210</sup> |



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| Intersex   | Describes people born with physical sex characteristics that do not fit medical and social norms for female or male bodies. <sup>211</sup>   |
| Lateral violence   | Lateral violence, also known as horizontal violence, is a product of a complex mix of historical, cultural and social dynamics that results in a spectrum of behaviours that include gossiping, jealousy, bullying, shaming, social exclusion, family feuding, organisational conflict and physical violence. Lateral violence is not just an individual's behaviour – it also occurs when a number of people work together to attack or undermine another individual or group. It can also be a sustained attack on individuals, families or groups. <sup>212</sup>   |
| Lesbian  | Describes a woman whose primary emotional and sexual attraction is towards other women. <sup>213</sup>   |
| LGBTIQA+   | An acronym used to describe members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer and asexual community. Other acronyms used to describe this community include LGBTIQ, or LGBTIQ+. <sup>214</sup>   |
| Modern slavery   | <p>Describes all human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices in Divisions 270 and 271 of the <i>Criminal Code Act 1995</i> (Cth). These offences include trafficking in persons, slavery, servitude, forced labour, deceptive recruitment for labour or services, debt bondage, and forced marriage. The term modern slavery is also used to describe the worst forms of child labour.</p> <p>Some modern slavery crimes, such as forced marriage and servitude in family and domestic settings, can involve victims who experience abuse and exploitation by their partners or members of their immediate or extended family, resulting in physical, sexual and psychological harm.</p> |
| National Agreement on Closing the Gap                    | The National Agreement on Closing the Gap was developed in formal partnership between all Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations. There are four Priority Reforms and 17 outcomes. The objective of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. <sup>215</sup>   |
| National outcome standards for perpetrator interventions | Refers to the national document including standards that both guide and provide a measure of the actions of government, community partners and systems, and the outcomes they achieve when intervening with male perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence against women and children.  |



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| Non-binary                   | An umbrella term for any number of gender identities that sit within, outside of, across or between the spectrum of the male and female binary. A non-binary person might identify as gender fluid, trans masculine, trans feminine, agender, bigender, etc.  |
| Our Watch                    | The organisation established under the <i>National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022</i> , to influence and drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence against women.   |
| Perpetrator                  | Refers to a person who commits an illegal, criminal or harmful act, including domestic, family or sexual violence.  |
| Personal Safety Survey (PSS) | Refers to the survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics collecting information from men and women aged 18 years and over about the nature and extent of violence experienced since the age of 15. PSS also includes childhood experiences of abuse.   |
| Practices                    | Gendered practices are the things people do to distinguish between girls and boys, or between male and female roles or spheres. They include a wide range of everyday actions, processes and behaviours that are undertaken both at individual, relational, organisational/institutional and societal levels that reinforce and perpetuate gendered norms and structures.   |
| Queer                        | <p>The identity and term ‘queer’ can be used in different ways and by different people. For some it is a reclaimed derogatory term and a political movement that celebrates difference.</p> <p>The term ‘queer’ is a politicised term and often used as a reaction against pressures to be cisgender and heterosexual. It can also be used against non-heterosexuals, intersex and trans people, based on the belief that they should express themselves only in ways acceptable to the cisgender heterosexual mainstream.</p> <p>For others, or in other circumstances, it is used as an umbrella term to be inclusive of anyone whose gender and/or sexual identity does not fit within the norm.<sup>216</sup></p> |
| Respectful relationships     | Refers to relationships among intimate, romantic, or dating partners that are characterised by non-violence, equality, mutual respect, consideration and trust. <sup>217</sup>  |
| Seclusion                    | Defined as isolating a person in a confined space where they are alone and unable to freely leave. <sup>218</sup>   |



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| Settings          | Environments in which people live, work, learn, socialise and play.  |
| Sexism            | Discrimination based on gender, and the attitudes, stereotypes and cultural elements that promote this discrimination. <sup>219</sup>  |
| Sexual assault    | Sexual assault is an act of a sexual nature carried out against a person's will through the use of physical force, intimidation or coercion, including any attempts to do this. This includes rape, attempted rape, aggravated sexual assault (assault with a weapon), indecent assault, penetration by objects, forced sexual activity that did not end in penetration and attempts to force a person into sexual activity. Note sexual assault occurs when a person is forced, coerced or tricked into sexual acts against their will or without their consent, including when they have withdrawn their consent. <sup>220</sup> |
| Sexual harassment | An unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated, where a reasonable person would anticipate that reaction in the circumstances.  |
| Sexuality         | Refers to the component of identity that includes a person's sexual and emotional attraction to another person. A person may be attracted to men, women, both, neither, and/or to people who are non-binary, or have other gender identities.  |
| Sistergirl        | A term used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to describe gender diverse people who have a female spirit and take on female roles within the community. <sup>221</sup>  |
| Social norms      | The informal, mostly unwritten and unspoken collective rules that define typical, acceptable, appropriate and obligatory actions in a social group, setting or society. They are produced and reproduced by customs, traditions and value systems that develop over time to uphold forms of social order.  |



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| Systems abuse                | Refers to the manipulation of legal and other systems by perpetrators of family violence, done so in order to exert control over, threaten and harass a current or former partner. <sup>222</sup> Perpetrators of domestic and family violence who seek to control the victim before, during or after separation may make multiple applications and complaints in multiple systems (for example the courts, Child Support, Centrelink) in relation to a protection order, breach, parenting, divorce, property, child and welfare support and other matters with the intention of interrupting, deferring, prolonging or dismissing judicial and administrative processes, which may result in depleting the victim's financial resources and emotional well-being, and adversely impacting the victim's capacity to maintain employment or to care for children. <sup>223</sup> |
| Technology-facilitated abuse | A wide-ranging term that encompasses many subtypes of interpersonal violence and abuse using mobile, online and other digital technologies. These include harassing behaviours, sexual violence and image-based sexual abuse, monitoring and controlling behaviours, and emotional abuse and threats.  |
| Trans                        | An inclusive umbrella term that describes people whose gender is different to what was presumed for them at birth. Trans people may position 'being trans' as a history or experience, rather than an identity, and consider their gender identity as simply being female, male or a non-binary gender. Some trans people connect strongly with their trans experience, whereas others do not. Processes of medical and legal gender affirmation may or may not be part of a trans person's life. Throughout this plan we use trans as the shorthand for trans and gender diverse people.  |
| Trauma                       | <p>Trauma occurs when someone's ability to cope is overwhelmed. It can have a significant effect on someone's physical, emotional and psychological well-being. The impacts of trauma, whether resolved or acknowledged, may surface at any time, particularly when victim-survivors tell or repeat their experiences, or when they encounter similar experiences that are shared by others.</p> <p>Trauma looks different for people depending on their experience of trauma and other factors such as exposure to previous traumatic events, access to support and mental health status.<sup>224</sup></p>   |
| Trauma-informed              | <p>Trauma-informed care and practice recognises the prevalence of trauma and its impacts on the emotional, psychological and social well-being of people and communities.</p> <p>Trauma-informed practice means integrating 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.</p>   |



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Victim-blaming      Refers to comments and suggestions that directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, put blame on the person experiencing violence for the abuse they have or continue to experience.

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Victim-survivors      People who have experienced family and domestic violence or gender-based violence. This term is understood to acknowledge the strength and resilience shown by people who have experienced or are currently living with violence. People who have experienced violence have different preferences about how they would like to be identified and may choose to use 'victim' or 'survivor' separately, or another term altogether. Some people prefer to use 'people who experience, or are at risk of experiencing, violence'.<sup>225</sup>

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