FOURTH ACTION PLAN
2019–2022

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DEDICATION

The Fourth Action Plan is dedicated to the countless women and children who are victims and survivors of violence, to those who are left to rebuild, and to those who have lost their lives. It is for the women whose stories continue to inspire our work and drive us to do more. We celebrate those people and organisations who work tirelessly with, and for, all women affected by violence and acknowledge their ongoing contributions to eradicating violence against women and their children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The National Plan is an initiative of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. We acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders past, present and emerging.

SUPPORT

Help is available if you, or someone you know, is experiencing violence. In the case of an emergency call 000. For information, support and counselling contact 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) or visit www.1800respect.org.au. This service is free, confidential and open 24 hours a day.
FOREWORD

THE NATIONAL PLAN

Ten years ago, the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (2008–09) produced Time for Action: the National Council’s Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009–2021. This provided the blueprint for the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022 (the National Plan), which was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and released in February 2011.

The 12-year National Plan aims to connect the important work being done by all Australian governments, community organisations and individuals to ensure that each year, fewer women experience violence and more women and their children live safely. The National Plan recognises that violence against women and their children is a complex problem that requires a long-term plan of action.

For this reason, the National Plan is being delivered through a series of four three-year action plans that will build on each other over time. This document sets out the Fourth Action Plan, the final action plan in the series.

The National Plan’s vision is an Australia free from all forms of violence and abuse against women and their children.

This is every woman’s and child’s right, and everyone’s responsibility. Violence against women and their children is a matter that requires commitment from everyone — all governments, Ministers, sectors, and members of our community. Since its release, all governments have increased efforts and investment to reduce violence against women and their children.

WORKING TO STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN

People’s knowledge and understanding of violence against women and gender equality has increased. With the development of Change the Story, Australia became the first country in the world to implement a shared policy framework across national, state and territory governments dedicated to the primary prevention of violence against women and their children.

Despite this progress, many women still experience violence every day in Australia. Every two minutes, police are called to a domestic and family violence matter. Every day, 12 women are hospitalised due to domestic and family violence. Every nine days, a woman is killed by a current or former partner. The overall economic cost of violence against women and their children in 2015–16 was $26 billion, with victims and survivors bearing approximately 50 per cent of that cost.

DELIVERING THE NATIONAL PLAN

The National Plan is being delivered through a series of four three-year action plans that have built on each other over time.

The First Action Plan: Building a Strong Foundation 2010–2013 laid a strong foundation for long-term change. This included the establishment of national-level infrastructure to inform future policy and service delivery and to engage the community in reducing violence against women and their children.

Under the Second Action Plan: Moving Ahead 2013–2016, jurisdictions committed to the national prevention campaign, Stop it at the Start, the development of a primary prevention framework to share understanding of preventing violence, an expanded research agenda and National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions.

The Third Action Plan: Promising Results 2016–2019 further strengthened the evidence base and national data collections, providing the basis for the trials of new and innovative approaches in early intervention, and crisis responses.

This document sets out the Fourth Action Plan: Turning the Corner 2019–2022, the final action plan in the series.

As the final action plan of the National Plan is released, now is the time to reflect, learn, and take further action.

This Fourth Action Plan sets out an ambitious but practical agenda to achieve change, by:
• improving existing initiatives
• addressing gaps in previous action plans
• providing a platform for future policy to reduce domestic, family and sexual violence.

The second generation impacts from violence against women and their children are estimated to cost the Australian economy $333 million each year. Recent research shows that many Australians still hold attitudes and beliefs that tolerate or excuse violence. For example, some Australians believe women use claims of violence to gain tactical advantage in their relationships with men.

Ending violence against women and their children starts with promoting gender equality and respect for all. Strong and growing international evidence confirms the severity of violence against women and the key role of addressing gender inequality to prevent and reduce this violence.

All levels of government, business and the community must commit to long-term, continuous action and investment to stop violence before it starts, and support women and children when they need it. All Australians have a role to play in the places we live, work, learn, play and interact, including when online.
The Fourth Action Plan continues to support the six overarching National Outcomes that all governments are working towards over the life of the National Plan (see bottom of pages 5–6).

It has been devised through extensive consultations with hundreds of people affected by violence, and the people working to stop it. These consultations culminated in the National Summit on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children, held in October 2018.

The Fourth Action Plan sets out eight principles to guide the way all industries, sectors and areas of government work together to address domestic, family and sexual violence. These principles inform 20 practical actions across five priority areas.

The priority areas represent the range of responses needed to tackle domestic, family and sexual violence: from primary prevention to improving service and support systems.

The Fourth Action Plan commits to leaving no one behind. It recognises the need to respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and listen to the diverse lived experiences of people affected by violence across all of our responses.

Commonwealth, state and territory governments will develop a national implementation plan over 2019 that will outline how governments will deliver actions and measure their impact to address the national priority areas.

Ms Libby Lloyd AM, Chair of the former National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, speaking at the 10th Anniversary of the release of Time for Action (10 May 2019): This is an opportunity to reflect on how far we’ve come, and where we’re going in our efforts to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in rates of violence against women. Although we know there is still a long way to go, it is also time to celebrate the passion and commitment of the sector working toward the National Plan goals.

COAG Summit delegates called on First Ministers for specific action in the following areas:
- We must invest in primary prevention and early intervention to stop violence at its source.
- We must make reducing violence everyone’s business.
- We must listen to lived experience and respect cultural knowledge.
- We must acknowledge and better respond to the unique experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.
- We must respond better to sexual violence, as a form of domestic and family violence and as a separate crime.
- We must improve systems so women and children are safe.
- We must change the behaviour of people who choose to use violence.
- We must respect the needs of children and young people as individuals.
- We must learn from what’s working, be flexible and tailor our approaches.

First Ministers agreed the COAG statement would inform the Fourth Action Plan. See the full statement at the COAG website.

For more information, go to www.plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au

GUIDE TO THIS ACTION PLAN

This action plan is written for governments, policy makers, specialist organisations and members of the community sector. It provides people working in support services or individuals affected by domestic, family and sexual violence with an overview of the national policy response to reduce violence against women and their children.

Technical terms are explained in the Glossary at the end of the publication on page 55. If readers are interested in finding out more, the References on page 61 provide details of all cited publications and websites.

For more information, go to www.plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au
FOURTH ACTION PLAN - AT A GLANCE

FOURTH ACTION PLAN PRINCIPLES

Reducing violence against women and their children is everyone’s business and we all have a role to play.

We must address gender inequality to stop violence – women will never be safe if they are not equal.

The voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must inform responses to the family and sexual violence experienced in their communities.

We must address the diversity and lived experiences of women and their children affected by violence.

Where children are involved, responses must be age appropriate, child-centred, and tailored to their specific needs and stages of development.

Actions must be evidence-based and help build an understanding of what works to respond effectively to, and prevent, violence against women and their children.

System and service responses must work to end the cycle of violence, keep people safe and prevent domestic, family and sexual violence.

A holistic approach to working with perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence is needed across all actions – informing prevention, deterrence, rehabilitation, and ensuring accountability.

NATIONAL PRIORITIES

NATIONAL PRIORITIES

PRIMARY PREVENTION IS KEY

1. Advance gender equality and respect for women through effective primary prevention initiatives.

2. Improve coordination across primary prevention activities to maximise their impact on community attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence.

3. Implement targeted primary prevention activities designed by, and tailored for, the specific communities they are intended to support.

4. Address intergenerational trauma for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through primary prevention, including holistic healing strategies, and by strengthening connections to culture, language, knowledge and identity.

5. Promote healthy and safe relationships and build gender equitable values through initiatives for children and young people.

SUPPORT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN

1. Value and engage the expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men, communities and organisations to lead in the creation and implementation of community-led solutions to build and manage change.

2. Build the workforce capability to ensure delivery of high-quality, holistic, trauma-informed and culturally safe supports that respond to the complex needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.

3. Develop innovative and alternative models for victim and perpetrator support that contribute to safe healing and sustainable behaviour change.

4. Address both the immediate impacts and deep underlying drivers of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through collective action with governments, service providers and communities.

RESPPECT, LISTEN AND RESPOND TO THE DIVERSE LIVED EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE OF WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE

1. Implement community-led and tailored initiatives to address the unique experiences and needs of communities affected by multiple forms of discrimination or inequality.

2. Deliver policies and services to address the disproportionate impact of violence on particular groups.

3. Better equip the service system and communities to address complex forms of violence and harmful cultural practices including early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, dowry abuse and human trafficking.

RESPOND TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

1. Prevent sexual violence and sexual harassment before it happens through national and targeted initiatives that promote informed consent, bodily autonomy and respectful relationships.

2. Deliver client-centred, trauma-informed, specialised and consistent support to victims and survivors of sexual violence.

3. Strengthen the capacity of all sectors to address sexual harassment to ensure women are safe at work, while studying, in public and online.

IMPROVE SUPPORT AND SERVICE SYSTEM RESPONSES

1. Enable workforces to provide trauma-informed support with a focus on safety and recovery to victims and survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence.

2. Collaborate across services, sectors and workforces to ensure responses to women affected by domestic, family and sexual violence are coordinated, meet women’s needs, avoid women having to retell their story and promote their recovery.

3. Improve access to and embed trauma-informed support for perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence to prevent recidivism and promote rehabilitation and treatment.

4. Build the evidence base to inform responses to domestic, family and sexual violence by strengthening the focus on what works to reduce violence, improving data and supporting the Fourth Action Plan priorities.

5. Improve access to suitable and safe accommodation within their communities for women who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence.

NATIONAL PLAN OUTCOMES

Communities are safe and free from violence

Relationships are respectful

Indigenous communities are strengthened

Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence

Justice responses are effective

Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account

NATIONAL PLAN OUTCOMES

5

6
Family violence is still an epidemic and it will be for some time. It is a serious abuse of human rights in our advanced and privileged culture and must continue to be addressed as an absolute priority, by both our Federal and state governments, and by our current leaders, as they also recognise the impact family violence has on their workplace.

Rosie Batty AO, family violence advocate, Australian of the Year 2015 (24 January 2016) 

Achievements of the National Plan

Ending violence against women and their children is a complex, long term goal. It will take years of continuous effort to end violence. As we move into the Fourth Action Plan there are clear indicators that show that, as a nation, we are on the right path to achieve this goal.

The National Plan provides all levels of government — Commonwealth, state and territory, and local — with a comprehensive strategy to drive lasting change. Over the last 10 years, all areas of Australian society have shown commitment and leadership to tackle the complex issue of violence against women and their children.

This approach allows every sector, institution, organisation and community to help end violence against women and their children. Ending violence against women and their children is everyone’s business — every day, more sports clubs, schools, faith communities, local councils, small businesses, media and corporations demonstrate this through positive and proactive action.

Since 2010, the National Plan has delivered many achievements:

• Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) was established as the independent national research organisation to produce and share evidence for policy makers and practitioners.

• Our Watch was established as the national centre of excellence for primary prevention to lead efforts to prevent violence and drive change in the culture, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence against women and their children.

• Organisations at the local and national levels are collaborating better to ensure women’s needs and safety are prioritised and addressed by expert services.

• Respectful relationships projects have been delivered to young people through schools and education programs.

• Many men are taking a leadership role to promote gender equality, raise awareness, and contribute to positive changes in the attitudes and behaviours that lead to and condone violence against women and their children.

• COAG agreed to the National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions, setting out the practice standards and performance indicators for perpetrator interventions to be used by all governments and community partners.

• Improved data and analysis have led to a better understanding of the experiences of hard-to-reach and marginalised women.

Gender Equality: The Key to Ending Violence Against Women and Their Children

Both men and women can be perpetrators of violence. Yet, overwhelmingly the people who carry out domestic, family and sexual violence are men, who commit violence against women.

There is no single cause of violence against women and their children; however, gender inequality sets the stage for such violence to occur.

Evidence shows that the key beliefs and behaviours relating to gender that drive violence against women are:

• condoning of violence against women

• men’s control of decision-making and limits to women’s independence

• stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity

• disrespect towards women, and male peer relations that emphasise aggression (see Figure 1 on next page).

95% of all victims of violence (women or men) experience violence from a male perpetrator.

Source: ABS, Personal Safety Survey.
Gender inequality affects everyone in a negative way, including men. For example, men are less likely to seek professional help or talk about their problems with friends or family, and this can have devastating consequences.\textsuperscript{21}

Other factors, such as drug and alcohol use, mental health and poverty, may also interact with, or reinforce, gender inequality and contribute to increased frequency and severity of violence against women and their children.\textsuperscript{19} However, these factors do not drive violence in and of themselves.

For example, we know the systematic discrimination and ongoing trauma experienced in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities plays a big part in how communities experience violence\textsuperscript{20} and people who have experienced violence as children may be more prone to experiencing or inflicting violence as adults.\textsuperscript{21}

**A PATH TO REDUCING VIOLENCE**

Counting on change: A guide to prevention monitoring\textsuperscript{23} provides guidance on tracking short, medium and long term progress towards the prevention of violence against women and their children at a national level (see Figure 2). It tells us that we need to effectively address and respond to the drivers that cause violence against women and their children to reduce, and ultimately end, this violence.

In the short term, we must put in place quality programs and infrastructure (such as an expert workforce and systems to ensure coordination) to increase gender equality, and promote equal and respectful relationships.

In the medium term we expect the demand for response services (such as counselling services and legal support) will increase, as barriers to accessing services are reduced, and people’s understanding of violence against women improves.

In the long term, violence against women and their children is expected to decrease.

This will happen as:
- women have greater independence and decision-making power
- traditional gender roles are less rigidly enforced
- more people have the skills and desire to create positive, equal and respectful relationships.

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\textsuperscript{1} Experienced physical violence

\textsuperscript{1} Experienced sexual violence

\textsuperscript{1} Experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a current or previous cohabitating partner

\textsuperscript{Source: ABS, Personal Safety Survey.}
12-month prevalence of violence against women

Demand for formal response services

Counter-intuitively, demand for response services will increase in the short and medium term as prevention infrastructure improves, awareness increases, and women feel more supported to seek help.

Strengthened infrastructure and programming leads to measureable improvements against the drivers and reinforcing factors of violence against women.

Lifetime prevalence of violence against women

In time, prevention infrastructure and programs are strong and high quality. Levels of investment plateau, with a view to ensuring continuous learning and maintaining quality of infrastructure.

12-month prevalence of violence against women will remain static in the short and medium term, but will begin to decrease with improvements in gender equality and reductions in the drivers of violence.

Lifetime prevalence will only start to decrease in the very long term.

Source: Our Watch and ANROWS, Counting on Change: A guide to prevention monitoring
Young people aged 16–24 years:
- have a good knowledge of key aspects of violence against women
- support gender equality
- reject attitudes supportive of violence against women
- say they would act or would like to act if they witnessed abuse or disrespect of women.

While there has been significant progress, it is also important to acknowledge the need for further work. This is demonstrated through the following NCAS findings:

- There is a continuous decline in the number of Australians who understand that men are more likely than women to perpetrate domestic violence (down from 86 per cent in 1995 to 64 per cent in 2017).
- Two in five Australians believe that gender inequality is exaggerated or no longer a problem.
- One in five Australians believe domestic violence is a normal reaction to stress, and that sometimes a woman can make a man so angry he hits her without meaning to.
- Two in five Australians believe that women make up false reports of sexual assault in order to punish men.

These findings provide a focus for future action and investment.

AN INCREASE IN REPORTING

Over the last 10 years, the number of women seeking help through formal services, including contacting police, has increased significantly, even though there has been no increase in the overall rate of violence occurring.

This indicates that:
- The quality and availability of support services is increasing, as is women’s trust in them.
- Community awareness of violence against women and their children is growing.
- The stigma associated with being a victim and seeking help is decreasing.

In 2017–18, 1800RESPECT, the national sexual assault and domestic and family violence counselling service, answered 98,466 first response telephone and online contacts. This was a 54 per cent increase from 2016–17. Trauma specialist counsellors answered 27,968 contacts, a 102 per cent increase from 2016–17.

In 2018–19, first response counsellors answered over 163,000 contacts, a growth of 66 per cent from the preceding year.

The prevalence of violence against women in Australia remains largely unchanged. In 2005, approximately 1.5 per cent of women aged 18 years and over had experienced partner violence in the previous 12 months, while in 2016 the figure was 1.7 per cent.

Encouragingly, the gap between prevalence rates and reporting rates is diminishing as more women than ever are feeling able to seek help and support.
The Royal Commission into Family Violence was established in 2016 in the wake of a series of high-profile deaths related to family violence in Victoria.

The Royal Commission was tasked with identifying the most effective ways to:

- prevent family violence
- improve early intervention
- support victims
- hold perpetrators accountable
- develop and refine system responses
- better coordinate community and government responses
- evaluate and measure the success of strategies, frameworks, policies, programs and services.

The Royal Commission recommended strategies to transform Victoria’s approach so as to:

- better reflect the experience of victims and survivors
- be responsive to their needs
- ultimately prevent this violence from occurring in the first place.

These strategies included a sustained focus on: effective ways to stop perpetrators, prevention of violence, early intervention, recovery and resilience.

The Royal Commission made a total of 227 recommendations in its March 2016 report, and the Victorian Government publicly committed to implementing each of these. In fact, as of January 2019, 120 of the recommendations had been implemented.

While based in Victoria, the Royal Commission has resulted in increased public awareness of domestic and family violence at the national level.

As a result, there has been a focus on ensuring that relevant strategies, programs, services and approaches:

- recognise the diversity of victims and survivors’ experiences
- prioritise their needs.

Stop it at the Start is the national primary prevention campaign to reduce violence against women and their children. It encourages adults to reflect on their attitudes and have conversations about respectful relationships with young people.

Aimed at the adults who influence young people aged 10–17 years — such as parents, family members, teachers, coaches, community leaders and employers of young people — the campaign shines a light on the role each of us plays in influencing respectful behaviour.

The response to the campaign has far exceeded expectations:

- The television commercials were viewed over 45 million times online.
- The website received 1.3 million page views.
- There were over 68,000 downloads of key resources, such as a guide to help influencers start a conversation about respect.

Importantly, evaluation research shows the campaign is already starting to have an impact.

More people now understand the link between disrespect and violence against women. Further, 70 per cent of people recalled an element of the campaign, with 60 per cent of those taking action — such as starting a conversation about respect or changing behaviour towards others. This means that 42 per cent of all people in a position of influence took action as a result of the campaign.
FOURTH ACTION PLAN
NATIONAL PRIORITIES

THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES INFORM ALL PRIORITY AREAS AND ACTIONS UNDER THE FOURTH ACTION PLAN

1. Reducing violence against women and their children is everyone’s business and we all have a role to play.
2. We must address gender inequality to stop violence — women will never be safe if they are not equal.
3. The voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must inform responses to the family and sexual violence experienced in their communities.
4. We must address the diversity and lived experiences of women and their children affected by violence.
5. Where children are involved, responses must be age appropriate, child-centred, and tailored to their specific needs and stages of development.
6. Actions must be evidence-based and help build an understanding of what works to respond effectively to, and prevent, violence against women and their children.
7. System and service responses must work to end the cycle of violence, keep people safe and prevent domestic, family and sexual violence.
8. A holistic approach to working with perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence is needed across all actions — informing prevention, deterrence, rehabilitation, and ensuring accountability.
We have to create a society that is more equal in terms of gender equality, and one that better reflects our diversity and difference, and in doing that we will actually come to address some of the key drivers of violence against women and children in the first place.

— Natasha Stott Despoja, Our Watch, Board Chair (15 April 2019)

Prevention is the most effective way to eliminate violence against women and their children, and that is why it is at the core of the Fourth Action Plan. Primary prevention means stopping violence before it occurs. It means changing the behaviours and norms, in all areas of society, that excuse, justify or even promote violence against women and their children. Figure 3 outlines the distinction between primary prevention and other work to address violence against women and their children.

Primary prevention is significant because out of the three levels of prevention, it has the potential to have the largest impact on reducing the prevalence of violence against women and their children. Secondary (early intervention) and tertiary prevention — while essential — are unlikely to significantly reduce the rates of violence against women and their children on their own. Responsibility for the prevention of violence against women must move from being the focus of a small but dedicated specialist sector, to become a core priority for all industries and areas of government. From health and other service providers, to police and justice systems, to workplaces and communities — every Australian has a part to play.

**ACTIONS**

1. Advance gender equality and respect for women through effective primary prevention initiatives.
2. Improve coordination across primary prevention activities to maximise their impact on community attitudes and behaviours that lead to violence.
3. Implement targeted primary prevention activities designed by, and tailored for, the specific communities they are intended to support.
4. Address intergenerational trauma for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through primary prevention, including holistic healing strategies, and by strengthening connections to culture, language, knowledge and identity.
5. Promote healthy and safe relationships and build gender equitable values through initiatives for children and young people.
Women have been clear that they and their families must play a key role in decision-making. Indigenous peoples must be acknowledged as equal and indispensable partners in designing policy and legislative frameworks that enable diverse solutions, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to determine their own futures, on their own terms.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and communities continue to experience disproportionately high rates of violence. Discrimination, racism and intergenerational trauma are some of the significant drivers that impact Indigenous women. These drivers are exacerbated by factors including:

- alcohol and substance abuse
- mental health issues
- inadequate housing and overcrowding
- poverty
- unemployment
- lack of access to culturally competent services.

We must be clear that family violence is not part of Australian culture, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. Culture and family is a central and key protective factor that supports communities to be free of violence.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women must be supported to make choices that will protect and promote their own and their families’ long-term physical, emotional and cultural safety if they are to break the cycle of trauma and violence.

The Fourth Action Plan recognises that preventing and responding to family violence starts with a recognition of individual, family and community strengths. It provides greater support for the work already being progressed within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities focussed on effective prevention. This is achieved by prioritising cultural healing, rebuilding proud traditions and support networks, and strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity.

The level and impact of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is far more prevalent and severe compared to that in non-Indigenous communities (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Comparison of Family Violence between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Families**

Relative to non-Indigenous women, Indigenous women are:

- 32 times more likely to be hospitalised from family violence
- 3.4 times more likely to experience sexual assault
- 11 times more likely to die due to assault

June Oscar AO, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner (25 June 2019)
During the COAG National Summit on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates told us that this higher rate of violence stems from deep issues around dispossession, intergenerational trauma and gender inequality.46 We also heard from many delegates about how the impact of past government practices and more recent experiences of incarceration, child removal and systemic racism prevent many Indigenous Australian victims from reporting violence and seeking help from police and other services.47

A range of complex and sensitive factors drive this. They include:

- mistrust of mainstream legal and support services to understand and respect the needs, autonomy and wishes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- lack of understanding of legal rights and options and how to access supports at times of crisis
- fear and experience of having children removed by child protection services
- potential social isolation from family and community as a result of taking action
- exposure and interaction with the justice system that can further perpetuate harm
- emphasis on incarceration as a way of rehabilitating perpetrators in place of alternative models which may better support family reunification and community-led healing.48

Solutions to address violence must effectively engage and equip Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in decision-making processes that affect their lives. Service providers and governments must work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and with community-controlled organisations to develop solutions that are culturally appropriate and trauma-informed, and can lead to healing for families and communities.

This requires:

- investing in quality services and workforces
- fostering innovation in service design and delivery
- focussing on prevention, by drawing on community strength and resilience.

Governments must facilitate community-led and co-designed delivery of services with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Increased capacity of resources and high standards of service are essential to ensure services are equipped to respond to the underlying complex issues such as trauma, disability and remoteness that can affect both victims and perpetrators.

Innovation must be promoted through:

- place-based approaches46
- alternative therapeutic models for victim support
- the rehabilitation of men who use violence.

Mainstream services must do more to adapt their models to meet the needs of individuals and communities. The strength and knowledge of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations should be leveraged by the sector to create new opportunities for leadership and collaboration in the development of culturally appropriate multidisciplinary responses.

However, this is only part of the solution. Genuine effort requires coordination across governments, service providers and communities to address the multiple and intersectional drivers of family violence. It is important to include men in these processes.

ACTIONS

6. Value and engage the expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men, communities and organisations to lead in the creation and implementation of community-led solutions to build and manage change.

7. Build the workforce capability to ensure delivery of high quality, holistic, trauma-informed and culturally safe supports that respond to the complex needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.

8. Develop innovative and alternative models for victim and perpetrator support that contribute to safe healing and sustainable behaviour change.

9. Address both the immediate impacts and deep underlying drivers of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through collective action with governments, service providers and communities.

While responding to the immediate impacts of family violence is a significant priority, efforts must also prioritise improved outcomes in justice, health, housing, employment and education. Service providers and agencies outside of the family violence sector must also be equipped to take a greater role in driving this change so the broader service system can better respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Source: Our Watch, Changing the Picture

3 IN 5
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have experienced physical or sexual violence perpetrated by a male intimate partner.
Domestic, family and sexual violence is experienced by women of all backgrounds. We must learn from the diverse lived experiences of victims and survivors to understand what works for them.

Quality service responses should:
- prioritise the needs and voices of victims and survivors
- show an understanding of different experiences of trauma
- take into account the needs and experiences of different cultures.

Ultimately, services and supports must not discriminate against any victims and survivors. It is important to consider gender inequality together with other forms of social discrimination and disadvantage. No two women’s experiences are the same. Race, sexuality, gender and disability, amongst other forms of identity, can impact the way a woman experiences violence (see Figure 5).

*Source: Adapted from Victorian Government Diversity and Intersectionality Framework, 2019*
Violence against women and their children can be exacerbated within certain settings and where gender inequality intersects with other forms of disadvantage and discrimination.

For example, rates of violence are higher for certain groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and in certain settings, such as prisons. Violence is less visible and less understood for some groups in the community. Some women, such as migrant and refugee women, older women, and women living in rural and regional areas, face additional barriers to accessing support. Women can also be at higher risk of experiencing violence at particular life stages, such as while pregnant or while separating from a relationship, and young women experience higher rates of sexual assault.

Women with disability experience significantly higher levels of all forms of violence. Nine in 10 women with intellectual disability report experiencing sexual assault. Violence against women with disability is also more diverse in nature. While women with disability face many of the same forms of domestic, family and sexual violence, women with disability also experience and are at more risk of particular forms of violence, such as forced sterilisation, seclusion and restrictive practices, and experience violence in a range of institutional and service settings such as in residential institutions and aged care facilities.

Many women in prison have histories of victimisation, including childhood sexual abuse and intimate partner violence. It is estimated that 87 per cent of incarcerated women are victims of sexual, physical or emotional abuse in either childhood (63 per cent) or adulthood (78 per cent), with the majority victims of multiple forms of abuse. The prison system can often exacerbate trauma for female criminal offenders with such histories. Female offenders who are victims and survivors of sexual violence are likely to be dealing with a complex range of issues related to their experience of victimisation and disadvantage.

Children who experience, or witness, acts of abuse and violence in their homes are also victims in their own right. They may experience psychological, behavioural and health issues over the course of their lives as a result. Their wellbeing, development, identity and connection to culture may also be impacted negatively.

Children who witness abuse before the age of 15 are also at an increased risk of experiencing intimate partner violence themselves.

Historically, the voices of children have been ignored. This has put the health and wellbeing of child victims and survivors at further risk. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are disproportionately represented in child protection and out-of-home care systems.

The National Plan supports the reforms under COAG’s National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009–2020. The National Plan acknowledges that children’s experiences of domestic and family violence are different from the experiences of adults. As such, it is important that our responses to these experiences take into account the age of the victims and survivors and their different experiences.

EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE WITH DIVERSE SEXUALITY AND GENDER

At least 11 per cent of Australians identify as having a diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or intersex status.

A significant proportion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and/or queer (LGBTIQ) people report experiencing various forms of violence and abuse in intimate partner and family relationships. The impacts of these are compounded by discrimination and stigma experienced in social and community settings and for young same-sex attracted and gender diverse people in school and in the family.

Research undertaken in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States over the last two decades has consistently identified a number of common abusive behaviours where an abusive partner will denigrate aspects of an LGBTIQ person’s sexuality, gender identity or intersex status to create fear, confusion and/or isolation from potential sources of support.

Threats or actual behaviours can focus on ‘outing’ or revealing a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, gender history, intersex or HIV status to family, social networks or workplaces, in order to control and restrict behaviour. These are some of the most commonly identified issues that LGBTIQ people name when identifying abusive tactics used against them.

Transgender, gender diverse and people with intersex variations report that there may be subtle or more overt coercion by a partner to adhere to social norms around gender and/or physical appearance.

Rates of victimisation for intimate partner violence have been found to be similar or even higher among LGBTIQ people in comparison with rates for non-LGBTIQ individuals.
All Australian communities experience violence against women and their children, regardless of cultural background. Some groups can experience different and complex forms of violence.

These can include:
- newly-arrived migrants
- refugees and asylum seekers
- culturally and linguistically diverse communities
- international students
- people travelling on working holiday visas.

Research shows some migrant and refugee women may experience emotional abuse and controlling behaviours by their partner or extended family using immigration or visa status. International students and those travelling on working holiday visas may be exposed to specific vulnerabilities that can contribute to abuse in intimate relationships.

These can include:
- exploitation of lack of accommodation and employment opportunities
- financial abuse
- lack of support from education institutions
- control over their mobility.

Some women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may experience complex forms of violence and harmful cultural practices including:
- early and forced marriage
- female genital mutilation/cutting
- dowry abuse.

These experiences can be influenced by many factors. For example:
- Some cultural beliefs, traditions and attitudes that reinforce gender inequality can increase the risk of violence within different communities.
- Racism, bias and other forms of discrimination may impact people’s experiences of violence, their help-seeking behaviour and their experience with service providers.
- Immigration and settlement in a new country can lead to the breakdown or weakening of cultural norms and practices that support respectful relationships or sanction against the use of violence.
- In some contexts, religious and/or cultural values that prioritise family unity and community can serve as barriers to divorce or reporting of violence, and make domestic, family and sexual violence a taboo subject.
- Limited English language skills, and limited contact with family, friends or communities in the country of origin can create situations of dependency. Social isolation may be used as a tool by perpetrators to enable situations for violence to occur. Isolation can also create barriers to accessing services and seeking support.
- Previous experiences of violence or trauma can be a risk factor for both perpetration and victimisation of violence, and some culturally and linguistically diverse communities are more likely to have experienced certain types of abuse or trauma.

EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN FROM CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

All interventions must be appropriate, accessible and inclusive for people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities across Australia. This means:
- developing culturally sensitive content
- ensuring meaningful participation of target communities in intervention design, implementation and evaluation
- supporting and empowering communities in culturally appropriate ways to enable them to address the factors that can perpetuate violence in their communities.

ACTIONS

10. Implement community-led and tailored initiatives to address the unique experiences and needs of communities affected by multiple forms of discrimination or inequality.

11. Deliver policies and services to address the disproportionate impact of violence on particular groups.

12. Better equip the service system and communities to address complex forms of violence and harmful cultural practices including early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, dowry abuse and human trafficking.
The recent high-profile stories of abuse have emphasised the importance of victims of sexual harassment and assault being able to come forward, tell their stories and be believed.

Kate Jenkins, Sex Discrimination Commissioner (5 March 2018)

Sexual violence can be both a form of domestic and family violence and a standalone crime. Like domestic and family violence, sexual violence is gendered, which means that more women experience sexual assault and sexual harassment than men.

Reported rates of sexual assault continue to rise. Between 2016 and 2017, the number of reported sexual assaults increased by 8 per cent across Australia. Despite this, many experiences of sexual assault are not reported for a number of reasons. More than 70 per cent of sexual assault incidents are not reported to police, and only about one in 10 reported incidents results in a guilty finding in court. Despite recent changes to legislation, there are still many barriers that make it difficult for women to report and access services.

Some of these barriers include women not being believed and, as a result, women not trusting the criminal justice system.

Some groups of women experience more barriers when reporting sexual assault and accessing services, including facing stigma and discrimination. These women include:
- women with disability
- culturally and linguistically diverse women
- sex workers.

Too many Australians (1 in 5) are willing to excuse violence as part of a ‘normal’ gender dynamic in a relationship.

Most Australians have accurate knowledge of violence against women and do not endorse this violence.

However, the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women survey found that:

- 2 in 5 Australians believe that women make up false reports of sexual assault in order to punish men.
- 1 in 3 Australians believe that a female victim who does not leave an abusive partner is partly responsible for the abuse continuing.
- 1 in 8 Australians believe that if a woman is raped while she is drunk or affected by drugs she is at least partly responsible.
All services must respond to women who report or share experiences of sexual violence, in a safe and supportive way.

Points of contact for victims and survivors include:

- hospitals
- legal services
- disability support services
- schools
- the police
- corrective services
- courts.

It is important that workers have the knowledge and skills to respond appropriately to victims and survivors to ensure they can access specialist services that are qualified to help.

This means that workers must:

- be trained in responding to trauma
- understand how to respond to victims and survivors in ways that take their diverse lived experience into account.

Above all, victims and survivors must be heard, believed and supported in their recovery.

"I did not report… I had no idea who to confide in and I was made to feel like it was all my fault, that I deserved it."

Submission No. 210 to the Australian Human Rights Commission, University Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Project (2017)

For the first time, the National Plan specifically addresses sexual violence through primary prevention and raising awareness and understanding of issues such as gender equality, consent and healthy sexual relationships, particularly for young people. It also aims to stop victim-blaming, particularly for people who are at greater risk of experiencing violence.

The Fourth Action Plan’s focus on prevention, changing attitudes, and addressing sexual violence in its own right will contribute to reducing sexual harassment. Sexual harassment can offend, humiliate and intimidate victims.

It is characterised by perpetrators:

- making unwelcome sexual advances
- making requests for sexual favours
- engaging in other non-consensual conduct of a sexual nature.

Sexual harassment can occur in public spaces, in the workplace, online and at home, and the statistics paint a concerning picture. Around 85 per cent of Australian women have been sexually harassed at some point in their lives, and there has been a marked increase in the prevalence of workplace sexual harassment.

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Submission No. 210 to the Australian Human Rights Commission, University Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Project (2017)

13. Prevent sexual violence and sexual harassment before it happens through national and targeted initiatives that promote informed consent, bodily autonomy and respectful relationships.

14. Deliver client-centred, trauma-informed, specialised and consistent support to victims and survivors of sexual violence.

15. Strengthen the capacity of all sectors to address sexual harassment to ensure women are safe at work, while studying, in public and online.

TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED ABUSE

As mobile and digital technology has grown and improved, there are new opportunities and greater risks for women and their children.

New technology allows for better access to information and links to service providers, such as those with online platforms. This enables women and their children who have experienced violence to report violence more quickly than previously. In addition, online movements of women sharing their experiences of sexual harassment and sexual violence can help women feel validated and less alone in their experiences, which can improve their confidence in reporting.

However, this new technology also increases women’s experiences of different forms of domestic, family and sexual violence or backlash. Digital technology is linked to new and emerging forms of violence against women, such as online sexual harassment, stalking and non-consensual sharing of intimate images (image-based abuse).

In one survey, 98 per cent of specialist staff said they had clients who had reported experiencing technology-facilitated stalking and abuse.

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NATIONAL PRIORITY FIVE

IMPROVE SUPPORT AND SERVICE SYSTEM RESPONSES

We know that when people are aware that support is available and they feel confident that they will be listened to and believed, they are more likely to reach out for support. And this is so important for people who are experiencing the impacts of trauma.

Chrystina Stanford, Canberra Rape Crisis Centre CEO, and member of the 1800RESPECT National Sector Advisory Group (10 April 2019)

The ways that current service systems are set up to respond to domestic and family violence are complex and can be hard for people to navigate. People may seek support from many different places and at different times.

Service systems must work together to:
- reduce the impact of violence on women and their children
- prioritise their safety
- prevent perpetrators from using violence again.

All governments continue to work hard to improve service responses to ensure women and their children have access to help when they need it. This includes improving how violence is reported and identified, and reducing the stigma associated with seeking support.

All jurisdictions contribute to the Death Review Network, which helps jurisdictions and the sector to learn from the worst situations to build more effective service systems. Figure 6 on page 37 shows how victims and survivors interact with many services, beyond specialist services. This highlights the vital role that different sectors — including education, health, housing, police, justice and social services — play in identifying and supporting people.

Early intervention is key in recognising and responding to early warning signs in order to:
- stop the escalation of violence against women and children
- protect victims from immediate harm
- prevent violence from escalating further.

Safe, accessible and stable accommodation is crucial for the safety and recovery of women and their children impacted by violence.

In 2017–18, 42 per cent of people seeking support from a specialist homelessness service reported experiencing domestic and family violence at some point during the reporting period. Despite this, services are often limited (including crisis accommodation) and people are required to travel long distances to access the services they need.

There are additional challenges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children living in remote communities. Services may rely on them leaving their community or extended family and existing support systems. Service responses need to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children to safely stay in their communities.

Actions

16. Enable workforces to provide trauma-informed support with a focus on safety and recovery to victims and survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence.

17. Collaborate across services, sectors and workforces to ensure that responses to women affected by domestic, family and sexual violence are coordinated, meet women’s needs, avoid women having to retell their story and promote their recovery.

18. Improve access to and embed trauma-informed support for perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence to prevent reoffending and promote rehabilitation and treatment.

19. Build the evidence base to inform responses to domestic, family and sexual violence by strengthening the focus on what works to reduce violence, improving data and supporting the Fourth Action Plan priorities.

20. Improve access to suitable and safe accommodation within their communities for women who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence.
Formal support services need specialised skills and systems to meet the unique experiences and needs of all Australian women and their children experiencing violence, particularly those affected by multiple forms of discrimination or inequality.

Within the population of women who have experienced violence, or are currently experiencing violence, the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that one in six are currently in the workforce.a

Women are more likely to talk to someone else about a violent incident than they are to tell police or contact a specialised agency. Most speak to a friend, a neighbour or an immediate family member.

A full-time GP is likely to be seeing one to two female patients each week who have experienced family violence.b

42 per cent of people seeking support from a specialist homelessness service reported experiencing domestic and family violence at some point during 2017–18.c

Family and domestic violence has significant implications for a victim’s economic security and independence. This can also affect a victim’s financial wellbeing and put them at financial risk.d

Informal support mechanisms can play an equally important role in recognising, referring and supporting victims and survivors.

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INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Violence against women and their children is widely recognised as a fundamental violation of human rights.

Australia is taking a leading role on the international stage, to promote gender equality and eliminate violence against women and girls. The Fourth Action Plan shows how Australia has taken a leadership role in violence prevention, a key part of how Australia meets its international commitments.

As a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Australia commits to:
- exercise due diligence to prevent violence against women
- provide services to victims and survivors of abuse
- ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice.

Australia reports periodically to CEDAW. This is an important process that holds Australia to account to ensure that our priorities at a national level align with our international commitments.

The Australian Government is a strong supporter of ending and preventing violence against women and their children internationally.

This is reflected in our engagement in the:
- Human Rights Council
- United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
- Women, Peace and Security Agenda.

Australia is also a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and is committed to upholding the rights of the child. The interests of the child are always the primary considerations for any actions involving or affecting children.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), provides a new global consensus for action to promote gender equality and address violence against women. This includes a standalone goal on gender equality (Goal 5) and specific targets on ending violence against women. In addition, other goals related to poverty, education and health cannot be achieved without addressing violence against women. Achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment is integral to each of the 17 development goals.
GOAL 5. GENDER EQUALITY

The Sustainable Development Goals include a standalone goal on gender equality (Goal 5) and specific targets on ending violence against women.

Sustainable development cannot be achieved without addressing violence against women and girls. And addressing violence against women and girls will contribute to achieving multiple development outcomes.

Goal 5 targets
5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere
5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation

Violence against women costs countries billions
Violence against women causes death, disability and poor health
Violence against women reduces girls’ access to education
Violence against women and girls face violence when accessing water and sanitation

Violence against women limits women’s access to decent work
Violence against women entrenches other inequalities
Violence against women limits women’s mobility and safe use of public spaces
Violence against women is often perpetrated with impunity

1. NO POVERTY
3. GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING
4. QUALITY EDUCATION
6. CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION
8. DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH
10. REDUCED INEQUALITIES
11. SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES
16. PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS

GLOBAL MOVEMENTS

Recently, women across the globe have been publicly sharing their experiences of sexual violence through collective action and social media, generating a global conversation between victims and survivors across the world, highlighting their experiences of sexual harassment and sexual violence. It is vital that we ensure commitments to achieve gender equality are translated into real action and real change to end violence against women and their children in Australia.

STATE SECURITY AND PEACEFULNESS

The links between the security of women and security of states are being increasingly recognised. Addressing violence against women has broad consequences for state and regional security and vice versa. It has been found that the overall level of violence against women and their children better predicts national and regional peacefulness, as opposed to other indicators such as levels of democracy and wealth.

Women and girls often face devastating human rights violations, including high levels of sexual and gender based violence, in conflict-affected settings. Women are also significantly under-represented and often overlooked in formal peace processes. On the other hand, women can be powerful agents in preventing conflict and building peace.

Efforts under the Fourth Action Plan can help contribute to broader state security and Australia’s standing in the region. At the same time, Australia is committed, under the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, to contribute to realising the full and meaningful participation, as well as the protection of human rights, of all women and girls.
The Commonwealth and state and territory governments are implementing many other significant initiatives that complement and support the National Plan. These initiatives contribute to ensuring women and their children are safe by supporting them in all aspects of their lives and throughout their lifetime.

**Commonwealth**
- National Housing and Homelessness Agreement
- National Women’s Health Strategy 2020–2030
- Women's Economic Security Package
- National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
- Closing the Gap Indigenous Advancement Strategy
- National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022
- Migration Amendment (Family Violence and Other Measures) Act 2018
- Modern Slavery Act 2018
- Family Advocacy and Support Service
- National Drug Strategy 2017–2026
- National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces
- National Plan to Protect Australia’s Children 2009-2022

**New South Wales**
- NSW Homelessness Strategy 2018–2023
- NSW Women’s Strategy 2018–2022
- OCHRE: NSW Government Plan for Aboriginal Affairs
- NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016–2021: Safer Lives for Women, Men and Children
- NSW Sexual Assault Strategy 2018–2021
- NSW Strategic Plan for Children and Young People 2016–2019
- NSW Ageing Strategy 2016–2020

**NSW Disability Strategy 2010–2020**
- Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JURISDICTION</th>
<th>HOUSING</th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
<th>INDIGENOUS</th>
<th>FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE</th>
<th>CHILDREN AND YOUTH</th>
<th>ELDER ABUSE</th>
<th>DISABILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ACT          | ACT Housing Strategy  
| Tasmania     | Affordable Housing Strategy 2015–2025  
|             |         |       |            |                | Safe at Home, Tasmania’s integrated criminal justice response to family violence | Child and Youth Wellbeing Framework | Strong, Liveable Communities: Tasmania’s Active Ageing Plan 2017–2022 |
|             |         |       |            |                | | Youth At Risk Strategy | | |
| Northern Territory | Northern Territory Homelessness Strategy 2018–2023  
Territory Families Regional Youth Services Framework | The Best Opportunities in Life: Northern Territory  
Child and Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019–2028  
Safe, Thriving and Connected: Generational Change for Children and Families | Strong, Liveable Communities: Tasmania’s Active Ageing Plan 2017–2022 |
|             |         |       |            |                | | | |
| South Australia | Housing and Homelessness Strategy (in development) | Committed to Safety — A framework for addressing domestic, family and sexual violence in South Australia  
Future Directions for Ageing Well (in development — consultations 2019) | Disability Inclusion Act 2018  
Disability Inclusion Plans (process being developed) |
|             |         |       |            |                | | | |
| Western Australia | Affordable Housing Strategy 2010–2020  
The 10 Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030  
Early Years Initiative Premiers Priorities: A Bright Future | WA Strategy to respond to the Abuse of Older People (Elder Abuse) (in development) | 10-year State Disability Plan (in development) |
At the start of the National Plan, governments agreed on six overarching National Outcomes to work towards. This also included how the success of each outcome would be measured over time, based on the best available data.

The outcomes are:

1. Communities are safe and free from violence, as measured by increased intolerance of violence against women and their children (using the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey [NCAS]).

2. Relationships are respectful, as measured by improved knowledge, skills and behaviour of respectful relationships by young people (using the NCAS).

3. Indigenous communities are strengthened, as measured by: the reduction in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who consider that family violence, assault and sexual assault are problems for their communities and neighbourhood; and increased proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are able to have their say within community on important issues including violence (using the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey [NATSISS]).

4. Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence, as measured by increased access to, and responsiveness of, services for victims of domestic, family and sexual violence (using Personal Safety Survey [PSS] and administrative data).

5. Justice responses are effective, as measured by increased rates of women reporting domestic, family and sexual violence to police (using PSS and administrative data).

6. Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account, as measured by a decrease in repeated partner victimisation (using PSS and administrative data).

Since 2010, governments have continued to invest in the national evidence base and data sources to better understand and address violence against women and their children.

The focus is on improving data on all cohorts of women at risk of violence and on all forms of violence that women and their children could experience.

Examples of data sources that can enhance our understanding of violence include the:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) crime statistics
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) compendia on domestic, family and sexual violence, the most recent of which was released in 2019.

Under the Fourth Action Plan, governments will:

- work together to build on the current measures of success
- identify and define clear indicators, and relevant data sources, to measure success
- focus on ‘mining’ existing data and information on violence to provide a useful picture of progress
- work towards addressing key gaps in the data
- use data to continually improve strategies
- continue to invest in the PSS and the NCAS as critical measures of progress towards reducing violence against women and their children.

The ABS will conduct a further wave of the PSS in 2020. The PSS collects information on the nature and extent of violence experienced by men and women in Australia.

The NATSISS provides information on a range of demographic, social, environmental and economic indicators, including estimates of the prevalence of violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The last NATSISS was conducted in 2014–15. The National Aboriginal and Torres Islander Health Survey was conducted in 2016–19 and included an additional module on violence, aligned with the NATSISS.

ANROWS will conduct another wave of the NCAS in 2021. The NCAS is a general population telephone survey of Australians aged 16 years and over, on their attitudes towards, and awareness of, violence against women.
REPORTING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Governments will develop and agree on an enhanced performance monitoring and reporting framework to support the implementation of the Fourth Action Plan, including revised measures of success (with both short and medium-term measures).

Governments will report on their key achievements and progress under the Fourth Action Plan through national progress reports. These reports will be made available to the community and will be placed on the plan4womenssafety website. Reporting will enable all governments to monitor national progress against the long-term objectives of the National Plan, including any changes needed to improve the outcomes of the National Plan.

EVALUATIONS

The Fourth Action Plan and overall National Plan will be evaluated to assess progress against objectives and inform the Australian Government’s future approach to reducing violence against women and their children. An evaluation plan will be developed in consultation with states and territories in the first year of the Fourth Action Plan. The overall evaluation will be informed by separate evaluations of key individual initiatives funded across jurisdictions under the Fourth Action Plan.

BUILDING OUR EVIDENCE BASE

Although the National Plan is supported by growing evidence, the evidence is far from complete. The Fourth Action Plan will expand the evidence, with dedicated research and data projects to support the five national priority areas of the Fourth Action Plan (see pages 5–6). These projects are in addition to the broader ANROWS research program.

The Fourth Action Plan will increase the focus on ‘what works’.

GOVERNANCE

Reducing violence against women and their children is the responsibility of all governments, the community sector, industry and members of the broader community. Governments are jointly responsible for overseeing the Fourth Action Plan.

The Fourth Action Plan has cooperative and collaborative governance arrangements that work to achieve the aims of the National Plan.

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS

Building on its endorsement of the National Plan in February 2011 and its commitment to strengthen efforts to eliminate violence against women and their children, COAG will continue to take collective action to reduce violence through the Fourth Action Plan.

WOMEN’S SAFETY MINISTERS

Women’s Safety Ministers from Commonwealth, state and territory governments are responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Fourth Action Plan, with support from Ministers in other portfolios.

NATIONAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION EXECUTIVE GROUP

The National Plan Implementation Executive Group (ImpEG) consists of senior officials from Commonwealth, state and territory governments. ImpEG is responsible for monitoring and reporting progress to Women’s Safety Ministers on the implementation of the Fourth Action Plan.

ImpEG will also continue to support Women’s Safety Ministers by:
- supporting and monitoring the implementation of the Fourth Action Plan, including coordinating efforts across jurisdictions
- contributing to reporting and evaluation of the National Plan
- driving community engagement
- sharing experiences and best practice between jurisdictions.
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Governments will continue to consult key organisations and people on implementing the Fourth Action Plan, including through existing advisory and consultative forums. This consultation includes interactions between the National Plan and state and territory plans to reduce violence against women and their children.

A new national communications strategy will:

- drive community engagement with the Fourth Action Plan
- build awareness in the community about violence against women and their children and understanding ‘what works’
- support the diverse information and accessibility needs of women and their communities.

FIGURE 8: NATIONAL PLAN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS

RELEVANT COMMONWEALTH MINISTERS

COMMONWEALTH REPORTING

WOMEN’S SAFETY MINISTERS

WOMEN’S SAFETY MINISTERS

NATIONAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION EXECUTIVE GROUP

Senior executive intergovernmental oversight of National Plan policy and implementation

SECTOR ENGAGEMENT

PERFORMANCE MONITORING

RESEARCH AND DATA

EVALUATIONS

STATE AND TERRITORY REPORTING

REGULAR MINISTERIAL REPORTING

FOURTH ACTION PLAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

PLAN4WOMENSSAFETY.DSS.GOV.AU
GLOSSARY OF TERMS

1800RESPECT
The national sexual assault and domestic and family violence counselling service, www.1800respect.org.au. It provides confidential information, counselling and support services. The service is open 24 hours to support people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

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 disabilities.

ANROWS
Refers to 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 and their children.

BISEXUAL
A person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to people of both sexes.

CO–DESIGN
Refers to a collaborative process for designing, implementing and evaluating community programs and services. The end-users and people who are impacted by the program or service are engaged in the process from the beginning. In the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, it means involving communities in ways that are respectful and empowering.

DEATH REVIEW NETWORK
Refers to the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network, which was established in 2011. It represents a unique collaboration between death review mechanisms for domestic and family violence across Australia. Network members have specialist expertise in domestic and family violence related issues. They also have access to extensive information pertaining to domestic and family violence deaths.

DIVERSE SEXUAL ORIENTATION
Refers to different patterns of emotional and sexual attraction relating to an individual’s personal and social identity — for example, homosexuality, bisexuality and heterosexuality.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
Refers to acts of violence that occur between two people who are, or were, in an intimate relationship. It includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse. While there is no single definition, the central element of domestic violence is behaviour motivated by gendered drivers of violence that can involve controlling a partner through fear, coercion and intimidation — for example by using behaviour that is violent and threatening. In most cases, the violent behaviour is part of a range of tactics to exercise power and control over women and their children, and can be both criminal and non-criminal.

DOWRY ABUSE
Dowry is a practice in some cultures referring to money, property or gifts that are often, but not always, transferred by a woman’s family to her husband upon marriage. Dowry abuse is where there is a presence of coercion, violence or harassment associated with the giving or receiving of dowry at any time before, during or after marriage. Dowry-related abuse commonly involves claims that dowry was not paid and coercive demands for further money or gifts from a woman and her family.

EARLY INTERVENTION
Refers to identification and support for individuals and families experiencing family violence with the aim of stopping early signs of violence escalating, preventing a recurrence of violence or reducing longer-term harm.

EARLY AND FORCED MARRIAGE
Early marriage, also known as child marriage, is any marriage that involves one or both parties who are under the age of 18 years. Forced marriages are marriages where one or both parties have not given their full and free consent to the union and where methods of force, coercion, and threats are often used to ensure the marriage takes place. A ‘child marriage’ is considered a form of forced marriage either because of the methods used to force one or both parties to participate in the union, or due to the fact that one or both parties are under the age of 18 years and therefore unable to provide informed consent.

ELDER ABUSE
The World Health Organization describes elder abuse as ‘a single, or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust which causes harm or distress to an older person’. Elder abuse can take various forms such as financial, physical, psychological and sexual. It can also be the result of intentional or unintentional neglect.

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.
FAMILY VIOLENCE
Refers to violence between family members, as well as between intimate partners. It involves the same sorts of behaviours as described for domestic violence, but includes the broader range of marital and kinship relationships in which violence may occur. For this reason, it is the most widely used term to identify the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as it captures the broader issue of violence within extended families, kinship networks and community relationships, as well as intergenerational issues. Family violence is also a relevant term when referring to complex forms of violence where family and in-laws, as well as other family members of the abusive spouse, can both arrange for violent acts to be committed against the victim or are themselves abusive toward the victim.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION/CUTTING
Refers to a cultural practice that occurs in many countries and cultures around the world where the external female genitalia are either partially or totally removed for non-medical reasons.

FINANCIAL ABUSE
Refers to when another person manipulates decisions or controls access to money or property without consent. Financial abuse can include someone taking control of household finances, limiting access to funds or forcing someone to spend money or sell property.

FORCED STERILISATION
Refers to the process of removing or compromising an individual's reproductive organs without their free and full consent.
PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Refers to one form of domestic violence. It can include punching, hitting, slapping, whipping, hitting with objects, kicking, stomping, shoving, throwing, burning, stabbing, choking, and damaging property.

Physical violence can be fatal due to physical injury intentionally caused by the perpetrator, or unintended consequences of physical abuse inflicted by the perpetrator.

PRIMARY PREVENTION

Refers to actions designed to stop violence before it starts by addressing deep-seated drivers of violence. Primary prevention requires changing the social conditions, such as gender inequality, that excuse, justify or even promote violence against women and their children.

Prevention activities may aim to change individual behaviour, but such change cannot be sustained at a population level in isolation from a broader change in the underlying drivers of such violence across communities, organisations and society as a whole.

A primary prevention approach works across the whole population to address the attitudes, practices and power differentials that drive violence against women and their children.

PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

Refers to actions that are used to threaten, intimidate, harass, belittle and humiliate someone else. It can include threats of violence or death toward a woman or to her children, family, friends, work colleagues or pets.

It can also include isolating women from family and friends, yelling, damaging property, driving at excessive speed, making unfounded accusations of infidelity, interrogating someone and making threats of self-harm or suicide if the woman attempts to leave.

QUEER

An umbrella term to include a range of alternative sexual and gender identities including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender or gender questioning.

RESPONSE

Refers to efforts and interventions used to address existing violence — for example, services such as crisis counselling or police protection. Also known as “Tertiary prevention”, these efforts aim to prevent violence occurring again, by supporting survivors and holding perpetrators of violence to account.

RESTRICTIVE PRACTICES

Refers to any practice or intervention that has the effect of restricting the rights or freedom of movement of a person with disability, with the primary purpose of protecting the person or others from harm.

SECLUSION

Defined as isolating a person in a confined space where they are alone and unable to freely leave.

SECONDARY PREVENTION

See Early intervention.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is defined in the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Cth) as any unwelcome sexual advance, request for sexual favours or conduct of a sexual nature in relation to the person harassed in circumstances where a reasonable person would have anticipated the possibility that the person harassed would be offended, humiliated or intimidated.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

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, or to people who are genderqueer, androgynous, or have other gender identities.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Refers to sexual actions without consent. This can include coercion, physical force, rape, sexual assault with implements, being forced to watch or engage in pornography, enforced prostitution, or being made to have sex with other people.

TECHNOLOGY-FACILITATED ABUSE

Encompasses a wide range of behaviours using communications technology to control, abuse, harass, punish and humiliate. This can include distributing intimate images without consent via digital platforms, restricting access to finances or methods of communication, accessing or modifying private information or correspondence, and alienating the victim from support networks through the use of technology. The non-consensual sharing of intimate images (colloquially referred to as ‘revenge porn’) is a specific form of technology-facilitated abuse that has become particularly prevalent. It can also include monitoring actions, movements and communications through placing applications on phones and computers.

TERTIARY PREVENTION

See Response.

TRANSGERDER

An umbrella term and, for some people, an identity term used to describe all kinds of people who sit outside the gender binary or whose gender identity is different from the sex assigned to them at birth. Transgender people may or may not feel the need to access hormone therapy and/or surgery.

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.

TRAUMA-INFORMED

Trauma-informed care and practice recognises the prevalence of trauma and its impacts on emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of people and communities.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Any act of sexual and gender based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm of coercion, in public and private life. This definition encompasses all forms of violence that women experience (including physical, sexual, emotional, cultural/spiritual, financial, and others) that are sexual and gender based.

RESPONSIVE PRACTICES

Refers to any practice or intervention that has the effect of restricting the rights or freedom of movement of a person with disability, with the primary purpose of protecting the person or others from harm.

The non-consensual sharing of intimate images (colloquially referred to as ‘revenge porn’) is a specific form of technology-facilitated abuse that has become particularly prevalent. It can also include monitoring actions, movements and communications through placing applications on phones and computers.

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7. Ibid.


9. Ibid.

10. Are we there yet? World Health Organization’s attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality.


18. Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, Change the story.

19. Ibid.


21. Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, Change the story.


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