

First Action Plan 2023–2027

*Under the National Plan to End Violence
against Women and Children 2022–2032*



A joint Australian, state and
territory government initiative



Australian Government

Department of Social Services

Ending gender-based violence in one generation

All governments have committed to ending violence against women and children in Australia in one generation. This signifies our collective agreement that women and children have the right to live free from fear and violence, and to be safe in their homes, workplaces, schools, in the community and online.

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Acknowledgement

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 recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must have a genuine say in the design and delivery of services that affect them for better life outcomes to be achieved. We commit to ongoing partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in implementing and monitoring this Action Plan, in accordance with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Dedication

This Action Plan is dedicated to each and every victim and survivor of gender-based violence. We acknowledge their resistance and resilience. We mourn those whose lives have been lost, including 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 gender-based violence, and whose advice and advocacy have informed the Action Plan.



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Foreword

On 17 October 2022, Australian, state and territory governments jointly released the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 (National Plan).

The National Plan outlines our collective commitment, and demonstrates our shared accountability, to end gender-based violence in one generation. This vision is ambitious, but by working together, we – governments, businesses and the community – can achieve it.

The First Action Plan, in parallel with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan, forms an integral part of commitments made in the National Plan. It sets out the initial scope of activities, areas for action, and responsibility with respect to outcomes, outlining how we will make our vision a reality.

We recognise and champion the significant community efforts underway that play a fundamental role in ending gender-based violence, including activities within businesses and workplaces, the media, schools and higher educational institutions, the justice system, health sectors, and local communities. We recognise how different agencies across our governments play key roles in policies and programs relating to outcomes for women’s and children’s safety, including across health, housing, education and employment.

We recognise the need for all relevant agencies across our governments to actively work together to develop and implement programs relating to outcomes for women’s and children’s safety, including in the areas of health, housing, education and employment.

We acknowledge and thank all those who work tirelessly every day to prevent and respond to all forms of gender-based violence.

We pay tribute to all victim-survivors of gender-based violence and acknowledge their strength and resilience. We thank those who have shared their stories and contributed to the development of the National Plan and this First Action Plan.

Seeking 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.

For information, support and counselling, you can contact:

1800RESPECT	National sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling, information and support service. This service is free and confidential. Available 24/7.	1800 737 732 1800respect.org.au
13YARN	National crisis support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping. We offer a confidential one-on-one yarning opportunity with a Lifeline-trained Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Crisis Supporter who can provide crisis support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.	139276 13yarn.org.au
1800RESPECT for women with disability	Sunny supports people with disability to recognise violence and abuse, understand their rights and take action to protect their safety.	1800respect.org.au/sunny
Full Stop Australia	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 385 578 fullstop.org.au
Lifeline	Lifeline is a suicide prevention service that provides people experiencing a personal crisis with access to 24-hour crisis support.	13 11 14 www.LifeLine.org.au Text 0477 13 11 14 Call, Text and Online Chat services available 24/7

National Suicide Callback Services	<p>Suicide Call Back Service offers free professional 24/7 telephone counselling support to people at risk of suicide, concerned about someone at risk, bereaved by suicide and people experiencing emotional or mental health issues.</p>	<p>1300 659 467 suicidecallbackservice.org.au</p>
Beyond Blue	<p>Beyond Blue provides support programs to address issues related to depression, suicide, anxiety disorders and other related mental health issues.</p>	<p>1300 224 636 for phone counselling BeyondBlue.org.au Online peer support forums and mental health coaching available.</p>
Kids Helpline	<p>Kids Helpline is a free, confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25, that is available for any reason. Qualified counsellors can assist via WebChat, phone or email.</p>	<p>1800 551 800 Web chat available 24/7 kidshelpline.com.au counsellor@kidshelpline.com.au</p>
1800ELDERHelp	<p>ElderHELP is a free call phone number that automatically redirects callers seeking information and advice on Elder abuse to the phone service in their state or territory.</p>	<p>1800 353 374</p>
Rainbow Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline	<p>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.</p>	<p>1800 497 212</p>
Well Mob	<p>Social, emotional and cultural wellbeing online resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.</p>	<p>wellmob.org.au</p>
Men's Referral Service	<p>For anyone in Australia whose life has been impacted by men's use of violence or abusive behaviours. Available 7 days.</p>	<p>1300 766 491 ntv.org.au</p>

Seeking support *continued*

MensLine Australia	MensLine Australia is a free telephone and online counselling service offering support for Australian men anywhere, anytime	1300 78 99 78 MensLine.org.au
Open Arms	Veterans & Families Counselling – Open Arms provides free and confidential counselling to anyone who has served at least one day in the Australian Defence Force (ADF), their partners and families. Counselling can be face-to-face, by telephone or online. 24/7 free and confidential phone support.	1800 011 046 openarms.gov.au
ReachOut	ReachOut is 100% online, anonymous and confidential, and lets young people connect on their terms, from one-to-one peer support and moderated online communities, to tips, stories and resources.	au.reachout.com
Centre for Women's Economic Safety	For women experiencing financial abuse and threats to their economic security and wellbeing.	financialsafety.org.au
My Blue Sky	Provides free legal and migration support to people experiencing forced marriage and other forms of modern slavery in Australia. Phone open Monday-Friday 9am-5pm (Eastern Standard Time)	02 9514 8115 Text +61 481 070 844 Email help@mybluesky.org.au mybluesky.org.au
Say It Out Loud	A national resource for LGBTQ+ communities and service professionals working with people who have experienced sexual, domestic and family violence.	sayitoutloud.org.au
Services Australia	Can help you with family and domestic violence concerns, access payments and connect you to other support services.	servicesaustralia.gov.au

<p>Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National)</p>	<p>Provides access to phone and on site interpreting services in over 150 languages.</p>	<p>Immediate phone interpreting (24 hours, every day of the year) Phone: 131 450 (within Australia) Phone: +613 9268 8332 (outside Australia) tisnational.gov.au</p>
<p>Aboriginal Interpreter Service (AIS)</p>	<p>Helps to address language barriers faced by Indigenous people in the Northern Territory.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The Aboriginal Interpreter Service operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.</p> <p>Standard business hours are 8am and 4:21pm, Monday to Friday.</p> <p>After hours interpreting services are for urgent matters only.</p>	<p>(08) 8999 8353 (24 hours) Fax (08) 8923 7621 Email: ais@nt.gov.au</p>
<p>National Relay Service (NRS)</p>	<p>Telephone relay service allowing people who cannot hear or do not use their voice to communicate with a hearing person over the phone.</p> <p>Available 24 hours a day from anywhere in Australia.</p>	<p>Voice relay number 1300 555 727 TTY number 133 677 SMS relay number 0423 677 767 accesshub.gov.au/about-the-nrs</p>
<p>eSafety Commissioner</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>esafety.gov.au/report</p>

Introduction

All governments have committed to ending gender-based violence in Australia in one generation through the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 (National Plan)*. This signifies our collective agreement that women and children have the right to live free from fear and violence, and to be safe in their homes, workplaces, schools, in the community and online.

This Action Plan is for governments, policy makers, businesses and workplaces, specialist organisations, family, domestic and sexual violence organisations and workers, communities, and people affected by family, domestic and sexual violence. It provides an overview of the national policy response to ending gender-based violence in one generation.

You can use this Action Plan to understand what actions governments are taking to end gender-based violence, what outcomes the actions and activities aim to achieve, and the targets we are working towards.

The National Plan is the national policy framework that guides the work of organisations and institutions across systems and sectors including governments, policy makers, businesses and workplaces, educational institutions, sporting clubs, media, mainstream and specialist organisations and family, domestic and sexual violence organisations and workers in addressing, preventing and responding to gender-based violence in Australia.

It identifies and highlights where collective action and a holistic response across government, not-for-profit and the private sector will strengthen and accelerate outcomes towards our ambition to end gendered violence in one generation.

The National Plan is a long-term collaboration by Australian, state and territory governments. It establishes a 10-year framework that includes two 5-year Action Plans and a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan to detail Australian, state and territory government investment and efforts towards implementing the National Plan. The First Action Plan (2023–2027) sets the foundations for achieving the goals of the National Plan, including the establishment of an evidence-based approach to monitoring and measuring progress. It will be a living document, updated annually to track implementation of activities and to reflect new activities and investments committed to by the Australian, state and territory governments over the life of the First Action Plan.

Progress will be monitored through a performance measurement plan, which is currently under development and expected to be in place in early 2024. As a starting point, 6 national-level meaningful and measurable targets have been developed to measure progress against:

1. Female intimate partner homicide
2. Knowledge of behaviours that constitute family, domestic and sexual violence

Community attitudes towards:

1. Violence against women
2. Rejecting gender inequality
3. Rejecting sexual violence
4. Closing the Gap Target 13



Introduction *continued*

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission will work with the Australian, state and territory governments, local governments and the not-for-profit and private sectors to promote coordinated and consistent monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and will provide annual reports to Parliament on progress towards meeting the objectives of the National Plan to help hold governments accountable.

Implementing the National Plan

Through the National Plan, the Australian, state and territory governments committed to implement actions and investments across four domains:

1. Prevention
2. Early intervention
3. Response
4. Recovery and healing

6 cross-cutting principles have also been agreed to, to be applied when delivering policies, programs and services:

1. Advancing gender equality
2. The diverse lived experiences of victim-survivors are informing policies and solutions
3. Closing the Gap
4. Person-centred coordination and integration
5. Intersectionality
6. People who choose to use violence are held accountable

Actions in this First Action Plan span the four domains of the National Plan. The domains are interconnected, and all actions contribute to addressing one or more of the domains.

The 6 cross-cutting principles have been applied in the development of the 10 Actions of the First Action Plan, and will be applied by the Australian, state and territory governments in the delivery of activities under the First Action Plan.

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 private life.'

'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.

Violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ people is also gender-based violence and shares some of the same drivers of violence against women.

Definitions of domestic violence, family violence and sexual violence are contained in the glossary.

Summary of Actions

Action 1	Advance gender equality and address the drivers of all forms of gender-based violence, including through initiatives aimed to improve community attitudes and norms toward family, domestic, and sexual violence.
Action 2	Improve the national evidence base by working towards consistent terminology and monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and by strengthening collection and sharing of data and evidence.
Action 3	Increase and strengthen the capability of mainstream and specialist workforces to deliver quality services, activities and programs across the four domains, including those that are tailored to respond to the unique experiences of all victim-survivors.
Action 4	Build the capacity of services and systems that support victim-survivors to provide trauma-informed, connected and coordinated responses that support long-term recovery, health and wellbeing.
Action 5	Strengthen systems and services to better hold people who choose to use violence to account, and provide opportunities to support people who have used violence, or are at risk of using violence, to change their behaviours, with the aim of protecting the safety and wellbeing of current and potential victim-survivors.
Action 6	Improve action to prevent and address sexual violence and harassment in all settings, across the four domains of the National Plan.
Action 7	Work in formal partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to ensure policies and services are culturally competent, strengths-based and trauma informed and meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, aligning with the goals of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan.
Action 8	Develop and implement age appropriate, culturally safe programs across all four domains, informed by children and young people, that support recovery and healing from trauma, and intervene early to address violence supportive behaviours.
Action 9	Improve police responses and the justice system to better support victim-survivors through the provision of trauma-informed, culturally safe supports that promote safety and wellbeing, and hold people who choose to use violence to account.
Action 10	Improve access to short-term, medium and long-term housing for women and children experiencing violence, including those living in institutional settings, and support women to stay in their own homes when they choose to do so.

See the Addendum for a list of Australian, state and territory activities being undertaken to implement the Action Plan.

How the Action Plan was developed

Delivering outcomes against the National Plan

A Theory of Change for the National Plan was developed to explain how and why we expect change to occur, as we work to achieve our vision of ending gender-based violence in one generation.

The Outcomes Framework builds on the Theory of Change by providing a focus for continuous improvement through 6 long-term (10+ years) outcomes:

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

The First Action Plan is underpinned by the Theory of Change and Outcomes Framework to ensure the actions and activities being undertaken will result in measurable change, and set the foundation for meeting our vision of ending gender-based violence in one generation.

Drawing on diverse expertise

The Australian, state and territory governments were guided by targeted consultations to inform development of this Action Plan.

This included:

- Victim-survivor groups
- National Plan Advisory Group (NPAG)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family domestic and sexual violence (Advisory Council)
- State and territories' key stakeholders
- Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV) Commission.

Development of this First Action Plan included specific consultation with victim-survivors, beyond the inclusion of victim-survivor expertise on the NPAG and Advisory Council, in line with the National Plan's cross-cutting principle to centre victim-survivors. We sincerely thank them for their participation and invaluable contribution in this process.

Development of the Action Plan also drew on the extensive consultation undertaken with diverse stakeholder groups to inform the National Plan.

Consultations to inform the National Plan engaged over 3,000 individuals through varied mechanisms, including:

- The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence (the Inquiry).¹
- Three public consultation surveys hosted on the DSS Engage online platform. Many written submissions were received in this process.
- The 2021 National Summit on Women's Safety, held in September 2021.²
- Targeted consultations facilitated by the Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Monash University. The findings from these consultations have been published in two Stakeholder Consultation Reports, the National Plan Stakeholder Consultation Report and the *National Plan Victim-Survivor Advocates Consultation Report*.³

These consultations listened to the diverse lived experiences of people from regional and remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disability, young people and older people.

Collective action for change

*“The role of community members, and the way they support, identify and protect their neighbours is crucial. It’s community behaviour change.”
– Victim-survivor⁴*

To reach our goals we need sustained, collective action across society, where everyone plays a role in increasing understanding and awareness of gender inequality and the gendered drivers of violence.

The Action Plan recognises that governments, relevant sectors and communities must work together to achieve our goal of ending violence against women and children in one generation. This includes focusing on actions and activities where there is a benefit in having a national approach.

It also includes all governments and relevant sectors working together in areas such as child protection, health and mental health, aged care, disability support, adult and youth justice, housing, education and employment, to address the social determinants of wellbeing.

Businesses and workplaces, including private, public and not-for-profit organisations, can contribute to preventing gender-based violence by supporting and promoting gender equality, taking a firm stance against sexual harassment, and complying with their obligations to provide leave entitlements to victim-survivors, such as paid Family and Domestic Violence leave.

All employers, including governments, have a specific role to play – from personnel management right through to corporate/strategy – in fostering equality, changing attitudes and behaviours and creating safe places for their employees. Promoting women into leadership roles and reducing barriers for women returning to work by providing flexible work arrangements and parental leave to all employees, regardless of gender will contribute to achieving gender equality.

Corporate Australia also has a role to play in recognising when customers are experiencing violence, and knowing how to respond to it appropriately. This includes designing products and services that are safe from misuse and working to ensure perpetrator accountability.

Specific companies, such as utility providers, financial services, insurance providers, social media platforms and those responsible for online dating apps, should promote safe and positive experiences and actively work to prevent abuse throughout their organisations and products.

The media has an important role to play in the way they report gender-based violence, in promoting perpetrator accountability, moving away from victim-blaming narratives, and raising awareness of support services.

The media can address inequality in how stories involving violence towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are reported in comparison to non-Indigenous women.⁵ The same applies to how the media reports on other marginalised and diverse population groups.

Traditional and social media can also work more broadly to counter gender stereotypes and work to end disrespect towards women, particularly through monitoring online platforms that invite comment from viewers and readers which may be harmful or disrespectful. The media has the power to influence and change prejudicial community attitudes that support violence supportive attitudes.⁶ The media should also be encouraged to provide information in other languages to ensure culturally appropriate services are promoted.

Resources including the Our Watch National Reporting Guidelines 'How to Report on Violence against Women and Children' are available for the media.⁷

As large local employers, with reach into communities through their delivery of community services, local governments are well-placed to influence social change and improve community attitudes and behaviours. Victoria's Free from Violence Local Government Program,⁸ which supports councils to embed gender equality and family violence prevention practices into their work, is a positive example. Stronger collaboration with local councils could produce a more integrated delivery of family violence initiatives.

Schools and educational institutions should engage students in Respectful Relationships Education from very young ages to embed respectful behaviours in relationships, and facilitate and provide resources that counter rigid gender stereotypes. Institutions should also provide a safe environment for children to make disclosures of harm, and provide warm referrals to appropriate support providers.⁹

Programs should be built on the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, which are the primary enabler for building organisational capability of this kind.¹⁰ Schools and other institutions should also work to identify and support boys and young men who may be victim-survivors of domestic, family or sexual violence, as they are at greater risk of perpetrating violence without early intervention.

The health sector must deliver trauma-informed and accessible health services. This sector should take action to support victim-survivors in their short and long-term wellbeing and health needs, and partner with the family, domestic, and sexual violence sectors to ensure wrap-around supports work together.

The aged care and disability sectors should safeguard older Australians and people with disability by equipping staff and volunteers with the skills and knowledge to recognise and respond appropriately to situations of abuse.

Sporting organisations are well-placed to educate children and young people about healthy relationships and gender equality and to intervene and respond to men who are using violence and abuse.¹¹

Faith organisations have a role to play in recognising and responding to gender-based violence and abuse in ways that do not cause further harm to victim-survivors.

Collective action for change *continued*

The roles of governments

This First Action Plan focuses on actions and activities where there is a benefit in having a national approach and recognises the challenges in reforming systems while meeting the needs of all levels of government.

The Australian Government is responsible for taking national and strategic leadership in delivering overarching national programs designed to eliminate family, domestic and sexual violence. This involves supporting consistent national services and organisations such as 1800RESPECT and DV-alert training.

The Australian Government also has a role in providing support for organisations, services and authorities that respond to and address the impacts of gender-based violence, for example through Medicare, social security, NDIS, mental health services, Aboriginal community controlled organisations and broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, industrial relations, and settlement services.

The Australian Government is also responsible for improvements to the federal justice system, reforming the family law system (including improving legal responses and preventing re-traumatisation for victim-survivors involved in these systems), building and maintaining technological solutions for interstate policing solutions, and supporting legal assistance services.

State and territory governments have primary responsibility for funding and delivering state-based services to respond to gender-based violence including justice, policing, housing, health and mental health services, and child protection services. Mainstream services, i.e. those services that are not specialist family, domestic or sexual violence services, also provide entry pathways to more direct specialist services for victim-survivors experiencing gender-based violence.

The Commonwealth, state and territory governments will coordinate to deliver policy, funding and implementation for national strategies. This includes working together to support and deliver the work of key national organisations, including Our Watch and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), and supporting behaviour change campaigns and interventions, which will continue to be a shared responsibility. Other collective initiatives include:

- Primary prevention activities
- Behaviour change campaigns
- Respectful relationships education delivered by schools
- Shared data and research activities
- Men's behaviour change and perpetrator interventions
- Counselling and recovery supports for victim-survivors
- Community services, including family support
- Funding for legal assistance services, including legal aid commissions, community legal centres, women's legal services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services.

The Action Plan will intersect with initiatives already being implemented by jurisdictions under their individual strategies.

Existing initiatives include:

Jurisdiction	Strategy
Australian Capital Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACT Domestic and Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework • ACT Government Domestic and Family Violence Training Strategy • ACT Government Response to the Listen, Take Action to Prevent, Believe and Heal Report
New South Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW Sexual Violence Plan 2022–2027 • NSW Domestic and Family Violence Plan 2022–2027 • NSW Primary Prevention Strategy (currently under development)
Northern Territory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northern Territory’s Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018–2028 • Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework 2020–2028 • Northern Territory Government Domestic and Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework
Queensland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic and family violence prevention strategy 2016–2026 • Prevent. Support. Believe. Queensland’s framework to address sexual violence • Qld Primary Prevention Plan (currently under development)
South Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed to Safety Framework 2019 to June 2022 • South Australia’s Women’s Equality Blueprint 2023–26
Tasmania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasmania’s Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022–2027: Survivors at the Centre – November 2022
Victoria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ending Family Violence – Victoria’s 10 year plan for change • Second Rolling Action Plan 2020–2023 • Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and management Framework • Free from violence: Victoria’s strategy to prevent family violence Victorian Government www.vic.gov.au • Family Violence, Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Strategy police.vic.gov.au • Dhelk Dja Second 3-year Action Plan 2022–25 • Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families Agreement • Building from Strength: 10 Year industry plan for family violence prevention and response 2017–2027
Western Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Path to Safety: Western Australia’s Strategy to Reduce Family and Domestic Violence 2020–2030 • Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy 2022–2032 • Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy (in development)

Collective action for change *continued*

The First Action Plan also intersects with other national initiatives that support systemic change for women and children.

This includes:

- National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence
- Standing Council of Attorneys-General Work Plan to Strengthen Criminal Justice Responses to Sexual Assault 2022–2027
- Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021–2031
- National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021–2031
- National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality (in development)
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy
- National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030
- National Children’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy: Good mental health and wellbeing
- National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement
- National Action Plan for the Health of Children of Young People 2020–2030
- National Women’s Health Strategy 2020–2030
- National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020–2025
- National Housing and Homelessness Plan (10 year strategy in development)
- National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021–2031
- National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems
- National Drug and Alcohol Strategy (2017–2026)
- National Women’s Health Strategy 2020–2030
- National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020–2025
- National Housing and Homelessness Plan (10 year strategy in development)
- National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021–2031
- National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems
- National Drug and Alcohol Strategy (2017–2026)

Actions to drive change

Shared Australian, state and territory actions have been designed to drive change and achieve the vision of the National Plan – to end gender-based violence in one generation.

The National Plan sets out an ambitious long-term policy platform. The First Action Plan is not expected to achieve all ambitions of the National Plan. The Actions under this First Action Plan provide a roadmap that will drive the first 5-year effort toward the change we want to see.

Each action will be implemented through specific activities undertaken by the Australian, state and territory governments. Activities can be found in the Addendum.

We also recognise and champion the significant societal efforts already underway that have an essential role in ending gender-based violence. We will continue to engage with all sectors to facilitate a shared understanding of the National Plan and to promote collective action across the community.

The term 'trauma-informed' is used in some actions. In practice, this means recognising and understanding the impacts of trauma and delivering dignity-affirming care that engenders trust and a feeling of safety.

The term 'healing-informed' is used in the Action Plan and refers to care principles which are strengths-based and specific to cultures and communities. Healing-informed care principles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities are tied to holistic views of health and connection to kinship and Country, and address the sociocultural determinants of health.

Where the term 'mainstream services' is used, it denotes services that are not specific to gender-based violence. These may include local governments, services delivering healthcare, aged care, legal and justice services, education and higher education, income support payments, emergency relief, and other forms of support. This also includes businesses delivering services essential to survival, such as energy and water services, financial services, housing, food or telecommunications.

ACTION 1

Advance gender equality and address the drivers of all forms of gender-based violence, including through initiatives aimed to improve community attitudes and norms toward family, domestic, and sexual violence.

Ending gender-based violence is everybody's business. All governments and society as a whole must work together to address the social, cultural, political, and economic factors that drive gendered violence through a range of national activities including nationally coordinated education and behaviour change campaigns.

Drawing on the *Our Watch Change the Story*,¹² and informed by victim-survivors, we will embed prevention activities in all settings.

We will work to continue to shift community attitudes and social norms that justify, excuse, trivialise, normalise or downplay gender-based violence, and attitudes that continue to place the onus on victim-survivors to stop the violence. We will also work to challenge the condoning of other forms of violence based on discriminatory attitudes such as race, culture, sexuality, gender and level of ability.

This includes challenging stereotyped views 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. Primary prevention works across the whole population to address attitudes, norms, practices, structures and power imbalances that drive gender-based violence.

Evidence-based and resourced Respectful Relationships Education can help create the generational change needed to free Australia from gender-based violence. Governments will continue to deliver evidence-based, Respectful Relationships Education that will support changing violence supportive behaviours. Whole-of-school approaches will improve schools' culture, policies and procedures, promote gender equality among staff and engage parents and guardians.

We will work together to address gender inequality in all its forms. This includes addressing barriers to women's economic and financial security, independence, social, political and economic participation, and decision-making in public life, giving all people equal access to power and resources.

We are restoring Australia's leadership on gender equality by developing the National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality to guide whole-of-community action.

We will work with victim-survivors to ensure primary prevention activities are designed by, and tailored for, the communities that use them, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, LGBTIQ+ people (including Sistergirls and Brotherboys), women and children with disability, children and young people, men and boys, older women, migrant and refugee women, women on temporary visas, and people in remote and rural communities.

ACTION 1 *continued*

What difference will we make?

Implementing this action will work towards the following outcomes as identified in the Outcomes Framework:

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

Responsibility for implementation:

Commonwealth, state and territory governments and local governments; society more broadly including workplaces, institutions, educational and faith-based settings, care settings, frontline services, justice and legal sectors, community and sporting organisations, media and social media organisations, police, data custodians, the family, and domestic and sexual violence sectors.

Domains:

prevention; early intervention.



ACTION 2

Improve the national evidence base by working towards consistent terminology and monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and by strengthening collection and sharing of data and evidence.

Definitions of gender-based violence are a whole-of-system issue. Better aligning definitions across systems and sectors will assist in building more robust national data on the prevalence and types of gender-based violence that perpetrators use and victim-survivors experience, as well as the immediate and long-term impacts of violence. Greater consistency of national terminology will also support a shared understanding of, and consistent response to, gender-based violence in Australia.

Victim-survivors have told us that we need to regularly collect data, conduct surveys, and engage in qualitative research to understand and measure changes in perpetration, prevalence, attitudes, behaviours, and knowledge related to gender-based violence. This will help us to identify mechanisms and early intervention strategies to help people at risk.

The Australian, state and territory governments will continue to work to improve national level data collection and sharing capability and development processes to measure changes in population-level attitudes to gender-based violence.

All governments will continue their ongoing commitment to develop appropriate infrastructure to support evidence building and evidence use, support ethical and strategic research, data collection and data analysis, improve our understanding of the drivers, of violence against women, and implement effective approaches across the domains.

We will expand disaggregated data collection for groups who experience forms of structural violence, expand disaggregated data collection for diverse groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, those from diverse cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds, including migrant and refugee women and children, older women, women and children with disability, and people with diverse sexualities and gender and/or intersex variations. This expanded data will be used to develop targeted activities and track progress toward outcomes.

With improved data and research we will be better able to improve services and understand and respond to the needs of specific cohorts. Community representatives and experts will be engaged to assist with the design of research and datasets and to ensure data is reflective of communities.

We will work towards building the data and evidence base on the nature and characteristics of the perpetration of different types of violence, to identify mechanisms and early intervention strategies. We will work to ensure that data is collected in a way that safeguards individual privacy and minimises re-traumatisation of victim-survivors.

We will further explore how we can measure improvements of victim-survivors health and wellbeing during their recovery and healing.

This Action recognises that jurisdictions are at different points in the development of their data collection processes. While some jurisdictions have robust data collection systems in place, others are at an earlier stage of developing data strategies.

ACTION 2 *continued*

Programs funded by the Commonwealth, states and territories must be rigorously evaluated to ensure accountability and provide reliable information on the success and progress of initiatives. Evaluations must inform future policy. We must have ambitious and measurable targets in place to demonstrate progress over time towards ending gender-based violence.

This Action will work to support Priority Reform 4 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, to 'share access to data and information at a regional level,' ensuring that 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to, and the capability to use, locally-relevant data and information to set and monitor the implementation of efforts to close the gap, their priorities and drive their own development'.¹³

What difference will we make?

Implementing this action will work towards the following outcomes as identified in the Outcomes Framework:

- Systems and institutions effectively support and protect people impacted by gender-based violence.
- Women are safe and respected in all settings, and experience economic, social, political and cultural equality.

Responsibility for implementation:

Commonwealth, state and territory governments; health sector; police and justice system; family, domestic and sexual violence sectors; mainstream services, Our Watch, ANROWS, data custodians and researchers.

Domains:

prevention; early intervention; response; recovery and healing.



ACTION 3

Increase and strengthen the capability of mainstream and specialist workforces to deliver quality services, activities and programs across the four domains, including those that are tailored to respond to the unique experiences of all victim-survivors.

As outlined in the *Our Watch Growing with change: Developing an expert workforce to prevent violence against women*, the success of Australia's efforts to prevent violence against women depends in part on the size and strength of an expert, national primary prevention workforce and the capacity of this workforce to plan, implement, scale-up, monitor and evaluate primary prevention initiatives.

Violence impacts people in different ways. Gender-based violence can be exacerbated where gender inequality intersects with other forms of disadvantage and 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.

Victim-survivors from diverse cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds and migrant and refugee women and children, including those on temporary visas, can face specific challenges. Such challenges can be exacerbated when people are dependent on a partner for residency or have limited access to government supports and services.

Older women can be vulnerable to various forms of violence and abuse, including sexual violence, economic abuse and over and under medicating. Mainstream workforces need to develop the skills to recognise when these forms of abuse are occurring.

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability highlighted the challenges that people with disability face in being heard and responded to when they have experienced violence.¹⁴ This includes women and children,¹⁵ in all settings, including institutions.¹⁶

Gender-based violence against people with disability tends to occur more frequently, over a longer period of time and across a wider range of settings.¹⁷ Violence can be perpetrated by a wider range of people than violence against people without disability, including by carers, guardians and support workers, in both home and institutional settings.¹⁸ We need to ensure people with disability are safe and feel safe from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation, aligning responses with *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031*.¹⁹

Victim-survivors tell us that supports and services must be accessible to all individuals regardless of their background, culture and socioeconomic status.

We will work toward developing and sustaining a strong national workforce by addressing workforce planning, workforce preparation and pathways, sector governance and coordination, working conditions and professional development.

We acknowledge that practitioners and first responders will require training and support to maintain their own mental health and wellbeing while supporting victim-survivors. This is important for reducing the impact of stress and trauma responses in the workforce, which can lead to sub-optimal care for victim-survivors.

ACTION 3 *continued*

We need to improve the capacity and capability of the specialist men's family violence workforce. For programs to be effective, we need to grow the pool of qualified men's family violence workers so that services can recruit and retain staff to meet demand.

Together, the Australian, state and territory governments will support workforces to access training and information to build their ability to deliver evidence-based and trauma-specialist services to all victim-survivors and perpetrators. This includes strengthening the capacity of our prevention workforce and perpetrator intervention workforces, our specialist gender-based violence services, and drawing on the expertise of victim-survivors.

Workforce training should support culturally safe services and healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and build capability for specialised responses for children and young people.

In supporting these services, we will acknowledge the distinction between the family and domestic violence workforce and sexual violence workforce, and the unique needs and requirements of each.

We will also work to increase the capability of mainstream services to identify, respond to and refer people who have experienced gender-based violence. Workers across all settings encounter victim-survivors and people who use violence, but understanding of the drivers of gender-based violence and strategies for responding safely, respectfully, and compassionately are limited. This supports what we have heard from victim-survivors – that it is essential to prioritise trauma-informed care across services and provide training and resources to service providers to strengthen trauma-informed practices.

Through this work, we will incorporate an understanding of, and appropriate response to the specific challenges that diverse communities face in relation to family, domestic and sexual violence. It is important that specialist and mainstream workforces are able to recognise and respond to people with diverse experiences through an intersectional lens, understanding that different approaches may be needed for different people.

This includes culturally safe, community-led policy and practice responses that meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. This will ensure alignment with Closing the Gap priorities, specifically Priority Reform One, sharing decision-making authority with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations, and Priority Reform Three, transforming government organisations to improve accountability and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, to improve and build the capacity in mainstream government institutions, services and responses, so that these are culturally safe and can better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

What difference will we make?

Implementing this action will work towards the following outcomes as identified in the Outcomes Framework:

- Services and prevention programs are effective, culturally responsive, intersectional and accessible.
- Community attitudes and beliefs embrace gender equality and condemn all forms of gendered violence without exception.
- Women are safe and respected in all settings, and experience economic, social, political and cultural equality.
- Systems and institutions effectively support and protect people impacted by gender-based violence.

Responsibility for implementation:

Commonwealth, state and territory governments; family, domestic and sexual violence sectors; other frontline services including Services Australia, NDIS, aged care, health services; police and the justice system, business and corporate sectors; and whole of society.

Domains:

prevention; early intervention; response; recovery and healing.

ACTION 4

Build the capacity of services and systems that support victim-survivors to provide trauma-informed, connected and coordinated responses that support long-term recovery, health and wellbeing.

Victim-survivors need survivor-centred, holistic responses involving multiple sectors that will meet their diverse needs. The Australian, state and territory governments will work together to build the capacity of mainstream and specialist services. In particular, governments will help cultivate a coordinated, integrated and appropriately skilled, qualified and resourced workforce to support all victim-survivors and cater to people's individual background and circumstances.

Experiences of the family and domestic violence support landscape can be fragmented and complex to navigate, making it difficult for people to access the supports they need.

Recent inquiries and strategies, including Senate and House of Representatives Inquiries,²⁰ the Productivity Commission inquiry into mental health,²¹ the National Women's Health Strategy,²² and the 2021 National Safety Summit,²³ have reviewed the services landscape and stressed the need for coordinated care and a joining up of all levels of government.

Better coordination and integration of systems that assist and support women and children experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, violence is integral to creating a person-centred service system where victim-survivors do not have to tell their stories repeatedly at multiple contact points. Victim-survivors have told us that mechanisms need to be established for information sharing, referral pathways and joint case management to provide a cohesive and integrated approach to support.

Legal assistance for victim-survivors of family violence must be part of a connected and coordinated response.

The experiences, recovery and safety needs of groups facing intersecting forms of discrimination, inequality and violence are a key priority of the National Plan. Collaboration and partnerships between specialist gender-based violence services and other services such as Aboriginal community controlled organisations, LGBTIQ+ community organisations, organisations supporting people with disability, organisations supporting the elderly, and culturally diverse communities are critical in increasing the ability to provide tailored, expert care and support. Children and young people need person-centred care that provides integrated, holistic supports to avoid re-traumatisation.

Mechanisms that respond to and manage risk and provide a pathway for victim-survivors, for example risk assessments and safety plans, are needed to enable coordination and collaboration across jurisdictions, sectors and settings. Such mechanisms will also promote consistency between legislative and policy reforms, where appropriate and practicable, programs, and other response and prevention efforts. These should be designed in partnership with victim-survivors.

There are currently also gaps in the capacity of some existing services to provide holistic, integrated and tailored responses. Career pathways into the family and domestic violence sector are not always clear and specialist skills are often learned on the job and under immense pressure. There are additional challenges and barriers to attracting, developing and retaining skilled and qualified staff in regional, rural and remote communities.

ACTION 4 *continued*

Economic and financial abuse often occur alongside other forms of abuse. The impacts of economic abuse can result in victim-survivors leaving their homes with no resources to rebuild their lives. Services need to have or develop the expertise to assist victim-survivors in establishing financial security as part of their recovery.

We will work together to ensure services are able to contribute to victim-survivors' long-term recovery and healing by addressing a range of complex needs, including access to stable and secure housing. This could include care coordination, psychological and mental health support and assistance with substance use.

Building the family, domestic and sexual violence sectors, both in size and capability, will help to ensure that victim-survivors can access the support they need no matter where they live, or where they are on their path to recovery.

What difference will we make?

Implementing this action will work towards the following outcomes as identified in the Outcomes Framework:

- Services and prevention programs are effective, culturally responsive, intersectional and accessible.
- Community attitudes and beliefs embrace gender equality and condemn all forms of gendered violence without exception.
- Women are safe and respected in all settings, and experience economic, social, political and cultural equality.

Responsibility for implementation:

Commonwealth, state and territory governments; family, domestic and sexual violence sectors; police and justice system; and mainstream services.

Domains:

early intervention; response; recovery and healing.



ACTION 5

Strengthen systems and services to better hold people who choose to use violence to account, and provide opportunities to support people who have used violence, or are at risk of using violence, to change their behaviours, with the aim of protecting the safety and wellbeing of current and potential victim-survivors.

Violence against women and children will not end without a clear and sustained focus on those who choose to use violence. The responsibility to stop using violence belongs to the person who chooses to use violence. We need to acknowledge that the perpetrators of gender-based violence are overwhelmingly men.

Evidence demonstrates that men's violence against women is underpinned by gendered dynamics. Australia's shared framework for the prevention of violence against women, *Change the Story*, outlines how violence against women is driven by men's control of decision-making and resources, gender stereotypes that constrain women and promote dominant forms of masculinity, the condoning of violence against women in the community and male peer relations that emphasise aggression, dominance and control. These strong links between socially dominant forms and patterns of masculinity are critical to address in preventing men's perpetration of violence against women.²⁴

It is the role and responsibility of a wide range of services and agencies to keep people who use violence in view, directly or indirectly, to address the risk posed and scaffold pathways toward non-violence. We will work to support individuals to change their behaviour by providing effective early engagement, referral pathways and evidence-based treatment programs.

We will work to reshape the social, political and economic aspects of our society that allow gender inequality and discrimination to continue, including by working with men and boys to disrupt and prevent the attitudes and behaviours that can lead to violence and through ongoing work in prevention.

While teaching consent and implementing prevention activities is important to prevent violence, it may not change the behaviour of people who are already using violence. As 97 per cent of sexual violence is perpetrated by males toward women and other men, we need to focus on changing the behaviour of men who perpetrate sexual violence and male bystanders who give tacit agreement by failing to speak out against sexism and violence.²⁵

This Action requires working with people using violence at every stage, including holding them to account through justice systems. Perpetrators charged with violence must be held to account through existing laws and interventions, and laws and systems need to be strengthened to support victims.

Tailored interventions are required for men who use family violence, and need to address the needs of, and risks present for, men in different communities and from diverse groups and communities.

Addressing cyclical and intergenerational violence must be a priority, since we know that many people who use violence have been victims of violence themselves during childhood.

We will work to support individuals to change their behaviour prior to interactions with criminal justice systems by improving the timeliness of identification and responses to at-risk behaviours or attitudes and providing effective early engagement, referral pathways and evidence-based treatment programs.

ACTION 5 *continued*

What difference will we make?

Implementing this action will work towards the following outcomes as identified in the Outcomes Framework:

- Children and young people are safe in all settings and are effectively supported by systems and services.
- Systems and institutions effectively support and protect people impacted by gender-based violence.
- Services and prevention programs are effective, culturally responsive, intersectional and accessible.
- Women are safe and respected in all settings, and experience economic, social, political and cultural equality.

Responsibility for implementation:

Commonwealth, state and territory governments; police; justice systems; frontline services; FDSV sectors; workplaces and mainstream services, and men's behavioural change programs.

Domains:

prevention; early intervention; response.



ACTION 6

Improve action to prevent and address sexual violence and harassment in all settings, across the four domains of the National Plan.

Sexual violence includes – but is not limited to – sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment, reproductive coercion, stalking, image-based abuse, forced sex work and sex trafficking. It occurs within intimate relationships, between people who are dating, colleagues, friends and acquaintances, in care, education, community and faith settings, as well as between strangers. It can also occur between young people and within families. Sexual violence is often gender-based, and can occur in any life stage.

Sexual violence can also occur online. Technology-facilitated abuse can consist of sexual extortion (blackmail), threats of sexual violence, the sharing of explicit images or videos without consent (including digitally altered images or videos), unwanted sexual requests or comments targeting someone due to their sexual orientation.

Sexual harassment is part of the continuum of sexual violence and abuse, and reflects unequal gender power dynamics.

Businesses and workplaces have a role in preventing gender-based violence, and providing a workplace environment that is safe and free from harassment and abuse. Effective processes and policies can enable employees experiencing gender-based violence to seek support and receive assistance from their employers. Workplaces also have a role in holding workplace perpetrators of violence and harassment to account. Businesses and workplaces also have legal responsibilities under the *Fair Work Act 2009*, the Work Health and Safety framework and the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* at the Commonwealth level.

While knowledge about what constitutes sexual violence and who perpetrators are has increased, attitudes and behaviours such as victim-blaming and justifying violence remain at problematic levels. Further work is required in the prevention domain to educate and shift these attitudes.

The implementation of Respectful Relationships Education in schools, and campaigns on consent, have resulted in a greater readiness to talk about gender equality, relationships and sex but there is still a long way to go. Men and boys need to be a focus of primary prevention activities around sexual violence.

Community mistrust can adversely affect victims' and survivors' treatment through the justice system, as myths and misconceptions can undermine police, legal and juror perceptions about the seriousness and credibility of sexual assault allegations. The fear of not being believed is also a key factor in whether women identify their experience as sexual assault, disclose their assault to informal support networks or report their assault to authorities.

ACTION 6 *continued*

Some victim-survivors experience unique barriers when reporting sexual assault, including women with disability, older women, women with limited English proficiency, women with uncertain visa status and sex workers. In many instances, women may need support to identify their experiences as worthy of reporting and to engage in reporting processes. LGBTIQ+ people can also face their own unique barriers to reporting.

Institutional responses to victim-survivors seeking to report or seeking 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.²⁶ Victim-survivors with disability face particular barriers in seeking support when services are not fully accessible.

Targeted work is needed to address sexual violence in all settings. The activities under this action will work across specialist sexual assault services, generalist services, the justice system, education institutions, aged care, disability care settings, and workplaces. This includes work to improve cohesion and collaboration between specialist family violence and sexual assault workforces.

We will work to make victims of sexual violence feel safe to report their experiences by embedding trauma-informed and culturally safe response models that treat victim-survivors with sensitivity and empathy, and, most importantly, believe victim-survivors' reports of violence. We will also work to support sexual violence specific services to effectively perform their role in supporting victim-survivors.

This Action will embed Closing the Gap Priority Reform Three, transforming government organisations to improve accountability and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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

What difference will we make?

Implementing this action will work towards the following outcomes as identified in the Outcomes Framework:

- Community attitudes and beliefs embrace gender equality and condemn all forms of gendered violence without exception.
- Systems and institutions effectively support and protect people impacted by gender-based violence.
- Services and prevention programs are effective, culturally responsive, intersectional and accessible.
- Women are safe and respected in all settings, and experience economic, social, political and cultural equality.

Responsibility for implementation:

Australian, state and territory governments; businesses and workplaces; police and justice systems; legal sector; and whole of society.

Domains:

prevention; early intervention; response; recovery and healing.

ACTION 7

Work in formal partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to ensure policies and services are culturally competent, strengths-based and trauma informed and meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, aligning with the goals of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan.

Every day, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples bring ways of knowing, being, and doing that are key to overcoming social, economic and environmental injustices, and healing from centuries of trauma.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience disproportionately higher rates of gender-based violence than non-Indigenous women.²⁷ This violence occurs concurrently with multiple, intersecting and layered forms of discrimination and disadvantage affecting the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. In order to address violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, these intersecting and structural forms of abuse, discrimination and disadvantage also need to be addressed.

Fear and mistrust of mainstream institutions and systems, including child protection, can lead to lower levels of reporting of violence and seeking assistance, including from specialist services, than is the case for some non-Indigenous women.²⁸ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are also at higher risk of being misidentified as perpetrators when they seek assistance.

Capacity building is required to address the fear of mainstream institutions and systems. This fear and mistrust is grounded in a very real experience of institutional violence perpetrated against Aboriginal women and children, and the historical failure of protective institutions to respond to the needs of Aboriginal women and children reporting violence. Outcomes are more likely to be positive when initiatives are community-controlled, or addressed within communities by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, service providers and professionals who work in the family, domestic and sexual violence sectors are expert knowledge holders in understanding the drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. They must lead the design and delivery of preventions and interventions. Governments must listen to, support, strengthen and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by working with them in genuine partnership.

Services need to recognise the effects of colonisation as a key driver of violence alongside addressing the gendered drivers of violence. Recognising this link is important for healing-informed work.²⁹

To ensure the best and safest outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, systems, institutions and services should strive for cultural competency, ongoing improvement and best practice.

In alignment with the National Plan, this First Action 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 they are culturally safe and can better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. The Action 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.

This Action will embed Closing the Gap Priority Reform One through a commitment to building and strengthening structures that empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress against Closing the Gap.

ACTION 7 *continued*

Victim-survivors have told us that collaboration at all levels is required to develop community-led initiatives that promote cultural understanding, empowerment and resilience within communities. This Action is in addition to community-led, community-controlled supports to be delivered under the dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan.

Work under this Action will align with priorities being addressed in the dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan. The development and implementation of the First Action Plan and the dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan is fundamental to addressing Target 13 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap – to reduce all forms of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children by at least 50 per cent by 2031, as progress towards zero.

What difference will we make?

- Services and prevention programs are effective, culturally safe, intersectional and accessible.
- Systems and institutions effectively support and protect people impacted by gender-based violence.
- Children and young people are safe in all settings and are effectively supported by systems and services.
- Women are safe and respected in all settings, and experience economic, social, political and cultural equality.

Responsibility for implementation:

Australian, state and territory governments; family, domestic and sexual violence sectors; and frontline services.

Domains:

prevention; early intervention; response; recovery and healing.



ACTION 8

Develop and implement age appropriate, culturally safe programs across all four domains, informed by children and young people, that support recovery and healing from trauma, and intervene early to address violence supportive behaviours.

We recognise that, until now, policies and programs have not elevated the needs and voices of children as victims of family and domestic violence in their own right. Over the term of this Action Plan, we will work to find opportunities to listen to the voices of children to influence and inform policies that respond to their needs.

People who use family and domestic violence toward children may be parents, siblings, extended family or formal or informal carers. In 2019–20, there were 376 hospitalisations of children aged zero to 14 for assault injuries perpetrated by a parent (277) or other family member (99).³⁰

Recent research highlights the link between adverse childhood experiences and those victim-survivors using violence themselves in the future.³¹ To end gender-based violence in one generation, it is vital that children and young people with lived experience of family and domestic violence are recognised as victim-survivors in their own right and supported through appropriate tailored supports and trauma-informed interventions that build hope, resilience and the ability to have healthy relationships.

Children and young people living with, or who have experienced violence in the past, can experience ongoing psychological, behavioural and health issues, affecting their development, health and education,³² but require different approaches to adults who have experienced violence.³³ We need to develop early intervention and referral pathways for children at risk of experiencing or perpetrating violence.

Children are frequently not listened to, not asked about their experiences, not believed when they do speak out, and not provided with their own support or service response. We need to shift this by engaging authentically with children and young people to understand their needs and experiences and co-design services with them.

We heard from victim-survivors that we need to address the unique needs of children exposed to and experiencing violence by providing targeted interventions and support services that are developmentally informed, and tailored to their specific circumstances. Victim-survivors also highlighted the importance of needing to empower young people to overcome situations and systems of abuse.

We know that it is also important to support primary care givers in their ability to nurture their children. Integrated responses to carers and children are required to close the circle and give children nurturing from carers whose wellbeing is also supported.

Victim-survivors outlined that more options and support are required for children and young people, including specific counselling, advocacy services, and support for young people in out-of-home care who may need protection from one or both parents. These need to include programs that promote early intervention to address violence supportive behaviours and enhance recovery and healing.

Australian, state and territory governments will work to 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. This includes sharing of data where it is safe and helpful to do so.

ACTION 8 *continued*

This Action will align with other national initiatives such as *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031*,³⁴ and the *Early Years Strategy*.³⁵

Children and young people can become victims of online abuse with perpetrators grooming them to provide intimate images or videos and sharing these further without consent, or threatening to share images with family, friends or strangers unless the child or young person pays them (sexual extortion). The eSafety Commissioner will continue their work to educate children and young people about online safety and to remove harmful content.

The National Plan recognises that sexual violence perpetrated against children is child sexual abuse, which is covered by the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030*.³⁶ The drivers and impacts of child sexual abuse can be vastly different to those of adult sexual abuse, and they require different responses. However, the Action Plan recognises that child sexual abuse and family and domestic violence can co-exist and when they do, require integrated responses across sectors and agencies.

What difference will we make?

Implementing this action will work towards the following outcomes as identified in the Outcomes Framework:

- Children and young people are safe in all settings and are effectively supported by systems and services.
- Systems and institutions effectively support and protect people impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence.
- Family, domestic and sexual violence services and prevention programs are effective, culturally safe, intersectional and accessible.
- All people live free from gender-based violence and are safe in all settings including at home, at work, at school, in the community and online.

Responsibility for implementation:

Australian, state and territory governments; family, domestic and sexual violence sectors; and frontline services.

Domains:

early intervention; response; recovery and healing.



ACTION 9

Improve police responses and the justice system to better support victim-survivors through the provision of trauma-informed, culturally safe supports that promote safety and wellbeing, and hold people who choose to use violence to account.

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.

We heard from victim-survivors that there needs to be improved access to justice by removing structural barriers like cost, location and legal complexity and increasing the availability of free or low cost legal assistance.

Victim-survivors also raised the difficulties faced in accessing systems that are rigid, outdated, and not trauma-informed – *“we are trying to leave an environment of power and control seeking support from the system to face another form of power and control.”*

Victim-survivors also raised numerous concerns about their experiences with the Family Court, including timeliness, prejudice and claims of domestic violence by victims not being believed.

Initiatives in the justice system can create change through providing appropriate survivor-centred justice responses, holding perpetrators to account, and responding to all victim-survivors, including children and young people, by listening, acting and responding in a trauma-informed way. People breaching domestic violence orders need to be held to account in all instances.

We will work to provide a safe environment and ensure victim-survivors are prepared, know what to expect and are able to make informed choices, should they choose to seek justice through the legal system.

The National Plan outlines that family violence is a significant factor contributing to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. Fear of child removal remains one of the greatest deterrents for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to report violence or seek assistance. Victim-survivors have also told us that fear of child removal is a big reason why victims do not disclose gender-based violence.

While there have been some initiatives introduced such as family violence specialist courts, virtual outreach legal services and intermediary schemes for victim-survivors and witnesses, more needs to be done. Misidentification of perpetrators and victims of family and domestic violence are concerning. The justice system, from initial police responses through to lawyers, prosecutors and judges, can be problematic for victims of sexual violence. A lack of understanding about the nature of perpetration, and who chooses to use violence, contributes to misidentification.

The National Plan outlines that alternative approaches to justice, such as restorative justice, family dispute resolution, roundtable conferencing and community courts (such as the Koori courts and Murri courts), 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. Victim-survivors have also told us we need to provide options for justice that do not solely rely on policing and promote early intervention and community-based responses to prevent further harm and promote healing.

ACTION 9 *continued*

Key areas for improvement identified in 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.

Systems need to improve responses to victim-survivors from diverse backgrounds. Migrant and refugee women can encounter systematic barriers in the justice system that directly impact their ability to obtain justice, including language barriers, access to language services, and distrust of the legal system due to temporary visa status.

All reporting systems must be accessible to women and girls with disability, and police and those implementing the justice system need to be trained in inclusive and accessible practices.

LGBTIQ+ people can face their own barriers in reporting family, domestic and sexual violence due to prejudice that impacts whether they are heard and responded to appropriately.

Capacity building for legal services, including Women's Legal Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Legal Services, police, legal practitioners, the judiciary and community corrections is also a priority. The National Plan and the First Action Plan directly and indirectly support 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).

When legal systems fail to hold perpetrators to account, the trauma experienced by women and children is exacerbated. People who have used violence must be accountable for their actions and face the appropriate consequences. Accountability may include restorative justice, mediation, family dispute resolution, and community courts.³⁷ Together, we will work to ensure victim-survivors have access to appropriate and timely survivor-centred justice responses.

Continuous improvement of the justice system will ensure people using violence and abuse are held to account, and have access to guidance and assistance through supports and services to end violence.³⁸ The justice and other intersecting systems include civil law (including family law), policing, the judiciary, child support, child protection, migration law, social security, housing, health, education, fair work, taxation, paid parental leave, superannuation, credit and debt, corrections, and family and community service systems.

We need to increase recognition that police and justice approaches and systems can have unintended consequences when they are used by perpetrators as a tool to further abuse and control.³⁹ Greater understanding of the ways this form of abuse occurs should be used to improve system responses. This includes misidentification of the predominant aggressor/perpetrator, particularly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

People who use violence will often use a pattern of escalating abuse over a period of time and this needs to be recognised in any responses.

What difference will we make?

Implementing this action will work towards the following outcomes as identified in the Outcomes Framework:

- Children and young people are safe in all settings and are effectively supported by systems and services.
- Systems and institutions effectively support and protect people impacted by gender-based violence.
- Services and prevention programs are effective, culturally safe, intersectional and accessible.
- Women are safe and respected in all settings, and experience economic, social, political and cultural equality.

Responsibility for implementation:

Australian state and territory governments; police; justice systems; frontline services; and community corrections.

Domains:

response; recovery and healing.

ACTION 10

Improve access to short-term, medium and long-term housing for women and children experiencing violence, including those living in institutional settings, and support women to stay in their own homes when they choose to do so.

“Housing cannot be overstated in enabling people to leave abusive relationships.”

– *Victim-survivor*

Unaffordable, unavailable, inaccessible, and insecure housing are major barriers for victim-survivors leaving violence, and for recovery and healing after violence. The housing crisis is having enormous impacts for people without stable housing, increasing their vulnerability to gender-based violence, particularly for young women and older women. Domestic and family violence is also the leading cause of children's homelessness in Australia.⁴⁰

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 homeless⁴¹. We need to address the significant gap in crisis accommodation supports for children escaping violence without a parent. We also need to address access to crisis and short-term accommodation for women with male children and young people, who may currently be excluded, and improve linkages between crisis refuges, to allow services to refer interstate.

For people with disability, crisis accommodation and housing availability can be more problematic due to building design, requirements for everyday living supports (eg cooking, showering), and location to necessary supports and services.

Inadequate housing may also force women and children to relocate, leaving family and friends and many other support networks behind. This can further impact women and children's ability to recover and heal after violence⁴².

Inadequate housing for people who use violence also needs to be addressed to keep women and children safe. People who use violence often return to the family home as they are unable to secure stable housing, putting victims of violence at a continued or heightened risk of violence. Housing strategies need to include accommodation services and housing options for men using family violence.

These housing issues are exacerbated for victim-survivors living in regional, remote and very remote locations.

The Australian, state and territory governments will work together to improve access to safe and secure housing for victim-survivors escaping violence, including from crisis accommodation to longer-term, sustainable social and private housing options, including access to schemes for affordable rental and owner occupied homes.

This includes recognising the diverse and intersectional needs of victim-survivors, and ensuring housing and infrastructure plans respond to these needs by including the voices of people with lived experience from the early design phase to completion.

Providing the option for victim-survivors to stay safely in their homes – and retain their connections to Country and community – will be part of a holistic response.

ACTION 10 *continued*

What difference will we make?

Implementing this action will work towards the following outcomes as identified in the Outcomes Framework:

- Systems and institutions effectively support and protect people impacted by gender-based violence.
- Women are safe and respected in all settings and experience economic, social, political and cultural equality.

Responsibility for implementation:

Australian, state and territory governments

Domains:

response; recovery and healing



Accountability

The Australian, state and territory governments are jointly responsible for implementing the National Plan through the actions and activities of the Action Plans. Our work to progress policy priorities of the Action Plans will be coordinated through a governance structure providing oversight, strategic direction and progress tracking. Different bodies or groups will have their purposes articulated in their own Terms of Reference.

To align with governments commitments under Priority Reform One of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (formal partnerships and shared decision-making) there is a commitment to shared decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on policies that affect them.

Public reporting will support accountability and transparency.

Governance structure

The **Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council** (Ministerial Council) consists of federal, state and territory ministers who have portfolio responsibility for key policy priorities for women, including gender equality, women's safety and women's economic security. The Ministerial Council will meet regularly to maintain momentum and a national focus on policy priorities in the Action Plans.

The **Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council Senior Officials** comprises senior officials from Commonwealth, state and territory departments/agencies with responsibility for women, women's safety, families and/or prevention of family and domestic violence. As an advisory body to the Ministerial Council, the group supports the work of the Council through sharing information, data and evidence to inform decision-making of the Council, coordinating cross portfolio and cross-jurisdictional advice and progressing policy to reduce family, domestic and sexual violence.

The **Jurisdictional Working Group** is a committee of Commonwealth, state and territory representatives with responsibility for women, women's safety, families and/or prevention of family and domestic violence. More broadly, the group also supports Ministerial Council Senior Officials in driving the national policy agenda for domestic, family and sexual violence and working to progress the priorities of governments related to gender equality and eliminating violence against women.

The **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Jurisdictional Working Group**, once established, will be a committee of Commonwealth, state and territory officials with responsibility for women's safety, families and/or prevention of family and domestic violence and/or First Nations policy. The group will support Ministerial Council Senior Officials in driving the national policy agenda for domestic, family and sexual violence and will work to progress the priorities of governments related to gender equality and eliminating violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, across both the First Action Plan and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Jurisdictional Working Group will draw on existing partnerships or shared decision-making bodies and share advice from other relevant advisory bodies.

Subject specific working groups will be convened as needed to drive joint Commonwealth, state and territory activities and respond to emerging issues and discussion about actions and activities, for timely delivery of advice and solutions. Membership will be determined by the Commonwealth lead on the subject matter, and may include government officials from relevant portfolios and subject matter experts. Subject specific working groups may also draw on the expertise of existing advisory committees or convene subject specific advisory committees when required.

The **Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission** (DFSV Commission) has been established to provide national leadership and promote coordination across a range of domestic, family and sexual violence policies and areas of service delivery. It will act as an independent and transparent agency that amplifies the voices of people with lived experience of domestic, family and sexual violence, provide evidence-informed policy advice, and promote coordination and accountability towards ending gender-based violence. The DFSV Commission will provide annual reports to Federal Parliament measuring progress towards the National Plan.

The **National Plan Advisory Group** (Advisory Group) is representative of a wide range of voices in the family, domestic and sexual violence sectors, including research organisations, national and state-based peak bodies, sector experts and academics, victim-survivors and victim-survivor advocates, and individuals with specialised expertise and knowledge. The Advisory Group will provide expert advice to inform implementation of the Action Plans.

The **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council** (Advisory Council) on family, domestic and sexual violence was established in July 2021 to provide expert advice and guidance to government on the development of the National Plan. In September 2021, the Advisory Council was tasked with leading the development of the dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan in formal partnership with the Commonwealth.

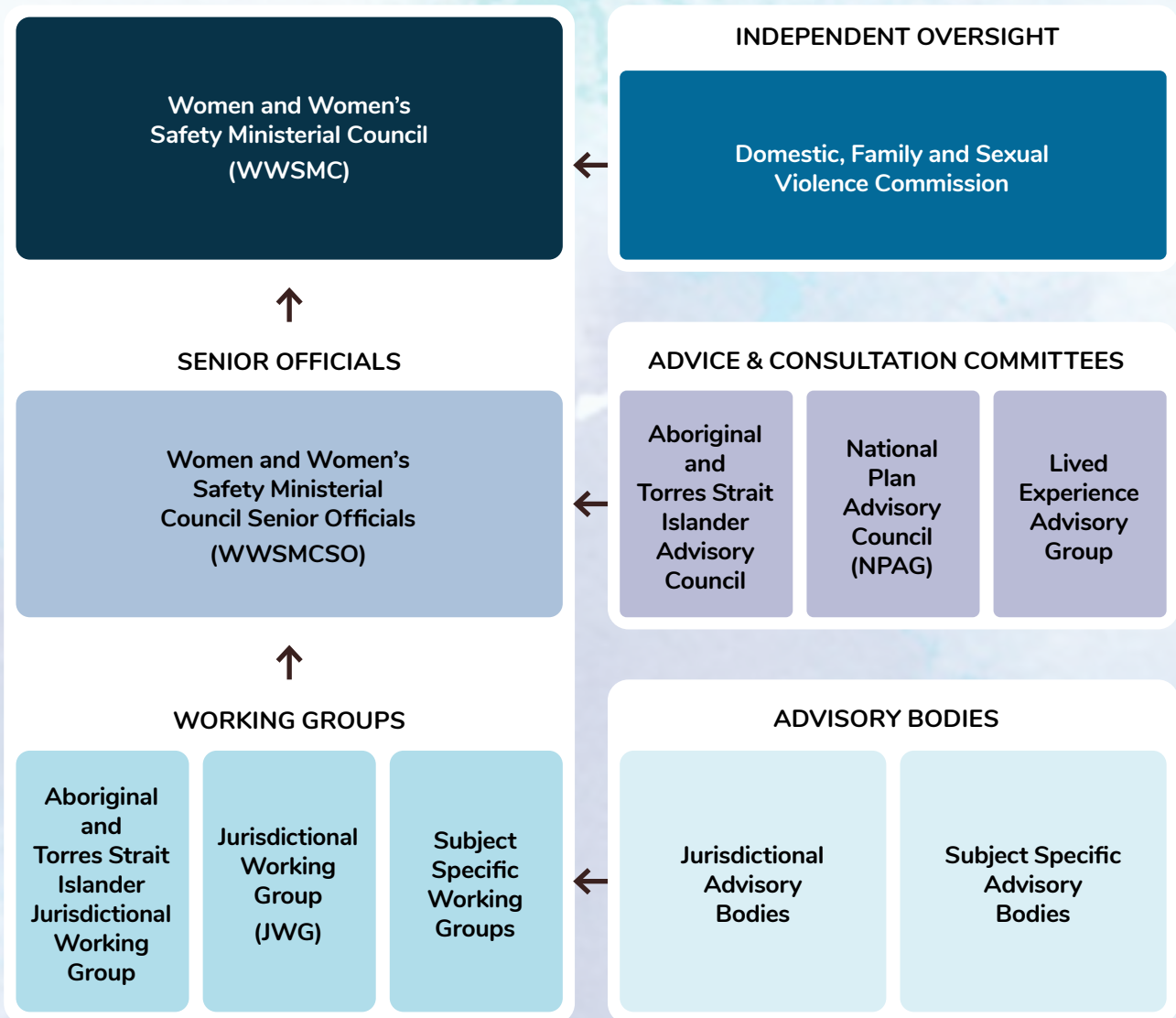
The **Lived Experience Advisory Council** (LEAC) will be established by the DFSV Commission as a formal mechanism for embedding the voices of people with lived experience of family, domestic and sexual violence at the national level to ensure the diverse lived experiences of victim-survivors are informing policies and solutions. LEAC will be supported by the DFSV Commission as one of a range of mechanisms for government to engage with people with lived experience.

Jurisdictional advisory bodies may inform state and territory governments on development and implementation of activities under the Action Plans as required. Where appropriate, states and territories may enter into formal partnerships and shared decision-making arrangements with advisory bodies to inform and implement actions under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan and activities under the First Action Plan, in line with Priority Reform One of Closing the Gap.

Subject specific advisory bodies may be convened as needed to inform emerging or complex issues being worked on by subject specific working groups.

Strategic advice and consultation may also be sought from other relevant Ministers, ministerial forums and established governance groups as needed. Membership will be determined by the Commonwealth lead on the subject matter, and may include government officials from relevant portfolios and other subject matter experts, for example researchers, sector representatives and victim-survivors. Subject specific working groups may also draw on the expertise of existing advisory committees or convene subject specific advisory committees when required.

FIGURE 3: GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE



Monitoring and reporting

A performance measurement framework will identify the indicators required to monitor and assess progress towards the achievement of the outcomes. It will link outcomes, performance indicators, measures and data sources together.

The components of a performance measurement plan include:

- **Outcomes** – the change the National Plan aims to achieve, which is described in the Outcomes Framework.
- **Indicators and measures** – the indicators will be chosen with regard to what we are aiming to measure and how best this can be achieved.
- **Targets** – the objectives the National Plan is working towards, expressed as a measurable value.
- **Data sources** – what available sources can be used to demonstrate progress against the indicators or measures, noting there is still more work required to develop data sources to robustly measure change.
- **Frequency for reporting and/or data collection** – how often the indicators and measures are able to be reported against.
- **Baseline** (if known).

A mixed method approach to measurement and evaluation will be used in recognition of the complexity of the outcomes. This approach would likely include quantitative trend data supported by more detailed qualitative analysis. Indicators and measures will continue to be reviewed and refined over the life of the National Plan as work continues to improve data and links between datasets.

There is still more to achieve in regard to data and evidence development to measure and monitor sustained population level changes towards ending violence against women and children. A focus over the life of the National Plan, through the underpinning Actions Plans, will be on continuing to support key national survey collections and identifying opportunities to implement new data collections and data development projects, including from the private sector.

Public reporting

Public reporting will support accountability and transparency. The Department of Social Services will report against the progress of the National Plan on an annual basis.

The First Action Plan Activities Addendum will be updated annually to track implementation of the activities that governments have committed to and add any new activities.

Public reporting will also occur through existing mechanisms such as relevant government department's annual reports and annual Closing the Gap reports.

The DFSV Commission will also provide annual reports to Federal Parliament measuring progress towards the National Plan.

Glossary

Term	Definition
1800RESPECT	The National domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service for people affected by domestic, family and sexual violence. The service is free, confidential and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Access 1800RESPECT by calling 1800 737 732 or by visiting www.1800respect.org.au .
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. ⁴³
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, 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. ⁴⁴
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. ⁴⁵

Term	Definition
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. ⁴⁶
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 almost always an underpinning dynamic of family and domestic violence and describes someone’s exertion of power and dominance against another person, using patterns of abusive behaviours over time, with the effect of creating fear and denying liberty and autonomy.</p> <p>Abusive behaviours that perpetrators can use as part of their pattern of abuse include physical abuse, monitoring a victim-survivor’s actions, restricting a victim-survivor’s freedom or independence, regulating and micromanaging victim-survivor actions, social abuse, using threats and intimidation, emotional or psychological abuse, cultural, spiritual and religious abuse, financial abuse, sexual violence and coercion, reproductive coercion, lateral violence, systems abuse, technology-facilitated abuse and animal abuse. Understanding coercive control requires a shift from a focus on physical violence and single or episodic acts of violence in isolation to a consideration of patterns of abusive behaviour and their cumulative impact.</p>
Consent	<p>All state and territory laws require consent to sexual activity be either “freely and voluntarily given” or 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.⁴⁷</p>

Glossary *continued*

Term	Definition
Creation of Change	Creation of change is the process whereby an institution and its people, invite, accept, and welcome change as a vital component in defining and achieving future success, define the future they want to design and deliver and, develop and implement a change plan that capably transitions its people, processes and circumstances, especially its culture, from the existing paradigm to the new desired one.
Evidence-based	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
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. ⁴⁸

Term	Definition
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. ⁴⁹
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. ⁵⁰
Gender identity	A person's deeply felt sense of being male, female, both, inbetween, 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. ⁵¹

Glossary *continued*

Term	Definition
Healing informed	Refers to care principles, which are strengths-based and specific to cultures and communities. The common ground that underlies these principles are found in the Indigenous worldview, ways of knowing, and cultural practices. Healing-informed care principles for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities are tied to holistic views of health, connection to kinship and Country, and should address the sociocultural determinants of health.
Hetero-normativity	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. ⁵²
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. ⁵³
Institutional settings	See settings.
Inter-generational 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 peoples, especially the children, grandchildren and future generations of the Stolen Generations. ⁵⁴
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 that 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. ⁵⁵

Term	Definition
Intersex	Describes people born with physical sex characteristics that do not fit medical and social norms for female or male bodies. ⁵⁶
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. ⁵⁷
Lesbian	Describes a woman whose primary emotional and sexual attraction is towards other women. ⁵⁸
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+. ⁵⁹
Modern slavery	<p data-bbox="435 1205 1406 1384">Describes all human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices in Divisions 270 and 271 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (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 data-bbox="435 1406 1398 1547">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 19 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 peoples. ⁶⁰

Glossary *continued*

Term	Definition
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.
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 national organisation established under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022, to prevent violence against women and their children.
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.

Term	Definition
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.⁶¹</p>
Respectful relationships	Refers to relationships among intimate, romantic, or dating partners that are characterised by non-violence, equality, mutual respect, consideration and trust. ⁶²
Respectful relationships education	The holistic approach to school-based, primary prevention of healing-informed gender-based violence. ⁶³
Seclusion	Defined as isolating a person in a confined space where they are alone and unable to freely leave. ⁶⁴
Settings	Environments in which people live, work, learn, socialise and play. Institutional settings can include settings such as educational institutions or residential institutions, or any settings where people receive a service or support. Broadly, these could include residential institutions, boarding houses, group homes, workplaces, respite care services, day centres, recreation programs, mental health facilities, hostels, supported accommodation, prisons, out-of-home care, in-home care provided by a service provider, hospitals, juvenile justice facilities, disability services, education institutions, and aged care facilities. ⁶⁵
Sexism	Discrimination based on gender, and the attitudes, stereotypes and cultural elements that promote this discrimination. ⁶⁶
Sexual abuse	See sexual violence.

Glossary *continued*

Term	Definition
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. ⁶⁷
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.
Sexual violence	Refers to sexual activity that happens where consent is not obtained or freely given. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity, such as touching, sexual harassment and intimidation, forced marriage, trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, sexual assault, and rape. Sexual assault is only one type of sexual violence and does not include sexual harassment, or broader and complex forms of sexual violence, such as technology-facilitated or image-based abuse. ⁶⁸
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. ⁶⁹
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.

Term	Definition
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. ⁷⁰ 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 wellbeing, and adversely impacting the victim's capacity to maintain employment or to care for children. ⁷¹
Systems and Structures	Macro-level mechanisms, both formal (policies, institutions and laws) and informal (social norms), which serve to organise society, and create power relationships between different groups of people and patterns of social and political power. ⁷²
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.

Glossary *continued*

Term	Definition
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 wellbeing. 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.⁷³</p>
Trauma-informed	<p>Trauma-informed care and practice recognises the prevalence of trauma and its impacts on the emotional, psychological and social wellbeing 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>
Victim-blaming	<p>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.</p>
Victim-survivors	<p>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'.⁷⁴</p>

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