

# Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025

## Implementation Update

The Australian, state and territory governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and the non-government sector are working together towards the shared goal of ending family, domestic and sexual violence towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025* (Action Plan) provides targeted action to address the alarmingly high rates of family, domestic and sexual violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. The Australian Government invested \$262.6 million over five years, from 2022-2023 to 2026-2027, to support the implementation of the Action Plan.

The Action Plan works with the [National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032](#) (National Plan) and its [First Action plan 2023-2025](#). It is fundamental to addressing Target 13 of [National Agreement on Closing of the Gap](#) (National Agreement) - to reduce all forms of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children by at least 50% by 2031, as progress towards zero.

Since its launch in August 2023, there has been strong efforts from the Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) sector, family, domestic and sexual violence sector and governments to improve the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence. However, there is still a long way to go.

The Action Plan aimed to address the current safety needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children and set the foundation for longer-term structural change. The Australian, state and territory governments are working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to build on this foundation through the development of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence (Our Ways). Our Ways will sit alongside the National Plan and will guide a whole of society approach to addressing the alarmingly high rates of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as part of ongoing efforts to achieve Target 13 of the National Agreement.

Governments have implemented a range of activities under the Action Plan, including but not limited to the measures highlighted in this Implementation Update Report and the companion Action Plan activities table.

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Progress updates for each of the activities linked to the Action Plan have been provided by activity owners from across the Australian, state and territory governments.

Reporting covers the period from the launch of the Action Plan in August 2023 to 30 June 2025. Some activity owners have provided updates on activities which commenced prior to the launch of the Action Plan but are closely linked to specific actions within it and have been updated or reviewed during the life of the National Plan. Actions were reported under each of the five Reform Areas of the Action Plan. Case studies are used to illustrate concrete examples of initiatives and practices helping to drive positive change.

## Overall observations

A total of 186 activities were reported by Australian, state and territory governments against the Reform Areas of the Action Plan, covering activities that support all priority cohorts. They also covered the domains of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing as outlined under the National Plan.

Progress on each activity varied with ongoing commitment continuing beyond the Action Plan's timeline. Progress on reported activities included:

- 29 activities in the planning phase
- 92 current activities which includes services available for a period of time
- 60 ongoing activities
- 5 finished activities.

The delivery method for reported activities also varied, including:

- 44 activities delivered by ACCOs
- 3 activities delivered by non-Indigenous non-government organisations
- 46 activities delivered by a mixture of organisation types
- 8 activities delivered by Indigenous-led organisations
- 85 activities where the organisation type was not applicable or was listed as other.

The reported activities contributed towards progress against 41 of the 55 actions listed in the Action Plan. While progress has been made, future opportunities remain in areas such as research and data to better understand how family, domestic and sexual violence impacts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy community and data around missing and murdered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. Strengthening evaluation capacity and tools available to ACCOs and additional supports to improve the cultural safety of the justice system are also areas that will benefit from future action.



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The reported activities represent a significant effort to implement the Priority Reforms under the National Agreement. Activities were grounded in the four Priority Reforms. They included efforts to embed formal partnerships and shared decision-making processes in the design and delivery of services, building the community-controlled sector through dedicated funding and ACCO specific grant programs, transforming how government works and measures to support Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

While the Action Plan aims to address Target 13 of the National Agreement, efforts also focused on Targets 4, 10, 11, 12 and 14.

The following sections provide case studies and a summary of reported activities against the Action Plan Reform Areas and Priority Groups. A full list of reported activities can be found in the companion Action Plan activities table.

## Reform Areas

### Reform Area One: Voice, self-determination and agency

In the reporting period, 14 activities targeting Reform Area One were implemented. These included a review of the governance arrangements for the National Plan, progress towards the establishment of a National Peak Body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety and embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices in the governance structures for a variety of programs administered by state and territory governments.

#### Case Study: National Peak Body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety

The Department of Social Services has engaged the Coalition of Peaks to establish a National Peak Body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety (National Peak Body) to champion the rights and interests of First Nations communities affected by family, domestic and sexual violence and oversee the implementation of Our Ways. In line with the principles of shared decision-making and self-determination under Priority Reform One of the National Agreement, the Coalition of Peaks will lead the design, ensuring it is designed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The National Peak Body will:

- engage families, communities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to articulate the needs of family, domestic and sexual violence victim-survivors as nuanced policy options and advice to government.
- engage effectively on reform, policy and program activities.



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- identify opportunities to work more effectively with community organisations to reduce gaps and duplication, and improve outcomes under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.
  - support efforts to work in genuine partnership with the government to co-design initiatives to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities.

## Reform Area Two: Strength, resilience and therapeutic healing


In the reporting period, 59 activities targeting Reform Area Two were implemented. These activities included grant funding for services and activities to prevent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being impacted by family, domestic and/or sexual violence. Crisis accommodation programs, support for ACCOs with existing family, domestic and sexual violence programs, the expansion of the Leaving Violence Program Regional Trial, specialist housing services and the implementation of the Safe and Strong Families Program, were also some of the activities reported.

### Case study: Four Immediate Priority Grants

The Australian Government is delivering 4 Immediate Priority Grants: supporting crisis accommodation services, culturally responsive programs delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, community-led men's wellness centres, and prevention programs and campaigns for children. These activities are examples of where government is working differently with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Through the early implementation phase of these grants, the government is receiving positive feedback from stakeholders about this new approach.

### Case study: Delivery of best-practice initiatives

In 2024-25, 27 place-based community-led projects were funded, dedicated to preventing and responding to family violence in Victorian Aboriginal communities. These include:

- a strengths-based, trauma informed Aboriginal women's group supporting Aboriginal women with lived experience of family violence.
  - 'Hoops against violence' basketball event and community sports days in Ballarat, working with young people affected by family violence.
  - a two-day Elders gathering with a focus on cultural activities, raising awareness about elder abuse, yarning about local solutions to prevent and reduce family violence in the Barwon Southwest community.
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## Reform Area Three: Reform institutions and systems

There were 77 activities reported against Reform Area Three. These activities included expanding existing services, building ACCO workforce capability and reforming related systems such as the justice system to ensure better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities impacted by violence. Key activities include the development of the First Nations Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Sector Strengthening Plan, ongoing funding for Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services and a number of jurisdictional workforce development processes and strategies.

### **Case study: First Nations Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Sector Strengthening Plan**

The Department of Social Services is working in partnership with the First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence and jurisdictions to develop the First Nations Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSVM) Sector Strengthening Plan (SSP). A dedicated working group has been established to oversee the development, bringing together DFSVM Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation (ACCO) Sector representatives and Commonwealth and state and territory government members from across Australia.

The DFSVM SSP is a joint, targeted effort to ensure sustainable workforce capacity building and increased investment in the DFSVM ACCO Sector. Strengthening actions developed by the working group will focus on uplifting the capability, capacity and sustainability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations and the workforce that support individuals, families, and communities impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence.

This co-design approach to strengthening the Sector demonstrates the Reform Areas in action, with governments and the ACCO Sector working together to reform institutions and systems (Reform Area 3) through shared decision making and genuine partnership (Reform Area 1).

## Reform Area Four: Evidence and data eco-systems

In the reporting period, 20 activities targeting Reform Area Four were implemented. Efforts are underway across states and territories to improve data collection and evaluate existing programs and processes. The Australian Government is also working to address data gaps. Findings from these activities will support the design of future initiatives and reporting.

### **Case study: Evidence base building**

The Dhelk Dja Action Group Regional Data Reports provide periodic data, trends and analysis to support the local and regional family violence data needs for the 11 Dhelk Dja Action Groups.



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The 11 Dhelk Dja Action Groups were provided with their Regional Data Reports in June 2024 to inform their decision-making and discussions at both the statewide and regional levels. The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing met with Action Group Chairpersons throughout 2024 to allow for feedback on the Regional Data Reports, which will be incorporated into subsequent reports.

The reports include data that specifically address the three Victorian Closing the Gap Plan measures, as well as estimated progress towards the National Plan's Target 13 by 2031 at a statewide level.

## Reform Area Five: Inclusion and intersectionality

In the reporting period, 16 activities targeting Reform Area Five were implemented. Activities included programs to engage people with lived experience to support policy and program design, provide accessible information about family, domestic and sexual violence and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disabilities in prison.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Priority Groups


The priority groups under the Action Plan include women, children and young people, people with disability, LGBTIQ+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy community, and men. All priority groups were targeted through a range of activities. There were also a range of activities that aimed to support the whole community and all priority groups. Where appropriate, reporting captured a primary and secondary priority group for each activity, this means some activities counted in the Reform Areas above are counted twice in the sections below. There were also 54 activities where a priority group was not reported. These activities include governance bodies, training for police and other activities targeted at whole communities, transforming government and workforce development.

### Women

There were 81 activities primarily aimed at supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence across all 5 Reform Areas. Activities included crisis accommodation, measures to improve the cultural safety of services, programs to embed the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in decision making, and strengths-based programs to support young parents.

#### Case study: Metropolitan Youth Health (MYH) Kidstuff - Indigenous Young Parents Group programs

A young parent was referred to MYH South for general practitioner (GP) support. A further risk screening indicated that the young parent was at high risk for domestic and family violence resulting





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in advocacy and collaboration with the South Australian Department of Human Services tendered services to increase risk/safety planning. MYH provided additional psychoeducation and safety planning, particularly where it related to the health impacts of domestic and family violence and reducing the acute distress for her and her young children. The young parent has now been referred to the YPP Parentstuff Circle of Security group and prioritised into a clinic for mental health care support following a recent suicide attempt and attempting to access a community GP who refused to complete a mental health care plan. MYH South will continue to support this young parent in therapeutic intervention that is strengths-based and embeds a feminist framework in responding to the impacts of domestic and family violence.

## Children and young people

In the reporting period, 83 activities aimed at supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence were implemented. These included a range of healing, early intervention, justice and safe spaces programs.

## People with disability

The 11 activities aimed at supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence included supports for people in prison and resources for people with disability on abuse and violence.

## LGBTIQA+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy

There was one activity reported on that was specifically targeted towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQA+ Sistergirl and Brotherboy people impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence. Further opportunity remains to improve and strengthen efforts to support this priority group.

## Men

The 28 activities aimed at supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men impacted by or who have or could use family, domestic and sexual violence included Men's Behaviour Change Programs, parenting support programs and education campaigns.

### **Case study: Metropolitan Youth Health (MYH) Young Men/Young Fathers Program - Indigenous Young Parents Group programs**

A 23-year-old Aboriginal man engaged with the South Australian Metropolitan Youth Health's (MYH) Young Men / Young Fathers Program after being identified by staff as emotionally distressed during an Indigenous Young Parents Program session. Initially reluctant to access support, he eventually opened up, expressing deep emotional pain and a belief that he was failing in life. He had



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faced numerous challenges including domestic violence, homelessness, mental and physical health issues, intergenerational trauma, and involvement with the justice and child protection systems.

With consistent support from MYH's multidisciplinary team, including doctors, nurses, and youth workers, he received comprehensive care. He was diagnosed and treated for mental health concerns, supported in managing his physical health, and referred to housing, financial services, alcohol and other drugs support services, and Aboriginal-specific trauma services. Importantly, he began to explore and understand his emotional responses and the root causes of his behaviour, particularly around the use of violence.

Over time, his violent behaviour decreased, and he began co-parenting more positively, staying involved in his children's lives. He developed healthier coping strategies, demonstrated accountability, and avoided conflict in situations that previously would have escalated. He credits MYH with helping him transform his life, stating he now has the tools and support to manage challenges and be the father he wants to be.

## Where to next?

The Action Plan ceases on 31 December 2025. There are many activities currently being implemented and reported on that will extend beyond this date and continue to address the alarmingly high rates of family, domestic and sexual violence towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These and other initiatives will continue while next steps for any future action plans and activities are developed by the Australian, state and territory governments.

Learnings from the activities implemented under the Action Plan will provide opportunities to strengthen existing initiatives and improve the design of future activities so they better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples affected by family, domestic and sexual violence.

Building on the foundational work in the Action Plan, longer term structural change will be addressed through Our Ways which is due to be finalised by the end of 2025 with a launch to follow shortly thereafter.

