National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032

Our commitment to ending all forms of gender-based violence

DRAFT

DEDICATION

The National Plan is dedicated to each and every victim and survivor of gender-based violence.

We thank the victim-survivors who have spoken out and bravely shared their stories. They leave us with an immense legacy of resistance and resilience and continue to inspire our work and drive us to do more.

We mourn those who have been murdered and the children we will not see grow up. We recognise those with lived experience who continue to recover from violence and manage the life-long impacts of trauma. We hope they not only survive but also thrive as they heal from their trauma.

We acknowledge all the people and organisations who work tirelessly every day to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women and children, including family, domestic and sexual violence.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge and pay respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia, who are the custodians of the land and of the oldest continuous living culture on Earth.

We acknowledge that the National Plan was conceived, written, and will be implemented on Aboriginal land.

We honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ongoing connection to sea, waterways and Country.

We pay respects to Elders past, present, and emerging and we acknowledge the leadership role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have played in the development of the National Plan.

TERMINOLOGY

We acknowledge there is no single set of terminology that suits all situations and people. No exclusion or harm of people is intended in the terms used in the National Plan.

The National Plan endeavours to use inclusive language, while acknowledging the evidence base and the experiences of women.

The National Plan uses the language 'violence against women' to acknowledge that the forms of violence it seeks to address are mostly perpetrated by men against women and children. It also acknowledges that people with diverse sexuality and gender are impacted by gender-based violence, often in complex and intersecting ways.

The National Plan acknowledges terminology around family, domestic and sexual violence is evolving. The glossary and supporting definitions are meant to build knowledge and awareness and do not intend to serve as legal definitions of any form.

HELP AND SUPPORT

Violence against women and children can be a difficult topic to discuss and reading this document may bring up strong feelings for some people.

Help is available.

FAMILY, DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE SUPPORT

For information, support and counselling contact **1800RESPECT (1800 737 732)** or visit www.1800respect.org.au. This service is free, confidential and open 24 hours a day.

Sexual Assault Counselling Australia – 1800 211 028

Rainbow Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence Helpline – 1800 497 212

Well Mob – www.wellmob.org.au

Men's Referral Service – 1300 766 491

Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling – 1800 011 046 or www.openarms.gov.au

CRISIS AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

If you are, or someone else is, in immediate danger, call Triple Zero: 000

Lifeline: 13 11 14 or www.LifeLine.org.au

National Suicide Callback Services – 1300 659 467 or www.suicidecallbackservices.org.au

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 or www.Beyond.Blue.org.au

ReachOut: visit www.au.reachout.com

MensLine Australia – 1300 78 99 78 or www.MensLine.org.au

Kids Helpline – 1800 551 800 or www.kidshelpline.com.au

1800 ELDERHelp – 1800 353 374

OTHER SUPPORT:

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) – 131 450

STATEMENT FROM DELEGATES AT THE 2021 NATIONAL SUMMIT ON WOMEN'S SAFETY

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

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

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

The Summit Delegates Statement called for the National Plan to prioritise:

- Building on our strong base in primary prevention to stop violence before it starts.

- Long-term bipartisan investment by all governments across prevention, intervention, response and recovery.

- Recognising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must lead responses for their communities and deliver those responses through a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan.

- Working with men and boys to disrupt and prevent the attitudes and behaviours that can lead to violence.

- Listening, engaging and being informed by diverse lived experiences, particularly those of victim-survivors.

- Supporting gender equality and addressing the complex intersection of gender inequality with other forms of discrimination, inequality and disadvantage.

- Emphasising the critical role of effective research, data and evaluation.

- Recognising the importance of justice and healing from trauma.

- Addressing men's violence against women and children across all settings including work, education, public, institutional and other community spaces, as well as at home and online.

- Training and workforce development across support across sectors such as the police, justice systems and frontline services.

- Improving the justice system to ensure people impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence are able to achieve justice and people using violence and abuse are held to account.

- Delivering community-led and place-based responses through lasting partnerships with community organisations.

- Acknowledging children and young people as victims and survivors of violence in their own right.

- Linking with other national strategies and initiatives to ensure there is a coordinated and cross-sectoral approach to ending all forms of gender-based violence.

- Recognising that ending violence against women is everybody's business.

See the full Summit Delegates Statement at womenssafetysummit.com.au.

TOWARDS ZERO

"Everyone has the right to safety. Addressing all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic, family and sexual violence, must be a priority for all Australians to achieve our shared vision of a community free of violence against women and children."[1]

- Summit Delegates' Statement, September 2021

Our vision is for a country where all women and children live free from fear and violence, thrive and reach their full potential, and where women and children and LGBTIQA+ people of all genders are safe at home, at work, at school, in the community and online.

A "towards zero" approach to violence against women and children means that we will reimagine and transform the social, political and economic aspects of our society that enable and sustain gender inequality, so that across all of Australia – in cities, regional, rural and remote communities alike – every individual's humanity and worth is respected and valued, regardless of their gender or sexual orientation, identity, ability, race or socio-economic status.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households will be safe. Women and children, young women, older women, pregnant women and mothers, women and children with disability, women from culturally, ethnically, religiously and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and migrant and refugee women and children will be afforded the dignity and respect they deserve. LGBTIQA+ communities, Brotherboys and Sistergirls will be free to safely lead the lives they want to live.

Achieving this vision demands leadership by all levels of government and requires long-term bipartisan investment across the pillars of prevention, early intervention, response and recovery.

To succeed we must listen, engage and be informed by diverse lived experiences. The voices and experiences of victim-survivors are essential to delivering trauma-informed services and solutions. We must recognise how race, age, disability, culture, gender, including gender identity, and sexuality amongst others forms of identity, impact on this lived experience.

Ending violence against women and children requires a continued focus on action, and a holistic, multilayered national approach, engaging a wide range of people, sectors and organisations. It requires addressing individual behaviours as well as structural and societal drivers**.**

The *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* integrates all we have achieved and learnt since 2010 and builds upon on a history of leadership and action by victim-survivors, advocates, women's and community organisations, the family, domestic and sexual violence sector, academics, law enforcement, the justice sector, all governments and community members, including the unique role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

The National Plan

The National Plan commits to ten years of ambitious and sustained action, partnership across sectors and levels of government, and effort to end violence against women and children. It sets out a long-term vision that supports and promotes gender equality, where human rights are protected and respected and patterns of discrimination, inequality and disadvantage are addressed to end the drivers of violence against women and children.

The National Plan is a plan for all Australians. It is a national blueprint for change and sets out our collective ambitions, priorities and targets for how we will work to end violence against women and children over the next ten years. It outlines that we all have a meaningful role to play and are accountable for change – as families, friends, work colleagues, employers, businesses, sporting

organisations, media, educational institutions, service providers, community organisations and governments. The National Plan also provides guidance for policy makers, those in the family, domestic and sexual violence sector, community-based organisations and all other stakeholders engaged in addressing and preventing violence against women and children. It recognises the different and complementary roles played by both the Commonwealth and state and territory governments, outlines the commitment by all levels of government and provides a nationally coordinated and long-term policy framework for ending violence against women and children in Australia.

Foundation Principles

The National Plan sets out four **Foundation Principles** to guide governments, businesses, the family, domestic and sexual violence sector, victim-survivors, research sector, and communities to work together to address and prevent violence against women and children.

These principles are based on our collective understanding and recognition that:

- addressing gender inequality is key to ending violence against women and children

- we need to draw upon the diverse lived experience of victim-survivors to design appropriate and effective policies and solutions

- working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, Elders and communities to end violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls is critical to ending violence in Australia and meeting the commitments in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

- there is need for an intersectional and evidence-informed approach that considers the complexity and diversity of people's lived experiences.

National Pillars

Informed by these principles, the National Plan takes a comprehensive approach, prioritising actions and targets across four **National Pillars** - **Prevention, Early Intervention, Response** and **Recovery**. These pillars of action are all connected and work together to help break the cycle of violence.

National population-wide **Prevention** looks to 'Change the Story'[2] in households, workplaces, schools, communities, institutions and social settings providing everyone with the tools to help stop violence before it starts by challenging views and attitudes that condone and reinforce gender inequality and promote violence against women and children.

Children who witness abuse before the age of 15 are at an increased risk of experiencing intimate partner violence as an adult, either as a victim or a perpetrator.[3] **Early intervention** seeks to 'change the trajectory' for individuals and families with higher-than-average risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence, or in situations where violence is starting to occur.

Trauma-informed **Response** and **Recovery** efforts help to break the cycle of violence. High quality and culturally appropriate response services can reduce the reoccurrence of violence and reduce its impact. A more integrated and enhanced service system can also support recovery, healing, wellbeing and positive life outcomes for victim-survivors.

Implementation

The National Plan will be implemented through two five-year Action Plans and two five-year Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plans, which will provide a roadmap for Commonwealth, state and territory governments to implement actions within each pillar of the National Plan. An Outcomes and

Evaluation Framework will provide structure for strong monitoring, evaluation and accountability to measure impact and demonstrate change over time.

The consultation approach

The National Plan has been developed and agreed by the National Federation Reform Council's Taskforce on Women's Safety, which includes Commonwealth, state and territory ministers who have responsibility for women's safety.

To support this work, the Commonwealth government established the National Plan Advisory Group (NPAG) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence (Advisory Council) to provide expert guidance and advice on the development of the National Plan.

A multi-faceted consultation process guided the development of the National Plan by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. Other inputs to the National Plan include:

- the House Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence;

- the Delegate's Statement from the National Summit on Women's Safety;

- key findings from the public consultation and targeted workshops and interviews (including with victim-survivors);

- the existing evidence base, including Change the Story, Change the Picture and the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices): Securing Our Rights; Securing Our Future Report 2020.

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WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

A lack of gender equality is cited as an underlying determinant of violence against women and children.[4] Without a shared understanding of the problem, and an understanding of the underlying drivers and impacts of gender-based violence, it will not be possible to achieve the goal of ending violence against women and children.

Our understanding must be informed by the stories of victim-survivors and their families so that the policies and solutions that are developed are appropriate and will work effectively to improve outcomes for people experiencing violence.

What is violence against women and children?

The term **violence against women** encompasses all forms of violence, harassment, abuse and coercive control that women (and often young women and girls) experience.[5] Violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, social, cultural, spiritual, financial and technology-facilitated abuse (including image-based abuse), and stalking.[6] Women can experience multiple and intersecting forms of violence, harassment and abuse across the course of their lives and across a variety of settings, including at home, in the workplace, online, or in the community. Violence against women and children often occur together in homes, and are driven by the same factors. Children can experience family violence both directly and indirectly and have their own unique experiences of family violence that can have a range of impacts on their health, wellbeing, and social and emotional development.[7]

Key terminology and definitions: working towards national consistency

National Plan consultations and the National Summit on Women's Safety highlighted the need for clear and consistent national definitions of the different forms of violence so that everyone can work from a consistent understanding.

National definitions are a whole-of-system issue and should be used to inform and support program design, public and private sector policies, as well as legislation across jurisdictions to ensure that all Australians have equal access to support and justice. They should also inform everyday working and social experiences as Australian's private and civil sectors apply this consistent understanding to workplaces, community and government settings.

The National Plan uses the following terms, which form a basis for discussion nationally on consistent definitions:

Intimate partner violence, also commonly referred to as '**domestic violence'**, refers to a pattern of behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours.

Family violence is a broader term than domestic violence, as it refers not only to violence between intimate partners but also to violence perpetrated by parents (and guardians) against children and between other family members. This includes, for example, elder abuse, violence perpetrated by children or young people against parents, guardians or siblings, and violence perpetrated by other members of the family such as parents-in-law. Family violence is also the term preferred by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples noting the ways violence can manifest across extended family networks.

Sexual violence refers to sexual activity that happens where consent is not freely given or obtained. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity, such as touching, sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment and intimidation, forced marriage and trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual violence can be non-physical and include unwanted comments or harassment of a sexual nature.

Gender-based violence refers to violence that is used against someone because of their gender. It describes violence rooted in gender-based power inequalities 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 the majority of cases of gender-based violence are perpetrated by men against women, because they are women. Gender-based violence can include female genital mutilation, trafficking of girls, forced marriage, and dowry abuse. Violence experienced by LGBTIQA+ people of all genders is also gender-based violence.

Coercive control is generally considered a pattern of behaviour that perpetrators use to create and maintain control over their victim-survivors. Controlling actions can seek to limit or control someone's movement or freedom, threaten, belittle or humiliate, and can include financial abuse or control of a victim-survivors financial or legal affairs against their will. It recognises that individual acts can form a broader pattern of abusive behaviours that reinforce and strengthen the control and dominance of one person over another.

Consent is defined by relevant laws of all state territories. Consent is required to enter into sexual activity and can be either "freely and voluntarily" given or an "free" or "free and voluntary" agreement. Legal definitions of consent vary between Australian state and territory jurisdictions with ongoing reforms in a number of states and territories to amend the definition of consent to require affirmative communication.

*Other definitions and terminology that relate to the National Plan are provided in the **Glossary**.*

Prevalence and patterns of violence against women and children

While each woman's experience of violence, abuse or harassment is unique, data indicates an epidemic of violence against women in Australia.[8] Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia affects people of all ages and from all backgrounds, but predominantly the violence is perpetrated by men against women.[9]

- 1 in 4 women has experienced intimate partner violence since the age of 15.

- 1 in 2 women has experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime.

- 1 in 2 women has experienced violence by a partner, other known person or a stranger since the age of 15.

- 1 in 4 women has experienced emotional abuse by a current or former partner since the age of 15.

- 1 in 5 women has experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.[10]

Violence against women and children in Australia is mostly perpetrated by men.[11] Around four in five family and domestic violence offenders are male.[12] Men's violence against women, including intimate partner violence, is more prevalent, more often used repeatedly and more likely to lead to serious injury, disability or death.[13] More than one in three Australians have experienced violence by a male perpetrator since the age of 15, compared to one in ten by a female perpetrator. While men can also be victim-survivors of family, sexual and domestic violence, men are more likely to experience violence from a stranger.[14]

Importantly, while sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence can occur in the context of domestic and family violence, it can also be perpetrated by other people known or unknown to the victim-survivor. In order to be effective, it is critical that our efforts to prevent, address, and respond to sexual violence recognise both the intersections and clear points of difference between domestic and family violence and sexual violence.

Women with disability experience significantly higher levels of all forms of violence. [15] Nine in 10 women with intellectual disability report experiencing sexual assault[16]. Violence against women with disability is also more diverse in nature. While women with disability face many of the same forms of domestic, family and sexual violence, they also experience and are at more risk of particular forms of violence, such as forced sterilisation, seclusion and restrictive practices, and experience violence in a range of institutional and service settings such as in residential institutions and aged care facilities.[17]

Drivers of violence against women and children

Violence against women is not caused by any single factor. However, Australia's national guide to prevent violence against women, *Change the Story*, sets out that violence against women has distinct gendered drivers. Evidence points to four factors that most consistently predict or drive violence against women and explain its gendered patterns.[18]

- **Driver 1:** Condoning of violence against women.

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

- **Driver 3**: Rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity.

- **Driver 4:** Male peer relations and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.[19]

The primary driver of violence against women is gender inequality, however this also intersects with other forms of discrimination and disadvantage that can marginalise people and make it more likely that some groups of women and children will experience greater levels of violence than others.

In addition to the gendered drivers, 'Change the Story' identifies four **reinforcing factors**. These factors do not predict or drive men's violence against women on their own, but can reinforce and increase the frequency and/or severity of violence:

- **Reinforcing factor 1:** Condoning of violence in general

- **Reinforcing factor 2:** Experience of, and exposure to, violence

- **Reinforcing factor 3:** Factors that weaken pro-social behaviour (including poverty, isolation, environments dominated by male peer relations, natural disasters and crises, alcohol and other drugs and gambling)

- **Reinforcing factor 4:** Resistance and backlash to prevention and gender equality efforts.[20]

Violence affects women across all life stages

The National Plan recognises the different needs of women and children at different points of their lives.

While forms of violence are not limited to specific ages, women and girls can be more at risk of different forms of violence as they age.

Girls and younger women can experience gender-based violence in the same way as adult women.[21] Girls can be at risk of experiencing specific forms of violence including female genital mutilation and early and forced marriage. In regards to sexual assault, young women (aged 15-24 years) are at the greatest risk of any age and sex group, followed by girls aged 10-14 years. Young women aged 18–34 were 2.7 times as likely as those aged 35 and over to have experienced intimate partner violence in the previous 12 months.[22]

Women (aged around 25 to 65 years) can experience all forms of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, in any setting. Around 25 per cent of women who experienced physical or sexual violence by a known perpetrator experienced violence during pregnancy. Of those, 25 percent indicated that the violence first occurred during pregnancy.[23]

For **older women** (around 65 years and over), gender-based violence can include forms of elder abuse, violence perpetrated by family members including adult children, and violence that occurs in non-family and domestic settings.

Recognising children in their own right

Children who grow up experiencing family and domestic violence in their homes can be impacted as both immediate targets and witnesses of gender-based violence. These experiences can have serious life-long negative consequences and can result in ongoing profound physical and mental health impacts,[24] developmental challenges, and barriers to effective participation in education and employment.[25]

The National Plan acknowledges children as victims of gender-based violence in their own right and targets actions towards preventing and addressing violence against children under each of the four National Pillars. Increasing education and prevention efforts for children as well as supporting recovery from childhood trauma, are important strategies for breaking the cycle of violence against women and children.

Experiences of child abuse are addressed concurrently through *Safe & Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021 – 2031*. Child sexual abuse is addressed through the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse* 2021-2030.

The importance of engaging men and boys

Men have an important role to play in constructively engaging and challenging views that condone gender inequality and gender-based violence. An important area of focus is supporting men call out harassment or disrespect towards women. The National Plan has a focus on changing social attitudes and structural norms that condone violence against women and children, such as passive by-standing and victim blaming. National awareness campaigns aim to do this at a whole of population level, supported by other prevention and education initiatives led by schools, workplaces and communities.

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

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

Where men seek help to address their own harmful behaviours and violence, the National Plan focuses on early intervention measures to address behaviours irrespective of their stage in life, lived experience or cultural background.

The impacts of violence against women and children – An Australian context

Violence against women and children is a human rights and criminal justice issue, which can result in long-term social, health, psychological, financial and economic impacts on victim-survivors. Increased anxiety, depression and fear can continue to affect women and children throughout their lives.[26]

The impacts of violence against women and children ripple across families, communities and society as a whole. For many, the trauma can remain undisclosed and unresolved for a range of intersecting and sensitive reasons including personal stigma or poor experiences with service systems.[27]

Trauma is a normal emotional and physical response to abuse.[28] Trauma can occur immediately after an event, or many years later. Traumatic stress reactions can include anxiety, depression, disassociation, flashbacks, and difficulty forming relationships and connections, as well as physical symptoms like difficulty sleeping, headaches or nausea.[29] Trauma looks different for each victim-survivor and how trauma affects an individual depends on many factors, including personal characteristics, the nature of the traumatic event/s, and sociocultural factors.[30]

Some individuals may clearly display trauma response behaviours, whilst others may have delayed responses to trauma. Underlying trauma can go unrecognised and unidentified which can result in long-term impacts on mental health.[31]

Trauma can also be experienced vicariously by people working to support others who have experienced violence or abuse.

Within the context of violence against women and children, victim-survivors often experience multiple traumatic events over time. This makes victim-survivors' experiences of trauma complex and the mental, emotional and physical impacts can extend over the long-term. Trauma extends to children who may experience or witness violence. Children's exposure to multiple types of violence increases the likelihood that they will experience post-traumatic stress disorder.[32]

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

Intimate partner violence is the main contributing preventable risk factor for morbidity and death in women aged 15 to 44.[33] Gender-based violence impacts all aspects of life, including, for example, the negative impact it has on a person's capacity to attend work, with 48 per cent of women who had experienced violence saying that it reduced their attendance at work.[34] Violence against women and children is also a leading cause of homelessness for women and children. In 2020-21, 42 per cent of people seeking specialist homelessness services reported having experienced family and domestic violence. Within this group, more than one in five were between the ages of 0-9 years, and nearly 30 per cent identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.[35]

The **impacts of family violence on children** are serious and long lasting, affecting their health, wellbeing, education, employment, relationships and housing outcomes.[36] In 2016–17, there were 288 hospitalisations of children for abuse injuries perpetrated by a parent (217 hospitalisations) or

other family member (71 hospitalisations).[37] Over the longer-term, children as victims or witnesses of intimate partner violence can be twice as likely to have a psychiatric diagnosis, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and impaired language skills at age 10.[38]

In **rural, regional and remote communities**, the challenges and impacts of violence against women and children can be more complex to address, with help often harder to access. Women in remote and regional communities are 24 times more likely to be hospitalised for domestic violence than women in major cities, and those from remote and regional communities reported they found it harder to report violence due to shame and stigma.[39]

Family, domestic and sexual violence also causes a **huge economic impact** with KPMG estimating this scourge costs Australia around $26 billion each year, [40] with victims and survivors bearing approximately 50 per cent of that cost.

CURRENT TRENDS IN VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Violence against women and children is impacted by national and global events and change. Governments, the family, domestic and sexual violence sector, communities and individuals more broadly have a growing awareness of the drivers and impacts of gender-based violence.

The National Plan recognises that responding to the changing nature of gender-based violence must keep pace with issues like the use of technology and global threats like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recognising that there is ongoing discussion about these issues, the National Plan has a focus on emerging issues supported by evidence-based strategies across all four pillars.

Intimate partner homicide

Domestic and family violence is a widespread and complex crime. It is a major precursor to partner homicide.

Approximately one in four women and one in 14 men have experienced violence by an intimate partner. Intimate partner violence contributes to more death, disability and illness in women aged 15-44 years than any other preventable risk factor.[41] Intimate partner homicide is also the most prevalent type of homicide in Australia, accounting for 46 deaths in 2017-18, at a rate of one woman killed every 11 days.[42]

Although the rate of intimate partner homicide remains an alarming number, we have seen some progress, with intimate partner homicide rates consistently decreasing for women and men since 1989-90.[43]

Sexual violence and harassment

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 23 per cent of women and 8 per cent of men in Australia have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. Victimisation rates continue to rise, and are higher for younger women, women in financial hardship and women with disability. Importantly, while sexual violence can occur in the context of domestic and family violence, it can also be perpetrated by other people known or unknown to the victim-survivor.

Sexual assault is a major health and welfare issue in Australia and worldwide. For many victim-survivors, the effects can be wide-ranging and lifelong. They can experience physical injuries, long-term mental health effects, and disruption to everyday activities such as eating and sleeping habits. Victim-survivors of rape or sexual assault may delay disclosing and reporting or never disclose their experiences. In fact, 83 per cent of Australian women did not report their most recent incident of sexual assault to the police.[44] Misconceptions about sexual violence can result in victim-survivors fearing they will not be believed.

This fear is has a legitimate basis. As many as four in 10 Australians mistrust women's reports of sexual violence according to the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey. In a focus group study where participants were asked to estimate the proportion of sexual allegations that are false, ANROWS found that the average estimate was 21 per cent. Other research has established that only about five per cent of allegations are false.[45]

Sexual harassment can be seen as part of the continuum of sexual violence. The 2016 Public Safety Survey found that around one in two women and one in four men have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime. Workplace sexual harassment is a particularly concerning trend impacting Australians. Significantly, the 2018 National Survey of Sexual Harassment in Australia revealed almost two in five women have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the past five years.

However, out of those affected, less than one in five people who had been sexually harassed lodged a formal report or complaint.

In order to be effectively respond to sexual violence and harassment the National Plan will reflect the intersections and points of difference between domestic and family violence, and sexual violence.

Respect in the workplace

In parallel to the National Plan, the Commonwealth Government will continue to support all levels of government and business to implement the *Roadmap for Respect*, the Government's response to the *Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report*. This work will build culture of respectful behaviour, and address women's safety in their workplaces, and elsewhere.

The *Roadmap for Respect* sets out the Government's long-term commitment to building safe and respectful workplaces. This is an ongoing effort.

41 of the 55 recommendations have been either fully implemented or fully funded. Work is underway on all remaining recommendations, and no recommendations have been rejected.

The Roadmap for Respect is being guided by five key principles:

1. everyone has a **right to be safe at work**;
2. policy should be **evidence-based**;
3. **prevention** must be our focus;
4. **simplicity** and **clarity** makes the law easier for Australians to understand and access;
5. laws must be **consistent** with broader legal frameworks and fundamental legal principles.[46]

Addressing workplace sexual harassment is key to improving women's safety and economic security.[47]

Coercive control

Coercive control is characterised by a pattern of behaviours aimed at regulating and controlling the day-to-day lives of victim-survivors, including threats, humiliation, isolation from friends and family, restricting a person's movement, rigid rules, financial abuse, stalking and monitoring.[48] Non-physical forms of coercive control frequently co-occur with serious forms of physical violence, including non-fatal strangulation,[49] and are closely linked to intimate partner homicides.[50] For example, the NSW Coroners Court found 99 per cent of family and domestic violence homicides between 2008 and 2016 occurred in relationships characterised by the offender's use of coercive and controlling behaviours towards the victim.[51]

Community awareness and official recognition of this form of abuse has increased in recent years. The Australian Government is co-designing national principles to develop a common understanding of coercive control, while some states and territories are progressing legislative reform to recognise coercive control through their criminal justice systems.

The coercive control national principles will consider the impact of coercive control on diverse groups of people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the barriers different groups of people face in accessing support and what will be necessary for system responses to be effective, inclusive and culturally appropriate.

Technology-facilitated abuse

Technology-facilitated abuse is widespread and increasing, [52] often taking the form of stalking, surveillance, tracking, threats, harassment and the non-consensual sharing of intimate images. Research suggests that mobile phones are the most frequently used technology, and texting and social media (such as Facebook and Snapchat) are the most common services[53] used for unwanted contact and abuse from a partner or ex-partner.[54] Studies also show that children are being exploited through the use of technology particularly in co-parenting situations, with some abusers using their children's devices to gather information about a former partner's whereabouts and activities.[55]

Offenders are also exploiting new technology and services, such as drones, artificial intelligence, online dating apps and the 'Internet of Things' to perpetrate sophisticated technology-facilitated abuse that can be difficult for victim-survivors to detect.[56] More than two thirds of complaints received by the eSafety Commissioner about cyber abuse and image-based abuse are from women.[57]

The effects of COVID-19 on violence against women

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a serious and lasting impact on all Australians. Women and men have experienced the pandemic differently, with these differences partly explained by existing gender disparities.

The COVID-19 pandemic created a range of situational factors, like lockdowns, that both amplified existing vulnerabilities and exposed new cohorts of women and children to increased levels of violence. Two-thirds of women who experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former co-habiting partner since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic reported the violence had started or escalated since the pandemic began.[58]

COVID-19 social restrictions exacerbated the isolation of victims from their workplaces, extended families and friends, and increased known risk factors for family and domestic violence offending, such as financial stress, job loss, poor mental health and alcohol consumption. These factors interact with existing drivers and vulnerabilities to increase the overall risks of domestic and family violence.[59]

Specific groups of women were more likely to have experienced physical and sexual violence during this time, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women aged 18–24, women with a restrictive health condition, pregnant women, and women in financial stress.[60]

Enhancing our understanding of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on domestic, family and sexual violence will support better responses in the event of a future national health and economic crisis.

Violence against women and children during natural disaster and emergencies

Times of stress can see an increase in violence against women and children, including during natural disasters and the aftermath. Women and children, in this circumstance can face a greater risk of violence, displacement, injury, and death, when disasters hit. The 2019 bushfire crisis in Australia, for example, saw an increase in referrals to domestic violence support services, and studies found a similar increase in domestic violence both during and after the 2009 Black Saturday fires.[61]

BUILDING ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE FIRST NATIONAL PLAN

The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and released in February 2011. It was the first of its kind in Australia and aimed to coordinate action across all levels of governments. It provided a national platform to outline our shared commitment and approach to addressing violence against women and children.

The first National Plan acknowledged that ending violence and its intergenerational impacts will take time. It had specific focus areas, and established key architecture to support long-term change, while enabling a national conversation about family, domestic and sexual violence. A series of evaluations show the first National Plan:

- helped bring family, domestic and sexual violence to the nation's attention and kept it in the spotlight, despite changes in government throughout the life of the plan.

- demonstrated the collective commitment to address family, domestic and sexual violence, led by the Commonwealth and supported by all states and territories.

- supported a positive shift in levels of collaboration including between organisations, government departments and services, including services that respond to groups disproportionately impacted by violence.[62]

Under the 2010-2022 National Plan, governments worked together to establish key infrastructure and strengthen service responses including though establishing Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), 1800RESPECT, the Stop it at the Start campaign, support for specialised services, emergency accommodation and safe at home programs and supporting work across sectors to provide a holistic service system. The approach to the first National Plan reflects the distinct but complementary roles of the Commonwealth and the states and territories, with the Commonwealth taking responsibility for population-level initiatives such as prevention and building the evidence base and states and territories primarily responsible for the delivery of frontline services.

At the Commonwealth level, annual funding for women's safety under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children 2010-2022* has increased significantly. When the National Plan was endorsed in 2011, the Australian Government announced that funding of $86 million had been allocated for National Plan initiatives from 2009 to 2011. In 2021-22, the Australian Government announced a record investment of $1.1 billion over four years in new funding as a down payment on the next National Plan. At the state and territory level, governments are taking action. As outlined in to the National Implementation Plan of the *Fourth and final Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children*, states and territories are delivering a range of responses needed to tackle domestic, family and sexual violence — from initiatives to prevent violence through to initiatives to enhance services and supports for those experiencing violence.[63]

Responding to prevalence of sexual violence in all settings

The first National Plan had a broad focus on all forms of family, domestic and sexual violence, however placed a strong emphasis on violence perpetrated in a domestic or intimate partner setting.

In the decade since the National Plan was launched, Australia has seen a significant shift in perceptions of domestic violence. Compared to 2009, Australians are now more likely to recognise that behaviours such as preventing a partner from seeing their family and friends, controlling them through finances or harassing them via text message are forms of domestic violence. We are less likely to excuse

domestic violence as a loss of control due to anger or alcohol, less likely to believe that women have a duty to stay in violent relationships for the sake of the family.[64]

The prevalence of intimate partner violence has remained relatively stable since the first National Plan was launched, and so there is still work to do to end violence in domestic settings, but we have also seen an increase in the prevalence of sexual violence in all settings. For example, rates of sexual violence among women increased between 2012 and 2016 (1.2 per cent in 2012 to 1.8 per cent in 2016).[65] Experiences of sexual assault are higher for young women. In 2016, young women aged 15-34 accounted for more than half (53% or 11,000) of all police-recorded sexual assault victims.

 Over time, our awareness of the prevalence and impact of sexual violence in all settings has grown, and justice and policing responses have begun to evolve with it.

Building our understanding of national definitions

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

The definitions used in the National Plan reflect what we have learned to date, acknowledging that learning will continue over the life of the plan, including further work with states and territories in areas where consistent national definitions have not been achieved to date.

Attitudes are changing

The 2017 National Community Attitudes Survey towards Violence against Women Survey showed a positive change in attitudes towards violence against women and gender equality since the previous survey in 2013, with the average score for Australians on the measure of understanding of violence against women increasing from 64 to 70 per cent.[66]

Women are reporting that they are increasingly feeling safer in private and in community settings. In particular, women are feeling much safer at home alone after dark. In 1996, more than 20 per cent of women indicated they felt unsafe in this setting. In 2016, this halved to 10 per cent.[67]

Despite progress, the prevalence of violence against women and children has not significantly decreased during the last 12 years and reported rates of sexual assault continue to rise. [68] While increases in reporting may be due to women feeling more supported to come forward and seek help, we must reduce the prevalence.

Service systems and policies are evolving

All levels of government are working to make the service system easier for all victim-survivors to access and navigate so there is no wrong door for reporting violence or seeking assistance. This includes greater training and awareness of gendered violence across education, health, housing, police and social service sectors, reducing the stigma associated with being a victim of gender-based violence, and minimising the risk of victim-survivors being further traumatised by seeking help.

An increased focus on different types of violence like coercive control has reflected a shift in the past decade from a focus on isolated incidents of (primarily physical) violence to a recognition that persistent series of actions (including emotionally abusive and controlling behaviours) can be used by perpetrators to form a broader pattern of abuse. Better understanding of coercive control is driving system level change and allowing for more holistic responses to victim-survivors.

The National Plan has a focus on building on this understanding and encouraging a wide range of sectors, including policing and justice, finance and utility sectors and information technology sectors, to build capacity and appropriate responses to forms of financial abuse, abuse of process, and technology-facilitated abuse.

There are reforms in a number of states and territories to amend the definition of consent, including to require affirmative communication of consent. These changes to legal definitions are a reflection of a change in community understandings of consent and attitudes towards victim blaming in relation to sexual violence.

The family law system

In the decade since the first National Plan was developed, the Australian Government has undertaken a series of reforms to the family law system to help families separate in a safe, child-centred, supportive, accessible and timely way. The aim of these reforms has been to provide better coordination and awareness of family safety issues in Australia's family law system, and the piloting of programs within the courts to recognise and respond to family, domestic and sexual violence like the Lighthouse Project.

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

When families separate, they are encouraged to settle matters out of court, where it is safe to do so. The Government funds family law services which provide free and low cost assistance to help families manage their family separation and relationship issues. Most notably, as separation is a risk factor for family violence, services play a vital role in assisting vulnerable women sort out post-separation arrangements, including where financial abuse is present. The vast majority of family law matters are settled outside the court system.

When matters proceed to court, they are heard primarily by the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia and the Family Court of Western Australia. Of the minority of matters that end up in court, the majority involve allegations of family violence. From 1 November 2020 to 30 June 2021, data from the Notices of Child Abuse, Family Violence or Risk, which are filed with applications for final orders in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, indicates that:

- 64 per cent of parties allege they have experienced family violence

- 57 per cent of parties allege a child has experienced family violence

- 39 per cent of parties allege that drug, alcohol or substance abuse has caused harm / poses a risk of harm to a child

- 44 per cent presented with four or more risk factors or complexity issues in their case (such as family violence, alcohol or drug use, mental health issues and gambling problems).[69]

Criminal justice responses

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

Key areas for improvement throughout the lifespan of the National Plan include enhancing access to equitable justice outcomes for all victim-survivors; identifying and removing barriers to reporting; investigating and prosecuting sexual violence, and strengthening our responses to perpetrators of violence.

Characteristics of the criminal justice system, including the use of legal terminology, complex processes and lengthy trials, can act as barriers to accessing justice. This is particularly true for individuals whose ability to participate in the criminal justice system may be impaired due to mental, physical or emotional factors.

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

Governments are exploring alternative pathways and strategies to address violence, especially where victim-survivors are apprehensive to engage directly with law enforcement or the formal court process. In some jurisdictions, victim-survivors who do not wish to formally report their sexual assault to police can be afforded an anonymous, informal alternative option.[70]

The National Plan also has a focus on cultural safeguards for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and on making justice accessible to people with disabilities, migrant and refugee communities, LGBTIQA+ people and to people with low digital literacy.

Business and industry responses to violence against women and children

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

Businesses have demonstrated their capacity to support population level change through their recent investment in public awareness raising for issues like the COVID-19 pandemic. It is also noted that key industries like banking, utilities and businesses with contact at people's homes – like delivery drivers - are leading the way with changes in business practices and staff responses to family, domestic and sexual violence, including recent initiatives to better respond to and support victim-survivors.

The Parliamentary Inquiry into family, domestic and sexual violence noted business and industry play a vital role in addressing and preventing violence against women and children. The Inquiry's final report noted the benefits of business initiatives, which often bring an entrepreneurial and innovative flair, to assist in implementing strategies and initiatives that range from prevention through to response, to reduce family, domestic and sexual violence including sexual harassment.

A LONG TERM APPROACH TO CHANGE

The National Plan is a ten-year plan that aims to put Australia on a pathway to eliminate all forms of violence against women and children. Achieving this goal requires a long-term commitment because change takes time and is often generational.

Based on the evidence outlined in *Counting on change: A guide to prevention monitoring* (see Figure 2) the demand for response services will increase as awareness is increased and women feel supported and empowered to reach out for help.

For example, since the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* was established awareness of domestic, family and sexual violence has increased in the broader community, resulting in a higher demand for 1800RESPECT. Over time, 1800RESPECT has evolved to community needs and increased its capacity to provide services from around 20,400 contacts in 2011-12 to over 286,000 contacts in 2020-21.
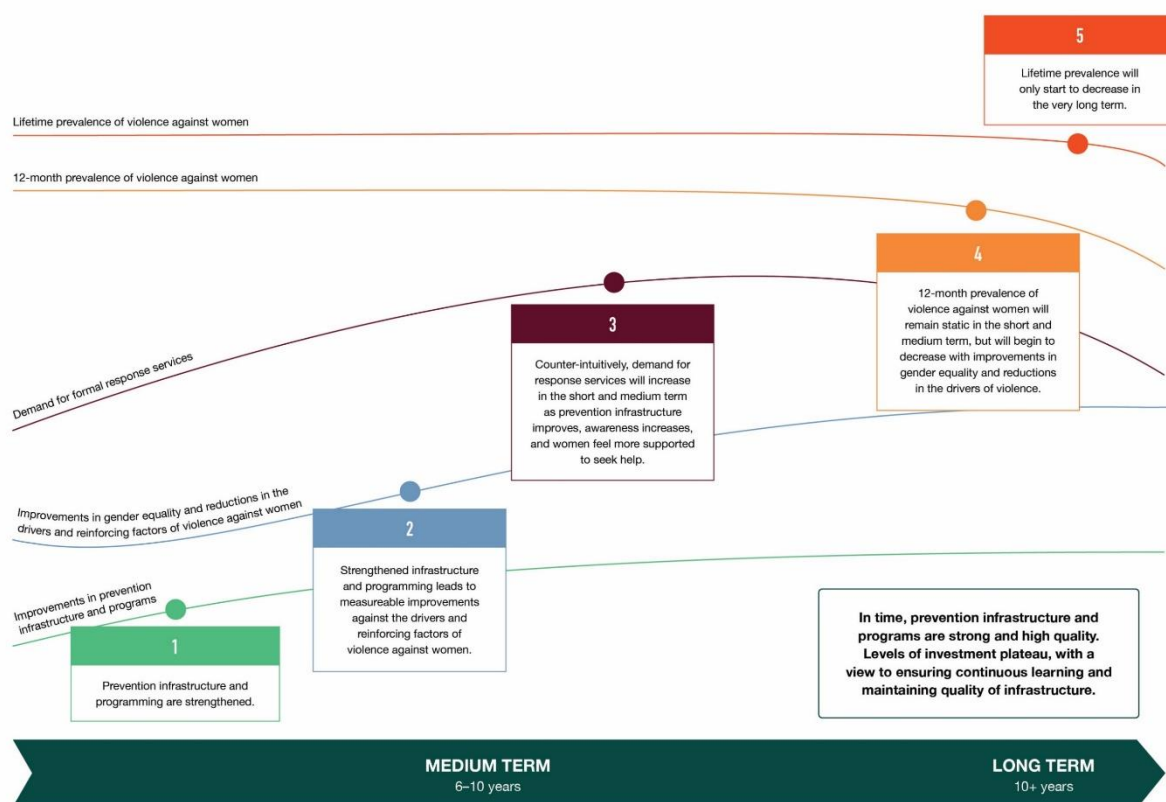
Source: Our Watch and ANROWS, *Counting on Change: A guide to prevention monitoring*

FOUNDATION PRINCIPLES

1. GENDER EQUALITY

"Achieving gender equality is key to preventing violence"

- Delegate Statement, 2021 National Summit on Women's Safety

Regardless of identity, ability, race, sexuality and status, everyone has the right to live and work free from violence and harassment. To achieve this we must address gender inequality and other forms of discrimination, which create the social context for violence against women and children to occur. Evidence shows that higher levels of violence against women are consistently associated with lower levels of gender equality in both public life and personal relationships.[71] Attitudes that deny gender inequality is a problem and support rigid gender roles are the strongest predictors of attitudes that support or condone violence against women.[72]

"There is still an attitude, a culture that excuses, justifies, ignores or condones gender inequality that drives, ultimately, violence against women"

- Prime Minister, the Hon Scott Morrison MP, 2021

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

- Social norms such as the belief that women are best suited to caring roles

- Practices such as differences in child-rearing practices for boys and girls

- Structures and practices that limit women's participation in the workforce and perpetuate the gender pay gap.

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

To end violence against women and children, we must address gender inequality in all its forms and expressions. This includes improving women's representation in leadership and decision-making roles and addressing barriers to women's economic and financial security.

…gender inequality is the core of the problem, so gender equality must be the heart of the solution….there are roles for all of us to play in preventing violence against women – governments, communities, organisations and individuals

– *Our Watch, Change the Story*

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2. THE DIVERSE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF VICTIM-SURVIVORS ARE INFORMING POLICIES AND SOLUTIONS

Victim-survivors must be at the heart of solutions. Victim-survivors have specific and contextual expertise that comes from lived experience of abuse and violence. Victim-survivors have intimate first-hand knowledge of services, systems, and structures that are intended to support them. They know the weaknesses and strengths of interventions in practice.

The National Plan commits to drawing upon lived expertise in multiple ways to work with victim-survivors and ensure what the National Plan delivers is appropriate and effective. This will be key to achieving the National Plan's objectives.

This will mean:

- The diverse voices and perspectives of victim-survivors are central in the development of the National Plan and its Action Plans, with multiple and regular opportunities for victim-survivors nationwide to engage with the implementation of the National Plan and through its life.

- Mechanisms for ongoing engagement and consultation with victim-survivors will be established to support implementation of the National Plan and its Action Plans.

- Victim-survivor led advocacy groups are supported to contribute to policy development and implementation.

- Trauma is a recognised as a normal response to abuse and as an injury of gender-based violence. Trauma recovery and actions to redress the lifelong impacts of violence and abuse on victim-survivors are embedded into the National Plan.

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

- Advocate, Monash Stakeholder Report 2021

3. CLOSING THE GAP

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

- Formal partnerships and shared decision-making

- Building the community-controlled sector

- Transforming government organisations

- Shared access to data and information at a regional level.[73]

Putting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at the forefront of the National Plan is critical for seeing real change.

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

- Delegate Statement, National Summit on Women's Safety, 2021

A dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan will outline strategic approaches to addressing violence against women and children, specifically designed with, and led by, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence. Community control and shared decision-making will be embedded into the implementation of the National Plan. In this way, it will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, and community-driven holistic solutions to ending violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

In alignment with the **Closing the Gap** strategy, which aims to overcome the entrenched inequality faced by too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples so that their life outcomes are equal to all Australians, the National Plan supports measures designed to achieve **Closing the Gap Target 13.**[74]

4. INTERSECTIONALITY

Other forms of discrimination as well as disadvantage can increase the prevalence or severity of violence against some women and children, and can make it difficult for people to access the support they need. For example, women with disability are nearly twice as likely as women without disability to experience violence by a cohabiting partner.[75]

Risks of violence are further compounded by multiple layers of discrimination, such as race and disability. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, violence can be compounded by a range of factors. For instance, around a quarter of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women reported a disability, this increases to 53.5 per cent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 55 and over.[76] Women from migrant and refugee backgrounds are less likely to report violence against them due to language barriers, cultural stigma, concerns about visa and residency status, and financial insecurity.[77]

The policies and reforms under the National Plan, from prevention through to recovery, respond to the diverse lived experiences of women and children, while addressing the underlying drivers of gender-based violence. Specifically, the National Plan:

- Recognises the increased risk and unique forms of violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, migrant and refugee women, LGBTIQA+ communities, young women and women in rural and remote communities, while recognising the intersections with other forms of discrimination experienced by women across a range of backgrounds and experiences.

- Supports definitions of violence against women and children that are inclusive of the diverse lived experiences of all intersectional groups.

- Encourages awareness raising activities and communications campaigns preventing violence against women and children that reflects the diversity of experiences and be culturally responsive and safe.

- Supports capacity building of police, justice, health, educators and other frontline services (including settlement and multicultural services) to identify diverse forms and experiences of violence and provide appropriate responses.

- Expands data collection and data disaggregation efforts to include demographics such as gender identity, ethnicity, visa and residency status, language barriers, age and other relevant demographic characteristics to enable a nuanced understanding of different women's experiences.

- Integrates with other relevant strategies such as the Safety Targeted Action Plan of *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031*, to pave the way for more effective responses to violence against women and children.

The importance of an intersectional analysis

An intersectional analysis of the issue of violence against women and children is critical to the success of all efforts. The intersections of a range of structural and systemic forms of discrimination and disadvantage – racism, `ableism, homo-, bi- and transphobia, ageism, class discrimination and experiences of trauma – produce particular forms and patterns of violence. These intersections can increase the prevalence or severity of violence against some women and children, and limit or undermine individual and systemic consequences for the use of violence. Not only do these systemic and structural intersections have an impact on women's experiences of violence (both as individuals

and as groups), but they also have an impact on how gender and gender inequality are constructed and experienced.[78]

NATIONAL PILLARS

Over the last 12 years, all areas of Australian society have shown commitment and leadership to tackling the complex issue of violence against women and children. Nationally, there has been progress and many achievements. The new National Plan has adopted a four-pillar approach to help focus and organise the next decade of effort and measure outcomes.

The National Pillars are interconnected, with each one reinforcing the effectiveness of the others. For example, healing and recovery from childhood trauma contributes to long-term prevention by addressing one of the reinforcing factors of violence against women. High-quality and accessible response services hold perpetrators accountable, and in turn reduce the recurrence of violence.

Achieving this vision demands leadership by all levels of government and requires long-term bipartisan investment across all pillars.

PILLAR ONE: PREVENTION

Our national vision is a country free from violence against women and children. The only way to achieve this is to stop violence from happening before it starts, through prevention efforts.[79] Prevention is a long-term national priority with a focus on generational change.

Prevention works to change the underlying social drivers of violence against women and children. It recognises that where there is structural inequality – for example, where systems create barriers to financial independence for women – it sends a message that women are of lower social value and worthy of less respect.

Prevention activities work across society to address the attitudes, norms, practices, structures, systems, policies, and power imbalances that drive violence against women and children.

Prevention must be consistently driven across all communities and settings. Without prevention, Australia will remain in a cycle of responding to crisis without addressing violence at its root cause.

Violence against women and children is not caused by any single factor. Domestic and international evidence has shown that certain factors, such as gender inequality, disrespectful attitudes towards women and rigid stereotypical gender roles are drivers of violence against women.[80] Efforts to prevent violence also must recognise other systemic and structural factors, such as discrimination and disadvantage, can heighten the risks for women and children experiencing violence.

While attitudes towards gender-based violence are improving, attitudes condoning violence against women and children are still prevalent in Australia. The 2017 National Community Attitudes Survey towards Violence against Women Survey found that the strongest predictor of attitudes that support violence is having a low level of support for gender equality.

Sustained investment in prevention is needed to challenge the attitudes and behaviours that underpin violence. Expanding the evidence base so that we recognise the complexity of effective prevention, and ensuring that prevention activities are grounded in the lived experience of diverse communities, is crucial to driving the necessary intergenerational change.

Our approach

Our national approach to primary prevention is founded on Australia's world-first guides produced by Our Watch under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*:

- Change the Story (2nd edition): A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and children in Australia[81]

- Changing the Picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children

- Counting on Change: A guide to prevention monitoring[82]

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

We must encourage all Australians, and anyone living in Australia**,** to be involved in prevention, and to actively support the National Plan

Prevention requires long-term investment. Our Watch's *Counting on Change* guide shows that overall rates of violence against women across the population will begin to decrease in the long-term as we make population level improvements in gender equality and reductions in the drivers of violence. It also shows prevalence may increase in the short to medium term as community awareness grows and women feel more supported to seek help.

We will build upon the success of the national primary prevention campaign Stop it at the Start campaign, which is seeing a sustained change in attitudes across broad groups of society.[83]

Focus Areas

1. **Prevention continues to underpin the foundation of our long-term strategy to stop violence against women and children and other individuals and groups impacted by gender based violence in all its forms, before it starts.**

   - Actively change community attitudes and social norms that justify, excuse, trivialise, normalise or downplay violence against women and children, and challenge the condoning of other forms of violence based on discriminatory attitudes.

   - Firmly embed prevention approaches in all settings including in homes, educational settings, workplaces, law enforcement, media, online, the justice system, sport, the arts and community organisations.

   - Recognise and champion the critical role of the corporate sector in preventing violence through fostering gender equality in the workplace and designing products and services that are safe and prevent misuse.

   - Challenge sensationalised or stereotyped views and sexist, racist, and other types of discriminatory depictions that contribute to a culture that condones gender-based violence and enables victim blaming.

   - Continue to develop, implement and evaluate targeted primary prevention activities designed by, and tailored for, the specific communities they are intended to support, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, LGBTIQA+ communities, women with disabilities, young people, older women, migrant and refugee women and people in remote and rural communities.

2. **Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships between and among women and men, girls and boys, in public and private spheres**

   - Ensure programs are available for all ages, including, but not limited to, respectful relationships education, consent education and emotional literacy programs, which promote positive, equal and respectful relationships between people of all genders, in all contexts.

- Build digital literacy among children, young people and adults, including building skills to engage respectfully in an online environment.

- Give people the tools and confidence to be active bystanders to challenge sexism, harassment, inequality, disrespect and hostility towards women and violence-supportive attitudes in their personal and professional lives and in all settings, including online.

- Give women and girls with disabilities the tools and confidence to challenge sexism, harassment and the specific forms of violence and abuse directed at those reliant on carers and support so they are able to challenge violence in those contexts.

- Address the role of pornography in contributing to harmful sexual behaviours and reinforcing stereotyped attitudes among children and young people.

3. **Empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices**

- Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities are resourced to lead, design, implement and evaluate culturally appropriate and trauma-informed work to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

- Address intergenerational trauma for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through truth telling, and capacity building, as well as strengthening connections to culture, language, knowledge and identity.

- For regional, rural and remote communities, consider funding models that reflect the complexity of services, workforce challenges and access issues that need to be considered on a community-by-community basis.

4. **Work with men and boys**

- Support primary prevention interventions that support men and boys to have respectful and equal relationships, and engage all men to be part of the change.

- Develop and promote healthy masculinities and representations of men and boys modelling respectful, fair, ethical, safe, supportive, equitable behaviours within relationships, to normalise these behaviours for men and boys.

- Engage those in leadership positions, including men, across the community to articulate the need for change and help them to become agents of change.

- Ensure programs are available early to challenge behaviours and attitudes before they escalate.

PILLAR TWO: EARLY INTERVENTION

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

Early intervention approaches complement population-level prevention initiatives with a focus on addressing the dominant and potentially harmful expressions of masculinity that drive violence against women and children. Approaches aim to change the course for individuals who are at high-risk of perpetrating violence, stop the escalation of violence and protect victim-survivors from both immediate and long-term harm.

We need to develop new and innovative ways of engaging and working with men and boys and increase help seeking behaviours for use of abusive and violent behaviours, including interventions that are evidence-based and community-led. We need further research on effective intervention strategies for children and young men who use violence.

Perpetrator interventions are varied and not limited to men's behaviour change programs. Perpetrator interventions range across mainstream and specialist services, to drug and alcohol services, police issuing protection notices promptly and courts appropriately dealing with breaches of orders. We must build the data-base on legal and justice interventions to monitor whether they are delivering justice to victim-survivors.

The unacceptable recidivism rates of people known to have committed family, domestic and sexual violence also need to be addressed. Currently, around 50 per cent of offenders commit a further domestic violence offence within four years of their initial offence.[84] Undertaking effective early intervention aims to prevent perpetrators from reoffending not only with current partners, but also addressing repeating patterns of behaviour with other family members and potential future partners.

Our approach

Effective intervention approaches need to be embedded in a wide variety of community settings. For example, the healthcare system is often the first and preferred point of contact for victims of intimate partner violence and perpetrators when seeking assistance individually.[85] Health service providers such as general practitioners, maternal and child health services, mental health and drug and alcohol services, pharmacists, hospitals and ambulance officers need to be supported through resources, time and education to identify and respond to family, domestic and sexual violence. Similarly, policing and justice systems need to be equipped to provide trauma-informed, culturally safe and person-centred responses that prioritise the safety of individuals and families.

Approaches toward perpetrators must be consistent and constructive, where men are supported to change their behaviour in all their interactions with systems and services, not just through engagement with specialist family violence services. This requires cooperation across all relevant departments and agencies, not just the family, domestic and sexual violence sector and men's behaviour change programs. Understanding and awareness of the drivers of violence as well as the ways perpetrators control victim-survivors also need to be embedded in wider system responses, including justice, policing and health responses.

Intervention must also include initiatives within educational settings including universities and in workplaces to reduce, prevent and respond appropriately to sexual harassment and violence.[86]

Appropriate interventions for children at different ages and stages are needed to disrupt the cycles of violence, address existing trauma and stop harmful behaviours from escalating now and into their

adult relationships. This includes working with children and young people that use violence against parents and other family members.

We must provide culturally-safe early intervention family support services, and formalise partnerships between specialist services and child protection systems to promote collective interventions that support families to recover from trauma of violence. It is critical that we alter the pathway for children and young people who are using family or sexual violence by providing resources and programs that support safety in the home environment, and recognise the role that schools and early learning centres can play.

Under the First National Action Plan of the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030*, Australian, state and territory governments will work together to develop a framework to prevent and respond to children with harmful sexual behaviours.

Focus Areas

1. **Break the cycle of intergenerational violence through early intervention**

   - Address trauma of children, young people and adults who have experienced violence and may be at increased risk of re-victimisation or perpetration (also see Recovery approach).

   - Implement initiatives to address and reduce the reinforcing drivers of violence, including initiatives that are intersectional and reflect diverse lived experiences.

   - Target approaches to at-risk life stages, such as during pregnancy and after relationship breakdown.

   - Build the data and research base on what drives men to perpetrate violence, including the role of their own lived experience of violence and trauma and the impact of use of alcohol and other drugs.

   - Building the evidence base around the causes, experiences, presentation and effective rehabilitation approaches for children and young people who use violence to support the family violence sector in providing effective intervention and diversion strategies.

   - Expand the availability of support services for children and young people who use violence in the family setting to address and change their behaviour and divert away from the criminal justice system.

2. **Support pathways for boys and men who identify as having attitudes and behaviours that may lead to violence to seek help.**

   - Provide safe and supported opportunities for men and boys who self-identify as engaging in violence to find pathways to change their behaviours, including harmful sexual behaviours treatment programs, prior to interactions with the justice systems.

   - Provide access to men's behaviour change programs, particularly in regional and remote areas where there is an identified need.

   - Invest in perpetrator programs, informed by risk assessment and mitigation, evidence and the lived experience of men, including men who have been in contact with the criminal justice system

3. **Embed perpetrator programs into community and justice settings to reduce recidivism rates.**

   - Develop programs that focus on deterrence that ensure perpetrators understand the costs of committing a crime, including novel approaches to monitoring.

- Maximise opportunities within the correctional system to identify all cohorts of people who may use family, domestic or sexual violence as a part of offending behaviour.

- Embed victim support in all programs including ongoing risk assessment and mitigation to ensure that victim-survivors understand the actions that are being undertaken and that there are no unintended consequences that may impact on the safety or wellbeing of victim-survivors.

4. **Support women at points in their life where violence can escalate**

- Ensure maternal health professionals understand and can identify the signs and risks of violence because pregnant women are at increased risk of experiencing violence from an intimate partner.

- Increase support for young people experiencing or at risk of violence.

- Increase awareness and build capacity in responses services to better understand violence in all its forms against older women.

- Equip emergency and first responders to recognise the signs of violence in natural disasters and other emergency situations and support them in referring victims to support services

5. **Build sectoral and community capacity to identify family, domestic and sexual violence and to intervene early to prevent the escalation of violence and, over time, reduce instances of violence.**

- Build the capacity of the services in contact with women and children at risk of experiencing violence, including health professionals, policing and justice and other family, domestic and sexual violence services to support diverse groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, women from regional and remote areas, women from migrant and refugee backgrounds, and LGBTIQA+ communities.

- Build capacity in mainstream frontline services responding to gender-based violence, such as health and policing, including accurately identifying the 'person most in need of protection'.

- Build the capability for those who work with men and boys on addressing and changing their behaviours in recognition of the highly specialised nature of the work, including through consistent standards.

- Ensure early intervention strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations are culturally-safe, community owned and delivered by prioritising funding for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

- Ensure family violence services work holistically with Child Protection Services and other family services to support greater integration of service front-doors.

PILLAR THREE: RESPONSE

Response includes efforts and programs used to address existing violence and support victim-survivors experiencing violence- including but not limited to crisis counselling, financial, housing or medical assistance as well as police and justice responses including family law services and perpetrator interventions. Also known as 'tertiary prevention', these efforts aim to prevent violence occurring again, by supporting survivors and holding perpetrators of violence to account.

It also refers to the response to perpetrators and ensuring victim-survivors are able to live free from the violence perpetrated against them. It is about perpetrators being accountable through the justice system as well as in the community, and recognition and resolution for victim-survivors. Accountability can take different forms and can involve perpetrators taking personal responsibility for their violence and choosing to change their behaviour. Supported and culturally-safe pathways for perpetrators to choose to address their behaviours are important to being able to support men to be accountable for their violence.[87]

Our approach

Responding to gender-based violence will be different for every victim-survivor.

Victim-survivors need survivor-centred, holistic multi-sectoral, trauma-informed responses with local referral pathways, which meet their diverse needs.

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

All services engaging with family, domestic and sexual violence should enhance cross system processes to be more joined up and easier to navigate. This includes, child protection, perpetrator interventions, the justice and legal systems (including police and family law systems and services), the community and women's sector, housing and health services.

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

Victim-survivor crisis responses include mechanisms for information-sharing that safeguard women and children's confidentiality and joint case-management which privileges the safety of women and children over perpetrator privacy.

A comprehensive and coordinated crisis response system is one that achieves the following:

- The number of times a victim-survivor must repeat their story is minimised, and information is only shared with those the victim-survivor has consented to share their story with.

- Perpetrator interventions work as part of an ecosystem of programs and in partnership with women's services.

- Underlying trauma is addressed to ensure men are prepared and able to engage in behaviour change programs and men's behaviour change programs adhere to minimum standards.

- Safe and expeditious resolution of family law matters is facilitated by an accessible and easy-to-navigate family law system and family law services that ensure victim-survivors can obtain fair outcomes and maintain their future safety and economic security following family separation.

- Perpetrator programs engage with men who have used violence and monitor and assess risk in an ongoing way, communicating this information to other services as part of a multi-

agency response. Such programs keep perpetrators in view, hold men accountable for their use of violence, and challenge the harmful attitudes and beliefs that perpetuate violence.

- Staff in specialist sectors receive ongoing specialist education, training and professional development related to the drivers of violence against women and children, how to identify domestic, family, and sexual violence, and trauma-informed responses to victim-survivors.

- All victim-survivors are heard, their choices are supported and empowered through these responses, and perpetrators are held to account and given the opportunity to work to change their harmful behaviours and attitudes.

- Where a response is required from the criminal justice system, this is survivor-centred and survivors are supported throughout their journey.

Focus Areas

1. **Ensure a resourced service system with an appropriately skilled and qualified workforce is available to support all victim-survivors, including victims of sexual assault, and address perpetrator behaviour no matter where they are located or their individual characteristics, through frontline services provided by states and territories.**

   - Account for the increased costs of providing services in remote communities.

   - Support workforces to access training and information to build capability to deliver evidence based and trauma informed services to victim-survivors and perpetrators, including in areas of emerging forms of family, domestic and sexual violence, such as technology-facilitated abuse including new and emerging technologies.

   - Establish a national minimum service level and ensure consistency in support across jurisdictions.

2. **Embed understanding of the unique and specific challenges diverse communities face in relation to family, domestic and sexual violence.**

   - Recognise that intergenerational trauma of historical policies and practices of governments create complex barriers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in accessing services.

   - Prioritise capacity building to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can develop and deliver culturally appropriate services.

   - Understand and address the unique forms of gender-based violence experienced by women with disability.

   - Build the capacity of services to recognise the gendered drivers of violence experienced by LGBTIQA+ communities and the overrepresentation of trans, gender diverse and non-binary people as victim-survivors of family and domestic violence.

   - Break down the systemic barriers and the diversity of experiences that directly impact women from migrant and refugee backgrounds in Australia.

3. **Ensure women and children escaping violence have safe and secure housing, across the spectrum from crisis to longer term, sustainable social housing.**

   - Expand options for women and children to stay safely in their own home, rather than being made to leave as a default.

- Enhance linkages between emergency accommodation, transitional housing and long-term housing to support women through the continuum of housing needs through to the recovery stage.

- Support victim-survivors to find safe housing options in the private market where they have capacity to do so.

- Recognise the particular housing challenges faced by women with disability, LGBTIQA+ communities and migrant and refugee women as well as women in remote and regional communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

- Deliver safe housing options for children and young people experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence including respite services.

4. **Improve legal responses for all forms of violence, including coercive control and sexual violence.**

- Ensure victim-survivors have access to appropriate survivor-centred justice responses.

- Improve alternative civil justice and non-criminal pathways for holding perpetrators to account.

- Promote greater legal consistency across all states and territories in terms of laws, justice responses and support offered to victim-survivors when interacting with the justice and court systems.

- Enhance the response to family violence in family law matters, including by strengthening information sharing and inter-agency collaboration between the Commonwealth family law courts and state and territory police and child protection systems.

- Increase and enhance training and awareness for police, lawyers, and the judiciary.

- Embed models of response to minimise re-traumatisation of survivors of sexual violence through the criminal justice system and increase experiences of victim-survivors being believed and treated with sensitivity and empathy.

- Implement culturally safe policing and justice responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and others who are disproportionately impacted by the justice system.

5. **The role of technology in the perpetration and prevention of violence against women.**

- Build on the work of the e-Safety Commissioner to better support young people and women when they experience technology-facilitated abuse to ensure they can use technology safely without fear of it being a vehicle for violence and can actively, productively and safely participate in online spaces.

- Recognise the serious impact of technology-facilitated abuse on children, and how widespread it is, with perpetrators misusing common devices and platforms, such as mobile phones, texting and social media.[88]

- Expand work within the financial sector in identifying and taking action against the misuse of banking platforms and embed safety principles in all products and services.

PILLAR FOUR: RECOVERY

Recovery and healing refers to the ongoing process that enables victim survivors to be safe, healthy, and resilient, to have economic security, to recover and thrive.

Our approach

Women and children who have experienced violence must be able to access support for their recovery and healing, beyond the crisis response, to achieve long-term improvements in health and wellbeing. This requires support to recover from the financial, social, psychological, and physical impacts of violence. Recovery helps to break the cycle of violence and reduce the risk of re-traumatisation. Recovery also relates to the broader rebuilding of a victim-survivor's life and ability to return to the workplace and community, obtain financial independence, and economic security.

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

- – Advocate, Monash Consultation Report, 2021

Recovery from family, domestic and sexual violence can be a difficult and long-term process. It takes tremendous strength and resilience. It requires access to services and social systems of support and will differ for each victim-survivor, and the ongoing impacts must be recognised.

Women who leave abusive or violent relationships must have the support to transition from being controlled to being in control of their lives, whilst often managing feelings of fear, shame, and grief.[89] We recognise that recovery is challenging particularly in circumstances where there is an ongoing contact with the perpetrator such as shared care arrangements of children, other legal and financial connections can continue to provide avenues for abuse.

Family, domestic and sexual violence can often be perpetrated over many years, in many forms, and has lifelong impacts, including post-traumatic stress,[90] depression, anxiety, substance abuse, financial stress and instability, homelessness, and other negative mental health and physical health outcomes.[91] Traumatic brain injury among women and children experiencing violence can also occur,[92] and more research is needed to inform response and recovery efforts to better identify and treat traumatic brain injury. Many victims also sustain permanent disabilities that result from physical violence such as hearing impairment. Similarly, mental health conditions like eating disorders are also common among victim-survivors.[93]

Recovery services must be tailored to the needs of victim-survivors of sexual violence including sexual assault, rape and sexual harassment from non-intimate partners and outside of family structures. We must continue to build trauma-informed services for victim-survivors that encourage people to report so as to reduce the stigma and victim blaming which has often left trauma unresolved or disclosed.

Some victim-survivors experience compounding traumas, such as from racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and intergenerational trauma. The National Plan takes an intersectional approach, and thus supports recovery efforts that cater to the diverse needs of victim-survivors.

The National Plan recognises that recovery and healing take time and will, in many cases, require lifelong support through dedicated and tailored services and interventions. When women and children are not supported to recover, they are at higher risk of being unable to leave abusive relationships, and could be targeted by another perpetrator. There is a strong relationship between child sexual

abuse and adult sexual re-victimisation. A 2017 review of research on these links found that about half of child survivors have been sexually victimised later in life.[94]

It is important that we minimise systems' barriers to recovery and minimise the possibilities for re-traumatisation and harm within services and systems. Trauma-informed and person-centred practice needs to be embedded across systems and services. This involves the recognition of victim-survivors' lived experience of trauma and taking steps to prevent experiences that may lead to re-traumatisation and re-victimisation when providing care and support.

Focus areas

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

   - Establish research related to the long-term impacts of FDSV and possible pathways to recovery for people with a range of lived experiences of violence.

   - Develop policy guidelines with reference to best practice for providing integrated, trauma-informed services to support both women and children to recover and heal, and fully participate in society both socially and economically.

   - Provide training for mental health and other health practitioners on identification and treatment of mental health impacts in relation to the experience of domestic, family and sexual violence and are linked into and can refer on to other support services including legal and workforce support.

   - Enhance recovery services so they are accessible to women with disabilities noting they may require specialised services and/or benefit from having access to services managed by people with experience of disability.

   - Develop whole-of–family approaches to healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and support the capacity needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led services to deliver healing-informed services and approaches.

2. **Recovery services and supports are tailored to the specific needs of diverse populations and individuals, and women of different ages and in all locations.**

   - Recognise the recovery needs of older people including the accumulated economic disadvantage for older women and the need to increase access to safe and affordable long-term housing.

   - Provide trauma-informed recovery support for people impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence, including people who have experienced violence and people who use violence, to break the cycle.

   - Support migrant and refugee women to access culturally appropriate services in their language.

   - Support LGBTIQA+ communities to access to inclusive, and affirming recovery support.

3. **Victim-survivors of sexual violence require specialist recovery and healing services.**

   - Ensure that services and support practices work to prevent future re-victimisation by supporting ongoing healing and building resilience.

- Provide trauma-informed and person-centred care through health services that is respectful of, and responsive to, the preferences, needs and values of victim-survivors and minimises the risks of re-traumatisation.

- Acknowledge that domestic violence and sexual assault can co-occur as part of victim-survivors complex lived experience.

4. **Children and young people are recognised as victim-survivors of violence in their own right, and their safety and recovery needs are met**

- Provide children and young people with access to holistic responses that focus on repairing the often-undermined mother-child relationship.

- Support integrated specialist family, domestic and sexual services and programs for children and young people who have been impacted by violence that focus on disrupting cycles of violence and reducing potential future re-victimisation or perpetration.

DEDICATED ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ACTION PLAN

A dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan will set the foundation for healing-informed, strength-based approaches that are culturally based and community-led. It will build on the commitments made through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, particularly in relation to the four reform priorities and specifically Target 13:

By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50 per cent, as progress towards **zero.**

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which came into effect in July 2020, charted the way forward for governments, institutions and organisations and other non-indigenous organisation to develop genuine partnership to address the specific dynamics of all forms of family violence and social issues and gaps for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, men/children.

The National Plan also recognises the importance of elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls' voices and leadership in the national response to family violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are essential to the strength, protection and revitalisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and families. As with the National Plan, everyone must play a role in stopping violence against women and children, meaning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men also play a key role in change and ensuring safe places for families to grow and thrive.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan National Plan will reflect the importance of the principle of self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It will also highlight the need for transformation of current prevention, early intervention, response and recovery efforts to counter systemic racism, promote culturally-safe practices, as well as holistic approaches that respond to deeply held historical trauma and improve the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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

- Advocate, Monash Consultation Report, 2021

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence will lead the development of the first ever Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan, and inform the implementation and evaluation of the National Plan with these principles in mind. The Advisory Council will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, Elders, communities and community-led organisations to build effective pathways, services and responses for both victim-survivors and perpetrators of family violence.

In order to address the complex and sensitive factors driving violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and communities, the Action Plan will explore solutions linked to the principles of truth-telling and self-determination. These principles along with continued work to establish meaningful partnership between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and communities and those sectors involved in the broader family violence system are required if Australia is to achieve the Closing the Gap Target 13.

Specific plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience higher rates of family violence, child removal, suicide and incarceration, and poorer outcomes in relation to mental health, employment and housing.[95][96] These social harms have lingered for so long and can often be seen as normal and if action is not taken to address these issues, they threaten to become permanent.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are less likely to seek help or report violence because of past government practices, and mistrust of police and mainstream services arising from previous experiences of reporting violence, misidentification of victims as perpetrators, incarceration and child removal.

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

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council notes that the Fourth Action Plan under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 and Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices): Securing Our Rights; Securing Our Future Report 2020 called attention to the impact of violence on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, as well as the key protective factors that are essential if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are to be free from violence.

3.1 times the rate
A national survey found Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women report experiencing violence in the previous 12 months at 3.1 times the rate of non-Indigenous women.

3 women in 5
3 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have experienced physical or sexual violence perpetrated by a male intimate partner.

11 times more likely to die
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are nearly 11 times more likely to die due to assault than non-Indigenous women.

32 times the rate of hospitalisation
The physical injuries resulting from violence are frequently more severe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Hospitalisation rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women due to family violence-related assaults are 32 times the rate for non-Indigenous women and 3 times the rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men.

Significant health impacts
Intimate partner violence contributes 10.9% of the burden of disease for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women aged 18 to 44, more than any other health risk factor, including alcohol or tobacco use and being overweight or obese. The contribution of intimate partner violence to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's burden of disease is 6.3 times higher than for non-Indigenous women.

Children are at greater risk
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are at greater risk of exposure to family violence than non-Indigenous children, with two thirds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults who experience violence sharing the household with children. Family violence against women is the leading reason for the disproportionately high numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families.

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

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

All governments have a role to play in addressing the broader drivers of violence including to improve rates of economic participation, education and housing security, which support communities and families and in turn drives reductions in violence against women and children.

Furthermore, remote and regional communities, specifically Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in those geographic settings, face other challenges in preventing and addressing violence against women and children, such as limited phone and network coverage, few transport options, and limited housing options. Specifically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities also disproportionately experience overcrowded housing or housing with major structural problems.[97]

The National Plan commits to building capacity within mainstream services and responses so that they are culturally-safe and can better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, while simultaneously supporting community-driven, strengths-based, localised approaches to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.[98]

Setting the foundations for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan

The first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan (2022-2027) will build upon the work of the **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council** on family, domestic and sexual violence and its Terms of Reference:

- **Addressing the drivers:** The drivers of family, domestic and sexual violence are different for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and are embedded in harmful historical policies and practices, inter-generational trauma and racism. These factors result in the ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children experience violence differing to those of non-Indigenous Australians and require healing-informed and culturally-safe responses.

- **Strength-based solutions:** The protective factors and solutions to family, domestic and sexual violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples need to be founded on culture, family and community. Solutions must be strengths-based, holistic, family-focused, and community-led, with a focus on men as part of the solution.

- **Shared decision-making:** Shared decision-making with governments and building and strengthening structures that empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to work with governments to find appropriate solutions to Closing the Gap.

- **Building community-controlled sectors:** Building formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sectors to deliver services to support Closing the Gap.

- **Systemic change:** Systemic and structural transformation of mainstream government organisations to improve accountability and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, particularly between family violence, child protection and justice systems.

- **Access and ownership of data:** Sharing access to location-specific data and information to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities to obtain a comprehensive picture of what is happening in their communities and make decisions about their futures.

"First things learnt are hardest to forget, from one generation to another we need to change"

- No*n-identified person*

NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

The National Plan 2010-22 saw the establishment of key national infrastructure of Our Watch, ANROWS and 1800RESPECT. These foundations of Australia's response to family, domestic and sexual violence have played crucial and interlocking roles over successive Action Plans under the first National Plan, leveraging investment from across all governments and providing a landmark, consistent and national focus on family, domestic and sexual violence.

The work of these foundational initiatives shares expertise and support across governments, business, the family, domestic and sexual violence sector and the broader public, recognising the shared responsibility we all have to understand this problem and make effective change. That work will continue through the National Plan, and the importance of Our Watch, ANROWS and 1800RESPECT will be augmented through the creation of the new National Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission in 2022 with a strong focus on accountability and ensuring activities and initiatives are appropriately aligned and collaborative.

Our Watch

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

Our Watch is the national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia, and has created policy frameworks such as Change the Story that underpin the commitments of governments to address gender-based violence.

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

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)

Established in October 2014, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Limited (ANROWS) delivers research and associated reports, research synthesis papers, tools and resources across all priority areas of the National Plan. ANROWS principal activity is to influence evidence-based developments in policy and practice design for the prevention of and response to violence against women, and its impacts on their children, nationally.

To achieve these objectives, ANROWS will:

- Deliver high quality, innovative and relevant research.

- Ensure the effective dissemination and application of research findings.

- Build, maintain and promote collaborative relationships with and between stakeholders.

- Be an efficient, effective and accountable organisation.

1800RESPECT

1800RESPECT is the national family, domestic and sexual violence counselling service and online referral, resources and information service. The 24 hour, seven day per week telephone and online counselling services provides support for people affected, or at the risk, violence, their friends and family, and professionals.

1800RESPECT is supported via a panel of not-for-profit family, domestic and sexual violence organisations providing trauma specialist counselling. These partner organisations deliver trauma informed specialist counselling.

The National Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Commission

On 24 November 2021, the Commonwealth Government announced it will invest $22.4 million over five years to establish the Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Commission. The Commission will be established as an independent executive agency under the *Public Service Act 1999*.

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission will have responsibility for monitoring and reporting on accountability and evaluation frameworks against the National Plan, across all levels of government, and to ensure it delivers real and tangible actions that prevent violence, intervene early and better supports victim-survivors.

MEASURING SUCCESS

An important achievement of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* was building the available data sources and comparable measurement of a range of forms of violence. All governments will continue work to expand and strengthen the evidence base in partnership with leading statistical agencies and researchers under the National Plan.

To measure success towards moving to zero and ending violence the Commonwealth and state and territory governments will develop and implement clear indicators that monitor outcomes across the pillars, and evaluate and report on our system responses. This work includes an Outcomes Framework developed as a key component of an Evaluation Plan. The Outcomes Framework will include targets and continue to build the evidence base to increase our ability to track, monitor and report change over the life of the National Plan.

The Outcomes Framework will include four tiered outcome levels, recognising the importance of action at the individual level, the service level, the system level and the community level. The inclusion of all four levels enables the framework to represent relevant, meaningful and impactful outcomes for a broad range of stakeholders who will be impacted by or involved with the National Plan.

To measure progress against areas of focus under the National Plan, targets that are quantitative and measurable will be developed and agreed in consultations with stakeholders, including non-government organisations, experts, and victim-survivors. The targets will be in addition to Target 13 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which aims to reduce all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls by at least 50 per cent by 2031, as progress towards zero.

There is still more data and evidence development work to be done to demonstrate sustained population-level changes in attitudes and prevalence of domestic violence. That is why we are continuing support for key national survey collections, implementing new data collections and data development projects.

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission will have responsibility for monitoring and reporting on accountability and evaluation frameworks against the new National Plan. The evaluation plan will detail the specific approach and schedule for monitoring and evaluation with activities continuing over the National Plan's life cycle. This includes:

- An initial one-year process evaluation will assess the early implementation of the National Plan.

- The first impact evaluation will be undertaken by 2026 to assess the outcomes and achievements over the first five years of the new National Plan and to inform the approach to the second action plan.

- A final impact evaluation considering the impact of both actions plan and the Plan as a whole will be undertaken in 2031-32.

Data and evidence

Data is crucial to understanding the problem, measure our achievements, and for the basis for future responses. Since 2010, the evidence base on family, domestic and family violence has grown. We know more about those who perpetrate violence and those who experience violence. More is understood about the diverse experiences of victim-survivors and the system responses. However, governments agree this evidence base needs further improvement, including a focus on consistent data collection

practices and clearer communication of the trends arising from both of national and state based data sources.

The evidence base directly informs the delivery of policy and programs under the National Plan and will evolve and adapt to meet emerging priorities and changing attitudes.

For instance, improvements in data under the National Plan include a new survey conducted by the ABS to build our understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experiences of family violence. This new survey will be prepared in cooperation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and will provide specialised evidence and data on prevalence and experiences of family violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This survey will support measuring progress against the Closing the Gap family safety target (Target 13) which is a key target under the National Plan.

Governments have invested substantially to build the evidence base over the course of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* to better understand, prevent and respond to violence against women and children:

- There have been significant improvements to the frequency, access and availability of key data.

- Nationally representative surveys on experiences of violence and community attitudes towards violence are now conducted every four years.

Key annual data collections include:

- National statistics recorded by police on family, domestic and sexual violence victims and offenders collated by the ABS.

- The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) collects data on family and domestic homicide incidents, victims and offenders through the National Homicide Monitoring Program.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) 2018 and 2019 compendium reports on FDSV bring together the key family, domestic and sexual violence data from each of these sources, as well as additional data relating to family and domestic violence-related homelessness services and hospitalisation rates. The AIHW have also launched an online family, domestic and sexual violence data dashboard to provide more flexible and interactive access to data,[99] which will help the community to monitor progress toward zero.

Despite significant improvements to the evidence base over the past decade there remain challenges. For example, the lack of nationally consistent services data, which currently means that while individual services may be able to report increases in demand for support, there is no systematic way of capturing this reporting, verifying it and understanding the drivers of the demand at a national level. The National Plan will seek to address these challenges.

The ABS and ANROWS will also undertake further waves of national surveys on family, domestic and sexual violence. This research will provide further insights into how people understand violence against women, their attitudes towards it, what influences their attitudes, and if there has been a change over time.

Additionally, work under the Data and Digital Ministers' National Data Sharing Work Program is underway. This work, which includes a family, domestic and sexual violence data-scoping project, will support service level data sharing between the Commonwealth and the states and territories to overcome barriers and identify critical data access needs.

ANROWS will develop future national research agendas to provide a framework for, and guidance on, priority areas of research and research topics for academics, researchers, research funding bodies and governments across Australia. Its aim is to encourage the production of evidence needed for national policy and systems-level practice design in preventing and responding to violence against women and children.

TARGETS

As Action Plans are developed, quantitative, measurable and ambitious targets will be finalised following consultation with stakeholders, including non-government organisations, experts, and victim-survivors.

The primary purpose of the targets is to measure progress against areas of focus under the National Plan. Targets will drive accountability and transparency in regard to ending violence and help build effective support services for victim-survivors.

The targets will be in addition to Target 13 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which aims to reduce all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls by at least 50 per cent by 2031, as progress towards zero.

Each of the National Pillars: Prevention, Intervention, Response, and Recovery will have respective targets.

The targets will serve as important points of measurement against the Outcomes Framework and reflect the action required at the individual, service, system and community levels.

The targets will include measures of community attitudes towards violence, community prevalence of various forms of violence including physical, sexual and emotional violence. Targets will be developed around the provision of services and the effectiveness of supports received by victim-survivors.

Progress towards achieving these targets is to be informed by a range of robust national, survey and administrative data sources including:

- National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS)

- Personal Safety Survey (PSS)

- ABS Recorded Crime Collection

- AIHW Specialist Homelessness Services Collection

Other potential data sources may include services data gathered from state and territory governments.

While the intention of the National Plan is to end violence, this is a long-term goal. The table below outlines the key measures and indicators we will use to inform our actions and measure progress. While specific targets will be developed, the aim is to achieve a significant, positive change in the measures outlined.

Measure	Indicator	Source	Collection frequency	Current data point	Possible target
People are intolerant of violence against women	Proportion of people who are categorised as having "low endorsement" of attitudes supportive of violence Community Attitudes Supportive of Violence Against Women Scale	NCAS	4 years	In 2017, on the scale that measure's people's attitudes that are supportive of violence against women, the average score was 33 (with 1 representing the lowest level of attitudinal support for violence against women).	Significant* increase in the average score
People have a good understanding of the physical and non-physical forms of violence	Proportion of people who are categorised as having "high" understanding of violence against women based on the Understanding Violence Against Women Scale	NCAS	4 years	In 2017, on the scale that measure's people's understanding of non-physical violence against women, the average score was 70 (with 1 representing the lowest level of attitudinal support for violence against women).	Significant* increase in the average score
Physical and/or sexual family and domestic violence	Estimates and proportion of Australian adults who experienced physical and or sexual partner violence in the past 12 months	PSS (2016)	4 years	1.3% (239,000) of Australians experienced partner violence from a current or former partner in the 12 months prior to the survey.	Significant* reduction in the proportion of Australian adults who experience physical and or sexual partner violence.
Sexual assault	Estimates and proportion of Australian adults who experienced sexual assault: in the last 12 months	PSS (2016)	4 years	1.3% of Australians experienced sexual violence in the 12 months prior to the survey.	Significant* reduction in the proportion of Australian adults who experience sexual violence.

Family and domestic violence homicide	Number of homicides (murder, manslaughter) where perpetrator was a family member or partner.	Australian Institute of Criminology National Homicide Monitoring Program	Annual	In 2018-19 there were 77* homicides in Australia where perpetrator was a family member or partner *figure excludes the ACT	Significant* reduction in the number of homicides where perpetrator was a family member or partner.
Children exposed to their parent or carer's experience of domestic violence	Estimates and proportion of people whose violence by a partner, since age 15, ever heard or seen by children Estimates and proportion of people who witnessed violence towards a parent by a partner before the age of 15	PSS (2016)	4 years	45.8% of Australians who had experienced violence by a current partner and had children in their care at the time of the violence stated their experience of violence was witnessed by a child in their care.	Significant* reduction
Women that sought help, advice or support about partner violence over the whole relationship with their current partner and/or most recent violent previous partner.	Estimates and proportion of women that sought advice or support about partner violence over the whole relationship with their current partner and/or most recent violent previous partner	PSS (2016)	4 years	(54% or 149,700) who experienced current partner violence, and 63% of women (864,100) who experienced previous partner violence, sought advice or support about the violence they experienced.	Significant* increase

| Victims that sought help, advice or support after their most recent incident of sexual assault | Estimates and proportion of victims that sought advice after their most recent incident of sexual assault | PSS (2016) | 4 years | 49.6% of women sought help, advice or support after their most recent incident of sexual assault.

28% of men sought help, advice or support after their most recent incident of sexual assault | Significant* increase |
| Women that reported their most recent incident of sexual assault to police | Estimates and proportion of women that contacted police after their most recent incident of sexual assault | PSS (2016) | 4 years | 13.4% of women contacted police after their most recent incident of sexual assault by a male in the last 10 years. | Significant* increase |

* The degree of significant change for each measure will be further developed and agreed with key stakeholders as part of the evaluation framework development process. Further elaborated targets supporting these measures will also be developed to provide a richer dataset against each of the National Pillars.

OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

The Outcomes Framework lays the foundation for the ongoing monitoring of progress and impact of the National Plan. The Outcomes Framework is supported by four tiered outcome levels, recognising the importance of action at the individual level, the service level, the system level and the community level. The inclusion of all four levels enables the framework to represent relevant, meaningful and impactful outcomes for a broad range of stakeholders who will be impacted by or involved with the National Plan.

- **Individual level outcomes** are focused on reducing violence through mechanisms that interact at an individual level.

    o Individuals are defined as people including victim-survivors, people who use violence and other people impacted by violence.

- **Service level outcomes** are focused on the effective and efficient delivery of services to people who experience violence, people who use violence and education and awareness for the general community.

    o Services refer to specialist family, domestic and sexual violence services as well as mainstream services that respond to violence as part of core business (for example, health, housing, police, courts.

    o Services also encompass services that interact with individuals on a day-to-day basis, including educational institutions, financial service systems and personal services such as retail, hairdressing and fitness.

- **System level outcomes** are focused on the legislative and policy environment in which violence occurs.

    o Systems refer to government levers that can be used including legislation, policy, governance and funding.

- **Community-level outcomes** are focused on reducing violence through attitudinal indicators within Australian society.

    o Community is defined as groups and collectives including the general population as well as smaller 'communities' such as families, workplaces, sporting clubs, cultural groups and others.

    o Community includes a traditional notion and understanding of 'family' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including extended family and kinship relationship, as well as acknowledging connection to culture and land.

A high level conceptual overview of how the Outcomes Framework will interact with and give effect to each of the four National Pillars to break the cycle of violence is outlined in the table below.

Outcome	Prevention	Intervention	Response	Recovery
Individual level outcomes				
1.1 Individuals have healthy and respectful relationships	■			
1.2 Individuals are able to access supports that address gender inequality and other drivers of violence	■			
1.3 Individuals do not experience or use violence in any form	■			
1.4 Where violence has occurred, individuals are able to access supports that enable long-term recovery			■	■
Service level outcomes				
2.1 Services address gender inequality and other drivers of violence	■	■		
2.2 Services are integrated and provide transition from prevention through to recovery	■	■	■	■
2.3 Services are evidence-informed, culturally safe and accessible to meet the needs of all individuals	■	■	■	■
2.4 Services actively engage in building and applying the evidence base	■	■	■	■
System Level Outcomes				
3.2 Services are delivered in a collaborative and productive way	■	■	■	■
3.3 The evidence base is further built and shared to enhance responses and improve prevention and recovery	■		■	■
Community level outcomes				
4.1 Communities recognise the value of gender equality and health relationships	■	■		
4.2 Community attitudes support people who use violence on pathways of rehabilitation			■	■
4.3 Communities encourage help-seeking behaviours by supporting individuals to access services			■	
4.4 Communities recognise everyone's role in preventing violence		■	■	■

ALIGNMENT TO BROADER REFORMS

Key national strategies related to the next National Plan to end violence against women and children

Existing national strategies

National strategies in development

Reports

National agreement on Closing the Gap

Relationship to next National Plan:
- Target 13 – at least 50% reduction in violence and abuse, towards zero
- Target 12 - 45% reduction in children in out-of-home care

Australia's Disability Strategy

Relationship to next National Plan:
- Safety of women with disability

National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery

Relationship to next National Plan:
- Parallels between FDSV and modern slavery, such as forced marriage

National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians

Relationship to next National Plan:
- Violence against older women

Successor to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children

Relationship to next National Plan:
- FDSV experienced by children and intersections with the child protection system

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy

Relationship to next National Plan:
- Supporting children to grow up in safe homes supported by strong families

Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Report

Relationship to next National Plan:
- Strength and resilience of women and girls leading solutions for safer communities and families

National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse

Relationship to next National Plan:
- Women and children are disproportionately victims and secondary victims of child sexual abuse

National Women's Health Strategy

Relationship to next National Plan:
- Health impacts on violence

A Roadmap to Respect (Respect@Work)

Relationship to next National Plan:
- Sexual harassment

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan

Relationship to next National Plan:
- Family violence as a social determinant of health outcomes

National Injury Prevention Strategy

Relationship to next National Plan:
- Injury incurred through violence

Online Safety Framework

Relationship to next National Plan:
- technology-facilitated abuse and harassment

National Preventative Health Strategy

Relationship to next National Plan:
- Violence and abuse as a social determinant of health outcomes

Parliamentary inquiry into FDSV

Relationship to next National Plan:
- Made recommendations to inform development of the next National Plan

This is not an exhaustive list but a snapshot of relevant intersecting Commonwealth strategies and frameworks

INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The National Plan reinforces Australia's commitment and leadership role on the international stage to promote gender equality and eliminate violence against all women and girls, particularly in delivering an inclusive post-COVID-19 recovery, with a focus on supporting women's safety, economic security and health and wellbeing.

Australia is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and engages in a range of international fora to advocate ending and preventing violence against women and children internationally.

This is reflected by Australia's engagement with the following:

- The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

- Generation Equality Forum, including as a member of the Action Coalition on Gender Based Violence

- The United Nations Human Rights Council

- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Decade of Action

- United Nations Women, Peace and Security Agenda, including through Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021-2031)

- Other multilateral forums such as ASEAN and G20

- Global movements and International Days of Recognition.[100]

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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

The rights listed in CEDAW cover political participation, health, education, employment, finance, housing, marriage, family relations and equality before the law.

Australia and Australian civil society organisations report periodically to the CEDAW Committee. This is an important process that holds Australia to account to ensure our priorities at a national level deliver on our international commitments.[101]

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

In 1989, world leaders adopted the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, an international agreement on childhood. It has become the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history and has helped transform children's lives around the world. Australia is a signatory[102] and is committed to upholding the rights of children. This includes taking all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measure to protect children from physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse (Article 19).

United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the

empowerment of women. Instrumental in promoting women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. Australia participates in CSW, demonstrating our commitment to international engagement on gender equality and women and girls empowerment.

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

Achieving gender equality is vital to both sustainable development and to realising the full potential of women, men, girls and boys. Australia is strongly committed to working with the international community to advance the rights of women and girls across the world.[103]

Internationally, we have placed gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre of our overseas development assistance program.

In particular, Australia invests in and advocates for:

- ending violence against women and girls

- women's economic empowerment

- enhancing women's voices in decision making, leadership, and roles in peace processes, and

- women and girls having access to, using and helping shape delivery of quality education, social protection, justice, and health services, including sexual and reproductive health services.

In the face of persistent challenges and slow progress, Australia is redoubling its efforts to achieve gender equality, both domestically and internationally. We have established an Indo-Pacific Gender Equality Fund. We are promoting a stronger culture of respect, supporting the economic standing of women, and empowering women to have meaningful, high-level influence in their communities.

Our Ambassador for Women and Girls promotes the rights of women and girls in multilateral, regional and bilateral fora, including by participating in the Commission on the Status of Women. Our Ambassador also supports Australia's efforts for equitable, inclusive and sustained recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, Australia advocates for and implements the Women, Peace and Security agenda, working with other governments, multilateral organisations and civil society to deliver on the four pillars of participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery. Under the second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2021-31 there is a specific outcome on reducing sexual and gender-based violence. To achieve that outcome, Australia tackles harmful gender norms, supports increased safety and security of women and girls, and advocates for increased access to justice.

UN Women Partnership

Australia is a top government donor to UN Women, the United Nations entity dedicated to providing guidance and technical support on gender equality, the empowerment and rights of women and girls, and gender mainstreaming. Ending violence against women and girls is a strategic priority for Australia's partnership with UN Women including to:

a) Protect and promote global normative standards on ending violence against women and girls
b) Support evidence-based activities, advocacy, and whole-of-government policies/strategies that prevent violence against women

c) Improve the availability and quality of services for women and their children, in all their diversity, who have been subject to violence, including access to justice, and ensuring quality, integrated, adapted and survivor-centered multisectoral services, including in humanitarian and disaster contexts

d) Expand support to address increased incidences of domestic violence during COVID-19 and the heightened risk factors of violence against women brought on by the pandemic

e) Coordinate with member states, civil society, women's rights organizations, especially those representing the most marginalised groups of women and girls, UN agencies, development partners, the private sector and academia to end violence against women and girls.

The Australian Government also supports UN Women Australia, a registered charity which exists to raise funds for and awareness of UN Women's work across the Pacific and around the world[104].

Generation Equality Forum

The Generation Equality Forum (GEF) is a civil society centred, global gathering for gender equality, convened by UN Women and events co-hosted in 2021 by the governments of Mexico and France. The GEF brings together governments, civil society, private sector and change makers from around the world to define and announce ambitions investments and policies to create a multilateral gender-progressive partnership.

The Forum's five-year action journey is built around a Global Acceleration Plan – a global road map for gender equality involving every sector of society – governments, civil society, private sector, entrepreneurs, trade unions, artists, academia and social influencers – to drive urgent action and accountability. Australia has joined the Gender Based Violence Action Coalition, one of six Action Coalitions established by the GEF and is a member of the United Nations Group of Friends on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a global consensus for action across 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [105]. SDG 5 is to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Under SDG 5 there are two targets related to ending violence against women and girls. In addition, other goals related to poverty, education and health cannot be achieved without addressing violence against women and girls. Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is integral to each of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals.

Australia tracks and reports on each of the components of SDG 5 targets including the proportion of women and girls who have experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence, or have undergone female genital mutilation.

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

GOAL 5. GENDER EQUALITY

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

Violence against women costs countries billions	Violence against women causes death, disability and poor health	Violence against women reduces girls' access to education	Women and girls face violence when accessing water and sanitation
1 NO POVERTY	**3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**	**4 QUALITY EDUCATION**	**6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION**
Violence against women limits women's access to decent work	Violence against women entrenches other inequalities	Violence against women limits women's mobility and safe use of public spaces	Violence against women is often perpetrated with impunity
8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	**10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES**	**11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES**	**16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**

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

Source: The Equality Institute

UN Women, Peace and Security Agenda – Australia's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021-2031)

Australia supports the United Nations Women, Peace and Security Agenda. In April 2021, Australia released its second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (2021-2031),[106] which sets out Australia's long-term strategy to realise gender equality and human rights of women and girls in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Australia recognises that human rights and gender equality are requirements for peace and security to be achieved and sustained. Building resilience and social cohesion, and supporting peace is key to ensuring our region is prosperous and stable. Australia's efforts focus on the Indo-Pacific region while also strengthening and supporting conflict prevention and peace processes globally.

The second National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security identifies four key outcomes to guide our international efforts:

- **Support women and girls' meaningful participation and needs in conflict prevention and peace processes** – Increasing women's participation in conflict prevention; Increasing women's participation in all peace processes

- **Reduce sexual and gender-based violence** – Reducing harmful gender norms; Increasing women and girls' safety and security; Increasing access to justice

- **Support resilience, crisis response, and security, law and justice sector efforts to meet the needs and rights of women and girls** – Security, law and justice responses; Preventing and countering violent extremism; Humanitarian action, stabilisation and disaster management

- **Demonstrate leadership and accountability for the Women, Peace and Security agenda** – Australia demonstrates global leadership; Australia demonstrates accountability for results

These four outcomes are mutually reinforcing. They support coordinated action across government to ensure that the Women, Peace and Security agenda is an inseparable part of all our efforts, whether in relation to peace, security, humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, development assistance or combat. Women and girls' full, equal and meaningful participation are front and centre of Australia's efforts to implement the second National Action Plan.

Other multilateral forums

Australia advocates for gender equality, and specifically for tackling discrimination and violence against women and girls, in a range of international and regional forums. For example, Australia works with like-minded countries on commitments and negotiations that refer to violence against women and girls, trafficking, forced and early marriage and access to sexual and reproductive health services in UN bodies. Australia also leads efforts in multilateral forums including G20 and ASEAN to tackle existing and emerging forms of violence against women and girls such as technology-facilitated abuse and support the need to address women's safety as fundamental to women's economic security and health and wellbeing.

Global movements and International Days of Recognition

Women across the globe continue to publicly share their experiences of violence including family, domestic and sexual violence. As shown by the #MeToo movement, women have harnessed the power of social media to have a global conversation between victims and survivors across the world, highlighting their experiences of sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Days of recognition such as International Women's Day and International Day of the Girl further highlight the ongoing importance of action. The International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, 19 June, calls for the end of all forms of conflict-related sexual violence and honours the victims and survivors of these crimes. The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence, an annual international campaign that starts on 25 November - the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, International Human Rights Day – also raise awareness and call for continued action on the prevention and elimination of violence against women and girls.

GLOSSARY

TERM	DEFINITION
1800RESPECT	The national telephone and online counselling and support services for people affected or at risk of domestic, family and sexual violence. Services are available online services at 1800respect.org.au or by telephone on 1800 737 732, 24 hours seven days per week.
Ableism	A term used to capture the way that the construction of social systems with able-bodied people as the norm results in the systemic, structural, intersecting and individual forms of discrimination against, and exclusion of, people with disabilities.[107]
Abuse of process	Abuse of process is the exploitation of rules or processes to control, financially damage or abuse another person. It includes vexatious behaviour by the other party, controlling parties through the emotional and economic toll of ongoing court proceedings. These tactics are also referred to as malicious, frivolous, vexatious or querulous. Some examples include the perpetrator failing to appear in court, repeatedly seeking adjournments, or appealing decisions on tenuous grounds.
ANROWS	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, a not-for-profit independent national research organisation. ANROWS was established by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments to produce, disseminate, and assist in applying evidence for policy and practice addressing violence against women.
Backlash / resistance	The resistance, hostility or aggression with which gender equality or violence prevention strategies are met by some groups. From a feminist perspective, backlash can be understood as an inevitable response to challenges to male dominance, power or status, and is often interpreted as a sign that such challenges are proving effective.[108]
Bisexual	A person who is sexually and emotionally attracted to people of both sexes.[109]
Brotherboys	A term used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe gender diverse people that have a male spirit and take on male roles within the community.[110]
Class	A system of structured inequality based on unequal distributions of power, education, wealth and income that determine social position and status.

Coercive control	Coercive control is generally considered to be a pattern of behaviour that perpetrators use to create and maintain control over victim-survivors. It is most often perpetrated by men against women. Examples of behaviours used by perpetrators of coercive control include manipulation, constant monitoring, isolation from friends and family, rigid rules, online abuse, controlling access to money, humiliation, threats, restricting a person's movement, and physical and sexual abuse (including sexual coercion). It can also include the control of a victim-survivors financial affairs. A focus on coercive control reflects a shift from specific, isolated incidents (of primarily physical violence) to a recognition that individual acts can be used by perpetrators to form a broader pattern of abusive behaviours that reinforce and strengthen the control and dominance of one person over another.
Consent	All state and territory laws require consent to sexual activity be either "freely and voluntarily given" or that consent involves "free" or "free and voluntary" agreement:[111] Investigating Australians' mistrust in women's reports of sexual assault - Key messages). 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.
Evidence-based	Models, approaches or practices found to be effective through evaluation or peer-reviewed research. Evidence is usually published and may be found in full or summarised in academic research documents, organisational reports, program evaluations, policy papers and submissions. There is a strong evidence base for strategies to prevent gender-based violence. As our understanding of what drives violence against women and children in different population groups and settings increases, the evidence base will continue to evolve.[112]
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 sterilisation	Refers to the process of removing or compromising an individual's reproductive organs without their free and full consent.
Gender	The socially learnt roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that any given society considers appropriate for men and women; gender defines masculinity and femininity. [113] Gender expectations vary between cultures and can change over time.[114]

Gay	Refers to a person whose primary emotional and sexual attraction is toward people of the same sex. The term is most commonly applied to men, although some women use this term.[115]
Gendered drivers of violence	The underlying causes that are required to create the necessary conditions in which violence against women and children 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 which privilege the needs, interests and behaviours of men over women, and which permeate many aspects of Australian society and institutions.[116]
Gender identity	A person's deeply felt sense of being male, female, both, in between, or something other. Everyone has a gender identity.
Gender norms	The dominant beliefs and rules of conduct which 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.[117]
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.[118]
Image-based abuse	When an intimate image or video is shared without the consent of the person pictured. This includes images or videos that have been digitally altered. Image-based abuse also includes the threat of an intimate image being shared.[119]

Intergenerational trauma	A form of historical trauma transmitted across generations. Survivors of the initial experience who have not healed may pass on their trauma to further generations. In Australia, intergenerational trauma particularly affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially the children, grandchildren and future generations of the Stolen Generations.[120]
Intersectional approach	In the context of addressing violence against women and children, an intersectional approach recognises that the way women experience gender and inequality can be different based on a range of other cultural, individual, historical, environmental or structural factors including (but not limited to) race, age, geographic location, sexual orientation, ability or class. This approach also recognises that the drivers, dynamics and impacts of violence women experience can be compounded and magnified by their experience of other forms of oppression and inequality, resulting in some groups of women experiencing higher rates and/or more severe forms of violence, or facing barriers to support and safety that other women do not experience.[121]
Intersex	Refers to people born with physical sex characteristics that do not fit medical and social norms for female or male bodies.[122]
LGBTIQA+	An acronym used to describe members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, asexual or questioning community. It is sometimes used to include allies or supporters of the LGBTIQA+ community. Other acronyms used to describe this community include LGBTIQ, or LGBTIQ+.[123]
Lesbian	Refers to a woman whose primary emotional and sexual attraction is towards other women.[124]
National agreement on Closing the Gap	The National Agreement on Closing the Gap was developed in partnership between Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations. There are four priority areas for reform and 17 targets. The objective of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.[125]
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. Note that NOSPI is concluding end 2021 with AIHW providing a final report.
Non-binary	A term that can vary depending on individuals, but generally refers to people who do not identify exclusively as being male or female.

Our Watch	Refers to the organisation established under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, to influence and drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence against women.
Perpetrator	Refers to a person who commits an illegal, criminal or harmful act, including domestic, family or sexual violence.
Personal safety survey (PSS)	Refers to the survey conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics collecting information from men and women aged 18 years and over about the nature and extent of violence experienced since the age of 15. PSS also includes childhood experiences of abuse.
Practices	Gendered practices are the things people do to distinguish between girls and boys, or between male and female roles or spheres. They include a wide range of everyday actions, processes and behaviours that are undertaken both at individual, relational, organisational/institutional and societal levels that reinforce and perpetuate gendered norms and structures.
Queer	An umbrella term to include a range of alternative sexual and gender identities including gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender or gender questioning.[126]
Respectful relationships	Refers to relationships among intimate, romantic, or dating partners that are characterised by non-violence, equality, mutual respect, consideration and trust.[127]
Seclusion	Defined as isolating a person in a confined space where they are alone and unable to freely leave.[128]
Settings	Environments in which people live, work, learn, socialise and play.
Sex	The biological and physical characteristics used to define humans as male or female.
Sexism	Discrimination based on gender, and the attitudes, stereotypes and cultural elements that promote this discrimination.[129]
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.[130]

Sexual harassment	Sexual harassment is an unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which, in the circumstances, a reasonable person, aware of those circumstances, would anticipate the possibility that the person would feel offended, humiliated, or intimidated.[131]
Sexual orientation	Refers to the component of identity that includes a person's sexual and emotional attraction to another person. A person may be attracted to men, women, both, neither, or to people who are genderqueer, androgynous, or have other gender identities.
Sistergirl	A term used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to describe gender diverse people that have a female spirit and take on female roles within the community.[132]
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.
Transgender	An umbrella term and, for some people, an identity term used to describe all kinds of people who sit outside the gender binary or whose gender identity is different from the sex assigned to them at birth. Transgender people may or may not feel the need to access hormone therapy and/or surgery.
Trauma	Trauma occurs when our ability to cope is overwhelmed. Trauma can have a significant effect on your physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing. The impacts of trauma, whether resolved or acknowledged, may surface at any time, particularly when survivors tell or repeat their experiences, or when they encounter similar experiences are shared by others. 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.[133]
Trauma-informed	Trauma-informed care and practice recognises the prevalence of trauma and its impacts on emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of people and communities.
Victim blaming	Refers to comments and suggestions that directly or indirectly, intentionally or unintentionally, put blame on the person experiencing violence for the abuse they have or continue to experience.

	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'.[134]
Victim-survivors	

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