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Evidence to action: informing direction for the Second Action Plan

Consultation Paper in support of the National Plan to
End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032

May 2026

ANROWS



Australian Government

Department of Social Services

Contents

Ministers' Foreword	4
ANROWS CEO Foreword	6
1. Introduction: Evidence to inform action	8
Purpose of this Consultation Paper	10
Recommended priorities for consultation	11
The scope of this paper	13
ANROWS' role in this consultation	13
Language and assumptions	14
Terminology and definitions	16
Acknowledgements	18
2. Assessment of the evidence	19
Introduction	20
Priority Area 1: Violence against women and other forms of gender-based violence	22
Priority Area 2: Prevention and early intervention	31
Priority Area 3: Children and young people in their own right	33
Priority Area 4: People who use violence	36
Priority Area 5: System Integration and Workforce	39
3. Proposed Priority Areas for consultation	43
Priority Area 1: Victim-Survivors	44
Priority Area 2: Prevention and early intervention	45
Priority Area 3: Children and young people in their own right	47
Priority Area 4: People who use violence	48
Priority Area 5: System Integration and Workforce	50
References	52

Acknowledgement of Country

ANROWS acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands across Australia on which we live and work. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past and present, and we value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and knowledge.

ANROWS recognises that domestic, family and sexual violence is not a part of First Nations cultures. There is a complex range of interrelated factors associated with the incidence and severity of domestic, family and sexual violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia. We must develop a deeper understanding of the ways in which colonial oppression and violence are reproduced through modern structures and institutions. ANROWS strives to understand and play our part in addressing these injustices, including seeking to ensure that our research practices are guided by the [Warawarni-gu Guma Statement](#).

Acknowledgement of lived experiences of violence

ANROWS acknowledges the lives and experiences of the women and children affected by domestic, family and sexual violence who are represented in this report.

Caution: Some people may find parts of this content confronting or distressing. Recommended support services include 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732), Lifeline (13 11 14), Men's Referral Service (1300 766 491), MensLine Australia (1300 78 99 78) and, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 13YARN (13 92 76).

About ANROWS

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) was established by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments under Australia's first *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*. As an ongoing partner to the National Plan, ANROWS continues to build, strengthen and translate the evidence base that informs the current *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*.

With more than 150 research projects led, commissioned or contributed to, ANROWS delivers targeted evidence to inform practice, policy, and systems reform. We engage closely with victim-survivors, communities, service providers, governments and researchers to ensure our work reflects lived experience and supports collective action.

ANROWS is a not-for-profit company jointly funded by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments. We are a registered harm prevention charity and deductible gift recipient, governed by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).

Ministers' Foreword

The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for Social Services

The Hon Ged Kearney MP, Assistant Minister for Social Services and the Prevention of Family Violence

Violence changes lives. It affects our health, our relationships, our sense of self, and its impact can span generations.

Living free from violence and feeling safe at home are basic human rights. But for too many Australians, that is not their reality.

As a government, we're working tirelessly to end family, domestic and sexual violence. The *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* is our 10-year roadmap to get there.

The National Plan makes clear the role the Australian Government must play in addressing violence against women and children over the long term.

It also recognises that ending violence demands a whole-of-community effort and requires a commitment from every one of us.

With more than **583 initiatives** across the country under the First Action Plan, we've supported more than **1400 organisations** and helped over **449,000** people across Australia who are experiencing family, domestic or sexual violence.

Together with states and territories and organisations on the ground, we have expanded prevention efforts, strengthened responses for victim-survivors and built a stronger evidence base.

Our government has delivered major reforms to strengthen safety online, in universities and workplaces, and through changes to the family law, social security and child support systems, with the finance and superannuation systems to soon follow.

Community awareness has increased, services have expanded and more people are recognising violence earlier and reaching out for help. There are some encouraging signs that some forms of violence are falling.

Despite the fact that our culture is shifting, too many lives are still being taken and too many people continue to experience violence. Sexual violence remains persistent and underreported. Children and young people are too often overlooked, despite being victim-survivors in their own right.

We need to do better for the women, children and communities who are experiencing violence and who face the greatest barriers. Too many people are navigating systems that are fragmented and hard to access.

We know the nature of violence is changing. Technology is reshaping how harm is experienced and perpetrated, reinforcing harmful norms about gender, power and relationships, particularly among boys and young men. We must do more to hold people using violence to account and change their behaviour.

There is much more to do.

The development of the Second Action Plan is our opportunity to work together on how our collective efforts can make the greatest difference over the next five years.

The consultations will be informed by the knowledge from those working to reduce violence and by what the evidence is telling us works. This paper brings together some of the latest evidence to show where progress is being made, where it is falling short and where gaps remain.

We are not standing still. We are adapting as new challenges emerge. We will keep learning from the lived experiences of victim-survivors. Because we know we can't get this right unless we listen better.

We encourage you to get involved and help shape this next phase of national action. Share your ideas. Share what works. Help us understand where our efforts can have the greatest impact.

Together, we can build a future where all women and children are safe, respected and free from violence.

ANROWS CEO Foreword

Dr Tessa Boyd-Caine, CEO, ANROWS

Violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence remain one of the most significant and complex challenges facing Australia. The impacts of this violence are profound, enduring and far-reaching; and disproportionately affect those experiencing intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage. Ending this violence requires sustained national effort and a collective commitment to measurable change.

ANROWS plays a central role in supporting the implementation of the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (National Plan). Our role is to generate evidence and support its effective use to drive action and change. That means connecting research, policy, practice and lived expertise to strengthen evidence-informed decision-making across the systems responsible for prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing. Through research, evidence synthesis, evaluation and knowledge translation, we support governments, services, policymakers and communities to better understand what is working, where gaps remain, and where greater focus is needed.

Evidence is a tool for hope. It helps us move beyond assumptions, respond to complexity, and remain accountable for progress. When evidence informs action, it becomes a tool for systems change. In this paper, we share our assessment of the evidence. We identify areas where we are seeing progress, where outcomes remain uneven, and where Australia is not yet achieving the change needed to improve safety for women and children.

The complexity of this work requires us to hold two truths at once: that the harm is urgent and ongoing, and that change is possible and already underway. We need sustained focus, even when progress feels slow, uneven, or contested. And we need to recognise the work that has come before, to guide our actions ahead.

The task now is to accelerate progress, ensuring its benefits are more equitably experienced and its impacts are sustained.

The Second Action Plan is an important opportunity to strengthen implementation, improve coordination across systems, and focus national effort where it can have the greatest impact. This consultation process is central to that work.

The National Plan makes clear that ending violence against women and children requires coordinated, evidence-informed action across governments, sectors and communities. It requires us to ask difficult questions, listen carefully to the experiences of people across Australia, and remain responsive to emerging evidence and changing conditions.

ANROWS is committed to supporting this plan through rigorous research, collaboration, and the effective translation of evidence into policy and practice. Turning evidence into action, and action into sustained systemic change, is essential if we are to realise the vision of ending violence in one generation.



1. Introduction: Evidence to inform action

Australia is a global leader in setting successive national agendas to end violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence. We are now in our second National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 (National Plan), which acknowledges the scale and impact of the harm caused by this violence and commits to the national objective of ending it.

Under the National Plan, Australia has:

- ▶ deepened our understanding of the way violence is used to harm and kill, which assists in shaping better and earlier intervention
- ▶ generated robust national trend data going back to 2005
- ▶ raised public understanding and knowledge about violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence to shift problematic social norms
- ▶ increased access to helplines and support services, ensuring there are multiple points of entry for support
- ▶ improved training for specialist workforces and we are increasing knowledge across workforces in universal services
- ▶ developed a strong focus on prevention and early intervention while sustaining response services
- ▶ improved evidence to better understand different types of violence and the way they impact on women, children, and other groups affected by gender-based violence.

We also need to monitor and learn from our actions. Australia's commitment includes ambitious monitoring frameworks, collection of critical data, and research to identify, prioritise and fill the gaps in what we know.

Combined, this work has generated a large and growing body of evidence about violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence, including what is working, where progress is made, and where gaps remain.

This evidence plays a critical role in informing and evolving the work of lived experts and advocates, service system and prevention workforces, policy makers and researchers who have invested countless hours towards ending this violence through prevention, early intervention, response and recovery efforts. It also helps identify where systems, services and programs are not meeting diverse needs, or where stronger action and coordination may be required.

At the same time, important evidence and implementation gaps remain. We continue to build our understanding of how systems, services and programs can better respond to the different needs of diverse populations, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, rural and remote populations, LGBTIQ+ people, migrant and refugee communities, women with disability, and children and young people. Ongoing monitoring, research and engagement will remain critical to ensuring approaches are effective, inclusive and responsive over time.

Purpose of this Consultation Paper

The Second Action Plan provides an opportunity to shape the focus of the National Plan—to end violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence—and to coordinate the actions needed to achieve it. Building on existing progress requires continued commitment to review and strengthen the evidence base on what works. The role of evidence in the National Plan is not only to deepen understanding, but to guide action and improvement over time.

At ANROWS, we support the use of knowledge by developing research, assessing other bodies of evidence, and advising on the actions supported by the evidence. Our assessment is that we are not yet where we need to be on violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence, but we have come a long way.

In this paper we have presented the evidence informing that assessment. This enables focus on where there is progress, where that progress is limited or not shared equally, and how that progress can inform what priorities and actions come next. We offer this assessment not as a definitive view, but as the starting point for a consultative process informed by the evidence.

Assessing the evidence requires ongoing review and adaptation. As part of our contribution to evidence-informed action, ANROWS will continue to refine our assessment of the evidence—and the critical priorities it informs—through consultation on the Second Action Plan and other stakeholder feedback.

Building on the work of the First Action Plan, progress in the National Plan requires coordinated action across the four domains of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing. The Australian National Research Agenda (ANRA) already identifies Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, children and young people, and people who use violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence as priority populations that need to be better understood in the research. In this Consultation Paper, we have expanded that list to reflect additional priorities in the work ahead.

This next phase requires a whole of community approach that involves engaging with victim-survivors, specialist and universal services and governments, alongside business, Aboriginal Community Controlled and other community organisations, and across the breadth and diversity of the Australian community.

Recommended priorities for consultation

This paper identifies five priority areas where the evidence indicates persistent gaps, emerging challenges, or opportunities to strengthen national coordination and impact. These areas are both distinct and interconnected. Together, these priorities contribute to a coordinated and complementary whole-of-system response.

Informed by the gaps and priorities identified in the ANRA, these priority areas have been refined in line with the priorities of government and of key stakeholders working across domestic, family and sexual violence. These priority areas have been identified to facilitate discussion, will be tested through the consultation, and may change based on the outcomes of consultation. Early consultation has highlighted the need to differentiate family and domestic violence from sexual violence, noting the significant difference in prevalence, prevention and early intervention, and service responses related to these forms of harm. The need for this differentiated approach is reflected in this paper.

In addition, all priority areas are underpinned by the recognition that First Nations leadership, practitioner-led evidence, and community expertise are critical to guiding the National Plan and ensuring its effectiveness. This includes recognising that experiences of violence, access to support, and interactions with systems are not the same for all people or communities. Across multiple settings, communities and practitioners continue to identify gaps in how systems recognise and respond to differing experiences and needs. Ensuring policy and practice across prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery is culturally safe, accessible and responsive to diverse communities, including migrant and refugee populations, is of critical importance.

Drawing on the available evidence and emerging issues, the following five priority areas are proposed for consultation.

1. **Victim-survivors of violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence:** strengthening a whole of society and life-course approach to prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing with a focus on victim-survivors from all communities and backgrounds.
2. **Prevention and early intervention:** embedding initiatives where people live, work, learn and connect to address the gendered drivers of this violence; address substantive influences on perpetration and risk such as harmful substance use, gambling, and adverse childhood experience; support attitudinal and behavioural change to prevent harm before it occurs; and to prevent escalation. It also requires collaboration and integration across sectors to strengthen primary prevention and early intervention approaches.
3. **Children and young people in their own right:** centring children and young people's voices, rights, and safety across prevention, early intervention, response and recovery, and providing tailored, age and developmentally appropriate support for children and young people. This priority includes young people who use violence (in the home and/or in intimate partner relationships, including the use of sexual violence).
4. **People who use violence:** advancing prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing throughout the life course on both family and domestic violence and sexual violence, supporting earlier identification, and multi-sector approaches to accountability and behaviour change, for example (but not limited to) strengthening policing and justice sector responses.
5. **System integration and workforce:** safe and effective prevention, early intervention, response and long-term recovery including justice and health-sector responses, drawing on an integrated system and a connected and capable workforce that utilises trauma and violence-informed approaches across multi-sector services and programs.

As the evidence is evolving, policy and practice also need to evolve. This paper points to suggested priorities for the Second Action Plan consultations, acknowledging that consultations may identify other areas of priority.

The scope of this paper

A number of important and complex issues are outside the scope of this paper, recognising that they require dedicated policy attention, specialist expertise, a focused review of the evidence in each of these areas and tailored responses:

- ▶ Child sexual abuse occurring outside domestic and family violence contexts is outside the scope of this paper. This remains a critical and distinct area of policy, practice and reform requiring dedicated responses.¹
- ▶ Misogyny and gender-based violent extremism are not addressed in detail in this paper. These are emerging areas of significant concern and are the subject of ongoing work at Commonwealth and state and territory levels, including work led by the Attorney-General's Department on emerging evidence and risks relating to misogyny and gender-based violent extremism.
- ▶ Many of the issues and consultation questions in this paper could be considered separately in relation to adults, children and young people. However, children and young people, including those who use violence (including sexual violence), have been addressed within dedicated sections to recognise their distinct experiences, developmental needs, and the specific service and system responses they require.
- ▶ Prevention and early intervention have been addressed as a combined area in this paper. This reflects the interconnected nature of these domains, while acknowledging that there are differing views across policy, research and practice sectors about whether they should be treated separately to support more targeted responses.

ANROWS' role in this consultation

ANROWS is Australia's national, independent research body on violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence. Established as an independent non-profit organisation and a partner to the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, we are the research engine supporting the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*.

¹ Work to address child sexual abuse is being progressed under the *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030* (National Strategy). Development of a Second Action Plan under the National Strategy is currently underway. Please visit [National Strategy Second Action Plan](#) to find out more and to provide feedback to inform the National Strategy's Second Action Plan.

We research what works to prevent violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence, and to improve safety and wellbeing outcomes in relation to this violence. We identify and prioritise gaps in the evidence base. We work as part of a landscape where research, data and evidence are rapidly evolving and shaping what we know about this violence. And we assess this knowledge broadly, to provide practical and evidence-informed advice to lead action across governments, practitioners, services and other systems.

Different measures and methods assessing outcomes can point to different priorities or conclusions. There are clear gaps, both in the evidence itself and how it is understood. For example, increased awareness and earlier help-seeking by victim-survivors and people using violence may all be indicators of progress, yet this heightened awareness can simultaneously shape perceptions that domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia is worsening.

Violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence is complex. While the evidence points to the urgent need to address significant ongoing harm, it also indicates that progress has been made and change is possible. Recognising that change is already underway reminds us that we do not need to start from scratch.

Progress to date has led to meaningful advances in evidence, policy, services and community attitudes. The next steps of this work need to build on what has come before.

Guided by these considerations, we have provided an assessment of the evidence and identified priorities for future action under the Second Action Plan, as a starting point for consultation.

Language and assumptions

We have adopted specific language in this paper to use terms that are as inclusive as possible of diverse experiences and communities.

There are core questions of definition, terminology and ways of working across and within different service systems and programs which cannot be addressed in this evidence brief. Some of those differences may be part of the consultation process, to be considered in the next Action Plan.

While there are specific terms adopted in the National Plan, extensive discussion and debate has informed the use and evolution of language, including identifying where language excludes experiences and communities that the National Plan is intended to serve.

No single set of terms adequately captures the relationship between sexual violence and other forms of violence; nor distinguishes violence in the home and family from non-familial violence such as sex trafficking, or violence against women with disabilities by their carers. Abuse and coercively controlling behaviour can be deprioritised when conversations are framed around 'violence'. Violence against women and children tends to work from heteronormative and cis-gendered framing and can exclude the experiences of people who are LGBTIQ+.

While women and children are disproportionately impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence, it is also important to acknowledge that men can experience victimisation and harm, including in family, intimate partner, institutional and community settings, or they may have experienced harm as children.²

Understanding community perceptions can assist in using appropriate language for messaging and program design. It also assists in shaping consistent and effective community education. For example, to explore community understanding of language in this area, ANROWS identified that young people have a nuanced and sophisticated understanding of domestic violence and abuse and the language of 'violence against women and children' is not always preferred by young people.³

The language in the National Plan uses mostly Violence Against Women and Children (and children) (VAWC) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV). Across policy and practice in Australia common use is Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV). Alternative terms for consideration include a focus on population groups, such as "violence against women, children and LGBTIQ+ people", or a focus on types of violence, such as "violence against women and children and all forms of family, domestic, sexual and gender-based violence", as ways to ensure inclusive terminology that also defines the scope of policy and programmatic work in this space.

This paper uses the language consistent with the National Plan. Violence against Women and Children and other forms of gender-based violence is shortened to "violence" and is inclusive of all Australians experiencing these forms of violence.

2 Department of Social Services. (2022). National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032. Australian Government. [Department of Social Services](#)

3 Carlisle, E., Coumarelos, C., Minter, K., & Lohmeyer, B. (2022). "It depends on what the definition of domestic violence is": How young Australians conceptualise domestic violence and abuse (Research report, 09/2022). ANROWS. <https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/it-depends-on-what-the-definition-of-domestic-violence-is-how-young-people-conceptualise-domestic-violence-and-abuse/>

Terminology and definitions

Drawn from the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*

Domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV): Domestic, family and sexual violence are different forms of violence requiring different responses. For this reason, we are specific about our terms throughout this document, separating domestic and family violence from sexual violence where prevalence, drivers, or responses differ. When referring to all forms of domestic, family and sexual violence we use “violence” as a collective term.

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

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

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

Gender-Based Violence (GBV): An umbrella term that describes any harmful act perpetrated against a person's will that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females. Gender-based violence is rooted in power imbalances, rigid gender roles and gender-based discrimination. It is most commonly perpetrated by men against women. Gender-based violence overall is mostly perpetrated by cisgender men and can impact people of all genders, including LGBTIQ+ people and some forms of violence experienced by men and boys. Understanding gendered patterns, drivers and impact is critical to ensuring responses are evidence-based and effective, and to supporting Australia's commitment to end all forms of gender-based violence.⁴⁵

Specialist workforce: Services and practitioners whose primary function is to respond to violence against women and children or other forms of gender-based violence. Examples include specialist women's and children's services, sexual assault services, men's behaviour change programs, crisis accommodation and refuges, domestic, family and sexual violence services (including dedicated helplines), and advocacy services. Understanding the role and capacity of this workforce helps to identify their intersection with the non-specialist workforce, referral pathways and funding requirements.

Prevention workforce: A range of practitioners and organisations are involved in early intervention and primary prevention. This includes prevention that is integrated with specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services, and services addressing perpetration. It also includes prevention that takes place in multiple sectors and settings – such as education, government, health and community services, legal services and many more. There are relatively few organisations and practitioners that are solely focused on prevention – instead prevention is a specialist practice that is often done in integrated ways with other work, and as one part of a broader role.

Non-specialist workforce: In this context, services and practitioners whose primary function is not responding to domestic, family and sexual violence, violence against women and children or other forms of gender-based violence, but which may come into contact with victim-survivors. These services are not specialists in violence but often represent key points of engagement or disclosure, such as family law and legal assistance (e.g. Legal Aid, community legal centres), financial advisors, parenting support services, broader Family and Relationship Services (FaRS). It also includes universal service systems like health and education.

4 Department of Social Services. (2022). *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*. Australian Government. [Department of Social Services](#)

5 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2020). *Policy on the prevention of, risk mitigation, and response to gender-based violence*. <https://www.unhcr.org/us/sites/en-us/files/legacy-pdf/5fa018914.pdf>.

This workforce extends across a range of service touchpoints where domestic, family and sexual violence may be identified; where pathways may exist for referral into specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services; and where capability is required to ensure services are domestic, family and sexual violence-aware, safe, and responsive.

Informal help seeking: Most help-seeking begins informally as a conversation with a trusted family member, friend or community support person. It can be face to face, over the phone, an email exchange, or through other forms of communication such as social media. It may also be a public post on social media. Many of these conversations are framed as 'testing the water' and people seeking confirmation of situations and circumstances to understand whether it is safe to confide in someone. Informal support is not linked with a structured service or emergency response (either funded or unfunded), nor would the person consulted be expected to have any relevant professional or life experience. Many people find their way to a formal service (specialist or structured support) through informal help-seeking conversations.

Formal help seeking: This is structured support from an organisation or individual who is formally designated to provide 'help' (either funded or unfunded). It may be a specialist service for violence against women and children or other forms of gender-based violence, or a universal service dedicated to meet other needs, such as a homelessness, health, financial, or generalist counselling.

Acknowledgements

While the views expressed in this Paper are our own, we gratefully acknowledge the insights and feedback on drafts of this paper from Australian Government Attorney-General's Department, Australian Government Department of Social Services, Australian Human Rights Commission, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Commission, National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence, No to Violence, Our Watch and Wesnet.



2. Assessment of the evidence

Introduction

Violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence is unacceptably high. Public discussion is increasingly focused on this violence, including emerging areas of risk, growing demand for support services, and the need to strengthen the workforce. At the same time, it is also necessary to reflect on areas where we have made progress.

Over more than 20 years of sustained focus on ending violence, specialist services have grown and strengthened, universal services have expanded their role in identifying, responding and referring, prevention and early intervention has established critical groundwork, and law and policies continue to improve. This combined effort has had an impact, and evidence suggests that in a global landscape of misogyny and feminist backlash, most forms of violence across most Australian jurisdictions are not increasing – they are declining or remaining static at a population level. At the same time, these trends are over the long-term, sitting alongside the impact of contextual changes that can lead to change in patterns of violence and service system usage, for example in public health emergencies like pandemics, natural disasters, or awareness raising campaigns that lead to more reporting.

Australia is one of only a few countries with a national strategy guiding policy direction and responses including funding commitments.

- ▶ The long-term and iterative National Plan has helped increase public awareness of violence against women and children,⁶ particularly intimate partner violence and child deaths, including homicide, filicide and suicide.⁷
- ▶ Violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence are receiving greater public, policy, and institutional attention. Police are more active in responding; women, children and families are more aware of options available to reach out for help; and increasing numbers of men using violence are facing police or court action and/or engaging with services to end their use of violence.^{8, 9, 10}

6 The 2021 NCAS results show significant increases in understanding violence against women including recognition of both domestic violence and violence against women (Coumarelous et al, 2023).

7 Public news media coverage of VAW has been instrumental driving in the implementation of formal violence responses, including royal commissions, legislative changes to homicide defences, affirmative consent, and criminalisation of coercive control. It has also set the backdrop for increased understanding and awareness, and improved attitudes. However, similar media coverage has not extended to violence perpetrated against Indigenous women, and therefore not driven response and crisis attention. (Vitis, 2024)


8 The Australian Bureau of Statistics recorded crime collection identifies that the proportion of police-recorded assaults related to FDV ranged from 41% to 65% across jurisdictions with available data (excluding Victoria); rates vary by crime type; police-recorded FDV-related sexual assaults doubled between 2014 and 2024 <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/responses-and-outcomes/police/fdv-reported-to-police#changed>. See also, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021-22, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/partner-violence/2021-22#about-this-release>, customised report 2025.

9 Department of Social Services, Independent Evaluation of 1800Respect. www.dss.gov.au/system/files/documents/2026-01/2025-1800respect-independent-evaluation-final-report-accessible.pdf; www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/b180312b-27de-4cd9-b43e-16109e52f3d4/aihw-fdv4-fdsv-in-australia-2019_in-brief.pdf?v=20230605172455&inline=true.

10 During 2024-25, the Men's Referral Service received more than 10,000 calls and webchats, for men seeking to build safer relationships and end their use of violence. <https://ntv.org.au/change-is-your-call-no-to-violence-takes-the-conversation-to-cricket-audiences-this-16-days-of-activism/>

Evidence about what is working can help strengthen and better target these efforts, particularly where long-term change is required. In this section we assess the evidence that informs the five priority areas identified for the Second Action Plan consultations. Wherever possible, national and jurisdictional evidence is relied on for monitoring population level change. This is supplemented with small area or small sample research deemed representative of topics and populations not well monitored at the national level. The content is not exhaustive, nor does it necessarily take account of all the important evidence evolving across Commonwealth, state and territory governments and at community levels.

Key message: Violence against women and children in Australia remains unacceptably high. At the same time, there are signs of progress. Evidence can help strengthen what is working and better target areas where more action is needed. Public support for further action is growing, and continued investment including in workforce capability will be critical to sustaining progress under the National Plan.



Priority Area 1: Violence against women and other forms of gender-based violence

Reviewing the evidence helps identify opportunities for future action to support victim-survivors and reduce risk of harm. At the time of preparing this evidence brief, there are few nationally consistent and comparative measures of victim-survivor help-seeking support, risk assessment and management, or safety planning. There are projects underway seeking to improve visibility of victim-survivor needs. For example, Safe + Equal are currently running the Safety Measures¹¹ project, and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) is developing a DFSV integrated data system¹² for administrative data sets, among others.

At a national level, the best available whole of population information on victim-survivors is collected through the Australian Bureau of Statistic (ABS) Personal Safety Survey (PSS).¹³ National information about victim-survivor access to justice is held in various victim of crime datasets at the ABS and the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC). The AIHW has collated information across the best available national support service databases to support overall monitoring of the National Plan.¹⁴ The ANROWS National Community Attitudes Survey on Violence against Women provides a whole population barometer of progress on improving attitudes, knowledge and understanding; all of which shape the social environment, dictate what behaviour is deemed acceptable, and directly influence the likelihood of violence occurring. This section draws from all these sources.

11 <https://www.safetymeasures.org.au/>

12 The first version of the FDSV IDS aims to link administrative data from a range of sources where there is evidence of family, domestic or sexual violence (FDSV), to create a series of FDSV cohorts or 'flags' for use in analysis of linked data. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/resources/the-family-domestic-and-sexual-violence-integrated-data-system-fdsv-ids>

13 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release#key-statistics>

14 <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/responses-and-outcomes>

Across these data sets there are some indicators of progress, areas where rates of harm are static, and markers of where we are falling behind. The Our Watch 'Counting on Change' theory of change¹⁵ recognises that progress will be varied. Some actions under the National Plan will gain traction earlier than others, and improvements may not be experienced equally across all populations. Limited or uneven progress may reflect the complexity and the time it can take for change to occur, or point to areas where current approaches are not yet achieving their intended impact.

The number of people affected by violence in Australia

The PSS measures victim-survivor experiences of multiple forms of violence. Over four survey waves between 2005-2020-21¹⁶ there is evidence of varied progress on different forms of violence.

Where we can see progress

- Population level rates of people experiencing violence are declining for most forms of violence and in most states and territories. It is important to note that a national decline in prevalence measured through the PSS does not fully show how the National Plan is working for all groups, especially those at highest risk. While some forms of violence are declining overall, the survey does not adequately capture information about some population groups who may experience higher, more severe, or different forms of violence. Without tailored sampling methods, national surveys do not typically include sufficient numbers of people from some communities to allow robust analysis. This means different and additional forms of research are more suited to understand the experiences of people from LGBTIQ+ communities, those living in institutions, recent migrant arrivals and people across a range of disabilities. While rates change from survey to survey, data over the last 20 years has shown a consistent trend in decline for overall physical violence against both women and men¹⁷ and in most states and territories.¹⁸ Across states and territories, most forms of violence against women have either declined or remain unchanged between 2016 and 2021-22 (see [Table 1](#) on page 41 and [Table 2](#) on page 42).

15 Our Watch. (2017), <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/change-the-story/counting-on-change>

16 The 2025 survey wave data have been collected but not yet released.

17 Physical violence against women (in the last 12 months) has decreased from 4.7% (2005) to 2.9% (2021-22); Physical violence against men (in the last 12 months) has decreased from 10.4% (2005) to 6.1% (2021-22). Intimate partner violence against women (in the last 12 months) has decreased from 2.3% (2005) to 1.5% (2021-22). Some caution is noted due to the unknown impact of the COVID pandemic conditions under which the 2021-22 data were collected. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021-22). <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release#key-findings-violence-prevalence-and-changes-over-time>; <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/partner-violence/2021-22>

18 States and Territory data: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release#state-and-territory-statistics>

- Women’s experiences of physical assault by a man have decreased overtime¹⁹
 - Physical and emotional abuse by a cohabiting partner decreased for women²⁰
 - Sexual harassment of women by a man has decreased over time ²¹
- Female intimate partner homicides have decreased from 0.66 per 100,000 in 1989-90 to 0.21 in 2024-25. While rates vary from year to year, there has been significant progress over time (overall 71% reduction since 1990).²²
- We are generating more inclusive and representative research with diverse communities to break down limited knowledge and understanding that does not allow for a comprehensive understanding of experiences of violence. There has been a particularly strong focus on understanding experiences of violence among LGBTIQ+ people, and women with disabilities.²³

19 Women’s experiences of physical violence by a man in the past 12 months decreased from 3.7% (~320,000 women) in 2005 to 2.5% (~245,000 women) in 2021–22, reflecting a decline over time; ABS, 2023. Physical violence. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/physical-violence/latest-release#prevalence-rates>, Section: Sex of perpetrator, Table: 12-month physical violence prevalence rate(a), By sex of perpetrator, 2005 to 2021–22.

20 Physical violence by a cohabiting partner decreased from 1.3% (~125,000 women) in 2016 to 0.7% (~70,000 women) in 2021–22, contributing to an overall decline in cohabiting partner violence (ABS, 2023). The 12-month prevalence rate of cohabiting partner emotional abuse among women decreased from 4.8% in 2016 (~455,000 women) to 3.9% in 2021–22 (~380,000 women); ABS, 2023. Partner violence. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/partner-violence/2021-22#changes-over-time>, Section: Change over time, Table: Women aged 18 years and over, Cohabiting partner violence, emotional abuse and economic abuse, 12-month prevalence rate, 2005 to 2021–22.

21 Sexual harassment of women by a man decreased from 14.0% in 2012 (~1.3 million women) and 16.1% in 2016 (~1.6 million) to 12.2% in 2021–22 (~1.2 million women); ABS, 2023. Sexual Harassment. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/sexual-harassment/latest-release#characteristics-of-sexual-harassment-experienced-by-women> Section: Changes over time, Table: 12-month sexual harassment prevalence rate(a), 2012 to 2021–22.

22 Australia is ranked as having one of the lowest homicide rates globally 77 out of 97 (https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/homicide_rate/#:-:text=Homicides%20per%20100%2C000%20people%2C%202017,countries%20where%20data%20are%20available.) With one of the lowest rates of homicide (average of 0.8 homicides per 100,000 people compared with a global average of 7.4 homicides per 100,000 people; 2017). This means that annual rates of homicide are very sensitive to change. When there is an increase in only a few homicides per year, it can appear as an increasing trend. It is therefore important to view homicide rates over the long-term AIC Homicide monitoring project, <https://www.aic.gov.au/statistics/homicide-in-australia>. See also <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/responses-and-outcomes/domestic-homicide>

23 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2021) Nature and extent of violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation against people with disability in Australia. Centre of Research Excellence in Disability and Health.

Where we are falling behind

- ▶ In 2022, half of all Australian adults had experienced at least one form of technology-facilitated abuse in their lifetime.²⁴ The impact is being felt across all ages and sectors of our society. Technology-facilitated abuse is not consistently defined or consistently measured, and it is challenging to measure consistently over time.
- ▶ Rates of sexual violence and stalking²⁵ against women have remained mostly stable since 2005 and neither are declining.²⁶ Comparing jurisdictions, only Victoria has seen a decline in sexual violence against women since 2016 (see [Table 1](#) on page 41 and [Table 2](#) on page 42).
- ▶ Stalking is likely to increase through the use of expanding forms of technology. There is growing recognition of stalking and coercive control as central features of sexual and other forms of violence, highlighting the need to improve how these behaviours are measured and understood, including their long-term impacts and recovery needs.
- ▶ In the PSS, women who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or who used a different term such as asexual, pansexual or queer were 5 times more likely to have experienced sexual violence (13%) than women who identified as heterosexual (2.4%).²⁷ Nearly all the violence (98%) was from a male perpetrator.²⁶ We need more and different ways of understanding these experiences of violence.
- ▶ Diverse population groups experience both common and unique forms of violence, as well as specific barriers to accessing support. Tailored support is required to ensure needs are appropriately managed and addressed. This may include, but not relate exclusively to, LGBTIQ+ people, recent migrant arrivals and those unable to participate in the available survey languages, people living in institutions or insecure housing, and people living with a range of disabilities.²⁸

24 Powell, A., Flynn, A., & Hinds, S. (2022). Technology-facilitated abuse: National survey of Australian adults' experiences (Research report, 12/2022). ANROWS.

25 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024). Stalking. Table 2.1, ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/stalking/latest-release>.

26 National prevalence rates in 2021-22 have been compared with prevalence rates from earlier surveys (2016, 2012 and 2005) to measure changes over time. Change is measured by asking if there have been any incidents during the 12-months immediately prior to the survey and compared with the same time period for each survey wave.

27 Gender identity and sexual orientation of the perpetrator was not reported. ABS, 2023. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/sexual-violence/2021-22>

28 Hill, A. O., Bourne, A., McNair, R., Carman, M. & Lyons, A. (2020). Private Lives 3: The health and wellbeing of LGBTIQ people in Australia. ARCSHS Monograph Series No. 122. Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University. <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/arcschs/work/lgbtiq-health/private-lives-3>

- ▶ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (First Nations) people are overrepresented as both victim-survivors and perpetrators of domestic and family violence.^{29, 30}
 - In a context of significant levels of racist violence and the ongoing impacts of colonisation, significant levels of violence are perpetrated against Aboriginal women from men who are not Aboriginal.
- ▶ Rates of violence are disproportionately high for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women:
 - About 3% of the adult female population are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, yet they comprised an average of 16% of adult female homicide victims each year since 1989–90.³¹
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are also disproportionately hospitalised for assault-related injuries at a rate 32 times higher than for non-Indigenous women.³² The AIHW found that, in over 62% of cases where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were hospitalised due to an assault, the perpetrator was a domestic partner, and in over 23% of these cases, the perpetrator was another family member or parent.³³

Where more work is needed

- ▶ Continued close monitoring of the prevalence of DFSV over time and identified opportunities to measure new and emerging forms of violence.
- ▶ Consistent and comparable monitoring of DFSV, including impact and change, for people who may face greater risk of DFSV, including people in institutions and group homes, people living in very remote areas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people with disability, those experiencing housing instability, migrant and refugee communities including people whose first language is not English, and LGBTIQ+ people. These groups are likely to be under-represented in survey data; and administrative data can show they often experience higher levels of harm but can also fail to capture this experience fully.

29 Cripps K (2023) Indigenous domestic and family violence, mental health and suicide- external site opens in new window, AIHW, Australian Government, accessed 26 May 2023.

30 Bricknell, S., & Miles, H. (2026). Homicide in Australia 2024–25 (Statistical Report 58). Australian Institute of Criminology <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/sr/sr58>

31 Australian Institute of Criminology, 2024

32 ADFVDRN & ANROWS, 2024.

33 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework, measure 2.10 Community safety. Primary source: National Hospital Morbidity Database (NHMD). <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/indigenous-hpf/contents/tier-2-hlth-behaviours-risk-factors/2-10-community-safety>

- ▶ Improved understanding of what sexual violence looks like in all its forms and what service responses are currently being provided by the specialist sexual violence sector to meet the varied needs of victim-survivors.
- ▶ Improved measurement and consistency of data on emerging forms of violence, particularly technology-facilitated abuse, stalking and coercive control, to ensure they are reliably tracked over time and across jurisdictions.
- ▶ Strengthened national data systems to better capture patterns of harm, including repeat victimisation, severity, and cumulative impacts, rather than relying only on prevalence snapshots.
- ▶ Strengthened integration and comparability of data across ABS, AHRC and administrative sources, and better measures of harm that capture coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse and stalking, not just incidence rates.
- ▶ Address persistent non-declining rates of sexual violence and stalking through stronger prevention, early intervention and accountability responses.

Help-seeking, understanding and attitudes

Where we can see progress

- ▶ We are seeing greater visibility of the problem. More people are recognising abuse, naming it earlier, and seeking formal and informal support. The 1800RESPECT national helpline has recorded consistent increases in demand³⁴ and police in most jurisdictions are prosecuting more domestic violence cases that come to their attention.³⁵
- ▶ Women are increasingly likely to ask family and friends for help when experiencing male perpetrated physical and sexual violence – evidence that victim-survivors are finding a voice and confiding in people close to them.³⁶
- ▶ As a community, we are hearing more about violence against women. ANROWS' National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) shows that understanding and rejection of violence against women and rejection of gender inequality have been increasing over the past 12 years.³⁷
- ▶ While most states and territories show reduction in some forms of violence between 2016 and 2021-22 (see [Table 1](#) on page 41), Victoria has shown the most consistent change across most forms of violence.

34 www.dss.gov.au/system/files/documents/2026-01/2025-1800respect-independent-evaluation-final-report-accessible.pdf

35 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024-25). Recorded Crime - Offenders. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/recorded-crime-offenders/2024-25>.

36 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021-22, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/partner-violence/2021-22#about-this-release>, customised Table 2025.

37 Coumarelos et al., 2023.

- ▶ The evidence shows incremental progress in Victoria ahead of other jurisdictions, suggesting focused attention can lead to improvement. Victoria is the only jurisdiction showing decreases in all forms of violence against women measured at the jurisdictional level.³⁸

Mistrust and misunderstanding of the data

- ▶ One in five (24%) Australians consistently mistrust women's claims of rape as noted in the National Community Attitudes Survey on Violence against Women, and the ANROWS Mistrust Study.³⁹
- ▶ Two in five Australians believe that domestic violence is committed equally by men and women, whereas evidence shows that 77% of intimate partner violence is perpetrated by a male.⁴⁰
- ▶ Up to one third of Australians mistrust women's reports of sexual violence. Many believe that women may make sexual assault allegations due to regret or as a way of "getting back at men" (24–34%), and that many allegations are false (14%).⁴¹

Persistent Sexual Violence and Harassment⁴²

The differences between sexual violence and harassment, and domestic and family violence, need to be recognised. Sexual violence and harassment require clear strategy and action to ensure a comprehensive approach to prevention, early intervention, unmet demand and recovery.⁴³

- ▶ Sexual violence remains persistent in the Australian community. The 12-month prevalence rate from the last PSS (in 2021-22) showed no significant change since 2016 and an increase from 2012.⁴⁴

38 There is a complicated picture of results in Victoria. This jurisdiction has been undergoing state-wide, DFSV system reform since 2008 with sustained investment including primary prevention investment since 2018 (Free from Violence, Respect Victoria and related infrastructure). Victoria also experienced the longest cumulative lockdown period during the Covi Pandemic during which time the PSS data was collected (though not during lock-down). Lockdown-era exposure could be argued to contribute to the decline with some people locked away from their abusive partner, triggers of abuse such as financial stress being relieved with financial supplements, and some victim-survivors maintaining peace without viable escape alternatives.

39 <https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/chuck-her-on-a-lie-detector-investigating-australians-mistrust-in-womens-reports-of-sexual-assault/>

40 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023). Partner violence, 2021–22. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/partner-violence/2021-22>

41 <https://www.ncas.au/ncas-2021-findings-for-australia>

42 Sexual violence is a spectrum of harmful behaviours, with sexual harassment sitting on the sexual violence continuum. These harmful behaviours refer to any unwanted or non-consensual sexual act, behaviour, or threat that violates a person's autonomy, dignity, or safety and can take place in both public and workplace settings.

43 www.uwa.edu.au/schools/-/media/public-policy/documents/2025/allambee-report-final_.pdf

44 ABS, 2023. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/sexual-violence/2021-22#changes-over-time>

- ▶ Sexual violence prevention, early intervention, response and recovery remains siloed from the domestic violence response service system.
- ▶ Sexual harassment continues to be widespread across Australia, with 77% (89% for women, 64% for men) of people experiencing sexual harassment since age 15 and one in three encountering it in the workplace yet reporting and accountability remain low.⁴⁵
- ▶ People who identify as LGBTQ+ experience higher rates of sexual harassment over their lifetime: 84% of people who identify as gay, 91% of bisexual people, and 95% of women who identify as lesbian.⁴⁶ For women who identify as LGBTQ+ the rate of lifetime prevalence is 91%.
- ▶ For both heterosexual and LGBTQ+ women who experienced sexual harassment in the last 12 months, the majority experienced it by a male perpetrator.⁴⁷

Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experiencing violence is vastly inadequate and unmet need remains high

- ▶ Police responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are woefully inadequate.⁴⁸
- ▶ Indigenous women are disproportionately hospitalised for assault-related injuries (the rate is 32 times higher than for non-Indigenous women).⁴⁹
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience higher rates of violence with greater risk of severe injury⁵⁰ as compared with Australians overall.
 - AIHW hospital stay data⁵¹ confirms that 28% of people with a DFV-related hospital stay are Indigenous, against a 3.3% population share, and NSW emergency department data finds that 19.6% of violence-against-women presentations are Indigenous, against a 4.2% population share.

45 For women the lifetime prevalence is 89%, for men it is 64%. Australian Human Rights Commission. (2022). Noting the introduction of “Positive duty” across Australian jurisdictions aims to improve prevention, reporting and accountability of workplace sexual harassment, however, to date there have not been significant evaluations to support its effectiveness.

46 Ibid. Research has found LGBTQ young people are at particular risk, with 77% of LGBTQ people between 14 and 30 years experiencing workplace sexual harassment, most often perpetrated by a man (Robinson et al, 2024).

47 Ibid.

48 Professor Kyllie Cripps’ coronial records investigation into 151 Indigenous women killed over the past two decades due to intimate partner violence by Indigenous and non-Indigenous men further found that almost all had sought help from the police but did not receive the support that could have saved their lives. Cripps, 2023, Indigenous women and intimate partner homicide in Australia: Confronting the impunity of policing failures. *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, 35(3), 293-311.

49 ADFVDRN & ANROWS, 2024.

50 <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people#hospitalisations>

51 <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/examination-of-hospital-stays-due-to-family-and-do/summary>

- ▶ System responses need to recognise that non-Indigenous men use DFSV against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. An examination of filicide cases with a history of domestic and family violence in Australia found that one in five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander filicide victims (21%) were killed by a non-Indigenous parent.
- ▶ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children experiencing intimate partner and family violence are too often failed by systems, including police and courts, through racism, victim misidentification, poor responses to coercive control, and fear of child removal - leaving many women reluctant to seek help and less likely to receive protection when they do.⁵²

Where more work is needed

- ▶ Sustained evaluation research to better understand the needs of victim-survivors and the impact of responses and programming.
- ▶ Monitoring formal responses to ensure specialists and broader workforces bring a trauma-informed, culturally safe, person-centred response. This is particularly important the first time someone seeks help and in crisis response.⁵³
- ▶ Address known system failures, including those already well documented for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, particularly racism, victim misidentification, and unsafe or inconsistent responses across police and courts.
- ▶ Simplify legal processes and reduce adversarial practices that can result in victim-blaming, re-traumatisation, and disengagement from the justice system.
- ▶ Shift focus from documenting barriers alone to implementing and scaling proven responses, including culturally safe, trauma-informed and self-determined approaches led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.
- ▶ Prevention efforts that consider and address systemic inequities to reduce opportunities for perpetrators to exploit system vulnerabilities. For example, migrant and refugee women may have insecure visa status and be hesitant to report violence.
- ▶ Targeted efforts to address persistent attitudes, including persistent beliefs that domestic violence is committed equally by men and women, and persistent mistrust of women's reports of sexual violence.

52 Nancarrow, H., Thomas, K., Ringland, V., & Modini, T. (2020). Accurately identifying the 'person most in need of protection' in domestic and family violence law - ANROWS - Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, ANROWS.

53 Fitzgibbon et al, 2022.

Priority Area 2: Prevention and early intervention

Where we are making progress

- ▶ Healthy parenting from father figures can be a protective factor against future use of violence. In the 10 to Men cohort study (Australian Institute of Family Studies), men who grew up with positive father figure role models expressing affection were 48% less likely to become perpetrators of family violence in adulthood.
- ▶ Online spaces and the broader sphere of male influencers can provide healthy opportunities to engage boys and men to counter the harmful effects of the manosphere - a network of online communities and influencers focused on men's issues that is often associated with the spread and reinforcement of misogyny toward women and girls.⁵⁴
- ▶ Positive adult male role models can be a protective factor in preventing young men and boys from using abusive behaviours as adults.⁵⁵ Transformative justice approaches address the structural drivers of harm rather than solely focusing on individual behaviour. There is promise in community-led healing initiatives promoting positive behaviour change and intergenerational healing.⁵⁶

Where we are falling behind

- ▶ Most men do not seek support to stop their use of violence and only a small proportion ever make it to any formal behaviour change intervention. Some of the reasons for this include shame, lack of recognition of their behaviour, belief that violence is normal, stigma, access issues, confidentiality concerns and lack of awareness about the availability of services. Early intervention is crucial, particularly through different settings.⁵⁷
- ▶ Long-term, consistent prevention programs that begin in primary school are most effective. Some educational interventions have inadvertently led to backlash, with boys becoming more supportive of violence after exposure to one-off, insufficiently contextualised awareness raising programs.⁵⁸

54 ANROWS. (2026). The manosphere in Australia: A guide for understanding and responding to online. ANROWS.

55 AIFS (2025). <https://aifs.gov.au/tentomen/insights-report/use-intimate-partner-violence-among-australian-men>

56 People who use SV are unlikely to seek early intervention support.

57 People who use SV are unlikely to seek early intervention support.

58 ANROWS (2023) New report finds education is an important step in reducing rates of gender-based violence, ANROWS.

Where more work is needed

- ▶ While some young people are rejecting manosphere content, more research is needed on why and how so that we can better support more young people to disengage and reject it.
- ▶ Prioritise early identification and support for men using violence, noting that most never engage with formal behaviour change programs due to shame, normalisation of violence, stigma, and limited access to trusted entry points.
- ▶ Improve understanding about the complex interplay between rigid gender roles and other influences, for example harmful substance use, gambling, and adverse childhood experience.
- ▶ Invest in early intervention pathways outside the justice system, including consistent capability across health (e.g. GPs), education, social services, workplaces, and digital platforms to identify and respond safely and early.
- ▶ Scale long-term, sustained prevention approaches starting in early childhood and school settings.
- ▶ Improve understanding of the range of prevention and early intervention programs and approaches underway nationally and support long-term evaluation to understanding impact and outcomes.
- ▶ Build system-wide capacity to engage boys and men in healthy, prosocial online and offline environments, including leveraging positive influencers and countering harmful manosphere narratives.
- ▶ Engage young people in prevention efforts before harmful attitudes become entrenched is important. However, affected young people experience this as a profound contradiction. They are taught about consent and respect in the classroom, only to return to homes and communities where the adults around them use violence or normalise its use. This not only undermines the educational message but places an unfair burden on children to solve an adult-created problem.

“If we don’t also have greater supports for parents ... then aren’t we implicitly placing the onus on children and young people to take responsibility for their own experiences of family violence/child maltreatment?” – *Florence, young victim-survivor*

To be effective, prevention must build the capacity of the entire community to create safe environments.



Priority Area 3: Children and young people in their own right

Where we are making progress

- ▶ We are recognising children and young people as victim survivors of violence in their own right.⁵⁹
- ▶ We are improving data collection measures to count children and young people as individuals, and we are undertaking more research directly with children and young people.
- ▶ We are becoming aware of the overlapping impact of exposure to family violence co-occurring with other form of violence. The Australian Child Maltreatment Study invited Australians to respond to a survey on maltreatment and identified that among this sample, exposure to domestic violence was likely to co-occur with other forms of maltreatment including emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse.⁶⁰

Where we are falling behind

- ▶ Data and evidence collection around children and young people often overlook this group as victim-survivors of violence and we do not have a clear prevalence measure of those living in families with violence.
- ▶ The PSS asks adult respondents about their experiences of witnessing parental violence before the age of 15. Because the survey asks persons aged 18 years and over about their experiences of witnessing parental violence before the age of 15, it does not provide estimates of the current prevalence of children witnessing parental violence.⁶¹

59 <https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/children-young-peoples-safety/>

60 Haslam, D., Mathews, B., Pacella, R., Scott, J. G., Finkelhor, D., Higgins, D. J., Meinck, F., Erskine, H. E., Thomas, H. J., Lawrence, D., & Malacova, E. (2023). *The prevalence and impact of child maltreatment in Australia: Findings from the Australian Child Maltreatment Study: Brief report*. Australian Child Maltreatment Study, Queensland University of Technology. <https://doi.org/10.5204/rep.eprints.239397>

61 <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release#childhood-abuse>

- ▶ The PSS tells us that 377,000 adults living with intimate partner or cohabiting partner violence had children living in their household.⁶²
- ▶ Younger men (22%) are more likely to agree that ‘Men should use violence to get respect if necessary’ compared with 11% of older men.⁶³
- ▶ Children and young people require tailored, violence-informed supports that recognise their unique developmental needs and are not dependent on the engagement of a protective parent.⁶⁴
- ▶ Trauma can manifest as externalising behaviours (such as hyperactivity, impulsivity, and aggression). Children and young people’s actions can be a response to violence, including a learned behaviour, an act of resistance or retaliation, or a result of a father’s use of coercive control, often characterised by the deliberate erosion of mother-child bonds. When these behaviours manifest, young victim-survivors face the risk of pathologisation and potential criminalisation. This is mirrored in the reflections of one young person, who stated, ‘Over the years I felt more angry. I wasn’t getting any help. I was a child being told that I’m going to be violent when I’m older.’ Rigid and binary ‘victim’ or ‘perpetrator’ frameworks are inadequate in this context and fail to address the root cause of the violence.⁶⁵

Where more work is needed

When children and young people are considered in relation to violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence, it is almost always in one of two limiting roles: as secondary victims attached to a protective parent (usually their mother); or as potential future perpetrators in need of preventative education. Children and young people commonly report not being believed or being dismissed when they disclose violence. Similarly, mothers report that they struggle to have their children’s needs as victims taken seriously or to get appropriate levels of help.

Childhood is a critical developmental period. When the distinct strengths and needs of children and young people are not fully recognised, the impacts of violence on their developing brains, bodies, relationships and sense of self can be dismissed or minimised.

62 Adults living in households with children (aged under 18 years), where the adult experienced physical/sexual violence by an intimate partner, and/or emotional/economic abuse by a cohabiting partner in the last 12 months, ABS, 2026 Custom Table.

63 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2024). The Man Box 2024: Executive summary. Jesuit Social Services. https://cdn.jss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/02133606/JSS2401_The-Man-Box-2024_Exec-Summary.pdf

64 Early Insights from the IVY study (Ellard et al) <https://www.anrows.org.au/project/the-ivy-study/>; Corrie, Moore and Anderson. (2021). Melbourne City Mission https://www.mcm.org.au/-/media/mcm/content-repository-files/amplify_turning-up-the-volume-on-young-people-and-family-violence.pdf

65 Brisbane Youth Service, 2025.

- ▶ Response systems need to be equipped to meet the specific rights and needs of young victim-survivors. An adult-centric framework has created a fragmented, inconsistent and crisis-driven response system that can further cause and increase harm.⁶⁶
- ▶ The consequences of this adult-centric response system can be fatal. While most homicide rates are declining, Australia's filicide rate remains stagnant and resistant to change. Three-quarters (76%) of filicide cases followed a known history of domestic and family violence. This tells us that in most cases there are existing opportunities for service system intervention, and we need to do more to use these opportunities.⁶⁷
- ▶ Children and young people can present with a range of responses to violence, such as self-harm, suicidality and internalising behaviours (such as worry, anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal) can be pathologised as mental illnesses without recognising experiences of violence as the root cause.
- ▶ When harm is not addressed, it can escalate issues including housing insecurity, multiple victimisations, and mental and physical health stress. This is especially compounded for children and/or families living with disability. Instead of unlocking support, this complexity can result in services deeming children 'too high risk' or 'too complex,' leading to refusal of care or referrals into a confusing web of services with little navigation support.⁶⁸
- ▶ Children must be supported as victim survivors in their own right.^{69, 70} Casework and safety planning should explicitly reflect children's perspectives, risks and developmental needs, supported by age and developmentally appropriate engagement and dedicated referrals or practitioners.
- ▶ Across service and system responses, children and young people need to be engaged in co-design to develop national practice standards for work with children and young people for developmentally appropriate and violence-informed responses across early-intervention, crisis and healing.⁷¹
- ▶ Work with children and young people to create and design and communicate information about DFSV, their rights and how to access meaningful help.

66 Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, 2025.

67 ADFVDRN & ANROWS, 2024; Brown, T., Lyneham, S., Bryant, W., Bricknell, S., Tomison, A., Tyson, D., & Fernandez Arias, P. (2019); <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/sr/sr58>

68 Robinson et al., 2022.

69 Gillfeather-Spetere, S., & Watson, A. (2024). In their own right: Actions to improve children and young people's safety from domestic, family and sexual violence (ANROWS Insights, 01/2024). ANROWS. <https://www.anrows.org.au/publication/children-young-peoples-safety/>

70 Recommendation 20: Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission (2025) Yearly Report to Parliament, Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission, Australian Government. www.dfsvc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-12/DFSVC-2025-YearlyReport.pdf

71 Recommendation 19: Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission (2025) Yearly Report to Parliament, Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission, Australian Government. www.dfsvc.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-12/DFSVC-2025-YearlyReport.pdf



Priority Area 4: People who use violence

Australia does not yet have a national measure of prevalence of perpetration of violence; however, we are gaining increased insight into perpetration through diverse data collection approaches. ANROWS is currently supporting a perpetration prevalence survey trial in one Australian jurisdiction.⁷² The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) has introduced some measures of forms of perpetration into the 10 to Men longitudinal survey measuring men's health over time. This study illustrates that this cohort of men are willing to reflect on their relationship and express concerns about their behaviour.⁷³

People who use violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence are not a homogenous group.⁷⁴ There are no set of characteristics that can reliably predict the use of violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence, however there are characteristics that are more common among people using violence, such as holding strong beliefs on rigid gender roles. Multiple studies have interrogated specific components of the use of violence. Some of their findings include:

- ▶ Violence against women and other forms of gender-based violence overall, as well as most violence against LGBTIQ+ people, is most frequently perpetrated by men.⁷⁵
- ▶ There is a complex interplay between trauma, harmful substance use, mental health issues, gambling and violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence.⁷⁶

72 For further information see <https://www.anrows.org.au/project/measuring-domestic-family-and-sexual-violence-perpetration-in-australia/>

73 The 10 to Men study is a positive initiative towards understanding patterns of violence within this specific cohort. There are limitations on the extent to which the data can be extrapolated to the whole population both in relation to the measures used and the limited demographics of the cohort included in longitudinal survey waves. <https://aifs.gov.au/research-programs/ten-men>

74 Understanding the differences between people who use DFV and SV are required in order to inform responses and interventions for these groups. Perpetration of SV remains poorly understood.

75 ABS, 2023. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/sexual-violence/2021-22>, Tables 2.3, 4.2 and 5.3.

76 The Men's Project and Flood, 2020; Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2025.

Where we are making progress

- ▶ We are learning more about offenders and responding to violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence, a positive step to responding early and more effectively to ending these forms of violence. Given low rates of reporting, it is likely that violence against women and children and other forms of gendered-based violence is vastly under-reported, and that many people using violence go unidentified.⁷⁷
- ▶ There is evidence of more proactive policing in response to domestic and family violence with positive trends of increasing prosecution of offenders.⁷⁸ Most children and young people who experience violence in childhood do not go on to use violence in adulthood, with available evidence suggesting this occurs in fewer than one third (28%).⁷⁹
- ▶ There is growing awareness of the pressures men experience to adhere to rigid gender norms and how these shape their choices and peer groups throughout their lives.⁸⁰

Where we are falling behind

- ▶ We know that 1 in 8 (13%) Australian adults experience violence between their parents or caregivers before the age of 15.^{81, 82}
- ▶ The Australian Child Maltreatment Study found over 60% of participants had experienced one or more types of child maltreatment (physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, or exposure to domestic violence). Where multiple forms of maltreatment were identified, exposure to domestic violence was most often present with the other forms present.⁸³

77 We do not have consistent national data identifying serial perpetration. This data is from New South Wales and similar results are emerging in Victoria through the Crime Statistics Agency family violence dashboard. <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi701>

78 Recorded crime is limited to those incidents that are reported to the police and more likely to be more serious incidents. They are therefore more likely to underestimate the prevalence of violence. (Voce & Boxall 2018; Stavrou, Poynton & Weatherburn, 2016.

79 Fleming et al., 2015.

80 https://cdn.jss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/02133606/JSS2401_The-Man-Box-2024_Exec-Summary.pdf?_gl=1*117pve9*_ga*OTgwNjgwODgwLjE3NzUwMTQxNjA.*_ga_D84XPJZM02*czE3Nzg3NDA2NDcjbzYkZzEkdDE3Nzg3NDA2ODYkajlxjGwwjGgw

81 ABS 2023. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release#childhood-abuse>

82 Higgins DJ, Mathews B, Pacella R, Scott JG, Finkelhor D, Meinck F, Erskine HE, Thomas HJ, Lawrence DM, Haslam DM, Malacova E, Dunne MP. *The prevalence and nature of multi-type child maltreatment in Australia*. Med J Aust. 2023 Apr 3;218 Suppl 6(Suppl 6):S19-S25. doi: 10.5694/mja2.51868. PMID: 37004183; PMCID: PMC10952595.

83 Mathews, B., Pacella, R., Scott, J. G., Finkelhor, D., Meinck, F., Higgins, D. J., Erskine, H. E., Thomas, H. J., Lawrence, D., Haslam, D. M., Malacova, E., Dunne, M. P., & Degenhardt, L. (2023). The prevalence of child maltreatment in Australia: Findings from a national survey. *Medical Journal of Australia*, 218(6 Suppl.), S13–S18. <https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.51873>

- ▶ Studies show that boys and young men who engage with manosphere influencers may be more likely to hold harmful views on relationships between men and women including the normalisation of controlling behaviours, dismissing consent and support for victim-blaming myths about sexual violence. Global research has highlighted the systemic challenges in school level responses to these attitudes and behaviours.⁸⁴
- ▶ Further, research suggests an overlap between the manosphere and other hate-based movements with links to transphobia, homophobia, white supremacy and racism, xenophobia and nationalism.⁸⁵
- ▶ A recent study found that boys and young men often disengage from the manosphere when they gain access to supportive relationships and more positive role models. This suggests protective factors include fostering early social connection, emotional literacy, and inclusive environments that meet needs for belonging while offering constructive, non misogynistic alternatives.⁸⁶
- ▶ Being a young parent under the age of 21 may be 'one of the clearest risk factors' for intimate partner violence (IPV), highlighting the critical need to support young and first-time parents.⁸⁷

Where more work is needed

- ▶ Having a positive male father figure as a role model is a protective factor towards not being abusive as an adult.⁸⁷ There is also some evidence that online spaces can also provide protective and preventive opportunities (see below). However, we have limited understanding of other protective factors and resilience which prevents young people from becoming abusive as adults.
- ▶ There is a lack of nuanced data understanding which types of abuse are used by which people, how they are influenced by their context and social circles, and the nature, type and situations in which people use violence.
- ▶ Data on the prevalence of violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence in Australia is limited. Most information about the perpetration of violence has been drawn from service provider and justice interventions. We have very little knowledge about users of DFSV who do not have an intervention.

84 ANROWS. (2026). *The manosphere in Australia: A guide for understanding and responding to online*, ANROWS.

85 Phelan, A., White, J., Wallner, C., & Paterson, J. (2023). Introductory guide to understanding misogyny and the far-right. Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats (CREST). <https://crestresearch.ac.uk/resources/introductory-guide-to-understanding-misogyny-and-the-far-right/>

86 Doherty, L., Dowling, C., & Dickens, M. (2026, March). *Disengagement from online misogynistic incel communities and its implications for attitudes to gendered violence* (Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice No. 727). Australian Institute of Criminology.

87 Australian Institute of Family Studies, Ten to Men study, <https://aifs.gov.au/tentomen>



Priority Area 5: System Integration and Workforce

Where we are making progress

- ▶ Practitioners outside of DFSV-specialist services are becoming increasingly knowledgeable in recognising and responding to physical and emotional abuse. They need more support identifying financial and sexual violence and abuse and consider cross-sector collaboration and information sharing as the most important additional support to increase confidence.⁸⁸
- ▶ There is increasing knowledge, strong commitment, and innovative and promising solutions are emerging across practitioners, particularly in terms of moving beyond crisis interventions to embrace the full spectrum of prevention, early intervention and recovery.⁸⁹

Where we are falling behind

- ▶ Early intervention remains constrained by system-level barriers that limit availability, effectiveness and sustainability. These challenges affect service reach, workforce capacity, evidence development and inclusion for priority cohorts.
- ▶ There is a further need for system reform in terms of priority cohorts, for example ANROWS' evaluation of early intervention and recovery initiatives in South Australia (2023-2025) identified system challenges in delivering early intervention to people using violence.
- ▶ Specialist family and sexual violence services need support, including to support evaluation and learning.

88 Cortis et al, 2018

89 Cullen et al, 2022. It should be noted that the sexual violence sector has a long history of utilising a service model encompassing prevention, early intervention, response and healing and recovery order to move past crisis response

Where more work is needed

- ▶ Specialised staffing and adequate resourcing determine service feasibility. Effective delivery relies on sufficient staffing, specialist roles (men’s, women’s, children’s, support for people with disabilities) and capacity for one to one support, including gender matched practitioners where culturally required.
- ▶ Support the development, piloting and evaluation of holistic therapeutic services capable of working with children and young people across their development needs and in violence-informed ways, while buffering harms to their growing minds, bodies, spirits and relationships.⁹⁰
- ▶ Develop clear pathways and embed specialist roles (e.g. disability/NDIS navigators, therapeutic and child practitioners, bilingual and bicultural workers) for early intervention across health, housing and education sectors, training professionals to recognise, validate and respond to children’s disclosures or risks of harm.
- ▶ Expand education on violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence to parents, families and communities, focusing on the impacts of violence, including non-physical forms of violence on children.⁹¹
- ▶ Strengthen a child-centred lens into all adult violence specialists and adjacent services (including men’s behaviour change, housing, alcohol and other drugs and adult mental health services), ensuring practitioners consider a client’s role as a parent and the impact on their children.
- ▶ Increase access to holistic supports for parents that address known contextual and reinforcing risk factors for violence, such as lack of mental health services, housing insecurity, gambling, financial stress, disasters, conflict exposure and other geopolitical shocks.

90 See for example, the [Amplify program](#), [BYS](#), [RECOVER](#), [QATSCIPP Healing Framework](#).

91 Fitz-Gibbon et al., 2022; Fitz-Gibbon, 2025

Table 1: Jurisdictional rates: Experiences of violence

Women’s experiences of violence in the last two years before the survey was administered comparing results from 2016 with 2021-22 PSS: Statistically significant differences over time ⁹²

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Type of violence	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT	Australia
Total violence	No change	Decreased	No change	No change	No change	No change	Decreased	No change	Decreased
Sexual violence by anyone	No change	Decreased	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change*	No change*	No change
Physical violence by anyone	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change	Decreased	No change	No change	Decreased
Intimate partner violence	No change	Decreased	Decreased	Decreased	No change	No change	No change**	Decreased	Decreased
Cohabiting partner violence	No change	Decreased	Decreased	Decreased	No change	No change	No change**	No change**	Decreased
Cohabiting partner emotional violence	No change	Decreased	No change	Decreased	No change	No change	Decreased	No change	Decreased

Note: Data represents the experiences of respondents in the two years prior to being interviewed. * indicates that the estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution. ** indicates that the estimate has a relative standard error greater than 50% and is considered too unreliable for general use.

92 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021-22). Personal Safety, Australia, Table 12.1, ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release>

Table 2: Jurisdictional rates: Sexual Harassment and Stalking

Women’s experiences of violence in the last twelve months before the survey comparing results from 2016 with 2021-22: Statistically significant differences over time ⁹³

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

Type of violence	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT	Australia
Sexual harassment against women	Decreased	Decreased	Decreased	No change	Decreased	Decreased	Decreased	Decreased	Decreased
Stalking against women	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change	No change*	No change

Note: Data represents the experiences of respondents in the two years prior to being interviewed, * estimate has a relative standard error of 25% to 50% and should be used with caution.

93 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021-22). Personal Safety, Australia, Table 12.1, ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release>



3. Proposed Priority Areas for consultation

The proposed consultation priorities focus on areas where available evidence suggests opportunities to strengthen, refine or expand comprehensive service and system responses in relation to violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence. Stakeholder input may also identify additional areas for consideration.

Priority Area 1: Victim-Survivors

All victim-survivors should have access to safety, support, justice and recovery, but many continue to face barriers. While important progress has been made, significant gaps and challenges remain across systems, services and responses particularly for people experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of disadvantage or living in rural and remote areas. The Second Action Plan provides an opportunity to strengthen specialist and universal service responses, improve coordination across systems, respond to emerging forms of abuse, and ensure victim-survivors can access safe, timely and culturally responsive support that meets their needs across different stages of life. Evidence also highlights the need to improve understanding of coercive control and strengthen responses to technology-facilitated abuse. Effort must also go towards improving responses across policing and justice, housing and crisis accommodation.

The consultation seeks input on where governments, systems and communities should focus efforts over the next phase of the National Plan.

Key opportunities for the Second Action Plan include:

- ▶ Build on progress towards whole of system support, response, healing and recovery to ensure victim-survivors are empowered to make informed choices, access support that meets their need over their life course and receive improved outcomes.
- ▶ Develop fast, effective responses to emerging forms of technology-facilitated abuse and harm.
- ▶ Improve experiences of policing and justice responses to reduce re-traumatisation, strengthen trust, and ensure equitable access to protection and accountability for all victim-survivors.
- ▶ Improve how coercive control is recognised, understood and addressed as a common pattern in domestic and family violence, including its impacts on victim-survivors, children, help-seeking and system responses.
- ▶ Systematically address systems abuse across sectors (e.g. financial or justice systems) and improve coordination across different services and sectors.

Consultation questions

- ▶ What service or system responses would make the biggest difference to victim-survivors' safety, wellbeing, healing and recovery?
- ▶ What helps people access support earlier, and what barriers prevent people from seeking help or engaging with systems and services?
- ▶ What current or emerging issues should the Second Action Plan address, including in relation to coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse?
- ▶ What gaps remain in addressing the needs of diverse communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

Priority Area 2: Prevention and early intervention

Ending violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence in a generation is a bold and achievable goal. It requires a sustained focus on changing the gendered attitudes, behaviours, systems and structures that drive violence. It requires clear recognition of harmful attitudes and behaviours, stronger community capability to respond safely, and more connected systems that work together to intervene before violence occurs. Early intervention requires a multi-dimensional focus on reducing risk for individuals and families, while also addressing a range of factors that contribute to or increase risk. Prevention should include efforts to target the impacts of harmful alcohol and substance use, gambling and adverse childhood experiences, through legislation, regulation, policy and programs.

The Second Action Plan provides a critical opportunity to strengthen prevention and early intervention across the places and systems where people live, work, learn and connect. This includes building on existing efforts and programs on the ground that are achieving change. It includes responding to emerging forms of harm experienced online and addressing harmful gender norms and misogyny. It also involves strengthening respectful relationships education; and supporting communities, services and institutions to recognise and respond to violence earlier.

The consultation seeks input on where governments, systems and communities should focus efforts to strengthen prevention and early intervention over the next phase of the National Plan.

Key opportunities for the Second Action Plan include:

- ▶ Improve understanding of how structural drivers contribute to and reinforce victimisation and worsen the impacts of this violence.
- ▶ Improve understanding of safe and healthy relationships, behaviours, attitudes, and consent.
- ▶ Challenge and correct common myths and misconceptions about violence; and create opportunities to reduce its spread.
- ▶ Build community and cross-sector capability to recognise and respond to harmful attitudes and behaviour.
- ▶ Build a whole of community approach to changing rigid gendered attitudes and behaviour where we live, work, learn and connect.
- ▶ Ensure respectful relationships curriculum remains current and relevant to the emerging harms experienced by young people, including those from digital technologies.
- ▶ Coordinate and strengthen efforts to target the risk of experiencing or using violence, such as harmful alcohol and substance use, gambling and adverse childhood experiences.
- ▶ Combat backlash against gender equality and growing online misogyny.

Consultation questions:

- ▶ What would make the biggest difference in preventing and ultimately ending violence?
- ▶ How can existing efforts to prevent violence be strengthened or built upon at the individual, community, organisational, institutional and societal levels?
- ▶ How can governments, communities, schools, workplaces, online platforms and others better support people to recognise and respond to harmful attitudes and behaviours?
- ▶ What prevention and early intervention approaches appear most promising or effective, and what is needed to strengthen or expand them?
- ▶ What emerging issues should the Second Action Plan address in relation to primary prevention and early intervention?

Priority Area 3: Children and young people in their own right

Children and young people are not only witnesses to violence experienced by adults. They are victim-survivors in their own right, with distinct experiences, needs, rights and insights that must shape policies, services and system responses.

Early recognition and intervention can improve safety and wellbeing outcomes across the life course. Schools, early childhood settings, health services, families and communities all play an important role in recognising harm earlier, supporting recovery, and strengthening prevention.

At the same time, children and young people are navigating rapidly changing forms of harm, including technology-facilitated abuse, harmful sexual behaviours, violent pornography, online exploitation and abuse within peer and dating relationships. Continued research, evaluation and engagement with children and young people are critical to ensuring responses remain effective, safe and relevant.

The consultation seeks input on how the Second Action Plan can strengthen child and young person-centred responses.

Key opportunities for the Second Action Plan include:

- ▶ Elevate children's and young people's expertise through meaningful engagement to inform policies and programs that support them.
- ▶ Reform policy and practice structures to respond effectively to children's needs, rights and safety.
- ▶ Work with families, communities, and educational (including early childhood and school) settings to recognise and respond early to prevent harm to children and young people.
- ▶ Tackle emerging forms of sexual violence prevalent among young people, including concerning or harmful behaviours on dating apps, deepfakes, non-fatal strangulation, exposure to violent pornography, and online extortion.
- ▶ Develop more child and youth-centred pathways from response to recovery and healing.
- ▶ Work with young people using violence in the home and in intimate partner relationships, including using harmful sexual behaviours and sexual violence.

Consultation questions:

- ▶ What would make the biggest difference to improving safety, recovery and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people affected by this violence?
- ▶ How can governments, services, education settings, families, communities and others better recognise and respond to children and young people experiencing violence or harm?
- ▶ What approaches are most effective in supporting children and young people who are using violence or displaying harmful sexual behaviours to take accountability, change behaviours, and reduce harm?
- ▶ How should the Second Action Plan respond to current or emerging forms of harm affecting children and young people, including technology-facilitated abuse, harmful online content, and violence within peer and dating relationships?
- ▶ How can children and young people be meaningfully involved in shaping the policies, programs and services that affect them?

Priority Area 4: People who use violence

Ending violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence requires a stronger understanding of the people who use violence, the systems and conditions that enable it, and the responses that support accountability and behaviour change while prioritising victim-survivor safety.

Opportunities for earlier intervention are often missed. People who use violence interact with many parts of the community and service system before violence escalates, including health services, workplaces, schools, justice systems, families and communities. Strengthening these points of recognition and response is critical to prevention and safety.

At the same time, important evidence gaps remain. More research and evaluation are needed to better understand pathways into and out of violence, the impacts of technology-facilitated abuse and harmful online content, and which interventions are most effective for different communities and settings.

The Second Action Plan provides an opportunity to strengthen evidence-informed approaches that improve accountability, support earlier intervention, and build a more coordinated and effective system response to people who use violence.

Key opportunities for the Second Action Plan include:

- ▶ Identify opportunities to encourage or compel people who use violence to seek support early, take responsibility, and change their behaviour, while ensuring access to culturally appropriate responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that meet diverse community needs.
- ▶ Address major evidence gaps in public attitudes and the institutional systems that encourage, excuse or fail to prevent and address the use of violence.
- ▶ Help families, communities and workplaces identify and seek help for harmful behaviours, including those related to technology-facilitated abuse.
- ▶ Strengthen the availability, quality, consistency, accessibility, and evidence base of behaviour change interventions with a focus on safety, accountability and alignment with best practice.
- ▶ Build and grow a continuum of appropriate and effective responses to end men's use of family violence.

Consultation questions:

- ▶ What would make the biggest difference in preventing and responding earlier to the use of violence?
- ▶ How can services, families, communities, workplaces, institutions and others better recognise and respond safely to people using violence or at risk of using violence?
- ▶ What approaches are most effective in supporting people who use violence to take accountability, change behaviours, and reduce the use of violence, while focusing on victim-survivor safety?
- ▶ How can governments and services, among others, strengthen culturally safe, accessible and evidence-informed responses for a range of communities and cohorts?

Priority Area 5: System Integration and Workforce

Many people experiencing violence must navigate multiple systems at once, including health, housing, policing, justice, education, child protection and specialist services. Improving coordination across these systems is critical to strengthening safety, continuity of care, accountability and recovery outcomes.

Specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services play a critical role in supporting victim-survivors and providing secondary consultation and capability building for other service systems. Evidence highlights the importance of workforce capability, culturally safe practice, consistent training, and stronger pathways for collaboration across sectors and jurisdictions.

In addition, a range of multi-disciplinary workforces contribute to both primary prevention and early intervention, across a wide range of sectors and settings.

The Second Action Plan provides an opportunity to strengthen integrated system responses, improve workforce capability, and support more consistent, evidence-informed practice and programming across Australia.

Key opportunities for the Second Action Plan include:

- ▶ Strengthen coordination, information sharing and continuity of care across sectors to support victim-survivors to easily navigate multiple services.
- ▶ Strengthen support for the workforces engaged in prevention, early intervention, response and recovery, recognising the risk of vicarious trauma.
- ▶ Improve national coordination of workforce capability, role definition and conditions, including support for greater consistency in standards, training and practice across jurisdictions.
- ▶ Build workforce capability to respond to the full spectrum of violence including coercive control, sexual violence and technology-facilitated abuse.
- ▶ Build collaboration and coordination between response workforces, prevention workforces, and non-specialist workforces.
- ▶ Improve the diversity of the workforce engaged across prevention, early intervention, response and recovery, and develop and strengthen pathways for integrated programs and services.

- ▶ Strengthen and expand workforce skills to engage with persons who use violence while avoiding collusion.
- ▶ Build capability to deliver culturally safe, trauma- and violence-informed services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, migrant and refugee communities, LGBTIQ+ people and people living with disability, and address systemic bias and inequities in policing and justice responses.

Consultation questions:

- ▶ What would make the biggest difference in creating a more coordinated and connected system response for people affected by violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence and people using violence?
- ▶ What workforce capabilities, supports, or conditions are most needed to strengthen prevention, early intervention, response and recovery?
- ▶ What approaches or models appear most effective in improving collaboration, coordination and information sharing across services, systems and programs?
- ▶ What supports do specialist and universal services need to provide inclusive, accessible and response services?
- ▶ What evidence, workforce or system gaps should the Second Action Plan prioritise to strengthen implementation and improve outcomes over time?

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