

## Arise Foundation Australia's Submission to the Second Action Plan Consultation (National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032)

### Introduction

The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children commits to ending violence in one generation. That requires funding a system where all four pillars work together as one mission. Yet recovery, the pillar that transforms a moment of safety into lasting freedom, remains almost entirely unfunded. By our estimate, recovery and economic re-engagement receives less than 5%<sup>1</sup> of domestic and family violence funding.

This fragmentation costs the system dearly. When recovery is unfunded, crisis services absorb the spillover. Women reach safety through crisis intervention, but without recovery resources, they cannot stay safe. They cycle in and out of crisis because the moment of immediate danger has passed, but the conditions that trap women remain untouched: economic dependence, housing insecurity, social isolation, ongoing coercive control. Prevention and early intervention programs lack an exit pathway. Crisis services are overwhelmed by repeat presentations from the same women. And children grow up witnessing cycles of violence, born into the expectation of abuse as normal.

Recovery changes this entirely. When recovery is properly resourced, women move from crisis-dependent to economically independent and do not return to their perpetrators. Crisis services free beds for women in acute danger, counsellors to support someone in immediate crisis, legal advocates to work on cases where safety is at acute risk. Children grow up in stability, not cycles of trauma. Prevention of recurrence becomes prevention infrastructure.

### Key Recommendations

#### Arise Foundation (Arise) recommends that the Second Action Plan:

1. Fund recovery as essential infrastructure for breaking cycles of violence by directing dedicated, multi-year investment to recovery-stage services that prevent women from returning to their perpetrators and stop intergenerational transmission of trauma.
2. Recognise economic independence as essential to lasting safety by treating financial security as part of safety (not peripheral to employment), supporting women to move from crisis-dependence to economic self-sufficiency, and resourcing technology-enabled financial safety as part of both response and recovery.
3. Create national measures for recovery outcomes including employment retention, income growth, housing stability, and financial independence so that recovery becomes visible, fundable, and accountable.
4. Expand recovery pathways through employer partnerships and supported employment models by resourcing 'intentional employer' models, creating incentives for cadetships and supported placements, and funding employer capability-building

<sup>1</sup> Arise Foundation internal calculations 2023

as a prevention and early-intervention mechanism.

5. Fund system integration and navigation between services through recovery-phase navigation and warm-referral pathways, national guidance and capability standards for a trauma-informed recovery-and-employment workforce, and partnership-based hub models that wrap multiple services around women.

## Why the Four Pillars are inseparable

The National Plan's framework includes prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery. It describes a system that works only if all four parts function together. Yet the current funding profile treats them as separate, creating a false hierarchy where crisis response is prioritised and recovery is left unfunded.

This fragmentation is costly. When recovery is unfunded, crisis services absorb the spillover. Women return in crisis not because prevention or response failed, but because they had nowhere to go after the crisis. They move through crisis accommodation, counselling, legal assistance, and support services, cycling in and out because the moment of crisis has passed, but the conditions that trap them remain untouched. Funding recovery prevents this cycle and, in doing so, reduces demand on crisis services and frees capacity for women in acute danger. This is not a secondary benefit; it is a primary system outcome. Every woman moved into economic security through recovery is a bed freed in crisis accommodation, a counsellor freed to support someone in immediate danger, a legal advocate freed to work on cases where safety is at acute risk.

More critically, recovery prevents intergenerational violence in ways that prevention and response alone cannot. 62% of women Arise Foundation (Arise) works with have children; 57% are single mothers<sup>2</sup>. When a mother regains stable income and secure work, her children's safety improves: reduced exposure to ongoing violence, housing stability, and stronger foundations for long-term wellbeing. A total of 560 women and children have been positively impacted through Arise's programs<sup>3</sup>. Breaking the cycle means breaking it for the next generation. Prevention, in this sense, includes preventing children from reliving or mirroring the trauma their parents experienced. This is prevention infrastructure operating at the systemic level.

What this requires is a fundamental shift in how we understand the roles organisations play in ending violence. Crisis services, early intervention, prevention, and recovery are not competing priorities; they are interdependent parts of a whole system aimed at breaking cycles of violence for good. Organisations like Arise that operate in recovery are not peripheral to that mission; they are essential infrastructure. When recovery is funded, it reduces pressure on crisis services, prevents women from cycling back into violence, and stops trauma from being passed to the next generation. This is how a system that actually ends violence functions. The Second Action Plan has the opportunity to resource that full system, rather than funding fragments of it.

## What recovery looks like: evidence from practice

<sup>2</sup> Arise Foundation impact dashboard 2026

<sup>3</sup> Arise Foundation impact dashboard 2026

Economic dependence is one of the strongest factors keeping women in violent relationships. Recent research found 22,600 women cited lack of money as the main reason they could not leave, and 37% who briefly separated returned because they had no money or nowhere to go<sup>4</sup>. This is not a choice between safety and independence. It is a choice between violence or poverty.

Arise's approach addresses this directly. Trauma-informed employment coaching (133 women have received 15,960 minutes of personalised coaching) is paired with wrap-around recovery support (46 partner organisations offering housing, legal services, financial counselling, and childcare) and employer partnerships (25 skilled mentors; cadetships with major employers including Wotton Kearney and Insignia Financial)<sup>5</sup>.

The employment results are compelling:

- 30% of women transition to paid work or structured training within six months of completing the program, most after 2 or more years out of the workforce
- 81% are employed or in guaranteed pathways within 1 to 2 years
- Placements pay \$25 to \$38 per hour, at or above award rates, fitting around caring responsibilities.
- Zero returns to the abuser for women in guaranteed employment pathways<sup>6</sup>

Arise reaches women the mainstream employment system misses:

- 74% from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- 57% sole mothers
- 28% over 45 years old
- 5% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- 26% on temporary or bridging visas.
- Online, flexible, trauma-informed delivery extends reach to women isolated by geography (83% in NSW including regional areas) or language<sup>7</sup>.

These are not exceptional outcomes for exceptional women. These outcomes are what recovery infrastructure looks like when it is designed for the women the crisis system has been unable to reach: women whose trauma is severe, whose barriers are complex, whose employment histories are disrupted, whose caring responsibilities are non-negotiable. The current system leaves these women outside mainstream employment services and expects them to remain permanently connected to crisis support or fall through altogether.

Arise demonstrates that when recovery is properly resourced, funded, and trauma-informed, women return to sustained employment. Since 2022, Arise has worked with 436 women<sup>8</sup> referred from crisis services, domestic violence and community organisations across six states and 45 Local Government Areas<sup>9</sup>. Of these, 199 women engaged with Arise and 145 completed our Employment Ready Program<sup>10</sup>. 81% of women moving into employment or guaranteed pathways within a year is not aspirational<sup>11</sup>; it is what a functioning system delivers. The fact that zero women have returned to their perpetrator is not coincidental; it is the natural outcome of women moving from economic dependence to independence. This is the recovery infrastructure the Second Action Plan needs to build and fund systemwide. Without it, the crisis system will continue absorbing repeat presentations, prevention efforts will lack an exit pathway for women in crisis, and children will continue being born into cycles of violence because their mothers had nowhere to go.

<sup>4</sup> The Choice: Violence or Poverty, Dr Anne Summers, UTS 2021

<sup>5</sup> Arise Foundation impact dashboard 2026

<sup>6</sup> Arise Foundation impact dashboard 2026

<sup>7</sup> Arise Foundation impact dashboard 2026

<sup>8</sup> Arise Foundation impact dashboard 2026

<sup>9</sup> Arise Foundation impact dashboard 2026

<sup>10</sup> Arise Foundation impact dashboard 2026

<sup>11</sup> Arise Foundation impact dashboard 2026

## The economic case for recovery

Recovery is not cost-neutral; it is cost-effective. The annual cost of violence against women is \$21,300 per victim-survivor<sup>12</sup>. The cost to society per woman is \$17,496 per year in economic abuse alone<sup>13</sup>. Arise's program cost is \$5,363 to \$6,402 per woman, with a conservative return on investment of 3.3 times per dollar invested based on financial abuse alone, and 13.1 times when wrap-around supports are included. The investment pays for itself within 4.4 months<sup>14</sup>.

This is not theoretical. When a woman moves from zero earned income to \$25 to \$38 per hour<sup>15</sup>, she moves from crisis-dependent to economically independent. She also moves from at-risk for return to violence to protection. For women and their children, this is the difference between poverty and stability, between ongoing vulnerability and lasting safety.

At \$5,363 to \$6,402 per woman with a 3.3x to 13.1x return on investment<sup>16</sup> this is not a charitable intervention or a nice-to-have program. It is the most efficient infrastructure the system has for breaking cycles of violence. Every dollar invested in recovery is a dollar that does more to end violence for good than the same dollar spent only on crisis response. This is a system efficiency meeting system mission.

When a woman graduates Arise's program into stable employment, she is no longer returning to crisis services. Her children are no longer witnessing or experiencing violence. The next woman in crisis can access a bed that would otherwise be occupied by a repeat presentation. Prevention of recurrence is prevention infrastructure. This is what it looks like when the system is designed to actually end violence, rather than manage it. The Second Action Plan can fund that, or continue funding only fragments of it. The economics make the choice clear.

## Why these priorities matter

### Priority 1: Fund recovery as essential infrastructure for breaking cycles

Recovery is not a peripheral outcome of crisis response; it is essential infrastructure for breaking cycles of violence. Arise's data shows this investment yields measurable, sustained outcomes: 81% employment or pathway achievement within 1 to 2 years, zero recurrence, and proven ROI. Critically, funding recovery reduces demand on crisis services, frees capacity for women in acute danger, and prevents intergenerational violence. When recovery is resourced, women move into economic independence and do not return to violence. Their children grow up in stability, not cycles of trauma.

### Priority 2: Recognize economic independence as essential to lasting safety

Economic independence is not an employment outcome; it is a safety outcome. When a woman moves from zero earned income to \$25 to \$38 per hour, she moves from at-risk for return to violence to protection. The Second Action Plan must treat financial security as part of safety infrastructure, not peripheral to employment. This means recognizing that economic abuse, technology-enabled financial surveillance, and barriers to earning and asset-building are core components of coercive control. Recovery support must explicitly help women establish secure, independent financial footprints, manage banking safely, and build economic resilience. Economic independence is what makes the safety reached in crisis services actually

<sup>12</sup> KPMG, DSS 2016

<sup>13</sup> Deloitte, CommBank 2021

<sup>14</sup> Arise Foundation internal calculations 2026

<sup>15</sup> Arise Foundation internal data 2026

<sup>16</sup> Arise Foundation internal calculations 2026

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### **Priority 3: Create national measures for recovery outcomes**

Recovery is invisible to the system because it is unmeasured. Develop national measures for economic recovery including employment retention, income growth, housing stability, and financial independence so that recovery becomes visible, fundable, and accountable. At present, system performance is measured only at crisis points; recovery outcomes are absent from performance data. Arise's consistent tracking of employment transitions, income levels, housing stability, and absence of recurrence demonstrates what measurement can reveal about system effectiveness and what outcomes are actually possible.

### **Priority 4: Expand recovery pathways through employer partnerships and supported employment**

Workplaces are underused recovery assets. They are stable settings where colleagues notice warning signs and where sustained support during crisis and recovery is possible. Arise's employment partnership network, including cadetships with WottonKearney and Insignia Financial, pro-bono/ in-kind support from Clifford Chance, NAB, Salesforce, and Uber, and access to 300,000 potential employers through Employment Hero, demonstrates what is possible at scale. This is one implementation pathway for recovery. Resource 'intentional employer' models and create incentives for employers to offer cadetships and supported placements. Employer capability-building should be funded and resourced as a prevention and early-intervention mechanism, not left to goodwill.

### **Priority 5: Fund system integration and navigation**

Recovery is where coordination breaks down. Women navigate crisis services, employment, housing, financial counselling, legal support, and childcare simultaneously, often alone. Arise's model, with 32 referral partners (Liberty DFV, Salvation Army, Centre for Women's Economic Safety, Jenny's Place, Jacaranda Hub, and others) and 46 wrap-around partners, demonstrates that coordinated recovery is achievable. Resource recovery-phase navigation and warm-referral pathways connecting all these services. Develop national guidance and capability standards for a trauma-informed recovery-and-employment workforce. Fund partnership-based hub models that wrap multiple services around women, with shared outcomes. This is the connective tissue that holds a functioning system together.

## **Conclusion**

Australia has made significant progress in responding to domestic and family violence. Yet for too many women, leaving violence means choosing between violence and poverty. That choice is not inevitable. It is the result of a system that funds crises and leaves recovery to chance.

The Second Action Plan is the opportunity to close that gap, not by adding another program to an already fragmented landscape, but by building a system that actually ends violence for good. This is not aspirational; it is achievable.

When recovery is funded, several things happen simultaneously. Women move from crisis-dependent to economically independent and do not return to their perpetrators. Crisis services are no longer absorbing repeat presentations. Beds are freed for women in acute danger, counsellors are freed to support someone in immediate crisis, legal advocates are freed to work on cases where safety is at acute risk. And critically, children grow up in stability rather than witnessing or being born into cycles of violence. Prevention of recurrence becomes

prevention infrastructure. Intergenerational transmission of trauma stops.

The National Plan's commitment is to end violence in one generation. That requires funding all four pillars equally, not because they are separate services, but because they are interdependent parts of one mission. Prevention without recovery leaves women with nowhere to go. Response without recovery sends women back out cycling in and out of crisis. Early intervention without recovery forces women to choose between safety and poverty. Recovery is not optional. It is what makes the other three pillars actually work.

The Second Action Plan can fund that full system and break cycles for good. Or it can continue funding fragments and watch the same women cycle in and out, their children born into the expectation of violence as normal, generation after generation. The economics make the choice clear. The evidence makes it clear. The mission makes it clear.

Arise Foundation works at this intersection every day with 436 women referred across six states, partnering with 32 crisis and community organisations and 46 recovery and employment providers. We would welcome the opportunity to partner with governments, employers, service providers, and women with lived experience to build a recovery system equal to the task, and to finally deliver on Australia's commitment to end violence in one generation.