



Second Action Plan (National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032)

Submission to Department of Social Services

29 July 2026

Recommendations

This submission recommends the Australian Government:

1. Mandate SMS to Triple Zero to ensure victim-survivors can safely access emergency services.
2. Continue to fund Wesnet's Safe Connections (Safer Technology for Women) program beyond 2027.
3. Fund targeted digital skills and literacy programs to equip victim-survivors to use technologies and safely navigate online environments.

About this submission

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (**ACCAN**) is pleased to provide this submission to the Department of Social Services on its consultation on the Second Action Plan (National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032) (**the Second Action Plan**).

Contents

About this submission.....2

Recommendations2

Contents3

1. Introduction4

2. Modernise Australia’s emergency services4

3. Continue funding for Wesnet’s Safe Connections program5

4. Promote digital skills and digital literacy5

5. Conclusion.....6



ACCAN is the peak national consumer organisation advocating trusted, accessible, inclusive, affordable and available communications and digital services.

1. Introduction

Reliable, accessible and affordable communications services are essential for public safety, and particularly for the safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence (DFS^{SV}). This submission highlights the essential nature of communications, including mobile and internet services, for victim-survivors to stay safe, seek help both formally and informally, and re-establish their lives after abuse.

However, communication services can also be weaponised as a tool of abuse, through tactics such as account and billing control, coerced debt, and technology-facilitated abuse, which cause significant harm to victim-survivors. The Second Action Plan should therefore prioritise promoting victim-survivor safety in the digital age and include greater focus on improving access to communications services.

2. Modernise Australia's emergency services

ACCAN strongly recommends the Second Action Plan prioritises modernising access to emergency services by ensuring victim-survivors can safely use non-voice methods to contact Triple Zero. The current voice-only Triple Zero system creates a serious safety gap for victim-survivors of DFS^{SV}.

As a first step, ACCAN considers the Government should mandate text-to-000 to modernise access to the Emergency Call Service. Having to make an audible call can escalate danger when a perpetrator is present. Victim-survivors may also be subject to technology-facilitated abuse, making a discreet SMS far safer to send than a call. Text-to-000 can also improve access to emergency services where mobile coverage is unreliable and voice and data services are not available.

Real-time text (RTT) to Triple Zero should be implemented as the next stage of reform, given its relevance to DFS^{SV} situations. RTT transmits each character as it is typed, enabling a victim-survivor who may only be able to manage a few words before being interrupted or discovered to still send a message to emergency services, and call-takers can begin acting on partial information rather than waiting for a completed text.

RTT would also improve access to Triple Zero for people with disabilities and culturally and linguistically diverse consumer cohorts, both of whom are disproportionately impacted by DFS^{SV}, by supporting communication for those who cannot rely on spoken English or verbal communication. This capability directly addresses the time-critical, high-risk nature of DFS^{SV} emergencies.

A further benefit RTT may deliver is increasing evidentiary proof of DFS^{SV}, particularly where a voice call has not been, or cannot be, made. The timestamped, character-by-character record created by RTT may assist victim-survivors to substantiate the nature and timing of an emergency in subsequent legal proceedings, such as family violence order applications or criminal matters. Therefore, modernising emergency services with safer, more accessible communication is vital to protect victim-survivors of DFS^{SV}.

3. Continue funding for Wesnet's Safe Connections program

Wesnet's Safe Connections program is the only nationwide program providing new smartphones to victim-survivors via practitioners who are trained to identify technology-facilitated abuse and undertake technology safety planning with victim-survivors. It provides around 7,500 free smartphones to survivors through a network of DFSV specialist services across the country.¹ ACCAN recommends that the Government continue to fund Wesnet's Safe Connections (Safer Technology for Women) program beyond 2027.

The Safe Connections program provides essential access to safe technology for victim-survivors of DFSV via a new smartphone device, prepaid credit and data, optional ID exemption, and technology safety information and planning. Devices are provided by practitioners in DFSV services in the context of a broader service response, providing a suite of DFSV targeted services (risk assessment, support, information, advocacy and safety planning) aimed at reducing DFSV risk. Safe Connections also provides training to its agencies' practitioners that enables the provision of the devices alongside technology safety information and planning that builds the capability of survivors. The program is a strong way for victim-survivors to disrupt the ever-increasing prevalence of technology-facilitated abuse.

4. Promote digital skills and digital literacy

ACCAN recommends the Government commit targeted funding to provide tailored digital skills and literacy programs for victim-survivors of DFSV. Tailored, trauma-informed digital skills programs, delivered by trained specialists, are essential to ensure victim-survivors can build the skills and confidence to safely and independently navigate technologies and digital environments.

Victim-survivors often face heightened cybersecurity risks due to technology-facilitated abuse, and many may lack confidence or skills in using devices and navigating online environments due to having had their technology use deliberately restricted or controlled by a perpetrator. Targeted programs should focus on cybersecurity training and building key digital skills such as using devices, accessing the internet safely, and navigating online platforms, alongside raising awareness of emergency connectivity options.

¹ WESNET, 'Telstra Safe Connections Program' <<https://wesnet.org.au/ourwork/telstra/>>.

5. Conclusion

Ensuring secure, affordable access to communications services is central to the safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors of DFSV and should be a clear priority under the Second Action Plan. This submission recommends the Government consider modernising access to emergency services and commit funding to Safe Connections and digital skills and literacy programs to ensure victim-survivors can safely and securely access communications to rebuild their independence after leaving a violent relationship. Together, these measures would ensure Australia's communications and emergency service systems keep pace with victim-survivors' safety needs and reflect the critical role connectivity plays in protecting and empowering those affected by DFSV.

The Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (ACCAN) is Australia's peak communication consumer organisation. The operation of ACCAN is made possible by funding provided by the Commonwealth of Australia under section 593 of the Telecommunications Act 1997. This funding is recovered from charges on telecommunications carriers. ACCAN is committed to reconciliation that acknowledges Australia's past and values the unique culture and heritage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



www.accan.org.au
info@accan.org.au