



CATHOLIC SCHOOL PARENTS AUSTRALIA

**Consultation on the Second Action Plan (National Plan to
End Violence Against Women and Children 2022 – 2032)**

July 2026

About Catholic School Parents Australia

Catholic School Parents Australia (CSPA) is recognised as the national body representing and advocating for the parents* and carers of 831 692 children and young people who attend the 1,758 Catholic schools across Australia. One out of every five Australian school students are educated in a Catholic school.¹

CSPA was formed in late 2013 and is made up of two representatives from each member State and Territory. CSPA works in collaboration and consultation with the National Catholic Education Commission and is recognised by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference through the Bishops Commission for Catholic Education.

CSPA's **vision** is for engaged Catholic school parents influencing quality learning and well-being.

Our **mission** is to be a distinct and influential national voice for Catholic School Parents driving quality learning and wellbeing through advocacy and partnerships.

Our vision and mission are underpinned by **values** of integrity, respect, faith, inclusivity and engagement.

We welcome the opportunity to present a submission to the Department of Social Services and to contribute to the consultation process on the Second Action Plan, shaping the focus of the National Plan².

As a result of domestic and family violence, children suffer ongoing trauma and their opportunity to thrive is diminished. CSPA believes that all children have the right to a quality education, allowing each child the opportunity to reach their potential. CSPA is committed to the belief that all children can learn and that school and family collaboration is essential to successful academic and developmental growth. Given this commitment, CSPA supports a variety of education and related support services that benefit the learning of all children. CSPA has undertaken a significant body of work around Family-School Engagement, contained in the *CSPA Parent Engagement Toolkit*.³

¹ Parent includes natural, adopted or foster parents, guardians or care givers of young people attending Catholic Schools. (CSPA Constitution)

² 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, p10.

³ [Gearing up for Parent Engagement in Student Learning](#)

Our input through this submission necessarily focuses on the capacity for parent engagement in education to bring about change. We also note that our scope to influence other areas related to gender-related violence in society may be limited.

We commend the work of ANROWS in seeking dignity and respect for all people and creating communities where safety is duly recognised as a basic human right. These values are shared by CSPA and underpin our work and mission for all stakeholders in Catholic Education.

CSPA notes and appreciates that Australia is one of the few countries with national strategy for ending gender-based violence.⁴ **Through our work with peak bodies in Australia education, CSPA is well-positioned to advocate for awareness-raising and for the continuation of the change that is already occurring – to be part of the collective effort to make the greatest difference.**⁵

Priority Area 1: Victim Survivors

Victim-survivors are more likely to access support earlier when it is local, culturally safe and easy to navigate. A system response that would make the biggest difference to victim-survivors' safety, wellbeing, healing and recovery would therefore be integrated with familiar and accessible place-based services.

There is impetus towards wrap-around hub models in Catholic schools and Early Learning Centres, supported by Catholic Social Services. Such models take a long-term, co-ordinated, inter-generational approach to addressing disadvantage.⁶ CSPA is supportive of the hub model and is seeing steps towards the development of hubs in regional areas. We would encourage ANROWS to include in the scope of the Second Action Plan consideration for engagement in hub model initiatives, especially given their potential to engage with diverse communities.

We recognise, as the Minister and Assistant Minister do, the impact of technology in reshaping how harm is experienced and perpetrated⁷ and the potential that education has to make change. Understandings of coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse can be fostered not only through the curriculum but through embedded school- and system-wide approaches, supported by parent resources, education and engagement.

⁴ 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, p20.

⁵ 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, p5.

⁶ [Schools as 'wrap-around hubs' in disadvantaged communities | Catholic Social Services Australia](#)

⁷ 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, p5.

CSPA is deeply cognizant of the diversity of communities that Catholic schools serve and the importance of inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in any program or initiative. **CSPA is actively seeking to ensure that our outreach for parent engagement includes all voices, throughout Australia, supporting this by visiting and actively listening in remote communities.**

Priority Area 2: Prevention and early intervention

Preventing and ultimately ending violence represents a highly significant cultural and historical shift for Australia. The myriad belief systems and lived experiences that have enabled the current situation must be problematized, challenged and erased to create an Australian society that is free from violence.

There are many influences on young people's ideas about the roles of men and women. Research tells us that, from a young age, some people start to believe there are reasons and certain situations that make disrespectful behaviour okay.⁸

A whole system, school and community approach to education around respect and gender values would make the biggest difference in preventing and ultimately ending violence.

CSPA's focus on parent engagement aims to ensure that parents are connected to their children's schools and are confident and capable in communicating with them. CSPA delivers parent education resources, family-school engagement initiatives and nationally consistent parent capability-building programs and sees the relevance of such resources and initiatives in the prevention and early intervention space.

We endorse the Action Plan's objective to engage young people in prevention efforts before harmful attitudes become entrenched and recognise the role of healthy parenting from father figures⁹. If parents can support their children in learning new ways of being and acting, then the opportunity for significant and lasting social change becomes possible.

"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-survivor¹⁰

⁸ [The Issue: Understanding violence against women in Australia](#)

⁹ 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, p32.

¹⁰ 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, p32.

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

Child-centred approaches ensure children and young people have a say and are heard in matters concerning their safety and wellbeing. This includes culturally appropriate responses, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and trauma-informed systems to support their safety in their own right.

Overall, the safety of children and young people is recognized as a fundamental right that must be actively upheld through protective legislation, core principles, and advocacy frameworks that uphold their individual needs and voices.

Ensuring that support systems are easily identifiable, accessible and cultural safe, throughout Australia, would make the biggest difference to improving safety, recovery and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people affected by violence.

System and school-wide responses must be supported by ongoing professional learning for school leaders, teachers and support staff. It is critical that time and resources are made available to enable this to occur authentically and effectively in all settings. Supporting the ongoing guidance and reflection that enables all educators, leaders and parents to respond to children displaying harmful sexual manners in an appropriate way, that helps the child form new understandings and ways of acting and responding, will be vital.

The continuation of funding for organisations, like CSPA, that support schools and systems with parent engagement and resources, is also critical.

Children and young people using violence or displaying harmful sexual behaviours benefit from approaches that are both child-safe and educational. The principles already embedded in the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework¹¹ and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations¹² provide the foundations for this.

It must be noted that the depth of understanding of child-safe practices held by educators may not be that held by parents. Partnerships with parents will be important in enabling them to nurture new ways of being that may be contrary to their own beliefs about or lived experience of gender roles. It is important that parents are not “left out” or placed “on the margins” of the Second Action Plan’s strategy.

The national advocacy of CSPA would actively and strategically support parent awareness and engagement in what, for many parents, will be a significant and challenging change in world view.

¹¹ [Lead the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework | National Office for Child Safety](#)

¹² [Child Safe Organisations: Implementation Tools](#)

CSPA is currently engaged in supporting the work of the eSafety Commissioner, especially in regard to promoting the resources that they provide to support parents¹³. The potential of the Second Action Plan to leverage and integrate existing Australian Government initiatives cannot be underestimated.

The Second Action Plan needs to address explicitly emerging forms of harm affecting children and young people. Developing an understanding of the issue would be foundational to any strategy for education or reform. The broad-ranging and often hidden nature of such harm means that public awareness is critical. Information would need to be shared in formats that are accessible and appropriate for all Australian communities.

The involvement of children in the development of policies cannot be tokenistic. As noted above, existing initiatives such as the Voice of Children Framework in the ECEC sector (which notes its value for all government agencies), and the Murdoch Children's Research Institute's Voice of the Child Toolkit¹⁴ can be leveraged to provide guidance on how and when to consult with children, with consideration for diverse backgrounds, safety and inclusivity.¹⁵

*Choosing the term 'involvement' over 'engagement' emphasises our partnership approach. Children and young people's participation should extend beyond 'data collection'. They should be meaningfully included across projects, influencing processes and outcomes.*¹⁶

Nonetheless, the involvement of children in the development of policies remains a challenge; creating space in the curriculum requires system-level commitment, that evolves into schools and classrooms, with the informed support of leaders, teachers and parents.

Priority Area 4: People who use violence

CSPA supports the creation of safe, respectful, and inclusive school environments where violence and aggression are not tolerated. We recognise the impact that the manosphere has on gendered norms, and the steps this Action Plan seeks to take to address this.

Violence is never an acceptable solution and undermines the dignity and safety of individuals. CSPA advocates for positive, restorative relationships and trauma-informed practices to prevent and respond to violence, including bullying and aggression, ensuring the wellbeing and safety of all.

¹³ [Parents | eSafety Commissioner](#)

¹⁴ [Voice of the Child Toolkit - Centre for Community Child Health](#)

¹⁵ [Voice of Children Framework - Department of Education, Australian Government](#)

¹⁶ [Voice of the Child Toolkit - Centre for Community Child Health](#)

This stance aligns with broader Catholic teachings that prioritise mercy, justice, and the dignity of every person, promoting safe and supportive learning communities free from violence and aggression.

Wide-ranging social change, underpinned by education and communication, would make the biggest difference in preventing and responding earlier to the use of violence. It requires a focused national effort and the endorsement and partnership of national representative organisations such as CSPA.¹⁷

Families and communities (especially school communities) can better recognise and respond safely to people using violence or at risk of using violence firstly when there is a shared understanding that violence is not acceptable. From that understanding, there will develop a willingness to engage in developing the knowledge that informs response. A commitment to ongoing training and learning in all contexts would be critical. CSPA's advocacy rests within the national education sector and its capacity to endorse strong messages around violence as a response that is never acceptable.

Priority Area 5: System Integration and Workforce

A truly national approach, which integrates existing policies and initiatives, would make the biggest difference. Ensuring that systems have clear pathways, making them readily accessible for all Australians, of all backgrounds and in all locations will be critical. Responses to the needs of victims and perpetrators need to be connected, consistent and offer the necessary specialisation. The hub model, referred to earlier, provides a community-based starting point for such a response. A complex or disjointed set of services will do little to ameliorate the situation.

The success of a coordinated response is also dependent on ongoing training which is timely and flexible in its delivery. Training needs to be responsive to the diverse needs of the entire Australian community and so would require extensive and reliable government funding. This will not be a “quick fix”, and a long-term commitment will be required for true cultural change to take place in terms of beliefs and practices around violence towards women and children.

Optimising the support, capacity and reach of national educational and family advocacy groups such as CSPA would be a key factor in promoting this approach.

¹⁷ 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, p6.

Are there any other actions you think should be a priority to stop family, domestic and sexual violence?

It is critical that the focus of the National Plan has a clear, rigorous, diverse and embedded approach to engaging parents and ensuring that they become ongoing partners in its delivery.

The Second Action Plan should strengthen support for parents, recognising their critical role in promoting safety, wellbeing and respectful relationships – and thus contributing to eliminating gender-based violence in our country.

Accessible parenting education, family support services and community-based prevention initiatives can help build protective factors and strengthen resilience before violence occurs.

