

30 July 2026

Department of Social Services
Australian Government
Online Submission

To the Department,

Re: Consultation on the Second Action Plan (National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032)

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this Consultation to the Second Action Plan. We do so as members of the Disrupting Violence Beacon, Griffith University. We are solely responsible for the views and content of this submission.

Our submission will address selected consultation questions for proposed Priority Areas 1 – 5 and provide overarching feedback. Our primary point for the Department's attention is that any further action to end violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence requires **innovative and alternative responses and integrated systems of intervention and justice**.

About the Disrupting Violence Beacon

The Disrupting Violence Beacon is a strategic research initiative to better understand and respond to violence at an intersectional level. It translates knowledge into effective prevention and intervention and helps build institutions and systems that improve people's access to justice. It does this by building long-term industry and community collaborations, international partnerships and projects that contribute to transformative responses to intractable problems of violence. The Beacon is interested in the occurrence of violence across interpersonal, family, community, state and global levels.

Our Values

- We value **access to justice**, recognising that it is critical for victims and survivors, and for ensuring that systems and institutions discourage and counteract violence. In this way, we see justice as a concept that can be used to effect change as well as healing.
- We value and recognise **diversity in culture and identity** and aim to prioritise the voices and experiences of Australia's First Nations Peoples.
- We value and listen to the **voices of people impacted by violence** and, in particular, aim to improve the lives of end users of research.
- We value **aspirational work that is unconstrained by conventional modes of thinking**. Using our multidisciplinary and intersectional focus, we disrupt normative systems, practices and narratives to find creative and technologically advanced ways to address violence of all forms.

Our Expertise

This submission draws on our extensive expertise on justice and service system responses to gender-based violence, gender-based violence law reform, perpetrator interventions, Indigenous justice, children and violence, and victim-centric, trauma-informed practice.

Consultation Feedback

Overarching Feedback

Domestic and family violence, and sexual violence

We agree that domestic, family and sexual violence are different forms of violence requiring different responses.¹ We reiterate the crucial importance of separating out domestic and family violence from sexual violence to ensure impacts are not diluted for sexual violence, including childhood sexual abuse.

Within this, it is important to recognise the position of children as having unique experiences of gender-based violence and therefore specific needs. Children can have complex needs as a result of being exposed or subjected to violence, and gender constructions can play a critical role in how impacts play out across the life course. In this way, it is important to be nuanced in responding to girls and boys to ensure they are not categorised in binary ways such as victim and perpetrator. We advocate that prevention and intervention responses not be singularly grouped into 'men and boys' or 'women and girls'.

Meaning of trauma-informed practice

The phrase 'trauma-informed' is frequently used when discussing responses to violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence. However, it is rarely explained what this term means or what application of trauma-informed approaches looks like in practice. This can lead to confusion about what a 'trauma-informed approach' looks like and implementation of approaches that do not in fact minimise re-traumatisation, risking disingenuous and tokenistic approaches. It is crucial that the Second Action Plan explain what is meant by 'trauma-informed' – for example, what principles should be applied. While further research is needed in this space given conceptual understandings of trauma-informed practice are not yet settled (leading to the creation of different frameworks with different principles),² we suggest the framework put forward by SAMHSA in the United States³ as appropriate to be applied in the interim.

Build research and evidence-based practice

Any actions to eliminate violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence must be evidence-based and grounded in research. There is a dire need for further research to be conducted in this space – these gaps must be acknowledged and addressed to ensure actions to end violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence are effective.

Further, the Action Plan advocates for innovative practice. It is important to distinguish between innovative practice that is added to existing responses and systems versus revolutionary initiatives that build new responses to violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence. Recognising that the aim is to eliminate gender-based violence requires transformation and it is therefore necessary to build research and evidence-based responses that sit outside of current paradigms and praxis.

¹ Consultation Paper, page 16.

² Sarah Kendall, 'The Trauma-Informed Trial: A Conceptual Framework to Guide Practice' (2024) 43(3) *The University of Queensland Law Journal* 319.

³ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach* (July 2014).

Priority Area 1: Victim-Survivors

What service or system responses would make the biggest difference to victim-survivors' safety, wellbeing, healing and recovery?

There are several service or system responses that would make the biggest difference to victim-survivors' safety, wellbeing, healing and recovery. Two key responses are, first, integrated responses that incorporate a whole of system approach and, second, innovative, alternative and transformative service and system responses. Innovative approaches include, for example, introduction and expansion of specialist courts for domestic and family violence and sexual violence, and perpetrator prevention programs that are individually tailored to address specific needs, both of which require government investment and resourcing. Other responses that would also make a big difference are ensuring all responses are culturally safe and trauma-informed, providing more funding for legal representation for victim-survivors, and assisting victim-survivors' economic recovery.

Further, providing victim-survivors with secure and stable housing post-separation from violence would go a long way towards ensuring sustainable healing and recovery – most housing services are short-term and do not allow male children after a certain age to be housed there, which does not help stop the cycle of violence or homelessness. There is a need for transformative approaches to housing, where women and children can transition from emergency accommodation to medium and long-term housing that provides support for families to have an entry point to stable and affordable housing in their recovery. Wherever possible, consideration should be given to the person using violence to be re-accommodated to prevent disruption to the majority of family members.

What helps people access support earlier, and what barriers prevent people from seeking help or engaging with systems and services?

A major barrier for early help seeking is recognising the early signs of coercive power and control. When people seek assistance early it can be difficult for them to gain timely access to services, often because core services are busy responding to more urgent acute and chronic issues. It is crucial to provide service responses that cater to a range of help seeking strategies, including text based and online responses, together with processes that do not stigmatise. Recognition of indicators of violence at touch points in other systems such as health care, family and relationship services, education, employment, and social services is critical to early intervention and help seeking. This requires an educated workforce across mainstream services to recognise and refer people impacted by violence, be it as victim or perpetrator. Other barriers include distrust of services, especially police, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as the fear of children being removed.⁴

What current or emerging issues should the Second Action Plan address, including in relation to coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse?

It is crucial that the Second Action Plan address **all forms of violence driven by misogyny and gender discrimination, biases and stereotypes**, not just domestic and family violence and sexual violence. While we recognise that domestic and family violence and sexual violence are serious problems that require immediate action, there are other forms of violence – such as obstetric and gynaecological violence⁵ – that are driven by misogyny and cause significant harm, yet are not widely recognised as 'gender-based violence' nor are addressed in strategies or action plans on gender-based violence. This is a critical oversight.

⁴ Queensland Law Reform Commission, *Non-Fatal Strangulation: Section 315A Review – Education, Accountability and Support: Improving Queensland's Response to Non-Fatal Strangulation* (Final Report, September 2025) 233.

⁵ Ileana Olivares-Medina et al, 'Obstetric and Gynecological Violence as Violence Against Women: Expanding the Concept Beyond Pregnancy and Childbirth' (2025) *Violence Against Women* 1.

Further, greater attention must be paid to people's intersecting needs across multiple mainstream service systems. Responses typically focus on people's individual needs as they relate to the particular service they are engaging with, rather than their intersecting needs. This can create service responses that are siloed and ultimately ineffective.

What gaps remain in addressing the needs of diverse communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

In addressing the needs of diverse communities, there is a need for less punitive and more culturally safe and appropriate responses, as well as alternative forms of justice that are victim-survivor focused and led. There is also a need to look at more appropriate ways to measure whether change is occurring.

Priority Area 2: Prevention and Early Intervention

What would make the biggest difference in preventing and ultimately ending violence?

We consider there are three main things that would make the biggest difference in preventing and ultimately ending violence. First, it is crucial that sexist, racist and other discriminatory attitudes and values held by all in the community are eliminated. This includes educating children from a young age about equality and respect for all. Second, and relatedly, the manosphere and radicalisation must be addressed. This is a significant online driver of gender discrimination and rigid masculinity. Third, poverty and other drivers of violence (such as substance abuse, other addictions and historical childhood trauma) must be addressed and, where relevant, eradicated.

How can existing efforts to prevent violence be strengthened or built upon at the individual, community, organisational, institutional and societal levels?

There is a need for more whole of community approaches that support bystander and community-level responses. See our [research](#) on 'A Whole of Community Approach to Addressing Domestic Violence in Division 9, Gold Coast'. This research aimed to create a whole of community model to address domestic and family violence that can be implemented in communities across Australia.

One of the neglected areas of research and intervention is the general occurrence of violence amongst males. Crime statistics consistently show high rates of violence occurring amongst men, particularly young men. Violence against women and children cannot be neatly separated from other occurrences of male violence in Australian society. This extends to how radicalisation of males – be it through politicalisation or misogyny – fuels male violence, including homophobia and racism. The occurrence of these forms of violence can be linked to all forms gender-based violence. Some occurrences of violence amongst men, be it in sport or justified through stereotypes, can become legitimised and normalised. While this is well known, strategies to address broader occurrences of violence amongst men need to be visible in prevention programs.

How can governments, communities, schools, workplaces, online platforms and others better support people to recognise and respond to harmful attitudes and behaviours?

It is crucial that governments invest more money in prevention programs, education about violence and gender discrimination, and support for victims. Important initiatives in workplace responses to sexual harassment and bullying as well as human resources policies such as domestic violence leave are also very important.⁶ Recognising the power of employers as agents of change to transform communities through workplace education and training on violence against women and children as well as responding to the key drivers of gender inequality, sexism, and discrimination

⁶ Sambath My et al, 'Persistent Issues and Effective Approaches to Addressing Work-Related Gendered Violence in Australia: A Scoping Review' (2026) 41(128) *Australian Feminist Studies* 258.

are critical to creating sustainable change. This includes approaches that support employees to take workplace training and education about how they behave both as an employee and as a parent, partner, friend, and community member.

Priority Area 3: Children and Young People in Their Own Right

What would make the biggest difference to improving safety, recovery and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people affected by this violence?

One of the things that would make the biggest difference to improving safety, recovery and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people affected by this violence is recognising that they are their own individuals – separate to the parent victim – who are also affected by violence. It is important that responses, particularly in relation to prevention, do not collapse children with adults. Trauma during childhood can have a lasting impact and this needs to be acknowledged and addressed in preventing violence against women and other forms of gender-based violence. This includes recognising the intersection between childhood trauma and well-being, including in relation to mental health and suicidality.⁷

Recognising that children are distinct from parent victims with their own experiences and needs, it is vital that we listen to children – particularly when they are children – about their experiences and what they say their justice and recovery needs are. We emphasise the importance of the National Plan's focus on elevating the voices of children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right.

Further, whole of family support should be offered and children should not be removed simply because the mother chooses to stay in a relationship with the perpetrator or, if the mother leaves, cannot find suitable housing. This often happens with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.⁸

How can governments, services, education settings, families, communities and others better recognise and respond to children and young people experiencing violence and harm?

As discussed above, governments, services, education settings, families, communities and others can better respond to children and young people experiencing violence and harm by listening to what they say their justice and recovery needs are. Further, there is a need to understand and respond to pathways that result from childhood trauma. These pathways can be in positive and negative directions, with internalising and externalising behaviours. Early intervention to address mental health impacts of experiencing violence and harm should be prioritised to address potential pathways towards further victimisation and/or use of violence. It is very clear that childhood trauma from abuse and violence can have long term detrimental effects on mental health. For both men and women, the biggest contributor to the burden of disease analysis for suicide and self-inflicted injuries in Australia was child abuse and neglect.⁹ This research highlights the need to address childhood trauma as early as possible as well as taking a life course approach to support for victim-survivors. It also points to the need for an intersectional approach to juvenile justice and gender-based violence.

⁷ Patrick O'Leary and Nick Gould, 'Men Who Were Sexually Abused in Childhood and Subsequent Suicidal Ideation: Community Comparison, Explanations and Practice Implications' (2009) 39(5) *British Journal of Social Work* 950.

⁸ Human Rights Watch, "All I Know Is I Want Them Home": Disproportionate Removal of Aboriginal Children from Families in Western Australia' (26 March 2026) <<https://www.hrw.org/report/2025/03/26/all-i-know-i-want-them-home/disproportionate-removal-aboriginal-children-families>>; Kylie Cripps and Daphne Habibis, *Improving Housing and Service Responses to Domestic and Family Violence for Indigenous Individuals and Families* (AHURI Final Report No 320, 2019).

⁹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 'Behavioural Risk Factor Burden for Suicide and Self-Inflicted Injuries' (Web Page, 2026) <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/risk-factors/illness-injury-burden-disease>>.

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?

Recognition of the intersection of child maltreatment and trauma and online harm for children and young people is critical to understanding their use of violence or involvement in harmful sexual behaviours. It is critical that responses to children and young people do not criminalise or categorise them in ways that stigmatise and set them on pathways known to have detrimental long-term trajectories towards violence, both as victims and perpetrators. A neglected area of work in juvenile justice is how offending can be linked to exposure to domestic violence and childhood maltreatment.¹⁰ Research shows that sexual offending can be linked to multiple and different types of maltreatment, household dysfunction, caregiver inconsistency and residential instability in childhood.¹¹

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?

The Second Action Plan needs to ensure actions are included that send strong messaging to children and young people that **any form of violence within relationships**, and **violence amongst boys and men**, is not acceptable. In particular, this includes violence that has been normalised, such as violence during sport or non-fatal strangulation during sex. Research shows that non-fatal strangulation is incredibly dangerous, even when used with consent, as the physical impacts of strangulation can impair a person's ability to withdraw consent.¹²

How can children and young people be meaningfully involved in shaping the policies, programs and services that affect them?

For children and young people to be meaningfully involved in shaping the policies, programs and services that affect them, it is crucial that children and young people be met where they're at and be provided with a range of ways for them to effectively engage, according to their own needs. In particular, consideration should be given to alternative and innovative approaches to engaging with children, including approaches using technology. This requires careful consideration of how children and young people can be engaged safely and ethically, while promoting their agency and choice.

Priority Area 4: People Who Use Violence

What would make the biggest difference in preventing and responding earlier to the use of violence?

There are several things that would make the biggest difference in preventing and responding earlier to the use of violence. Many of these are similar to those discussed above in relation to victim-survivors' safety, wellbeing, healing and recovery. Two of the responses that would make the biggest difference are building integrated systems of intervention and justice, and innovative, alternative and transformative service and system responses, rather than simply adapting current practices which maintain the status quo. For example, men's behavioural change programs are adapted instead of shifting the range of intervention modalities and justice alternatives. To address this gap, DVConnect and the Disrupting Violence Beacon co-developed the START pilot, a phone-based service providing

¹⁰ Catia G Malvaso et al, 'The Child Protection and Juvenile Justice Nexus in Australia: A Longitudinal Examination of the Relationship Between Maltreatment and Offending' (2017) 64 *Child Abuse and Neglect* 32.

¹¹ Danielle Harris et al, 'Exploring the Onset, Duration and Temporal Ordering of Adverse Childhood Experiences in Young People Adjudicated for Sexual Offences: A Longitudinal Qualitative Study (Report, July 2022).

¹² Queensland Law Reform Commission, 'Education, Accountability and Support: Reforming Queensland's Response to Non-Fatal Strangulation (Final Report, September 2025) 71-73. See Recommendation 1 (public education and training program about the risks and dangers of strangulation, including during sex).

clinical and case management to men using violence.¹³ Its main aim is to help reduce the gap in appropriate responses to men seeking short term support to address their use of violence by engaging with them when they are at a heightened state of motivation. The pilot also aims to engage men to build skills and a network of supports to address intersectional issues related to their use of violence.

Other responses that would also make a big difference are ensuring all responses are culturally safe and trauma-informed, improving the timing of interventions so that they occur as soon as possible after the first point of contact with services, encouraging voluntary participation, and considering introducing programs that allow for the perpetrator to leave the family home with supports in place. Further, addressing the housing needs to people using violence is crucial to ensure this does not contribute to the cycle of 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?

Research has shown that within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, involving Elders and respected community members can have an impact on changing the behaviour of people who use violence.¹⁴

Priority Area 5: System Integration and Workforce

What workforce capabilities, supports, or conditions are most needed to strengthen prevention, early intervention, response and recovery?

A workforce that understands and can effectively apply culturally appropriate, trauma-informed practices, and adequate service funding, are 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?

To improve collaboration, coordination and information sharing across services, systems and programs, an approach that recognises that workplace health and safety policies should include strategies to address psychological and emotional abuse in the workplace, and that recognise the connection between bullying, sexual harassment and discrimination in the workplace and domestic and family violence, could be effective.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have further enquiries about our submission.

Yours sincerely,

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Name]

[Redacted Title]

¹³ Disrupting Violence Beacon, *Evaluation of the START Pilot* (Final Report, 2026).

¹⁴ Elena Marchetti and Kathleen Daly, 'Indigenous Partner Violence, Indigenous Sentencing Courts and Pathways to Desistance' (2017) 23(12) *Violence Against Women* 1513.