



AustralAsian Centre
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS & HEALTH

07/08/2026

PROPOSAL

National Advisory Group on Dowry Abuse

A specialist advisory mechanism under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032

DECISION SOUGHT

That the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for Social Services, formally establish and champion a National Advisory Group on Dowry Abuse, with a direct reporting pathway to the Minister and a defined mandate to inform the Second Action Plan from 2027.

Why a national advisory group is needed

Dowry abuse is a form of gender-based, family and economic violence that may involve a partner, extended family members and transnational networks. It can intersect with coercive control, visa dependence, financial abuse, forced marriage, threats of abandonment or deportation, and the withholding of money, jewellery, gifts and other marriage-related property. These features cut across Commonwealth, state and territory systems and are not well captured by a single service or jurisdiction.

The National Plan expressly calls for an intersectional approach, culturally safe and accessible support, effective early intervention, coordinated systems and perpetrator accountability. Since 10 June 2025, the Family Law Act has also expressly included examples of dowry abuse within economic or financial abuse. The policy opportunity now is to convert recognition into nationally consistent practice, data and accountability.

A broad Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Advisory Council is now being established to advise the Minister on the National Plan. A specialist Dowry

Abuse Advisory Group would complement that body by resolving a tightly defined cross-system problem and supplying implementable recommendations for the Second Action Plan.

Proposed mandate

1. **Define and measure.** Develop a nationally consistent definition and minimum dataset for dowry abuse, including extended-family and transnational abuse.
2. **Close system gaps.** Identify failures across police, courts, family law, migration, health, settlement and specialist family-violence services, including perpetrator misidentification and systems abuse.
3. **Set national practice standards.** Recommend risk-screening, evidence, interpreter, referral, training and culturally safe service standards that can operate across jurisdictions.
4. **Drive accountability.** Recommend measurable outcomes, responsible agencies and annual public reporting, with a first report to the Minister within 12 months.

Governance and membership

Ministerial sponsorship should be explicit: appointment or endorsement by the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for Social Services; a Ministerial launch; six-monthly briefings; and a published Government response to the Group's final recommendations. The Group should be supported by DSS and linked formally to the broader DFSV Advisory Council and Second Action Plan process.

Membership (approximately 12–15) should combine victim-survivor/lived-experience expertise; multicultural women's organisations; specialist dowry-abuse expertise; First Nations/culturally safe practice expertise as appropriate; police; family law and family-violence law; migration law/Home Affairs; judiciary/court administration or independent justice expertise; health and mental health; researchers/data experts; and Commonwealth/state/territory policy representatives. Lived-experience and community members should be remunerated and supported to participate safely.

INVESTIGATION AGENDA

12 questions the Advisory Group must investigate

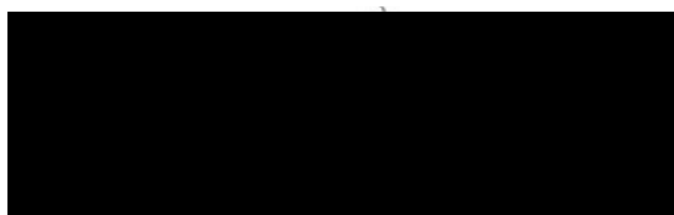
The Group should answer these questions with evidence, jurisdictional comparisons and costed, implementable recommendations.

5. Definition and scope — What nationally consistent definition of dowry abuse should be used across legislation, police, courts, health, migration and services, and how should it capture economic abuse, coercive control, extended-family involvement and transnational conduct?
6. Prevalence and data — What is the prevalence, pattern and harm of dowry abuse in Australia, which communities and visa cohorts face heightened risk, and what national minimum dataset and privacy safeguards are required to measure it reliably?
7. Prevention and early intervention — Which community-led, culturally safe prevention approaches can challenge gender inequality and dowry-related coercion without stigmatising cultural communities, and which early warning signs should trigger support before violence escalates?
8. Police response — Are police consistently identifying the predominant aggressor and recording dowry demands, retained property, visa threats and extended-family abuse; what changes to risk assessment, statements, interpreters, evidence collection and training are required?
9. Justice and systems abuse — How are intervention-order and other legal processes being used to continue post-separation coercive control, and what safeguards are needed against litigation abuse, repeated proceedings, delay and unequal access to legal representation?
10. Family law and property — Since the 2025 family-law reforms, are money, jewellery, gifts and property transferred in connection with marriage being identified, traced and appropriately considered; what mechanisms are needed for early disclosure, preservation and timely return where withholding is abusive?
11. Visa and migration abuse — How should Australia prevent threats involving sponsorship withdrawal, visa cancellation, deportation or transnational abandonment from trapping victim-survivors, and are safety-net, immigration and legal protections adequate across temporary visa categories?
12. Cross-border abuse — What practical arrangements are needed where perpetrators, relatives, threats, assets or evidence are overseas, including safe information-sharing and cooperation with relevant foreign authorities and services?
13. Children and post-separation control — How should courts and services identify the use of children, overseas-removal threats or parenting processes as tools of coercion while ensuring children receive independent, culturally responsive and trauma-informed support?

14. **Health and mental health** — Are trauma responses, language barriers or culturally shaped presentations being misread in ways that undermine credibility or safety, and what standards should govern trauma-informed assessment, expert evidence and referral?
15. **Integrated, culturally safe services** — Would named multicultural family-violence navigators improve coordination across police, courts, migration, housing, health and specialist services; what workforce, interpreter, privacy and referral standards are necessary?
16. **Outcomes and accountability** — What five-year targets should government adopt for safety, repeat victimisation, misidentification, interpreter access, legal representation, court delay, property recovery, visa security and recovery, and which agency should publish progress annually?

Explore the National minimum dataset to form a strong evidence base: what and how ?

17. **Person and context.** Age group, country of birth, preferred language/interpreter need, visa status/pathway, time in Australia, disability, children and relationship/separation status — collected only where necessary and with privacy safeguards.
18. **Dowry and abuse pattern.** Dowry demands before/after marriage; money, jewellery, gifts and property transferred, retained or recovered; economic abuse; coercive control; physical/sexual/psychological abuse; visa threats; extended-family involvement; transnational conduct; and post-separation abuse.
19. **Police and justice response.** Police reports and statement quality, interpreter provision, predominant-aggressor identification/misidentification and correction; protection orders; criminal/family-law proceedings; legal representation; court delay; financial disclosure; and property-recovery outcomes.
20. **Service access and recovery.** Referral completion and waiting times across family-violence, migration, legal, housing, health and mental-health services; visa and housing security; repeat victimisation; child safety; financial recovery; and victim-survivor experience of cultural safety.
21. **National reporting standard.** Use common definitions and a privacy-protective de-identified case identifier so pathways and outcomes can be followed across systems; publish disaggregated national and jurisdictional trends annually without identifying individuals or small communities.



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