



Submission in relation to

The Second Action Plan, National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032

31 July 2026

Engender Equality is Tasmania's statewide specialist family violence organisation.

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Acknowledgements

This Submission was prepared in Lutruwita/Tasmania, on stolen Palawa-Pakana land. Engender Equality acknowledges Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners of the land, water and air of Lutruwita/Tasmania. Engender Equality acknowledges that Aboriginal sovereignty was never ceded, and the continuing hurt caused by colonisation.

Engender Equality acknowledges the ongoing leadership role of Tasmanian Aboriginal community in addressing and preventing family violence.

Engender Equality acknowledges all people who have experienced family violence, and all forms of gender-based violence. As a specialist family violence service, the contributions in this discussion paper have been informed by the lived and living experiences and expertise of victim-survivors who we work alongside every day.

Introduction

Engender Equality welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032. Along with this submission, our colleagues have attended multiple consultation forums in person and online. We are hopeful that this dedicated consultative approach will be followed up with clear action and investment.

This submission aims to put forward recommendations and examples of scalable solutions from our own practice in Lutruwita/Tasmania. Engender works tirelessly across the spectrum of family violence practice and service delivery, often in partnership with other organisations and communities. We offer primary prevention education to communities, share our specialist family violence expertise with early intervention programs in generalist services, deliver family violence response services via place-based models, and innovate specialist therapeutic services for victim-survivors in the face of insurmountable demand for our support.

Engender is dedicated to the cause to end violence against women and children, and all forms of gender-based violence. We are eager to contribute our experience and learn from others on a national scale as part of future work under the Second Action Plan.

Recommendations

Priority Area 1 – Victim-Survivors

Recommendation 1 Adequately fund specialist family violence services to ensure all victim-survivors have a timely response.

Engender Equality urgently requires an increase in investment to meet a backlog of over 200 victim-survivors waiting for service, and support long-term demand management solutions via:

- **Additional one-off funding of \$1.5M.** This will cover 3 years of service provision to meet the needs of people currently on the wait list (3FTE in the South and 1FTE in North + North West)
- **Increased National Partnership Agreement – 500 Workers Initiative funding for additional 2.5FTE** to fund the Brief Intervention Program. This is a long-term, cost-effective solution to manage demand. Our modelling predicts that if we are resourced to provide BIP as an option for all new referrals, we can eliminate our wait list in 3 years.

Wait times for specialist services 3 years in Tasmania

Engender Equality is Tasmania's statewide provider of therapeutic services for victim-survivors recovering and healing from family violence, primarily delivered through medium- to long-term trauma-informed family violence counselling (up to 2 years). At present, Engender is managing a waitlist of approximately 200 victim-survivors waiting for this service in Southern Tasmania alone. We are currently estimating that for people joining our waitlist, they will need to wait for 3 years before a Family Violence Practitioner becomes available.

While our waitlist and times for services in the North and North West of Tasmania are less (12 months), research indicates that rates of family violence are higher in these areas, particularly in the North West. This suggests that the need in these areas is greater than what is represented on our waitlists. It also reflects the work that needs to be done so victim-survivors are able to access the specialist support that will improve their safety, reduce the impacts on children and prevent homicides.

Brief Intervention Program

In 2025, Engender used retained earnings to conduct and evaluate a 12-month trial of a Brief Intervention Program (BIP) in an effort to diversify our services to ensure victim-survivors had an option for a timely response.

BIP offered new Engender clients up to six therapeutic appointments using a 'Single Session Thinking' approach as an alternative to being placed on our waitlist for a longer-term counselling intervention.

Over the 12 months, the pilot was:

- Delivered by 1.2FTE staff
- Offered to 65% of new referrals to Engender, 55% of these clients chose to engage

- Delivered to 77 clients over 249 sessions and 1227 case coordination activities

Three clear trends emerged from the evaluation of the pilot:

1. Clients experienced high levels of improved safety and agency, and improved wellbeing
2. Most clients (75%) accessed 1-3 sessions
3. Approximately 50% of clients who completed BIP chose not to go on the medium- to long-term therapeutic counselling waitlist.

Our modelling suggests that if we can resource BIP to be available to all new referrals, we will be able to transition to a cost-effective and sustainable service delivery model.

Recommendation 2 Tailor specialist services to the diverse needs of victim-survivors with partnership approaches and place-based service delivery.

Engender Equality recommends increased investment and support for partnerships between specialist family violence services and child and family services, shelters, community organisations led by LGBTIQ+ people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, people with disabilities and migrant and refugee communities.

The LGBTIQ+ Family Violence Service

The LGBTIQ+ Family Violence Service is a strong example of the impact of investing in partnerships to meet the needs of marginalised communities. The Service is a partnership between Engender Equality and Working It Out, Tasmania's LGBTIQ+ support, education and advocacy organisation. Funded through the 500 Workers Initiative and delivered by a single statewide LGBTIQ+ Family Violence Practitioner (1.0 FTE), the service has significantly expanded its reach and impact over the past 12 months.

Since the previous reporting period, the number of LGBTIQ+ victim-survivors accessing the service has increased by 54%, while counselling sessions have increased by 25%. Demand for specialist support now exceeds the capacity of the current staffing model, resulting in the establishment of a waitlist. As of 30 June 2026, two clients were awaiting support, with an estimated wait time of two months.

The service is well positioned for further growth to meet increasing demand across Tasmania. An upcoming initiative will trial a drop-in support model at Working It Out for LGBTIQ+ people who have concerns about their relationships. This aims to reduce barriers to help-seeking, particularly for people who may not recognise their experiences as family violence due to the unique dynamics and misconceptions surrounding violence in LGBTIQ+ relationships.

There is also a significant and unmet need for specialist responses to family violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ people perpetrated by family members within their family of origin. With investment, LGBTIQ+ Family Violence Service could expand to provide services for this cohort of victim-survivors.

Hobart Women's Shelter place-based family violence counselling

Engender Equality's partnership with Hobart Women's Shelter is another strong example of a place-based service delivery model that supports access to specialist services for victim-survivors, and workforce capacity building for homelessness services.

Engender has been delivering place-based therapeutic services to women currently residing at and on the wait list for Hobart Women's Shelter, since 2024.

The Family Violence Practitioner is based at the HWS for 0.6FTE and at Engender for 0.2FTE. The Practitioner is employed and clinically supervised by Engender, ensuring specialist governance, risk management, and adherence to family violence best practice, while working alongside HWS staff in a collaborative, integrated way. This includes delivery of secondary consultations to HWS support staff to build their capacity to work with residents experiencing family violence.

This model could be scaled across other shelter sites, with a community of practice supporting implementation, shared learning and best practice.

Priority Area 2 – Prevention and early intervention

Recommendation 3 Invest in sustained partnerships between specialist family violence services and community settings to deliver evidence-informed prevention and early intervention initiatives.

Engender recommends investment in partnerships and collaborations between specialist family violence services and community settings to deliver evidence-informed primary prevention and early intervention initiatives and programs. This includes longer-term funding mechanisms that enable successful initiatives to transition from time-limited pilots to sustainable, embedded community programs.

We recommend investment in the following implementation-ready, evidence-informed initiatives:

Primary prevention

- Fund statewide delivery of *Where's Your Line?*, a community-based, values-focused program developed collaboratively by four Tasmanian women's services (Engender Equality, Hobart Women's Shelter, Women's Legal Service, and Women's Health Tasmania).
- Fund the LGBTIQ+ Family Violence Service, a partnership between Engender Equality and Working It Out, to contribute to primary prevention efforts that address the role of transphobia, transmisogyny and homophobia in gender-based violence.
- Recognise community education that supports reflection on values, gender equality, respect and relationships as a core component of violence prevention, addressing the drivers of violence against women.
- Provide ongoing funding to enable delivery beyond short-term grants and pilot projects.

Early intervention

- Support partnerships between early childhood education settings such as Child and Family Learning Centres and specialist family violence services to deliver evidence-informed programs that support parenting and aim to reduce re-victimisation such as *Shark Cage* and *Bringing Up Great Kids*.
- Provide opportunities for parents and caregivers to strengthen reflective parenting, understand the impact of family violence on children, and develop safe and respectful relationship practices before patterns of harm become entrenched.
- Position specialist family violence practitioners alongside community services so that families can access expertise early, in familiar and trusted settings.

Embedding specialist prevention in community settings

- Community settings provide opportunities to engage children, parents and caregivers before patterns of violence become entrenched.
- Partnerships between specialist family violence services and community settings strengthen opportunities for earlier identification, timely support and coordinated responses before violence escalates.
- Specialist family violence services bring expertise in the gendered drivers of violence, trauma, risk and safety that strengthens prevention and early intervention delivered within community settings.
- Community-based, values-focused education addresses the gendered drivers of violence while creating opportunities for reflection, respectful relationships and behaviour change.
- Embedding specialist-led initiatives within trusted community settings increases accessibility, reduces barriers to participation, and normalises conversations about family safety and respectful relationships.
- Long-term investment enables effective initiatives to become embedded community infrastructure rather than remaining reliant on short-term project funding.

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

Recommendation 4 Adequately fund specialist family violence services for children and young people

Engender Equality recommends increased investment in specialist family violence services for children and young people who have experienced or are currently experiencing violence. This includes funding specifically for young people who have experienced intimate partner violence.

Children and young people require dedicated, developmentally appropriate responses that recognise their own experiences of trauma and recovery. Children and youth services are experts in how to reach and engage children and young people. There is an opportunity under the Second Action Plan, to support collaborations and partnerships between children and

youth services and specialist family violence services, to ensure children, young people and their families are supported with the appropriate skills and approaches.

Recommendation 5 Require mandatory family violence training and professional development for educators, school staff and youth workers.

Engender recommends mandatory and ongoing training for educators, school wellbeing staff, early childhood professionals and youth workers on recognising and responding to family violence, coercive control, trauma and adolescent family violence.

The training should be designed and delivered by a specialist family violence service on a regular basis (e.g. bi-annually) to maintain knowledge and stay up to date with changing information.

Recommendation 6 Embed specialist family violence practitioners or liaison roles within nationally funded youth programs, such as Headspace.

Engender recommends embedding specialist family violence practitioners or liaisons within nationally funded youth programs such as Headspace. Access to a dedicated family violence youth specialist would strengthen risk assessment, safety planning, consultation and referral pathways while increasing the capacity of universal services to provide timely and appropriate responses.

Priority Area 4 – People who use violence

Recommendation 7 Require men's behaviour change programs to engage with victim-survivor specialist services.

Engender recommends that under the Second National Action Plan, nationally funded men's behaviour change programs are required to establish and maintain formal partnerships with independent specialist family violence services supporting victim-survivors as a core component of service delivery. Long-term investment should support collaborative practice models that prioritise victim-survivor safety, strengthen accountability through more robust assessment of sustained behaviour change, and strengthen accountable, integrated responses to men who use violence.

We recommend embedding family violence specialist expertise across responses to men who use violence through:

- Formal partnerships between nationally funded men's behaviour change programs and independent specialist family violence services supporting victim-survivors as a core requirement of service delivery.
- Safe and appropriate partner contact, delivered independently through specialist family violence services supporting victim-survivors, to inform ongoing risk assessment, safety planning and accountability.
- Structured information sharing and collaborative risk assessment that strengthens coordinated responses and enables timely responses to changes in risk.
- Collaborative practice that recognises independent specialist family violence services supporting victim-survivors bring expertise in coercive control, risk assessment, trauma and safety planning that complements men's behaviour change programs.
- Sustainable funding that embeds collaborative practice as a core component of responses to men who use violence, rather than relying on local relationships or time-limited projects.

Embedding specialist family violence expertise in responses to men who use violence

- Responses to men who use violence are strengthened when accountability is informed by multiple sources of information, rather than relying solely on self-report or program participation.
- Independent specialist family violence services supporting victim-survivors provide critical expertise in understanding patterns of coercive control, assessing risk and supporting victim-survivor safety, strengthening the effectiveness of men's behaviour change programs.
- Collaborative practice supports earlier identification of escalating risk and enables timely, coordinated responses that prioritise victim-survivor safety.
- Meaningful behaviour change should be assessed through multiple sources of information, with victim-survivor safety informing whether behavioural change is being experienced beyond program participation.
- Embedding independent specialist expertise within responses to men who use violence strengthens accountability while ensuring that victim-survivor safety remains central to assessing, responding to and reducing men's use of violence.
- Long-term investment enables collaborative practice to become embedded across service systems, supporting consistent, integrated responses rather than approaches that depend on local relationships or time-limited funding.

Priority Area 5 – Systems and workforce

Recommendation 8	Build workforce capability of generalist services through secondary consultations and external supervision delivered by specialist family violence services.
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Engender has experience delivering external clinical supervision and secondary consultations to other services to support the building of capacity of the broader workforce to respond to people affected by family violence.

External supervision provision to Home Base (Supporting Adolescent Boys Trial)

In 2025, Engender was consulted on the development of Home Base's *Supporting Adolescent Boys Trial* (SABT) program and now provides external supervision to the frontline workers. The SABT program is for adolescent boys who have experienced family violence perpetrated by a parent (most commonly a father) and who may be beginning to use violence towards family members, peers and intimate partner relationships. These young people should be recognised as victim-survivors in their own right, while being supported through interventions that balance trauma-informed care with accountability for their behaviour.

External supervision is delivered by Engender staff who are formally trained in clinical supervision. This arrangement supports Home Base workers to engage in critically reflective practice and develop trauma-informed family violence practice with adolescent boys and their families. This includes exploring gender, contemporary research on men, masculinities, and gender-based violence, recognising the ways gender norms, power, trauma, and socialisation can shape experiences of violence and the use of violence.

Priority Area 5 – Systems and workforce

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Closing remarks

Engender Equality welcomes the development of the Second Action Plan as a critical opportunity to move from commitment to implementation. The next phase of the National Plan must be ambitious, practical and properly resourced, with a clear focus on what will improve safety, access, healing and transparency for victim-survivors of family violence and gender-based violence.

Across this submission, Engender has outlined scalable examples from Lutruwita/Tasmania that demonstrate the value of investing in specialist family violence expertise, tailored responses for diverse communities, place-based partnerships, prevention and early intervention, children and young people in their own right, accountability for people who use violence, and workforce development. These approaches are already making a difference, but they require sustained investment to meet demand and become embedded as essential service system infrastructure.

The Second Action Plan should recognise that ending violence against women and children requires more than short-term initiatives. It requires long-term, coordinated and adequately funded responses that centre victim-survivor safety, uphold children and young people as rights-holders, strengthen community-based prevention, and ensure specialist services can respond before harm escalates.

Engender Equality looks forward to continuing to work with governments, services, communities and victim-survivors to support implementation of the Second Action Plan and to build a future where all women, children and communities can live free from violence.