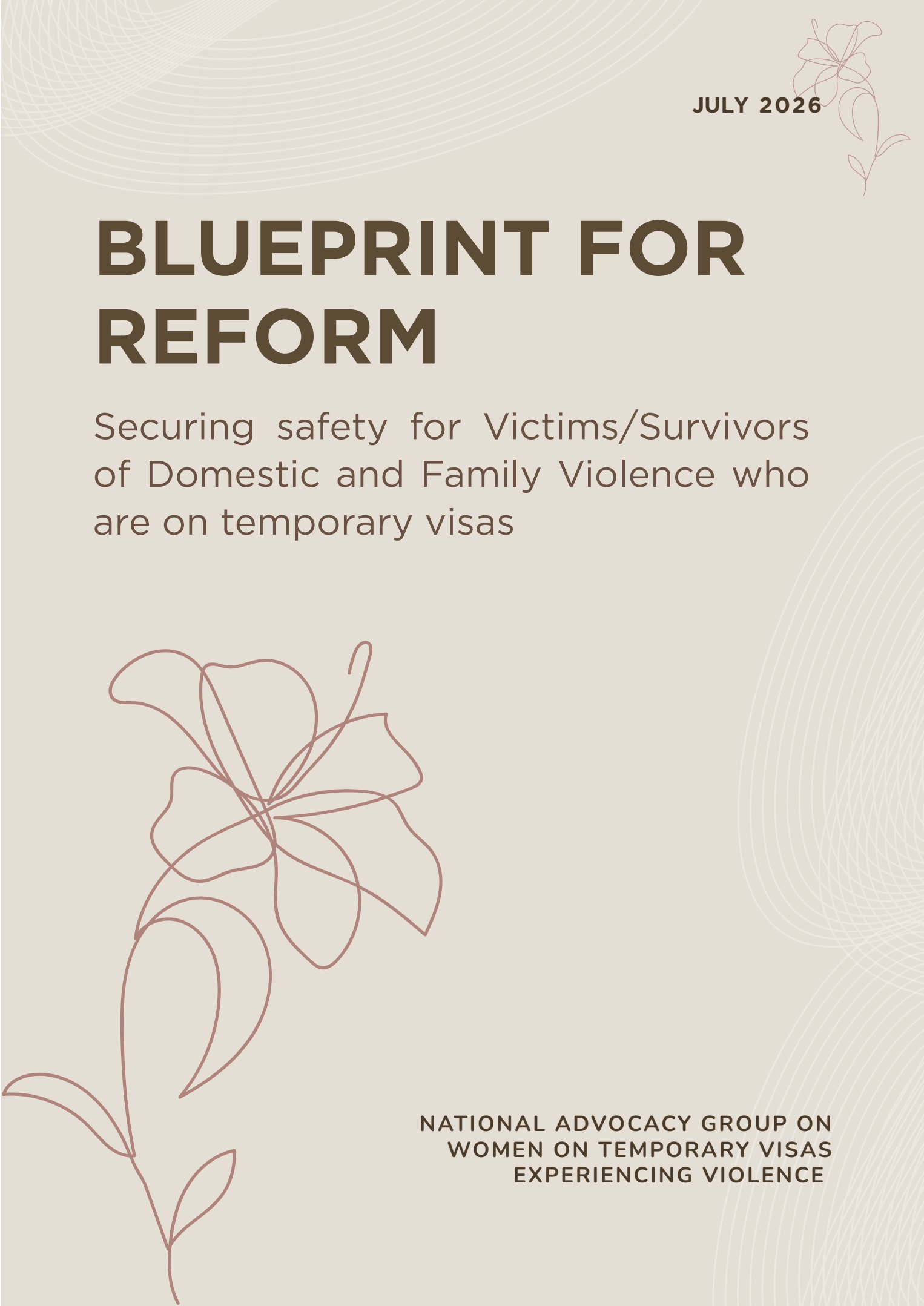




JULY 2026

# BLUEPRINT FOR REFORM

Securing safety for Victims/Survivors  
of Domestic and Family Violence who  
are on temporary visas



NATIONAL ADVOCACY GROUP ON  
WOMEN ON TEMPORARY VISAS  
EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE

**The Blueprint has been developed and endorsed by the National Advocacy Group on Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence (NAG), that consists of over 30 state and national peak bodies, service providers, organisations and individuals working to address violence against women across Australia.**

The group functions to collectively advocate for policy and law changes to support women on temporary visas experiencing violence and their children to be safe.

### **THE NATIONAL ADVOCACY GROUP:**

AustralAsian Centre for Human Rights and Health/Australian Multicultural Women's Alliance (AMWA)/Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights/ACT Women's Legal Centre/Anti-Slavery Australia/The Bangle Foundation/Dr Ana Borges/Central Australian Women's Legal Service/Domestic Violence NSW/Economic Justice Australia/Federation of Community Legal Centres (Victoria)Inc/Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils' of Australia/Immigration Advice and Rights Centre/Intouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence/Jesuit Refugee Service Australia/Melaleuca/Muslim Women Australia/North Queensland Women's Legal Service/Northern Community Legal Centre/Professor Manjula Datta O'Connor/Dr Samantha O'Donnell/Refugee and Immigration Legal Service (RAILS)/Refugee Legal/Dr Alexandra Ridgway/Safe Steps/Professor Marie Segrave/Settlement Services International/South-East Monash Legal Service/Tasmanian Refugee Legal Service/Tasmania Women's Legal Service/Top End Women's Legal Service/Dr Stefani Vasil/Women's Community Aid Association (Women's House)/Women's Health Matters/Women's Legal Services Australia/Women's Legal Service NSW/Women's Legal Service Queensland/Women's Legal Service Victoria/WESNET (Women's Services Network)/YWCA Canberra

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Land on which we undertake our work across this nation. We pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders – past and present – and acknowledge the important role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and ongoing leadership in responding to family violence.

# STATEMENT

**TEMPORARY VISA HOLDERS  
WHO EXPERIENCE  
DOMESTIC AND FAMILY  
VIOLENCE AND/OR SEXUAL  
VIOLENCE MUST HAVE  
APPROPRIATE AND  
IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO  
SAFETY AND JUSTICE.**

# PREFACE

This is the third Blueprint for Reform released by the National Advocacy Group for Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence. Our previous advocacy has led to important reforms including:

- Temporary visa holders included in the escaping violence program and having access to equal funds in this program
- Expanding the family violence provisions to apply to Prospective Marriage (subclass 300) visa holders
- Expanding the family violence provisions to apply to secondary applicants for permanent visas who have experienced family violence from the primary applicant.
- Broadening the kinds of professionals and organisations who can provide non-judicial evidence of family violence.
- Allowing applicants for the Provisional Partner (subclass 309) visa to apply for review, rather than only allowing the sponsoring partner to lodge a valid review application.
- Allowing for an exemption to the fee for a review application to the Administrative Review Tribunal for secondary applicants, in certain circumstances, where the Department of Home Affairs was satisfied that family violence had occurred.<sup>[1]</sup>
- Creation of the Domestic and Family Violence Support Section within the Department of Home Affairs.
- Improved and greater information on family violence and supports available on the Home Affairs website.
- Reforms to ImmiAccount processes, including the removal of visa applications from shared accounts where there has been a notification of family violence, represent an important, but still imperfect step towards enhancing victim/survivor safety.

This reform momentum must continue. It remains the case that many women on temporary visas who are experiencing family violence are denied access to safety and justice. This group of women, and their children, remain at significant risk of harm. This requires urgent attention.

This blueprint provides an expert view on the next steps required to uphold the commitment of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 that “all people deserve to live safely and free from fear of violence”, by ensuring that the barriers to temporary visa holders accessing safety are removed.

[1] *Migration Regulations 1994*, reg 4.13 (2A).

# KEY ASKS

01

Amend the migration system so that all women and children on temporary visas who experience domestic, family and sexual violence can access safety.

02

Address economic insecurity and financial barriers to enable access to pathways to safety for temporary visa holders experiencing violence.

03

Ensure equal access to emergency, refuge and long-term housing regardless of visa status.

04

Invest in long-term and sustainable funding for legal and specialist services that support women on temporary visa who are experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence.

05

Create a formal intergovernmental collaboration to advance action to protect temporary visa holders.



# PILLAR ONE:

**Improve the migration system so that all women and children on temporary visas who experience domestic, family and sexual violence can access safety.**

## **What is putting women and children at risk?**

The migration framework acts as a barrier to temporary migrant women accessing safety and continues to put them at risk. This is most true for women who do not have access to the family violence provisions. This requires urgent reform.

## **HOW CAN WE IMPROVE WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SAFETY AND JUSTICE?**

### **RECOMMENDATION 1.1.**

Introduce a new visa for victims/survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence who do not have access to the family violence provisions.

**The Australian Government should introduce a new substantive temporary visa to protect victims/survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) for a period of three years. This visa would provide protection to a variety of people, including those who:**

- Hold temporary visas because of their relationship with a person using violence. A visa holder is at risk of their visa being refused or cancelled when the visa of the person using violence has their visa refused or cancelled.<sup>[2]</sup>
- Hold temporary visas granted based on being a member of the family unit of the perpetrator of DFSV, and are consequently at risk of their visa being cancelled if they leave the relationship with the perpetrator.
- Are unable to comply with the conditions of their visa due to the DFSV, for example student visa holders being unable to participate in classes due to DFSV or Skilled Work Regional (subclass 491) holders having to move from regional areas for their safety and to access DFSV support services.
- Are at risk of or have been exit trafficked out of Australia but have no viable visa option to return or stay in Australia.
- Cannot leave Australia with their child/ren and have ongoing Family Court proceedings, but have no viable visa option to stay lawfully in Australia to pursue these proceedings.
- Are ineligible for the family violence provisions because they have not entered on a Partner visa and/or are not included on a permanent visa application. This can affect victims/survivors on visitor visas, who are excluded from these protections; perpetrators often exploit this by using the promise of future sponsorship to coerce victims/survivors to remain in the relationship.

[2] *Migration Act 1958*, ss 116, 140.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.1. cont.**

**This temporary visa would allow victims/survivors of DFSV who cannot rely on the family violence provisions to have visa certainty so they can prioritise their safety and make decisions about their next steps.**

This temporary visa should:

- Be valid for a period of three years, to allow necessary time for victims/survivors to seek help and safety without having to reapply for another visa within a short time, including often lengthy family court proceedings.
- Have no application cost and no health assessment requirement because many victims/survivors will be unable to afford these expenses.
- Be a substantive visa so that it does not inhibit other visa pathways that may be available to the victim/survivor.
- Be listed as a prescribed visa under reg 2.12 of the Migration Regulations 1994, so that victims/survivors are not barred from applying under s 48 of the Migration Act 1958.
- Have the possibility of extension where needed for the victim/survivor to address ongoing matters related to the DFSV, such as lengthy Family Court proceedings.
- Not have restrictions on work or study.
- Allow victims/survivors to access Medicare and social security payments.

**This visa should have a pathway to a permanent visa, to create safety and certainty for those who, for example, have significant ties to Australia or would face stigma, discrimination or other forms of hardship in their home country.**

There is precedent for many elements of this recommendation. In 2024, the Australian Government introduced the Workplace Justice Visa, to allow temporary visa holders to extend their stay in Australia to pursue a workplace exploitation claim.<sup>[3]</sup> This visa is a substantive visa, has no application fee and holders may be eligible to apply for a subsequent Workplace Justice Visa if their workplace exploitation matter is ongoing. Departmental policy and Ministerial Instruments for other temporary visas include exceptions for health assessment requirements.

**This recommendation is supported by the Final Report of the Senate Inquiry into the practice of dowry and the incidence of dowry abuse in Australia (2019).**

At paragraph 5.31, the Committee recognised that temporary visa holders experiencing family violence face heightened vulnerability due to their migration status and recommended consideration of a dedicated visa pathway to protect victims/survivors who are not eligible to rely on existing family violence provisions. The Senate acknowledged that perpetrators weaponise migration dependency as a form of coercive control, and that the absence of an independent visa option can force victims/survivors to remain in abusive relationships. Recommendation 1.1 gives effect to this recognised gap.

[3] <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/temporary-activity-408/australian-government-endorsed-events-workplace-justice-pilot>

**RECOMMENDATION 1.2**

Amend the family violence provisions and improve departmental policies on the application of the provisions to better respond to the realities of DFSV.

**While much progress has been made regarding the application of the family violence provisions, significant gaps remain. The consequence is that many victims/survivors are unable to rely on the family violence provisions, despite having a pending application for a kind of permanent visa that has access to the family violence provisions.**

**These victims/survivors include:**

- Partners of Australian citizens who travel to Australia on visitor visas to spend time together prior to lodging an offshore partner visa;
- Dependent children who experience DFSV, including child sexual abuse, from a parent who is their sponsor for a Child visa;
- Dependent children who experience DFSV, including child sexual abuse, from a parent who is the primary applicant for a visa and there is no secondary applicant who is the spouse or de facto partner of the primary applicant, or that secondary applicant does not end the relationship with the primary applicant;
- Elderly parents who are primary applicants and experience family violence perpetrated by their adult child who has sponsored them for a Parent visa;
- Victims/survivors who primarily experience family violence perpetrated by a relative or relatives of their sponsoring partner or the primary applicant, where such conduct causes significant fear of consequences if they try to leave their sponsoring partner or the primary applicant;
- Victims/survivors who cannot meet the definition of being the “spouse” of the perpetrator because they experienced forced marriage or were deceived about the nature of the ceremony or the marital status of the perpetrator.

**To address these gaps, the Australian Government should:**

- (a)** Broaden the definition of family violence to cover DFSV that occurs outside spouse or de facto relationships, such as child sexual abuse and elder abuse.
- (b)** Expand access to the family violence provisions to apply to primary applicants for all family visas, including child visas and parent visas.
- (c)** Expand access to the family violence provisions to secondary applicants who are dependent children of the primary applicant, without the requirement that a spouse or de facto partner relationship between another secondary applicant and the primary applicant must have ceased.
- (d)** Broaden the definition of family violence to include conduct by a relative of the sponsoring partner or primary applicant for the permanent visa.
- (e)** Create a waiver of the requirement for a marriage to be valid under the Migration Act 1958 where there is sufficient evidence that the person experienced forced marriage or were deceived about the nature of the ceremony or the marital status of the perpetrator. This evidence could be judicial or non-judicial.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.2 cont.**

Additionally, while the Australian Government has expanded access to the family violence provisions to secondary applicants for many permanent visas, the current approach of linking the outcome to the primary applicant enables ongoing control by the primary applicant.

For example, if the primary applicant may choose to withdraw the application before a decision is made. It also perpetuates uncertainty as the secondary applicants will often not know whether there is a risk the primary applicant's visa could be refused for reasons not related to family violence, resulting in the refusal of the secondary applicant's visa as well. This uncertainty inhibits victims/survivors ability to safety plan for themselves and their children.

**Accordingly, the Australian Government should:**

**a)** Amend the family violence provisions to allow secondary applicants who have experienced family violence from the primary applicant to be granted a visa regardless of the outcome of the primary applicant's application; and

**b)** Amend the Department of Home Affairs' policy and procedures to:

- Determine whether there is family violence prior to assessing for a 'de facto' or 'spouse' relationship. If a delegate of the department is satisfied that there has been family violence, the Departmental policy should set out that the delegate should generally accept that the family violence occurred within a genuine spouse or de facto relationship without further and separate assessment of the relationship.
- Where the Department does still require a separate assessment of whether the relationship was genuine, this assessment must be conducted in a trauma-informed and culturally appropriate manner and with regard to the context of family violence, given that forms of family violence, including financial abuse and controlling behaviours, can limit the evidence that an applicant can provide, and that victims/survivors have often lost access to documents after leaving a relationship.
- Ensure that assessment of claims of family violence based on non-judicial evidence are considered in a trauma-informed manner, and caution delegates against requiring victims/survivors to provide further evidence, such as text messages, statements from family and friends, where they have already provided evidence from professional and organisations that is consistent with family violence.
- Conduct an internal review of the Independent Expert (IE) to identify the current practices of the IE process and those which may re-traumatise survivors of violence. If the review finds that the IE process may still be beneficial practice to applicants, then create transparent guidelines on how the IE's assessment should be conducted. These guidelines should ensure that interviews are conducted in a trauma-informed manner and that a lawyer/ migration agent is permitted to attend with the applicant.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.2 cont.**

- Allow legal representatives to be present during IE interviews with the victim/survivor, to increase transparency and allow consideration of whether the IE has correctly considered the definition of family violence under the Migration Regulations 1994.
- Amend the financial dependency requirements for children aged 18 and over where they, or their parent, are relying on the family violence provisions. Young adult children in families affected by domestic and family violence are often required to work or rely on charities following separation. Temporary employment or emergency financial support should not be treated as evidence of independence. The Migration Regulations should allow flexible assessment of dependency in circumstances involving family violence.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.3:**

Develop a viable permanent visa pathway for parents of Australian citizen children.

A significant gap in Australia's migration system that is exploited by Australian citizen and permanent resident perpetrators of DFSV, is the absence of a viable option for victims/survivors of DFSV to remain in Australia with their Australian citizen or permanent resident children without visa sponsorship by the perpetrator. This allows perpetrators to use the promise of sponsorship for a Partner visa to coerce the victim/survivor to remain in the relationship. If the victim/survivor chooses to leave the relationship, they must often pursue lengthy Family Court proceedings to try to obtain orders to leave Australia with their child. Such orders are not consistently granted by the Family Court.

This gap is critical because it enables migration dependency to operate as a form of coercive control. Victims/survivors are frequently forced to choose between their own safety and remaining in Australia with their child. Insecure visa status can prevent access to essential supports such as public housing and child-care subsidies, increasing financial instability and the risk of homelessness. In some cases, mothers return to violent relationships to avoid separation from their children. Where Family Court orders are granted permitting departure from Australia, children experience significant disruption and upheaval. The current framework fails to adequately prioritise the best interests of Australian citizen children and does not recognise them as victims/survivors in their own right.

**This situation has direct, negative impacts on Australian children, resulting from:**

- Inability to access public housing due to the migration status of their parent;
- Inability to access child-care subsidies and related supports;
- Exposure to ongoing violence where a parent returns to the abusive partner; and
- Significant upheaval where children are required to leave Australia following Family Court proceedings.

**The Australian Government should:**

**(a)** introduce a permanent visa pathway for non-citizens who have minor or dependent Australian citizen or permanent resident children.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.4:**

Amend legislation and policy at the Administrative Review Tribunal to create better access for victim/survivors and facilitate trauma-informed procedures within the Tribunal.

**The Australian Government should:**

- Make amendments so Tribunal fees are only become payable by review applicants who have experienced family violence, or those relying on the family violence provisions if the Tribunal affirms the decision under review. A form, similar to that currently used for fee reduction, should be utilised to provide for deferred payment or waiver of the fee in these circumstances.
- Review the current fee reduction for FV (\$1500) and amend to ensure a lower fee should be available for victims/survivors of DFV.
- Amend the Migration Act 1958 to provide the ART with discretion to allow valid lodgement of an application for review beyond the prescribed time period on grounds of domestic, family and sexual violence.
- Create priority for ART review of applications under the family violence provisions because it is often difficult for victims/survivors to recall and recount details of trauma that occurred several years after the fact and waiting times for Tribunal hearings can be around two to three years. Decisions should be made on the papers where a positive decision can be made.
- Requests that Tribunal hearings be conducted by female members be accommodated as a matter of course.
- Provide training to Tribunal members on the nature and impacts of DFSV, for example to challenge misconceptions that genuine victims/survivors should have left the relationship, or credibility determinations based on demeanour of victims/survivors or delays in disclosing DFSV. This training should be supported by published Practice Directions on the conduct of review matters where the review applicant has experienced DFSV.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.5:**

Improvements to the Departmental policy and procedure regarding Protection visa determinations involving DFSV.

**Currently policy guidance from Department of Home Affairs is limited and needs to provide guidance on trauma-informed practice to decision makers assessing protection claims that relate to DFSV and ensure that guidelines on assessing claims are, in fact, followed by delegates.**

Currently protection visa applicants raising DFSV-related claims are often required to demonstrate not only that domestic and family violence has occurred, but that they will continue to experience such violence in the future. This approach is inconsistent with the evidentiary framework applied under the family violence provisions in Partner visa contexts, where applicants are only required to establish that family violence has occurred.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.5 cont.**

Requiring evidence of ongoing or future threats of harm is not trauma-informed and may place applicants at risk by implicitly pressuring continued contact with perpetrators in order to substantiate future harm.

**The Australian government should:**

**(a)** Support the Department of Home Affairs to establish a specialist sub-team within Protection visa processing units to assess DFSV-related claims, ensuring that issues of safety, coercive control and evidentiary burden are considered in a trauma-informed and consistent manner. This includes:

- Where there is a judicial finding that DFSV has occurred, such evidence should be treated as conclusive evidence that the violence occurred, without need to further interrogate the victim/survivor about these incidents. Where no evidence from a court is available, letters/statutory declarations provided by health professionals should be given substantial weight.
- When considering evidence of DFSV, decision makers should be directed to consider whether the complex nature of the violence experienced by the victim/survivor or other related circumstances made it difficult for the victim/survivor to articulate their claims at an earlier stage in the visa application process and/or to submit comprehensive or judicially determined evidence of the DFSV they suffered.
- All applicant claims should be considered at the initial assessment phase. All adult applicants should be offered an interview with a case officer on their own. The interviewing officer should be of the same sex as the applicant, as per existing Departmental policy.
- Decision makers should be directed to give greater weight to foreign states' inability to provide effective protection from DFSV.
- DFSV should be recognised as an acceptable reason for delay in lodging a protection visa application for the purposes of applications for work rights on a Bridging visa E.
- Refusals should not be automatic if a victim/survivor does not attend a biometrics appointment and DFV is disclosed in the application - may be due to FV. The victim/survivor should be given another opportunity to attend before refusal.
- Time limits for responding to requests for information should be more readily extended and applicants should be offered more flexibility when requesting documents, given that such documents, like passports and identification, may be withheld by the perpetrator.
- People seeking asylum affected by DFSV should be given visa processing priority.
- Assessment of family violence evidence must be practical and consistent, addressing the current inconsistency between subclass 866 and Division 1.5 (family violence provisions) assessments.
- Specialist case officers should be appointed within Protection visa processing teams to handle DFSV-related claims.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.6**

Update Departmental policies and procedures to prevent ongoing systems abuses by perpetrators.

**The Australian government should ensure the Department of Home Affairs:**

- (a)** Update policies to prevent abuse of systems by perpetrators. This should include the policies in relation to processing visa applications and visa cancellations should reviewed to ensure that where the Department has been notified that the applicant has experienced domestic, family or sexual violence — including through reliance on the family violence provisions, a protection visa claim, judicial findings, or other credible evidence — allegations made by the person using violence are treated with caution and that further information should be sought in a trauma-informed manner. Awareness that mis-identification is a major issue for migrant and refugee women should also be factored into consideration of visa applications under consideration.
- (b)** Amend visa application forms to require a different contact email and/or phone number (or alternative of emergency contact who is not the primary applicant where an individual does not have a phone number or email) for each adult applicant, to allow the Department of Home Affairs to communicate directly with secondary applicants regarding their matter, for example, where the primary applicant has withdrawn their application or provided adverse information relating to the secondary applicant.
- (c)** Create a procedure delegates to contact an applicant directly to seek confirmation regarding their circumstances and whether they intend to withdraw their application, when a request to withdraw has been made.
- (d)** Investigate abuse of ImmiAccount and other Departmental systems by perpetrators, as part of broader consultations conducted by the Australian Government on technological facilitated abuse through governmental systems.
- (e)** Enable applicants to communicate with the Department through alternative secure channels, including email, where use of ImmiAccount is unsafe, inaccessible, or compromised when the Department has been notified of domestic, family or sexual violence. The Department should develop clear procedures to verify identity while ensuring safety and confidentiality.
- (f)** Amend the Character policy to recognise that temporary visa holders (TVHs) who experience domestic, family and sexual violence are at heightened risk of misidentification as the primary aggressor due to power imbalances, language barriers, visa dependency, cultural factors, and systemic bias. The policy should direct decision-makers, when assessing character concerns under the Migration Act 1958, to give substantial weight to credible evidence that an applicant has been misidentified as a perpetrator of family violence. Where there is evidence of misidentification – including police records, intervention order histories, family law findings, or professional assessments – delegates should be required to consider the broader context of family violence and coercive control before relying on such material to refuse or cancel a visa.

**RECOMMENDATION 1.7**

Waive the requirement for a residential address to lodge a valid visa application.

**The Australian Government should:**

**(a)** create an exception to the requirement that a residential address is required to lodge a valid visa application, where the applicant is in crisis or temporary accommodation or otherwise homeless. An email address or PO Box should be accepted as sufficient in these circumstances.

**CASE STUDY: NO ACCESS TO FAMILY VIOLENCE PROVISIONS**

Meena\* is a 72-year-old Bridging visa holder who has been in Australia for eight years awaiting the outcome of her Parent (subclass 804) visa application. She was sponsored by her adult daughter, an Australian citizen, and has lived in her daughter's home during this period. Her other adult children also live in Australia but are unable to take on full-time care due to their own financial and family responsibilities. Meena has lived in Australia for eight years and now receives ongoing medical treatment here. She no longer has stable housing or family support in her country of origin.

In recent years, Meena's health has declined and she has become increasingly dependent on her daughter for care. Her daughter began expressing frustration about the burden of supporting her. This escalated into financial and emotional abuse. Her daughter took control of Meena's overseas pension payments, restricted her phone access and threatened to withdraw sponsorship if Meena did not comply with her demands. She repeatedly told Meena that after waiting eight years, she could be "sent back" at any time.

Police attended the home following a dispute. Due to language barriers and fear, Meena did not disclose the abuse and was initially recorded as contributing to the incident. She now fears this could affect her visa outcome.

Meena wants to leave the abusive environment, but she cannot access the family violence provisions. As the primary applicant for a Parent visa, she is not eligible to rely on those provisions, which apply only to secondary applicants in limited visa categories. If her daughter withdraws sponsorship or her visa is refused, Meena has no independent pathway to remain in Australia. After eight years in the country and ongoing medical treatment here, she feels trapped. Leaving the abuse may mean losing her chance of permanent residence.

*\*Not her real name.*



# PILLAR TWO: ECONOMIC SECURITY

## What is putting women and children at risk?

There are a range of economic barriers for women on temporary visas that can be easily rectified. Significant numbers of women on temporary visas cannot access social security payments through Centrelink, as well as Medicare in some instances. Currently only a small number of temporary visa categories may be eligible to access Special Benefit. Across Australia access to education and childcare differ. Temporary visa holders, and their children, who are seeking to live lives free from violence deserve immediate access to the full suite of economic support that can provide a foundation to rebuild their lives.

## HOW CAN WE IMPROVE WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SAFETY AND JUSTICE?

### **RECOMMENDATION 2.1.** Eligibility and access to social security

#### **The Australian Government should:**

- (a)** Exempt women who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence and have been granted permanent residency from social security waiting periods (that is, Centrelink's newly arrived resident's waiting period [NARWP]). This would be similar to existing waiting period exemptions that are in place for people recognised as refugees and should extend to their children and other impacted family members.
- (b)** Review eligibility opportunity for holders of the New Zealand special category visa for social security to ensure access for all.
- (c)** Expand eligibility for Special Benefit to include people who are on all types of temporary visas and have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence. The rates of Special Benefit should be increased to make it liveable.
- (d)** Review current settings for social service payments: ensure that where the recognised primary carer is a temporary visa holder that the payment is going directly to them (currently many non-primary care parents who are Australian citizens are automatically the recipient of these payments)
- (e)** review the Leaving Violence Program payment settings and consider a cash option for migrant women where necessary.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.2.** Eligibility and access to Medicare**The Australian Government should:**

- (a)** Exempt women on temporary visas and women seeking asylum who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence from meeting residency requirements so that they can fully access Centrelink and Medicare while their visa is being processed.
- (b)** Ensure that women utilising the family violence provisions, women applying for protection on domestic, family and sexual violence grounds and other women on temporary visas affected by domestic, family and sexual violence have access to Medicare.
- (c)** Enable access to Medicare access to roll over, rather than requiring repeated applications which can disrupt access to care and medical treatments mid-treatment cycles.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.3** Access to subsidised childcare**The Australian Government should:**

- (a)** Create a nationally consistent safety net to enable temporary visa holders access to subsidised childcare

**RECOMMENDATION 2.3** Access to education**The Australian Government should:**

- (a)** Ensure that women on temporary visas experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence and their dependents are eligible to access all tiers of education from childcare services, to schools, vocational training and tertiary education regardless of where they are residing in Australia.
- (b)** remove or waive international student fees for:
  - women who have experienced violence and are not permanent residents or Australian citizens who have experienced violence; and
  - children who are not permanent residents or Australian citizens whose primary parent has experienced violence.



# PILLAR THREE:

## SAFE AND SECURE HOUSING

### WHAT IS PUTTING WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN AT RISK?

The centrality of stable accommodation for the safety of survivors of DFSV is undeniable. The threat of homelessness is a well-documented reality for survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence - most women that end up homeless have experienced DFSV. Women often will only leave an abusive relationship once they are certain they have a place to go and inversely women will return to abusive relationships if they do not have alternative accommodation.

The issue is worse for women on temporary visas due to the prevalent lack of access to social security payments, the time-consuming nature of visa applications for this group and the historical delays on visa processing. State based laws around eligibility to community and government housing also mean temporary migrants have no access to the most important affordable housing schemes due to their visa.

### HOW CAN WE IMPROVE WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SAFETY AND JUSTICE?

#### RECOMMENDATION 3.1

Expand access to public and social housing.

#### State and Territory Governments should:

- (a)** Expand the eligibility for and provide equal access without any migration restriction to temporary accommodation, crisis accommodation, rental assistance, public housing and Safe at Home Programs to ensure that women on temporary visas experiencing violence and their dependents can have a safe place to live and a safe home.
- (b)** Respond to the barriers women on temporary visas face in terms of accessing private rentals. Women on temporary visas are often excluded from private rentals, or not competitive, because of lack of access to income/social security and previous rental history.

#### The Australian Government should:

- (c)** Ensure temporary visa holders can access Rent Assistance through the social security system (see also Pillar Two).

**RECOMMENDATION 3.2**

Enable access to emergency housing and women's refuges.

**More refuges and emergency housing are needed nationwide considering the demand. Women's refuges will often identify that supporting temporary migrant women is resource intensive as staff must support the women to navigate many legal and financial barriers on top of the usual challenges of escaping DFSV. This leads to denial of access to temporary visa holders in some refuges because they do not have the resourcing to support this group.**

Temporary migrants may be discriminated against when looking for support services and supported accommodation based on their many complex systemic needs. They often take longer to exit a refuge due to lack of housing options, particularly where a temporary visa holder is without income due to no access to Centrelink/ no work rights and/or only limited work opportunities. Delays in visa processing directly impact service provision and increase the likelihood of migrant women staying in refuges for a long period of time.

**The Australian Government should:**

- (a)** Ensure temporary visa holders have their stay in emergency accommodation and women's shelters guaranteed by the expansion of the number of women's shelters and emergency accommodation and the development of specific programs inside women shelters for migrants on temporary visas so they can access safety on the short term despite the financial barriers (see Pillar Two access to social security).
- (b)** Acknowledge women's complex needs by ensuring women's shelter workers should receive specific training to support those women and children.
- (c)** Resourcing emergency accommodation and women's shelters to cater for larger families too with the possibility of collaborating or integrated services (ie access to migrant lawyers, culturally appropriated support).
- (d)** Invest in culturally appropriate accommodation and services. It demands training, collaboration, appropriate referrals and funding for material adaptation sometimes (i.e., culturally appropriate kitchen utensils)
- (e)** Recognise the challenge of exit pathways for temporary visa holders and invest to address this: women's shelters are specialised services that should not have families staying there just because they do not have a place to go to. People should be able to access the services they need and women staying longer than needed in women shelters is bad for the women that remain in a supported accommodation with limited freedom when that is not what they need any longer, and occupying the space that would be ideal for another family.



### RECOMMENDATION 3.3 Long term housing

**The Australian Government should:**

- (a)** Invest in housing that is accessible to temporary visa holders without an income. If women stay on temporary visas for a long time, they do not have exit pathways out of women's refuges and overstay at women's refuges and emergency accommodation. Temporary migrant women require housing that can accommodate them after they exit emergency services, such as transition houses and long term accommodation purposefully developed.
- (b)** Coordinate with State and Territory governments to make sure temporary visa holders that experienced DFSV can access housing, through specific programs and access to all social security (See Pillar Five).
- (c)** Ensure government and community properties cater for larger families and accept applications from temporary migrants escaping violence, understanding the ongoing barriers placed for temporary visa holders escaping DFSV. integrated services (ie access to lawyers, culturally appropriated support).
- (d)** Invest in culturally appropriate accommodation and services. It demands training, collaboration, appropriate referrals and funding for material adaptation sometimes (i.e., culturally appropriate kitchen utensils)

### RECOMMENDATION 3.4 Ability to remain in the home

**The Australian Government should:**

- (a)** Identify and address barriers for women on temporary visas to maintain private leases instead of resident partners, to support access to support inventions that enable women to remain in the property while the person/s using violence are removed.



# PILLAR FOUR:

**Long-term and sustainable funding for legal and specialist services that support women on temporary visas who are experiencing or are at risk of domestic, family and sexual violence**

## **What is putting women and children at risk?**

Lack of access to essential services due to a lack of funding impacts the support women experiencing domestic and family violence receive. Meeting the complex legal and support needs of women who hold temporary visas is a specialised area. It is essential that service provision and funding is maintained at an appropriate level to meet the demand, and that funding and efforts are targeted appropriately.

## **HOW CAN WE IMPROVE WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SAFETY AND JUSTICE?**

All women experiencing family violence must have access to high-quality independent legal advice and full casework assistance, regardless of visa status.

It is essential that service provision and funding is maintained at an appropriate level to meet the demand, and that funding and efforts are targeted appropriately, with long term commitments to enable security of service delivery.

**RECOMMENDATION 4.1.** Ensure long term and sustainable funding to specialist legal services supporting women on temporary visas who are experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence.

### **The Australian Government should:**

**(a)** Provide comprehensive funding to specialist legal services advising and assisting women experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence. The funding should be provided to legal services that assist with immigration matters, and to services that assist with intersecting legal issues including in the areas of, domestic and family violence, family law, child protection, child support, criminal law, workplace and other civil law matters. The funding will provide women on temporary visas with independent access to justice.

**“All women experiencing family violence must have access to high-quality legal advice and full casework assistance, regardless of visa status.”**

**RECOMMENDATION 4.2.** Increase dedicated long term funding to specialist organisations supporting women on temporary visas who are experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence.

**The Australian Government and state and territory governments should:**

**(a)** Ensure that women on temporary visas experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence and their dependents are given equal access, without any restrictions relating to migration status, to specialist organisations who are fully trained and resourced to provide support and meet women's accommodation, counselling, health, case management and domestic, family and sexual violence education needs.

**RECOMMENDATION 4.3** National roll out of flexible support packages

**The Australian Government should:**

**(a)** Roll out flexible support packages nationally. Flexible support packages - a program by the Victorian government to provide a new individualised approach to respond to victims/survivors experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence - must be made available to all women experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence and their dependants irrespective of visa status. Flexible support packages must be allocated in addition to social security provided by Centrelink, and in addition to the one-off payment provided through the leaving violence payment.

**RECOMMENDATION 4.4** Access to free interpreting and translating services

**The Australian Government and state and territory governments should:**

**(a)** Provide free access to telephone interpreting services to all services supporting women experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence.

**(b)** Provide free-to-client accredited translation and interpreting services to legal services, health services and non-governmental organisations that are not covered under existing national funding.

**(c)** Ensure that all professional interpreters are required to undertake family violence education training as part of their professional accreditation.

**RECOMMENDATION 4.5**

Provide family violence information to all visa applicants

**The Australian Government and state and territory governments should:**

**(a)** Ensure that family violence information is provided to all visa applicants and sponsors - regardless of the visa subclass - in their first language both digitally and in person (for example, through health services and educational providers). This information should be provided in a variety of forms (for example as a credit card sized document with the passenger declaration card) in different languages, including pictures/visuals, and provided at different stages throughout a person's migration journey. It should include information for referral and services to seek help.

**(b)** Regularly review family violence information needs to be regularly reviewed for its content and quality of translation in collaboration with specialist services.

**RECOMMENDATION 4.6** Mandatory training and professional development**The Australian Government and state and territory governments should:**

**(a)** Ensure workers in all relevant agencies who come in contact with women on temporary visas who have experienced DFSV - including the Department of Home Affairs, Services Australia (including Centrelink and Medicare), housing agencies, as well as non-government organisations - are subject to mandatory training and ongoing professional development provided directly by specialist family violence services, that includes:

- the nature and dynamics of domestic, family and sexual violence including complex forms of violence (dowry abuse, forced marriage, female genital mutilation or cutting, trafficking and servitude), financial abuse, reproductive coercion, coercive control and technology-based abuse,
- intersections between domestic, family and sexual violence, immigration issues and family law for women on temporary visas,
- marriage practices across different cultures,
- human trafficking and slavery indicators,
- how to respond and make referrals in a culturally safe and trauma-informed way with women on temporary visas experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence, and
- gender-based claims for protection.

**(b)** Embed family violence training in training for lawyers and other relevant professionals, including social workers and migration agents, at the initial stages and also via continuing professional development.



# PILLAR FIVE:

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL COLLABORATION

### WHAT IS PUTTING WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN AT RISK?

**The National Advocacy Group on Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence (NAG) has consistently highlighted the urgent need for systemic reform to ensure safety and justice for women on temporary visas experiencing domestic, family, and sexual violence.**

While the existing Blueprint for Reform provides a robust framework for migration, social security, housing, and specialist services, we have identified a critical gap: the lack of cohesive, accountable, and collaborative action across state, territory and commonwealth jurisdictions. We propose mechanisms to ensure that policy, legislative, and service delivery reforms are implemented consistently and effectively across jurisdictions.

Casework experience and research highlight a persistent lack of cohesion between federal, state, and territory governments, as well as between departments within individual governments, which unnecessarily convolute system navigation for victims/survivors. This fragmentation consequently leads to inconsistent policy implementation, missed opportunities for timely intervention, gaps in service delivery, and poor access to justice and safety for victims/survivors on temporary visas.

### HOW CAN WE IMPROVE WOMEN'S AND CHILDREN'S ACCESS TO SAFETY AND JUSTICE?

#### RECOMMENDATION 5.1

Establish an Intergovernmental Committee on temporary visas and DSFV

#### The Australian Government should:

**(a)** Formalise an Intergovernmental Committee on temporary visas and family violence comprising representatives from federal, state, and territory governments, as well as key departments, alongside expert stakeholders (including representatives from the National Advocacy Group and across lived experience) that actions the following:

- Establish clear mechanisms for intergovernmental collaboration and accountability.
- Ensure that reforms are implemented uniformly across all jurisdictions.
- Reduce bureaucratic barriers and streamline access to services for women on temporary visas.

**RECOMMENDATION 5.1 cont.**

Establish an Intergovernmental Committee on temporary visas and DSFV

- Embed rigorous data collection and reporting to monitor progress and drive continuous improvement.
- Establish a dedicated task force comprising representatives from federal, state, and territory governments, as well as key departments.
- Include NAG representatives to ensure lived experience and advocacy perspectives are central to decision-making.
- Coordinate policy and legislative reforms, oversee implementation, and address emerging issues.
- Mandate the collection of data on visa status for all victims/survivors accessing services & use data to identify gaps, inform policy, and track progress.
- Ensure transparency with regular public reporting.
- Engage with community organisations, service providers, and victims/survivors.

# TAKE ACTION WITH US TODAY

NATIONAL ADVOCACY GROUP ON  
WOMEN ON TEMPORARY VISAS  
EXPERIENCING VIOLENCE

Get in touch with us to learn more:

