

National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032

Second Action Plan

FSU Submission July 2026

Finance Sector Union

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National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–
2032. Second Action Plan.

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Background

The Finance Sector Union (FSU) is a registered industrial organisation under the Fair Work (Registered Organisations) Act 2009. The FSU represents members in the banking, finance and insurance industries (finance sector) in Australia. The finance sector consists of approximately 724,900 workers with women making up approximately 52% of the total number of workers.¹

Finance workers include bankers, insurance workers, credit and loans officers, claims managers and assessors, financial planners and analysts, investment managers. FSU members are also technology workers, administrators, call centre operators and work in a large variety of jobs such as marketing, fraud investigations and cyber security in all of Australia's largest finance companies.

This submission responds to the six broad questions included in the online survey provided by the department to assist with the consultation process.

What actions can governments, workplaces, industries, schools, families and individuals take to stop violence before it starts?

Prevention is the key to ending violence against women and children.

Australians spend approximately a third of their adult life at work, so workplaces have a significant influence on culture, expectations and behaviour. This means they have an important obligation and opportunity to support the prevention of violence against women and children through the delivery of appropriate education.

Workplaces are required by law to provide safe and healthy environments. Training modules such as “safe and respectful workplaces” have been developed to ensure healthy and safe relationships are at the centre of our workplaces.

Healthy and safe relationships cannot be built in a society where inequality is normalised at work. The finance industry has a stubbornly high gender pay gap of almost 22% (of total remuneration)², which, among other things, is driven by vertical segmentation of the workforce. The finance industry should be leading by example in the provision of workplace-based education about the drivers of gender inequality, the importance of eliminating harassment and disrespect, and balancing power. It is important for workplaces to provide “on the job education” to encourage curiosity and challenge

¹ [FSO Workforce Platform - Future Skills Organisation](#) [accessed 29 July 2026]

² [Industry Data Explorer | WGEA Gender Equality Data](#) [accessed 29 July 2026]

attitudes that allow violence and control to take root. Addressing inequality and harmful attitudes within workplaces should be considered a form of primary prevention.

We know that workplaces *can* provide effective education on issues such as sexual harassment. For example, in 2022, the Federal Government introduced a “positive duty” on employers to eliminate sexual harassment at work. The FSU surveyed finance workers in 2023 to understand the impact of this positive duty. Results showed that finance workers did not have a good understanding of the types of unlawful behaviours that constituted sexual harassment.

The FSU then held a roundtable discussion with the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, the CEO of Safe Work Australia and some of Australia’s largest finance employers to discuss the findings and the implementation of the “positive duty”. A follow-up survey two years later showed a significant improvement in workers’ understanding of unlawful behaviours³. This example demonstrates the important role that unions, working alongside employers in workplaces, can have in educating workers.

This clearly demonstrates that the solution is to provide incentives that support workplace-based training on family, domestic and sexual violence, gendered violence, trauma-informed responses, psychosocial hazards and safe referral pathways for union delegates, Health and Safety Representatives (HSRs), managers and workers. The government should investigate funding state and territory Trades and Labour Councils to deliver that training. Union delegates and HSRs are often trusted first points of contact for workers experiencing violence, and they must be properly equipped to support workers safely, confidentially and respectfully.

Recommendation 1

That the Second Action Plan include a dedicated stream, developed in consultation with unions, that recognises workplaces as essential sites for supporting victim-survivor safety, preventing further harm, and ensuring work does not compound the impacts of family, domestic and sexual violence.

Recommendation 2

That unions be included and recognised as formal partners in the development, implementation, training, monitoring and evaluation of workplace-related actions under the Second Action Plan.

Recommendation 3

That the Australian Government supports workplace-based training for union delegates, HSRs, managers and workers on family, domestic and sexual violence, gendered violence, trauma-informed responses, psychological hazards and safe referral pathways. This includes considerations to fund state and territory Trades and Labour Councils to deliver that training.

³ [One-too-many-Sexual-Harassment-Survey-Report-2024.pdf](#) and [Sexual-Harassment-Survey-Report-March-2026-Approved.pdf](#) [accessed 29 July 2026]

Recommendation 4

That workplace family, domestic and sexual violence policies and procedures be developed through genuine consultation with workers, unions, delegates and HSRs, rather than imposed by employers without workers' voices.

How can services and supports work better for people who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, family, domestic or sexual violence?

Services and supports are only effective when they are accessible, confidential, simple to navigate and widely understood. For victim-survivors, seeking support can involve arranging safe accommodation, attending court, accessing counselling, replacing documents, caring for children, changing work arrangements and rebuilding financial independence. These steps take time, money and practical support.

The union movement, including the FSU, has fought tirelessly for workplace conditions and protections that reduce unnecessary barriers for victim-survivors seeking safety. The introduction of 10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) was an important step towards recognising family, domestic and sexual violence as a workplace issue. However, further improvements are needed to ensure all workers can access this leave when they need it most. Most of the larger employers in the finance industry provide 20 days of paid leave, with some not limiting the amount of paid leave they will provide where their employees require time away from work due to the impact of family and domestic violence.

The Australian Government should follow this example and strengthen paid family and domestic violence leave by reviewing evidentiary requirements, strengthening confidentiality protections, expanding the reasons for which the leave can be accessed, and increasing the amount of leave available to workers.

Flexible working arrangements are also essential to many victim-survivors' ability to remain connected to their workplace, stay in paid employment and maintain their safety. Flexible work is not simply a matter of convenience. For many workers experiencing violence, it can be the difference between remaining employed and being forced out of work altogether.

The right to request flexible working arrangements under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) must be strengthened by making flexibility more accessible – including by removing thresholds and barriers – to workers experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence, caring responsibilities, reproductive health needs and other circumstances affecting safety and wellbeing.

The Australian Government must do more to ensure workers understand their rights to access paid family and domestic violence leave and flexible working arrangements. Too many workers are unaware of the supports available, meaning legal entitlements can remain out of reach. Services and workplace supports work better when workers know their rights, can access them safely, and are protected from retaliation, stigma or loss of employment for doing so.

Short-term gender equality projects (*Advancing Gender Equality in Gender Segregated Industries grant program*) are currently funded by the Australian Government across the nation, which include elements designed to help workers and workplaces understand, expand upon, and access their legal rights. However, these projects are currently limited to gender segregated industries and completely disregard industries that are gender-balanced, such as the finance industry.

The finance industry is vertically segmented and has entire sections that are both male-dominated (investments and wealth) and female-dominated (retail banking). Gender-balanced industries like these should be included in any future funding arrangements. The short-term nature of this funding also limits this work. Increasing funding and the funding term will support both the breadth and impact of this important work.

Recommendation 5

That the Australian Government review and strengthen paid family and domestic violence leave in the National Employment Standards, including by considering reduced evidentiary burdens, stronger confidentiality protections, expanded reasons for accessing the leave, and an increased quantum of leave.

Recommendation 6

That the Australian Government strengthen the right to request flexible working arrangements under the *Fair Work Act 2009* by making flexibility more accessible – including by removing thresholds and barriers – to workers experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence, caring responsibilities, reproductive health needs and other circumstances affecting safety and wellbeing.

Recommendation 7

That workers accessing family and domestic violence leave, flexible work, safety planning or related workplace supports be protected from adverse action, discrimination, loss of shifts, disciplinary action or career detriment.

Recommendation 8

That the Australian Government increase the funding term and expand the breadth of the funding of the *Advancing Gender Equality in Gender Segregated Industries grant program* to cover gender-balanced industries, with a focus on industries that are vertically segmented.

How can communities and services best support children and young people to stay safe from violence?

Children and young people must be recognised as victim-survivors in their own right, with distinct experiences, needs and rights. Communities and services can best support them by ensuring the workers who respond to family, domestic and sexual violence are properly trained, resourced and supported to identify risks early and respond safely.

Union members are police, firefighters and ambulance workers, all of whom are often first responders to incidents of family, domestic and sexual violence. They are doctors, nurses and allied health professionals who provide treatment and care. They are teachers, early childhood educators, public sector workers, housing workers and community service workers who support children, young people and families through crisis and recovery. These workers must have access to trauma-informed training, safe staffing levels, specialist support and clear referral pathways so they can respond appropriately when children and young people are experiencing or at risk of violence.

The Australian Government must also recognise that supporting victim-survivors in the workplace supports children and young people too. Strengthening access to paid family and domestic violence leave, flexible working arrangements, secure work and confidentiality protections can help parents and carers take the practical steps required to protect themselves and their children, including attending court, relocating, accessing counselling, changing schools or childcare arrangements, and rebuilding safety.

What more can be done across the community to promote healthy, safe relationships and strengthen accountability for people who use violence?

Workplaces have a significant influence on culture, expectations and behaviour, and have an important role to play in the prevention of family, domestic and sexual violence.

Healthy and safe relationships cannot be built in a society where inequality is normalised at work. When gender inequality, harassment, disrespect and unequal power are tolerated in working life, attitudes that allow violence and control to take root elsewhere are reinforced. Addressing inequality at work is therefore a form of primary prevention. Fair pay, secure work, respectful workplace cultures, safe reporting pathways, gender equality and genuine accountability all help challenge the conditions that enable violence, while modelling the respect, autonomy and equality that healthy relationships require.

The Australian Government must address the economic conditions that make it harder for victim-survivors to leave violence, including insecure work, low wages, unpredictable rostering, gender pay inequality, limited access to early childhood education and care, and inadequate retirement savings.

The Second Action Plan should expressly recognise family, domestic and sexual violence as a workplace issue, an economic security issue, and a work health and safety issue. It should include a dedicated workplace prevention and response stream, developed in consultation with unions, workers, specialist FDV services, employers, work health and safety bodies and victim-survivors.

The Australian Government should also work with Safe Work Australia to strengthen national guidance, model WHS laws and codes of practice dealing with psychological hazards, gendered violence, sexual harassment, third-party violence, stalking, technology-facilitated abuse and other FDV-related risks where they intersect with work.

To encourage action in this space from employers, the Australian Government must leverage its procurement, grants and funding powers to ensure public money supports organisations that advance gender equality, prevents gendered violence, addresses the gender pay gap, provides secure work, and maintains safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces.

Finally, the Australian Government should support workplace-based training for union delegates, HSRs, managers and workers on family, domestic and sexual violence, gendered violence, trauma-informed responses, psychosocial hazards and safe referral pathways.

Recommendation 9

That the Australian Government, in consultation with workers and their unions, work with Safe Work Australia to strengthen national guidance, model WHS laws and codes of practice dealing with psychological hazards, gendered violence, sexual harassment, third-party violence, stalking, technology-facilitated abuse and other FDV-related risks where they intersect with work.

Recommendation 10

That the Australian Government takes a “whole of government approach” to address the economic conditions that make it harder for victim-survivors to leave violence. This includes making changes that address insecure work, low wages, unpredictable rostering, gender pay inequality, limited access to early childhood education and care, and inadequate retirement savings.

Recommendation 11

That the Australian Government leverages its procurement, grants and funding powers to ensure public money supports organisations that advance gender equality, prevents gendered violence, addresses the gender pay gap, provides secure work, and maintains safe, respectful and inclusive workplaces.

What would make the biggest difference in helping people and families to recover and heal after being affected by family, domestic and sexual violence?

Everybody has the right to feel safe, respected and loved in their relationships. No one should live in fear. Leaving violence is one of the bravest things a victim-survivor can do, but it is also a process that can take time, planning, money and support. Work should never be a barrier to a person seeking safety.

The biggest difference governments can make is to give victim-survivors real options. Recovery and healing require more than crisis support. Victim-survivors may need time to relocate, attend court, access counselling, support children, replace documents, rebuild financial security and re-establish a sense of safety and stability.

Workplace flexibility is essential to this process. Flexible working arrangements can help victim-survivors maintain their connection to work, remain in paid employment and rebuild routine after violence. Therefore, the Australian Government should strengthen the right to request flexible working arrangements under the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) by making flexibility more accessible – and by removing thresholds and barriers – to workers experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence, caring responsibilities, reproductive health needs and other circumstances affecting safety and wellbeing.

Paid family and domestic violence leave must also be safeguarded and strengthened. The Australian Government should review the *Fair Work Act 2009* (Cth) to ensure that paid family and domestic violence leave is accessible in practice, including by reducing evidentiary burdens, strengthening confidentiality protections, expanding the reasons for which the leave can be accessed, and increasing the amount of leave available.

The Australian Government must pursue reforms that support women's economic independence, including:

- Ensuring universal access to affordable early childhood education and care
- Addressing the limitations in the government-funded paid parental leave scheme – including by increasing the leave entitlement, removing the administrative complications to accessing the leave, and making superannuation payable on employer paid parental leave
- Introducing reproductive health leave
- Ensuring stronger rights to secure and predictable work
- Introducing measures to reduce gender segregation and undervaluation in feminised industries.

Supporting victim-survivors in their workplaces can have a tangible impact on their ability to seek safety, recover and heal. Secure work, paid leave, flexibility and confidentiality protections help ensure victim-survivors are not forced to choose between their safety and their income.

Recommendation 12

That the Second Action Plan include action to address the economic conditions that make it harder for victim-survivors to leave violence, including insecure work, low wages, unpredictable rostering, gender pay inequity, poor access to early childhood education and care, and inadequate retirement savings.

What makes it easier for people to access support or services related to family, domestic or sexual violence?

People are more likely to access support when they know it exists, trust that it is safe, and can use it without fear of stigma, retaliation or loss of employment. Concerningly, many workers are still unaware of their rights to access paid family and domestic violence leave, flexible working arrangements, and safe workplace supports. Many are also unaware of their employer's obligation to eliminate or manage psychosocial hazards where those risks intersect with work.

Education is essential. Union delegates, health and safety representatives, managers, and employers must understand the supports available to victim-survivors, workers' legal rights, and the obligations placed on workplaces to respond safely and appropriately. This includes training on family, domestic and sexual violence, gendered violence, trauma-informed responses, psychosocial hazards, confidentiality and safe referral pathways.

Health and safety representatives and union delegates are often aware of workplace risks before managers or employers. This knowledge is invaluable to prevent harm before it occurs, particularly where workplace systems may leave victim-survivors vulnerable to violence, harassment, stalking, surveillance or other forms of abuse by perpetrators.

Employers are required to take proactive steps to identify and address risks before harm occurs. These requirements arise from the "positive duty" in the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) and work health and safety legislation. Employers, however, commonly fail to take these proactive steps, and allow risks to continue or result in injury or fatality. With enforcement almost exclusively vested in poorly equipped safety inspectorates, employer contraventions go unpunished and deterrence from future contravention is not achieved.

The solution is to ensure that the legal standing to pursue enforcement and remediate contraventions of legal obligations is vested with those with the highest possible stake in workplace safety and culture – unions, workers and the families of deceased workers. These groups should also have stronger rights to hold non-compliant employers to account where they fail to meet their legal duties.

Victim-survivors must also be protected from adverse action when they access support. No worker should lose shifts, face disciplinary action, be treated as difficult, or suffer career detriment because they have accessed their rights and entitlements.

Summary of recommendations

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