

Georges River Council's Feedback on the *Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*

Priority Area 1: Victim-survivors

Georges River Council plays an important role in supporting victim-survivors of domestic and family violence through community education and awareness initiatives, community safety programs, advocacy, local partnerships, grant funding and capacity-building support for community organisations. While community organisations are the primary providers of domestic and family violence services in Georges River, Council helps strengthen the broader support system for victim-survivors by connecting community members with information, increasing awareness of available support pathways, bringing stakeholders together, identifying emerging issues, and advocating for local needs and service gaps.

To guide this work, Council has developed a Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan (DFV Action Plan) focused on primary prevention, early intervention, crisis response and advocacy. The DFV Action Plan (Appendix A) builds on existing initiatives including the Community Safety Education Program, community education activities, local partnerships and interagency collaboration. Through community education and awareness initiatives, Council seeks to reinforce that domestic and family violence can occur in any suburb and any household, helping to normalise conversations about violence and reduce stigma. By increasing visibility of the issue and available support services, Council aims to help people recognise abusive behaviours, understand available support pathways and seek assistance earlier.

In our community, access to culturally responsive services is particularly important due to the high proportion of residents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including people with limited English proficiency. Consultation undertaken as part of Council's DFV Action Plan identified ongoing gaps in access to interpreters, bilingual support and culturally appropriate services. These gaps create ongoing barriers to seeking help and engaging with support services. Where requested, Council works with community organisations to connect services with language support, resources and local networks to improve accessibility for victim-survivors.

Council identifies that one of the most significant opportunities for improvement is stronger coordination across all levels of government. More regular forums involving federal, state and local government, together with specialist services, would help councils deliver responses that are coordinated, purposeful and aligned within a broader system response. Improved coordination would also support clearer delineation of roles and responsibilities. Local government is often the closest level of government to the community, and its relationships, local partnerships and understanding of community context can be better leveraged to support a more integrated response.

Priority Area 2: Prevention and early intervention

Council recognises that place-based prevention initiatives and strong partnerships between governments, schools, and community organisations are critical to creating safer communities and strengthening early intervention outcomes. Council's experience is that prevention works best when it is sustained, locally delivered and supported by strong partnerships. Effective prevention also

requires recognition of the intersections between domestic and family violence and broader social issues, including alcohol and other drug use, financial insecurity and homelessness.

Council contributes to prevention and early intervention through community education, engagement and advocacy initiatives, including the Community Safety Education Program and the annual NO Domestic Violence Walk. These initiatives provide opportunities to raise awareness of domestic and family violence, promote respectful relationships and connect people with support pathways. Council also recognises the value of community-based education and awareness activities that are delivered through trusted local settings and in-language where appropriate.

While initiatives such as the NO Domestic Violence Walk provide valuable opportunities to engage young people on the drivers of violence and healthy relationships, Council's experience is that one-off activities are most effective when complemented by ongoing education. Respectful relationships education delivered through schools is one of the most promising approaches to prevention. Programs embedded within the curriculum and supported by ongoing funding are more likely to achieve long-term behavioural and cultural change than standalone events. Similarly, engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse communities is most effective when delivered through trusted local networks, community spaces and culturally appropriate approaches.

Local governments would benefit from stronger and more consistent partnerships with NSW Police, NSW Health, the Department of Education and specialist domestic and family violence services. Council has found that engagement from key agencies can vary depending on organisational priorities, capacity and resources. A more coordinated and sustained commitment across sectors would strengthen local prevention efforts, improve community engagement and help ensure consistent messaging and support pathways are available throughout the community.

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

Georges River Council recognises that children and young people are victim-survivors in their own right and that their safety, wellbeing and recovery should be prioritised across all systems responding to domestic and family violence. This includes ensuring that the best interests of children are consistently prioritised in family law and within child protection systems. It also includes strengthening protections from emerging harms such as some online content, technology-facilitated abuse and unrestricted online access to age-inappropriate material.

As a Child Safe Organisation, Council is committed to creating safe environments for children and young people through its Child Safe Framework, Child Safe Code of Conduct, and Triage team. Council also supports primary prevention through school and youth engagement initiatives that promote respectful relationships and community safety.

Council is an active participant in a range of local interagency groups and community networks that focus on the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. These forums provide opportunities for government agencies, community organisations and service providers to share information about emerging issues, identify service gaps, coordinate local responses and strengthen referral pathways. However, participation is often dependent on organisational capacity and resources, meaning there may be opportunities to better engage organisations that support children and young people but are not currently connected into these networks.

Council also delivers a range of youth-focused initiatives throughout the year that increase awareness of available services and supports and provide opportunities for children and young people to have a voice in issues that affect them. These initiatives are informed by youth participation and co-design approaches and include the Georges River Youth Festival, which promotes connection to local services and community participation, and National Child Protection



Week activities that encourage conversations about personal safety, protective behaviours and child wellbeing.

Through Council's involvement in local networks, particularly the St George Domestic Violence Committee, we regularly hear about the challenges faced by children and young people affected by domestic and family violence. There is a need for systems responding to family violence to consistently prioritise the safety, wellbeing and best interests of children and young people and recognise their experiences when decisions are being made.

More effective communication and coordination between all levels of government, education settings, specialist services and community organisations would strengthen responses to children and young people experiencing violence or harm and help ensure they are connected to appropriate supports as early as possible. Stronger inclusion of local government within governance, planning and funding arrangements would support more effective local implementation. The Second Action Plan should also continue to respond to emerging harms affecting young people, including technology-facilitated abuse, harmful online content, and violence within peer and dating relationships.

Priority Area 4: People who use violence

Georges River Council's role in this area has traditionally focused on prevention and early intervention. However, Council has been exploring opportunities to contribute more directly through community-based prevention initiatives that support the early identification of harmful behaviours, promote healthy relationships, and engage settings where violence prevention messages can have the greatest impact.

In 2025, Council developed a grant proposal that sought to leverage local sporting networks to build awareness of healthy relationships, strengthen early identification and response pathways, and explore the role sporting clubs can play in preventing violence. While the project was unsuccessful in securing funding, it received strong support from local sporting organisations, demonstrating the willingness of community institutions to contribute to violence prevention efforts. Council has also used initiatives such as the annual NO Domestic Violence Walk to engage young people in conversations about respectful relationships, gender equality and healthy behaviours, including through partnerships with organisations such as Top Blokes.

Council recognises that Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) accredited Men's Behaviour Change Programs (MBCPs) are an effective intervention for people who use violence. Entry into these programs involves a thorough intake and assessment process undertaken by trained MBCP facilitators to ensure participants are ready to engage in a group setting. These programs prioritise victim-survivor safety by providing support to victim-survivors affected by the participant's behaviour, while placing accountability for violence firmly on the person using violence. Across the domestic, family and sexual violence sector, MBCPs are widely recognised as an important mechanism for supporting behaviour change and helping people who use violence, who are predominantly men, take responsibility for their actions and make different choices. However, these programs remain scarce and often operate at limited capacity. In addition, the accreditation process through the DCJ can be lengthy. Greater investment in and availability of MBCPs would increase access to effective interventions and strengthen responses to people who use violence.

Council also recognises the increasing impact of systems abuse, where legal, administrative or institutional processes are used to continue patterns of control, harassment and harm after separation or disclosure of violence. In addition, domestic and family violence does not occur in isolation and is often linked with other complex issues, including gambling, alcohol and other drug misuse, financial stress and housing instability. These interconnected factors can increase vulnerability, create additional barriers to seeking support, and complicate recovery for victim-



survivors. Prevention efforts should therefore take a holistic approach that recognises these intersecting issues, supports earlier intervention and behaviour change, and contributes to safer communities.

Priority Area 5: System Integration and Workforce

Georges River Council's experience is that effective responses to domestic and family violence rely on strong coordination, accessible data and a well-supported service system. Local governments, specialist services and community organisations are often working towards the same outcomes but do not always have access to the same information, resources or opportunities to collaborate. Strengthening coordination across sectors would support a more integrated and effective system response.

The recent development of a NSW Domestic Violence Death Review Team website has improved public access to domestic violence death review findings. However, there remains an opportunity for a nationally consistent approach to data collection and reporting. A federal government-funded tracker and interactive dashboard for women and children killed by domestic and family violence, alongside more accessible local-level data, would strengthen prevention efforts, support evidence-based planning and help governments and communities better understand the impact of domestic and family violence across Australia.

Through consultation undertaken as part of Council's DFV Action Plan, local service providers, community organisations, NSW Police and NSW Health identified a number of ongoing system and workforce challenges. These included limited access to early intervention and prevention programs, a lack of bystander training, insufficient culturally appropriate services, restricted availability of coordinated case management and wrap-around supports, increasing demand on services, long waitlists and workforce capacity pressures. Stakeholders also identified ongoing shortages of crisis accommodation, social housing, legal support and counselling services for victim-survivors.

These findings highlight the importance of continued investment in both specialist services and the broader workforce that supports prevention, early intervention and recovery. Greater support for community organisations, improved coordination between services, and mechanisms that strengthen information sharing and collaboration would help address identified service gaps and improve outcomes for victim-survivors. For example, practical resources, toolkits and evidence-based messaging that can be adapted locally would help reinforce shared understandings of healthy relationships, respectful behaviours and accountability, while ensuring communities receive consistent information regardless of where they engage with services and supports.

Georges River Council is committed to addressing locally identified gaps through the actions outlined in its DFV Action Plan and through ongoing collaboration with government agencies, specialist services and community organisations.



Appendix A. Georges River Council's Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan 2025

Initiative	Action	Rationale	Primary Prevention	Early Intervention	Crisis Response	Advocacy
Short-Term (Within 12 Months)						
Collaboration and Partnerships	Strengthen the relationship between Council and DFV service providers in the GRC area.	Improve coordination, identify service gaps, and enhance support for victim-survivors.	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Investigate opportunities to collaborate on the development of educational and awareness-raising resources.	Increase community understanding and engagement with DFV prevention.	✓	✓		
	Seek out current educational programming run by DFV organisations that can be supported by Council resourcing (e.g. funding, venues, promotion).	Amplify survivor voices and support advocacy efforts.	✓	✓		✓
DFV Webpage on the GRC Website	Consult with local DFV organisations and service providers to explore Council's role in supporting access to their services via the Council website.	Provide an avenue for service providers to share messaging with the community.	✓	✓		✓
	Use insights from consultation to guide updates to the existing DFV webpage.	Create a central, accessible hub of information and support.	✓	✓		
	Implement a "quick exit" button and improve navigation for users in crisis.	Ensure the safety and discretion of users accessing DFV information online.			✓	
	Promote existing translated resources.	Remove language barriers and ensure equitable access to support.	✓	✓		



Initiative	Action	Rationale	Primary Prevention	Early Intervention	Crisis Response	Advocacy
Advocacy	Write advocacy letters to State and Federal Governments to advocate for police cultural sensitivity training.	Improve police response and build trust with diverse communities.		✓	✓	✓
	Advocate to the DCJ for increased funding and availability of Men's Behaviour Change Programs.	Expand access to perpetrator programs and reduce repeat offending.		✓		✓
Financial Assistance Programs	Promote Council's financial assistance programs to community organisations delivering DFV-related projects and support services, particularly for vulnerable and marginalised communities.	Support the delivery of community-based DFV programs.		✓		
	Identify and apply for state or federal grants to fund initiatives outlined in this Action Plan.	Maximise impact and financial sustainability of Action Plan initiatives.		✓	✓	✓
Mid-Term (From 12 Months to 3 Years)						
DFV Webpage on the GRC Website	Translate key DFV resources and service directories into key community languages.	Remove language barriers and ensure equitable access to support.	✓	✓		
Education Campaigns	Deliver a targeted campaign to share DFV awareness content in key community locations.	Promote available support pathways to CALD groups.	✓	✓		
	Deliver a targeted campaign to share information on respectful relationships via social media.	Promote information where young people already engage.	✓	✓		
School and Youth Engagement	Facilitate connections between schools and local DFV support organisations to deliver evidence-based sessions on respectful relationships, consent, and help-seeking.	Support consistent, age-appropriate messaging across schools.	✓	✓		
	Support youth arts or creative projects that explore themes of gender equality or respectful relationships.	Empower young people to share messages through creative expression.	✓	✓		



Initiative	Action	Rationale	Primary Prevention	Early Intervention	Crisis Response	Advocacy
Policy Review	Explore the feasibility of introducing fast-track grant processes for service providers delivering key initiatives aligned with Council's endorsed Action Plans, to be considered in the next revision of the Grants and Donations Policy.	Provide responsive support to organisations meeting urgent community needs.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Long Term (3 Years+)						
Placemaking	Consider the feasibility of a memorial garden based on policy, consultation, and location criteria.	Honour victims and survivors of DFV and provide a space for community reflection.				✓
Housing Support	Explore the use of Council property for crisis accommodation.	Increase emergency housing options for people experiencing DFV.			✓	✓
	Engage in discussions with local housing providers and neighbouring councils to identify shared opportunities for transitional housing solutions.	Expand housing pathways and improve regional coordination.			✓	✓

