



Thursday 30 July 2026

Commonwealth Government
Department of Social Services
SecondActionPlan@dss.gov.au

By online portal submission

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Second Action Plan under Australia's *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*

Justice Support Centre ('JSC') thanks the Commonwealth Department of Social Services for the opportunity to contribute to the consultations about the Second Action Plan under Australia's *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* ('the Second Action Plan').

JSC has forty years' experience providing free legal assistance in South West Sydney (SWS) communities and delivering trauma-informed domestic and family violence specialist services across South West Sydney and Sydney. Our purpose is twofold:

1. To support women and children to break the cycles of Domestic and Family Violence.
2. To provide equitable and accessible legal services to our community.

Across our programs, JSC reached 26,872 people in 2024/25.

JSC provides frontline casework support and assistance to domestic violence survivors across Liverpool, Fairfield, Canterbury-Bankstown, Canada Bay, Strathfield, Sydney and Waverley Local Courts. In light of our frontline experience, JSC has limited its submission to Priority Area 1 (Victim-survivors) and Priority Area 5 (System Integration and Workforce), reflecting the areas of the National Plan most directly informed by our casework and service delivery.

A. Priority Area 1: Victim-survivors

This submission responds to the following considerations in providing feedback about victim-survivors:

- What service or system responses would make the biggest difference to victim-survivors' safety, wellbeing, healing and recovery?
- What helps people access support earlier, and what barriers prevent people from seeking help or engaging with systems and services?

Promote and fund integrated legal, DFV casework and financial counselling models

Victim-survivors need integrated, trauma-informed and culturally safe service responses that resolve legal, safety, financial and accommodation issues together. The NSW Law and Justice Foundation

has found people experiencing DFV are 10 times more likely to experience other legal problems and 16 times more likely to experience family law problems, and reinforces the importance of accessible public legal assistance services ([Quantifying the legal and broader life impacts of domestic and family violence, Justice Issues paper 32](#)). This is consistent with JSC's frontline experience and research. In 2024 JSC conducted legal health checks on SWS residents and clients and identified an average of 3.1 legal issues per respondent, with the most common issues being family law (62%), ADVOs (60%) and VS (45%); 71% of respondents were women and 60% single parents.

Trauma-informed and culturally safe services via an integrated model can promote healing and recovery, whereas inaccessible or fragmented services can compound trauma. In the 2026 financial year, JSC's wraparound and multi-disciplinary model delivered services to at least 300 DFV survivors, 170 DV Casework/SWSDVCAS clients and 200 CALD women – with 80% female clients for family law/DFV representation services. The integrated and multidisciplinary practice model utilised by JSC promotes psychological, physical and financial wellbeing, reduces service fragmentation and client retelling as well as enables earlier identification of hidden legal and safety issues. This client-centred model supports victim-survivors experiencing all forms of family violence who are afraid (or unwilling) to make a police report, to receive the assistance they need.

JSC submits that the Second Action Plan should fund place-based integrated models combining legal assistance, DFV casework, WDVCS and financial counselling supports.

Strong partnerships with local organisations as trusted entry points

Earlier access to support is improved when services are delivered through trusted local entry points – particularly for vulnerable and marginalised communities and cohorts with low trust in institutions such as CALD and First Nations communities.

JSC's operational plan identifies Fairfield as a priority location because it ranks 1st in NSW for socio-economic disadvantage (SEIFA). Additionally, 59.5% of Fairfield residents have a CALD background and 44.2% are on a low-income.

Fairfield also shows high levels of legal need: 21.8% of residents potentially require higher-intensity legal assistance such as representation (per the Need for Legal Assistance – NLAS Capability indicator), and 24.6% are non-English speakers who may require language-supported legal services (per the NLAS Language indicator). Both figures are well above the NSW averages of 9.4% (NLAS Capability) and 4.3% (NLAS Language), underscoring the disproportionate legal need in this catchment.

Based on the above data, JSC has proactively developed partnerships with trusted local and culturally safe entry points, such as Fairfield Women's Health Service, Family Relationship Centres, and the Miller Community Hub. Clients experiencing DFSV are more likely to engage with supports they already trust which in turn facilitates earlier identification and safe disclosure. These partnerships aim to embed legal services in trusted community settings where local partners can engage hard-to-reach communities, help overcome language barriers and reduce the high cost of family law litigation through mediation.

Multilingual staffing and resources – Vietnamese and Arabic-speaking lawyers and community liaison officers

South West Sydney Local Government areas are among the most culturally and linguistically diverse in NSW, with CALD communities comprising 49.4% of Canterbury-Bankstown, 59.5% of Fairfield and 44.2% of Liverpool.

A wide range of community languages are spoken across these catchments, but Vietnamese and Arabic stand out as the most common. Vietnamese is the leading non-English language in Fairfield, spoken by 21.1% of the community, while Arabic is the top language in both Canterbury-Bankstown (17.2%) and Liverpool (13.1%).

This demonstrates the need for culturally responsive, language-accessible legal and support services – particularly targeted towards prominent languages spoken.

In the 2025 financial year, 32% of JSC clients were from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds. JSC's staff reflect the cultures and religions of the community we serve, bringing lived experience and representation that reflects the diversity of the clients we help. In the 2025 financial year, 7% of our staff identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

JSC submits that the Second Action Plan should specifically fund multicultural and multilingual staff - particularly in client-facing roles.

Support and train informal help-seeking, frontline workers and government decision makers

Victim-survivors often disclose first to those closest to them - family, friends, community and religious leaders, health workers, settlement workers, teachers and financial counsellors. Equipping these informal first responders and frontline workers with capability to recognise the signs of abuse, support safe disclosure and make warm referrals is critical to ensuring victim-survivors receive timely, appropriate and trauma-informed assistance.

Community Legal Education (CLE) reaches both victim-survivors and informal responders directly and is more effective through the use of culturally and linguistically appropriate content. Whenever possible, resources should be co-developed with community members to ensure cultural relevance and sensitivity. Furthermore, CLE shifts the burden of help-seeking away from the individual victim-survivor by building community-level awareness, legal literacy, and confidence. In areas with high CALD populations, CLE for community members should be delivered in community languages via onsite interpreters within trusted community settings such as migrant resource centres, schools, women's health services, playgroups and faith-based locations.

Secondly, frontline workers are often the first point of contact for victim-survivors and should be trained to also recognise coercive control, financial abuse, technology-facilitated abuse and unreported sexual violence, and to make safe, warm referrals. Beyond identification, frontline workers should also be equipped to provide practical assistance. For example, helping victim-survivors gather evidentiary documents, draft Victims Compensation and divorce applications, prepare statements for ADVO applications, and access financial supports such as Centrelink Crisis Payment and Leaving Violence Program.

Thirdly, government decision-makers (including Victims Services) should receive additional training and resources to support trauma-informed, culturally safe and accessible decision-making to give effect to its stated aim of being a beneficial scheme for victim-survivors. This is particularly important in the exercise of discretionary powers, such as recognising multiple and separate acts of violence for the purposes of recognition payments and considering requests to waive the issuance of restitution orders against offenders where recovery risks compromising victim safety. Embedding these practices at the decision-making level helps ensure consistent, fair and compassionate outcomes, as well as reducing the risk of re-traumatisation through administrative processes, and makes the scheme more victim-centred.

JSC recommends that the Second Action Plan should support informal help-seekers and frontline workers through Community Legal Education and practical skills training in identifying abuse and providing practical help. It should also support government decision-makers through ongoing and targeted training.

B. Priority Area 5 – System Integration and Workforce

This submission responds to the following considerations in providing feedback about victim-survivors:

- What would make the biggest difference in creating a more coordinated and connected system response for people affected by violence against women and children and other forms of gender-based violence and people using violence?
- What workforce capabilities, supports, or conditions are most needed to strengthen prevention, early intervention, response and recovery?
- What approaches or models appear most effective in improving collaboration, coordination and information sharing across services, systems and programs?

The JSC integrated model: legal assistance, DFV casework, financial counselling, and WDVCS supports

System integration and coordination would be enhanced through ongoing funding for place-based multidisciplinary models. The JSC model combines legal assistance with WDVCS supports, DFV casework, Staying Home Leaving Violence, financial counselling, and pathways towards trusted CALD/community organisations such as women's health services.

An integrated and multidisciplinary model ensures there is no wrong door for clients. Individuals who engage with a lawyer can be seamlessly connected to ongoing domestic violence and financial counselling support, while clients entering through counselling or support services can be easily referred for legal assistance within the one organisation. This coordinated approach ensures that clients are supported at every stage of their healing and recovery journey.

Workforce diversity, development and wellbeing

Bilingual and bicultural roles should be a core component of services supporting victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. For example, JSC's outreach at Fairfield Women's Health Service in Cabramatta supports Vietnamese-speaking clients through bilingual intake staff, thereby strengthening service accessibility.

Fairfield, Canterbury-Bankstown and Liverpool LGAs are home to large Vietnamese and Arabic-speaking communities. Bilingual lawyers and community liaison workers would play a critical role in building community trust, overcoming language barriers, and strengthening warm referral pathways to legal and non-legal support services.

JSC also invests in workforce wellbeing and capability through fortnightly internal supervision, external supervision with qualified counsellors, psychosocial safety training, vicarious trauma and suicide prevention training, First Nations cultural awareness training, and participation in sector networks. This level of workforce training and support is essential to service sustainability because integrated practice requires both technical legal expertise as well as practitioners who are able to safely engage with trauma whilst working across diverse cultures in order to respond effectively to complex and intersecting client needs.

JSC recommends that the Second Action Plan should prioritise funding to expand bilingual and bicultural workforces that reflect local community needs, alongside investment in workforce training, professional development and wellbeing. This should include technical professional development as well as trauma-informed and culturally safe practices to strengthen workforce capability, resilience and retention, ultimately improving outcomes for diverse communities experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence.

Building data collection capability, standardising data tools, data sharing, service mapping and outcomes tracking

System integration and collaboration needs data capability, standardised tools and shared information and outcome objectives.

In 2025 JSC conducted an in-depth Legal Needs Analysis (LNA) which draws on Legal Health Checks, community worker surveys and stakeholder consultations to provide a snapshot of local legal

needs, emerging trends and gaps in service delivery. Our case management system, Actionstep, captures valuable service data. However, this captures only a partial picture of legal need and emerging trends within the local community.

To build a more robust evidence base, JSC also utilises publicly available data sources, including BOCSAR, ABS Census, SEIFA, NLAS data, as well as research published by the Law and Justice Foundation of NSW. While these sources are valuable, they are fragmented and there continues to be a need for stronger sector-wide data infrastructure and sharing.

A coordinated framework for collecting, sharing and mapping legal needs, local support service availability and domestic and updated family violence incidents/rates from law enforcement agencies would provide more timely and accurate information about the experiences of victim-survivors and barriers faced. This would create a clearer picture of the legal and support landscape, enable service providers to identify unmet need, allocate resources, train specialist workforces, and form strategic partnerships while reducing duplication of services.

An outcomes framework would allow legal assistance services, support organisations and government agencies to move beyond measuring outputs (such as service numbers) to gain a better understanding of the impact of interventions on safety, wellbeing, legal capability, financial security and access to justice.

JSC submits that the Second Action Plan should promote data collection capability, particularly around emerging legal need and service mapping. It should also support the development of shared tools and data capability across the domestic, family and sexual violence sector, including standardised legal health checks, community worker surveys, service mapping and outcomes measurement frameworks. It should also promote coordinated data collection and information sharing between legal assistance services, community organisations and government agencies to strengthen evidence-based planning, identify emerging needs, improve referral pathways, reduce duplication of services, and ensure resources and specialist workforces are directed to areas of greatest need.

For transparency and accountability, we agree to the publication of these submissions.

If you would like further information or input on matters raised in these submissions, please contact us by email to [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,
JUSTICE SUPPORT CENTRE

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