

DRAFT SUBMISSION

Second Action Plan Consultation for the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032

13 August 2026





Local Government NSW (LGNSW) is the peak body for local government in NSW, representing NSW general purpose councils and related entities. LGNSW facilitates the development of an effective community-based system of local government in the State.

OVERVIEW OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR



Employ nearly **50,000 people**



Manage more than **1,800 community & public centres**



Maintain more than **168,000km of roads & bridges**



Manage more than **\$220 billion of community assets**



Recycle **1.75 million tonnes of waste**



Spend more than **\$2.5 billion each year on caring for the environment**



Operate more than **380 libraries that attract tens of millions of visits each year**



Make kerbside waste collections for more than **3.1 million households**



Manage an estimated **4 million tonnes of waste each year**



Spend more than **\$2.4 billion on culture and recreation**

Local Government NSW acknowledges and pays respect to the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work, and the lands we travel through. We also acknowledge our Elders – past, present and emerging.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Achieving the National Plan's vision of ending violence against women and children requires sustained, coordinated action across all levels of government, sectors and communities. Local Government NSW (LGNSW), the peak body for local government in New South Wales, represents councils that are critical partners in creating safer, more inclusive and connected communities.

As the only tier of government embedded in communities across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote Australia, councils provide an existing and scalable platform for delivering prevention initiatives where people live, work, learn and connect. Through their leadership, workforce, infrastructure, services and partnerships, councils are uniquely positioned to support place-based prevention and strengthen implementation of the National Plan.

Emerging research demonstrates that councils are already making a substantial contribution to the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence. However, local government remains inconsistently recognised within national prevention arrangements and lacks dedicated investment, coordinated capability-building support and consistent evaluation mechanisms. These barriers limit the scale, sustainability and visibility of prevention activity across Australia and reduce the ability to leverage local government's reach and community connections.

Drawing on council consultation, LGNSW policy positions, emerging research and implementation experience, this submission proposes four mutually reinforcing reforms:

1. recognising local government as a key implementation partner in the National Plan;
2. investing in place-based prevention through local government;
3. strengthening prevention capability through nationally coordinated support; and
4. establishing mechanisms to measure and demonstrate local government's contribution to prevention outcomes.

Together, these reforms would strengthen local government's capacity to contribute consistently, effectively and sustainably to the objectives of the National Plan. By leveraging the reach of Australia's councils and strengthening the systems that support their prevention efforts, governments can accelerate place-based prevention and progress towards ending violence against women and children.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

Recognise local government

Formally recognise local government as a key implementation partner in the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence under the Second Action Plan.

Recommendation 2

Invest in place-based prevention

Provide dedicated, sustained multi-year investment in local government as a key delivery partner for place-based prevention, including prevention workforce capacity, local partnerships, regional collaboration, community-led action and local implementation of prevention initiatives.

Recommendation 3

Build local government prevention capability nationally

Establish a nationally funded Local Government Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Prevention Network, including a national coordination function and project management resources to support workforce development, capability building, knowledge exchange, resource development, evaluation and implementation support across jurisdictions.

Recommendation 4

Strengthen evidence and demonstrate local government's contribution

Support a nationally consistent Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning approach that strengthens the evidence base and demonstrates local government's contribution to prevention outcomes.

OPENING

Local Government NSW (LGNSW) welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Australian Government Department of Social Services to inform the development of the Second Action Plan under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*¹ (the National Plan).

LGNSW is the peak body for local government in NSW, representing general purpose councils and related entities across the state. Through advocacy, representation and support, LGNSW works with member councils to strengthen local communities and improve outcomes for residents across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote NSW.

This submission draws on LGNSW policy positions, Annual Conference resolutions, targeted consultation with councils and local government practitioners, and emerging findings from commissioned research undertaken by the University of NSW (UNSW) Gendered Violence Research Network² examining the scale, scope and diversity of prevention activity across NSW councils.

Please note that this submission is provided as a draft pending endorsement by the LGNSW Board at its next meeting. We will advise any amendments to the submission in due course.

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Councils are critical implementation partners in the primary prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSVM). They influence many of the settings where prevention occurs and translate national and state priorities into locally relevant action.

Emerging findings from LGNSW's research with the UNSW Gendered Violence Research Network demonstrate that councils are already making a significant contribution through respectful relationships education, gender equality initiatives, workforce development, community engagement and cross-sector partnerships. This contribution is reinforced by national evidence, with ANROWS³ identifying community settings and whole-of-community approaches as critical to effective prevention.

¹ Australian Government 2022, *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*, Department of Social Services, Canberra, available at: <https://www.dss.gov.au/national-plan-end-gender-based-violence/resource/national-plan-end-violence-against-women-and-children-2022-2032>

² UNSW Gendered Violence Research Network, *Local Government NSW Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Prevention Research Project* (unpublished research, 2026).

³ Australian Government 2026, *Evidence to Action: Informing Direction for the Second Action Plan*, Department of Social Services, Canberra, available at: <https://engage.dss.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/05/second-action-plan-consultation-paper.pdf>

LGNSW is a lead partner in the NSW Government's *Pathways to Prevention: NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence 2024-2028*⁴, supporting councils to strengthen their contribution to primary prevention through workforce development, implementation support, practical tools and communities of practice.

Despite this contribution, local government remains inconsistently represented within national prevention and implementation arrangements. This reduces opportunities to coordinate efforts and align local needs and action with national priorities.

ANROWS also identifies fragmented systems as an ongoing barrier to ending violence against women and children and highlights the need for stronger cross-sector coordination, information sharing and connected local systems. Councils already play an important convening role across government agencies, specialist services, schools, sporting organisations and community groups and can help strengthen local implementation of national priorities.

Local government provides a significant place-based implementation platform for prevention. In NSW alone, councils employ more than 51,000⁵ people across 128 councils working in areas as diverse as community development, libraries, recreation, planning, youth services and community engagement. Combined with councils' leadership, infrastructure and partnerships, this workforce provides substantial capacity to support implementation of the National Plan and strengthen prevention efforts in communities across Australia, where councils are appropriately resourced and supported to undertake this work.

The proposed four priority reforms provide a practical pathway for strengthening local government's contribution to the National Plan through recognition, investment, capability-building and evaluation.

⁴ NSW Government 2024, *Pathways to Prevention: NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence 2024-2028*, NSW Department of Communities and Justice, Sydney, available at: <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/documents/service-providers/supporting-family-domestic-sexual-violence-services/pathways-to-prevention-nsw-dfsv-primary-prevention-strategy-2024-to-2028.pdf>

⁵ Office of Local Government NSW, *At a Glance – Your Council NSW*, available at: <https://www.yourcouncil.nsw.gov.au/nsw-overview/at-a-glance/>

Recognise Local Government

Local governments can support place-based implementation of the National Plan. Councils influence many of the settings where primary prevention occurs and play a unique role in connecting national priorities with community-level action.

While councils are increasingly engaged in prevention, local government is not consistently reflected within the governance, implementation and funding structures that support the National Plan. Formal recognition would help ensure councils are considered in policy development, implementation planning, monitoring and evaluation activities, while strengthening coordination across all levels of government.

Evidence snapshot

Emerging findings from LGNSW's research demonstrate strong engagement in prevention across participating councils. Among respondents from 38 NSW councils:

- 82% recognised a role for local government in primary prevention.
- 62% reported involvement in primary prevention activities, (initiatives that seek to prevent violence before it occurs)
- 56% reported involvement in secondary prevention activities, (identifying and responding to early signs of violence or risk before harm escalates).
- 22% reported involvement in tertiary prevention activities, (supporting recovery and healing and preventing further harm following violence).
- 85% reported having council policies relevant to DFSV prevention.

These findings indicate that prevention work is already embedded within many councils, although the scale and maturity of activity vary depending on local priorities, workforce capacity and available resources.

Evidence in action

Northern Beaches Council, a metropolitan NSW council, is an executive member of the Northern Beaches Domestic Violence Network and plays a key role in supporting community-wide prevention activities. Through partnerships with specialist service providers, Police, schools, community organisations and local stakeholders, the network supports year-round prevention initiatives, community education, awareness raising and local collaboration, with activities amplified during the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign.

While not all councils have the same level of capacity or resources, the Northern Beaches example demonstrates how councils can use existing relationships and local networks to bring prevention partners together and maintain community momentum over time.

Implications for the Second Action Plan

To support local government's contribution to National Plan outcomes, the Second Action Plan should:

- Recognise local government as a key prevention and implementation partner.

- Include local government representation within relevant governance, advisory and implementation structures.
- Support councils to be active place-based participants by providing funding and resources.
- Create opportunities for councils to contribute to policy development and implementation planning.
- Recognise the role of councils in advancing gender equality and place-based prevention.

Recommendation 1.

Formally recognise local government as a key implementation partner in the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence under the Second Action Plan.

Invest in Place-Based Prevention

Recognising the role of local government is an important first step. However, recognition alone will not strengthen prevention outcomes without dedicated and sustained investment in local implementation capacity.

Across NSW, and consistent with activity occurring in other jurisdictions, councils are delivering a broad range of initiatives that contribute to the prevention of DFSV, including respectful relationships education, gender equality initiatives, community awareness campaigns, youth engagement programs, local prevention networks and cross-sector partnerships. These activities aim to address the underlying drivers of violence identified in *Change the Story*⁶ by promoting gender equality, strengthening respectful relationships and challenging harmful attitudes, norms and behaviours.

Primary prevention initiatives targeting children and young people represent one of the greatest opportunities to influence attitudes and behaviours before violence occurs. Through youth centres, libraries, recreation programs, community facilities, family services and school partnerships, councils are well positioned to support early intervention, promote healthy relationships and address emerging issues such as online harms and technology-facilitated abuse. Increasing investment in these community-based initiatives would help strengthen protective factors, support healthy relationship development and contribute to long-term prevention outcomes.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal communities are best placed to lead prevention initiatives that reflect local cultures, priorities and strengths. Councils can play a supporting role by fostering partnerships, enabling local collaboration and helping create the conditions for community-led prevention efforts to

⁶ Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) 2021, *Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence against Women in Australia*, Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, Melbourne.

succeed. Place-based approaches can strengthen local leadership, build on community strengths and support prevention activity that reflects local priorities and contexts.

Consultation undertaken by LGNSW identified three consistent barriers to sustaining council prevention activity: limited dedicated workforce capacity, short-term funding arrangements and insufficient access to implementation and evaluation support. Investment in local government would build on existing workforce capacity, infrastructure and partnerships already embedded within communities. Dedicated multi-year funding would enable councils to strengthen prevention capability, support local partnerships, retain skilled staff and implement sustained prevention initiatives beyond short-term funding cycles.

Evidence in Action

Maitland City Council, a regional council in NSW, is currently developing a new Social Strategy to guide community wellbeing and social planning across the local government area. As part of this work, Council is preparing a *Children and Families Supporting Plan* that will outline priorities to support child development, family wellbeing, social connection and community safety. The draft plan includes a focus on strengthening prevention, support and healing for people impacted by DFSV. This emerging approach demonstrates how local government can incorporate prevention considerations within broader social planning, engagement and community development functions to strengthen local protective factors and support long-term prevention outcomes.

Through the NSW Government's investment in the *Pathways to Prevention: NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence 2024–2028*, LGNSW is supporting councils to strengthen their contribution to primary prevention through workforce development, practical tools, implementation support, communities of practice and sector-wide capability building.

This is modelled on Victoria's sustained investment in local government prevention capability. Through initiatives delivered by the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV)⁷, councils have been supported to strengthen prevention leadership, workforce capability and gender equality initiatives.

The NSW and Victorian examples illustrate how sustained investment can strengthen workforce capability, partnerships and implementation infrastructure across local government. It also highlights the need for longer-term and nationally coordinated investment to provide certainty beyond individual programs and funding cycles.

Implications for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should provide dedicated, sustained multi-year investment in local government as a key delivery partner for place-based prevention.

Investment should support:

- Local partnership development, coordination and community engagement.

⁷ Municipal Association of Victoria, *Preventing Violence Against Women*, accessed August 2026, available at: <https://www.mav.asn.au>

- Regional collaboration and shared approaches across councils.
- Community-led prevention initiatives.
- Primary prevention activities targeting children and young people.
- Flexible, culturally safe and locally tailored responses that reflect the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, migrant and refugee communities, people with disability, LGBTQIA+ communities, and regional, rural and remote communities.
- Evaluation, monitoring and continuous improvement.

LGNSW recommends the establishment of a dedicated Local Government Prevention Investment Stream under the Second Action Plan.

The stream should include both foundational capability funding and place-based implementation funding to support workforce development, partnership coordination, implementation planning, evaluation activities and locally led prevention initiatives. As one implementation mechanism, funding could be delivered through partnerships with state and territory local government associations, building on existing sector networks and support arrangements while strengthening coordination across jurisdictions and reducing duplication.

Recommendation 2.

Provide dedicated, sustained multi-year investment in local government as a key delivery partner for place-based prevention, including prevention workforce capacity, local partnerships, regional collaboration, community-led action and local implementation of prevention initiatives.

Build Local Government Prevention Capability Nationally

Investment alone will not create a capable and consistent national prevention system. Local government prevention capability remains fragmented across Australia, with councils experiencing uneven access to expertise, training, implementation support and evidence.

ANROWS identifies workforce capability within universal services as a key challenge and highlights the importance of building prevention capability across non-specialist workforces. Local government employs staff across community services, youth services, libraries, recreation services and community engagement functions, making councils an important component of Australia's broader primary prevention workforce.

Jurisdictions are at different stages of developing local government prevention capability. Victoria has made sustained investments over many years through initiatives led by MAV, while other jurisdictions, including NSW, are building capability through more recent initiatives and investments. As prevention activity grows nationally,

resources, training programs, implementation tools and evaluation activities are often developed independently despite addressing similar challenges.

An emerging area for consideration is the role that council services, systems, regulatory functions and administrative processes may play in either preventing or inadvertently enabling systems abuse, coercive control and financial abuse. Drawing on the principles of safety by design, there is an opportunity to strengthen local government capability to identify and address foreseeable opportunities for misuse of council processes by people using violence. This may include consideration of issues such as vexatious complaints, misuse of companion animal management processes, inappropriate attempts to access personal information, or exploitation of planning, compliance and administrative systems. By embedding a stronger understanding of these risks into policy, processes and customer service approaches, councils can help disrupt bias, improve responses to victim-survivors, and create safer customer service experiences. While this area remains under-explored within local government, it represents a promising avenue for further research, guidance and capability development.

There is also growing concern about the impact of online and in-person misogyny on local democracy. Female councillors, candidates and community leaders are frequently exposed to gendered abuse, harassment, intimidation and discrimination, which can affect their safety, wellbeing and participation in public life. These behaviours risk undermining women's representation in local government and may discourage current and prospective candidates from seeking or continuing in elected office. Strengthening local government capability to understand and respond to these forms of gender-based abuse would support both violence prevention objectives and the broader goal of achieving gender equality in civic and democratic participation.

A nationally coordinated approach would connect existing expertise, reduce duplication and improve access to training, implementation support, evaluation resources and shared learning opportunities. It would also maximise the value of existing investments by reducing the need for jurisdictions to independently develop similar capability-building infrastructure and support a more consistent approach to prevention across Australia.

Implications for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should establish a nationally funded Local Government Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Prevention Network to strengthen coordination, workforce capability and collaboration across jurisdictions.

The Second Action Plan should:

- Establish a nationally funded Local Government Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Prevention Network.
- Support national communities of practice, sector networks and peer learning opportunities.
- Invest in workforce development, training and implementation support for councils.

- Facilitate the sharing of evidence, evaluation findings, tools and resources across jurisdictions.
- Support councils to respond to emerging issues, including coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse, online misogyny, economic abuse and systems abuse, and gendered abuse directed at women participating in local democracy.
- Strengthen collaboration between Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments in prevention policy and implementation.

This would help connect existing investments and expertise, reduce duplication and improve equitable access to prevention capability, tools and support for councils across Australia.

Recommendation 3.

Establish a nationally funded Local Government Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Prevention Network, including a national coordination function and project management resources to support workforce development, capability building, knowledge exchange, resource development, evaluation and implementation support across jurisdictions.

Strengthen Evidence and Demonstrate Local Government's Contribution

As investment in prevention grows, governments will require stronger evidence about which approaches are effective, where progress is occurring and where additional support may be needed. Monitoring, evaluation and learning help build the evidence base for primary prevention, support continuous improvement and inform future investment decisions.

Despite growing recognition of local government's contribution to primary prevention, inconsistent monitoring approaches, limited evaluation capacity, restricted access to local-level data and insufficient evaluation resources make it difficult to understand collective impact and demonstrate local government's contribution to prevention outcomes. These challenges are particularly significant for smaller councils with limited internal capacity to undertake monitoring, evaluation and learning activities alongside program delivery.

Evidence in Action

Emerging findings from LGNSW's research with the UNSW Gendered Violence Research Network demonstrate extensive prevention activity occurring across NSW councils. Participating councils reported involvement in primary, secondary and tertiary prevention activities and identified a strong role for local government in advancing prevention outcomes.

Monitoring and evaluation approaches vary across councils, making it more difficult to identify effective practice, understand collective contribution and inform investment decisions.

Implications for the Second Action Plan

The Second Action Plan should establish a national Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning approach that helps councils and governments better understand, strengthen and demonstrate local government's contribution to prevention outcomes.

The Second Action Plan should:

- Improve access to local-level prevention, community safety and gender equality data.
- Provide dedicated funding and technical support for evaluation activities.
- Support councils to undertake monitoring, evaluation and continuous improvement activities that are proportionate to local capacity and resources.
- Establish mechanisms for sharing evidence, evaluation findings and promising practice across jurisdictions.
- Support inclusion of local government contributions within national evidence, monitoring and learning processes.

Recommendation 4.

Support a nationally consistent Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning approach that strengthens the evidence base and demonstrates local government's contribution to prevention outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Ending violence against women and children requires coordinated action across all levels of government, sectors and communities. Local government is already making a significant contribution to preventing domestic, family and sexual violence. As the only tier of government embedded in communities across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote Australia, councils provide a unique and scalable platform for delivering place-based prevention initiatives.

The Second Action Plan presents an opportunity to strengthen local government's role within Australia's prevention architecture. Recognising councils as implementation partners, investing in place-based prevention, building capability nationally and strengthening monitoring, evaluation and learning would provide a practical pathway to expand prevention efforts.

Local Government NSW recommends that the Australian Government recognise local government as a key implementation partner within the Second Action Plan and consider councils within relevant governance, and investment arrangements. Doing so will strengthen prevention efforts at scale, maximise the value of existing community infrastructure and partnerships, and accelerate progress towards the National Plan's vision of ending violence against women and children in a generation.