



Submission to inform the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032

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Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Second Action Plan. Our submission focuses on sport as a national setting where gender-based violence occurs, and where governments can invest in practical prevention, early intervention, response, accountability, and recovery measures. Sport has been recognised in national work largely as a primary prevention setting. This remains important, but it is incomplete. Sport is also a setting where women, gender diverse people, and children experience gender-based violence across sexual violence, harassment, psychological violence, physical violence, discrimination, coercive control, and abuse of power.

Sport is central to Australian community life. It is where children learn relationships, where families build social connections, and where local leadership, volunteering, identity, and belonging are formed. Because of this reach, the harms that occur in sport are not isolated incidents or private matters for clubs to manage alone. Not only does harm affect sport participation, but it also impacts safety, health, education, community trust, and public confidence in sport. Due to the high participation rates, noted prevalence of violence, and the significant implications for societal, economic and broader health impacts, sport must be named a priority setting.

Why sport must be named as a priority setting in the Second Action Plan

- Over 39% of Australians aged 15 and over participate in a sport through an organisation or a venue. Given between 0.5% to 79% of those participating in sport can experience sexual, physical or psychological violence based on global figures, approximately up to 6.5million Australians will experience interpersonal violence in sport in their lifetime. These figures do not include institutional violence, also recognised as being prevalent across sport as an institution. Women, children, gender-diverse and those with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse, and LGBTIQ populations will have higher rates of such violence in this context.
- Sport aligns directly with five priority areas in the consultation paper: victim-survivors, prevention and early intervention, children and young people in their own right, people who use violence, and system integration and workforce.
- Whilst the First Action Plan already recognises that sporting clubs and sporting organisations are settings where communities can be reached, the Second Action Plan should now move beyond generic inclusion of sport and identify gender-based violence *in* sport as a specific policy, service, regulatory, and investment priority.
- Evidence from sport shows that gender-based violence occurs across community and high-performance sport settings, and across roles in sport including participants/athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers, staff, parents, and

administrators, and across the life course. This includes adult victim-survivors and children harmed in sport.

- Despite public funding, sport organisations are largely governed through self-regulation, with a focus on reputation management. They are often run by volunteer labour. These features can silence disclosures, protect people who use violence, and leave local clubs without the expertise or authority to respond safely. There are some means to regulate publicly funded sport such as The Australian Sports Commission requiring gender equity on boards. However, this alone is not enough.
- Current integrity and safeguarding systems in sport do not provide comprehensive, enforceable, survivor-centred responses to gender-based violence, particularly for adults. A national policy approach is needed alongside specialist service partnerships and local implementation support.

Recommended actions and investment priorities

Given the current evidence and identified gaps, we provide suggestions for what needs to happen as part of the Second Action Plan and where funding for initiatives in sport should be targeted.

- 1. Name sport as a priority setting in the Second Action Plan**, with a focus on 1) evaluation of existing programs to provide the evidence of what works 2) development of initiatives to fill intervention gaps
- Include sport explicitly in the Second Action Plan as a setting where gender-based violence occurs and where coordinated prevention, early intervention, response, accountability, and support for victim-survivors and those impacted by gender-based violence is required.
 - Establish a national sport and gender-based violence evidence building and implementation group including victim-survivors, specialist gender-based violence services, child safeguarding experts, sport integrity bodies, community sport, disability and LGBTQIA+ sport representatives, First Nations representatives, researchers, and government.
 - Implement a national evaluation program to review and evaluate existing or already-developed programs to ensure we know what works, for whom, in what contexts.
 - Require funded sport initiatives to address gender inequality, power imbalances, organisational culture, disclosure pathways, child safety, and independent accountability, not only awareness raising.
 - Indicative budget: \$8.65 million over two years for national coordination, victim-survivor participation, sector consultation, evaluation and evidence building, policy translation, and implementation planning.

2. Fund development of a National Code for Preventing and Responding to Gender Based Violence in Sport

- Drawing on lessons from the National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to GBV, commission legal, policy, and sector analysis to test how a National Code model could apply to sport and adapted to the structure of community, state, national, professional, and high-performance sport.
- Fund a national roundtable and staged consultations with victim-survivors, community sport, National and State Sporting Organisations, Sport Integrity Australia, child safeguarding agencies, specialist services, insurers, regulators, and governments.
- Develop minimum enforceable standards for prevention, reporting, response, information sharing, victim-survivor support, child-centred practice, protection for victim-survivors and other whistleblowers from retaliation, transparency, and independent oversight.
- Indicative budget: \$1.25m over 18 months for roundtable design, legal and policy mapping, victim-survivor engagement, consultation, drafting, and testing of a model Code.

3. Build safe reporting and response pathways for community sport

- Adapt and scale evidence informed tools such as [Safe to Speak, Bound to Act](#) for community sport, with practical guidance for sport volunteers, clubs, regional sport assemblies, state sport bodies, and specialist services to better respond to incidences of GBV in sport.
- Create local referral and escalation pathways so that clubs are not left to manage disclosures alone. This should include clear roles for sport bodies, specialist gender-based violence services, child protection and child safeguarding services, police and justice pathways where appropriate, and independent advice for victim-survivors.
- Establish communities of practice for people receiving disclosures in sport, including trauma and violence informed supervision and support for volunteer responders to improve organisational learning.
- Indicative budget: \$1.75 million over three years for toolkit adaptation, training, regional pilots, communities of practice, evaluation, and national dissemination. A smaller two-region pilot could be delivered for approximately \$630,000.

4. Invest in place-based demonstration projects in regional, rural, remote, and urban communities

- A place-based demonstration project is a localized, on-the-ground pilot designed to test solutions to complex community or environmental challenges – through the Second Action Plan, such projects could be funded to bring together community sport, local government, regional sport assemblies, specialist sexual assault and family violence services, women’s health organisations, child safeguarding expertise, and victim-survivor advocates.
- Use these sites to test how prevention and response must be adapted across geography. A club that functions as a second family or community hub in a regional town faces different disclosure, confidentiality, retaliation, and support issues from a club in a large metropolitan area.
- Support practical activities including community readiness assessment with targeted and tailored interventions that could include awareness campaigns, club readiness audits, training, leadership and governance reform, locally supported reporting pathway implementation, consent education, and evaluation.
- Indicative budget: \$1.8 million over three years for, for example, three linked programs: supporting regional sport to prevent and respond, strengthening reporting pathways, and scaling consent education.

5. Centre children and young people as victim-survivors and rights holders in sport

- Develop a national child and youth safe sport response package that recognises children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right, including those harmed by adults and by peers while participating in sport.
- Embed the voices of children, young people and victim-survivors of child abuse in sport governance, policy design, implementation and evaluation by establishing mechanisms for their meaningful participation in decision making at all levels, including national sport bodies and government.
- Fund guidance on child disclosure in sport, parent and carer first responses, club level responsibilities, trauma informed referral, and developmentally appropriate recovery supports.
- Indicative budget: \$1.5 million over three years for co-design with children, young people and survivor advocates, resource development, training, implementation support, and evaluation.

6. Build the evidence and monitoring infrastructure for gender-based violence in sport

- Support for national prevalence studies of gender-based violence in Australian sport with regular tracking beyond a single research cycle.

- Develop indicators that can be aligned with a National Plan, including prevalence, disclosures, confidence in reporting pathways, retaliation, organisational readiness, workforce capability, victim-survivor outcomes, and accountability actions.
- Explore a regular sport module in national surveys or monitoring systems such as AusPlay, and alignment with community attitudes work to track changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour across sport in relation to GBV.
- Indicative budget: \$1.75 million over three years to extend prevalence, longitudinal monitoring, data linkage feasibility, knowledge translation, and evaluation across implementation sites.

What success would look like by the end of the Second Action Plan

- Sport is explicitly named in national policy as a setting where gender-based violence, against women and children (including gender diverse individuals), occurs and where targeted prevention, response, accountability, and recovery actions are required.
- All victim-survivors of abuse in sport have accessible, visible, safe, culturally appropriate independent, and supported pathways to disclose and seek redress for GBV. These pathways must be responsive to intersecting systems of inequality impacting victim-survivors differently, including age, gender (cis-gender/ gender diverse), economic status, race, ethnicity, disability, and sexuality.
- Sport organisations are required and supported to meet minimum standards, with independent oversight and consequences when they fail to prevent or respond to harm.
- Community sport has practical local partnerships with specialist services, rather than relying on volunteers to respond to complex violence without training or support.
- Government has reliable national data on the prevalence, nature, reporting, and response to gender-based violence in sport, and uses that data to guide investment and accountability.

Selected evidence base underpinning this submission

1. National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032: establishes the four domains of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing, and recognises that sporting organisations have a role in a whole of society responseⁱ.
2. First Action Plan: identifies prevention in all settings, improving the evidence base, strengthening mainstream and specialist workforce capability, strengthening services and systems, accountability for people who use violence, sexual violence and harassment in all settings, and children and young people in their own rightⁱⁱ.
3. Second Action Plan Consultation Paper: proposes priority areas of victim-survivors, prevention and early intervention, children and young people, people who use violence, and system integration and workforce. Sport intersects with each priorityⁱⁱⁱ.
4. Forsdike, Fullagar, Randle, Marshall and colleagues: research on violence against women and gender-based violence in sport shows that sport organisations need a gender lens, practical response capability, policy implementation support, cross-sector collaboration, and attention to organisational culture^{iv, v, vi, vii, viii, ix, x}.
5. Pankowiak, Woessner and colleagues: Australian community sport research found high levels of psychological, physical, and sexual violence against children in sport, with disclosure often limited and strongly shaped by normalisation of violence and adult responses^{xi}.
6. Woessner, Pankowiak and colleagues: disclosure research shows children most commonly disclosed to parents, coaches, or another adult, and that policies and practices must clearly identify and support first responders^{xii}.
7. Marshall and colleagues: research on harassment, policy responses, and sport integrity systems indicates that gender harassment and gender-based violence are not isolated to individual cases and require stronger organisational and regulatory responses^{xiii, xiv}.
8. Forsdike and Giles: meta-synthesis of women's experiences in sport shows that violence against women in sport is pervasive, includes psychological, physical, and sexual violence, and is shaped by power, gender inequality, organisational silence, and retaliation^{xv}.
9. AusPlay: Australia's largest national population tracking survey, funded and led by the Australian Sports Commission (ASC). It collects comprehensive data on how Australians of all ages participate in over 600 different sports and physical activities^{xvi}.
10. International Olympic Committee Consensus Statement on interpersonal violence and safeguarding in sport: presents the prevalence of interpersonal violence in sport and emphasises a whole of system approach to comprehend and prevent such violence^{xvii}.

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