



Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) Inc. Tasmania

Submission to the Commonwealth Government, Department of Social Services on the consultation to inform the Second Action Plan under Australia's *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032*

28 July 2026

Content warning

This submission contains information about sexual violence, including child sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviours, as well as domestic and family violence. We encourage readers to exercise care as they engage with this content. If the information in this document raises concern or distress, please consider contacting the following services for support:

1800RESPECT

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24/7 crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

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About the Sexual Assault Support Service Inc. (SASS) Tasmania

SASS (Tas) is a specialist, non-government organisation dedicated to promoting the safety, wellbeing, and agency of victim survivors, and those at risk of or impacted by sexual violence. We work across the prevention continuum – primary prevention, early intervention, response, recovery, and healing – to deliver evidence-based, best practice and trauma-informed services.

This includes specialist therapeutic services for children, families and adults; 24-hour crisis response; multidisciplinary partnership response to recent sexual assault; specialist therapeutic interventions for children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours; and statewide primary prevention initiatives delivered across schools, higher education, workplaces and communities. We also provide specialist support through the National Redress Scheme and therapeutic services to justice-involved victim survivors servicing custodial sentencing of community-based orders.

In collaboration with government, non-government, and community stakeholders, we work to amplify the voices and experiences of victim survivors and their support networks to inform legislative, policy, and sector reform that is attuned to the unique needs, complexities and impacts of sexual violence. We take a holistic approach, supporting individuals and families to heal from harm, while actively working to challenge the underlying drivers, structures, norms and attitudes that enable sexual violence. This approach underscores our unwavering commitment to creating lasting change for individuals and communities affected by sexual violence and our vision for a Tasmania free from sexual violence.

Please direct any enquiries about this submission to:

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Introduction

SASS (Tas) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the consultation on the Second Action Plan (the 'Action Plan') under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (the 'National Plan').

This submission draws on SASS' (Tas) experience as one of two, specialist non-government sexual assault services in Tasmania, including our work across primary prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing, alongside workforce development, practice leadership and engagement in systems reform. It combines this practice experience with contemporary evidence and insights from the Tasmanian context, where the smaller and highly networked population and service system create unique opportunities to pilot, evaluate and refine innovative approaches to strengthen Australia's response to sexual violence. This includes two strategic investment opportunities designed to translate national prevention priorities into scalable, evidence-informed practice: a coordinated, place-based pilot to prevent sexual violence and a peer mentoring prevention program for adolescent boys.

SASS (Tas) recognises that experiences of sexual violence, access to support, pathways to healing and experiences of justice are diverse and are shaped by intersecting social, cultural, geographic, economic and structural factors. The Second Action Plan should be guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and self-determination, lived and living experience, community knowledge and specialist practice wisdom, ensuring systems are culturally safe, equitable and responsive to the diverse realities of people's lives.

The National Plan established a vision to end violence against women and children within a generation. The First Action Plan laid important foundations for national reform through strengthened leadership, accountability and collaboration, increased investment, improved community awareness and a more robust evidence base. While this progress provides a strong platform for the next phase of reform, sexual violence remains highly prevalent, demand for specialist services continues to increase, and technological and social change continue to reshape the nature and context of sexual violence. The Second Action Plan provides an opportunity to strengthen Australia's implementation capability by embedding evidence-informed approaches across the prevention continuum, improving coordination across jurisdictions, sectors and service systems, building specialist workforce and organisational capability, and strengthening the capacity of systems to adapt to emerging evidence, evolving patterns of harm and changing community need. Achieving the National Plan's vision will require sustained investment in the specialist sexual violence sector to strengthen the capability, leadership and implementation support needed to deliver consistent outcomes across Australia.

Key recommendations

The strategic investment opportunities identified in this submission represent specialist-led, evidence-informed approaches to strengthening Australia's capability to prevent and respond to sexual violence. They are informed by contemporary evidence, implementation experience and emerging evaluation findings. SASS (Tas) would welcome the opportunity to provide further information on their evidence base, implementation methodology, evaluation and implementation considerations to inform the development of priorities under the Second Action Plan.

1. **Primary prevention in practice – a coordinated, place-based approach to prevent sexual violence**
2. **CaRE4Peers Mentoring Program to engage adolescent boys as partners in prevention**

Tasmania – challenges and opportunities for implementation

Tasmania provides an important implementation context for the Second Action Plan. It demonstrates both the complexity of implementing sustained sexual violence reform and the opportunities that smaller jurisdictions can offer to pilot, evaluate and refine approaches capable of informing national policy and practice.

Implementation context

Tasmania provides an important context for the development and implementation of the Second Action Plan. High rates of sexual violence and longstanding structural and socioeconomic factors influence both the demand for specialist services and the capacity of systems to prevent, identify and respond effectively to harm. Population dispersion, workforce shortages, constrained fiscal capacity, and comparatively high rates of housing insecurity, disability and chronic illness, poverty and lower rates of literacy and educational attainment shape the implementation environment.¹

These challenges are further influenced by the realities of a small, geographically dispersed jurisdiction with limited market scale and developing systems infrastructure. Recruiting, retaining and developing a sustainable specialist workforce is challenging, while the costs of delivering accessible, high-quality services across dispersed communities are proportionately greater. This experience highlights the importance of implementation approaches that both reflect differences in jurisdictional context and support smaller jurisdictions to achieve equitable outcomes, beyond population-based funding models.

Scale of sexual violence

Sexual violence rates in Tasmania are among the highest in the country.

- Tasmania records the second highest rate of sexual assault and the third highest rate of sexual harassment of any Australian jurisdiction.²
- Between 2019 and 2024, reports of sexual assault increased by 169 per cent,³ likely reflecting rising prevalence, emerging forms of sexual violence and increased community awareness.
- More than one in four women (26 per cent) experienced sexual assault or sexual threats since the age of 15.⁴
- More than one in two women (56.8 per cent) experienced sexual harassment since the age of 15.⁵

¹ The Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Alliance submission to the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children (2026) provides a detailed summary of the data and Tasmanian context.

² ABS, Personal Safety, Australia 2021-22 (2023), [Table 9.3](#) Women aged 18 years and over, Experiences since the age of 15, By state and territory: Proportion.

³ ABS, Recorded Crimes – Victims 2024 (2025), [Table 9](#) Victims, Selected offences by states and territories, 1993 to 2024. Tasmania recorded 211 sexual assaults in 2019, and 567 in 2024.

⁴ ABS, Personal Safety, Australia 2021-22 (2023), [Table 9.3](#). Women aged 18 years and over, Experiences since the age of 15, By state and territory: Proportion.

⁵ ABS, Personal Safety, Australia 2021-22 (2023), [Table 9.3](#). Women aged 18 years and over, Experiences since the age of 15, By state and territory: Proportion.

- Of sexual assaults recorded by Tasmania Police in 2024, more than one third of victim survivors were aged between 10 and 17 years at the time of the assault.⁶
- More than four in five (81 per cent) of Tasmanians reported that they likely, very likely or certainly know someone who experienced child sexual abuse – the highest proportion reported across Australian jurisdictions.⁷

In addition, the cumulative impacts of primary and secondary trauma in small, highly networked jurisdictions such as Tasmania reinforce the need for sustained and coordinated investment across the prevention continuum, specialist capability and implementation arrangements that support locally relevant yet nationally consistent, accountable and evidence-informed reform.

Opportunities for reform implementation

While these challenges are significant, the characteristics of smaller jurisdictions also create important implementation opportunities. For example, the scale of Tasmania's service system requires close collaboration between government agencies, specialist and generalised services, enabling resources to be leveraged, workforce capability to be strengthened and integrated responses to be developed. These conditions also provide an effective environment in which new approaches can be designed, tested, evaluated and refined before broader implementation, generating valuable evidence to inform policy, research and practice across Australia.

In our work across the prevention continuum, SASS (Tas) has developed innovative, evidence-informed approaches that respond to the needs of Tasmanian communities while contributing to broader policy, research, program and practice development. The examples presented highlighted in this submission demonstrate the essential role of specialist sexual assault services in translating evidence into practice and outcomes enablers.

Tasmania reflects both the urgency and the opportunity of the Second Action Plan. Our experience demonstrates that meaningful and sustained progress depends on long-term investment in specialist expertise, coordinated national reform and implementation approaches that reflect the distinct dynamics of sexual violence while enabling locally responsive solutions.

1. Victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence

Position sexual violence as a whole-of-government policy priority

While timely access to crisis and therapeutic responses are essential to promote healing from harm, long-term outcomes are also shaped by access to safety, stable housing, economic security, healthcare, connection to culture and community, trusted relationships, increased agency and the prevention of sexual violence.⁸ These are not peripheral policy issues; they are fundamental determinants of safety, healing and justice.

⁶ ABS, Recorded Crime – Victims 2024 (2025), Tasmania, Sexual assault.

⁷ National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse (October 2024), [The Australian child sexual abuse attitudes, knowledge and response study: Tasmania](#), p. 6.

⁸ McLindon, E., McKenzie, M., Webster, A., Hargrave, J., Turner-Myatt, P., Maltzahn, K. & Tarzia, L. (2024), [‘Reclaiming power over my story, my body and myself’: Recovery and healing for adult victim-survivors of sexual violence](#), Melbourne: University of Melbourne, Sexual, Assault Services Victoria & Women with Disabilities Victoria; McGlynn, G., & Westmarland, N., (2018), [Kaleidoscopic Justice: Sexual Violence and Victim-Survivors’ Perceptions of Justice](#), Social & Legal Studies, Vol. 28, Issue 2.

The Second Action Plan should recognise preventing sexual violence and healing from harm as shared whole-of-government responsibilities. Achieving outcomes across the prevention continuum requires coordinated action across portfolios, supported by clear accountability, integrated implementation and sustained investment. Progress should be measured through outcomes that reflect long-term wellbeing, safety and healing, alongside service and system performance.

National priorities

- Establish the prevention of sexual violence as a whole-of-government policy priority, with clear cross-portfolio accountability and implementation arrangements.
- Expand access to justice beyond prosecutorial pathways by strengthening restorative, civil, workplace, institutional and victim recognition pathways that reflect the diverse justice needs, including those associated with recognition, dignity, accountability, voice, prevention and connectedness.
- Recognise housing and economic security as fundamental to recovery and healing by strengthening supports that promote safety and financial stability, such as dedicated housing pathways, sexual harm leave entitlements, and mechanisms to support financial recovery and stability.
- Fund specialist sexual assault services to deliver flexible, person-centred responses that reflect the realities of trauma, structural disadvantage and diverse healing trajectories. Commissioning should recognise the full scope of specialist practice, including but not limited to advocacy, systems navigation, outreach, brokerage, case management, advocacy, peer support, group programs, secondary consultation, court and witness support, multidisciplinary partnerships, engagement with families and supporters and longer-term support where required.
- Invest in Independent Sexual Violence Advisors in Tasmania to provide on-the-ground expert advocacy, system navigation, and linkages to services and supports for victim survivors of sexual violence.
- Support integrated, multidisciplinary partnerships between specialist sexual assault services and mental health, alcohol and other drug, disability and child and family support services, to provide coordinated, wrap-around responses to victim survivors of sexual violence.

Practice Innovation: SASS (Tas) – Responding to increasing demand through service model innovation

To improve access, responsiveness and sustainability within existing funding constraints, SASS (Tas) has implemented an evidence-informed stepped care model as the foundation of its redesigned clinical service system. Rather than relying on single pathways into longer-term therapeutic counselling, the model provides an integrated continuum of specialist therapeutic responses through strengthened intake, active waitlist management, brief intervention, therapeutic groups and ongoing counselling.

This enables clients to access the most appropriate level of support according to their needs, while moving between lower- and higher-intensity interventions as their circumstances change. Implementation of the stepped care model has strengthened client flow, improved timeliness and access, enhanced client choice and supported the sustainable delivery of high-quality specialist sexual violence services.

SASS's (Tas) experience demonstrates that this evidence-informed service innovation provides a scalable approach to responding to increasing demand for specialist sexual violence services. Realising this potential requires funding models that support services to scale proven models of care alongside the workforce capacity needed to maintain timely access, quality and sustainability.

2. Prevention and early intervention

Build Australia's sexual violence prevention capability

Australia has established a strong foundation for the primary prevention of gender-based violence. The next phase of reform should strengthen Australia's capability to prevent sexual violence through dedicated action to address the specific drivers, dynamics, risk factors and contexts in which sexual violence is normalised, facilitated and perpetuated. This includes investment in evidence-informed initiatives that address implementation gaps between prevention policy and practice outcomes by providing a structured approach to building prevention capability across populations, settings and the life course.

National priorities

- Develop a dedicated national approach to sexual violence prevention within the broader primary prevention architecture that addresses the distinct drivers, dynamics and contexts of sexual violence.
- Invest in evidence-informed, scalable implementation models that strengthen Australia's capability to prevent sexual violence across diverse settings and contexts, supporting expansion and evaluation of implementation approaches with demonstrated effectiveness.
Strategic investment opportunity: *a coordinated, place-based approach to prevent sexual violence.* SASS (Tas) proposes a place-based, coordinated primary prevention pilot that applies its evidence-informed implementation model to strengthen prevention capability across communities and settings. The pilot would address recognised prevention implementation challenges and translate national prevention frameworks into coordinated local action while generating implementation evidence to inform future scale.
- Invest in evidence-informed, specialist peer mentoring prevention programs for young men and boys that integrate critical reflection on masculinities, consent education, peer leadership and the development of practical violence prevention skills.
Strategic investment opportunity: *CaRE4Peers – translating prevention priorities into practice outcomes* directly addresses this priority through the implementation and independent evaluation of CaRE4Peers, SASS' (Tas) specialist, evidence-informed peer mentoring model that equips adolescent boys with the knowledge, skills and leadership capability to become active partners in the primary prevention of gender-based violence.

- Ensure all children, young people and adults have access to comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, evidence-informed consent, relationships, sex and sexualities education that extends beyond legal concepts of consent to build emotional literacy, respectful relationships, sexual ethics, healthy masculinities and bystander capability.
- Strengthen national approaches to preventing technology-facilitated sexual violence through critical media and digital literacy alongside regulatory approaches addressing platform accountability and duty of care, AI-generated abuse, online misogyny, image-based abuse and the algorithmic amplification of harmful content.

Strategic Investment Opportunity: Primary prevention in practice – a coordinated, place-based approach to prevent sexual violence

SASS (Tas) has developed an evidence-informed primary prevention model that translates national prevention frameworks into a practical implementation approach for diverse populations and settings. Rather than delivering a single program, the model provides a scalable methodology that supports consistent, evidence-informed primary prevention while allowing adaptation to local community needs, strengths and contexts.

Delivered by specialist prevention practitioners, the model supports coordinated implementation across developmental stages, populations and settings, providing a structured pathway from initial engagement through to the practical application of prevention capability. Its methodology is designed to create psychologically safe conditions for engagement, reducing barriers such as shame and resistance while supporting the meaningful inclusion of men and boys.

The model has been implemented across higher education, workplaces and community settings, demonstrating its applicability across the life course and socio-ecological model. Early evaluation findings indicate promising improvements in consent literacy, bystander capability and participants' confidence to apply prevention learning in practice, including in complex settings. Independent evaluation through the Commonwealth-funded *Partners in Prevention of Sexual Violence* project will further strengthen the evidence base for the prevention of sexual violence.

This experience illustrates the importance of investing in implementation approaches that bridge national prevention policy and local delivery. The Second Action Plan should support the expansion and evaluation of evidence-informed implementation models to strengthen Australia's capacity to deliver sexual violence prevention across communities and settings.

Strategic Investment Opportunity: SASS (Tas) CaRE4Peers Mentoring Program – Translating prevention priorities into practice outcomes

The *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* identifies engaging men and boys as a national primary prevention priority and recognises that ending gender-based violence requires whole-of-society action to address its gendered drivers. While this policy direction is well established, there remains a need for practical, evidence-informed approaches that translate these priorities into sustained prevention action.

CaRE4Peers has been developed by SASS (Tas) as a specialist, evidence-informed peer mentoring model that complements universal respectful relationships education. The program recognises adolescence as a critical period in which peer relationships, gender norms and social expectations shape attitudes and behaviours associated with sexual violence. CaRE4Peers engages adolescent boys as active partners in prevention, supporting them to critically examine gender, power and peer influence while strengthening their capacity to model respectful relationships, positive bystander behaviours and gender-equitable peer cultures. By combining specialist facilitation, structured mentoring and participant-led prevention initiatives, CaRE4Peers provides a practical implementation model that complements existing school-based prevention efforts while addressing an identified gap between prevention policy and practice.

School communities across Tasmania have expressed interest in the program; however, without dedicated funding, the cost of delivery creates a barrier to participation, particularly for schools with limited discretionary resources and those in rural and remote communities. Funding would enable SASS (Tas) to subsidise delivery costs, support equitable access and build the implementation and evaluation infrastructure required to embed, refine and demonstrate the impact of the program. This investment would move CaRE4Peers from a promising, practice-informed model to a sustainable prevention initiative capable of contributing to measurable change across Tasmanian school communities.

3. Children and young people in their own right

Strengthen child-centred and rights-based responses to children and young people

Current responses are frequently shaped by the boundaries, thresholds and at times competing priorities of child protection, policing, youth justice and adult service systems rather than the needs and experiences of children and young people. This can increase barriers to disclosure and access to support, delayed recognition of harm and fragmented service pathways, particularly for unaccompanied children and young people, those with care experience, and those experiencing sexual exploitation, or who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours.

The Second Action Plan should strengthen the capability of systems to provide child-centred, developmentally appropriate and rights-based responses to children and young people impacted by sexual violence. This requires systems that recognise and respond to the structural vulnerabilities of children and young people, their developmental stage and distinct patterns of disclosure, help-seeking and support needs.

National priorities

- Improve equitable access to specialist sexual assault services for children and young people, including children without a protective parent and young people experiencing barriers to accessing adult services.
- Expand integrated, multidisciplinary wraparound responses for children, young people and families. The practice innovation below identifies how integrated partnerships between specialist sexual assault services and family support organisations can deliver coordinated,

multidisciplinary responses for children and young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours.

- Strengthen national capability to prevent and respond to child sexual exploitation, online sexual abuse, peer sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviours through developmentally appropriate, therapeutic and rights-based approaches.
- Embed Child Rights Impact Assessments in the development, implementation and evaluation of public policy.⁹

Practice Innovation: SASS (Tas) and Mission Australia (Tas) – partnership response to harmful sexual behaviours

The Prevention, Assessment, Support and Treatment (PAST) Program is a statewide, best practice, evidence-based, early intervention program developed by SASS (Tas) and delivered in partnership with Mission Australia for children and young people (aged up to 18 years) who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours (HSB). The partnership integrates specialist clinical interventions with family support, case management and coordinated engagement to provide wrap around, multidisciplinary responses to children, young people, their families and caregivers. The approach balances accountability with healing to reduce immediate risk, support behaviour change, and strengthen the family and community environments that underpin sustainable outcomes.

Evidence demonstrates that intensive, specialist, therapeutic interventions are effective in addressing HSB.¹⁰ These findings are reflected in outcomes from the PAST program. Since its inception PAST has supported positive outcomes for children and young people participating in the program. To date, no child or young person who has completed the program has been re-referred, and parents and carers consistently report that HSB have significantly reduced or ceased following participation in the program.

The PAST Program demonstrates the value of integrated partnerships between specialist sexual assault services and family support organisations in delivering coordinated responses to HSB. The model provides an example of how multidisciplinary capability can improve outcomes for children, young people and families while strengthening system coordination and early intervention.

4. People who use violence

Strengthen earlier intervention for people who have caused or are at risk of causing sexual harm

The Second Action Plan should strengthen Australia's capability to identify and respond earlier to people at risk of using sexual violence across the life course, while maintaining victim survivor safety, rights and accountability as central organising principles. Sexual violence has distinct drivers, dynamics

⁹ Australian Human Rights Commission, [Safeguarding children: A child rights impact assessment tool](#).

¹⁰ Such interventions can support children and families to address the underlying drivers and risks of HSB (such as family violence, a history of sexual victimisation, neglect, and inappropriate exposure to sexual activity or pornography); minimise the stigma associated with HSB; reduce the likelihood of harm to other children, as well as harm to the child who has displayed these behaviours; and to preserve existing family and community relationships and connections. ANROWS, [Good practice in delivering and evaluating interventions for young people with harmful sexual behaviours](#) (2020), p. 8.

and patterns of escalation that require dedicated, evidence-informed early intervention approaches rather than relying solely on broader domestic and family violence or criminal legal responses.

Australia currently has limited pathways for identifying and responding to concerns before sexual harm occurs or escalates. There are few confidential and evidence-informed options for people concerned about their own sexual thoughts or behaviours, family members or partners seeking advice, professionals responding to concerning sexualised or coercive behaviours, or people using sexual violence who do not recognise their behaviour as abusive. This includes limited developmentally appropriate pathways for emerging adults (18–25 years), who frequently fall between child and adult service systems despite evidence identifying this as a critical period for therapeutic intervention and opportunity for behaviour change. Addressing these gaps presents an important opportunity to strengthen Australia's secondary prevention capability across the life course.

Recent research examining policy barriers to child sexual abuse secondary prevention in Australia identified that policy responses have largely prioritised policing and tertiary responses, with comparatively less emphasis on prevention and earlier intervention. It identified several barriers to the development and implementation of secondary prevention policy, including the complexity of child sexual abuse; limited public, professional and political understanding; gaps in epidemiological data; and the emerging nature of the evidence base. The research also identified a growing policy opportunity to strengthen secondary prevention through national and international shifts towards public health approaches to child sexual abuse, increasing policy support for prevention and earlier intervention, and sustained investment in implementation, evaluation and service development.¹¹

The Second Action Plan should strengthen a coordinated public health approach to preventing sexual violence by supporting evidence-informed action across the prevention continuum. This should include sustained investment in secondary prevention, epidemiological data, implementation and evaluation to strengthen Australia's prevention capability and address recognised policy barriers.

National priorities

- Expand evidence-based, specialist interventions for emerging adults (18–25 years) who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours, recognising emerging adulthood as a distinct developmental stage with significant opportunities for prevention, early intervention and behaviour change.
- Expand evidence-informed secondary prevention pathways for people concerned about their own sexually harmful thoughts or behaviours, alongside confidential advice and support for family members, partners and professionals responding to concerning behaviours before harm occurs or escalates.
- Strengthen responses to intimate partner sexual violence by embedding sexual violence expertise within domestic and family violence settings to improve recognition of and response

¹¹ Austin, K., & Salter, M., (2023), [*Policy barriers to child sexual abuse secondary prevention programs in Australia*](#), Journal of Sexual Aggression.

to the distinct dynamics, risk factors and intersections of sexual violence which are frequently under-recognised.¹²

- Develop a comprehensive evidence-based public health model of for the prevention of sexual violence.

5. System integration and workforce

Strengthen national leadership, accountability and implementation of sexual violence reform

Sexual violence is a significant and pervasive form of violence that requires dedicated national leadership within an integrated response to ending gender-based violence. Domestic and family violence, and sexual violence are deeply interconnected and frequently co-occur, however they are not synonymous. Evidence identifies that a substantial proportion of sexual violence is experienced outside of family violence relationships, across the life course and within a wide range of settings, with distinctions in prevalence, patterns of harm, prevention levers, systems responses and recovery needs.¹³

While policy must recognise the significant intersections between domestic and family violence and sexual violence, it must also articulate where sexual violence requires distinct policy attention. The Second Action Plan should reflect the distinct prevalence, patterns of harm, prevention and intervention opportunities, system responses and recovery needs associated with sexual violence while maintaining an integrated approach to gender-based violence. This is essential to ensuring that sexual violence is appropriately understood, prioritised, prevented and responded to across policy and practice, improving the coherence and effectiveness of reform across the full spectrum of sexual violence.

The Second Action Plan provides an opportunity to strengthen the implementation of evidence-informed sexual violence reform. This includes embedding a dedicated sexual violence reform agenda within the Action Plan, strengthening implementation of existing national reforms alongside emerging priorities, enhancing jurisdictional accountability for implementation, and improving coordination across intersecting national policy, including the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse.

National priorities

- Establish a dedicated sexual violence reform agenda within the Second Action Plan, underpinned by clear articulation of the intersections and distinctions between different forms of gender-based violence and supported by robust sexual violence policy architecture.
- Develop nationally coordinated implementation roadmaps that identify jurisdictional responsibilities, milestones, performance measures and public reporting, including implementation of existing national reform priorities. This should include implementation of

¹² Effective reform requires family violence and sexual violence to be understood as distinct but intersecting policy domains. Co-occurrence of sexual violence and family violence is associated with heightened risks severe harm and lethality, including revictimisation, intergenerational harm and trauma, non-fatal strangulation, sexual exploitation, child sexual harm and other forms of child maltreatment, coercive control including sexual coercion, intimate partner homicide and filicide and victim suicide. Despite these elevated risks, sexual violence is often under-identified in family violence responses.

¹³ See Sexual Assault Support Service (June 2026), [Strengthening Sexual Violence Policy Architecture in Tasmania](#).

the recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission, *Safe, Informed, Supported: Reforming Justice Responses to Sexual Violence* report.

- Invest in implementation capability across governments and service systems including through evidence translation, workforce capability, implementation guidance, knowledge sharing and continuous quality improvement.
- Strengthen consistent approaches to data collection, outcomes measurement, evaluation and investment transparency to support accountability and continuous improvement.
- Establish national principles, practice standards and evaluation frameworks for lived experience engagement within policy, sector, service and practice reforms to ensure that it is safe, ethical, representative, appropriately resourced, trauma-informed and aligned with best practice.

Recognise and resource specialist capability to support reform implementation

Successful implementation of the National Plan depends on a specialist sexual violence sector with the expertise, leadership and capacity to strengthen responses across the broader service system. In addition to providing specialist support to people impacted by sexual violence, specialist sexual assault services play a critical role in prevention and practice leadership, workforce development, secondary consultation, research and evaluation, policy development, implementation support, and responding to emerging reforms and priorities. These functions strengthen the quality, consistency and sustainability of responses across jurisdictions and ensure that evidence is translated into policy and practice. Delivering these functions depends on a sustainable specialist workforce with the capacity to respond to increasing demand, growing practice complexity and evolving forms of sexual violence, while providing leadership and capability across the broader service system.

Current commissioning models have not kept pace with this expanded role. Funding remains predominantly oriented towards direct service delivery and does not consistently recognise or resource the broader functions required to enable policy outcomes. Sustaining these functions also requires investment in a skilled specialist workforce with the capacity to respond to increasing demand, growing clinical complexity and evolving forms of sexual violence. Future commissioning approaches should recognise specialist sexual assault services as both providers of direct support and critical implementation partners, with funding models that reflect the full scope of specialist functions and workforce capability required to deliver sustainable reform.

National priorities

- Reform commissioning and funding models to recognise and resource the full scope of functions performed by specialist sexual assault services as providers of both direct services and critical system capability across the prevention continuum.
- Provide sustainable and flexible investment that enables specialist sexual assault services to expand and adapt their service models, specialist practice and implementation capability in response to emerging evidence, national reform priorities and evolving patterns of sexual violence.

- Invest in specialist practice leadership to support evidence translation, practice development, secondary consultation and the timely development of guidance in response to emerging and evolving forms of sexual violence.
- Develop a national sexual violence workforce strategy that spans the scope of the prevention continuum. This should include a focus on rural and remote contexts, broader workforce development, and strengthening the primary prevention workforce, including through the establishment of minimum primary prevention capabilities.