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Submission: The Second Action Plan to End Violence against Women and Children

Executive Summary

Top End Two Ways Services (TETWS) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Second Action Plan (2027–2032) under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032.

Violence against women and children remains one of Australia's most significant social, health and human rights challenges. While important progress has been made, the Northern Territory continues to experience disproportionately high rates of domestic, family and sexual violence, highlighting the need for place-based responses that recognise the unique circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, regional centres and remote Australia.

TETWS believes the Second Action Plan should build upon the foundations of the National Plan by shifting from fragmented and reactive responses towards a coordinated system that prioritises prevention, early intervention, cultural safety, community leadership and long-term healing.

Drawing on our workforce development and community engagement across urban, regional and remote Northern Territory communities, we offer the following recommendations.

1. Place victim-survivors at the centre of all responses

Victim-survivors should experience coordinated, trauma-informed and culturally safe services that reduce fragmentation, improve access and support healing over the long term. Recovery should extend beyond crisis intervention to include housing, wellbeing, connection to culture, family, community and ongoing recovery supports.

2. Invest in prevention and early intervention

Australia cannot end violence by responding only after harm has occurred. Sustained investment is required in respectful relationships education, community capability, parenting support, workforce development and Aboriginal-led prevention initiatives that strengthen protective factors and reduce the drivers of violence.

3. Recognise children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right

Children require dedicated responses that recognise the impacts of violence on development, health, education and lifelong wellbeing. Early intervention, trauma-informed practice, culturally grounded



healing and respectful relationships education should become central components of Australia's prevention strategy.

4. Strengthen responses to people who use violence

Greater emphasis should be placed on early identification, accountability and evidence-informed behaviour change while maintaining victim-survivor safety as the highest priority. Responses should include culturally safe interventions, stronger workforce capability and increased opportunities for early engagement before violence escalates.

5. Build an integrated and sustainable system

Victim-survivors should experience one coordinated service system rather than multiple disconnected services. Too often, services are funded to operate beside each other rather than together. Victim-survivors pay the price by repeating their story over and over. Better coordination is not simply an administrative improvement—it is a safety issue.

6. Invest in workforce capability

A skilled, culturally safe and trauma-informed workforce is fundamental to achieving the objectives of the National Plan. Ongoing professional development, supervision, reflective practice, worker wellbeing and Aboriginal workforce development should become national priorities.

7. Support Aboriginal self-determination

Aboriginal communities are best placed to design, lead and evaluate solutions that reflect their cultures, strengths and aspirations. Long-term investment in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal-led partnerships is essential to achieving sustainable change.

8. Move from short-term projects to long-term investment

Ending violence requires sustained commitment. Multi-year funding agreements, community-led implementation and long-term evaluation will produce stronger outcomes than fragmented short-term initiatives.

Conclusion

Top End Two Ways Services believes Australia has an opportunity to strengthen the Second Action Plan by placing greater emphasis on prevention, Aboriginal leadership, cultural safety, workforce capability and integrated service delivery.

The recommendations contained within this submission are informed by practical experience working alongside Aboriginal communities, government agencies, community organisations and frontline practitioners throughout the Northern Territory. They are offered in the spirit of partnership and with a shared commitment to creating safer women, safer children, stronger families and healthier communities across Australia.

Our Overall Position

TETWS believes the Second Action Plan should be guided by five practical principles:



1. Prevention must be treated as core business

Crisis services remain essential, but prevention and early intervention need stable funding, clear accountability and the same policy attention as response services.

2. Aboriginal leadership must shape implementation

Self-determination is not an additional program feature. Aboriginal organisations and communities need real authority over priorities, local design, delivery and evaluation.

3. Children and young people must be recognised in their own right

Policy and services must respond to children's own experiences of violence, development, safety and recovery, while supporting the non-offending parent and family.

4. A plan is only as strong as the workforce delivering it

Workers need practical training, good supervision, manageable conditions and access to specialist advice. In regional and remote areas, retention and local workforce development are central to continuity of care.

5. Communities are partners, not end users

The strongest responses are built with the people who will use and deliver them. Local knowledge should influence decisions from the outset, not be added through consultation at the end.

About Top End Two Ways Services

Top End Two Ways Services (TETWS) is an Aboriginal-controlled Northern Territory organisation working across prevention, early intervention, workforce development, organisational capability and community strengthening. Our Two Ways approach brings Aboriginal cultural knowledge together with contemporary professional practice, with self-determination, respect and practical partnership at its centre.

We work with Aboriginal communities, government agencies, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, non-government organisations, schools, health services and community providers. This work spans domestic, family and sexual violence prevention and response, trauma-informed practice, cultural safety, child protection, leadership, governance and community wellbeing.

Because our work sits between policy, frontline practice and community-led delivery, we see where good policy translates well and where systems create avoidable barriers. We use that perspective to help organisations turn broad commitments into practical changes that make sense locally.

TETWS designs and delivers professional development for people working in health, education, justice, housing, disability, child and family services, local government and community organisations. The focus is practical: building confidence, reflective practice and sound judgement that workers can use in their day-to-day roles.

Culture is central to this work. Connection to family, Country, language, Elders and community strengthens identity, belonging, resilience and healing. Aboriginal people must therefore have



authority in the design, delivery and evaluation of responses, rather than being consulted after key decisions have already been made.

Our experience across urban, regional and remote NT settings also gives us a practical understanding of distance, workforce turnover, housing pressure, limited service availability and the continuing effects of intergenerational trauma and systemic disadvantage. These conditions shape whether a policy can be implemented, not just how it is described.

This submission draws on that implementation experience. It reflects what TETWS has learned from working alongside communities and organisations to strengthen local capability, support Aboriginal leadership and improve how services respond to women, children and families.



Priority Area 1 – Victim-survivors

Across our work in the Northern Territory, TETWS sees both the strength of Aboriginal communities and the practical barriers that prevent victim-survivors from getting help when they need it. Distance, limited housing, staff turnover, concerns about confidentiality and past experiences with government systems can all shape whether a person feels safe to seek support.

For many victim-survivors, particularly Aboriginal women, children and families living in remote, regional and urban communities, recovery is not simply about escaping violence. It is about restoring safety, dignity, cultural identity, connection to family and community, and hope for the future. The Second Action Plan presents an opportunity to strengthen responses that recognise healing as a long-term journey rather than a single service intervention.

Creating responses that improve safety, wellbeing, healing and recovery

The biggest practical gain would come from services working as one system around the victim-survivor. Police, health, housing, child protection, legal services and specialist domestic and family violence providers often hold different parts of the picture. When they work separately, people must navigate the gaps and repeat distressing information to each new service.

Governments should prioritise integrated service models that place the victim-survivor at the centre of decision making. This includes coordinated case management, shared risk assessment processes, timely information sharing where appropriate, and stronger collaboration between specialist and universal services.

Healing should also be recognised as extending beyond crisis intervention. Long-term investment is needed in culturally safe healing programs, peer support, counselling, family strengthening initiatives and community-led wellbeing programs that recognise the impacts of trauma, grief, loss and ongoing disadvantage.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, healing is strengthened through connection to culture, Country, language, Elders and community. Services should support these protective factors rather than viewing them as optional additions to mainstream responses.

Improving early access to support

Victim-survivors frequently delay seeking support because of fear, shame, stigma, previous negative experiences with services, concerns about child removal, housing insecurity, financial dependence, and fear of retaliation from the person using violence. These barriers are often intensified in regional and remote communities where privacy is limited and services may be scarce.

In a small NT community, seeking help may also mean finding transport, leaving Country, waiting for a visiting service or approaching a worker who knows the family. Safety planning must account for these realities, including limited phone coverage, overcrowded housing and the difficulty of keeping movements confidential.

Improving early intervention requires increasing opportunities for people to seek support before violence reaches crisis point. Community education, culturally appropriate information, trusted local



workers and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations all play a critical role in helping individuals recognise abuse and seek assistance earlier.

Universal services including schools, early childhood settings, health services, community organisations and workplaces should receive ongoing training to recognise the indicators of domestic, family and sexual violence and respond safely to disclosures. Many victim-survivors first disclose to someone they already know and trust rather than to a specialist service.

For example, an Aboriginal health worker may notice that a patient has become more isolated, no longer controls her own phone or money, or is repeatedly missing appointments. With training, a private place to talk and a clear referral pathway, that worker can open the door to support without forcing a disclosure or increasing risk.

Investment in workforce capability is therefore an investment in earlier intervention.

Responding to coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse

TETWS supports greater national recognition of coercive control as a pattern of behaviour designed to dominate, isolate and control victim-survivors. Physical violence is often only one aspect of a broader pattern of abuse.

Service systems, legal responses and workforce development should reflect contemporary understandings of coercive control, recognising emotional abuse, financial abuse, social isolation, intimidation, stalking and ongoing psychological harm as significant forms of violence.

Technology-facilitated abuse is becoming increasingly common and includes surveillance through mobile devices, social media harassment, tracking applications, financial monitoring, image-based abuse and ongoing digital intimidation. Responses must evolve alongside technology.

The Second Action Plan should invest in workforce capability, community education and practical resources that help professionals and victim-survivors recognise technology-facilitated abuse and develop appropriate safety planning strategies. Digital safety planning should become routine practice across specialist services.

Addressing the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Despite significant national investment, substantial gaps remain in meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors.

Aboriginal communities continue to experience higher rates of violence while also facing additional barriers to accessing culturally safe services. Many communities remain underserved, particularly across remote areas of the Northern Territory where travel distances, workforce shortages and limited infrastructure reduce access to specialist support.

Responses must move beyond consultation towards genuine Aboriginal leadership and shared decision making. Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations are uniquely positioned to deliver culturally safe, place-based responses because they are embedded within communities, understand local cultural protocols and maintain trusted relationships.



Governments should increase long-term investment in Aboriginal-led organisations to deliver prevention, early intervention, crisis response, healing and workforce development. Short-term funding cycles reduce continuity of care, undermine workforce retention and limit opportunities for sustainable community capacity building.

Policies should also recognise the diversity of Aboriginal communities. There is no single Aboriginal experience. Programs must be flexible enough to reflect local cultures, languages, governance structures and community priorities.

Key Recommendations

Top End Two Ways Services recommends that the Second Action Plan:

- Invest in integrated, victim-survivor-centred service systems that reduce fragmentation and improve coordination.
- Expand culturally safe, trauma-informed healing and recovery services, including long-term community-led healing programs.
- Strengthen early intervention by increasing community education and workforce capability across universal and specialist services.
- Recognise coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse as core priorities requiring workforce development, public education and strengthened safety planning.
- Increase long-term investment in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to deliver culturally safe prevention, response and recovery services.
- Support place-based solutions that are designed with communities rather than imposed upon them.
- Strengthen access to specialist services across remote and regional Australia through sustainable workforce investment and innovative service delivery models.
- Embed cultural safety, self-determination and lived experience within policy development, program design and service delivery.

Implementation

Implementation should begin through regional partnerships in which governments, Aboriginal organisations, specialist services and local providers agree on referral pathways, risk assessment, information sharing and measures of success. These arrangements should be tested with victim-survivors and adapted before being expanded.

Conclusion

Victim-survivors should not have to fit their lives around a fragmented service system. The Second Action Plan can make a practical difference by joining up support, funding recovery beyond the immediate crisis and trusting local organisations to shape responses with their communities.



For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this work must be led with communities and grounded in culture, local authority and long-term relationships. Those are foundations for safety and healing, not optional additions to a mainstream model.



Priority Area 2 – Prevention and Early Intervention

Prevention cannot sit at the edge of the Second Action Plan. Crisis responses remain essential, but Australia will not end violence by acting only after serious harm has occurred. Earlier work must help people recognise warning signs, strengthen protective relationships and challenge the attitudes and conditions that allow violence to take hold.

As an Aboriginal-controlled organisation working throughout the Northern Territory, TETWS believes prevention must be community-led, culturally informed and embedded across all stages of life. Prevention is not the responsibility of one sector alone. It requires coordinated action by governments, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), schools, workplaces, health services, justice agencies, sporting organisations, faith groups, community leaders and families.

Preventing violence through community capability

The clearest opportunity is to build the confidence and capability of families, organisations and communities before harmful behaviour becomes entrenched.

Communities already possess significant strengths, cultural knowledge and protective factors. Prevention initiatives should build on these strengths rather than focusing solely on deficits or risk.

Programs that strengthen respectful relationships, emotional literacy, cultural identity, resilience, parenting confidence, leadership, conflict resolution and community connection contribute to reducing the conditions in which violence develops.

For Aboriginal communities, prevention is strengthened through connection to culture, Country, language, Elders and community leadership. These are not additional components of prevention—they are protective factors that support wellbeing, belonging and resilience.

Governments should invest in long-term community development rather than short-term awareness campaigns. Sustainable prevention requires trusted relationships, local leadership and community ownership.

This is particularly important in remote NT communities. A one-off fly-in session is unlikely to change behaviour if it is not connected to local leaders, delivered in a way that makes sense in language and culture, and reinforced over time by people the community trusts.

Strengthening prevention across every level of society

Violence against women and children is driven by complex social, cultural and structural factors. Preventing violence therefore requires action across individual, community, organisational, institutional and societal levels.

At the individual level, prevention should begin in early childhood by supporting healthy emotional development, respectful relationships and positive parenting.

At the family and community level, initiatives should strengthen protective factors, promote healthy relationships, reduce social isolation and increase opportunities for community-led learning and healing.



Schools play a critical role by embedding respectful relationships education, emotional literacy, conflict resolution, consent education and digital citizenship throughout children's education rather than treating these topics as one-off programs.

Workplaces also have an important prevention role. Employers should foster respectful workplace cultures, understand domestic and family violence as a workplace issue, meet their positive duty under the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 and ensure managers are equipped to respond appropriately when concerns arise.

At a broader societal level, governments should continue challenging harmful gender stereotypes, discrimination, racism and attitudes that normalise violence while promoting equality, respect and inclusion.

Helping communities recognise harmful attitudes and behaviours

Many people do not initially recognise controlling or abusive behaviour because it has become normalised within relationships or communities.

Governments should invest in practical community education that helps people identify early warning signs including coercive control, emotional abuse, financial abuse, social isolation, intimidation and technology-facilitated abuse.

Education should extend beyond victim-survivors to include families, friends, neighbours, sporting clubs, workplaces and community organisations so that communities are better equipped to safely recognise concerns, respond appropriately and encourage earlier help-seeking.

Training should also be expanded across universal services including health, education, child and family services, disability services, aged care, housing and community organisations. These sectors often have regular contact with individuals experiencing violence long before they engage with specialist domestic and family violence services.

Building workforce confidence across these settings creates more opportunities for early identification and intervention.

Effective prevention and early intervention approaches

Evidence and practice demonstrate that prevention is most effective when it is sustained, culturally relevant and delivered across multiple settings.

TETWS has found that community-based learning, culturally safe workforce development and Two Ways approaches that combine professional knowledge with Aboriginal cultural knowledge create stronger engagement and improved outcomes.

Promising approaches include:

- Respectful relationships education beginning in early childhood and continuing throughout schooling.
- Trauma-informed practice across all universal and specialist services.
- Community-led education programs delivered through trusted Aboriginal organisations.



- Workforce capability development that equips professionals to recognise and respond to early indicators of violence.
- Parenting support and family strengthening initiatives that promote safe, nurturing relationships.
- Men's engagement programs that promote healthy masculinity, accountability and respectful relationships.
- Healing programs that strengthen culture, identity, resilience and connection.
- Community conversations that reduce stigma and encourage earlier help-seeking.

Importantly, prevention initiatives require long-term investment. Short funding cycles undermine relationships, workforce stability and the sustained behavioural change that prevention seeks to achieve.

Emerging issues for prevention

The Second Action Plan should respond proactively to emerging forms of harm that continue to evolve.

Technology has transformed how coercive control and abuse occur. Young people are increasingly exposed to harmful online content, image-based abuse, cyberbullying, online exploitation and unhealthy relationship messages through digital platforms.

Artificial intelligence, digital surveillance technologies and increasingly sophisticated methods of online monitoring present new risks for victim-survivors and require ongoing policy attention.

The Second Action Plan should also recognise the unique challenges experienced by regional, rural and remote communities, including workforce shortages, service accessibility, housing pressures and the impacts of natural disasters and emergencies, which can increase vulnerability to domestic, family and sexual violence.

Prevention strategies must remain adaptable to changing social conditions while ensuring communities have the capability to respond effectively.

Key Recommendations

Top End Two Ways Services recommends that the Second Action Plan:

- Prioritise prevention as a long-term national investment alongside crisis response.
- Increase funding for community-led, culturally safe prevention initiatives delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- Embed respectful relationships, emotional literacy and consent education across all stages of schooling.
- Strengthen workforce capability across universal services to recognise and respond to early indicators of violence.



- Expand trauma-informed and culturally safe practice across government, community and non-government sectors.
- Invest in parenting support, family strengthening and community leadership initiatives that build protective factors.
- Increase public education regarding coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse and healthy relationships.
- Require online platforms to apply safety-by-design principles, strengthen reporting and removal pathways, and make age-appropriate prevention information easier to access.
- Support evidence-informed programs that engage men and boys in promoting respectful relationships and preventing violence.
- Provide longer-term funding models that enable sustained prevention efforts and meaningful community partnerships.
- Ensure prevention initiatives are place-based, culturally responsive and co-designed with Aboriginal communities.

Implementation

Implementation should be funded through multi-year regional partnerships, with local organisations able to adapt delivery to language, culture, age and setting. National consistency should sit in the outcomes and safeguards, not in requiring every community to use the same program model.

Conclusion

Prevention will only work if it becomes sustained, ordinary work across schools, services, workplaces and communities—not a series of short campaigns. The Second Action Plan should give local partners the time and certainty needed to build that work properly.

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, locally led prevention can draw on cultural strength, trusted relationships and community responsibility. Investing in those foundations offers a realistic path to safer families and intergenerational change.



Priority Area 3 – Children and Young People in Their Own Right

TETWS strongly supports recognising children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right. Children have too often been treated as an extension of the adult victim-survivor's experience, even though they have their own safety, developmental and recovery needs.

Children do not need to be the direct target of violence to experience significant harm. Living in environments characterised by fear, coercive control, intimidation or domestic and family violence affects brain development, emotional regulation, physical health, learning, behaviour, relationships and lifelong wellbeing. The Second Action Plan provides an important opportunity to place children and young people at the centre of prevention, response and recovery efforts.

Improving safety, recovery and wellbeing

For children and young people, recovery begins with safety, stable relationships and support that arrives early enough to make a difference.

Children recover best when surrounded by trusted adults, safe homes, positive relationships, consistent education, strong communities and opportunities to reconnect with culture, identity and belonging. Recovery should not be limited to counselling services alone but should include holistic approaches that strengthen families, build resilience and restore protective factors.

Governments should invest in trauma-informed and culturally safe services that understand child development, recognise the impacts of adverse childhood experiences and provide long-term support rather than short-term crisis responses.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, healing is strengthened through connection to family, Elders, Country, language and culture. These cultural strengths should be recognised as essential protective factors within policy, funding and service delivery.

Strengthening recognition and response across systems

Children often interact with a wide range of adults before concerns are formally identified. Early childhood educators, teachers, health professionals, youth workers, sporting coaches, disability services, community workers and extended family members all have opportunities to recognise changes in behaviour, wellbeing or development that may indicate exposure to violence.

Governments should strengthen workforce capability across universal services to improve understanding of child development, trauma, domestic and family violence, coercive control and culturally safe responses.

Children frequently communicate distress through behaviour rather than words. Withdrawal, aggression, anxiety, poor concentration, sleep difficulties, developmental regression, school disengagement or risk-taking behaviours should not be viewed simply as behavioural problems but as possible indicators of trauma requiring careful assessment and support.

A teacher who notices a child becoming withdrawn, tired or unusually reactive should be able to seek advice and make a supported referral, rather than treating the change only as a discipline or attendance issue. In remote areas, the school may be one of the few services with regular contact, so access to specialist consultation is vital.



Greater collaboration between education, health, child protection, specialist domestic and family violence services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations will improve earlier identification and coordinated responses.

Responding to children and young people who use violence or display harmful sexual behaviours

Children and young people who use violence or display harmful sexual behaviours require responses that prioritise accountability while recognising that these behaviours often emerge from complex experiences including trauma, family violence, neglect, disrupted attachment, exposure to harmful behaviours or unmet developmental needs.

Early intervention is essential. Responses should be therapeutic, evidence-informed and developmentally appropriate while maintaining the safety of victims and other family members.

Programs should focus on helping children understand emotions, develop empathy, build healthy relationships, strengthen problem-solving skills and learn non-violent ways of responding to conflict.

Families should also receive support, recognising that sustainable behaviour change often requires whole-of-family interventions alongside specialist therapeutic services.

Responding to emerging forms of harm

Technology is changing the way children and young people experience relationships, communicate and encounter harm.

The Second Action Plan should address technology-facilitated abuse affecting children and young people, including cyberbullying, image-based abuse, online grooming, coercive control through digital platforms, exposure to violent or misogynistic online content and increasing pressures associated with social media.

Young people also require greater education regarding consent, respectful relationships, healthy online behaviours, digital safety and recognising coercive or controlling behaviours within peer and dating relationships.

Schools, families and communities require practical resources that help adults understand these emerging risks and confidently support children and young people navigating increasingly complex digital environments.

Meaningfully involving children and young people

Children and young people should not only be recipients of services—they should also be recognised as important contributors to the design of policies and programs that affect them.

Meaningful participation requires creating safe, age-appropriate and culturally respectful opportunities for children and young people to share their experiences, ideas and aspirations.

Engagement should extend beyond one-off consultation activities to include ongoing youth advisory groups, school-based engagement, community-led youth forums and partnerships with Aboriginal young people to inform service design.



Listening to children improves policy, strengthens services and demonstrates respect for children's rights while ensuring responses remain relevant to their lived experiences.

Investing in prevention through childhood

The strongest opportunity to prevent future violence begins during childhood.

Governments should invest in programs that promote emotional literacy, respectful relationships, resilience, problem solving, positive identity, cultural pride and help-seeking from the earliest years of life.

Respectful relationships education should be embedded across the education system and reinforced through families and communities. Programs should recognise children's strengths while building confidence, empathy, communication skills and healthy conflict resolution.

For Aboriginal children, culturally grounded learning strengthens identity, belonging and resilience. Community-led initiatives that combine cultural knowledge with evidence-informed wellbeing approaches provide important opportunities to interrupt intergenerational cycles of violence while strengthening protective factors.

Key Recommendations

Top End Two Ways Services recommends that the Second Action Plan:

- Recognise children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right across policy, funding and service responses.
- Increase investment in trauma-informed, child-centred and culturally safe healing and recovery services.
- Strengthen workforce capability across education, health, community and child and family services to recognise and respond to children affected by violence.
- Embed respectful relationships, emotional literacy, consent education and digital citizenship throughout childhood and adolescence.
- Expand evidence-informed early intervention programs for children and young people displaying harmful behaviours while maintaining victim safety.
- Increase support for families through parenting programs, family strengthening initiatives and therapeutic services.
- Recognise culture, identity, connection to Country and community leadership as protective factors for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Improve coordinated responses across education, health, justice, child protection and specialist domestic and family violence services.
- Ensure children and young people are meaningfully involved in shaping policies, programs and services that affect them.



- Invest in long-term prevention initiatives that strengthen resilience, belonging and positive childhood development.

Implementation

Implementation should bring education, health, child and family services, specialist services and Aboriginal organisations together around clear local pathways. Children and young people should help design those pathways, with safe participation methods and feedback on what changed as a result.

Conclusion

Children and young people are not passive witnesses. Violence can shape their health, learning, relationships and sense of safety long after the immediate event. Recognising their own experience is essential to recovery and to breaking intergenerational patterns.

The Second Action Plan should make children's safety and recovery visible in funding, practice standards and accountability. Every child should be able to grow up safe, connected to family and culture, and supported to thrive.



Priority Area 4 – People Who Use Violence

Ending violence requires earlier and more consistent work with people who use violence or are at risk of doing so. That work must never lose sight of the central test: whether the intervention makes victim-survivors and children safer.

The Second Action Plan should strengthen Australia's capacity to identify, respond to and reduce the use of violence through earlier intervention, increased accountability, culturally safe practice and evidence-informed behaviour change. Responding effectively to people who use violence is not about shifting attention away from victim-survivors. Rather, it is about addressing the source of the harm and reducing the likelihood of future violence.

As an Aboriginal-controlled organisation working across the Northern Territory, TETWS believes responses must recognise the diversity of people who use violence and avoid one-size-fits-all approaches. Effective interventions require an understanding of trauma, culture, community context, gender inequality, childhood experiences and the broader social determinants that influence behaviour, while maintaining clear expectations of personal responsibility and accountability.

Strengthening early identification and intervention

Opportunities to intervene often occur long before violence reaches crisis point. Family members, friends, employers, schools, sporting organisations, health professionals, justice agencies and community leaders may all observe behaviours that indicate an increased risk of violence.

Governments should invest in building the confidence of universal services to safely recognise warning signs such as controlling behaviour, escalating jealousy, intimidation, emotional abuse, social isolation, misuse of technology, threats, stalking and patterns of coercive control.

Early intervention should not rely solely on criminal justice responses. Community-based pathways that encourage help-seeking, challenge harmful attitudes and provide opportunities for behaviour change before violence escalates should be expanded.

Where risks are identified, interventions should be coordinated, evidence-informed and accompanied by ongoing risk assessment to ensure victim-survivor safety remains central to decision making.

Supporting accountability and behaviour change

Behaviour change is most effective when individuals accept responsibility for their actions and understand the harm caused to victim-survivors, children, families and communities.

Programs should challenge attitudes that excuse, minimise or justify violence while supporting participants to develop emotional regulation, respectful communication, healthy relationship skills and non-violent responses to conflict.

Behaviour change interventions should never be viewed as a substitute for accountability. Participation in a program does not, in itself, indicate reduced risk. Ongoing assessment, coordinated information sharing and victim-survivor safety planning remain essential throughout any intervention.

Where appropriate, responses should include opportunities for individuals to reconnect with positive cultural identity, community responsibility and healthy role models. For Aboriginal participants,



culturally grounded approaches developed in partnership with Aboriginal organisations can strengthen engagement while maintaining clear expectations regarding accountability.

Responding safely across families, communities and workplaces

Ending violence requires communities to feel confident in recognising concerns and responding safely.

Families, Elders, community leaders, employers, educators, health professionals and service providers all have opportunities to influence attitudes, encourage early help-seeking and support safe referral pathways.

Governments should increase investment in workforce capability so professionals understand how to respond safely when concerns arise without placing victim-survivors at greater risk.

Workplaces also play an important role. Managers should understand domestic and family violence as a workplace issue, recognise concerning behaviours, support affected employees and respond appropriately where an employee may be using violence or engaging in coercive or controlling behaviours.

Communities should be supported to promote respectful relationships, healthy masculinity, positive fatherhood and non-violent conflict resolution while reducing stigma associated with seeking support before violence escalates.

Strengthening culturally safe responses

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to experience disproportionate impacts from domestic, family and sexual violence while often facing barriers to accessing culturally safe services.

Responses for Aboriginal people who use violence should be delivered, wherever possible, through Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Aboriginal-led partnerships that understand local culture, history and community dynamics.

Culturally safe practice does not mean lowering expectations of accountability. Rather, it means recognising that meaningful behaviour change is more likely when interventions are respectful, locally relevant and delivered in ways that strengthen identity, belonging and responsibility.

Programs should incorporate trauma-informed practice, recognise the impacts of intergenerational trauma and colonisation, and build on cultural strengths without excusing or minimising violent behaviour.

The Second Action Plan should also recognise the unique challenges experienced in regional and remote communities where limited service availability, workforce shortages and geographic isolation reduce opportunities for timely intervention.

Outside Darwin and larger centres, a person may have no timely access to a suitable behaviour change program, or may need to travel significant distances to attend. The result is a missed window for intervention. Regional commissioning should allow for outreach, locally supported delivery and continuity when specialist staff are not based in the community.



Building a stronger evidence base

Australia requires greater investment in evaluating interventions for people who use violence to better understand which approaches produce sustained behaviour change and improved safety outcomes.

Evaluation should measure more than program completion. Success should be assessed through reductions in reoffending, improved victim-survivor safety, sustained behaviour change, increased accountability and strengthened family and community wellbeing.

Research should also expand the evidence base regarding culturally grounded approaches developed in partnership with Aboriginal communities, recognising that these programs remain underrepresented despite their importance in many regions.

Key Recommendations

Top End Two Ways Services recommends that the Second Action Plan:

- Increase investment in early identification and intervention for people at risk of using violence.
- Strengthen workforce capability across universal and specialist services to recognise and respond safely to concerning behaviours.
- Expand evidence-informed behaviour change programs that prioritise victim-survivor safety and ongoing risk assessment.
- Promote approaches that combine accountability with opportunities to develop respectful relationships, emotional regulation and healthy conflict resolution skills.
- Support Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to design and deliver culturally safe interventions for Aboriginal participants.
- Increase investment in programs that engage men and boys in preventing violence, promoting respectful relationships and modelling positive masculinity.
- Improve collaboration between justice, health, child protection, community services and specialist domestic and family violence providers to ensure coordinated responses.
- Expand research and evaluation to identify effective interventions, particularly within Aboriginal and remote community settings.
- Strengthen responses to coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse and emerging patterns of violence through workforce development and public education.
- Ensure all interventions maintain victim-survivor safety, accountability and ongoing risk management as their primary focus.

Implementation

Implementation should combine accessible entry points, specialist risk oversight and regular review of victim-survivor safety. Regional models should be commissioned with Aboriginal organisations from the outset and evaluated on safety and sustained behaviour change, not attendance alone.



Conclusion

Australia must respond to the behaviour causing harm, not only its consequences. Earlier intervention, firm accountability and careful risk management can reduce further violence, provided victim-survivor and child safety remains the measure of every decision.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, accountability can be strengthened through approaches that are locally credible, culturally grounded and connected to positive community leadership. This requires Aboriginal organisations to be funded as design and delivery partners, not brought in only to improve engagement.



Priority Area 5 – System Integration and Workforce

Australia already has many committed services and practitioners. The problem is that they are too often expected to operate through separate programs, funding arrangements and information systems. A more connected response, backed by a capable and supported workforce, would make a direct difference to safety and recovery.

Victim-survivors, children and families often deal with police, health, housing, child protection, justice and specialist services at the same time. When those services work separately, people repeat their story, risks are assessed differently and opportunities to act early are missed.

The Second Action Plan should prioritise stronger collaboration between services while investing in the workforce capability necessary to deliver culturally safe, trauma-informed and person-centred responses across Australia.

Building an integrated and coordinated service system

People affected by violence should experience one connected system, not a collection of separate programs.

Integrated responses require shared responsibility across governments, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), specialist services, universal services and community organisations.

Governments should strengthen regional and local service coordination by supporting multidisciplinary partnerships, shared planning, coordinated case management and consistent approaches to risk assessment, referral and safety planning.

In practice, this could mean a standing regional group with agreed decision-making authority, clear escalation points and one coordinated safety plan. The victim-survivor should know who is leading the response and should not have to restart the process each time another service becomes involved.

Victim-survivors should not bear the responsibility of navigating complex systems or repeatedly recounting traumatic experiences to multiple agencies. Information sharing arrangements, where lawful, appropriate and centred on safety, should reduce duplication while protecting privacy and confidentiality.

System integration should also include stronger collaboration between prevention, early intervention, crisis response, recovery and healing services, recognising that these components are interconnected rather than separate stages of intervention.

Strengthening workforce capability

Good policy depends on the people who put it into practice. Workers need the knowledge, confidence and support to make safe decisions, particularly when risk is complex or specialist help is not immediately available.

Workforce development should extend beyond specialist domestic and family violence services to include professionals working across health, education, child protection, disability, housing, justice, community services, local government, early childhood and workplaces.



Training should build practical capability in:

- Domestic, family and sexual violence dynamics.
- Coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse.
- Trauma-informed practice.
- Cultural safety and cultural humility.
- Risk assessment and safety planning.
- Responding to disclosures.
- Child-centred practice.
- Working with people who use violence.
- Professional boundaries and ethical decision making.
- Vicarious trauma, reflective practice and worker wellbeing.

Training should be ongoing rather than one-off and supported by supervision, mentoring, communities of practice and continuous professional development.

Growing and retaining the workforce

Across the Northern Territory and many regional areas of Australia, workforce shortages continue to limit service accessibility and continuity.

In small NT teams, a vacancy or staff departure can remove an entire local function and disrupt relationships built over years. Workforce planning must therefore include local training pathways, handover arrangements, cultural and clinical supervision, and practical support for staff who work across large distances with limited backup.

Recruitment alone will not solve these challenges. Governments should invest in strategies that attract, retain and support workers over the long term.

This includes competitive employment conditions, structured professional development, cultural supervision, reflective supervision, wellbeing initiatives, career pathways and leadership opportunities.

Supporting Aboriginal workforce development should be recognised as a national priority.

Aboriginal practitioners bring cultural knowledge, trusted community relationships, language skills and lived understanding that significantly strengthen service delivery. Increasing Aboriginal representation across all levels of the workforce—including frontline practice, leadership, management, research and policy—will improve cultural safety and service effectiveness.

Investment should also support community-based workforce development, recognising that locally trained workers are more likely to remain within their communities and provide continuity of care.



Improving collaboration across sectors

The Second Action Plan should encourage stronger partnerships between governments, ACCOs, specialist services, universal services, education providers, health organisations, police, justice agencies, community organisations and researchers.

Collaboration requires shared understanding, clear roles, consistent communication and joint responsibility for outcomes.

Governments should invest in local partnership models that support collaborative planning, multidisciplinary problem solving, joint training and shared learning.

Supporting inclusive, accessible and culturally safe services

Many victim-survivors continue to experience barriers when accessing services due to culture, language, disability, geographic location, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, immigration status or previous experiences with government systems.

Specialist and universal services need practical support to improve cultural safety, accessibility and inclusion.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, culturally safe services are those that recognise self-determination, respect local cultural authority, engage communities as genuine partners and build on cultural strengths rather than deficits.

Governments should increase investment in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, recognising their critical role in delivering trusted, culturally responsive services and workforce development.

Flexible funding models should enable locally designed solutions rather than requiring communities to adapt to rigid program models developed elsewhere.

Strengthening evidence, evaluation and implementation

Australia requires stronger evidence regarding what works across diverse communities, particularly within regional, remote and Aboriginal settings.

Evaluation should focus not only on activity measures but also on long-term outcomes including safety, wellbeing, healing, prevention, workforce capability and community capacity.

Governments should support partnerships between Aboriginal organisations, researchers and communities to strengthen evidence while respecting Indigenous Data Sovereignty and community ownership of knowledge.

Implementation should also include mechanisms that enable continuous learning, adaptation and improvement rather than relying solely on periodic reviews.

Key Recommendations

Top End Two Ways Services recommends that the Second Action Plan:



- Strengthen integrated service delivery through coordinated case management, shared planning and multidisciplinary partnerships.
- Improve information sharing arrangements that prioritise victim-survivor safety while protecting privacy and confidentiality.
- Expand workforce capability across specialist and universal services through ongoing, practical and evidence-informed professional development.
- Embed trauma-informed practice, cultural safety and child-centred approaches as core workforce competencies.
- Increase investment in Aboriginal workforce development, leadership pathways and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- Improve workforce retention through supervision, mentoring, wellbeing initiatives, career progression and sustainable funding.
- Support locally led partnership models that strengthen collaboration between governments, ACCOs, specialist services and community organisations.
- Increase investment in regional and remote workforce capacity through place-based strategies and flexible service models.
- Strengthen evaluation, implementation science and Indigenous Data Sovereignty to improve evidence and continuous system improvement.
- Provide long-term, flexible funding that enables organisations to build sustainable workforce capability and community partnerships.

Implementation

Implementation should use regional governance with clear authority, shared protocols and a funded workforce plan. Governments should report on vacancies, retention, training quality, service access and outcomes, including whether improvements are reaching remote communities.

Conclusion

The system will be judged by what people experience: whether help is easier to reach, information follows safely, workers know what to do and support continues beyond a crisis. Better coordination and sustained investment in the people delivering the work are essential.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, improvement depends on shared authority and long-term investment in Aboriginal organisations and workforces. That is how the Second Action Plan can turn national commitments into a response that is trusted, connected and effective on the ground.



