



Transforming Justice Australia Submission to the Australian Government Second Action Plan (2027–2032) National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032

Executive Summary

Transforming Justice Australia (TJA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children. We acknowledge the substantial progress that governments, victim-survivors, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, specialist services, researchers and advocates have made in building a stronger national response to family, domestic and sexual violence.

The National Plan has helped establish violence as a whole-of-community responsibility and has strengthened investment in prevention, early intervention, crisis responses and system reform. However, significant gaps remain. Many victim-survivors continue to experience long delays before disclosing violence, encounter substantial barriers to justice, and report that existing systems do not fully meet their needs for acknowledgement, accountability, information, validation or repair. Families and communities affected by violence frequently receive little dedicated support, while opportunities for people using violence to seek specialist help before further harm occurs remain limited.

Transforming Justice Australia believes that the next phase of national reform should not simply expand existing services. It should broaden Australia's understanding of justice, accountability and recovery by building a more comprehensive continuum of responses.

Our recommendations are informed by contemporary international research, implementation science and direct practice with victim-survivors, people who have caused harm, families and communities. As practitioners, researchers and policy contributors, we have worked across restorative justice, specialist sexual violence responses, accountability practice, community education and workforce development. Through programs such as REVIVE, developed and

implemented with support from the Department of Social Services and La Trobe University, we have explored practical approaches to early intervention, accountability and violence prevention while contributing to Australia's emerging evidence base through independent evaluation.

Our experience consistently demonstrates that people affected by violence require more than a binary choice between therapeutic support and criminal justice intervention.

Many seek opportunities to ask questions, receive truthful information, have the harm acknowledged, understand why the violence occurred, see meaningful accountability demonstrated and regain a sense of agency over their own recovery. These justice needs are often present regardless of whether a person reports to police or whether criminal proceedings are successful.

Similarly, many individuals who have caused harm, or who recognise concerning thoughts or behaviours before violence escalates, struggle to find safe, specialist and voluntary pathways to seek help. Families, partners, parents and others affected by violence frequently carry significant emotional and practical burdens without access to dedicated support. These gaps represent missed opportunities for prevention, accountability and healing.



About Transforming Justice Australia

[Transforming Justice Australia](#) (TJA) is a national specialist organisation dedicated to advancing restorative, trauma-informed and evidence-informed responses to sexual violence and sexual harm. Our work sits at the intersection of research, policy and practice, with a particular focus on developing safe and effective responses where significant gaps currently exist within Australia's service system.

Unlike organisations whose work is centred solely within criminal justice, therapeutic support or behaviour change, TJA operates across the continuum of **prevention, accountability, restorative practice and recovery**. We work directly with victim-survivors, people who have caused harm, families and communities through specialist restorative processes, accountability casework, survivor support, education groups and professional learning. This practical experience provides insight into the ways existing systems succeed, where they fall short and where opportunities for innovation exist.

Our submission reflects both contemporary evidence and lived implementation. It draws upon international restorative justice research, victimology, violence prevention literature and implementation science, alongside our direct experience designing, delivering and evaluating specialist programs within Australian communities.

We connect and are held in relationship with restorative practitioners, academics and advocates internationally and domestically and through networks such as the Oceania Community of Restorative Practice for Sexual Harm. This is the only specialist community of practice for sexual violence where practice is situated in the community – and where researchers and practitioners regularly collaborate to support the dual aims of applying best practice and evidence – and expanding the edges of practice through emergent and innovative approaches.

Likewise, **Transforming Justice Australia** was established by practitioners and researchers with longstanding expertise in restorative justice, criminal justice reform and responses to sexual harm. Dr Jane Bolitho is one of Australia's leading restorative justice scholars, whose research has contributed nationally and internationally to understanding restorative justice implementation, victim participation and criminal justice reform. Co-founder Thea Deakin-Greenwood is a Churchill Fellow whose research examined restorative justice responses to sexual violence internationally. Her practice is informed by extensive experience in community law, restorative facilitation and victim advocacy, alongside appointments to the NSW Victims Advisory Board, the NSW Sentencing Council and the Corrective Services NSW Ethics Committee.

Together, our work is supported by collaborators and allies in the community – a team with diverse professional and personal expertise – and deep commitment to restorative practice – and applying restorative principles and values not only in work settings, but in life and relationships of all kinds.

Our work at Transforming Justice is informed by three complementary sources of knowledge: contemporary research; professional prior practice and the learnings we have made through offering restorative practice approaches in the community over the past four years. Our community has supported this work and has shown us that restorative responses are not only wanted – but very much needed as part of the suite of options that form part of the community, system and service response to sexual harm.

A key example of this approach is our program REVIVE, a specialist accountability and prevention program developed and implemented with support from the [Department of Social Services and La Trobe University](#). REVIVE originates in Canada and was developed by our mentors at Community Justice Initiatives over 20 years ago.

REVIVE combines structured education, individual assessment, specialist casework and longer-term accountability planning for adults concerned about their own harmful sexual behaviour or who are seeking to prevent further harm. The program has been developed through collaboration between practitioners, researchers and lived experience contributors, with independent evaluation contributing to Australia's emerging evidence base.

Beyond direct practice, TJA contributes to workforce development, policy advice, communities of practice and research partnerships across Australia and internationally. We support professionals from justice, health, community services and education to understand

restorative approaches, accountability practice and survivor-centred responses to sexual harm.

Our recommendations are therefore not theoretical. They reflect the realities of working alongside people navigating violence, accountability and recovery every day, while remaining grounded in evidence and committed to rigorous evaluation. We believe Australia is well positioned to lead internationally in developing more integrated, community-based responses to family, domestic and sexual violence. The Second Action Plan presents an important opportunity to build that future.

Transforming Justice Australia believes the Second Action Plan should therefore move beyond expanding existing systems alone. It should begin building a continuum of justice, accountability and healing—one that recognises the complementary roles of prevention, therapeutic support, criminal justice, restorative practice, family support and community-based accountability. This continuum does not replace existing responses.

Rather, it expands the choices available to victim-survivors, strengthens opportunities for meaningful accountability and creates safer pathways for preventing future harm.

National Recommendations

Transforming Justice Australia recommends that the Second Action Plan adopt the following priorities to strengthen Australia's response to family, domestic and sexual violence.

1. Recognise justice as part of healing and recovery

Recognise that victim-survivors have diverse and evolving justice needs that extend beyond criminal justice outcomes, including acknowledgement, information, accountability, validation and opportunities for repair. Policy and service responses should support these needs throughout a person's recovery, regardless of whether they engage with the criminal justice system.

2. Expand survivor choice through a broader continuum of justice responses

Invest in a broader range of evidence-informed justice pathways that complement criminal justice and therapeutic responses. This should include specialist advocacy, restorative justice, facilitated dialogue where appropriate, survivor casework and other responses that enable victim-survivors to revisit their choices over time.

3. Fund voluntary specialist accountability pathways

Create accessible, voluntary pathways for people concerned about their own behaviour to seek specialist support before violence escalates or is repeated. This should include

assessment, specialist casework, structured education, prevention planning and long-term accountability support delivered by organisations with demonstrated expertise.

4. Recognise sexual violence as requiring specialist responses

Acknowledge that sexual violence presents distinct dynamics and requires specialist responses for victim-survivors, people who have caused harm and families. National investment should reflect the complexity of sexual harm rather than assuming that generalist behaviour change programs will meet all needs.

5. Support families and communities affected by violence

Provide dedicated support for parents, partners, siblings, adult children and others affected by violence through specialist information, education, peer support, casework and referral pathways. These supports should recognise their own wellbeing needs while strengthening community capacity to respond safely.

6. Recognise restorative justice within Australia's response

Explicitly recognise restorative justice as one voluntary, evidence-informed component of Australia's response to family, domestic and sexual violence. Restorative processes should complement—not replace—criminal justice, therapeutic and protective responses and should only be delivered by specialist organisations operating within robust practice standards, comprehensive risk assessment and independent supervision.

7. Invest in specialist community organisations

Recognise the unique contribution of specialist community-based organisations in developing innovative responses to violence. Funding arrangements should support long-term organisational capability, reflective supervision, workforce development, cultural governance, partnership building and evaluation rather than relying solely on short-term project funding.

8. Build workforce capability

Invest in national workforce development that strengthens practitioners' capacity to respond to complex sexual violence, accountability practice, restorative approaches and family systems. This should include specialist training, communities of practice, reflective supervision and opportunities for cross-sector learning.

9. Support implementation and independent evaluation

Fund implementation alongside independent evaluation to ensure promising models are developed responsibly. Evaluation should consider survivor experience, safety, accountability, accessibility, cultural responsiveness and long-term outcomes, recognising that meaningful change extends beyond program completion or service throughput.

10. Develop a national continuum of prevention, accountability and recovery

Position the Second Action Plan as the beginning of a more integrated national system in which prevention, therapeutic support, criminal justice, restorative practice, family support and community-based responses operate as complementary parts of a coordinated continuum. Such an approach will better meet the diverse needs of victim-survivors, strengthen accountability and create more opportunities to prevent future harm.

Conclusion

Transforming Justice Australia welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Second Action Plan and acknowledges the significant leadership that governments, victim-survivors, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, specialist organisations and researchers have shown in advancing Australia's response to family, domestic and sexual violence.

The next phase of reform presents an important opportunity. Australia has invested substantially in strengthening prevention, specialist support services and criminal justice responses. The challenge now is not simply to expand these systems, but to recognise where important gaps remain and to build a more complete continuum of responses that reflects the complexity of violence and the diverse needs of those affected.

Our experience as practitioners, researchers and educators consistently demonstrates that people do not experience violence in ways that fit neatly within organisational or legislative boundaries. Victim-survivors seek safety, healing, information, acknowledgement and meaningful accountability. Families and communities require guidance, education and support to respond safely and constructively. People who recognise harmful behaviours need accessible opportunities to seek help before violence escalates or is repeated. These needs are interconnected and require coordinated, evidence-informed responses that extend beyond the traditional boundaries of crisis services and criminal justice.

Transforming Justice Australia believes that restorative justice, specialist accountability practice and community-based responses have an important contribution to make within this broader system. When carefully designed and delivered, they expand the choices available to victim-survivors, strengthen opportunities for meaningful accountability and create additional pathways for prevention and recovery.

Australia has the expertise to lead internationally in this work. Across the country, governments, universities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, specialist community services and people with lived experience are already developing innovative approaches that respond to long-recognised gaps in the system. Programs such as REVIVE, developed and implemented with support from the Department of Social Services and La Trobe University, demonstrate the value of partnerships that combine research, implementation and independent evaluation to address unmet need while building the evidence base for future reform.

The Second Action Plan should build on this momentum by investing in responses that recognise survivor choice, strengthen accountability, support families and communities, and encourage responsible innovation. Doing so will help create a more integrated and responsive national system—one that is capable not only of responding to violence after it occurs, but also of preventing future harm and supporting long-term healing.

Transforming Justice Australia stands ready to work alongside governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, researchers, specialist organisations and people with lived experience to contribute to this next phase of national reform. Together, we have an opportunity to build a response that is more inclusive, more effective and more capable of meeting the complex realities of family, domestic and sexual violence across Australia.

Thank you for considering our submission and we would be happy to be contacted for comment or to be involved in future planning and implementation of the National Plan.

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted signature block]

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