



NATIONAL PLAN TO

*reduce violence against women  
and their children*

**Including the first three-year Action Plan**

*safe and free from violence*

AN INITIATIVE OF THE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS

## Foreword

One in three Australian women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15. Almost one in five have experienced sexual violence. It is time for that to change.

The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (the *National Plan*) brings together the efforts of governments across the nation to make a real and sustained reduction in the levels of violence against women.

It is the first plan to coordinate action across jurisdictions. It is the first to focus strongly on prevention. It is the first to look to the long term, building respectful relationships and working to increase gender equality to prevent violence from occurring in the first place. It is the first to focus on holding perpetrators accountable and encourage behaviour change.

The *National Plan* sets out a framework for action over the next 12 years. This plan shows Australia's commitments to upholding the human rights of Australian women through the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Declaration to End Violence Against Women and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

The *National Plan* has been built from an evidence base of new research and extensive consultation with experts and the community.

The *National Plan* will be implemented through four three-year plans, with the "First Action Plan: Building Strong Foundations" for 2010 to 2013 published in this plan. It seeks six national outcomes through the implementation of a wide range of strategies.

By working together and challenging the attitudes and behaviours that allow violence to occur, all Australian governments are saying a very loud "no" to violence.

The *National Plan* is underpinned by the belief that involving *all* governments *and* the wider community is necessary to reducing violence in the short and longer terms. No government or group can tackle this problem alone.

While living free from violence is everyone's right, reducing violence is everyone's responsibility.

Endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG):

The Hon. Julia Gillard MP, Prime Minister of Australia

The Hon. Kristina Keneally MP, Premier of New South Wales

The Hon. Mike Rann MP, Premier of South Australia

The Hon. Anna Bligh MP, Premier of Queensland

The Hon. Lara Giddings MP, Premier of Tasmania

The Hon. Colin Barnett MLA, Premier of Western Australia

The Hon. Ted Baillieu MP, Premier of Victoria

Mr Jon Stanhope MLA, Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory

The Hon. Paul Henderson MLA, Chief Minister of the Northern Territory

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# Introduction

## Why we need a National Plan

Reducing all violence in our community is a priority. All forms of violence against women are unacceptable, in any community and in any culture. It is everyone's responsibility to reject and prevent violence.

The *National Plan* targets two main types of violence: domestic and family violence and sexual assault. These crimes are gendered crimes – that is they have an unequal impact on women.

Whilst there are many forms of violent behaviour perpetrated against women, domestic violence and sexual assault are the most pervasive forms of violence experienced by women in Australia, and require an immediate and focused response.

Nearly all Australians (98 per cent) recognise that violence against women and their children is a crime.<sup>1</sup> The prevalence of violence, however, continues to be unacceptably high.

One in three Australian women have experienced physical violence since the age of 15, and almost one in five have experienced sexual violence, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.<sup>2</sup> In 2005, over 350,000 women experienced physical violence and over 125,000 women experienced sexual violence.<sup>3</sup>

Indigenous women and girls are 35 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults than other Australian women and girls.<sup>4</sup>

No form of violence in our community is acceptable. While a small proportion of men are victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, the majority of people who experience this kind of violence are women—in a home, at the hands of men they know.<sup>5</sup> Men are more likely to be the victims of violence from strangers and in public, so different strategies are required to address these different types of violence.<sup>6</sup>

A study commissioned by the Commonwealth in 2009 also shows the enormous economic cost of violence. Domestic violence and sexual assault perpetrated against women costs the nation \$13.6 billion each year. By 2021, the figure is likely to rise to \$15.6 billion if extra steps are not taken.<sup>7</sup>

The emotional and personal costs of violence against women cannot be measured: the effects reach all levels of society.

Violence not only affects the victim themselves, but the children who are exposed to it, their extended families, their friends, their work colleagues and ultimately the broader community. Too many young people in Australia have witnessed acts of physical domestic violence against a parent.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> VicHealth, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> KPMG, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Indermaur, D., 2001

Domestic and family violence and sexual assault occurs across the Australian community. It is acknowledged that some groups of women experiencing violence will have limited access to services or have specific needs that generalised strategies do not account for. Additionally, the women in these groups are often at increased risk of violence. The *National Plan* recognises the diversity of the needs of women with disabilities, young women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, Indigenous<sup>9</sup> women, same-sex attracted women and older women, and provides scope to tailor responses based on individual needs.

## Definitions

Violence against women can be described in many different ways, and laws in each state and territory have their own definitions.

*'The term violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.'*

United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

Domestic violence refers to acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship. While there is no single definition, the central element of domestic violence is an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear, for example by using behaviour which is violent and threatening. In most cases, the violent behaviour is part of a range of tactics to exercise power and control over women and their children, and can be both criminal and non-criminal.

Domestic violence includes physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse.

Physical violence can include slaps, shoves, hits, punches, pushes, being thrown down stairs or across the room, kicking, twisting of arms, choking, and being burnt or stabbed.

Sexual assault or sexual violence can include rape, sexual assault with implements, being forced to watch or engage in pornography, enforced prostitution, and being made to have sex with friends of the perpetrator.

Psychological and emotional abuse can include a range of controlling behaviours such as control of finances, isolation from family and friends, continual humiliation, threats against children or being threatened with injury or death.

Family violence is a broader term that refers to violence between family members, as well as violence between intimate partners. It involves the same sorts of behaviours as described for domestic violence. As with domestic violence, the *National Plan* recognises that although only some aspects of family violence are criminal offences, any behaviour that causes the victim to live in fear is unacceptable. The term, 'family violence' is the most widely used term to identify the experiences of Indigenous people, because it includes the broad range of marital and kinship relationships in which violence may occur.

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<sup>9</sup> Throughout this document, the term 'Indigenous' refers to all persons who identify as being of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin.

## Background

The Commonwealth established the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (the National Council) in May 2008 to advise on measures to reduce the incidence and impact of violence against women and their children.

The National Council was asked to develop an evidence-based plan for reducing violence against women and their children, based on community consultation, assessing existing Australian and international research, investigating the effectiveness of legal systems and commissioning research on the economic costs of violence.

The Council, led by Ms Libby Lloyd AM (Chair) and Ms Heather Nancarrow (Deputy Chair), consulted with more than 2,000 Australians in every state and territory, conducted expert roundtable discussions, interviewed victims and perpetrators of violence and reviewed more than 350 written submissions.

The Council presented its recommendations in *Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, 2009-2021* and four companion documents.

The *Time for Action* report proposed that all governments, through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), should agree to a long term plan to reduce violence, with the Commonwealth taking a leadership role. *Time for Action* identified six outcome areas and strategies for all parties to deliver.

The Commonwealth released its response, *Immediate Government Actions*, in April 2009 supporting the direction and focus of *Time for Action*. The Government announced that it would invest \$42 million immediately to address urgent recommendations. These included the establishment of a new national domestic violence and sexual assault telephone and online counselling service, the implementation of respectful relationships programs in schools and other youth settings and the development of a social marketing campaign targeted at young people and parents.

The Commonwealth also announced that it would refer *Time for Action* to COAG as many recommendations required cooperation between all levels of government. Both *Time for Action* and the Government's response, *Immediate Government Actions*, laid the groundwork for the *National Plan*.

The Commonwealth has since worked closely with state and territory governments to develop this *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children*.

## ***Building on recent achievements***

Australia's governments have been working in their respective areas of responsibility to be more effective in reducing violence against women and their children. Law reform and greater community awareness have made a difference.

The Commonwealth Government delivers support and services through family law, including legal assistance and the social security system.

State and territory governments deliver a range of services including justice, policing and legal assistance for victims and perpetrators. They also fund and coordinate many services provided by the non-government sector.

While all governments have services and programs to respond to violence against women and their children and many of them are highly effective—these responses could be improved by a coordinated approach.

The *National Plan* is designed to provide a coordinated framework that improves the scope, focus and effectiveness of governments' actions, ensuring women and their children receive the support and information they need.

## **Commonwealth**

Since 2007, the Commonwealth has shown leadership in developing measures to reduce violence against women. It has built on policy areas related to violence such as family law, Indigenous safety and well-being, homelessness, and the provision of income support, family payments and crisis payments. It also works internationally on initiatives to reduce violence against women and their children and to promote human rights

Equality benefits women and men, as well as their families and communities. The Commonwealth is committed to improving gender equality for all Australians. Progress towards equality prevents women from falling into poverty and improves outcomes for the most vulnerable women and their families. The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, through the Office for Women, provides policy advice and coordination across government to improve equality between women and men, including through supporting women's economic security, safety and status. The level of equality across our society as well as within individual relationships can have a significant impact on reducing violence against women.

The Commonwealth plays a key role in primary prevention of violence, in particular focusing on young people's attitudes towards violence and risk taking behaviours such as binge drinking. Helping young people better understand and develop respectful relationships will have long term impacts on the level of violence against women.

The Commonwealth funds a range of relationship counselling services to assist people dealing with relationship issues including those experiencing violence, and to support them in their role as parents.

National programs include a 24-hour counselling service for victims, respectful relationships education, a social marketing campaign aimed at young people to develop healthy, respectful relationships, specialist training for nurses and Aboriginal health workers in regional and rural areas, funding for the *Australian Women Against Violence Alliance* and for the White Ribbon Foundation to extend their work to rural workers.

The Commonwealth led the development of Australia's first White Paper on homelessness which sets the target of halving homelessness, and offering supported accommodation to all rough sleepers who seek it, by 2020.

The Commonwealth invests in research to build the evidence base through the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault.

## **New South Wales (NSW)**

In June 2010 the NSW Government launched the \$50 million five-year Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan - *Stop the Violence, End the Silence*. The Action Plan contains 91 actions across five key areas, including prevention and early intervention; protection, safety and justice; provision of services and support; building capacity; and data collection and research.

*Stop the Violence, End the Silence* aims to reduce the prevalence of domestic and family violence in NSW and increase community awareness that such violence is not acceptable. The Plan will also make sure that women and children when escaping violence receive the best possible responses, both in the short-term and long-term and that these responses are consistent, integrated and embedded within the priorities of relevant agencies.

The Government is currently developing a Sexual Violence Prevention Plan as part two of its Strategy to Prevent Violence Against Women.

## **Victoria**

Since 2005 the Victorian Government has invested over \$175 million in a number of significant whole-of-government reforms to reduce and prevent violence against women. These have been driven through four policy initiatives:

- Development and investment in integrated family violence system reform.
- A sexual assault reform strategy which aims to improve the effectiveness of the system response to sexual offending and victims of sexual assault.
- The development, in partnership with the Indigenous community, of an Indigenous Family Violence 10-Year Plan *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities*.
- Development of the first whole of government long term plan to prevent violence against women, identifying strategies and initiatives addressing the underlying causes of violence against women, promoting gender equality and respectful relationships

## **Queensland**

The Queensland Government released its coordinated state strategy, *For Our Sons and Daughters - A Queensland Government strategy to reduce domestic and family violence 2009-2014*, in July 2009. A 20-month trial of an integrated response to domestic and family violence has been set up in Rockhampton, which involves a case-coordination team with police, child safety officers and a specialist domestic and family violence worker.

On the legislative front, the Queensland Government introduced a new partial defence of 'killing in an abusive domestic relationship' in February 2010 and is reviewing the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989* (Qld).

## **Western Australia (WA)**

The reform of family and domestic violence laws occurred in the state in 2004. These reforms increased penalties, provided greater police powers in suspected cases of family violence and recognised emotional abuse as a form of domestic and family violence.

The *Western Australian Family and Domestic Violence Strategic Plan 2009-2013* involves systemic reform of Western Australia's response to family and domestic violence. The reforms are currently being implemented by the Department for Child Protection and the Senior Officers' Group for Family and Domestic Violence.

## **South Australia (SA)**

The *Women's Safety Strategy 2005–2010* (WSS) outlines the South Australian Government's vision to address the issue of violence against women, including both rape and sexual assault and family and domestic violence. The WSS has a broad focus from early intervention work focused on preventing violence, through to community education to raise awareness about the level and complexity of violence against women.

Recent initiatives have focused on systems wide reform evidenced by:

- The Family Safety Framework (FSF) that seeks to ensure that services to the families most at risk of violence are provided in a more structured and systematic way, through agencies sharing information and taking responsibility for supporting these families to navigate the system of services to help them.
- Rape and sexual assault law reform in 2008 to ensure that the criminal justice system is more sensitive to the needs of victims of rape and sexual assault.
- Domestic violence law reform in 2009 to expand the power of police to issue Intervention Orders and expand the definition of abuse to include emotional or psychological harm and denial of financial, social or personal autonomy.

## **Tasmania**

Tasmania's whole-of-government approach to reducing family violence, *Safe at Home: A Criminal Justice Framework for Responding to Family Violence in Tasmania*, was introduced in 2004 with major changes to legislation. The *Family Violence Act 2004* (Tas) introduced economic and emotional abuse and intimidation as criminal offences and grounds for obtaining Family Violence Orders. The act also recognises children as victims of family violence in their own right and amendments were made to the *Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997* to recognise exposure to family violence as a form of child abuse requiring mandatory reporting.

Major initiatives under *Safe at Home* include tougher prosecutions and perpetrator programs as a sentencing option, greater counselling and support for victims, and improved victim access to Legal Aid and court support. To facilitate the new approach, the Tasmanian Government developed systems to enable information to be exchanged across relevant government agencies and improved case management.

## **Northern Territory (NT)**

The Northern Territory uses a whole-of-government approach to family violence policy and programs, with the main policy framework called *Building on our Strengths: A Framework for Action for Women in the Northern Territory 2008-2012*.

The Territory became the only jurisdiction with mandatory reporting for domestic and family violence when the Government introduced its mandatory reporting scheme in March 2009. The scheme was introduced with a \$15 million package to combat violence and raise awareness. Early crime statistics are indicating that the new system is working, with higher levels of reporting being attributed to the new system and additional funding being provided for police in remote areas.

The Northern Territory Government strengthened domestic violence orders in 2007 and included economic abuse and intimidation as a form of violence.

## Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

In September 2008, the ACT introduced legislation to broaden the scope of protection orders and to better protect victims during the court process. The commencement of new legislation (*Domestic Violence and Protection Orders Act 2008*) coincided with technology upgrades in courts and specialist training of police, prosecutors and the victim support sector.

ACT initiatives are in accordance with the *ACT Women's Plan (2010-2015)*, which includes the objective to prevent violence against women and their children and instil an anti-violence culture in the community. The ACT Office for Women has the lead role in the Territory's initiatives to reduce violence against women.

## Links with other COAG reform

Violence against women does not occur in isolation from other issues faced by individuals and communities. Evidence shows that:

- The most common reason that people give for seeking assistance from government-funded homelessness services is domestic or family violence (22 per cent of support periods, or times a person uses a homelessness service). Women with children most often cited domestic or family violence when accessing homelessness services (49 per cent of support periods).<sup>10</sup>
- Overcrowding in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities contributes to high rates of domestic and family violence.<sup>11</sup>
- Domestic and family violence are significant risk factors for child abuse and neglect.<sup>12</sup>

It is important, therefore, to recognise and maintain the strong links that exist between this *National Plan* and other significant COAG reforms. All governments are working together on a series of issues that have an impact on violence against women, as outlined below.

### Indigenous women

The *National Plan* has been developed to support all women and their children experiencing violence, including Indigenous women and their children. In addition some Indigenous communities need extra assistance to address particular factors and disadvantage which contribute to higher rates of family violence and sexual assault among Indigenous people.

The *National Plan* builds on COAG's commitments under the Closing the Gap framework, which is working to help close the gap in life expectancy and life opportunities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The Commonwealth also recently launched the Indigenous Family Safety Program and a supporting Agenda to help reduce family violence. Priorities under the Agenda are to work with communities to develop innovative approaches to address alcohol abuse, more effective police protection in remote communities, support for community led initiatives that heal trauma and change attitudes, and improve the coordination of services to victims, including children.

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<sup>10</sup> *The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness*, 2008.

<sup>11</sup> *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2009*, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business – National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, 2009.

### **Protecting children**

Physical abuse, emotional maltreatment, neglect, sexual abuse and witnessing family violence are now all recognised as forms of child abuse and neglect. In April 2009, COAG endorsed *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business—National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020*. This framework is aimed at reducing child abuse and neglect in Australia over time. The *National Plan* and the *National Framework* are designed to work in tandem to bring about positive change for women and children experiencing violence.

### **Homelessness**

Domestic and family violence continues to be the major cause of homelessness. Escaping violence is the most common reason provided by people who seek help from specialist homelessness services. In December 2008, the Commonwealth released *The Road Home – the Australian Government White Paper on Homelessness*. *The Road Home* sets a strategic whole-of-government agenda for reducing homelessness to 2020. Women and children who have been victims of violence are a key target group of the White Paper.

To address homelessness, the Commonwealth is working together with states and territories to:

- Increase spending on homelessness services by 55 per cent as a substantial initial investment on a 12-year reform agenda.
- Increase the supply of affordable housing homes through the National Rental Affordability Scheme and the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan.
- Provide an additional emergency relief and financial counselling services until mid 2011 to support Australians through difficult times.
- Fund 41 specialist homelessness projects across our housing programs, to provide more than 1,680 new units of accommodation.

### **Health and hospitals**

The health sector through doctors, nurses and specialist staff are often an early point of contact for women who have experienced sexual assault or domestic violence. COAG's February 2011 announcement on national health reform will have an impact on the *National Plan* through improved services in areas of urgent priority for the health sector. The *National Plan's* National Workforce Agenda for specialist workers in domestic violence and sexual assault services will seek to align work in the community services sector with that in the health sector.

### **Social inclusion**

The Commonwealth developed a social inclusion agenda that seeks to ensure all Australians have the opportunity to participate fully in the economic, social and civic life of our country. Priorities have been identified in which to start the work of addressing social exclusion and increasing social inclusion, including:

- Supporting children at greatest risk of long-term disadvantage by improving health, education and family relationship services.
- Helping jobless families with children by helping the unemployed into sustainable employment and their children into a good start in life.
- Focusing on the locations of greatest disadvantage by tailoring place-based approaches in partnership with the community.
- Assisting in the employment of people with disability or mental illness by creating employment opportunities and building community support.

- Addressing the incidence of homelessness by providing more housing and support services.
- Closing the gap for Indigenous Australians with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement and employment outcomes.

By developing programs to assist the above priority groups, the Commonwealth will also assist women experiencing domestic violence.

# The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022

## What is the *National Plan*?

The *National Plan* provides the framework for action by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to reduce violence against women and their children.

The central goals of the *National Plan* are to reduce violence against women and their children and to improve how governments work together, increase support for women and their children, and create innovative and targeted ways to bring about change.

The *National Plan* is unprecedented in the way it focuses on preventing violence by raising awareness and building respectful relationships in the next generation. The aim is to bring attitudinal and behavioural change at the cultural, institutional and individual levels, with a particular focus on young people.

As well as focusing on prevention measures, the *National Plan* will allow women who have experienced violence to rebuild their lives as quickly as possible as part of a community-wide response. This will enable mainstream and specialist services to work together to improve their responses so that women return to full social and economic participation as soon as possible.

The *National Plan* also recognises and acknowledges the diverse experiences of women and their children, and the need to ensure responses meet their specific circumstances.

The *National Plan* sets out six national outcomes for all governments to deliver during the next 12 years. The outcomes will be delivered through four three-year action plans, the first of which runs from 2010 to 2013.

## Vision and targets

The vision of the *National Plan* is that:

'Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities.'

To measure the success of this vision, governments have set the following target for: 'a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children,' during the next 12 years, from 2010 to 2022.

To know whether this target is being achieved, the following four high-level indicators of change will be used to show progress:

- Reduced prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault
- Increased proportion of women who feel safe in their communities
- Reduced deaths related to domestic violence and sexual assault
- Reduced proportion of children exposed to their mother's or carer's experience of domestic violence.

The values and principles that guide the *National Plan* are:

- Domestic violence, family violence and sexual assault crosses all ages, races and cultures, socioeconomic and demographic barriers, although some women are at higher risk.
- Everyone regardless of their age, gender, sex, sexual orientation, race, culture, disability, religious belief, faith, linguistic background or location, has a right to be safe and live in an environment that is free from violence.
- Domestic violence, family violence and sexual assault are unacceptable and against the law.
- Governments and other organisations will provide holistic services and supports that prioritise the needs of victims and survivors of violence.
- Sustainable change must be built on community participation by men and women taking responsibility for the problems and solutions.
- Everyone has a right to access and to participate in justice processes that enable them to achieve fair and just outcomes.
- Governments acknowledge the legacy of past failures and the need for new collaborative approaches to preventing violence against Indigenous women.
- Responses to children exposed to violence prioritise the safety and long term well-being of children.

The *National Plan* recognises that policy solutions to address domestic violence and sexual assault must take into account the diverse backgrounds and needs of women and their children. The outcomes and strategies are relevant to all Australians irrespective of their age, sex, sexual orientation, race, culture, disability, religious belief, faith, linguistic background or location.

### **Working together – areas of responsibility**

All systems need to work together to make a major difference to the prevalence and impact of violence against women. The *National Plan* will build on the current work of all Australian governments and non-government organisations. Government departments and agencies will need to partner with relevant community and business organisations to achieve this change.

The National Council reported in *Time for Action* that frequent changing of government programs and differences between the states and territories were major barriers to progress in reducing violence. *Time for Action* recommended that governments adopt a long term strategic approach: one that was widely communicated so that it could be used by government and non-government organisations.

The *National Plan* will drive an unprecedented level of collaboration with the broader community and governments who will share information with each other. Many areas of business and the community are already playing their part in reducing violence. Through the *National Plan*, governments are committed to working in partnership with business, researchers and the community sector to develop and implement the *National Plan's* actions and report on its progress – consistent with the National Compact with the Third Sector.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The National Compact with the Third Sector outlines how the Commonwealth Government and sector organisations will together find better ways of working together to drive innovation, wellbeing and sustainability in our communities. The Third Sector refers to a broad range of organisations that are 'formed by people to provide services for themselves or for others, to advance a cause, to share an enthusiasm, to preserve a tradition, to worship a god or gods. Different groups of these organisations are known by different names: non-government organisations (NGOs), charities, unions, cooperatives, clubs, associations, peoples' organisations, churches, temples, mosques and so on. Collectively, they comprise a third organised sector.' (Prof. Mark Lyons 2003)

## Action Plans 2010–2022

The *National Plan* will be driven by a series of four three-year Action Plans. They will support Australian governments to work together to develop, implement and report progress within a coordinated national framework

This *National Plan* includes the first three-year Action Plan. The Commonwealth, states and territories will indicate which actions they commit to in their individual implementation plans as part of the implementation process.

The action plans have been designed in three-year cycles so governments can review the strategies and actions once they are implemented and design future government efforts to be as effective as possible. Governments will respond to emerging priorities as new evidence becomes available and circumstances change.

Each action plan will address all national outcomes, while allowing states and territories to act in locally relevant and responsive ways. In addition, Action Plans will draw on existing evidence and aid national consistency, such as through developing national benchmarks.

Importantly, each action plan will also help to build the skills, systems and data for governments to improve policy making and service delivery. This is essential to governments having the capacity to work together and to support lasting change.

Each action plan will be supported by the following 'foundations for change':

- Strengthen the workforce
- Integrate systems and share information
- Improve the evidence base
- Track performance.

The four Action Plans have been designed as a series to be implemented over 12 years, each building on the other as described below.

### **First Action Plan (2010–2013) – Building a Strong Foundation**

The First Action Plan establishes the groundwork for the *National Plan*, putting in place the strategic projects and actions that will drive results over the longer term while also implementing high-priority actions in the short term. During this period, governments will work with services to support women, build a solid evidence base and establish the frameworks and approaches that will achieve the attitudinal and behavioural change that is necessary for stopping violence against women in the future.

Creating momentum in primary prevention in the first three years will provide an essential platform for the following three Action Plans. While cultural and attitudinal change in the community can take a long time, evidence about the impact and effectiveness of the First Action Plan should emerge during the plan's implementation and evaluation.

## **Second Action Plan (2013–2016) – Moving Ahead**

The Second Action Plan will take stock of what has worked well in the first three years and consolidate the evidence base for the effectiveness of the strategies and actions implemented to date.

The evidence will inform the strengthening of existing strategies and actions and the development of new approaches if some areas are not producing the progress expected. In this phase, the governments will be moving ahead in the sense that cultural change will be advancing and the level of women reporting violence increasing, allowing for greater attention and action in the next stages.

## **Third Action Plan (2016–2019) – Promising Results**

The Third Action Plan will deliver solid and continuing progress in best practice policies, with governments using data of far greater detail, accuracy and depth due to the improvements made in data collection and analysis. The long term initiatives put into place during the first two Action Plans are expected to be delivering results. The involvement of groups across the community is expected to make more people receptive, supportive and involved in strategies to reduce violence against women. In turn, this will enable governments to draw on greater community awareness and support.

## **Fourth Action Plan (2019–2022) – Turning the Corner**

The Fourth Action Plan is expected to see the delivery of tangible results in terms of reduced prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault, reduced proportions of children witnessing violence, and an increased proportion of women who feel safe in their communities.

Governments and the community will be turning the corner through a greater awareness of the importance of respectful relationships and the need for changes in norms and behaviours that support violence beyond the life of the *National Plan*.

# Six National Outcomes

## ***National Outcome 1 – Communities are safe and free from violence***

Positive and respectful community attitudes are critical to Australian women and their children living free from violence in safe communities. Research shows that social norms, attitudes and beliefs contribute to all forms of violence against women, whether it is emotional, psychological, economic, physical or sexual violence.<sup>14</sup> These beliefs can result in violence being justified, excused or hidden from view.

Evidence shows that key predictors of violence against women relate to how individuals, communities and society as a whole view the roles of men and women. Some of the strongest predictors for holding violence-supportive attitudes at the individual level are low levels of support for gender equality and following traditional gender stereotypes.<sup>15</sup>

### **Measure of success**

The success of Outcome 1 will be measured by *an increase in the community's intolerance of violence against women.*

Data: National Community Attitudes Survey to be undertaken every four years across the life of the *National Plan.*

### **Strategy 1.1: Promoting community involvement**

Violence against women is a community problem that requires a community-wide response. Leaders in local governments, community organisations, workplaces and sporting clubs can promote equal and respectful relationships between women and men. It is important that this starts from the ground up. Successful anti-violence strategies require a community-wide vision, with strong and committed local and organisational leadership.

This strategy focuses on encouraging people throughout Australia – from individuals and families, to community, health and education organisations, to businesses and governments – to embrace their responsibility as a community member and take a role in preventing and reducing violence against women. The strategy includes supporting men to take a leading role in discouraging violent behaviour and challenging discrimination and gender stereotyping.

### **Strategy 1.2: Focus on primary prevention**

Primary prevention involves taking action to prevent the problem of violence before it occurs. It means working to change the underlying causes of the problem, in the different environments where people live and work. Strategies such as social marketing, school-based programs or work to promote positive and equitable workplace cultures are all examples of primary prevention.

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<sup>14</sup> Flood, M. and Pease, B., 2006.

<sup>15</sup> VicHealth, 2009.

Primary prevention strategies have successfully reduced other complex social or health problems such as drink-driving and smoking. But we know that they are only effective when implemented through a coordinated approach at all levels. The social practices and cultural values of broader society shape how violence can occur at an individual level.

This strategy focuses on developing primary prevention frameworks that will assist in forming, implementing and assessing primary prevention at a national level through different groups and at different levels of society. It will look at building positive attitudes and beliefs, social norms and ways for organisations to confront controlling, macho, aggressive and ultimately violent behaviour.

**Strategy 1.3: Advancing gender equality**

The unequal distribution of power and resources between women and men and adherence to rigid or narrow gender roles and stereotypes reflects gendered patterns in the prevalence and perpetration of violence.<sup>16</sup> The acting out of jealousy and controlling behaviour is an especially important predictor of violence.<sup>17</sup> If the woman’s partner is engaged in controlling behaviour, she is six times more likely to experience physical violence.<sup>18</sup> It has also been noted that psychological abuse, particularly dominance, is a strong predictor of repeat violence.<sup>19</sup>

At every level of society, gender inequalities have a profound influence on violence against women and their children. Building greater equality and respect between men and women can reduce the development of attitudes that support or justify violence.<sup>20</sup>

Other factors contribute to gender equality, such as where women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities have difficulties accessing the paid workforce or higher education. Broader social policy initiatives that address gender inequality and improve the status of women are critical to reducing violence against women.<sup>21</sup> The strategy will use the link between gender equality and violence to create better outcomes.

Strategies	Key actions by Australian governments during 2010 to 2013	Responsibility	Immediate national initiatives
<b>Strategy 1.1: Promote community involvement</b>	<p>Encourage schools, community, sporting and business groups to prevent, respond to, and speak out against violence.</p> <p>Foster community initiatives to reduce alcohol and substance abuse.</p> <p>Change community attitudes and behaviours through a national social</p>	<p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p>	<p>Implement <b>social marketing and awareness campaigns</b> including the Commonwealth’s <b>‘The Line’</b>, to encourage young people to develop healthy and respectful relationships, with the aim of changing attitudes that support violence.</p> <p>Continue the <b>National Binge Drinking Strategy</b>.</p> <p>Support local Indigenous communities to take action against alcohol supply where it is leading to high levels of violence through the new Indigenous Family Safety Program.</p>

<sup>16</sup> VicHealth, 2006.  
<sup>17</sup> Robinson, 2004.  
<sup>18</sup> J Mouzos and T Makkai, 2004.  
<sup>19</sup> Robinson, 2004.  
<sup>20</sup> VicHealth, 2006.  
<sup>21</sup> World Health Organisation, 2004.

	<p>marketing campaign complemented by local initiatives.</p> <p>Promote positive media representations of women.</p>	Commonwealth, states and territories	Examine and develop <b>media codes of practice</b> for reporting sexual assault and domestic violence.
<b>Strategy 1.2: Focus on primary prevention</b>	<p>Expand and apply national best practice benchmarks for work in primary prevention.</p> <p>Build primary prevention into the work of schools, community and sporting groups, local government agencies, and business groups.</p> <p>Draw on evidence to develop targeted primary prevention strategies for key groups.</p>	<p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p>	<p>Develop <b>best practice benchmarks for work in primary prevention</b>.</p> <p>Increase community action through <b>local primary prevention strategies</b>.</p> <p>Provide <b>Local Community Action Grants</b> to encourage primary prevention. Grants will be available to mainstream organisations, but priority will be given to assist women with disabilities, older women, culturally and linguistic diverse communities and gay and lesbian communities.</p> <p>Provide <b>Local Community Action Grants</b> to encourage zero tolerance through sport.</p> <p>Continue to implement and evaluate the national <b>respectful relationships program</b>.</p>
<b>Strategy 1.3: Advance gender equality</b>	<p>Improve women's economic participation and independence.</p> <p>Improve the participation of women in leadership positions.</p> <p>Build and support legal literacy among migrants and refugees on Australian law and gender equality principles.</p> <p>Develop workplace measures to support</p>	<p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth</p> <p>Commonwealth</p>	<p>Develop and implement measure to <b>increase women's economic security</b>, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the introduction of paid parental leave</li> <li>superannuation reform</li> <li>increased support for pensioners.</li> </ul> <p>Develop and implement measures to increase women's leadership opportunities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>funding <b>National Women's Alliances</b> to support women's involvement in government policy development</li> <li>delivering on gender targets for government boards</li> <li>funding scholarships to support more women on private sector boards.</li> </ul> <p>Provide <b>information about protections for women</b> who experience violence in Australia to newly arrived migrants and refugees.</p> <p>Consult with peak employer and</p>

	<p>women experiencing and escaping from domestic violence.</p>		<p>employee representatives to improve ways for <b>workplaces to better support women experiencing domestic violence.</b></p> <p>Fund the Australian Domestic Violence Clearinghouse <b>Domestic Violence - Workplace Rights and Entitlements</b> project.</p>
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Details of the specific actions to be undertaken by each jurisdiction against the strategies and actions outlined above will be provided in each jurisdiction’s implementation plan. This will include details of what actions each jurisdiction will undertake, along with when they will do it and who has responsibility for its success.

## ***National Outcome 2 – Relationships are respectful***

Changing and shaping attitudes and behaviours of young people is critical to preventing domestic violence and sexual assault in the future. While prevention at the community level is essential, governments will also support individuals to develop healthy respectful relationships.

Education can help in encouraging young people to develop more equal and positive relationships. Seeing adults exhibiting respectful behaviours – between partners, friends, parents and their children – is also important for young people. Positive parenting practices and violence-free home environments are crucial to the development of healthy social behaviour skills and healthy relationships.<sup>22</sup>

### **Measure of success**

The success of Outcome 2 will be measured by *improved knowledge of, and the skills and behaviour for, respectful relationships by young people.*

Data: Evaluation of the respectful relationships education projects and Commonwealth social marketing campaign.

### **Strategy 2.1: Build on young people’s capacity to develop respectful relationships**

Education plays a key role in equipping young people with the knowledge and skills to develop and maintain non-violent, respectful and equitable relationships. School and community cultures need to support and foster structural and individual change. School-based approaches that help young people identify inappropriate sexual or violent behaviour, and shape their expectations and capacity to build and sustain respectful relationships, are promising examples of primary prevention that appear to be working internationally.<sup>23</sup>

### **Strategy 2.2: Support adults to model respectful relationships**

Children learn their attitudes and behaviour from those around them. Positive adult role models can encourage young children to develop positive respectful relationships.

### **Strategy 2.3: Promote positive male attitudes and behaviours**

The majority of men are non-violent, but they need to be supported to speak out against violence against women. While men and community leaders have spoken out against violence against women and organisations such as the White Ribbon Foundation of Australia have made progress in this area, more can be done.

<b>Strategies</b>	<b>Key actions by Australian governments during 2010 to 2013</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Immediate national initiatives</b>
<b>Strategy 2.1: Build on young people’s capacity to develop</b>	Embed evidence-based best practice respectful relationships education in schools.	Commonwealth, states and territories	Work through the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority to support the inclusion of <b>respectful relationships education</b> in phase three of

<sup>22</sup> Harvey, A., Garcia-Moreno, C. & Butchart, A., 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Harvey, A., Garcia-Moreno, C. & Butchart, A., 2007.

<p><b>respectful relationships</b></p>	<p>Foster whole-of-school approaches to respectful relationships involving staff, parents, students and community agencies.</p> <p>Extend access to respectful relationships programs in non-school settings</p>	<p>States and territories</p> <p>States and territories</p>	<p><b>the Australian Curriculum.</b></p> <p>Continue to implement and evaluate the <b>national respectful relationship program.</b></p> <p>Encourage young people to develop healthy and respectful relationships through national social marketing campaign, <b>‘The Line’</b>.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.2: Support adults to model respectful relationships</b></p>	<p>Encourage broader societal and cultural change that promotes respectful relationships.</p> <p>Increase support for parents to learn positive parenting skills and promote positive fathering.</p> <p>Increase awareness of, and education on, cyber safety issues.</p>	<p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p>	<p><b>Support workshops for adult survivors</b> of sexual abuse, parents and spouses through the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children.</p> <p>Fund the <b>Family Support Program</b> to support vulnerable and disadvantaged families, and separating parents and their children. Program includes early intervention and prevention services to families to build and strengthen relationships, develop skills and support parents and children.</p> <p>Extend work in the detection, investigation and prosecution of <b>online sexual exploitation.</b></p>
<p><b>Strategy 2.3: Promote positive male attitudes and behaviours</b></p>	<p>Actively engage men to promote gender equality.</p> <p>Encourage men to speak out against violence and promote non-violence.</p> <p>Expand men’s knowledge and skills in sustaining respectful relationships.</p>	<p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p>	<p>Fund the <b>White Ribbon Day</b> campaign to promote male intolerance of violence against women to expand to rural and regional areas.</p> <p>Boost funding to the <b>national Mensline</b> to assist callers with issues such as separation, family violence and fathering.</p>

Details of the specific actions to be undertaken by each jurisdiction against the strategies and actions outlined above will be provided in each jurisdiction’s implementation plan. This will include details of what actions each jurisdiction will undertake, along with when they will do it and who has responsibility for its success

## ***National Outcome 3 – Indigenous communities are strengthened***

The *National Plan* is focused on supporting Indigenous communities to develop local solutions to preventing violence. This includes encouraging Indigenous women to have a stronger voice as community leaders and supporting Indigenous men to reject violence. Improving economic outcomes and opportunities for Indigenous women are critical to reducing violence.

Statistics indicate that Indigenous women experience much higher levels of family violence than non-Indigenous women. In 2006-07, Indigenous women and girls were 35 times more likely to be hospitalised due to assaults related to family violence than non-Indigenous women and girls.<sup>24</sup>

While Australians deserve to live in a community safe and free from violence, some people experience disadvantage that requires additional responses. Australian governments acknowledge the legacy of past failures and the need for new collaborative approaches to preventing violence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. This outcome is designed to work in parallel with other government efforts to strengthen Indigenous communities.

Indigenous women and their children must be considered in all elements of the *National Plan*. For example, *The Line*, in Outcome 1, is both a mainstream and an Indigenous-specific national social marketing campaign aimed at changing young people's attitudes and behaviours towards relationships.

Given the significant disadvantage experienced by Indigenous Australians, this outcome focuses on strengthening Indigenous communities to better tackle family violence and sexual assault. The issues are complex and extra effort is needed.

### **Measure of success**

The success of Outcome 3 will be measured by *reduction in the proportion of Indigenous women who consider that family violence, assault and sexual assault are problems for their communities and neighbourhoods; and increase in the proportion of Indigenous women who are able to have their say within their communities on important issues, including violence.*

Data: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey.

### **Strategy 3.1: Foster the leadership of Indigenous women within communities and broader Australian society**

Indigenous women are often the informal leaders in their communities. Their voices need to be heard, not only in their communities but in representative bodies and in broader society. The successes they have achieved need to be built on and shared.

### **Strategy 3.2: Build community capacity at the local level**

Governments will support communities to develop and implement local solutions across all areas of the *National Plan*.

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<sup>24</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2006.

### Strategy 3.3: Improve access to appropriate services

The *National Plan* prioritises broader work to close the gap for Indigenous people to reduce disadvantage in life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement, employment and community safety outcomes.

Strategies	Key actions by Australian governments during 2010 to 2013	Responsibility	Immediate national initiatives
<p><b>Strategy 3.1: Foster the leadership of Indigenous women within communities and broader Australian society</b></p>	<p>Promote the leadership of senior women in governance and decision-making for communities and organisations.</p> <p>Create new opportunities to improve economic outcomes for Indigenous women.</p> <p>Improve employment and retention strategies for Indigenous women at senior levels.</p> <p>Foster Indigenous women's participation in policy and program development design to reduce violence against women.</p>	<p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p>	<p>Fund the Commonwealth <b>Indigenous Women's Program</b> to enhance Indigenous women's leadership, representation, safety, well-being and economic status.</p> <p>Support establishment of the <b>National Congress of Australia's First Peoples</b> with 50% representation of women.</p> <p>Support Indigenous women to identify issues and develop their own solutions through funding for the <b>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance</b>.</p> <p>Fund initiatives to <b>Close the Gap</b> in Indigenous housing, health, early childhood, economic participation and remote service delivery and develop new targets to hold Governments to account.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 3.2: Build community capacity at the local level</b></p>	<p>Foster national healing and locally developed healing places, programs or activities.</p> <p>Work with communities to deliver integrated local contingency planning and responses.</p> <p>Develop effective Community Safety Plans including in remote service delivery locations which include primary prevention.</p> <p>Support culturally appropriate Indigenous male role models and community leadership</p>	<p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p>	<p>Establish the <b>Healing Foundation</b> to address trauma and aid healing in Indigenous communities, with a particular focus on the Stolen Generations.</p> <p>Invest in initiatives under the <b>Indigenous Family Safety Program</b> to work with communities to develop local skills and life-skills education to prevent violence, train local leaders as community change agents and strengthen local governance.</p> <p>Provide a flexible funding pool for quick and flexible responses to <b>high priority needs</b> identified by communities in the <b>29 Remote Service Delivery priority locations</b>.</p> <p>Support community-led solutions for addressing alcohol and substance abuse</p>

			<p>Develop and trial new models and approaches to <b>improve police responses and community planning</b> for Indigenous family safety.</p> <p>Develop <b>community safety plans</b> in 29 Remote Service Delivery sites.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 3.3: Improve access to appropriate services</b></p>	<p>Improve the cultural competence of mainstream and specialist services.</p> <p>Improve community responses to perpetrators.</p> <p>Improve services for Indigenous women and their children.</p> <p>Develop effective culturally appropriate therapeutic responses for Indigenous children who have been exposed to family violence, to prevent the transmission of intergenerational trauma.</p>	<p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p>	<p>Through the <b>Indigenous Family Safety Program</b> fund initiatives that create better links and information sharing between local police and service providers focused on preventing and protecting families against violence; and research on appropriate tools for the states and territories to use when allocating police resources.</p> <p>Provide incentives and <b>support payments for practice nurses and Indigenous health workers</b> in regional and rural areas to undertake training on domestic violence.</p> <p><b>Provide 22 safe houses</b>, a mobile child protection team and remote family and community support workers in the Northern Territory as part of Closing the Gap.</p>

Details of the specific actions to be undertaken by each jurisdiction against the strategies and actions outlined above will be provided in each jurisdiction’s implementation plan. This will include details of what actions each jurisdiction will undertake, along with when they will do it and who has responsibility for its success.

## ***National Outcome 4 – Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence***

Specialist and mainstream services are critical to helping women rebuild their lives following violence. *Time for Action* reported on the challenges facing the domestic violence and sexual assault sector in meeting the needs of victims. These included the inability of services to meet the holistic needs of victims and their families and over-stretched and stressed services with long waiting lists.

*Time for Action* also reported the need for the first door to be the right door. A ‘first door approach’ means that for women who have experienced violence their first point of contact should provide professional, capable and compassionate assistance. Improving collaboration between services means that women do not have to repeat their stories.

Services supporting victims of violence must be flexible in meeting the diverse needs of their clients, including Indigenous women, older women, young women, women with disabilities, same-sex attracted women and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Of those women who reported experiencing partner violence in the 2005 Personal Safety Survey, 34 per cent said their children had witnessed the violence.<sup>25</sup> Children need services to meet their needs in their own right.

### **Measure of success**

The success of Outcome 4 will be measured by *an increase in the access to, and responsiveness of, services for victims of domestic and family violence and sexual assault.*

Data: Personal Safety Survey to be conducted every four years across the life of the *National Plan*.

### **Strategy 4.1: Enhance the first point of contact to identify and respond to needs**

When violence occurs, victims and their children need access to support services that are high-quality, accessible and responsive. Women should not have to tell their story multiple times to multiple services. The first response should be the right one.

### **Strategy 4.2: Support specialist domestic violence and sexual assault services to deliver responses that meet needs**

New perspectives and strategies are required by all Australian governments in the delivery of best responses, as early as possible to victims of violence. Women may require specialised support based on individual needs in recognition of issues such as age, English language proficiency, disability, sexuality and prior victimisation.

### **Strategy 4.3: Support mainstream services to identify and respond to needs**

Women and their children need to receive holistic support including health, housing, education, employment and legal assistance. Economic and social wellbeing is critical for women and their children who have been victims of violence to rebuild their lives. Services need to be equipped to support this.

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<sup>25</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2005.

Strategies	Key actions by Australian governments during 2010 to 2013	Responsibility	Immediate national initiatives
<p><b>Strategy 4.1:</b> <b>Enhance the first point of contact to identify and respond to needs</b></p>	<p>Deliver high quality integrated national helpline and online support services which meet national benchmarks.</p> <p>Reduce the need for victims to retell their story through improved information sharing and integrated case management.</p> <p>Extend the use of best practice risk assessment and management frameworks to identify and respond to violence against women.</p>	<p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p>	<p>Expand the <b>1800 RESPECT: Domestic and Sexual Violence National Counselling Service</b>, to provide back up support for frontline workers such as allied health, child care etc. who clients may disclose domestic violence and sexual assault and do not know what to do.</p> <p>Develop national standards and integrate 1800 RESPECT with state and territory services to ensure victims are able to be transferred in a timely way to relevant local services.</p>
<p><b>Strategy 4.2:</b> <b>Support specialist domestic violence and sexual assault services to deliver responses that meet needs</b></p>	<p>Build the capacity of domestic violence services to respond to the needs of children who are exposed to domestic violence.</p> <p>Extend sexual assault services and domestic violence services' work with other agencies to provide flexible, innovative, inclusive and integrated services which recognise diversity.</p> <p>Provide survivors of sexual assault with access to timely, best practice forensic medical and crisis response/counselling services.</p> <p>Support the specialist domestic violence and sexual assault workforces.</p> <p>Support culturally responsive services for Aboriginal children and young people impacted by the experience of family violence.</p>	<p>States and territories</p>	<p>Support <b>better service delivery</b> for children, Indigenous women and women with disabilities through the development of new evidence based approaches where existing policy and service responses have proved to be inadequate.</p> <p>Implement the <i>Building Capacity Building Bridges</i> project to <b>deliver accredited 'child focus' training</b> to workers in adult-focused services.</p> <p>Investigate and promote ways to improve access and responses to <b>services for women with disabilities</b>.</p> <p>Develop a National Workforce Agenda to <b>support and improve workforces</b> involved in reducing violence against women.</p>

<p><b>Strategy 4.3: Support mainstream services to identify and respond to needs</b></p>	<p>Improve early identification of violence against women through routine home visits and screening tools for antenatal, maternal and child health services.</p> <p>Improve and expand cross-agency support for women and children to remain safely in their homes and communities while the perpetrator is removed.</p> <p>Increase the numbers of families who maintain or secure long term safe and sustainable housing post-violence.</p>	<p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p>	<p>Implement homelessness services under the National Homelessness Partnership Agreement to <b>improve housing options for women victims of violence</b>.</p> <p>Fund income support and family assistance payments, including the <b>Crisis Payment</b> for women experiencing violence.</p> <p>Provide <b>social work services</b> to victims experiencing domestic violence through Centrelink’s Domestic and Family Violence Strategy.</p> <p>Provide <b>training for health workers in regional and rural areas</b> to help them recognise signs of domestic violence, and to make referrals to available community resources.</p> <p>Develop a <b>national risk assessment framework for the health sector</b> to assist medical professionals identify and better support victims of violence.</p>
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## ***National Outcome 5 – Justice responses are effective***

Domestic violence and sexual assault are crimes. A range of civil and criminal measures exist to protect women and children in Australia who have experienced violence and prevent further violence. While aiming to reduce violence, the First Action Plan will drive more effective justice responses where violence has occurred.

Reforms to the justice system have improved links between criminal justice processes, services for victims and prevention programs. Despite these changes, the legal response remains inadequate for many women and their children.<sup>26</sup> Under the *National Plan* work will be undertaken to improve the legal response to domestic and family violence and sexual assault, and to promote responses from criminal justice agencies.

### **Measure of success**

The success of Outcome 5 will be measured by *an increase in the rate of women reporting domestic violence and sexual assault*.

Data: Personal Safety Survey to be conducted every four years across the life of the *National Plan*.

### **Strategy 5.1: Improve access to justice for women and their children**

The civil and/or criminal justice systems need to protect women and their children who have been the victims of violence. Systems need to be accessible and responsive to their ongoing safety. Some women, such as women with disabilities, face further barriers to accessing justice and processes should recognise different access needs.

### **Strategy 5.2: Strengthen leadership across justice systems**

Justice systems have an important role in reducing violence against women, and all elements of the systems need to work together.

### **Strategy 5.3: Justice systems work better together and with other systems**

Women and their children who experience violence may come into contact with more than one justice system, as well as a range of services outside of the justice sector. This strategy will support these systems to work together effectively and provide appropriate responses to women and their children.

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<sup>26</sup> National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2009a.

Strategies	Key actions by Australian governments during 2010 to 2013	Responsibility	Immediate national initiatives
<b>Strategy 5.1: Improve access to justice for women and their children</b>	<p>Enhance legal aid funding arrangements to ensure women and their children at risk of violence are a key priority.</p> <p>Improve the capacity of the civil and criminal justice systems to respond effectively to patterns of risk and accumulative effects of violence.</p> <p>Enhance the family law system's response to family violence.</p>	<p>Commonwealth</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth</p>	<p><b>Increase funding for legal assistance programs</b>, including for services to assist victims of domestic violence.</p> <p>Support victims of family violence to access the legal system through the <b>Family Violence Prevention Legal Services</b> program.</p> <p><b>Improve sexual assault victims' access to justice</b> through the evaluation of the impacts of 'victim-focused' court practice reforms around Australia since around 2000.</p> <p><b>Pilot dispute resolution models</b> to improve the family law system's response to violence.</p> <p><b>Expand Family Pathways Networks</b> and expand coverage of the networks with a greater focus on family violence and child protection services.</p>
<b>Strategy 5.2: Strengthen leadership across justice systems</b>	<p>Adopt best practice investigation and prosecution of sexual assault and family violence.</p> <p>Drive continuous improvement through sharing outcomes of reviews into deaths and homicides related to domestic violence.</p> <p>Develop and promote the uptake of multi-disciplinary training for professionals to improve consistency and responsiveness in the handling of family violence cases.</p>	<p>States and territories</p> <p>States and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p>	<p><b>Implement multi-disciplinary training package</b> for police, lawyers, judicial officers, counsellors and other professionals working in the family law system.</p> <p>Monitor <b>domestic violence-related homicide</b> issues to inform ongoing policy development, including the Australian Institute of Criminology's National Homicide Monitoring Program to research domestic violence-related homicides, risk factors and interventions.</p>
<b>Strategy 5.3: Justice systems work better together and with other systems</b>	<p>Improve cross-jurisdiction mechanisms to protect women and children through a national approach to domestic and family violence protection orders.</p> <p>Consider the recommendations of the Australian Law Reform Commission Inquiry into Family</p>	<p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p>	<p>Develop options for a <b>national scheme for domestic and family violence orders</b></p> <p>Consider the recommendations of the <b>Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC) 2010 Inquiry, Family Violence Family Violence – A National Legal Response</b>.</p>

	Violence.		Establish the <b>ALRC inquiry into the impact of Commonwealth laws on those experiencing family violence</b> , including the impact of child support and family assistance law, immigration law, employment law, social security law, superannuation law and privacy provisions.
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Details of the specific actions to be undertaken by each jurisdiction against the strategies and actions outlined above will be provided in each jurisdiction’s implementation plan. This will include details of what actions each jurisdiction will undertake, along with when they will do it and who has responsibility for its success.

## ***National Outcome 6 – Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account***

Preventing and reducing violence against women requires strong laws that are effectively administered and hold perpetrators to account. This outcome promotes a zero tolerance approach to violence, supported by stronger policing leading to arrest, consistent sentencing of perpetrators, and serious consequences for perpetrators if they breach orders.

‘Perpetrator interventions’ include a broad range of responses for perpetrators, including legal responses and rehabilitation programs. The primary objective of perpetrator interventions is to ensure the safety of women and their children.

This outcome is supported by research that shows the likelihood of recidivism may be reduced by addressing the underlying causes of offending behaviour.<sup>27</sup> Focusing just on punishing perpetrators will not bring about behaviour change. Perpetrators need assistance to end their violence.

All governments recognise the evidence base for perpetrator interventions requires strengthening. This requires a staged, systematic approach. Lessons can be shared between those who work with perpetrators of domestic violence and those who work with perpetrators of sexual violence.

Governments are currently working to expand the range of perpetrator interventions in their jurisdictions. Perpetrator interventions are now recognised as an essential part of an effective plan to reduce violence against women and their children. Research into effective perpetrator interventions is crucial and will guide work in future action plans.

### **Measure of success**

The success of Outcome 6 will be measured by *a decrease in repeated partner victimisation*.

Data: Personal Safety Survey to be conducted every four years across the life of the *National Plan*.

### **Strategy 6.1: Hold perpetrators accountable**

The most effective way to deliver an immediate reduction in violence and enhance community safety in the long term is to hold perpetrators to account now.

### **Strategy 6.2: Reduce the risk of recidivism**

Violent behaviour needs to be addressed before there is an opportunity for violence to occur again. Community safety can also be enhanced by reducing the risk that perpetrators will re-offend. This strategy seeks to improve responses to perpetrators to help reduce rates of re-offending.

### **Strategy 6.3: Intervene early to prevent violence**

Some men are more likely than others to act violently towards women due to health, behavioural or other complex risk factors. They should be supported as children and young teenagers to develop appropriate behaviours and protected from the damaging effects of exposure to violence.

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<sup>27</sup> Andrews & Bonta (2010)

Strategies	Key actions by Australian governments during 2010 to 2013	Responsibility	Immediate national initiatives
<b>Strategy 6.1: Hold perpetrators accountable</b>	<p>Adopt effective pro-active policing.</p> <p>Implement strong domestic violence and sexual assault legislative responses to offending.</p> <p>Enforce strong penalties for repeat offences and breaches of sentencing and protective orders.</p>	<p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>States and territories</p> <p>States and territories</p>	<p>Conduct <b>research into perpetrator interventions</b>, and use this to develop best practice guidelines and national standards.</p> <p>Develop and trial new models and approaches to <b>improve police responses</b> for Indigenous family safety.</p>
<b>Strategy 6.2: Reduce the risk of recidivism</b>	<p>Track sexual assault and domestic violence offenders to improve monitoring and management of the risk of violence.</p> <p>Enforce attendance at mandatory domestic violence and sexual assault perpetrator programs.</p> <p>Set and monitor national minimum standards for domestic violence perpetrator programs and ensure programs for sex offenders continue to adhere to evidence-based best practice.</p> <p>Develop, test and roll out specific evidence-based best practice domestic violence programs to be tested in correctional, juvenile justice and community settings.</p> <p>Identify effective post-intervention services and programs to sustain long term behavioural change and reduce re-offending.</p>	<p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>States and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, States and Territories</p>	<p>Commonwealth to provide funding to <b>expand the number and standard of perpetrator interventions</b> through a once-off reward payment to the states and territories at the end of the first three-year action plan. Funding will support greater integration between police, the courts, corrections and family violence and community services.</p> <p>Commonwealth to provide funding to increase evaluation of interventions to both build the evidence base and support development of national standards.</p>
<b>Strategy 6.3: Intervene early to prevent violence</b>	<p>Provide access to interventions for people with complex needs at risk of committing violence.</p> <p>Provide services for</p>	<p>Commonwealth, states and territories</p> <p>Commonwealth, states and</p>	<p>Conduct <b>research into perpetrator interventions</b>, and use this to develop best practice guidelines and national standards.</p>

	children and young people showing early indicators of violence or sexually harmful behaviours.	territories	
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Details of the key, specific actions to be undertaken by each jurisdiction against the strategies and actions outlined above will be provided in each jurisdiction's implementation plan. This will include details of which actions each jurisdiction will undertake, along with when they will do it and who has responsibility for its success.

# Implementing the National Plan

The *National Plan* is a 12-year overarching plan for reform (2010-2022) supported by rolling three-year action plans identifying specific actions, responsibilities and timeframes for action. Now the *National Plan* has been developed, governments need to work on how the *National Plan* will be implemented. This includes looking at how governments will work together and with the community to reduce violence against women and their children.

## Governance

<b>Council of Australian Governments</b>
Relevant <b>Commonwealth, state and territory ministers</b>
<b>National Plan Implementation Panel</b> involving representation from Commonwealth, state and territory governments, and non-government organisations
<b>Working groups</b> to progress specific actions nationally
<b>Jurisdiction level arrangements</b>

The *National Plan* will require integrated governance arrangements that cut across traditional government boundaries and engage the community-based and private sectors. Work under the *National Plan* will need to engage diverse government portfolios and services.

Relevant **Commonwealth, state and territory ministers** will oversee the implementation of the *National Plan*, monitor progress and develop further Action Plans. Ministers across different areas of all governments will be involved. Because reducing violence against women is relevant to many areas of government, the ministers will partner with other groups of ministers where appropriate to progress key national priorities. A cross jurisdictional officials group will continue to support Commonwealth, state and territory Ministers.

A tripartite **National Plan Implementation Panel** will be established to advise on the development and implementation of the *National Plan*, including key national priority projects identified in the Action Plans. The Implementation Panel will also provide advice to ministers on emerging issues for subsequent Action Plans. The Implementation Panel will ensure there is effective cross government and cross community collaboration.

The Implementation Panel will comprise government and non-government representatives, such as leading researchers, practitioners and community representatives. The Implementation Panel will report to ministers.

**Working groups** will sit under the Implementation Panel and will be established as required to progress the implementation of important national priorities. Membership will be drawn from government and non-government representatives from sexual assault and domestic violence sectors which specialise in the prevention of violence, providing service support to victims, or justice responses.

Violence against women requires a whole-of-government and community response. States and territories have arrangements in place to engage with service providers and experts across different fields. These arrangements will continue and will be formally used to engage key stakeholders on relevant aspects of the *National Plan's* implementation. These are an important point of contact between national and state and territory activities.

### ***A national implementation plan***

All governments will work together to develop a national implementation plan within four months of COAG endorsement of the *National Plan*. The national implementation plan will set out how governments will implement key national priorities over the life of the First Action Plan. A new implementation plan will be developed for each three year action plan to reflect changing and emerging priorities.

### ***Jurisdictional implementation plans***

Alongside the national implementation plan, each jurisdiction will develop and make public a jurisdictional implementation plan every three years. These implementation plans are important because states and territories will undertake actions in different ways and will give higher priority to actions where they are more relevant to local circumstances. Jurisdictions will report annually to ministers on progress against the national and jurisdictional implementation plans.

### ***New ways of working together***

All governments recognise that outcomes for women and their children could be improved by governments working more collaboratively through building the evidence base, sharing information and tracking performance.

A key priority of the *National Plan* is to build a strong and lasting evidence base, especially through the establishment of the **National Centre of Excellence**. The National Centre of Excellence will bring together existing research, as well as undertake new research under an agreed **national research agenda**. Through pursuing research in a cohesive national way there will be greater opportunities to support research which is more responsive to policy makers' and service providers' needs. National research will fill gaps in knowledge and help increase the understanding of issues across different sectors such as health, justice, education and housing.

Alongside research, the evidence base for work in domestic violence and sexual assault will be improved through all jurisdictions' commitment to a **national data collection and reporting framework**. In the long term, the aim is to create nationally consistent data definitions and collection methods. This data framework will be operational by 2022. All governments consider the data framework to be a key priority and will work together to map how data can be improved by the end of 2011.

With a national focus on reducing violence against women and their children, the *National Plan* will facilitate greater information sharing between jurisdictions. Working groups will provide a forum for passing on lessons from other jurisdictions.

### ***Monitoring and reporting***

Monitoring and reporting progress against the *National Plan* is vital to ensure there is real progress towards reducing violence against women and their children. The *National Plan* introduces high level performance indicators as well as indicators for each outcome. These reflect baseline data which is currently available or readily collectible. As work progresses, new measures of success may be identified and measured to improve understanding of progress.

In addition to annual reporting of progress against implementation plans, an evaluation will be conducted for ministers at the conclusion of each three year Action Plan. These evaluations will be submitted to COAG for information. As part of this evaluation, generic indicators and measures of success will be analysed, as well as progress against each of the actions. At the end of the 12 years there will be a final report which reviews achievements over the life of the *National Plan* and sets future policy directions as required.

Action Plan evaluations will also monitor the success of the *National Plan* in achieving the six specific national outcomes. These measures of success will initially be monitored using national surveys, such as the Personal Safety Survey and the National Community Attitudes Survey. As data collection improves and is more consistent new sources of data will become available.

### ***Reporting on progress***

Reporting on the progress of the first three-year Action Plan is crucial so that future action plans can build on the First Action Plan and jurisdictions can learn from each others' successes. Progress against actions will be provided to enable ministers to report annually to COAG on progress for at least the first three years.

## State and Territory Initiatives

### New South Wales (NSW)

#### Structural Arrangements

##### Agency Responsibility

Violence Against Women policy is the responsibility of the Office for Women's Policy (OFWP) in the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC). Specifically, the Violence Prevention Coordination Unit in OFWP develops and reviews all policy related to violence against women. As it is located in a central agency (i.e. DPC), the Unit reports to both the Minister for Women and the NSW Premier. It provides strategic advice and coordinates the whole-of-government response to violence against women issues.

In relation to domestic and family violence the whole-of-government response is underpinned by the recently released five-year Domestic and Family Violence Action Plan, *Stop the Violence, End the Silence*. The implementation of the Action Plan will be overseen by a Senior Officers Group. A Premier's Council on Preventing Violence Against Women, comprising representatives from key non-government agencies, advocates and academics, provides advice to the Minister for Women and the Premier on a range of violence against women issues and helps to inform government policy.

Other agencies across government deliver specific projects and programs in relation to violence against women. Some examples include:

##### Department of Human Services

- Staying Home Leaving Violence is a specialised domestic violence program that works with women over 18 years (and their children), who have separated from a violent partner or family member, but choose to remain in their own home. The program has been expanded to 18 locations across NSW.
- The Domestic Violence Line provides telephone counselling, information, support and referrals to refuges and other accommodation for women and their children.
- Start Safely provides short to medium-term financial assistance to women, and women with children, escaping domestic or family violence to assist them to access appropriate, affordable and safe housing in the private rental market, and where required, provide referrals to support services.
- Brighter Futures is designed for families who have children aged under nine years or who are expecting a child. To be eligible for Brighter Futures, families must also have at least one vulnerability that, if not addressed, is likely to escalate and impact adversely on their capacity to parent adequately and/or on the wellbeing of the children. Domestic Violence is one of the seven vulnerabilities.
- Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Services Program, a multi-agency, coordinated response to prevent the escalation of domestic and family violence among high risk target groups and in targeted communities.
- Funding and support for a range of crisis, medium and long term accommodation services.

##### Department of Health (NSW Health)

- NSW Health sexual assault services provide free, crisis and ongoing counselling and court support to adult and child victims of sexual assault and non-offending family members. Medical and forensic services are also provided to victims as part of this comprehensive service provision. NSW Health is currently engaged in a project to improve the accessibility of medical and forensic services in this area.

- NSW Rape Crisis Centre, a NSW Health funded service provides a 24/7 telephone and online crisis counselling service to anyone whose life has been impacted by sexual violence.
- The NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence provides state-wide specialised training, consultancy and resource development for NSW Health and interagency workers who provide services to children and adults who have experienced sexual assault, domestic or Aboriginal family violence and/or physical and emotional abuse and neglect.
- To improve identification of and responses to victims of domestic violence in NSW Health Services, Domestic Violence Routine Screening was introduced for all women presenting to antenatal and early childhood health services, and women aged 16 years or over presenting to mental health and alcohol and other drugs services. It is an early intervention strategy that also has a role in prevention of domestic violence by providing information to at risk populations.

#### NSW Police Force

- All local area commands are equipped with domestic violence evidence kits to assist with evidence collection, the investigation process and the prosecution of domestic violence matters.
- Currently over 120 specialist domestic violence officers are employed by NSW Police.
- A Police Code of Practice on dealing with domestic violence provides, in conjunction with operational policies and procedures, a reference tool for operational police to perform their duties whilst investigating domestic and family violence.

#### Department of Justice and Attorney-General

- The Domestic Violence Intervention Court Model operates in two NSW Courts and is aimed at improving efficiency and the quality of the criminal justice response to domestic violence.
- A range of legislative reforms in the areas of domestic violence and sexual assault have been implemented more recently. In relation to sexual assault offences, one of the most significant changes has been the introduction of a statutory definition of consent. The definition of consent is an objective test and has replaced the former common law subjective test – requiring the Crown to prove the accused knew the complainant was not consenting, or was reckless as to whether the complainant was consenting, solely from the point of view of the accused.
- Through the Legal Aid NSW the Domestic Violence Duty Solicitor Scheme provides legal advice and advocacy for victims of domestic and family violence.
- The Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program, provides independent services for women and children seeking help and information about how to get protection from the court from domestic violence. Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services are funded by Legal Aid NSW and are managed by local agencies.

#### **Recent reforms**

- A Domestic Violence Death Review Team is being established within the office of the NSW Coroner. The team will be an expert, multi-disciplinary team and will review deaths occurring within the context of domestic violence and make recommendations to improve systems and services.
- The expansion of the Domestic Violence Pro Active Support Services Project (DVPASS) in identified Police Local Area Commands. This project involves a collaborative approach to domestic violence from both the police and specialist domestic violence workers which gives victims a seamless criminal justice and human services response.
- The development of the Tackling Violence Initiative which involves regional rugby league teams delivering messages about the unacceptability of violence against women through a range of education and promotional campaigns. In addition, players sign a code of conduct which provides for penalties should a player commit a domestic violence related offence. These penalties include suspension from a team in addition to the action taken by police and the courts.

## **Future Directions**

### Sexual Violence Prevention Plan

The Office for Women's Policy is currently developing a comprehensive and integrated Sexual Violence Prevention Plan focusing on early intervention, prevention and support. Sweeping legislative reform has been undertaken over the last few years in relation to sexual assault and the prevention plan will build on the those reforms.

## Victoria

### **Structural Arrangements**

Since 2005 the Victorian Government has invested over \$175 million in a number of significant whole of government reforms to reduce and prevent violence against women. These are outlined below:

#### *Family Violence Reform*

The Victorian Family Violence Reforms (VFVR) aim to increase safety for women and their children experiencing family violence by making it easier for them to get the right help through prioritising the safety of women and their children and holding men accountable for their behaviour. Improved police and court responses, as well as supporting men to take responsibility for their behaviour through behaviour change programs and other forms of support, are critical to achieving these objectives.

The VFVR have been sponsored by a Ministerial Working Group (representing the portfolio areas of Women's Affairs, Attorney-General, Police and Emergency Services, Housing, Aboriginal Affairs, Community Services). A lead Minister has overseen and coordinated this Ministerial Working Group.

The Interdepartmental Committee on Family Violence has comprised departmental executive officers representing all portfolio areas implementing family violence reform. These have been from Planning and Community Development, Human Services [Housing & Community Building and Children, Youth and Families Divisions], Health, Education and Early Childhood Development, Justice and Victoria Police. The Committee has met regularly to monitor implementation of the VFVR and has been chaired by a senior executive within the Department of Planning and Community Development. A Family Violence Statewide Advisory Committee, comprised of government, non-government, family violence peaks and statewide services representatives provides advice to government on family violence integration and has been co-chaired by the Department of Planning and Community Development and Victoria Police.

The Victorian Indigenous Family Violence Strategy has driven the development of the 10-year Plan *Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families: Towards a safer future for Indigenous families and communities*. This strategy is a community led partnership with government (firstly through the Indigenous Family Violence Taskforce and then the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum) and is the first of its kind on Indigenous family violence in Australia. The 10-year Plan is a living document which guides joint government and community efforts to prevent and respond to family violence in Indigenous communities in Victoria.

The Victorian Sexual Assault Reform Strategy (SARS) is a systems approach based on collaboration and partnership, aimed at changing attitudes and behaviours across the criminal justice system that encourages people to report sexual assault, minimises the trauma and distress for complainants throughout the criminal justice process and leads to a reduction in the incidence of sexual assault in the community.

The latest stage of Victorian Government reform in the area of family violence and sexual assault (as the two most common forms of violence against women) focuses on cultural and attitudinal change to prevent such abuses from happening in the first place. Victoria's plan to prevent violence against women is based on comprehensive research showing the key contributing factors to violence against women lie in unequal power relations between men and women and adherence to rigid gender stereotypes.

## Recent reforms

### *Victorian Family Violence Reform – key initiatives include:*

- Continued expansion of the Family Violence Common Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework to further embed use and application of Framework tool for next three years.
- Expanded services for women and children including additional case management; an enhanced after hours response and support for women and children to remain safely at home.
- Existing programs for women and their children ranging from intensive case management, Access to Private Rental program, women's refuges and statewide services. Responses to men who use family violence include case management and emergency accommodation programs.
- Intensive case management services for Indigenous women and men.
- Statewide rollout of expanded after hours men's referral service, regional men's behaviour change intake and men's case management (being evaluated).
- Developed the Victoria Police *Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence (2004)*, providing the framework for police when responding to family violence that has significantly improved responses for victims.
- Implementation of the Victoria Police Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women and Children 2009-2014 – *Living Free From Violence*.
- Commencement of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* and introduction of police-issued Family Violence Safety Notices (being independently evaluated).
- Developed the campaign: 'Enough' - supporting commencement of the new family violence legislation in December 2008 extended to end of 2010 through partnerships with Netball Victoria and Victorian Country Football League.
- Specialist court responses, such as the Family Violence Court Divisions (and Family Violence Court Intervention Project), Specialist Family Violence Services and the Koori Family Violence Court Support Project (currently being piloted).
- Establishment of a range of initiatives to support Aboriginal people affected by family violence including Indigenous Family Violence Healing and Time Out Services; group programs for Aboriginal men who use violence; and additional accommodation options specifically for Aboriginal women.
- The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's gender based violence demonstration pilot has informed the development of violence prevention curriculum guidance and materials, including advice for schools and community agencies to provide a whole-school systemic approach to the prevention of violence and promotion of respectful relationships.

### *Sexual Assault Reform – key initiatives including:*

- Establishment and expansion of multidisciplinary centres co-locating police specialist investigators, child protection workers, sexual assault counsellor/advocates and with strong links to specialist forensic medical personnel to provide an integrated and holistic response to sexual assault victims.
- Establishment of Victoria Police's Sexual Offences and Child Abuse Investigation Teams (SOCITs).
- Establishment of a Child Witness Service to assist child witnesses and their support people during the court process.
- Establishment of specialist sexual offence lists in the Magistrates' Court, County Court and more recently in the Children's Court.
- Establishment of a Specialist Sex Offences Unit within the Office of Public Prosecutions in Melbourne and Geelong.
- Providing treatment programs for children and young people displaying inappropriate sexualised behaviour or sexually abusive behaviour.
- Providing enhanced management of serious sex offenders and expanded treatment and post-release programs.
- Establishment of a Forensic Nurse Network to improve access to appropriate and timely forensic medical services.

- Expanding availability of forensic medical examinations for adult victims who do not initially choose to report to police.
- Significant legislative amendments to improve the operation of the criminal justice system in sexual assault matters, particularly in relation to children and adults with cognitive impairments.

### **Evidence base**

- Victorian Family Violence Database; release of volume four showing nine years of family violence trend data from 1999 to June 2008.
- Australian Research Council Linkage Grant – five year research project to review the family violence reform program in Victoria (the SAFER Research program) in partnership with University of Melbourne and Monash University.
- Individual program evaluations including: the family violence safety notices; specialist family violence courts; men's case management, expanded men's after hours referral service and regional men's behaviour change intake; Gain Respect Increase Personal Power (GRIPP) pilot program targeting young adolescent males aged 13-17; and the SARS.
- Systemic review of family violence related deaths conducted through the Coroners Court of Victoria (established late 2008).

### **Future Directions**

The VFVR will continue to develop and implement initiatives and programs supporting the safety of women and children and the accountability of perpetrators with specific areas of focus including:

- Implementation of the Family Violence Strengthening Risk Management project.
- Extending and embedding the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework to build on the significant cross sector workforce development undertaken to date.
- Further development of Victorian minimum data set to measure family violence system reform.

The Department of Justice commissioned a system wide evaluation of the SARS with the aims being to assess the performance of the reform strategy against the specified outcomes, objectives and aims; provide an evidence base to inform future funding decisions; and inform future policy development and practices addressing sexual assault.

Continued implementation of 10-year Indigenous Family Violence Plan, including: the development of an Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Framework; and the development of cultural competence guidelines for use by mainstream services.

Victoria's plan to prevent violence against women received \$14.1million in the 2010/11 state budget. Key areas of immediate activity have included:

- Working with councils who will pilot prevention activities across schools, workplaces, sporting clubs, local media and arts organisations in their communities. The councils will develop a 'whole-of-community model' for prevention of violence against women.
- Trialling the Respectful Relationships in Schools demonstration project by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in partnership with CASA House, distributing *Building Respectful and Safe Schools: A resource for school communities* to be implemented by all government schools. This includes new curriculum guidance and professional learning on respectful relationships education, as part of a whole school approach.
- Working with sporting codes to develop and implement respectful relationships education for players, such as those developed by the Australian Football League.
- Engaging and supporting local communities by appointing local champions and prevention ambassadors; including implementing White Ribbon Day activities.
- Addressing violence-supportive attitudes and transforming social norms through the media by funding for the Eliminating Violence against Women Media Awards (the EVAs), and to support survivors of family violence to be public advocates for media interviews and community events.

## Queensland

### **Structural Arrangements**

#### *Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland*

The overarching framework for the Queensland Government includes an objective to create a *fair* Queensland that supports safe and caring communities.

#### *For our Sons and Daughters: A Queensland Government Strategy to reduce domestic and family violence 2009-2014*

A Queensland Government strategy from 2009-2014 commits to:

- Build zero tolerance for domestic and family violence
- Improve the support and safety of people affected by domestic and family violence
- Place accountability and responsibility firmly on those who choose to use violence within their relationships.

#### *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 (Qld)*

The Act covers a wide range of relationships in which violence occurs and allows for the removal of the violent person from the home. The *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 (Qld)* is currently being reviewed.

#### *Domestic and Family Violence Strategy Implementation Advisory Group*

The group advises the Minister for Community Services and Housing and Minister for Women on the implementation of the Queensland Strategy and provides specialist feedback on the review of the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 (Qld)*.

#### *Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research*

Funded by the Department of Communities, the Centre contributes to the prevention of domestic and family violence through research, evaluation, sector development and community engagement.

#### *Interagency guidelines for responding to adult victims of sexual assault*

The guidelines are intended to provide a best practice framework for government agencies in responding to adult victims, with a particular focus on victims of recent assault.

#### *Key coordinating agencies*

- The Department of Communities (lead agency for domestic and family violence), Queensland Police Service, Queensland Health, Department of Justice and the Attorney-General, Department of Education and Training and Legal Aid Queensland are key agencies.
- The Violence Prevention Team in the Department of Communities coordinates a range of activities to reduce domestic and family violence in Queensland including social marketing initiatives for domestic and family violence, and program management for specialist domestic and family violence services funded by the Department of Communities.
- The Queensland Police Service Domestic and Family Violence Unit coordinates policy and training for the Queensland Police Service on issues relating to domestic and family violence, investigates the application of policy on domestic-related homicides with a view to identifying trends, and monitors and reports on the effectiveness of the *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 1989 (Qld)*. Domestic Violence Liaison Officers provide support and advice to both police officers and victims of domestic and family violence at a local level, they coordinate and monitor policing strategies and assist with the provision of training to police on domestic and family violence-related issues.

- The Queensland Health Strategic Policy, Funding and Intergovernmental Relations Branch coordinate policy and training for specialist sexual assault services funded under the Sexual Assault Support and Prevention Program.

*Domestic and Family Violence Senior Officers Group (Department of Communities, Queensland Police Service, Queensland Health, Department of Justice and the Attorney-General, Department of Community Safety, Department of Education and Training, Department of Premier and Cabinet)*

The Senior Officers' Group is the key coordinating body across government with oversight responsibility for – For our Sons and Daughters: a Queensland Government Strategy to reduce domestic and family violence, and input into the *National Plan* and related matters.

## **Recent reforms**

### *Prevention*

- Community Engagement grant program and the Queensland Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Month provide Queensland communities with an increased awareness of the social and personal impacts of domestic and family violence.
- 'Act as One' campaign - social marketing initiative to raise awareness about domestic violence launched in May 2010.
- Launch of the Guide to Social and Emotional Learning in State Schools (October 2008).
- Expansion of the Schoolwide Positive Behaviour support program (commenced in 2005, expanded to more than 250 schools in 2008-09).

### *Early identification and intervention*

- Expansion of domestic violence screening across the ante-natal and post-natal period in Queensland Health settings which began in July 2008 and, since then, has expanded every year.
- Support for applicants to the One Social Housing Program, as part of the Client Intake and Assessment Process, facilitate a referral to a support service for clients who are homeless or need to leave their current housing due to domestic and family violence.
- Introduction of a referral program for paramedics, to support vulnerable clients including victims of domestic and family violence.

### *Connected victim support services*

- Testing an enhanced domestic and family violence integrated response in Rockhampton comprising case management services for individuals with multiple support needs, an integrated specialised court program and enhanced legal services, behavioural change programs for perpetrators of violence and community awareness raising and capacity building of the service sector.
- Introduction of a safety upgrades program in three trial locations in Townsville, the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast to enable victims to stay in their homes where it is safe to do so and provide accommodation support for people on ouster conditions.
- Ongoing investment in services to victims of crime including victims of domestic and family violence or sexual assault. The Department of Justice and Attorney-General, through Victim Assist Queensland, provides financial assistance and a first point of contact for victims of crime to access government and non-government services to assist in their recovery from an act of violence.
- Coordinating forums with community leaders – in partnership with the Commonwealth to raise awareness and understanding of a range of topics including domestic and family violence to develop community leadership that supports victims.
- Continued support for the Elder Abuse Prevention Unit, including development of a 1300 helpline for people experiencing elder abuse, and their friends, carers and families.
- Funding five Seniors Legal and Support Services, offering free assistance for seniors who are at risk or experiencing elder abuse or financial exploitation.

**Perpetrator accountability**

- Research risk assessment tools for police.
- Review police training in the area of domestic and family violence.
- Conduct a Practice Skills Development Workshop to supplement existing domestic and family violence training and resources for frontline child protection staff in Child Safety Services, Department of Communities.

**System planning and coordination**

- Establish an expert Death Review Panel to oversee a review of coronial processes and practices.

**Future Directions**

- Development of the next Program of Action for the Queensland Strategy. The new 3 year Program of Action will build on the work already undertaken to meet the objectives of the Strategy and will include actions that fulfil commitments to the *National Plan*.
- Conclusion of a review of domestic and family violence legislation in Queensland. The objectives of the review are to ensure the legislation is effective and efficient in protecting victims of domestic and family violence, that people who use violence are held responsible for their behaviour and that the implementation of the Queensland Strategy is supported.

## Western Australia (WA)

### Governance

The Department for Child Protection is the lead agency responsible for the development and management of family and domestic violence policy, working in partnership with a Family and Domestic Violence Senior Officers' Group comprising representation across State and Commonwealth Government departments and the Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services WA.

### Structural Arrangements

#### *Department for Child Protection*

- Department for Child Protection, Family and Domestic Violence Unit
- Family and Domestic Violence Senior Officers' Group

#### *Department for Communities*

- Office for Women's Policy
- Western Australian Women's Safety Framework Reference Group

#### *Department of Health*

- Sexual Assault Resource Centre

### WA Strategic Plan for Family and Domestic Violence 2009-2013

In 2009, the WA Strategic Plan for Family and Domestic Violence 2009-2013 was officially launched. The Strategic Plan aims to ensure that each part of the system has the capacity to take action, and through their combined, integrated efforts, maximise the safety of victims and the accountability of perpetrators. A major focus of the Strategic Plan is the systemic reform of Western Australia's response to family and domestic violence of the four years through the implementation of an evidence based, integrated response. The integrated response will operate across all agencies within a common framework of objectives, principles, definitions and strategies.

In 2004, the *Acts Amendment (Family and Domestic Violence) Act 2004 (WA)* amended the *Restraining Orders Act 1997 (WA)*, the *Criminal Code and the Bail Act 1892 (WA)* to afford greater protection to victims of family and domestic violence. The amendments included strengthening the police response by introducing Police Orders that allows police to issue orders without prior judicial approval in situations of family and domestic violence, and expanding police powers to enter a property and remove a perpetrator for up to 72 hours.

### Recent reforms

#### *Establishment of Family and Domestic Violence Case Management and Coordination Services*

These services will facilitate interagency case management of high risk family and domestic violence clients and regional coordination. A number of tools and processes have been developed to support the operation of the Family and Domestic Violence Case Management and Coordination Services including:

- Governance and Operations Manual that outlines the role and functions of the model.
- Memorandum of Understanding for information sharing to support multi-agency case management of high risk cases involving family and domestic violence.
- Consistent risk assessment and referral processes.

#### *Collocation of Department for Child Protection Field Officers with Western Australian Police Districts*

The co-location of Western Australia Police Family Protection Coordinators and Department for Child Protection Senior Family and Domestic Violence Field Workers has ensured timely information sharing between agencies and streamlined responses to families.

### *Development of a Family and Domestic Violence Common Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework*

The Common Risk Assessment Risk Management Framework outlines a minimum standard for screening, assessment and response to family and domestic violence for all mainstream and specialist services in Western Australia.

### *Establishment of a Hub and Outreach Service in 5 regional Aboriginal communities in the East Kimberley*

The Commonwealth through the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) has engaged the Department for Children Protection to develop and implement the East Kimberley Hub and Outreach Service. The Service will address the safety, accountability and healing needs that arise from family and domestic violence in the communities of Kalumburu, Oombulgurri, Wyndham, Kununurra and Warmun. The Service will be based in Kununurra and administered through the Department for Child Protection's East Kimberley District Office.

### *Establishment of Safe at Home Program*

The Department for Child Protection will deliver the Safe at Home Program that will provide support to women and children who wish to remain in their own home following domestic violence, when it is safe to do so. The Safe at Home Program will be located in the North West, North East, South West and South East metropolitan regions and two rural centres in the South West and Wheatbelt.

### *Establishment of Family Violence Courts*

The Department of the Attorney General has established and implemented specialist Family Violence Courts in six Perth metropolitan Magistrates Court locations and an Aboriginal specific court in Geraldton (Barndimalgu Court). The Family Violence Court model uses an interagency and alternative sentencing approach.

The aims of the model are to improve the criminal justice response to family violence with a particular emphasis on meeting the needs of Aboriginal people, making perpetrators accountable for their behaviour, supporting victims in the criminal justice system, ensuring victim safety and reducing the incidence of family violence.

### *Establishment of a 24 Hour State-Wide Response*

The Department for Child Protection operates a 24 hour State-wide Women's Domestic Violence Helpline that offers support, referral and advice to women experiencing abuse in their relationships. In addition, a 24 hour State-wide Men's Domestic Violence Helpline is available and offers support, referral and advice to men who are perpetrating abuse, and men who are experiencing abuse in their relationships.

The Department for Health operates a 24 hour State-wide emergency service, consisting of medical, forensic and supportive care to people who have been sexually assaulted or sexually abused in the past two weeks.

### **Future Directions**

Western Australia's current strategic framework provides a foundation to strengthen our existing responses and work within a national framework. Western Australia will sustain the Family and Domestic Violence Senior Officers' group to ensure standing governance arrangements remain in place.

Future strategic direction and reform of the WA system response will be achieved by integrating service delivery throughout the state supported by a strengthened criminal justice response. Future direction will also be informed by shared learnings across jurisdictions that are achieved through the *National Plan*.

## South Australia (SA)

### Structural Arrangements

#### *Women's Safety Strategy 2005 -2010*

The Women's Safety Strategy (WSS) was launched on International Women's Day, 8 March 2005 and outlines the South Australian Government's vision to address the issue of violence against women, including both rape and sexual assault and family and domestic violence. The WSS has a broad focus, from early intervention work focused on preventing violence, through to community education to raise awareness about the level and complexity of women's safety. The Minister for the Status of Women is the lead Minister and Office for Women is the lead agency with responsibility for coordination and monitoring of the WSS. The WSS is led by an across Government Group chaired by the Minister for the Status of Women as lead Minister. This group brings a strategic perspective to the way in which Government is delivering women's safety services in South Australia and has lead responsibility for the reform agenda.

Four working groups have been convened as part of the WSS focusing on:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities
- Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities
- The impact of domestic violence on women's employment
- The implementation of the Family Safety Framework.

#### *Policy and legislative frameworks*

*Criminal Law Consolidation (Rape and Sexual Offences) Amendment Bill 2008 (SA)*

*Statutes Amendment (Evidence and Procedure) Bill 2007 (SA)*

*Intervention Orders (Prevention of Abuse) Act 2009 (SA)* (currently being implemented)

South Australia's Strategic Plan (SASP) which outlines a number of targets aimed at reducing violence against women which is currently being updated.

### Recent reforms

#### *Prevention*

- An anti-violence community awareness campaign; the four year campaign (<http://www.dontcrosstheline.com.au/>) seeks to change community attitudes, increase awareness for workers who respond to perpetrators and victims, encourage a culture of perpetrator accountability and highlight the important work being undertaken by the South Australian Government.
- SASP Women in Leadership targets; [Target 5.1 Women on boards](#): At 1 June 2010, women held 45 per cent (45.16 per cent) of positions on SA Government boards and committees. This represents an increase of 11.48 percentage points from 33 per cent (33.68 per cent) at 1 April 2004 following the release of South Australia's Strategic Plan (SASP). [Target 5.2 Women as Chairs](#): At 1 June 2010, women held 35 per cent (34.59 per cent) of chair positions on government boards and committees. This represents an increase of 10.76 percentage points from 24 per cent (23.83 per cent) at 1 April 2004 following the release of the SASP. [Target 6.23 Women as Executives](#): South Australia's Strategic Plan also has a target of having 50 per cent of executive positions in the public service filled by women by 2014 (Target 6.23). This has increased from 29.4 per cent to 36.4 per cent since the target was set in 2003.
- [Women's Health Action Plan](#) Initiative 1: Application of gender analysis to health policy, service and program planning and evaluation by central health units, health regions and health services in South Australia.
- [State Aboriginal Women's Gathering](#) SAWG aims to ensure that Aboriginal women's voices are heard and that Aboriginal women are included in decision making across government and promotes Aboriginal women's leadership roles within the SA community.

- The Focus Schools Program builds on the success of the share Project (2003-2005) which aims to improve the sexual health, safety and wellbeing of young South Australians. A significant component of the program focuses on respectful relationships.

#### *Provision*

- The development of the [Family Safety Framework](#) (FSF): The FSF is a strategic and pro-active new way of addressing domestic violence in South Australia. It is to ensure that services to the families most at risk of violence are provided in a more structured and systematic way, through agencies sharing information about high risk families and taking responsibility for supporting these families to navigate the system of services to help them. The FSF currently operates in six locations in SA – 4 metropolitan (Elizabeth, Holden Hill, Port Adelaide and Noarlunga) and 2 regional (Port Augusta and Port Pirie).
- [Women’s Health Action Plan](#) Initiative 4: Provision of health services that provide appropriate responses to women who have experienced violence, including sexual violence and the recognition of the impact of violence on women’s mental health.
- Sustainable Economic Futures: The aim of the research project was to: identify and document barriers and supports for women living in situations of domestic violence whilst working or seeking employment.

#### *Protection*

- The development of a new domestic violence response strategy by South Australia Police. The strategy is an overarching corporate framework which provides the foundation and sets a clear direction for SAPOL’s response to domestic and Indigenous family violence. SAPOL also developed a domestic violence policing response and investigation approach, the Domestic Violence Policing Model which aims to improve safety for victims and hold perpetrators accountable.
- Reform of rape and sexual assault and domestic violence legislation; the aim is to strengthen the SA laws to provide greater protection to victims and hold perpetrators of violence more accountable. The reforms will also improve the response of the criminal justice system to rape, sexual assault and domestic violence.

### **Future Directions**

In addition to the continuation of the reforms above:

#### *Prevention*

- Development of a promotional campaign to encourage women to access training in high-demand non-traditional industries, such as mining, defence and construction.

#### *Provision*

- Expansion of the Family Safety Framework.
- Implementation of a dedicated resource within the Coroner’s Office to research and investigate domestic violence related deaths.

#### *Protection*

- Implementation of the *Intervention Orders (Prevention of Abuse) Act 2009 (SA)*.

## Tasmania

### **Governance**

The Department of Justice is the lead agency on the Tasmanian Government's integrated response to family violence, *Safe at Home: A Criminal Justice Framework for Responding to Family Violence in Tasmania*. A whole of government Interdepartmental Committee oversees the strategic development and co-ordination of Safe at Home and is supported by Regional Co-ordinating Committees. A system of Integrated Case Coordination meetings across the state supports and fosters service provider collaboration, encourages cross-discipline learning and sharing of information, and promotes a multi disciplinary approach to meeting the needs of Safe at Home clients.

#### *Policy and Legislative Frameworks*

*Tasmania Together* (a consultative process between the government and the community to determine policy goals), identified a reduction in the reported level of family violence as a key indicator in the achievement of the goal to, 'Have a community where people feel safe and are safe in all aspects of their lives'.

*Safe at Home* is underpinned by the *Family Violence Act 2004* (Tas). It provides protection to adult and child victims of family violence, via the provision of Family Violence Orders issued by police or the courts. It also includes provision for the making of rehabilitation orders to mandate offenders into treatment. Children are recognised as victims of family violence in their own right within the act and amendments were made to the *Children, Young Persons and their Families Act 1997* (Tas) to recognise exposure to family violence as a form of child abuse requiring mandatory reporting. The act also enables perpetrators to be excluded from the family home thereby allowing victims and their children to remain in their home.

### **Structural Arrangements**

#### *Family Violence*

Safe at Home is an integrated service delivery system operated in partnership by the Departments of Police and Emergency Management, Justice, and Health and Human Service. It is premised on the primacy of the safety of the victim and is pro-arrest, pro-charge, and pro-prosecution in its response to family violence. It was recognised as a model of best practice by the National Domestic Violence Clearing House in 2007. The following services are provided by Safe at Home.

#### *Department of Police and Emergency Management*

##### Family Violence Response and Referral Line

Tasmania Police operate the Family Violence Response and Referral Line, which is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This service provides access to the full range of Safe at Home responses, including immediate police call out where violence is occurring or is threatened.

##### Operational Police

Police officers throughout the state have received specialist family violence training in order to enable them to respond appropriately and effectively to victims of family violence. All police are empowered to arrest and remove perpetrators from the home to assist police to investigate family violence, secure victim safety, and issue on the spot Police Family Violence Orders (PFVOs) where appropriate of up to 12 months.

##### Victims Safety Response Teams

Each of the four police districts has a dedicated Victim Safety Response Team that provides initial crisis support for victims. This includes gathering evidence and supporting information for a Family Violence Order and/or prosecution, conducting an initial risk and safety assessment, a safety audit, and linking victims with the full range of Safe at Home support services.

### Dedicated Police Prosecutors

Dedicated police prosecutors are available in each of the Police districts to prosecute Safe at Home cases.

### *Department of Justice*

- Legal Aid  
Dedicated Legal Aid lawyers are available to provide specialist advice and representation to victims of family violence.
- Court Support and Liaison Service incorporating the Child Witness Service  
Court Support and Liaison Officers assist adult and child victims of family violence through the court process.

### *Family Violence Offender Intervention Program*

- An intensive 75 hours behaviour change program for high risk offenders mandated to the program by the court is delivered by Community Corrections.

### *Department of Health and Human Services*

- Defendant Health Liaison Service  
This service aims to assist perpetrators to assess appropriate services to address their health and welfare needs with the overall aim being to enhance the safety of victims and reduce the perpetrators likelihood of reoffending.
- Family Violence Counselling and Support Services  
Provide a range of counselling and support services to adult and child victims. The service is involved in the Living Safer Sexual Lives Respectful Relationships Peer Education Project. This project is funded through the *National Plan* and is undertaken by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society, La Trobe University in partnership with Women with Disabilities Australia.
- Perpetrator Emergency Accommodation Program  
Brokerage funds are available to provide emergency accommodation to perpetrators removed from the family home due to an acceptable risk of reoffending.

### *Sexual Assault Services*

While the Department of Justice has carriage of legislative provisions in relation to rape and sexual assault, the Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for the provision of services to victims of sexual assault and rape. These are provided across the state by government funded community based organisations that provide services to adult and child survivors of sexual assault. There are offices in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie and they offer a 24 hour, seven day a week crisis response service.

### **Future Directions**

#### *Family Violence*

Future directions for Safe at Home will focus on introducing legislative and service delivery reform in response to the recommendations made in the reviews of the *Family Violence Act 2004* (Tas) and Safe at Home service delivery system. These include improving services to children continuing to live in violent households and perpetrator/offenders. To this end, Safe at Home is in the process of negotiating linkages between the Gateway and Integrated Family Support Services and regional Integrated Case Co-ordination meetings to improve the case co-ordination and the risk and safety management of families who are not part of the child protection system. Shorter forms of the FVOIP will be developed to improve service delivery in more regionalised areas and a new Integrated Case Co-ordination Information Management System will be developed and implemented. Improvements will also be made to the Tasmania Police Family Violence Management System. Human Rights and Victims Rights Charters will also be considered and amendments made to the *Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Act 2001* (Tas) in 2011.

*Sexual Assault*

Future directions in the sexual assault sector will focus on ensuring that survivors of sexual assault have timely access to best practice forensic medical and crisis response/counselling services.

## Australian Capital Territory (ACT)

### **Structural Arrangements**

#### *Agency responsibility*

Oversight of violence against women policy is shared between two key agencies in the ACT – the Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services. These agencies provide the majority of funding and program management for services supporting women and children escaping violence, including justice responses, victim support, crisis and long term accommodation options, and child protection and family support. ACT Office for Women is a core agency involved in preventing violence against women. The role of the Office is to provide advice to the Minister for Women on all issues impacting on women, provide across government strategic direction and oversighting of policy and program development in addressing and progressing issues relating to women in the ACT; and develop and promote links between key stakeholders and the Government in working to improve the status of women.

The ACT has a strong focus on the coordination of services for victims of domestic and sexual violence, with two established Programs supporting a whole-of-government/ service system response.

#### *ACT Family Violence Intervention Program*

The Family Violence Intervention Program (FVIP) is a coordinated interagency response to criminal family violence matters. It commenced in May 1998. Essentially, it is systemic case coordination between ACT agencies involved in responding to family violence. The Program has been the only fully-integrated program of its type in Australia.

Support to clients has encompassed the agencies focusing on each victim's safety and keeping each other abreast of each victim's needs, ensuring that each victim is given timely information on how their matter is progressing through the criminal justice system, and offering independent advocacy and other support for each victim at court.

Since FVIP commenced, from 1998-99 to 2005-06, there was a 464 per cent increase in family violence matters handled by the Office of the ACT Director of Public Prosecutions; a 75 per cent increase in family violence charges brought before the Court; and an increase from 24 per cent to 46 per cent of matters finalised by an early plea of guilt. The number of defendants convicted of a domestic violence offence trebled between 1998 and 2006.

### **Recent reforms**

#### *Sexual Assault Reform Program*

The objectives of the ACT Sexual Assault Reform Program (SARP) are to improve the processes and support for adult and child victims of sexual assault in the criminal justice system; to reduce attrition of victims from police and court processes; and to improve coordination and collaboration between the agencies involved in the criminal justice system.

The program's key initiatives have included a significant package of legislative reform, including the *Sexual and Violent Offences Legislation Amendment Act 2008* (ACT); court infrastructure upgrades; employment of key personnel; training initiatives; development of multimedia tools for victims and service providers; and an enhanced model of victims' services, called 'Wraparound'.

The purpose of Wraparound is to ensure sexual assault victims who are considering reporting to police, or reporting, are offered adequate support and information. The Wraparound agencies include ACT Policing, the Office of the ACT Director of Public Prosecutions, the Canberra Rape Crisis Centre, and Victims Support ACT. Representatives from these agencies have developed a Wraparound Charter of Victims Rights and comprehensive Wraparound Service Standards.

SARP will be fully evaluated over the next few years. However, agencies and victims have already provided the Department with significant feedback that indicates an increase in victims reporting sexual assaults to police and an increase in those reports becoming criminal trials. Further, the reference groups have noted that a key SARP outcome has been an unprecedented level of collaboration between ACT agencies responsible for responding to sexual assault.

### **Future Directions**

#### *ACT Prevention of Violence against Women and Children Strategy*

An ACT Prevention of Violence against Women and Children Strategy is currently under development and will align with the ACT's commitment to a *National Plan* to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.

The ACT Strategy will be a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach to preventing violence against women and children. It will provide a new strategic focus on diversion, early intervention and primary prevention, and a focus on holding perpetrators accountable - beyond existing justice sanctions.

The ACT's commitment to a whole-of-government Prevention of Violence against Women and Children Strategy commenced with the 2010-11 Prevention of Violence against Women Budget initiative. This initiative established new programs to support young people using violence in their family relationships, access to legal support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and a family violence court advocacy service. The initiative also provided additional resources to support increased demand for sexual assault support services resulting from the SARP Wraparound model.

#### *ACT Family Violence Court*

The Courts Legislation Amendment Bill 2010, introduced in December 2010, will legislate for a specialist Family Violence Court to deal with domestic violence offences in the ACT. The amending provisions recognise the complex nature of domestic violence and the need to protect victims as well as the great personal and social harm that results from domestic violence in our community.

## Northern Territory (NT)

### **Structural Arrangements**

#### *Department of Health and Families*

Responsibility for co-ordinating the whole-of-government response to domestic/family violence has been located in the Northern Territory Families and Children Division of the Department of Health and Families. On 18 October 2010, in response to a Board of Inquiry report, the NT Government announced major reforms to the child protection system, including a new department to be dedicated to child safety and wellbeing. Further details about structural arrangements within the new department are yet to be announced.

#### *Department of Justice*

NT Correctional Services, within the Department of Justice (DoJ), provide a range of programs aimed at decreasing or ceasing offence-related behaviours, including domestic and family violence.

#### *Police, Fire and Emergency Services*

NT Police units which support a focused response to family/domestic violence include:

- Strategic Services Division and DV units
- Domestic Violence Units
- The Child Abuse Task Force (CAT).

#### *Strategic Frameworks*

Key strategies and plans to respond to violence against women and their children in the Northern Territory include:

- 'Building on our Strengths: a Framework for Action for Women in the Northern Territory 2008-2012'
- 'Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage – a Generational Plan of Action'
- The Northern Territory Police's 'Crime Reduction Strategy'.

### **Recent reforms**

#### *Prevention, Provision/Services, Protection*

Programs and campaigns aiming to educate and raise public awareness about family violence, domestic violence and sexual assault include:

- The 'Be-Someone' social marketing campaign, encouraging Territorians to report domestic and family violence to NT Police
- The Aboriginal All Stars Family Violence campaign, featuring high profile Aboriginal sportsmen speaking out against domestic violence
- The annual 'White Ribbon Day' campaign, raising awareness of violence against women
- The development of local policies and education regarding the use of violence and addressing issues of bullying, harassment, violence, child abuse and neglect in Northern Territory schools
- Increased core funding for crisis accommodation services for victims of domestic and family violence
- Increased availability of medical and counselling services for victims of sexual assault
- Increased funding for programs that encourage respectful relationships
- Implementation of community-based Indigenous Family Violence Offender Program
- Custodial offender programs
- Police Domestic Violence Prevention Units
- Increased funding for domestic/family violence legal services.

### *Reviews and updates to legislation*

- Implementation of mandatory reporting under the NT Domestic & Family Violence Act (enacted 12 March 2009)
- Review of all matters relating to Domestic Violence Orders (DVOs) in the *Domestic & Family Violence Act 2007* (NT).
- Amendments to the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* (NT) (effective from 1 September 2009).

### **Future Directions**

- NT-wide domestic/family violence data scoping project (in conjunction with the Australian Bureau of Statistics)
- Extension of social marketing campaign to focus on perpetrators of violence
- Continued investment to build capacity in the domestic/family violence service sector
- Improving the capacity of NT hospitals to respond to domestic/family violence
- Evaluation of the impact of mandatory reporting of domestic/family violence
- Development of new NT-wide strategy to reduce violence against women
- Implementation of 'Working Future', the NT Government's plan for improving the lives of remote Territorians.

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