

NATIONAL PLAN TO

# REDUCE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN



## Third Action Plan 2016-2019

*Of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against  
Women and their Children 2010-2022*

**Safe and free from violence**

An initiative of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments.



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# Foreword

Community awareness of the severity and impacts of violence against women and their children has never been higher. We come together on this issue at a national watershed moment. All jurisdictions have already made significant investments and undertaken wide-ranging reform. We now have an opportunity to build on those commitments to deliver a generational change in outcomes for women and their children.

While we are all separately committed to taking action, the Third Action Plan (2016–2019) articulates what we can do together to support, sustain and increase our collective effort. The Third Action Plan is not an instrument to list current work or rest on achievements; it is a place to seed future action that will accelerate all our efforts to reduce violence against women and their children.

The Third Action Plan is built on the understanding that gender inequality is a root cause of violence against women. For this reason, there is an emphasis on primary prevention and driving cultural change from the ground up and, in the process, assisting communities to better respond to and support women and their children who are experiencing violence. If we do not focus on prevention, we will find ourselves always in the position of responding to tragedy.

We are now at the halfway point of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (National Plan). While rates of domestic, family and sexual violence are still intolerably high, there is unprecedented community momentum behind the call for Australia to be a place free from violence and abuse of women and their children.

The Third Action Plan sets out an ambitious agenda for achieving change that builds on what has already been done and addresses gaps with new work. There is still much to do, particularly in the areas of sexual violence, addressing the needs of children experiencing violence and providing greater support and choice for women wanting to leave violence. Despite an increase in awareness, the rate of violence against women and their children is escalating. Attitudes about violence remain concerning and new challenges have emerged.

Changing attitudes takes time. No government or group can address this problem alone but, by working together and challenging ideas and behaviours that allow violence to occur, all Australians can play a role in reducing violence. The Third Action Plan articulates a purposeful agenda to guide future action that will build on the efforts of key stakeholders and the community to end violence against women and their children in Australia.

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**Freedom from violence is everyone's right and everyone's responsibility.**

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# Setting the scene

The causes and consequences of violence against women and their children are multiple and complex, so our efforts to reduce its incidence and impacts must be multifaceted. The National Plan is one significant piece of a much bigger jigsaw of activity undertaken by governments and aimed at making Australia a place free from violence against women and their children.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) coordinates and guides the efforts of all governments in this space. It links the significant pieces of policy work, structures and investment that contribute to changing the factors leading women to seek protection from violence; to reducing the prevalence and impact of violence; and to improving the ability of agencies to develop effective responses to women and their children who are experiencing violence.

Under this umbrella, the Third Action Plan is strongly linked with the recent Report of the *COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children* (the Report). The Report's recommendations are wide-ranging and interlocking. While the Third Action Plan reflects the directions of the Report and incorporates a number of recommendations for priority action over the next three years, the Report's objectives are much broader than can be achieved solely through the Third Action Plan. Other opportunities to address the recommendations will continue through COAG considerations. This includes conversations about the future of the housing and homelessness partnership agreements. With its increased focus on responding to the needs of women and children with disability, the Third Action Plan represents a significant implementation activity under the *National Disability Strategy 2010–2020*. Other policy mechanisms, such as reforms to child care, the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children: Third Action Plan* and the *Draft National Framework to improve accessibility to Australian Courts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and Migrant Refugee Women*, provide further platforms for integrating and linking with the Report's recommendations and the Third Action Plan.

Commonwealth, state and territory governments are progressing significant policy work as part of the national effort to ensure that women and their children are able to live free from violence now and into the future. The Australian Government has developed the Women's Safety Package as part of a longer-term response to keeping women and their children safe. The recommendations of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence add significantly to the growing suite of policy responses that allow us to address more adequately the scale and impact of harm caused by family violence. The Queensland report *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland* provides insights and recommendations on changing cultural attitudes, service systems and legal and justice systems to put an end to family violence.

In addition, there is a groundswell of work being undertaken across the country that forms part of the overarching plan to address violence against women and their children. The South Australian report *Taking a Stand: Responding to Domestic Violence* is informing state government initiatives following the Zahra Abrahimzadeh inquest. Whole-of-government and community responses in the Australian Capital Territory are being guided by the *ACT Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Strategy 2011–2017* and the Safer Families package. New South Wales has recently launched Australia's first Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme, which enables people to find out if their partner has a history of domestic violence offending. Tasmania has made a significant investment to address family violence under *Safe Homes, Safe Families: Tasmania's Family Violence Action Plan 2015–2020*. The Northern Territory has undertaken a major public awareness campaign to promote messages that men and their families can challenge domestic violence. Western Australia launched the *Freedom from Fear Action Plan: Working towards the elimination of family and domestic violence in Western Australia* to engage and respond to perpetrators of family and domestic violence.



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

The National Plan is a long-term collaboration for action by Commonwealth, state and territory governments aimed at achieving:

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**‘a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children’.**

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It provides a 12-year platform for action by Commonwealth, state and territory governments, together with the non-government sector, business and communities. It provides a coordinated framework for effective effort to reduce and respond to violence against women and their children. It identifies national priorities and helps to focus our attention on the areas of greatest need through collaboration between all Australian jurisdictions.

The National Plan drives an integrated approach to preventing and responding to domestic, family and sexual violence and encourages all governments to:

- work towards the same goals in reducing domestic, family and sexual violence
- work together in areas of shared responsibility
- improve links between the many supports and services we provide in order to avoid duplication, coordinate planning and implementation, and better share information and innovation
- undertake key national leadership projects, including work in primary prevention and work to build a national evidence base.

It sets out six National Outcomes to work towards over 12 years from 2010 to 2022:

1. Communities are safe and free from violence.
2. Relationships are respectful.
3. Indigenous communities are strengthened.
4. Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence.
5. Justice responses are effective.
6. Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account.

These National Outcomes are being delivered through four three-year Action Plans.

## Where are we now?

We stand at the halfway point of the 12-year endeavour to drive generational change. Over the past six years, we have laid some promising foundations, such as:

- the establishment of Our Watch, an organisation driving nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and power imbalances that lead to violence against women and their children
- *The Line* media campaign

- multiple points within the Australian Curriculum where respectful relationships education can be delivered, after Ministers endorsed the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum in 2015
- key research projects on domestic violence, sexual assault and perpetrator interventions under Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)
- the expansion of 1800RESPECT to meet service demand and the needs of workers, women, children and perpetrators from diverse groups and victims of complex violence.
- the further expansion of the DV-alert training program to community frontline workers to better support victims of domestic, family and sexual violence.

Work still underway under the auspices of COAG includes:

- a Model Law Framework for domestic violence orders
- a national information-sharing system for domestic violence orders
- National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Intervention
- a national campaign to change the attitudes of young people to violence
- better targeting technology.

Work is also occurring in the non-government and corporate sector. For example, White Ribbon Australia's efforts in primary prevention, have contributed to an unprecedented awareness of domestic and family violence.

Despite our efforts, violence against women continues. In 2015, 80 women were murdered in Australia with approximately three-quarters killed by a current or former partner. This national shame continues into 2016. In addition to the pain, and devastation for individuals, families and communities, who have lost loved ones, KPMG estimated the economic cost of violence against women and their children in 2015–16 to be between \$22 billion and \$26 billion.

During the Second Action Plan, a number of high-profile inquiries delivered substantial findings informing the way forward on our path to an Australia free from violence against women and their children. The conclusions and recommendations from the critical pieces of work discussed above have provided us with an increased understanding of causes and costs of violence and of the key issues that need to be addressed to enable us to move forward. At a national level, for example, COAG agreed the following six action areas for national attention:

- National leadership is needed to challenge gender inequality and transform community attitudes.
- Women who experience violence should be empowered to make informed choices.
- Children and young people should also be recognised as victims of violence against women.
- Perpetrators should be held to account for their actions and supported to change.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities require trauma-informed responses to violence.
- Integrated responses are needed to keep women and their children safe.

These six areas are reflected in the priorities and actions of the Third Action Plan.

We are at a point where our awareness of the severity and impacts of violence against women and their children has never been higher, and our evidence base for developing effective prevention and response approaches is more substantial and robust than it has ever been. This combination provides a powerful opportunity to better prevent and respond to violence against women and their children.

## Where are we going?

The advances we have made through the work done over the past six years create a platform from which we can consider the best way forward for the next three years. What is most clear is that there is still much more to be done. During 2016, a series of national consultations identified key areas for attention in the Third Action Plan and determined a program of work that is manageable and that addresses ongoing and emerging issues. The six National Priority Areas for attention in the Third Action Plan are:

1. Prevention and early intervention.
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.
3. Greater support and choice.
4. Sexual violence.
5. Responding to children living with violence.
6. Keeping perpetrators accountable across all systems.

## How will we get there?

Practical measures under these six National Priority Areas provide a roadmap for the Third Action Plan. The 36 Actions outlined below build on our efforts to date and focus our attention on some new areas. We will keep measuring what works, improving our understanding of the key levers for change and how to use them. We will be innovative, drawing from current successes, previous learnings and national momentum, to drive a reduction in domestic, family and sexual violence.

Over the next three years, our joint endeavours will be underpinned by the following four principles:

- a. The specific barriers and challenges of women and children from diverse groups are addressed in implementing all actions.
- b. When developing supports, services and systems, innovative solutions are explored, including integration and co-location of services and harnessing new and emerging technology.
- c. Systems, services and agencies intervene effectively.
- d. Robust research, evidence and data are used to underpin practice when developing supports, services and the overarching system.

To enhance our collective effort, we will make use of other significant plans, research and strategies to drive our work. One important example is the *Third Action Plan (2015–2018) of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*, under which the government and non-government sectors are progressing actions to deliver a substantial and sustained reduction in levels of child abuse and neglect over time. Furthermore, with its increased focus on responding to the needs of women and children with disability, the Third Action Plan links to the *National Disability Strategy 2010–2020*.

Working groups will be established to progress and monitor key actions. They will be led by state and territory government officials, with support from the Australian Government, and will comprise experts from the academic and service sectors. The Australian Government will support the working groups by providing research, evaluations and other sources of evidence to inform the implementation of Actions under the Third Action Plan. This will focus on areas such as service gaps and capacity, integration and collaboration, and implementing and measuring evidence-based practices and programs.



# The Third Action Plan: Areas for action

## National Priority Area 1: Prevention and early intervention

All parties recognise the critical role of prevention in breaking the cycle of abuse and acute response that characterises the current system. Without effective and well-planned prevention actions, we will remain locked into simply responding to crisis, which is damaging for women and their children and expensive for governments and services. Primary prevention activities under the Third Action Plan will address deep-seated attitudes and practices that excuse, justify and promote violence against women and their children. These activities will engage local communities in developing their own initiatives to address local culture, behaviours and gender inequality which lead to violence against women and their children.

Primary prevention activities are particularly important in culturally and linguistically diverse communities, where families may not be aware of the differences between the cultural norms and laws of Australia and those of their country of origin, particularly in relation to family life, sexuality and gender roles.

Early intervention effort with at-risk cohorts reduces the likelihood of development and escalation of violent behaviours to the point where they are difficult to reverse. The Third Action Plan articulates a number of early intervention initiatives which improve identification of and early responses to violence for both perpetrators and women and children at risk of violence.

### KEY ACTIONS

#### National Priority Area 1: Prevention and early intervention

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##### 1.1: Drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and attitudes that lead to violence against women and their children.

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- 1.1(a) All jurisdictions commit to implementing Our Watch's *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence*.
  - 1.1(b) Better targeting *The Line* campaign at diverse cohorts of young people.
  - 1.1(c) Develop a bystander campaign to support people to intervene where safe to do so.
  - 1.1(d) Continue collaboration with the media to improve reporting on and support for victims of domestic, family and sexual violence.
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##### 1.2: Support local communities to take effective action to reduce violence against women and their children.

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- 1.2(a) Co-design tools and resources with local governments to engage with business, sporting organisations and community groups to promote action against violence and engage all levels of business to lead and collaborate on initiatives to drive a reduction in violence.

- 1.2(b) Support culturally and linguistically diverse women, young people and communities, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and elders, to lead efforts to reduce violence against women in their communities.

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**1.3: Support schools and teachers to deliver age-appropriate and evidence-based respectful relationships education to all schoolchildren covering sexual violence, gender equality issues and a range of other relationship issues and tailored to vulnerable cohorts.**

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**1.4: Increase men's involvement in gender equality and reducing violence, including through the use of influencers and role models.**

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- 1.4(a) Use a range of communication, ambassador and public relations activities to raise awareness about non-physical abuse and where to seek help.
- 1.4(b) Engage parenting services to incorporate primary prevention resources and advice on ways to equally share parenting into programs for first-time parents and fathers.

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**1.5: Embed gender equality in workplace culture and increase women's workforce participation and economic security**

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- 1.5(a) Build on work being done across the public and private sectors to embed greater gender equality in workplace culture and increase workforce participation and economic security for women.
- 1.5(b) Support employers and employees when domestic and family violence impacts on workplaces by providing a 'one-stop shop' for resources on effective workplace responses to violence against women and their children.

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**1.6: Improve financial literacy and competence for women who are experiencing or at risk of violence.**

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- 1.6(a) Increase the availability of financial support and counselling and partner with corporate bodies and non-government organisations to improve women's access to microfinance products.

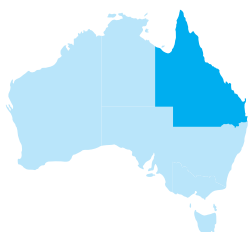


## All

### **Stop It at the Start campaign**

The *Stop It at the Start* national campaign is a \$30 million, three-year, co-funded COAG initiative, led by the Australian Government, which focuses on stopping violence where it begins. The campaign aims to bring together families and communities to positively influence young people's attitudes towards respectful relationships and gender equality. It encourages adults to think about the impact of what they say and do and to start conversations about respect with boys and girls.

The campaign strategy includes a mix of advertising, public relations, community engagement, corporate partnerships and education. The first phase of advertising resulted in over 32 million views of the television commercials, with more than 12 million views in the first week alone.



## Queensland

### **Recognise, Respond, Refer: Domestic Violence and the Workplace**

The Queensland Government has partnered with Australia's CEO Challenge to develop an innovative online learning program — Recognise, Respond, Refer: Domestic Violence and the Workplace — to raise employee awareness of domestic violence in the workplace. The e-learning program aims to build workplaces that are supportive of victims of domestic and family violence and includes developing skills to identify and respond to domestic violence. Launched in May 2015, the Recognise, Respond, Refer e-learning program has been rolled out to all Queensland Government agencies. Australia's CEO Challenge is also being supported to promote the e-learning program to business and non-government organisations.



## South Australia

### **Violence Against Women Collaborations**

The Violence Against Women Collaborations between government and non-government agencies provide the opportunity to develop local responses to women experiencing rape and sexual assault, domestic and family violence and homelessness. The collaborations build community capacity and create cultural and attitudinal change to address the underlying causes of violence against women and their children. The Western Adelaide Violence Against Women Collaboration implemented a Clothesline Project across the western suburbs throughout the 16 Days of Activism in 2015, featuring shirts carrying anti violence against women slogans. The project is supported by Charles Sturt, Port Adelaide, Enfield and West Torrens councils.





## Tasmania

### **Changing the attitudes and behaviours that lead to family violence**

Under *Safe Homes, Safe Families*, Tasmania's Family Violence Action Plan 2015–2020, the Tasmanian Government is implementing a number of actions which aim to change the attitudes and behaviours that lead to family violence. The Tasmanian Government has joined Our Watch and is actively supporting the national campaign *Stop It at the Start*. From 2017, Respectful Relationships education programs will be delivered in all Tasmanian Government schools from kindergarten to year 12. Support is also being provided to non-government schools to support students affected by family violence. All Department of Education frontline staff will undertake a *Safe Homes, Safe Families* training program and, over the next four years, all Tasmanian Government departments will undertake the White Ribbon Workplace Accreditation Program.



## New South Wales

### **\$20 million Domestic and Family Violence Innovation Fund**

The \$20 million Domestic and Family Violence Innovation Fund was announced as part of the 2016–17 Budget and is a key action of the *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016–2021*.

The blueprint identified the need for an increased focus on prevention and early intervention activities in order to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in the rate of domestic and family violence and a corresponding reduction in the demand for crisis services. To achieve this, the Domestic and Family Violence Innovation Fund will provide a financial investment for initiatives that develop innovation within two streams of funding over four years: Prevention and/or Early Intervention of Domestic and Family Violence; and Improving the Delivery of Crisis Services in Response to Domestic and Family Violence.



## Australian Capital Territory

### Working With The Man

The Working With The Man program contributes to the prevention of violence against women and their children by its use of an intensive approach, combining specialist case management, counselling, a behaviour change program and casework services. With this approach, Working With The Man assists men who have been using violence against women to stop using violence and develop their skills in dealing more effectively and respectfully with partners or ex-partners, their children and other family members impacted by their use of violence.

Experienced practitioners at EveryMan Australia work with men who are abusive to their partners. They raise awareness about the range of physical and other controlling behaviours which can be considered as domestic violence and about options for addressing these issues. The program advocates for the safety of partners and children and for the benefits of effective behaviour change programs for all parties.



## New South Wales

### NSW Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy

The *Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy* will set a coordinated agenda for violence prevention activities across NSW for prevention and early intervention activities, including engagement with organisations representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; people with disability; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer communities; and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

## National Priority Area 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence related assaults than other women, and police data suggests they are up to 3.7 times more likely than other women to be victims of sexual violence. One-third of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have experienced physical violence from a partner. This is twice the level recorded among non-Indigenous women.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in remote and regional areas experience rates of family violence up to 45 times higher, and sexual assault 16 to 25 times higher, than other Australian women. They also experience barriers to accessing information and support services, particularly where English is not their first language.

We need to improve our understanding of the nature and impact of violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children. All governments are working towards the collection of comparable data and the identification of new data that could be collected from funded services.

Responses to family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities must recognise the impact of past trauma for Indigenous people resulting from colonisation, racism and social disadvantage, and the role of these intersecting factors in perpetuating violence. Policy and program responses aimed at addressing family violence effectively must be developed and implemented with and by communities.

The Third Action Plan aims to support the existing leadership and knowledge base of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to oversee the development of culturally appropriate policy, programs and primary prevention activities, delivered in partnership with their communities. This includes activities that are trauma-informed and aligned with culture and community. It also includes activities that provide wraparound, case-managed support for families and encourage behaviour change without resorting to police or courts, such as family dispute resolution.

This National Priority Area also has a strong focus on addressing trauma for children and young people caused by domestic, family and sexual violence.

### KEY ACTIONS

#### National Priority Area 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children

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##### 2.1: Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to prevent and respond to violence against women and their children.

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- 2.1(a) Establish culturally appropriate support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to lead community efforts against violence.
- 2.1(b) Foster the development of community-driven and place-based initiatives that respond to local needs and conditions.
- 2.1(c) Our Watch to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to develop an Indigenous-specific resource to sit alongside *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence*.



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**2.2: Conduct a study in remote, regional and urban communities to improve our understanding of what it will take to reduce domestic, family and sexual violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.**

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- 2.2(a) Examine the extent of exposure to violence against women and their children; social impacts on relationships, health, wellbeing, education and workforce participation; and availability, appropriateness and effectiveness of services and other supports; and identify what else is needed to reduce exposure to, and the effects of, violence in communities.
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**2.3: Co-design and develop primary prevention activities with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men.**

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- 2.3(a) Produce primary prevention resources specifically targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys and men.
- 2.3(b) Promote respectful relationships, particularly for young men.
- 2.3(c) Engage male role models and community leaders to speak out against domestic, family and sexual violence.
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**2.4: Establish improved community-driven, trauma-informed supports that give choice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children who have experienced domestic, family or sexual violence.**

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- 2.4(a) Build the capacity of communities to respond to domestic, family and sexual violence through boosting local workforce development.
- 2.4(b) Develop and implement wraparound, case-managed support for families.
- 2.4(c) Improve and expand on current services so they provide intensive, holistic, culturally sensitive responses.
- 2.4(d) Support perpetrators of violence to engage in behaviour change programs to address the drivers of their violence.
- 2.4(e) Intervene early and support parents and carers to meet the needs of children and young people, to reduce problem behaviours and connect them with the services they need.

## Working Group

Under the Third Action Plan a working group will be established to ensure a strong focus on reducing domestic and family violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children. The working group will be co-led by South Australia and the Northern Territory and will comprise Indigenous women, government representatives, academics and service providers. It will be responsible for leading a partnership approach with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to understand better the context of family, domestic and sexual violence in urban, regional and remote Indigenous communities. The working group will facilitate responses that are culturally appropriate and consider the effectiveness of current service provision, taking into account the impact of past policies and intergenerational trauma.

The working group will engage closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group under the Third Action Plan of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*.



### South Australia

#### Primary prevention across the NPY Lands

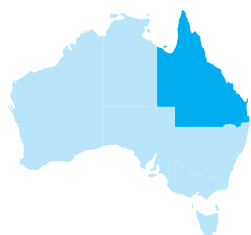
In May 2016, the Premier of South Australia and the Chief Minister of the Northern Territory announced joint funding of \$100,000 for community-led initiatives, focusing on primary prevention and education, to address domestic and family violence in Aboriginal communities across the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara (NPY) lands. An additional \$50,000 has since been provided by the South Australian Department of State Development (Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation). These initiatives are being developed and implemented with and by Aboriginal people and overseen by a South Australian Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement. Initiatives will include safe space workshops for men to discuss family violence; community education for young people in schools; community awareness via the South Australian National Football League; and research to determine the true cost of family violence in Central Australian communities.



### New South Wales

#### Strong Aboriginal Women

The NSW Education Centre Against Violence offers a series of free workshops to Aboriginal women on domestic and family violence and sexual assault. The workshops support women in their aim to address and prevent violence, resulting in safer communities. Topics include coming to terms with their own experience of violence, responding to disclosures from children and other women, and accessing support for victims or witnesses of abuse. The course discusses survival strategies and links Aboriginal women together to discuss their issues in a safe space. It also provides advice and information about legal rights, family law and accessing legal support.



## Queensland

### **Cherbourg Domestic and Family Violence Integrated Service Response trial**

The Cherbourg Domestic and Family Violence Integrated Service Response trial is one of three trials being established across Queensland to test holistic and integrated approaches to improving the safety of victims and their children and holding perpetrators to account for their violence. The trial provides an opportunity to develop a culturally integrated response to domestic and family violence that is tailored to the needs of discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

From 2016–17, High Risk Teams will be rolled out to the trial sites. They will be central to the integrated response trials, targeting victims and their children assessed to be at high risk of serious harm or death. Everyone with a role in keeping victims safe and holding perpetrators to account — police, hospitals, domestic violence services, corrections staff — will collaborate and work together to provide integrated, culturally appropriate responses.



## Western Australia

### **Safer Families, Safer Communities: Kimberley Family Violence Regional Plan**

The *Safer Families, Safer Communities* five-year plan was launched in October 2015. The Kimberley region is a high priority, as it has the highest incidence of family violence when compared with other regions in the state and is over-represented in terms of victim hospitalisations and deaths. The plan aims to strengthen current family and domestic violence service provision and coordination, with approaches that are specific to Aboriginal communities. These strategies are entrenched in a strong Aboriginal law and culture framework and supported by a community readiness model to improve the safety of women and children and accountability for perpetrators.

## National Priority Area 3: Greater support and choice

Women and children leaving, or trying to leave, family and domestic violence need pathways of support that will prioritise their safety, minimise disruption in their lives, provide appropriate assistance and enable choice, including the choice to remain in their home if it is safe to do so.

Many women experience significant difficulty in accessing appropriate support services and payments. This can discourage them from leaving violent relationships. This is particularly so for those who already face barriers in seeking help. We need to reduce the barriers experienced by women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by driving innovation and collaboration between specialist and mainstream services to develop culturally sensitive and integrated service responses. Women with disability can find it difficult to access appropriate support and justice services. When this occurs, violence and abuse can be more severe and continue for longer periods of time.

Accessible information about rights, choices and options, along with integrated post-crisis planning information and resources, can help women and their children to recover and rebuild their lives. Similarly, access to integrated legal assistance and other support services can reduce trauma, improve victim safety and strengthen perpetrator accountability within the family law system. Mainstream services can learn from the service delivery models of specialist women's services which provide crisis and post-crisis support, advocate for and with victims and survivors, and support them to navigate complex systems.

Access to safe, accessible, appropriate and affordable crisis housing and long-term housing is of particular concern for women from diverse backgrounds and those with special needs. Barriers here can result in women remaining in violent relationships or children being removed from their mothers for protection. While Safe at Home initiatives will be beneficial for some women, specialist women's services and homelessness services must remain an integral part of the response system.

Service infrastructure, tools and resources need to support information-sharing about domestic violence orders across systems and jurisdictions. Staff who work in specialist and key frontline workforces need to be able to recognise signs of domestic, family and sexual violence and respond appropriately. This includes diverse and complex forms of violence, which are not always understood or captured under mainstream initiatives to address violence against women.

### KEY ACTIONS

#### National Priority Area 3: Greater support and choice

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**3.1: Develop and implement national principles for risk assessment for victims and perpetrators of violence, based on evidence, including the risks that are present for children and other family members who experience or are exposed to violence.**

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**3.2: Develop an evidence-based national workforce agenda to support frontline services and improve responses to violence against women and their children.**

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3.2(a) Review the specialist domestic, family and sexual violence workforce and frontline workforces that engage with women and their children who have experienced violence or with perpetrators. Identify gaps and challenges faced by these workforces and recommend actions that could be undertaken by employers and funding bodies to strengthen the workforce.

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### **3.3: Strengthen safe and appropriate accommodation options and supports for women and their children escaping violence, including specialist women's services.**

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- 3.3(a) Assess and work to address the immediate, medium-term and long-term accommodation needs of women who are escaping violence.
  - 3.3(b) Increase the stock of affordable, accessible and social housing and the support needed to enable women and their children, if they want to, to stay in their own homes through Safe at Home initiatives.
  - 3.3(c) Improve the availability of accommodation for perpetrators who are removed from the home to ensure the safety of women and children in their homes.
  - 3.3(d) Assess the effectiveness of Victoria's use of Individual Flexible Packages for women and their children who are escaping violence as the basis of a joint review of future funding models, including a possible broader rollout.
  - 3.3(e) Develop national principles for tenancy legislation to ensure consistency across jurisdictions for women who are experiencing violence.
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### **3.4: Develop integrated post-crisis planning information and resources for use by general service providers and individuals to help women and their children who have experienced violence to recover and move forward.**

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- 3.4(a) Draw on the expertise of specialist women's services and work with women and their children post-crisis to set medium-term and long-term goals.
  - 3.4(b) Provide advice to services and women about medium-term to long-term considerations when escaping violence, including economic security, post-crisis accommodation, ongoing physical and mental health, parenting after violence, healthy family functioning and future relationships support.
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### **3.5: Improve support to women with disability who experience or are at risk of violence by working with them, the disability sector, specialist family and domestic violence services and mainstream services.**

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- 3.5(a) Engage with women with disability, researchers and the disability sector to better understand and address the diverse experience of violence against women with disability.
  - 3.5(b) Develop accredited training for the disability workforce to improve capacity to identify and support women with disability who experience violence.
  - 3.5(c) Foster innovative and collaborative service delivery and outreach to improve the quality and accessibility of services.
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### **3.6: Improve the quality and accessibility of services for women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.**

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- 3.6(a) Provide high-quality, professional translating and interpreting services and improve the cultural appropriateness of services and information.
- 3.6(b) Improve training and resources for GPs and other health workers to assist them in supporting and appropriately referring patients who are experiencing violence.

3.6(c) Trial intensive, recovery-focused support programs for women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds who have experienced violence to help them to improve life skills and employment prospects.

3.6(d) Improve access to culturally appropriate family dispute resolution services and support.

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**3.7: Use technology to support women who have experienced violence.**

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3.7(a) Enhance and expand video and online options for 'real-time' counselling and support, including through 1800RESPECT, and explore how technology can be harnessed to provide safe and relevant services for women in rural, remote and isolated communities and for women with disability.

3.7(b) Build on work currently being undertaken to share information about victims and perpetrators of violence between courts and service providers.

3.7(c) Provide technology in courts to allow women to participate safely in judicial processes and expand the use of technology to gather evidence for legal processes.

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**3.8: Ensure migration rules and eligibility requirements for support services do not disempower victims of violence or discourage them from leaving violent relationships.**

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3.8(a) Develop appropriate visa arrangements for temporary residents who are experiencing violence.

3.8(b) Revise eligibility requirements to enable more victims of violence to access support.

3.8(c) Work with service providers to improve access of temporary residents to available support services.

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**3.9: Support community-driven initiatives to prevent and respond to diverse and complex forms of violence against women and improve community awareness of these forms of violence.**

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3.9(a) Provide leadership training to young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to drive attitudinal change in their communities.

3.9(b) Build the capacity of community and faith leaders to reject, prevent and respond to violence.

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**3.10: Enhance services in the family law system for families experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, violence.**

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3.10(a) Integrate legal and social support services to:

- assess risk and prepare safety plans
- deliver holistic services
- provide continuity of service for people moving between the state and federal systems
- better support groups that face additional barriers to accessing the family court system, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.



## Working Group

Under the Third Action Plan a working group will be established in the first year to focus on strengthening the workforce involved in supporting women and their children who are experiencing violence. The working group will be led by Victoria and will comprise government and community representatives, academics and service providers. It will be responsible for identifying gaps and developing a workforce agenda to build competence and capacity in specialist and other frontline services.

In the second and third years of the Third Action Plan, coinciding with considerations on the future of the National Affordable Housing Agreement, a working group will be established to focus on housing and homelessness. This working group will be convened by NSW and will comprise government and community representatives, academics and service providers. It will be responsible for identifying the supports needed to enable women and their children to live safely, either at home or elsewhere, and for assessing the effectiveness of the supports provided.



## Australian Capital Territory

### Safer Families Reforms

In 2016, the ACT Government announced a landmark reform of the family violence service system, with \$21.42 million allocated to the Safer Families package over four years. In recognition that family safety is everybody's business, the Safer Families package is being partly funded through a \$30 household levy — the first of its kind in Australia.

The Safer Families package is an ACT whole-of-government coordinated response that includes the establishment of the new position of Coordinator General for Family Safety and a dedicated Safer Families Team; a Family Safety Hub that centralises integrated case management and coordinated services for victims; and increased investment in staffing, training and support across frontline and specialist services to improve responses to victims and perpetrators of violence across the ACT.



## Tasmania

### **Safe Families Coordination Unit and Safe Choices**

The Safe Families Coordination Unit provides a collaborative, coordinated, statewide, multi-agency response to family violence. It uses information from Tasmanian Government agencies to review family violence incidents and develop a cumulative assessment of risk and harm in order to ensure timely and coordinated support to victims of family violence and ensure the perpetrators are held to account. The unit builds on and complements the operational services already being delivered through Safe at Home —Tasmania's whole-of-government criminal justice responses and intervention system. Following a successful trial phase from April to June 2016, the unit began full operations on 27 June 2016.

Safe Choices is a new service being delivered by CatholicCare to provide practical support for people in, or choosing to leave, violent relationships. Safe Choices is being trialled in southern Tasmania from June 2016 and then rolled out in the north and north-west. The Tasmanian Government has committed \$8 million over four years (from 2015) to establish the unit and Safe Choices.



## Commonwealth

### **1800RESPECT triage model**

1800RESPECT is the Australian Government funded National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Counselling Service providing a confidential online and telephone counselling, information and referral service, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. 1800RESPECT provides high-quality support for people experiencing, or at risk of, sexual or domestic violence; their family and friends; and frontline workers and professionals.

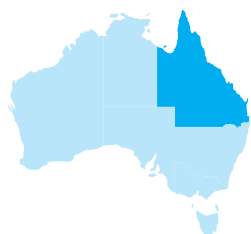
In August 2016, a first response triage model was introduced to ensure 1800RESPECT is better equipped to respond to increasing demand. In October, the triaging approach was extended to the online chat function. People contacting the helpline are now being responded to more quickly and are receiving more tailored assistance based on their specific needs, including referrals to support services. Through the Third Action Plan, improvements will continue to be made to 1800RESPECT to improve accessibility and ensure that people are able to seek the assistance they need when they need it.



## Western Australia

### **Western Australian Family and Domestic Violence Common Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework — Second Edition**

This common risk assessment and risk management framework is supporting Western Australian government and non-government service providers to better identify and respond to victims of family and domestic violence, regardless of what area of the service sector they come into contact with. It was developed to ensure service responses are client and safety focused; to support inter-agency collaboration so responses are timely, streamlined and coordinated; and to hold perpetrators accountable. The updated edition includes new resources and presents minimum standards for screening, risk assessment, risk management, information and referral.



## Queensland

### **Southport specialist domestic and family violence court**

The *Not Now, Not Ever* report recommended the establishment of a specialist domestic violence court with the jurisdiction to deal with all related domestic and family violence and criminal/breach matters. The specialist domestic violence court trial was initially established at the Southport Magistrates Court for the period 1 September 2015 to 29 February 2016, with one dedicated magistrate. The trial has since been extended until 30 June 2017 due to the substantial increase in the number of domestic violence applications since the trial began. A second specialist magistrate and extra support staff have been allocated to the trial to meet the significant increase in demand for services. The interim evaluation released in May 2016 found that the project is tracking well, and there are indications that the trial is improving timeliness in obtaining temporary and final orders.

## National Priority Area 4: Sexual violence

Nearly 1.5 million women in Australia have experienced sexual assault since the age of 15. In 93 per cent of cases, the perpetrator was known to the victim; frequently they were intimate partners, friends, colleagues or dates. Women are far less likely to report sexual assaults when the perpetrator is a partner or someone known to them and there is research suggesting as many as 70 per cent of cases of sexual assault are not reported to police.

While the National Plan has always incorporated sexual assault and violence in its mandate, the prevailing national conversation to date has centered on domestic and family violence. The Third Action Plan seeks to sharpen our focus on sexual violence as a key component of the overall blueprint for women's safety, so that women and children who have experienced sexual violence have the same status in our responses as other groups.

A growing and significant problem in Australia and internationally is the non-consensual sharing of intimate images, known as 'revenge pornography'. This has a severe impact on victims, including serious psychological injury; humiliation and distress; and loss of reputation, social standing and employment.

The Third Action Plan will have a focus on better understanding and countering the impact of pornography given increasing evidence showing a correlation between exposure to online pornography and the sexual objectification of women and girls, the development of rape cultures and the proliferation of sexual assault.

### KEY ACTIONS

#### National Priority Area 4: Sexual violence

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**4.1: Governments consider giving the same priority and support in relevant policies and programs to victims/survivors of sexual violence as to those who have experienced domestic or family violence.**

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4.1(a) Governments to review guidelines for programs, policies and information materials to ensure that victims of sexual violence receive the same level of support as those who experience domestic or family violence.

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**4.2: Provide improved training and resources to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders who are working to respond to and prevent sexual violence in their communities.**

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**4.3: Support frontline services to better recognise and respond to women and their children who have experienced sexual violence, including the knowledge and confidence to refer to specialist sexual violence services.**

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4.3(a) Ensure frontline services have the information they need to identify and refer all women who require specialist sexual violence services, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer women; older women; and women with disability.

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**4.4: Deliver an evidence-based community initiative to understand and counter the impact of pervasive pornography and promote positive, healthy behaviours in young people negotiating sexual relationships.**

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- 4.4(a) Undertake developmental research to inform effective strategies and messages to engage young people and the broader community.
  - 4.4(b) Develop a communication activity and support the development of resources and tools for influencers so they can have conversations with children and young people about healthy relationships, choice, respect, and pornography.
  - 4.4(c) Provide resources for young women and men to enable them to have the information and confidence to make respectful and empowered sexual and relationship choices.
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**4.5: State and territory governments to support women and children in rural, remote and isolated communities who have experienced sexual violence to have improved access to the collection of forensic evidence.**

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- 4.5(a) Work with Attorneys-General, justice departments, health workers (doctors and nurses) and professional associations to broaden the categories of health workers who can collect forensic evidence.
  - 4.5(b) Trial different models for the appropriate collection of forensic evidence and victim support in rural and regional locations.
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**4.6: Respond to the distribution of intimate material without consent, including what is known as 'revenge pornography'.**

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- 4.6(a) Develop a national portal to assist women in the removal of intimate images that are distributed online without their consent.
- 4.6(b) Work with internet content hosts / services / telecommunication companies and social media services to facilitate consistent and responsive approaches for removal of intimate material.
- 4.6(c) Undertake a national legislative review of the adequacy of criminal legislation for those distributing intimate material without consent to identify any jurisdictional amendments that may be required.
- 4.6(d) Provide information to the broader community that highlights the impacts and consequences of distributing intimate material.

## Working Group

Under the Third Action Plan a working group will be established to ensure a continuing focus on addressing sexual violence throughout the life of this plan. The working group will be led by NSW and will comprise government and community representatives, academics and service providers. It will be responsible for scoping the extent to which services, policies and legislation support victims of sexual violence as well as providing advice on the development of the community initiative and national portal.



### Northern Territory

#### **Whole-of-government sexual assault strategy**

The Northern Territory Government will be developing a sexual assault strategy to prevent and respond to all forms of sexual assault in the Northern Territory. A Cross-Government Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Strategy Working Group has been established to advise, guide and oversee the development of the strategy. A sexual assault specialist will provide client support to Indigenous victims of sexual assault as it occurs within the context of domestic and family violence. The service will operate out of the Alice Springs Women's Shelter and extend to four remote Indigenous communities and 19 town camps. In addition to direct client support, the service will also offer secondary support for immediate and extended families of victims.



### New South Wales

#### **Child Abuse Sexual Assault Clinical Advice Line**

NSW will launch the Child Abuse Sexual Assault Clinical Advice Line in 2016 to support, guide and build capacity of clinicians to better respond to those who have experienced sexual assault in NSW. It will guide them to deliver high-quality, timely and accessible medical and forensic examinations for children and young people who are victims of sexual assault and child abuse. The advice line will also provide specialist clinical advice, peer review, second opinions in preparation for attendance at court to give evidence, and debriefings thereafter.





## South Australia

### Legislative reform

The SA Attorney-General has introduced the Summary Offences (Filming and Sexting Offences) Amendment Bill 2016 to Parliament. The Bill will refine and update offences in the *Summary Offences Act 1953* (SA) (filming offences) in response to the emerging phenomena of ‘sexting’ among young people and ‘revenge porn’, where sexting-type images of adults and minors are used as a tool of bullying, vilification or harassment or as a form of domestic violence. The Legislative Council of the South Australian Parliament is currently considering the Bill.



## Victoria

### ‘Revenge porn’ legislation

In October 2015, the Victorian Government passed an amendment to the Crimes Act, creating two new offences around ‘revenge porn’. It is now an offence for an individual to intentionally send an intimate image of another individual without that person’s consent. If the individual is a minor, consent is not relevant. It is also an offence for an individual to threaten to distribute an intimate image. These offences carry penalties of imprisonment. Exceptions exist in recognising that consensual peer-to-peer ‘sexting’ is categorically distinct from child pornography. In instances where young people engage in consensual ‘sexting’, they will not be charged with child pornography offences under the law.

## National Priority Area 5:

### Responding to children living with violence

A growing body of evidence shows that children experience the impact of violence and abuse in the home, even when the violence and abuse are not directly targeted at them. Children can be profoundly affected in the immediate and long term, and children's experience of violence must be considered in all responses to their mothers. It is important that we engage sensitively with children to hear about how they are affected by family violence, what helps them to feel and be safe and what we can do to help them recover.

The Family Law Council's interim and final reports on *Families with Complex Needs and the Intersection of the Family Law and Child Protection Systems* have made a number of recommendations designed to strengthen the family law system's capacity to safeguard and support children and families with complex needs. We will work to implement supported recommendations to improve interactions between the family law, child protection and family violence systems and to enhance the family law system's capacity to identify, assess and respond to domestic and family violence.

We need to respond to the needs of children and ensure their home environments are safe from violence, while also ensuring that systems which protect children are not used to further victimise women who are experiencing violence. Women must not be in fear of reporting violence due to the actual or perceived belief that their children will be removed. State and territory governments are currently implementing reforms to their statutory child protection systems to minimise this risk.

Responses to children at Commonwealth, state and territory levels need to be based on a shared understanding of the impacts of violence on children to ensure their needs are met across the various systems, including child protection, police, courts, specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services and frontline services such as health professionals and schools.

The Third Action Plan aims to break intergenerational cycles of violence. This will require working with families through every possible avenue, including health services, schools and early childhood services. To facilitate this, the Third Action Plan will link with early intervention work underway through the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children's First 1000 Days Strategy*. Focusing on early childhood development will contribute to increased awareness and understanding of its importance and the critical role positive parenting and role models play in these early years.

## KEY ACTIONS

### National Priority Area 5: Responding to children living with violence

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**5.1: Commonwealth, state and territory agencies to work together to implement supported recommendations of the Family Law Council's *Families with Complex Needs and the Intersection of the Family Law and Child Protection Systems* interim and final reports.**

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5.1(a) Improve interactions between the family law and child protection systems and enhance the family law system's capacity to identify and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence.

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**5.2: The child protection system will recognise that a non-abusive parent is not responsible for a perpetrator's violence against the children.**

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- 5.2(a) Child protection agencies to assess the risk faced by non-abusive parents and children together, work with them as a family unit and ensure relevant agencies are engaged with perpetrators.
- 5.2(b) Child protection agencies to investigate the sharing of information across jurisdictions and between domestic, family and sexual violence services, family support services and child protection systems to enable services to better work together to support women and their children.

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**5.3: Identify and address service gaps and build capacity of specialist and mainstream service providers to recognise and respond to the impacts of violence on children.**

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- 5.3(a) Assess the workforce capacity of specialist and mainstream services systems, including the role of each and pathways between them.
- 5.3(b) Develop national principles for risk assessment that can be used in different sectors.
- 5.3(c) Provide training to the childcare and family and children's services workforces about how to recognise, respond to and refer children and their mothers who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing violence.
- 5.3(d) Identify and implement evidence-based programs and practices for victims, perpetrators and their families and evaluate the effectiveness of practices and programs by measuring outcomes for women and their children.

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**5.4: Trial mechanisms to enable sharing of information that is already collected by states and territories about children's exposure to domestic, family and sexual violence and the associated risks between the family law courts, child protection systems and state courts.**

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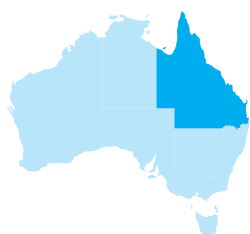
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**5.5 Improve children's safety through the development and dissemination of emerging technology such as interactive games and digital learning activities to give age-appropriate information to children who are exposed to or are at risk of violence.**

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## Working Group

Under the Third Action Plan a working group will be established to focus on children and parenting throughout the life of this plan. The working group will be co-led by Queensland and Western Australia and will comprise government and community representatives, academics and service providers. It will be responsible for identifying ways to support community-based and government services to recognise and respond to the impact of violence on children. The working group will ensure strong links between work done under this priority area and the Third Action Plan of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*, including joint meetings of the Senior Officials Groups overseeing both plans.



### Queensland

#### Child and family reforms and domestic and family violence

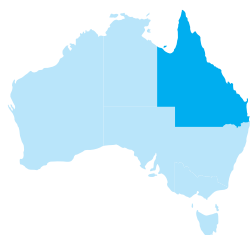
We know that domestic and family violence is a significant cause of harm to children and young people and that the impacts can be severe and long-lasting. There are many synergies between the findings of the Queensland Child Protection Commission of Inquiry and the *Not Now, Not Ever* report on domestic and family violence in Queensland. Both reports recommend action to ensure we are identifying children who are affected by domestic violence and responding effectively to their needs. Specialist domestic and family violence workers have been established in the new Family and Child Connect and Intensive Family Support Services rolled out across the state. This innovative model recognises the high number of families seeking family support who have also experienced domestic and family violence. Specialist domestic and family violence training, based on the innovative Safe and Together model, has been provided to 321 child safety staff and our community partners. This model is based on victim empowerment and perpetrator accountability as a way to keep children safe.



### Western Australia

#### Practice guidance for child protection workers

The practice guidance for child protection workers was launched in July 2016 to support child protection workers to better engage with perpetrators of family and domestic violence and hold them to account. The guidance includes an Assessment Toolkit and a Safety Planning Toolkit. The Assessment Toolkit includes example questions for interviewing an adult victim, child or perpetrator; information about using research to manage gaps in evidence; and example harm statements, danger statements and safety goals. The Safety Planning Toolkit includes example questions that identify people in the safety network; questions to support safety planning; options for managing the risk posed by the perpetrator of violence; example behaviours to be demonstrated by a perpetrator of violence; and options for reunification.



## Queensland

### **Walking with Dads**

The new Walking with Dads program is a domestic violence informed approach to child protection work. Commencing in 2016–17, the program will be piloted in Gympie, Mount Isa and Caboolture. The program motivates men to change violent behaviour by making them accountable. Women are often told they need to end their relationship with a violent man. He may simply reappear somewhere else with another family or return to the former family, with little impetus to change his behaviour. This program will address that gap and improve the safety of not only children but women as well.

Child safety is everyone's responsibility. An external organisation will also be engaged to review the practice standards for working with those experiencing domestic and family violence and to develop a suite of tools to support monitoring of perpetrator intervention programs.



## Northern Territory

### **Domestic Violence Specialist Children's Service**

Through the *Safety is Everyone's Right Northern Territory Domestic and Family Violence Reduction Strategy 2014–2017*, Tangentyere Council, as the lead agency in a consortium with the Alice Springs Women's Shelter and Jesuit Social Services, has established a Domestic Violence Specialist Children's Service in Alice Springs. The Domestic Violence Specialist Children's Service provides targeted support to Aboriginal youth aged between 12 and 17 years who have been affected by domestic and family violence. Through victim advocacy, case management, targeted support and counselling, the service seeks to break the generational cycle of violence within the next generation of young parents so that their children are born into families where the safety and respect of all family members is valued. Priority is given to youth identified as being the most vulnerable and at risk of experiencing domestic violence in their relationships, either as a victim or perpetrator. Identified youth in the juvenile justice system, young mothers and children entering and exiting the child protection system and those referred through the NT Family Safety Framework, Critical Intervention Outreach Service are also prioritised.



## Victoria

### Maternal and Child Health Service

There are currently 662 Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Centres in Victoria. This service supports child health and development from birth to three and a half years of age, with 10 free Key Ages and Stages consultations with an MCH nurse. The service is provided every week of the year and is also supported by the 24-hour Maternal and Child Health Line. All parents who access this service are provided with the opportunity to discuss any social, emotional and safety concerns they may have with an MCH nurse. At each Key Ages and Stages consultation, the MCH nurse will complete a family violence assessment as part of a full comprehensive assessment for the child and the family. This assessment allows the MCH to provide support and appropriate planning as required by the family. If there are any family violence indicators, the MCH nurse will support the child and the family and may provide referrals to relevant services if requested. Follow-up and support is provided in the MCH Centre in conjunction with other services.



## National Priority Area 6:

### Keeping perpetrators accountable across all systems

It is not possible to keep women and children safe from violence without a focus on perpetrators. While our highest priority is responding to crisis for women and children and then ensuring their long-term support and stability, there is also a need to target perpetrators to change their behaviour, as this increases the safety of women and their children. Perpetrators must be kept in focus and held accountable for their actions.

There is a lack of consistency in how intervention programs are delivered to perpetrators of violence and not enough evidence as to which programs produce the best, lasting outcomes. Under the Second Action Plan, National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions were developed and agreed by all jurisdictions. The Third Action Plan will drive the implementation of these standards to ensure more effective and consistent interventions are used across all jurisdictions.

There are currently few services or programs available for adolescents who are perpetrating violence, exhibiting violence-supportive attitudes or demonstrating inappropriate sexualised behaviours. Intervention services and youth-specific services must take into account intersections with mental health issues, behavioural issues and substance abuse. Such services need to be made available for young people to divert them from the criminal system and provide appropriate supports at their first encounter with the criminal justice system.

Lack of suitable accommodation for perpetrators of violence can result in their return to the home, which can lead to continuing violence. Men who perpetrate violence can also face homelessness if they do not have financial means or the support of family or friends.

## KEY ACTIONS

### National Priority Area 6: Keeping perpetrators accountable across all systems

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**6.1: Work closely with ANROWS to support the implementation of its Perpetrator Interventions Research Stream to improve perpetrator interventions.**

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**6.2: Improve targeted perpetrator interventions, including police, courts, corrections, child protection, legal services and support, behaviour change programs, offender programs and clinical services.**

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6.2(a) Implement key performance indicators against the National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions and develop an approach to report against these indicators annually to drive further refinements and improvements.

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**6.3: Improve the quality and consistency of behaviour change programs throughout Australia.**

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6.3(a) Develop, share and review principles, tools and practices for behaviour change programs and training programs, tools and practices for the workforce.

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**6.4: Improve mechanisms to refer perpetrators to appropriate interventions early based on individual risk factors.**

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6.4(a) Trial and evaluate the impact of early integrated case management and counselling prior to, and after, participation in men's behaviour change programs.

6.4(b) Improve efficiency of the police referral to services based on legislation and policies.

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**6.5: Progressively design, trial and evaluate innovative models of perpetrator interventions across community and correctional settings to understand what works for different groups.**

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6.5(a) Tailored initiatives to be targeted at young people and adolescents; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men; culturally and linguistically diverse men; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people.



## Northern Territory

### Marra'ka Mbarintja Men's Behaviour Change Program

A consortium of Tangentyere Council, Alice Springs Women's Shelter and Jesuit Social Services has developed and implemented a best-practice Men's Behaviour Change Program with the safety of women and children at its core. The program is delivered over 24 sessions and assists perpetrators of violence to take responsibility for their actions and not use violence in future. The program employs an Aboriginal cross-cultural consultant to ensure cultural issues are appropriately and sensitively dealt with. It also uses innovative strategies to assist participants to stay engaged for the duration of the full program. Assertive outreach, the attendance of children, case management and an understanding of structural, cultural and personal barriers are imperative to work in a Central Australian context.



## Tasmania

### Further funding for perpetrator programs

*Safe Homes, Safe Families* is supporting perpetrator programs for low-risk to medium-risk family violence offenders. No To Violence (Men's Referral Service) has been contracted to provide a telephone counselling and referral service to family violence perpetrators and their families. Relationships Australia has been contracted to provide Men's Behaviour Change Programs and education and training for mainstream service providers who come in contact with family violence offenders.



## Commonwealth

### National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions

The Australian Government has led the national effort with states and territories to develop indicators for the National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions. The standards will improve mechanisms which hold perpetrators to account by guiding and measuring the outcomes achieved by perpetrator interventions across Australia.

In recognition of the time and investment underpinning this work, the Australian Government has provided \$4 million to support state and territory governments to implement the national standards.



## Australian Capital Territory

### Legislative reform

The ACT is passing legislation to improve the response to domestic and family violence, including:

- a new *Family Violence Act 2016*, which expands the definition of family violence to expressly include a broader range of behaviours, including emotional, psychological and economic abuse, and improves the protection order system through after-hours access and by implementing model provisions for the national recognition of family violence orders
- amendments to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1997* to make it easier for tenants who are impacted by domestic violence to change their living arrangements if this is necessary or to better secure their premises
- amendments to the *Discrimination Act 1991* to ensure that a person's status as a victim of family violence is protected so that a person cannot be discriminated against on that basis.



## Victoria

### Men's behaviour change programs

Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence noted that responses to perpetrators of family violence, aside from criminal sanctions, is an underdeveloped policy area. Men's behaviour change (MBC) programs have been delivered in Victoria since the 1980s and they are one of the key methods for educating and rehabilitating perpetrators. As at July 2015, there were 35 MBC programs available in Victoria.

A number of MBC programs are tailored to culturally and linguistically diverse communities. There are programs available for Vietnamese and Arabic speaking men, which have been well received by participants and their partners. Aboriginal men's family violence programs have also been developed in recent years. For example, the Dardi Munwuro Strong Spirit program focuses on family violence, cultural identity and the role of an Aboriginal man in the family setting. MBC programs are a key part of the suite of perpetrator interventions in Victoria. The Victorian Government is committed to improving these programs, with continual evaluation of demand, development and delivery.



## New South Wales

### **Multifaceted and wide ranging perpetrator interventions**

Reducing domestic violence is one of the NSW Premier's Priorities. To achieve this, the NSW Government is implementing a system-wide and coordinated approach to perpetrator interventions to better hold perpetrators to account and improve the safety of victims. As articulated in the *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016-2021*, the NSW Government is committed to:

- increasing and improving behaviour change interventions for high risk offenders
- trialling the reduction of Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders through Behavioural Insights strategies
- developing the capacity of, and expanding the NGO and community based men's behaviour change sector
- implementing a referral pathway between Police and the Men's Referral Service to help offenders change behaviour
- establishing Police High Risk Offender Teams to target recidivist offenders
- assessing the feasibility and effectiveness of providing accommodation for perpetrators to reduce immediate re-offending
- trialling GPS tracking of domestic and family violence offenders.

# Building the evidence base

## Why is research important?

For the National Plan to be successful in achieving its long term target, a solid national evidence base is required. The National Plan is built on the existing evidence and continues to invest in new research and in strengthening existing data collections. National research, such as work being undertaken and commissioned by ANROWS, will fill gaps in our knowledge and improve the effectiveness of service provision.

## What have we achieved to date?

A firm foundation has been laid with the establishment of ANROWS, national surveys on the prevalence and experience of violence and community attitudes to violence, the establishment of the perpetrator research stream, and the development of the National Data Collection and Reporting Framework.

ANROWS' inaugural set of research priorities (2014–2016) under the National Research Agenda to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children has resulted in 20 research projects being conducted. Some of these have already been completed and reports have been published on the ANROWS website, while others are still underway. The research contributes to the evidence base to inform policy and service responses and supports the development and rollout of evidence-based programs to improve long-term outcomes for women and their children.

ANROWS is also progressing the Perpetrator Interventions Research Stream as a priority of the Second Action Plan. This research is building an authoritative information base from which we can improve the quality of perpetrator interventions and men's behaviour change programs within the context of the civil, criminal and child protection systems.

States and territories collect and report on administrative data relating to the experience and perpetration of violence against women and their children. This data is collected through systems such as policing, justice, corrections, health and community and legal assistance services. The National Data Collection and Reporting Framework, which was delivered by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in September 2014, will improve the capacity for linking the information held in each of these different systems. It will also enhance our ability to identify individual pathways of women and children who are experiencing violence, and of perpetrators, across systems. Since then, work to implement the National Data Collection and Reporting Framework has continued and includes a number of data improvement projects, mostly in criminal justice systems.

The Australian Government is funding the Personal Safety Survey and National Survey on Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women every four years:

- The Personal Safety Survey is the most comprehensive quantitative study of interpersonal violence in Australia. The 2012 Personal Safety Survey was conducted from February to December 2012. It provided information on the nature and extent of women's and men's experiences of violence since the age of 15, including detailed information about current and previous partner violence, stalking, physical and sexual abuse before the age of 15, and general feelings of safety.
- The National Survey on Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women provides information on community knowledge of, and attitudes towards, violence against women and identifies areas that need attention in the future. It was most recently conducted in 2013.



## What will be done under the Third Action Plan and what it will tell us?

The Personal Safety Survey is being undertaken again in 2016 for release in 2017. This will provide updated information on the prevalence of the different types of violence by different perpetrator types.

The next National Survey on Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women will be undertaken in 2017, with findings to be released in 2018. It will improve our understanding of the factors that influence knowledge, attitudes and responses to violence against women and identify particular parts of the population to target prevention efforts.

ANROWS' next research stream is being developed in late 2016 and will prioritise areas that have been identified through the evaluation of the Second Action Plan and ongoing consultation. ANROWS will continue progressing the Perpetrator Interventions Research Stream, adding to our knowledge of the effectiveness of current interventions and identifying intervention models that address a diversity of perpetrators.

Current evidence on violence against women with disability relies heavily on overseas research and data. We will commission an Australian study in 2017 that will examine the types of violence experienced by women with disability and the range of perpetrators and settings.

In order to improve our understanding of what it would take to reduce domestic, family and sexual violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, we will conduct a study in remote, regional and urban communities. The study will examine the extent of exposure to violence against women and their children; social impacts on relationships, health, wellbeing, education and workforce participation; and availability, appropriateness and effectiveness of services and other supports. It will also identify what else is needed to reduce exposure to, and the effects of, violence in communities.

Work on the National Data Collection and Reporting Framework will be progressed further under the Third Action Plan, along with work begun under the Second Action Plan to improve systems that support reviews of domestic and family violence related deaths and child deaths. This work will be progressed by the Australian Human Rights Commission, which will consult states and territories to scope the development of data collection protocols and a proposed national data collection mechanism.

The continuing building of an evidence base will link with, and be informed by, work underway as part of the research agenda of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*.

# Governance and engagement

All governments are jointly responsible for overseeing the Third Action Plan. To achieve its actions, a collaborative and cooperative effort is needed from all governments across Australia, the community sector, the corporate sector and the broader community. Strong communication and governance arrangements between governments and other stakeholders will ensure that relevant experts and organisations are involved in national work to reduce violence against women and their children.

## Council of Australian Governments

Building on its endorsement of the National Plan in February 2011 and prioritisation of violence against women and their children in 2015, COAG will continue to take collective action to reduce violence through the Third Action Plan.

## Women's Safety Ministers

Commonwealth, state and territory Women's Safety Ministers are responsible for overseeing implementation of the Third Action Plan and will lead whole-of-government involvement. Women's Safety Ministers will also drive the development of the Fourth Action Plan.

## Implementation Executive Group

The Implementation Executive Group (ImpEG) will continue to support Women's Safety Ministers by driving the Third Action Plan's day-to-day implementation. ImpEG will:

- progress the Third Action Plan's National Priorities and Actions, particularly cross-jurisdictional and national actions
- contribute to reporting and evaluation of the Third Action Plan
- support whole-of-government involvement through working with officials across portfolios, within jurisdictions and at the national level
- drive community engagement.

## Working groups

Working groups will be established to progress and monitor key actions under the Third Action Plan. They will be led by state and territory government officials and will comprise experts from the academic and service sectors. The Australian Government will support the working groups by providing research, evaluations and other sources of evidence to inform the implementation of actions under the Third Action Plan. Working groups will focus on:

- workforce strategies (year 1) and then housing and homelessness (from 2017)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- sexual violence
- children and parenting.

## State and territory advisory mechanisms

Current consultative and advisory bodies established by the states and territories will inform and provide feedback on the implementation of the Third Action Plan and its interface with state and territory plans to reduce violence against women and their children.

## National summits

The COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children has recommended biennial national summits on preventing violence against women and their children. The first summit was held in October 2016.

## Other engagement

The Third Action Plan will be implemented with the ongoing support of key national partners, including Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, Our Watch, 1800RESPECT, Lifeline and White Ribbon Australia.

All governments will also continue to undertake targeted consultations with subject-matter experts on the implementation of specific actions.

# Communication

## National Plan website

The National Plan website ([www.plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au](http://www.plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au)) is a tool for governments, partners, stakeholders and the community. It provides a platform to share information and connect with work being done across the country to reduce violence against women and their children. The website also houses the eNewsletter and a National Plan communication toolkit.

## eNewsletter

The National Plan eNewsletter is released quarterly. It promotes the achievements and actions of governments and National Plan partners and raises awareness of upcoming events and activities as part of the National Plan.

## The National Plan Secretariat

The National Plan Secretariat is a central point of contact for public queries on the Third Action Plan. It can be contacted at [NPSecretariat@dss.gov.au](mailto:NPSecretariat@dss.gov.au).

## Evaluation 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. It allows jurisdictions to share information with each other and the public and provides governments with useful information when developing future Action Plans.

The National Plan includes a commitment by all governments to conduct an evaluation of the National Plan as a policy framework for reducing violence against women and their children across its 12-year lifespan.

An evaluation of the achievements and outcomes of the Third Action Plan will be undertaken in 2019 by an external organisation, and will contribute to this overall evaluation of the National Plan.

Governments will also work together to publicly release targeted and streamlined annual reports to the Australian public on progress under the Third Action Plan.

# Definitions of domestic, family and sexual violence

## Domestic Violence

**Domestic violence** is most commonly described as an act of violence that generally occurs between two people who are in an intimate relationship or have previously been in an intimate relationship.

Domestic violence usually consists of violent, threatening and intimidating behaviour that is used as an ongoing tactic to exercise power and control. Acts of domestic violence may occur once, but most commonly, when there is no form of intervention, it continues in cycles for the life of the relationship, often escalating in severity and regularity. Perpetrators often escalate their violence when women declare their intention to leave the relationship or for short or extended periods following her leaving the relationship.

While men can be victims of violence, women experience domestic, family and sexual violence at disproportionately higher levels, predominantly perpetrated by men. Violence perpetrated against women tends to be more severe and part of an ongoing pattern of intimidation and control. Men are more likely to be the victims of violence from other men and from strangers in public, and different strategies are required to address these different types of violence.

## Family Violence

**Family violence** is a broader term that generally extends to violence between family members as well as violence between intimate partners. The term 'family violence' is the preferred term to identify violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, where violence can occur between people from a range of marital and kinship relationships.

Domestic and family violence can include a broad range of actions and behaviours, including:

- **Physical violence.** This is most people's common understanding of domestic violence. It can include punching, hitting, slapping, whipping, hitting with objects, kicking, stomping, shoving, throwing, burning, stabbing and choking. Physical violence can be fatal and women are often at the highest risk of injury or death when leaving a violent relationship. Choking has also been identified as a red flag for potential homicide.
- **Psychological violence.** This consists of actions that are used to threaten, intimidate, harass, belittle and humiliate. It can include threats of violence or death toward a woman or to her children, family, friends, work colleagues or pets. It can include isolating women from family and friends, yelling, breaking property, driving at excessive speed, making unfounded accusations of infidelity, interrogation and making threats of self-harm or suicide if the woman attempts to leave.
- **Sexual violence.** This consists of sexual actions that are without consent. This can include coercion, physical force, rape, sexual assault with implements, being forced to watch or engage in pornography, enforced prostitution, or being made to have sex with other people.
- **Financial abuse.** This can include control of household finances, limiting access to funds and forced acquisition of funds or property. Financial abuse is also a common form of abuse against older people and can involve accessing finances and property without consent.

- **Technology-facilitated abuse.** This can include monitoring actions, movements and communications through placing applications on phones and computers. It can include using phone calls, texts, emails and social media to make threats or make personal information public. Technology can also be used to record consensual or non-consensual sex and to upload, or threaten to upload, these images online without consent.
- **Neglect.** This includes failure to provide care or provide for the basic needs of women who are dependent on others due to disability or for other reasons.

While alcohol, substance abuse, mental health issues and poverty can be contributing factors to violence, they are not the causal factors. Most people who consume alcohol or drugs, or who have mental health issues, do not commit acts of domestic or family violence.

## Sexual Violence

The prevalence of sexual violence is staggering. The statistics demonstrate the complex experiences of sexual violence and show that increased investment by all governments is essential to address the unacceptable rates of sexual violence in Australia.

The National Plan notes that 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. Other forms of sexual violence, such as those that are facilitated by technology, are also emerging as a serious issue in Australia.

Nearly 1.5 million women in Australia have experienced sexual assault since the age of 15, which equates to one in five women. In 93 per cent of cases, the perpetrator was known to the victim and included intimate partners, friends, colleagues and dates. Ninety-nine per cent of sexual assaults on women were committed by males.

Sexual violence is a gendered crime — that is, it has an unequal impact on women, and the perpetrators of this violence are mostly men. Sexual violence can have serious and long-term psychological, emotional, physical, social and interpersonal effects on a victim. These impacts can lead to lost quality of life, ongoing mental health issues and lost productivity, which also results in a cost to the broader community.



