

Building Better Responses: NSW Strategy to Respond to the Use of Domestic and Family Violence 2026–2030

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Acknowledgement of Country

The New South Wales (NSW) Government acknowledges and pays respects to all Aboriginal peoples across NSW. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and work, and whose winds and waters we all share. We acknowledge the diversity and richness of Aboriginal cultures and languages across NSW.

We pay our respects to Aboriginal Elders past and present. We value Aboriginal histories, cultures, and knowledge and the many ways they enrich our nation and communities. We recognise that Aboriginal peoples — through the ongoing impacts of colonisation and systemic racism — have experienced high levels of violence and institutional abuse. The result is an enduring legacy of intergenerational trauma, devastating impacts to outcomes and barriers to care.

Addressing these factors is crucial to closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. In this context, all work carried out under this strategy must:

- respect the specific experiences of Aboriginal peoples
- work towards ensuring activities and reforms are culturally appropriate and safe
- nurture the spirit, resilience and cultural identities of Aboriginal peoples, families and communities.

We recognise that Aboriginal peoples have contributed their wisdom, knowledge, experiences and expertise in the development of this strategy. We also acknowledge the ongoing role Aboriginal peoples, organisations and communities will play in its implementation.

The NSW Government is committed to transforming how we work with Aboriginal peoples to achieve better outcomes for those impacted by domestic and family violence. We are committed to supporting the ongoing efforts of Aboriginal peoples to reduce the effects of individual and collective trauma and violence, including by working in partnership with Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, and by supporting Aboriginal-led initiatives.

We respect the rights of Aboriginal peoples to self-determination and agency.

Minister's message

Domestic and family violence (DFV) is one of the most devastating challenges facing our communities. Too many people have been harmed, and too many lives have been lost.

In any 12-month period, about 82,000 (1 in 100) NSW adults report experiencing DFV assault. More women than men are impacted by DFV, with 25% of women (794,000) in NSW estimated to have experienced violence, emotional abuse, or economic abuse by an intimate partner since the age of 15. These numbers are shocking and unacceptable.

The NSW Government is working to reduce and ultimately eliminate DFV. In 2024, we announced an additional \$245.6 million to strengthen and expand support for victim-survivors and stop violence before it begins through primary prevention. This was followed by a further \$272.7 million in the 2025–26 Budget for frontline services and to begin foundational reform.

These investments were largely focused on strengthening protections for those at risk. While supporting victim-survivors remains essential, and primary prevention underpins the long-term change we seek, we must also continue to expand and evolve our approach to reducing the use of violence.

The NSW Strategy to Respond to the Use of Family and Domestic Violence 2026–2030 is the next step.

Real change requires addressing the perpetration of violence by intervening earlier, addressing factors that escalate violence and holding those who use DFV to account.

Without confronting the problems and behaviours that fuel violence, the cycle will persist, and so will the harm.

This is why the government has made a clear commitment to invest in perpetrator research and intervention, and to deliver the first ever whole-of-NSW strategy dedicated to responding to people who use violence.

The strategy prioritises children and young people who use, or are at risk of using, DFV, acknowledging that childhood abuse and maltreatment can significantly increase their likelihood of future perpetration. By intervening early, addressing the drivers of violence, supporting healing for children, and fostering accountability, self-awareness and respect in relationships, we can help future generations break the cycle of violence and create lasting change.

While this strategy focuses on people who use violence, victim-survivor safety remains at its heart. The responsibility of safety should not rest on the shoulders of those who have been harmed but be delivered through system-wide coordination and reform. Every action is designed to support, protect and empower those experiencing violence.

Thank you to the more than 300 stakeholders from across NSW Government agencies, peak bodies, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, service providers, academics and individuals with expertise or lived experience who have shared insights to inform this work. Your contributions are deeply valued.

Everyone in our community deserves to live free from fear and violence. No one should feel unsafe in their own home, no child should grow up thinking violence is normal and, most importantly, no family should suffer the heartbreak of losing a loved one to abuse.

Ending DFV demands sustained effort and unwavering commitment to ensure domestic and family violence is identified as soon as possible, and people kept safe sooner. This strategy lays the foundations for that future.

The Hon. Jodie Harrison MP

Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

A note on language

This strategy adopts and builds on the definitions used in the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Plan 2022–2027, the NSW Sexual Violence Plan 2022–2027, and Pathways to Prevention: NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence 2024–2028.

Domestic and family violence (DFV) is characterised by a range of abusive behaviours intended to exert power and control. DFV includes any behaviour in a domestic relationship that is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling and causes a person to live in fear for their own or someone else’s safety. It can include technology-facilitated or financial abuse. **DFV** refers to violence between family members, current or former intimate partners, and other people in a domestic relationship. DFV can include violence from a relative, co-resident or carer, adolescent violence and elder abuse. DFV is predominantly perpetrated by men against women.

In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, DFV can include violence within extended families, kinship networks and community relationships. For other communities, such as the LGBTIQ+ community, ‘family’ may be defined as the ‘chosen family’.

DFV usually manifests as part of a pattern of controlling behaviour known as ‘coercive control’.

Coercive control is when someone repeatedly hurts, threatens, scares or isolates another person to control them. DFV involves the exploitation of power imbalances and ongoing patterns of controlling behaviours that aim to create fear and compliance in victim-survivors.

Sexual violence is used as an umbrella term to describe acts of a sexual nature that happen without consent. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any sexual activity. Such activity can be sexualised touching, sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment and intimidation, and forced or coerced watching of or engagement in pornography or modern slavery.¹

This strategy also considers sexual violence that occurs in the context of domestic relationships. It excludes sexual violence that occurs in other contexts.

People who use violence, and **perpetrator**, are used interchangeably in this strategy to refer to someone who has enacted any form of DFV against others. The use of the term, people who use DFV, is not intended to in any way minimise the significant harm caused to victim-survivors, the offending behaviour or the need for accountability and responsibility. It recognises that those who use violence make the choice to do so, should be accountable for their actions, and can stop their abusive behaviours. This strategy acknowledges that some individuals and communities prefer to use the terms ‘perpetrator’ or ‘offender’, generally for adults. They are also the most appropriate terms to use in certain contexts, such as criminal justice settings.

Victim-survivor is used in this strategy to describe people who have experienced DFV firsthand, as well as those who have witnessed DFV against family members. This includes children, young people, adults and older people. The strategy recognises that some people who use violence may also be victim-survivors, with prior exposure to DFV in childhood and/or adolescence. The Strategy also acknowledges that not all victims of DFV survive.

Strategy overview

Vision	Systemic, community, organisational and individual drivers that contribute to people using DFV are identified and addressed through prevention, intervention, healing and recovery					
Domains	Supporting children and young people		Children and young people who use, or are at risk of using, DFV are identified early and supported through effective interventions, including through working holistically with families			Cohort based domains
	Preventing the use of DFV		People who are at risk of using DFV are identified, assessed, and supported to disrupt pathways towards violence			
	Addressing the use of DFV		People who use DFV are identified, assessed, held accountable and change their violent behaviours			
	Enhancing service system integration		All services and systems work together to address the use of DFV through collaborative and integrated practices			System enablers
	Increasing workforce capability		The workforce engaging with people who use DFV has the appropriate skills, resources and capacity to support prevention, identification, referral and response			
	Improving evidence and data		Evidence and data adequately captures use of DFV and drives the understanding of, and response to, people who use or are a risk of using DFV			
Focus areas	Priority actions to drive the achievement of outcomes					
Principles to guide actions	Accountable	Equitable and inclusive	Evidence-based	Intersectional	Victim-survivor centred	Whole-community oriented

Introduction

This is NSW's first dedicated strategy to respond to the use of DFV. It builds on and connects to a broader suite of activity under the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Plan 2022–2027, NSW Sexual Violence Plan 2022–2027, and Pathways to Prevention: NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence 2024–2028.

The NSW Government has committed to ending DFV. To achieve this, we have developed strategies, policies, and programs to tackle this complex issue, with efforts across education, family and community services, health, law enforcement and the justice system. Work to date has concentrated on supporting the safety of victim-survivors, improving our ability to hold perpetrators to account, and engaging in community-based primary prevention.

Despite these efforts, rates of DFV in NSW are not going down. The drivers are multifaceted, involving gender inequality, complex cultural and social norms (such as beliefs regarding gender and the justification of violence), socio-economic experiences, systemic factors (such as structural gender inequality, racism, ableism, and inadequate access to housing and support services) and personal factors (such as experiences of trauma and alcohol use).

We must stop DFV. Without new approaches, people will continue to experience DFV. Cycles of intergenerational trauma and violence will persist.

To prevent harm and protect victim-survivors, we must expand our focus and shift the responsibility to those who use, or are at high risk of using, violence. This strategy differs from other NSW Government strategies

in that it concentrates on the actions and attitudes of those who cause harm, and efforts to change their behaviour. However, the strategy is not intended to operate in isolation.

Rather, it aims to strengthen the DFV response system by focusing more closely on people who use violence. It will build on existing law enforcement and risk management approaches by introducing preventive and early intervention measures to help change violent behaviours and provide a cohesive, integrated approach to reducing DFV.

We recognise that this work must occur alongside efforts to improve the supports, safety and experiences of victim-survivors.

The strategy is underpinned by a theory of change that recognises DFV is preventable, and that accountability, behaviour change and coordinated systems responses are essential to stopping violence. By investing in prevention, early identification, targeted interventions and a skilled workforce, the strategy aims to reduce the use of DFV and interrupt cycles of abuse over time.

We acknowledge those without a voice, those continuing to experience violence and those who did not survive.

Purpose and audience

This strategy focuses on the behaviour of people who use violence, and considers how law enforcement and specialist DFV and non-specialist systems respond to that behaviour. This includes responses to violence once it has occurred, and opportunities to intervene early to prevent abusive behaviours and underpinning attitudes from becoming entrenched.

The purpose of the strategy is to drive a coordinated whole-of-government response to people who use DFV. It integrates prevention, intervention, response and recovery efforts for those who use violence within a broader framework that supports community-wide initiatives to respond to DFV.

This strategy will guide service design and prioritisation decisions by organisations involved in DFV prevention, identification, intervention and recovery for DFV. This includes government agencies, community organisations, the private sector and the broader community.

The DFV crisis in NSW

DFV in NSW is widespread, and complex.

In the year to June 2025, NSW Police recorded more than

100,000 domestic violence-related incidents



38,169

incidents of DFV assault, with

24,520

incidents of DFV intimidation, stalking and harassment, with

25,267

breach incidents of Apprehended Violence Orders, with

16,222

people legally proceeded against.

11,583

people legally proceeded against.

14,233

people legally proceeded against.²

The number of DFV incidents recorded by police is increasing.



In the past 10 years

DFV sexual offences increased by

98%

DFV breached Apprehended Violence Orders increased by

82%

DFV intimidation, stalking and harassment increased by

86%

DFV assault increased by

30%³

From 2005 to 2021–22 in NSW

794,100 women

are estimated to have experienced violence, emotional abuse, or economic abuse by a cohabiting partner since the age of 15,

representing

25%

of women in NSW.⁴



In 2024, there were

39 victims

of DFV murder in NSW

67% of these victims were women or children.

In the past 10 years, there have been more than

300 victims

of DFV murder in NSW.⁵



While there are data gaps, we know men are the dominant users of DFV in NSW.

Due to underreporting, concrete data are not available on the number of people who use violence.

About 1 in 4 women and 1 in 14 men have experienced intimate partner violence since age 15.⁶ However, research suggests that **79% of women who have experienced violence from a current partner, and 68% who have experienced violence from a previous partner, did not report the incident to the police.**⁷

This reflects the limitations of justice data, which may disproportionately represent disadvantaged and marginalised people using DFV who are more likely to be in contact with the justice system.

Victimisation rates indicate that large numbers of people use DFV in their lifetimes.

Approximately 6% of people born in any given year are estimated to be proceeded against by police for a DFV offence by the age of 37. The rate is higher for men, at 9.6%.⁸

This would indicate that there may be more than

500,000 users of violence in NSW in 2024

with more than

400,000 male users of violence.

This aligns with recent research showing that

more than

1 in 3



Australian men aged 18–65 have used intimate partner violence in their lifetime.⁹

There are clear trends in who is using DFV.

Research consistently shows that most DFV perpetrators are men.¹⁰

Almost

two-thirds



of people proceeded against by NSW Police for DFV assault in the year to June 2025 were men (**65%**).

68% of defendants on Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders commenced in NSW during this period were men.¹¹

Young people are using DFV.

Almost

a quarter

or 22% of people legally proceeded against for DFV assaults were **under the age of 25** in the year to June 2025.¹²

Regional communities experience greater rates of DFV than metropolitan areas.

The rate of DFV assaults in regional NSW is **more than 60% higher** than in Greater Sydney.¹³

There is limited evidence on the number of people who use violence within the LGBTIQ+ community.

However, this community experiences extremely high rates of DFV, at

(more than 60%).¹⁴

Intersectional factors, such as age, cultural background, experiences of trauma, prior experiences of DFV in childhood or adolescence, and sexuality may influence the use and nature of DFV.

Violence has devastating and ongoing impacts on victim-survivors, which are carried across generations.

Impacts on victim-survivors include mental and physical harm, ultimately leading to poorer life outcomes for these individuals and their families. There are also significant economic costs to the community.¹⁵

It is estimated the annual direct economic cost of DFV in NSW during 2020, the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, was

\$1.5 billion,

with a total economic cost of

\$5.1 billion.

The total direct costs over the period 2020–25 from the escalation in violence during 2020 are estimated at

\$3.3 billion

with a total economic cost of

\$24.6 billion.¹⁶



The risk of experiencing DFV is not evenly distributed across the population. Over two-thirds of adult victims of DFV assault recorded by NSW Police are women (67%), reflecting the gendered nature of DFV.¹⁷

Research has shown that specific groups are more likely to experience DFV and face additional barriers to escaping DFV. **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, children and young people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds or who have temporary migrant status, those in the LGBTIQ+ community, older people, and people with disability are at greater risk of being victims of DFV in NSW or facing barriers to accessing support.** Individuals with multiple, intersecting identities across these groups may face compounding forms of discrimination and marginalisation, increasing their risk of experiencing DFV and making it more difficult for them to access effective support. Children who experience DFV with co-occurring parent/carer alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and mental health conditions are twice as likely to be removed from their parent/carer's care.¹⁸

Aboriginal people are disproportionately impacted by DFV

Aboriginal people are overrepresented both as people who use violence and as victim-survivors of DFV.

Aboriginal people represent 3.4% of the NSW population but account for

21% of people proceeded against for DFV assault

and

18% of victim-survivors in the DFV assaults.¹⁹

A significant proportion of DFV instances are perpetrated by non-Indigenous men against Aboriginal women.²⁰ Aboriginal women are more likely to be misidentified as the primary aggressor, instead of the person in most need of protection, for using self-defence or retaliatory violence.²¹

These figures do not imply blame on Aboriginal communities. Systemic factors contribute to over-representation. A range of structural and socio-economic factors influence the use of violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Complex historical trauma, ongoing effects of colonisation, dispossession, oppression and racism are identified as key risk factors in these communities.²²

Experiences of poverty, and challenges with accessing stable and suitable housing and appropriate employment opportunities have also been identified as key socio-economic drivers of the use of violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.²³ In regional and remote communities, these factors are amplified by geographic isolation and barriers to accessing essential and culturally safe services, leading to increases in the use of violence.

Causes of DFV

Gendered drivers of DFV

While DFV is broader than gender-based violence, gender inequality is a root cause of many forms of DFV.

There are four key gendered drivers of DFV:

- condoning of violence against women
- men's control over decision-making and limits to women's independence in public and private life
- rigid gender stereotyping and dominant forms of masculinity
- male peer relationships and cultures of masculinity that emphasise aggression, dominance and control.²⁴

Gender-based drivers of DFV operate at every level of society, including in communities, neighbourhoods, workplaces and informal social networks. As noted above, intersecting forms of discrimination and inequality, including racism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia, also contribute to and amplify people's experiences of DFV. DFV experienced by LGBTIQ+ people is also gender-based violence and typically has the same drivers as violence against women.

Reinforcing factors

A range of reinforcing factors can also contribute to DFV. While none of these cause, predict or drive DFV, they influence the occurrence or dynamics of DFV. These factors must be addressed because they can increase the risk and severity of DFV.

Reinforcing factors

Prior exposure to violence

Research shows that children who are exposed to or experience DFV or child maltreatment may be more likely to use or become the victim of violence later in life.²⁵ This highlights the intergenerational nature of DFV. Experiences of child maltreatment or victimisation are also linked to childhood trauma, which may exacerbate the use of violence with family members or future partners.

Trauma

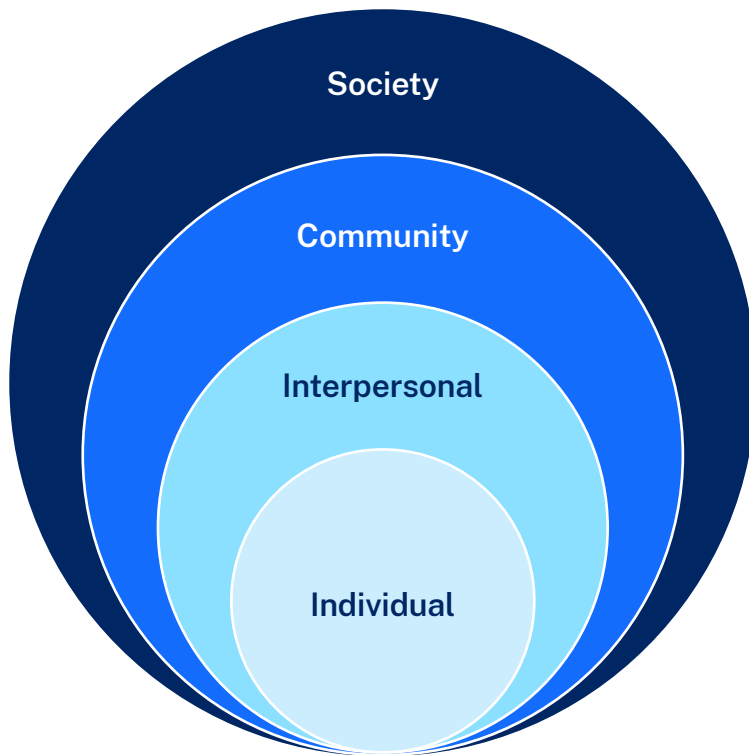
Trauma can negatively affect neurological development, lowering social and emotional processing and emotional regulation, which help protect against the use of violence.²⁶ Trauma can stem from many adverse events, but can include experiences of childhood maltreatment and abuse, neglect, homelessness, incarceration, climate disaster, social isolation, war, persecution, loss and displacement.²⁷

Reinforcing factors (continued)

Mental health conditions	Mental health conditions do not cause DFV but have been linked to the use of DFV. ²⁸ Depression, generalised anxiety disorder, panic disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder are commonly identified among DFV offenders.
Alcohol and other drugs	AOD use can contribute to the escalation, frequency and severity of DFV. Between 25 and 50% of people who use DFV have one or multiple alcohol or other drug dependencies. ²⁹
Gambling	Gambling can intersect with the use of violence in a range of ways. While problem gambling has been known to contribute to experiences of physical violence, it is recognised that it is also linked to coercive control and economic abuse in DFV settings. ³⁰
Pornography	Violent pornography use is a risk factor for the use of DFV, specifically intimate partner violence. ³¹ Other factors such as mental health conditions and AOD can contribute to frequent pornography use and intimate partner violence. ³²
Social media and online environments	Online content is increasingly reinforcing harmful gender stereotypes that contribute to gender inequality. ³³ Recent research identified a fourfold increase in the amount and level of misogynistic content being presented to individuals on one social media platform. ³⁴ This normalises sexism and misogyny, particularly among young people.
Housing and homelessness	Housing instability, a lack of affordable housing, difficulties accessing emergency accommodation, poor housing conditions and overcrowding can exacerbate DFV, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, children who experience sexual violence in the home, and older people living with adult children. ³⁵ Inadequate housing and homelessness can perpetuate abusive relationships, in cases where victim-survivors cannot escape DFV and parents or carers require stable housing to maintain custody of their children.
Ongoing impacts of colonisation	For Aboriginal people, the drivers of DFV are interconnected and complex. The colonisation of Australia has had negatives impacts on Aboriginal Cultures, creating systemic conditions such as intergenerational trauma, disrupted cultural norms, institutional racism and socio-economic disadvantages that increase vulnerability to DFV. ³⁶

Rationale

The strategy adopts a socio-ecological approach to addressing the use of DFV. It acknowledges the complex and diverse societal, community, interpersonal and individual factors that contribute to DFV.



Society

Social and cultural norms influencing how violence is perpetuated

Community

Schools, workplaces, neighbourhoods, places of worship, police interactions

Interpersonal

Interactions with family, friends and intimate partners

Individual

Personal background, personality type, early exposure to violence, substance abuse

Cultural and social norms are supported and reinforced across all levels of society, including relationships, families, communities, and institutions. These norms influence how people think and talk about violence.³⁷ While individual behaviour-change programs can be effective in tackling the personal factors driving the use of violence, cultural and social causes of violent and controlling behaviour should also be addressed.³⁸

We recognise that government, the community, the private sector and service systems have distinct roles and responsibilities. This includes child protection, community services, education, health, law enforcement and legal services, in both specialist and mainstream settings. All parties need to work together as part of an integrated system that centres victim-survivors, prevents DFV, stops further DFV and contributes to recovery and healing. This strategy aims to address societal, community, interpersonal and individual factors that contribute to DFV perpetration.

Policy context

National and international

Australia has a robust framework to combat DFV, involving collaborative efforts between national and state governments.

The National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032 (the 2022–2032 National Plan) provides the foundation, aiming to eradicate gender-based violence within a generation, building upon the successes and lessons learned from the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022.

Several other national frameworks and strategies support the 2022–2032 National Plan. Australia also engages in international efforts to combat DFV, leveraging its commitments to global treaties and collaborations.

National

- First National Action Plan, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan and Outcomes Framework under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032
- National Agreement on Closing the Gap (in particular Target 13: Families and households are safe)
- National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030
- Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021–2031
- National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians (Elder Abuse) 2019–2023

International

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and Convention on the Rights of the Child
- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, specifically targeting the elimination of violence against women and girls
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

NSW context

Building better Responses: NSW Strategy to Respond to the Use of Domestic and Family Violence 2026–2030 is part of a broader framework of existing strategies and plans within the state, enhancing the comprehensive approach to prevention and response.

These include:

- NSW Domestic and Family Violence Plan 2022–2027
- NSW Sexual Violence Plan 2022–2027
- Pathways to Prevention NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence 2024–2028
- Strengthening the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Sector: Workforce Development Strategy (2025–2035)
- NSW Women’s Strategy 2023–2026
- Strategic Plan of the NSW Women’s Safety Commissioner 2024–2027
- NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2021–2025
- SafeWork NSW Respect at Work Strategy (2023–2027), focusing on preventing sexual harassment
- NSW Women’s Health Framework
- NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan
- Children First (2022–2031), supported by Safety in Action and Talking About It
- NSW Health Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Domestic and Family Violence 2021–2026
- NSW Health Integrated Prevention and Response to Violence, Abuse, and Neglect Framework 2019
- NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner’s Strategic Plan 2023–2026

This strategy operates in conjunction with these plans to systematically identify and address the drivers and causes of violence through targeted prevention, interventions and responses.

Principles

The following principles underpin the strategy and will guide future design, investment and delivery.

Principle	Explanation
Accountable	Responses to people who use violence must hold them to account and prioritise victim-survivor safety. Perpetrators must be encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviours and supported to change.
Equitable and inclusive	All people, regardless of gender, race, culture, language, age, ability, sexuality, economic position, geography or background, should have access to services and support that meet their needs. Applying an equitable and inclusive lens enables us to acknowledge that barriers to participation and access exist. The design of this strategy aims to remove these barriers, ensuring that no group is disproportionately disadvantaged in efforts to prevent and address DFV.
Evidence-based	The Action Plan for this strategy will be informed by a combination of lived experience, practice wisdom and rigorous scientific research. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative data facilitates an understanding of what is happening, what works, and for whom. This principle ensures that policies and programs are grounded in data and effective practices rather than assumptions or outdated approaches, while recognising the emerging nature of the evidence base in this field.
Intersectional	Individuals have multiple and overlapping identities. Applying an intersectional lens means examining how these identities shape a person's experience of the use of violence and their ability to access services, ensuring that responses are tailored to diverse needs. This approach is necessary to effectively address the core drivers of violence across the diverse Australian population.
Victim-survivor centred	Victim-survivors, including children and young people, must be heard, believed and supported, and their needs and rights prioritised. Services and system must be DFV and trauma-informed, integrated, and uphold victim-survivors' dignity, agency and self-determination. We value the voices of those with lived experience in the design, delivery and evaluation of responses to DFV.
Whole community oriented	The strategy adopts a whole-of-community approach, recognising that government agencies, organisations, workplaces, and community leaders must collaborate. This ensures that efforts are coordinated and communicated across settings to drive change at multiple levels. It emphasises a shared responsibility where all parts of the community work together to prevent violence, intervene early, and create environments that foster safety, accountability and change.

Development of the strategy

The development of the strategy has been informed by data on DFV in NSW, a targeted literature review on evidence-based practice, desktop review of relevant strategies, plans and policies, and extensive stakeholder consultation with more than 300 government representatives, service providers, peak bodies, academics, community members and people with lived experience. This included direct engagement with regional and remote communities to understand their experiences.

The strategy recognises the continuum adopted by the 2022–2032 National Plan and the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Plan 2022–2027, including:

Prevention	Stopping DFV before it starts
Early intervention	Stopping DFV from escalating and preventing it from reoccurring
Response	Addressing existing use of DFV
Recovery and healing	Breaking the cycle of DFV and reducing the risk of retraumatisation

We understand that these domains are intrinsically linked in practice, rather than functioning independently. For example, recovery efforts to address childhood exposure to violence contributes to prevention by addressing the normalisation of violence. This strategy identifies priority areas for change that are interconnected, with each priority reinforcing the effectiveness of the others and supporting the continuum of the 2022–2032 National Plan.

Domain 1 – Supporting children and young people

Children and young people who use, or are at risk of using, DFV are identified early and supported through effective interventions, including through working holistically with families.



Why is it important?

We know children develop their understandings of gender, consent and healthy relationships in the early years. This can contribute to DFV by normalising rigid gender stereotypes, unhealthy concepts of masculinity, and relationships of dominance and control.³⁹ We also know that children and young people are increasingly being exposed to harmful online content and violent pornography, which can have a negative impact on attitudes and practices.⁴⁰

The education system, including early childhood and school settings, can provide near-universal reach to children and young people to support primary prevention.

While education alone will not solve DFV, evidence-based respectful relationship education has been shown to improve the knowledge, skills and attitudes of children and young people, helping to stop violence before it starts.⁴¹

We must focus on children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right to prevent DFV. Many children and young people are exposed to DFV in their homes and families. Many do not go on to use DFV, but exposure can increase the risk of violence. Exposure to parental conflict can lead to worse health, social and educational outcomes, and the trauma of DFV can lead to difficulties with emotional regulation, aggression, and mental health, all of which contribute to violent and controlling behaviours.⁴² Working with children and young people, particularly boys and young men, before these behaviours become entrenched is an opportunity to disrupt cycles of violence at the earliest possible point in their lives.

We also need appropriate interventions for children and young people who have already begun to use DFV. There is currently a lack of dedicated services in NSW for children and young people who use DFV in the home and in intimate partner relationships. Identifying and addressing the needs of these children and young people through holistic, trauma-informed, culturally safe, accessible and disability-affirming interventions can reduce the risk of further harm and prevent future violence.

Working with adults who use DFV provides an opportunity to both protect and prevent harm to children and young people and disrupt potential pathways to violence. Effectively responding to the needs of children and young people requires greater collaboration and system-level accountability between child protection, education, youth justice, and health services to create a coordinated system response.

1

What are we doing?

- Expanding primary prevention efforts through Pathways to Prevention: NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence 2024–2028, which has allocated \$38 million in funding over 4 years across a range of priority areas to strengthen delivery of primary prevention initiatives. This includes:
 - developing and commencing the implementation of a holistic Respectful Relationships Education curriculum, a resource hub and professional learning for teachers to teach children about respectful relationships, healthy masculinities and the problems with pornography, to change the attitudes of the next generation at the whole-of-population level
 - investing in innovative early childhood education prevention approaches and initiatives to challenge rigid gender roles and promote healthy relationships
- Investing \$484.3 million to provide access to safe and secure crisis accommodation and specialist supports for 2,900 women and children escaping DFV, and help break intergenerational cycles of DFV by reducing exposure to DFV
- Investing \$48.1 million to expand the Specialist Workers for Children and Young People (SWCYP) program to break the cycle of disadvantage and improve client outcomes for children and young people who are, or who are at risk of, experiencing homelessness and who have been impacted by DFV
- Investing in the Aboriginal Child and Family Centres & Aboriginal Family Wellbeing and Violence Prevention Project, which is an Aboriginal community led interagency project that supports prevention, early intervention, responses, and healing and recovery, including for people using violence

- Facilitating diversified interventions through the *Young Offenders Act 1997* (NSW), including alternative pathways for DFV offenders

What do we need to focus on?

- Enhancing primary prevention efforts by developing education programs on respectful relationships, healthy masculinities and pornography, to change the attitudes and behaviours of the next generation
- Expanding support services for children and young people who are using DFV
- Developing trauma-informed, age-appropriate and culturally safe interventions for young people who use DFV to encourage healing and recovery while changing behaviours
- Increasing the use of restorative justice interventions for children in contact with the criminal justice system due to the use of DFV, to effectively address violent and controlling behaviour

Priority cohorts and focus areas

- Working with Aboriginal communities to deliver community-led, culturally safe healing and social and emotional wellbeing programs that support primary prevention efforts
- Supporting young people using violence who appear before Youth Action Meetings, to increase service system coordination
- Providing tailored supports for young people in out-of-home care to develop positive relationships and healthy behaviours and prevent the use of violence



Domain 2 – Preventing the use of DFV

People who are at risk of using DFV are identified, assessed and supported to disrupt pathways towards violence.

Why is it important?

We need to improve our ability to identify people who are at risk of using DFV if we are to truly prevent harm to the community.

The service system is a crucial point of contact where risk of using DFV can be identified and responded to. This is not limited to services traditionally associated with DFV, like police and the justice system. Health systems, including mental health and AOD services, are common touch points for people at risk of using DFV. Other sectors, like child protection, family services, housing, homelessness, social services and veteran services also work with at-risk individuals. The community also has a role in identification and response through workplaces, sporting clubs, and social connections. Work is needed at the whole-of-population level in key settings to enable effective responses.

We know there are common life events where patterns of behaviour can escalate. Changing living arrangements, intimate partner pregnancy, early parenthood, financial hardship, housing instability, job loss or unemployment, relationship breakdowns, retirement, and other periods of stress can affect the trajectory toward violence. If we can identify risks and intervene at these key points, we can disrupt pathways into DFV.

However, the service system often misses opportunities to intervene early. There needs to be a strong understanding of indicators of attitudes and behaviours of concern, sufficient confidence to identify and refer to supports, and services in place with capacity to address contributing factors. A comprehensive set of actions is needed to ensure that early identification is seamlessly integrated into the broader service system.

What are we doing?

- Supporting communities in NSW to be leaders in domestic, family and sexual violence prevention through multi-year partnerships to deliver local prevention projects, including funding organisations that focus on healthy masculinities
- Working in partnership with councils, a range of local government networks and local organisations to increase understanding and awareness of primary prevention
- Delivering workshops to employers on the drivers of workplace gender-based violence, and preventative actions they can take.
- Building an evidence base, a coalition of sporting organisations and multi-year delivery partnerships with sporting organisations

What do we need to focus on?

- Improving risk assessment practices for harmful attitudes and behaviours to increase identification at system touchpoints and in under-recognised settings
- Delivering programs for at-risk individuals, to prevent DFV and change harmful attitudes and behaviours

Priority cohorts and focus areas

- Supporting the identification of people at risk of using DFV in under-recognised settings, including against people with disability and older people (for example, due to carer abuse) and those on temporary visas
- Working with Aboriginal communities to expand access to community-led, culturally safe healing and social and emotional wellbeing programs that prevent DFV by addressing intergenerational trauma
- Working with fathers in early parenthood through programs that support the development of safe parenting and healthy relationship skills and behaviours



Domain 3 – Addressing the use of DFV

People who use DFV are identified, assessed, held accountable and change their violent and controlling behaviour.



Why is it important?

The service system must be able to identify perpetrators, hold them accountable, and stop harmful patterns of behaviour.

However, many people who use DFV are never reported to police and thus may not be identified as users of violence.⁴³ Some manipulate systems to avoid accountability and perpetrate abuse. Every time a person who uses violence interacts with the service system, there is an opportunity for intervention. Improving our ability to identify people who use DFV at critical junctures can prevent escalating patterns of DFV or high-harm incidents.

Building community capacity to identify and report DFV is key to identifying those who are not engaged with government systems. DFV is commonly identified and reported to family, friends, community groups and at work.⁴⁴ Private sector organisations, such as those in the banking sector, are key to identifying financial, technology-facilitated and other forms of abuse.

Addressing the use of DFV requires recognising not only physical (including sexual) abuse but also non-physical forms of violence, such as emotional or financial abuse. These behaviours can be central to the dynamics of DFV. Our systems and processes are more mature in relation to detecting physical violence, with further work required to ensure we can identify all abusive behaviours. Better processes are also needed to improve our understanding of how to prevent misidentification of the predominant aggressor in a relationship.

A suite of interventions is needed to ensure we can drive change in the diverse cohort of people who use violence. It is unreasonable to expect that any one short-term intervention will be enough to resolve the attitudes, behaviours and complex psychosocial factors that may contribute to DFV perpetration. Services must be well-resourced, integrated, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive to ensure that people using DFV can receive sufficient support to change their violent behaviour.

3

What are we doing?

- Strengthening law enforcement responses, including undertaking visible police operations targeting high-risk DFV offenders, introducing new offences for intentional and persistent ADVO breaches, the introduction of a new serious domestic abuse prevention order scheme and stronger bail laws for serious domestic violence offences
- Making coercive control a criminal offence in current or former intimate partner relationships from 1 July 2024, and delivering community awareness campaigns to increase awareness and understanding of coercive control
- Providing holistic and cultural supports through Aboriginal DFV Court Support, which assists people who use violence to reduce reoffending and break the cycle of violence
- Developing the Common Approach to Risk Assessment and Safety (CARAS) framework, which supports a whole-of-system approach to identifying and responding to DFV
- Funding service providers to deliver men's behaviour change programs, which may include individual counselling, case management and support for victim-survivors, in custodial and community settings
- Implementing the Practice Standards for Men's Behaviour Change Programs, the Compliance Framework for Men's Behaviour Change Programs and the Risk, Safety and Support Framework for Men's Behaviour Change Programs, to support the provision of safe, high-quality and consistent content
- Delivering corrective services programs for DFV offenders in custody and in the community that reduce re-offending.

- Delivering a range of tailored and place-based early intervention and diversion programs for young people who engage in and/or have experienced DFV, and who are in contact with or at risk of entering the youth justice system
- Responding to young people using and/or at risk of using violence in the home who have Youth Justice NSW supervision

What do we need to focus on?

- Engaging communities in preventative education and awareness initiatives to help identify people who use DFV
- Improving risk assessment practices for people who use DFV, to increase identification at system touchpoints
- Diversifying interventions for people who use DFV to ensure they are accessible to people from different communities and with diverse needs, and support the maintenance of change over time
- Enhancing specialised interventions for high-risk and recidivist DFV offenders, who may have multiple victims
- Integrating services for people who use DFV with other specialist DFV and mainstream services and responses

Priority cohorts and focus areas

- Increasing awareness raising around specific dynamics of DFV, including those relating to carer relationships for older people and people with disability; refugee and migrant communities; and the LGBTIQ+ community
- Diversifying interventions to support the engagement of people who use violence, by tailoring programs to culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse communities
- Engaging Aboriginal men in the co-production of programs and supports to encourage behaviour change and address other needs, including healing programs
- Addressing misidentification of victim-survivors as primary aggressors, particularly for Aboriginal communities



Domain 4 – Enhancing service system integration

All services and systems work together to address the use of DFV through collaborative and integrated practices.

Why is it important?

An integrated service system is essential to effectively identify people who use DFV, hold them accountable, and support them to stop using violence.

The current service system's approach to working with people who use DFV is fragmented and episodic. Too often there is an expectation that specialist perpetrator services will single-handedly manage risk, hold users of violence in view and facilitate accountability. This can impede collaborative information sharing, risk assessment, oversight and management. Relevant government agencies and non-government service providers must better integrate their practices and strengthen their collective responsibility for keeping perpetrators in view. This includes police, courts, child protection services, child and family services, victim-survivor services, and universal and allied services, such as education, disability, housing and healthcare. Greater integration will help shift the burden of responsibility to users of violence to change their behaviour, while keeping victim-survivors safe.

We know government, non-government and private sector systems are being manipulated by some users of violence to perpetrate DFV. This can include incurring debts in a victim-survivor's name and making false allegations and complaints, for example to police or child protection services. Banking systems and social media platforms are also vulnerable to being exploited for the use of stalking and harassment. Many of these systems are integral to the day-to-day lives of both victim-survivors and perpetrators. Developing systems that can identify and address misuse is crucial to prevent further harm.

What are we doing?

- Delivering Safer Pathways and Safety Action Meetings to provide a coordinated and integrated responses between perpetrator and victim-survivor interventions to increase the safety of DFV victim-survivors
- Investing in Youth Action Meetings across NSW to provide a coordinated response to young people at risk of offending or victimisation
- Reviewing NSW Government systems (specifically Service NSW) to identify how they are vulnerable to systems abuse
- Providing the Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Services program to offer multi-agency, integrated and coordinated responses to DFV for families, victim-survivors and users of DFV through government and non-government agencies and the NSW Police Force

What do we need to focus on?

- Improving service system coordination at the local level to support collaborative service planning, identification of DFV and responses
- Reviewing legislative and cultural barriers to information sharing on users of violence to improve visibility and accountability across government and non-government systems
- Preventing future misuse of government systems through systems abuse by DFV perpetrators, by considering Safety by Design principles
- Improving coordination and information sharing between services for people who use DFV and other specialist DFV and mainstream services and responses

4

Domain 5 – Increasing workforce capability

The workforce engaging with people who use DFV has the appropriate skills, resources and capacity to support prevention, identification, referral and response.

Why is it important?

Preventing and responding to DFV requires NSW to have an appropriately skilled, sized, resourced and located workforce across the state.

We need to expand our understanding of who is part of the workforce. There is a 'core' workforce that interacts with users of violence, including police, legal practitioners, corrective services workers, judicial officers and men's behaviour change practitioners. There are specialist DFV services that regularly work with both victim-survivors and users of violence.

Outside the specialist workforce, there are other services that frequently work with people who use violence. This includes AOD, child protection, mental health, housing, disability support and other community services. Workers in these services need to understand DFV and its risks, including collusion and misidentification of the predominant aggressor. They need to recognise their role in addressing violence and have the skills and confidence to identify DFV users and refer them to other services or work safely with them.

Specialist DFV services are experiencing issues with attracting and retaining staff. Cultural barriers reduce the number of workers who are interested in engaging users of DFV. There are gaps in recruiting male, bilingual, multicultural and other diverse workers.⁴⁵ Levels of Vicarious trauma, large workloads and burnout are contributing to high workforce attrition.⁴⁶ It is essential that workers in these services receive appropriate support. This requires resourcing, supervision and processes to enable workers to deliver services effectively, safely and sustainably.

Practices in working with users of DFV are evolving as we learn more about the interface between intervention, recovery and prevention. Both specialist and non-specialist workers must have the knowledge and skills

to deliver trauma-informed, culturally appropriate and safe services that can support long-term healing, and recovery for victim-survivors and people who use DFV. It is also essential that the workforce is appropriately skilled to ensure service delivery can be tailored to meet the needs of all of NSW's diverse communities.

What are we doing?

- Supporting police, legal practitioners, judicial officers and domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) specialists to build capacity, capability and processes to recognise and respond to coercive control
- Implementing the Strengthening the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Sector: Workforce Development Strategy (2025–2035)
- Developing an e-learning module for interpreters on coercive control and the skills and knowledge required when interpreting in DFV contexts

What do we need to focus on?

- Delivering training to the broader workforce interacting with people who use DFV, including children and young people, to improve identification and referral to appropriate specialist services
- Investing in multi-agency collaborative training initiatives to build understanding of roles and better support integrated practices
- Developing guidance for services on how to work with users of violence to increase confidence and improve practice
- Building the cultural awareness of the workforce to improve the ability to identify users of DFV and enable equitable access to services

5

Domain 6 – Improving data, research and evidence

Evidence, research and data adequately captures the use of DFV and drives the understanding of, and response to, people who use, or are at risk of using, DFV.

Why is it important?

High-quality data is essential for us to understand the forms of DFV happening in our community, what works to address DFV, and what more we can do to stop the use of violence.

Right now, there are limited data that accurately describes who is using violence, how often they use it, why they use it, and what can be done to stop their abusive behaviour. Our insights are mostly limited to those who have been charged with a DFV offence, meaning we know little about those who are using DFV but are not engaged in the criminal justice system.

Data collected by government agencies in certain circumstances can be focused on victim-survivors rather than users of DFV, which can make it more difficult to keep users in view. Better and more granular data would allow a more comprehensive understanding of the extent to which DFV is used in NSW, acknowledging the cultural diversity of NSW and recognising the experiences of different communities. In turn, this would inform prevention efforts and help provide more targeted, evidence-based responses.

The evidence base on ‘what works for whom’ to stop DFV is still emerging. We need to better understand the pathways into using DFV, and the processes that support people to move away from violent and controlling behaviours. Responses should be tailored to different ages, sexualities, genders, cultures and accessibility needs – but we still lack strong evidence on how best to do this.

A robust evidence base would strengthen our approaches, allowing us to better disrupt pathways into violence and facilitate behaviour change. Evaluation of existing services, and testing of new services, is key to understanding how we can continuously improve our approaches and best stop the use of DFV.

Gaining valuable insights into the use of DFV requires the collection of high-quality data, including from people with lived experience. Data collection processes must also recognise Indigenous Data Governance and Sovereignty.

What are we doing?

- Capturing data on DFV through the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
- Developing the NSW Outcomes and Monitoring Reporting Framework to guide and improve outcomes measurement
- Commencing work to support the DFSV Data Strategy to improve data and evidence
- Rolling out a minimum data set for men’s behaviour change programs to improve outcomes measurement, and better understand demand
- Strengthening the use and dissemination of evidence and data analysis in government program and policy design to drive innovation and deliver better outcomes
- Supporting:
 - the Neglect Project, funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, which investigates the number of reports on the neglect and mistreatment of older people and adults with disabilities.
 - the evaluation of men’s behaviour change programs funded by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, which began in 2025
 - the evaluation of Youth on Track, an early intervention program for young people, to be undertaken in 2025
 - evaluation of the Safe & Together Model, which focuses on keeping children safe and together with protective parents, while holding perpetrators accountable.



What do we need to focus on?

- Building practice leadership and disseminating system-wide advice to encourage the uptake of effective practices in working with people who use DFV
- Reviewing existing data collection systems to capture information that improves our understanding of who is using violence
- Developing or identifying new data sources to better understand people who use DFV, including those who have no contact with the justice system
- Better embed evaluation into the design and implementation of existing and new services, to gather data on the effectiveness of interventions for users of DFV and how these responses contribute to the safety and wellbeing of victim-survivors
- Increasing research and the evidence base on people who use DFV

Priority cohorts and focus areas

- Improving data collection on demographics including sexual identity and cultural, linguistic and religious diversity
- Enhancing the evidence on ‘what works for whom’ by evaluating interventions for cultural, linguistically and religiously diverse communities and those who are incarcerated
- Increasing research on pathways into and out of violence, to deepen our understanding of the complexities of DFV
- Exploring how the use of DFV interlinks with other forms of violence, such as racism, ableism, ageism, homophobia and transphobia
- Examining the extent of misidentification and the impacts of the criminalisation of victim-survivors.



Implementation

NSW Government agencies are jointly responsible for implementing the Strategy through the Action Plan, in collaboration with service providers, community and industry. Implementation will be coordinated through a governance structure providing oversight, strategic direction and progress tracking.

The NSW Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Board has overarching responsibility and accountability for the strategy. The Board brings together principal decision-makers and leaders from across the NSW Government to ensure agencies work collaboratively to shape, support and implement DFSV reforms.

The detailed actions that support the implementation of the strategy are contained in a supporting Action Plan to ensure appropriate separation between long-term directions and short-term interventions. The Action Plan has been developed by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice in collaboration with other government agencies and key partners.

The Action Plan:

- assigns priorities to actions
- addresses governance arrangements
- embeds monitoring and evaluation requirements.

The strategy will be implemented through a phased approach that builds momentum over time, as funding becomes available.

The **first phase** will focus on building strong foundations by continuing existing initiatives, aligning the system around a shared direction, and addressing urgent workforce needs.

The **second phase** will expand on this foundation — enhancing services and supports, improving practices, and strengthening the evidence base on what works to stop the use of DFV.

The **final phase** will focus on long-term impact, consolidating coordination across the system, evaluating outcomes, and identifying future priorities to ensure a more integrated, effective and sustainable response to people who use DFV.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning

The strategy will be supported by a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework that will identify the intended impact of the actions committed to. It will enable tracking, monitoring and reporting of change over the life of the strategy. This will help to determine what is working and what else needs to be done to stop the use of DFV.

The monitoring, evaluation and learning framework will be developed in collaboration with government agencies and key partners involved in implementation, to support access to data and information. It will help to embed evaluation processes in funded actions to improve the availability of evidence on interventions.

The approach will also align with the NSW DFV Outcomes Monitoring and Reporting Framework to ensure coherence of indicators, measures and reporting periods.

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