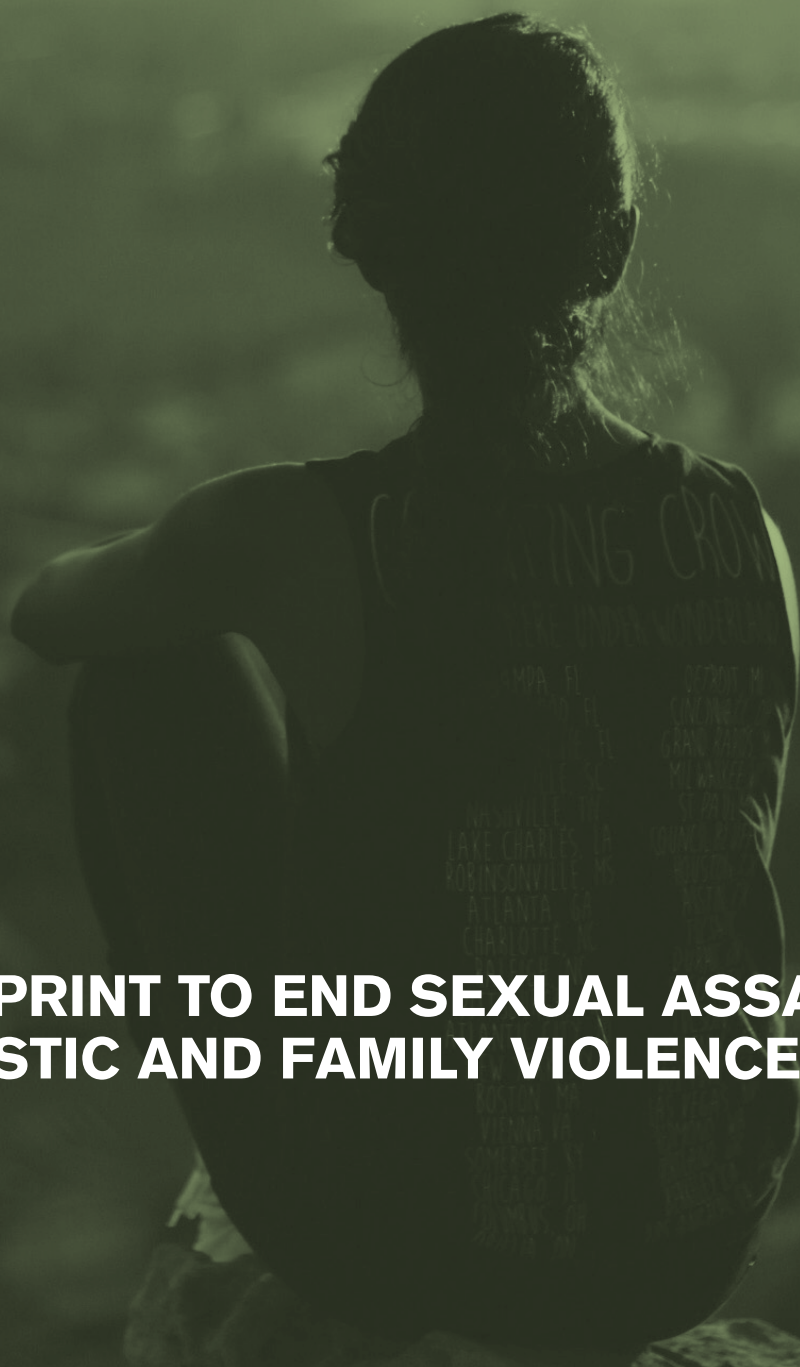


# A Safer State



**A BLUEPRINT TO END SEXUAL ASSAULT AND  
DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IN NSW**



The Men's Behaviour Change Network <sup>NSW</sup>

A Safer State would not have been possible without the significant input of the NSW Women's Alliance membership and the NSW Men's Behaviour Change Network.

We thank all the involved organisations for their contributions.

The NSW Women's Alliance was established in 2013 by a number of NSW feminist and social justice peak organisations and state-wide service providers working within the sexual assault and domestic and family violence fields.

The NSW Women's Alliance brings together a range of agencies with a variety of expertise, knowledge and experience in both responding to and working to prevent violence against women. The NSW Women's Alliance is co-convened by Domestic Violence NSW and Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia.

The Men's Behaviour Change Network of NSW consists of representatives from Men's Behaviour Change Program providers from across NSW who have met the Minimum Standards for Men's Domestic Violence Behaviour Change Programs in NSW.

Acronym	
ADVO	Apprehended Domestic Violence Order
ANROWS	Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
AVO	Apprehended Violence Order
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
DFV	Domestic and Family Violence
DVNSW	Domestic Violence NSW
FaCS	Family and Community Services
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer
MBCN	Men's Behaviour Change Network
MBCP	Men's Behaviour Change Program
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSW	New South Wales

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Moo Baulch

The NSW Women's Alliance is a group of non-government peak and statewide organisations working from feminist, human rights based, social justice perspectives to improve policy and practice responses to sexual assault and domestic and family violence in our state. We've worked with a number of partners to highlight the range of issues and responses that urgently require the attention of the NSW Government and our community leaders.

30 women died in NSW in 2014, whilst many hundreds of thousands of women and children live in fear of violence and abuse. Government and non-government agencies have a strong evidence base built through decades of practice. Sexual assault and domestic and family violence can be stopped. We know what works and we know what needs to be done. We know that one size will never fit all and that appropriate responses must be trauma-specialist and client-centred. With adequate resourcing and consistent messaging across legal and justice, support, housing, health and education sectors we could shift these horrific statistics within a generation.

This is a blueprint for intergenerational change in NSW outlining a multi-pronged approach. We all have a part to play but it will require sustainable investment and a cross-partisan commitment. This is our challenge for 2015. Let this be the year that NSW turned a corner and chose a safer state for our communities and the next generation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Baulch'.

Moo Baulch  
CEO of Domestic Violence NSW

**Sexual assault and domestic and family violence is a national emergency that requires adequately resourced, gendered, nuanced responses addressing the continuum of violence against women and children. It crosses all cultures, communities, relationships, socio-demographics and happens everywhere. Domestic and family violence costs the NSW economy \$4.5 billion annually and is one of the leading causes of death, physical and mental health, disability, child abuse and homelessness for women.<sup>1</sup>**

## A BLUEPRINT TO END SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IN NSW

## HIGH LEVEL LEADERSHIP: A PROACTIVE CROSS GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY STANCE

1. The NSW Premier drives a strong, sustained, coordinated, prevention message that speaks to the diversity of communities affected by sexual assault and domestic and family violence.
2. The appointment of a NSW Government Minister for the Prevention of Sexual Assault and Domestic and Family violence.
3. Develop a NSW framework for responding to and preventing sexual assault.
4. Women NSW to be relocated to the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, driving a whole-of-government approach to prevention and responses.
5. Embedded, systematic opportunities for sexual assault and domestic and family violence peak organisations to work meaningfully with government to co-design reforms. Convene a biannual forum with community leaders and non-government partners to discuss current issues relating to sexual assault and domestic and family violence and how they can be addressed.
6. The Premier, alongside political and community leaders, to demonstrate leadership and commitment by filming messages unequivocally condemning violence against a diverse range of women and children and making a clear public statement that violence against women and children is serious, a crime, a violation of human rights and will not be tolerated in NSW.
7. The NSW Domestic and Family Violence Council to be chaired by the Premier and have accountability, transparency and a commitment to meaningful and ongoing engagement with civil society.
8. The Premier acknowledges the NSW Government's respect for NGOs' gendered expertise in specialised community service provision.
9. Implementation of a long-term cross-departmental Aboriginal Family Violence Strategy driven by Aboriginal communities. The Family Violence Strategy must intersect with a strong, well-resourced Aboriginal Family Violence Network to develop consistent and evidence-based best practice initiatives.

## PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION: SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES TO TACKLE THE CAUSES OF VIOLENCE

10. Adoption of a coordinated, long-term NSW Prevention Plan including strategies that respond to diverse communities affected by sexual assault and domestic and family violence.
11. Build on the research and good practice identified through the Women NSW-commissioned Prevention studies. Make State and Federal prevention programs and research a priority including a commitment to ANROWS and Our Watch for the lifespan of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*.
12. Maximise interagency and intersectoral collaboration and ensure relevant strategic planning around program funding for Men and Boys' Violence Prevention, including NGO representation.
13. Review the NSW Men's Behaviour Change minimum standards, include accreditation and regular auditing for MBCPs and expand to included standards for one on one behaviour change counseling and programs. Review annually, and adapt as new research emerges. Accredited MBCPs to be funded adequately to ensure NGOs are able to deliver best practice and implement latest research recommendations.
14. Accredited Men's Behaviour Change Programs should be accessible through *Safer Pathways* (a component of the *It Stops Here* reforms).
15. Embed evidence-based respectful relationship education that focuses on promoting gender equality and violence prevention. Evaluated respectful relationship education needs to target all sections of community, not only throughout the *NSW School Curriculum*, but also in conjunction with sporting and community organisations.

## PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION: SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITIES TO TACKLE THE CAUSES OF VIOLENCE (continued)

16. Develop and invest in a NSW specific program based on the principles of Victoria's Gender and Disability Workforce Development Program, specifically education programs for women with disability about the nature of violence.
17. Provide ongoing training to police, prosecutors, judicial officers, court staff, legal practitioners and other justice workers on risk assessment and management, the nature and dynamics of sexual assault and domestic and family violence and victims' experiences.

## RESPONDING TO SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE: A WELL RESOURCED, SUSTAINABLE SERVICE AND SUPPORT SYSTEM

18. At a minimum, invest a further \$100 million over the next 3 years.
19.
  - a) Urgently expand funding for accessible, specialist, targeted, culturally safe, client-centered services that meet the health, housing, justice and legal needs of all women, children, young people and high risk communities including but not limited to; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, young women, older women, women with disabilities, CALD women, women living in regional, rural and remote areas, women in prison, women exiting prison and LGBTIQ people who have experienced sexual assault and/or domestic and family violence;
  - b) Invest in the statewide roll out of *Safer Pathways* (a component of *It Stops Here*) with adequate resourcing of all service providers to provide immediate and long-term, trauma-specialist support to women and children experiencing domestic and family violence
  - c) Increase protections and support for women in violent relationships whose private tenancies or mortgages are compromised. Invest in an expansion of the Staying Home Leaving Violence program to ensure coverage across NSW. Adopt the Shelter NSW target; "within 10 years making 100,000 more rental properties available to low income household at affordable rents".
  - d) Increase appropriate support options for LGBTIQ people impacted by sexual assault and/or domestic and family violence
  - e) Increase legal assistance funding, including for specialist women's legal services and other legal services that provide gender and culturally safe trauma-specialist sexual assault and domestic and family violence expertise.
20. All agencies working with women and children who are impacted by sexual assault and/or domestic and family violence work in trauma-specialist, culturally safe, client-centred and feminist framework.
21. The NSW Domestic Violence Death Review Team must meet and publicly report regularly. Where recommendations of the Team are not implemented, the NSW Government give reasons for not doing so. The recommendations should inform reforms in NSW intersecting with sexual assault and domestic and family violence including child protection.
22. Exploration of a model and strategy for the establishment of specialist Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Courts in NSW.
23. All courts to have safe, private and confidential waiting spaces for victims of violence.
24. Improve strategies and training with government and NGO agencies on identification of the primary aggressor and primary victim and improve data collection about women defendants to AVOs.
25. Improve the NSW Victims' Rights and Support Scheme.
26. Establish at every Local Area Command teams of highly specialised police officers, counselors and support workers that work collaboratively when responding to adult victims of sexual assault and domestic and family violence.
27. Conduct research into the effectiveness of trauma-specialist psychosocial interventions for women who experience violence. Utilise this research to inform subsequent policy and practice.



Between October 2013 and September 2014 there were

**30** female victims of Domestic Violence related homicide

**21934** female victims of Domestic Violence related assault

**4133** female victims of Sexual Assault

**4963** female victims of Indecent Assault

BOCSAR, 2015



Domestic and family violence costs the NSW economy

**\$4.5 billion** per annum



Women NSW 2014



“Between 2007 and 2012, **768** children known to the NSW Department of Family and Community Services died. Domestic violence was previously reported in **466** (61%) of these children’s families.”

Family and Community Services, Child Deaths 2012 Annual Report



“Domestic violence is recognised as the single greatest preventable cause of death, ill health and disability for women aged under 45 in Australia.”

NSW Auditor General's Report, Responding to domestic and family violence, 2011

The NSW Government must urgently commit to a thorough, coordinated and sustained investment in evidence-based responses across the fields of prevention and early intervention, legal and criminal justice and support sectors. Action is required across our state to provide nuanced, tailored, specialised responses to the increase in reports of sexual, domestic and family violence and to address the alarming number of domestic violence-related deaths.

*"Family violence happens to everybody. No matter how nice your house is, how intelligent you are. It can happen to anyone, and everyone"*

Rosie Batty, 2014

There are multiple government initiatives and reforms in various stages of implementation aimed at reducing prevalence, and provide tailored, client-centred approaches to sexual, domestic and family violence but these have largely been developed in isolation and with varying degrees of input from NGO's. Reforms to child protection, justice and policing the specialist homelessness service sector and victim support must be aligned if we are to close substantial gaps between government and non-government responses identified in the 2011 NSW Auditor General's report.

The 2012 NSW Parliament's cross-partisan inquiry into domestic violence trends and issues<sup>3</sup>, made 89 recommendations to improve responses in our state, some of which have been addressed in the NSW Government's 2014 *It Stops Here* domestic and family violence strategy. A substantial number are yet to be implemented. *It Stops Here* aims to identify and respond to women and children who are most at risk and to provide a multi-agency response. In two launch sites in Orange and Waverley, there are now clearer support pathways for the referral of victim-survivors.

Whilst the spirit of many of the reforms are welcomed, they don't do enough to address significant gaps and deficits in resourcing, service provision, prevention and early identification. Victims still have to navigate heavily silo-ed parts of the system and access services across various agencies and may encounter services with limited understanding of complex trauma, appropriate responses to diversity and the lived impacts of sexual, domestic and family violence.

To make a change in NSW, sexual, domestic and family violence requires the leadership of the Premier. The 2012 Parliamentary Inquiry concluded "...that leadership to address domestic violence must be driven from the highest levels to bring about the change that is so necessary. This policy area deserves no less than the leadership of the Premier." A cross-departmental approach must be driven by our State's leader and implemented by a dedicated Minister to drive a whole of government approach that the issue that is so urgently required.

Safety of victims and their children is paramount; however it is key that perpetrators of violence are held accountable. A strong, well-resourced, trauma-specialist justice response is required. Perpetrator accountability requires action from all system agencies to be able to identify and intervene effectively, to manage perpetrator risk and refer to a Men's Behaviour Change Program that meets the NSW standards.

Perpetrator accountability requires all state agencies and all services providing programs for perpetrators of violence' to have a nuanced understanding of sexual, domestic and family violence. Similarly, child protection workers and policy responses must have an embedded understanding of the intersections between sexual, domestic and family violence and the impacts on families and communities, particularly mothers who may fear being further victimised by a system that blames them for not leaving.

The NSW Government has begun to scrutinise a range of initiatives and programs aimed at stopping violence from occurring in the first place. It is crucial that long term investment in evidence-based prevention strategies that put the safety of women and children at the center is made, so that the value of these programs are proven.<sup>4</sup>

There are a number of high-risk groups that experience significant barriers to accessing support. Particular emphasis on resourcing programs and services that regional, rural and remote areas and community-driven initiatives that address local need. The impacts of disadvantage, poverty and intergenerational violence, which are evident in many of our communities must be urgently addressed but with a commitment to long-term resourcing. Aboriginal communities in NSW requires a long-term commitment and resourcing of effective and culturally appropriate family violence strategies.

In addition, to address fully the consequences of violence against women and children and the needs of diverse women, children, and communities impacted by sexual, domestic and family violence, the NSW Government requires a comprehensive, well-resourced, cross-sectoral response building significantly upon the reforms already underway.

### Key Recommendations:

1. The NSW Premier drives a strong, sustained, coordinated, prevention message that speaks to the diversity of communities affected by sexual assault and domestic and family violence.
2. The appointment of a NSW Government Minister for the Prevention of Sexual Assault and Domestic and Family violence.
3. Develop a NSW framework for responding to and preventing sexual assault.
4. Women NSW to be relocated to the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, driving a whole-of-government approach to prevention and responses.
5. Embedded, systematic opportunities for sexual assault and domestic and family violence peak organisations to work meaningfully with government to co-design reforms. Convene a biannual forum with community leaders and non-government partners to discuss current issues relating to sexual assault and domestic and family violence and how they can be addressed.
6. The Premier, alongside political and community leaders, to demonstrate leadership and commitment by filming messages unequivocally condemning violence against a diverse range of women and children and making a clear public statement that violence against women and children is serious, a crime, a violation of human rights and will not be tolerated in NSW.
7. The NSW Domestic and Family Violence Council to be chaired by the Premier and have accountability, transparency and a commitment to meaningful and ongoing engagement with civil society.
8. The Premier acknowledges the NSW Government's respect for NGOs' gendered expertise in specialised community service provision.
9. Implementation of a long-term cross-departmental Aboriginal Family Violence Strategy driven by Aboriginal communities. The Family Violence Strategy must intersect with a strong, well-resourced Aboriginal Family Violence Network to develop consistent and evidence-based best practice initiatives.

### Key Issues:

- Communicating the causes of violence against women and children and the barriers to gender equality requires tailored messages appropriate to the audience. Political, community, faith, and sporting leadership are uniquely placed to raise the profile of violence against women and children as serious, prevalent, and preventable. Leaders can initiate wide-ranging conversations on the causes and assist communities to understand the role we all have in addressing the problem and that we can all *'stop violence before it starts'*.
- The current evidence base demonstrates that for major reforms to be successful they need to be adequately funded and have a clearly articulated, transparent, independent and ongoing process and outcomes evaluation, as well as timely reporting. These need to be considered not just during policy and procedure development, but also throughout implementation.
- In the context of *'One FaCS'* internal reform process sexual assault and domestic and family violence must be prioritised as key areas for strong coordinated policy development particularly in relation to child protection and Out of Home Care.
- The NSW Domestic Violence Death Review Committee met infrequently in 2014. This audit and review process is vital in highlighting systemic contributors to domestic homicides. To further develop policy and practice in NSW without being informed by timely reviews is a serious and significant failing.
- There has been an increased focus on violent crime in the last 12 months. The 2014 Minister's Violent Domestic Crimes Taskforce, explored key themes including the impacts of violence, strategies to reduce recidivism and enhanced systems to monitor ADVO's. This taskforce has now concluded and all of the findings from the community roundtables need to be respectfully integrated into a whole of Government approach.
- Rosie Batty, Australian domestic violence campaigner, and the 2015 Australian of the Year, has shown strength beyond comprehension in her advocacy for victims of domestic and family violence. Following the horrendous murder of her son Luke, Rosie has been instrumental in the subsequent instigation of a Royal Commission into family violence and continues to campaign for fixing the failures of government processes relating to the protection of women and children.



# HIGH LEVEL LEADERSHIP

A Proactive Cross Government & Community Stance

**[On the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence]  
...“It’s really great when you see Governments following through with their promises in such a strong manner of leadership, It sends a very clear message that the extent of the problem is now recognised and no more Band-Aid fixes and wasted short-term campaigns. This needs strong, intense investigation and a long-term strategy”**

**Rosie Batty, 2015, ABC Radio**



**National plans enable all the sectors involved to coordinate and systematise their activity, evaluating and building on initiatives so that approaches remain adaptive and responsive for years to come.**

United Nations General Assembly resolutions, 2013



**“ The profile and political strength of the lead office-bearer has a significant impact on her/his potential to influence the often substantial legislative or policy changes required to prevent and respond to violence against women.**

**”**

United Nations 2013



**The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (2013) Agreed Conclusions: Eliminating and preventing violence against women and girls shows that few countries worldwide have undertaken the multi-sectoral and sustained approaches deemed necessary for effective prevention.**

United Nations 2013



### Key Recommendations:

10. Adoption of a coordinated, long-term NSW Prevention Plan including strategies that respond to diverse communities affected by sexual assault and domestic and family violence.
11. Build on the research and good practice identified through the Women NSW-commissioned Prevention studies. Make State and Federal prevention programs and research a priority including a commitment to ANROWS and Our Watch for the lifespan of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*.
12. Maximise interagency and intersectoral collaboration and ensure relevant strategic planning around program funding for Men and Boys' Violence Prevention, including NGO representation.
13. Review the NSW Men's Behaviour Change minimum standards, include accreditation and regular auditing for MBCPs and expand to included standards for one on one behaviour change counseling and programs. Review annually, and adapt as new research emerges. Accredited MBCPs to be funded adequately to ensure NGOs are able to deliver best practice and implement latest research recommendations.
14. Accredited Men's Behaviour Change Programs should be accessible through *Safer Pathways* (a component of the *It Stops Here* reforms)
15. Embed evidence-based respectful relationship education that focuses on promoting gender equality and violence prevention. Evaluated respectful relationship education needs to target all sections of community, not only throughout the *NSW School Curriculum*, but also in conjunction with sporting and community organisations.
16. Develop and invest in a NSW specific program based on the principles of Victoria's Gender and Disability Workforce Development Program, specifically education programs for women with disability about the nature of violence.
17. Provide ongoing training to police, prosecutors, judicial officers, court staff, legal practitioners and other justice workers on risk assessment and management, the nature and dynamics of sexual assault and domestic and family violence and victims' experiences.

### Key Issues:

- There is a growing evidence base on the underlying causes of violence against women and children. These include the attitudes, behaviours, practices and systems that may promote, justify, excuse or condone it.<sup>13</sup>
- The *Nation Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children* isn't adequately resourced. While acknowledging some important work underway, the NSW jurisdictional response to the *National Plan* cannot deal effectively with high-risk communities without additional funding.
- The *National Plan* details initiatives and strategies over a 12-year period. However, Our Watch and ANROWS are currently only funded until 2016. To seriously reduce the impact and prevalence of sexual assault and domestic and family violence we need to support longer-term appropriate investment at a State and Federal level.
- *It Stops Here* details prevention strategies which build upon the *National Plan* initiatives. As yet there had been no long-term commitment to funding primary prevention initiatives and the inclusion of respectful relationship education within the school system. Investment in primary prevention in NSW is long overdue.
- \$9 million has been allocated for phase one of the *It Stops Here* reforms. Adequate prevention, best practice responses and early intervention measures require significantly more investment by the NSW Government. An investment of at least \$100 million is required.
- Short-term funded projects cannot address highly complex issues. Programs and initiatives are far too often here one year and gone the next. This impacts on an organisation's ability to build relationships of trust in the community and this diminishes the impact of this crucial work.
- The most effective way of tackling homelessness is to intervene as early as we can, to prevent people becoming homeless in the first place or to support them so their likelihood of becoming homeless again is significantly reduced. Homelessness prevention is dependent on access to affordable housing and tackling underlying poverty, both of which disproportionately impact upon women. Women and LGBTIQ people experiencing domestic and family violence are at a much higher risk of becoming homeless and far less likely to be financially independent.

“Children who grow up in families where there is violence may suffer a range of behavioural and emotional disturbances. These can also be associated with perpetrating or experiencing violence later in life.”

World Health Organisation, 2014



“Women from immigrant and refugee backgrounds are more likely to be murdered as a result of domestic and family violence and are less likely to receive appropriate assistance when they try to leave a violent relationship.”

Dimopoulos and Assafiri, 2004



“Regarding primary prevention, *“there is some evidence from high-income countries that school-based programmes to prevent violence within dating relationships have shown effectiveness.”*”

World Health Organisation, 2014



“Since 1995 there has been a decrease in understanding that women are at greater risk of sexual assault by a person they know than by a stranger, despite evidence that a woman is three times more likely to be sexually assaulted by someone she knows.”

ABS, 2013



**Women with disabilities, living in rural or remote areas, or are from Aboriginal, migrant or refugee backgrounds are at much greater risk of male violence.**

VicHealth, 2011

**A BLUEPRINT TO END SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IN NSW**

**Key Recommendations:**

18. At a minimum, invest a further \$100 million over the next 3 years.
19. a) Urgently expand funding for accessible, specialist, targeted, culturally safe, client-centered services that meet the health, housing, justice and legal needs of all women, children, young people and high risk communities including but not limited to; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, young women, older women, women with disabilities, CALD women, women living in regional, rural and remote areas, women in prison, women exiting prison and LGBTIQ people who have experienced sexual assault and/or domestic and family violence;  
b) Invest in the statewide roll out of Safer Pathways (a component of *It Stops Here*) with adequate resourcing of all service providers to provide immediate and long-term, trauma-specialist support to women and children experiencing domestic and family violence  
c) Increase protections and support for women in violent relationships whose private tenancies or mortgages are compromised. Invest in an expansion of the Staying Home Leaving Violence program to ensure coverage across NSW. Adopt the Shelter NSW target; “within 10 years making 100,000 more rental properties available to low income household at affordable rents”.  
d) Increase appropriate support options for LGBTIQ people impacted by sexual assault and/or domestic and family violence  
e) Increase legal assistance funding, including for specialist women’s legal services and other legal services that provide gender and culturally safe trauma-specialist sexual assault and domestic and family violence expertise.
20. All agencies working with women and children who are impacted by sexual assault and/or domestic and family violence work in trauma-specialist, culturally safe, client-centred and feminist framework.
21. The NSW Domestic Violence Death Review Team must meet and publicly report regularly. Where recommendations of the Team are not implemented, the NSW Government give reasons for not doing so. The recommendations should inform reforms in NSW intersecting with sexual assault and domestic and family violence including child protection.
22. Exploration of a model and strategy for the establishment of specialist Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Courts in NSW.
23. All courts to have safe, private and confidential waiting spaces for victims of violence.
24. Improve strategies and training with government and NGO agencies on identification of the primary aggressor and primary victim and improve data collection about women defendants to AVOs.
25. Improve the NSW Victims’ Rights and Support Scheme.
26. Establish at every Local Area Command teams of highly specialised police officers, counselors and support workers that work collaboratively when responding to adult victims of sexual assault and domestic and family violence.
27. Conduct research into the effectiveness of trauma-specialist psychosocial interventions for women who experience violence. Utilise this research to inform subsequent policy and practice.

**Key issues:**

- People who have experienced sexual assault and/or domestic and family violence require intensive support and access to an array of culturally-safe, client-centred, specialist women’s services to help them rebuild their lives and to become independent. Appropriate and timely support allows services to focus on their individual needs.
- Specialist DFV housing providers enable the promotion of access to appropriate support that empowers women and enables them to achieve safety, stability and economic and social wellbeing.
- LGBTIQI people who have experienced sexual assault and/or domestic and family violence can be extremely vulnerable when accessing emergency accommodation due to fears or experiences of homophobia/transphobia and discrimination.
- AVOs are not just a way of increasing safety but a step toward holding perpetrators of domestic and family violence accountable for their actions. Stopping the ongoing perpetration of violence is the only long-term solution to keeping women and children safe. *It Stops Here* and the *NSW DV Justice Strategy* are steps toward change.

**Key issues (continued):**

- While potential loss of liberty is an important reason to adequately and sustainably fund criminal law matters, loss of liberty and life through domestic violence highlights the need for additional and separate funding for family and civil law matters as recommended by the Productivity Commission.
- Specialist women's legal services, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's legal services, are vital in empowering and supporting women to exercise their legal rights. They have a thorough understanding of the nature and dynamics of sexual assault and domestic and family violence and are able to recognise intersecting and compounding forms of disadvantage. To promote agency it is also important that women have a choice of legal assistance service providers.
- Specialist knowledge of the dynamics and nature of sexual assault and domestic and family violence is required to deliver a consistent and safe justice system.
- With recent court closures, victims of sexual assault and/or domestic and family violence now have to on average travel much further to attend courts. Not all courts have a dedicated safe waiting space for victims so women and children are at risk of coming into contact with the perpetrator.
- Women continue to be incorrectly identified as the primary aggressor and so are forced to defend an AVO often related to a single incident despite there being a history of domestic, family and/or sexual violence where the woman has been the victim. The woman may also be defending an AVO despite the other party having no fear for his safety and the woman fearing for her safety or the safety of her children. Where the other party is injured, injuries could be indicative of self-defense, such as scratching or biting the arm or leg
- Victims of violence, particularly victims of sexual assault and domestic and family violence, receive significantly less financial assistance under the new Victims Support Scheme and due to strict documentary evidentiary requirements, including a report to a government agency or NSW Police, may not be eligible for recognition payments. The NSW Government must reconsider the need for legal assistance and legal representation supporting victims throughout this process and for this work to be paid. Victims of sexual assault and domestic and family violence must be prioritised in new legal assistance services funding arrangements.
- Violence against women not only impacts the women themselves but also has life-long lasting effects on their children. Growing up in an environment where you are exposed to sexual assault and domestic and family violence can profoundly impact a person's capacity for healthy relationships, emotional wellbeing, engagement with work, education and community and is also closely linked to intergenerational cycles of violence.
- Adequate funding, training and support for culturally-safe, trauma-specialist, accessible services and available for all victims of sexual assault and domestic and family violence are essential. This is of particular importance where women remain in a relationship with the perpetrator (noting the complex and varied reasons for doing so) or are in the process of leaving a relationship, which can take many attempts over an extended period of time.
- Accountability across government departments is splintered and it is very difficult with limited funding to proactively respond to increasing incidents of sexual assault and domestic and family violence. Departments have different definitions, jurisdictions and ways of working with women, children and communities affected by sexual, domestic and family violence – Health, Education, Family and Community Services, Police, Attorney- General responses must to be better coordinated and share good practice to prevent and respond effectively to the problem.
- *It Stops Here* represents a new approach to domestic and family violence. In Orange and Waverley agencies are already working together to ensure domestic violence victims don't have to repeat their story. The numbers of women at serious threat referred to Safety Action Meetings are higher than expected. There needs to be adequate resourcing of the Local Coordination Point to ensure that all victims are supported.
- As *Safer Pathways* is rolled out across the state there needs to be an corresponding investment in specialised sexual assault and domestic and family violence services (particularly in rural and remote areas) to which Local Coordination Point will be able to make warm referrals to. The success of the new service delivery model depends on women and children receiving meaningful support from all in the service network.

Since the NSW DV reforms were launched in September 2014, until 20th February 2015 the new Orange Local Coordination Point hosted by Central West WDVCS has received 694 referrals and the Waverley Local Coordination Point hosted by Sydney WDVCS has received 1205 referrals. A total of 453 women have so far been identified as “at serious threat”.

WDVCAS, 2015

It is widely acknowledged that only portion of domestic violence incidents are ever reported. In 2013 there were 144,142 COPS events where NSW Police responded to a report identified as domestic violence related.

NSW Police, 2013

Of women that have experienced violence from an ex-partner 58% had never contacted the police.

ABS, 2012

**58%**

62% of the women who had experienced physical assault by a male perpetrator, the most recent incident was in their home.

ABS, 2012

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are more likely to become homeless after a sexual assault; leaving their homes to stay with extended family members contributes to overcrowding and puts them and their children at risk of further victimisation.

Australian Department of Social Services, 2009

Only one third of all interpersonal violence is reported to police.

ABS, 2012



“Young people that identify as LGBTIQ can be particularly at risk of DFV from family members due to their sexuality and/or gender identity, and this contributes directly to youth homelessness.”

Donovan and Hester, 2008

**In 2013/14,**

WDVCASs assisted 11,125 clients to obtain final ADVO's (as opposed to provisional ADVO's) WDVCASs made 73,433 client referrals to support services.

WDVCAS, 2015

**“Domestic and family violence accounts for 13 per cent of listed court matters across the State”** **13%**

NSW Auditor-General's Report, 2011

**“The overrepresentation of Indigenous Australians as both victims and offenders of domestic assault has not changed over the last decade. The rate of recorded domestic assault for Indigenous women is more than six times higher than for non-Indigenous women.”**

BOCSAR, 2011

**The 2012 ABS Personal Safety Study found that of the women who had experienced domestic family violence, 61% had children in their care when the violence occurred, including 48% who stated the children had seen and heard the violence.**

LaTrobe University, 2006

**“More than one-third of women identifying as lesbian, bisexual, transgender or intersex have been in a relationship where their partner abused them.”**

World Health Organisation, 2014

**Risk factors for being a victim of intimate partner and sexual violence include low education, witnessing violence between parents, exposure to abuse during childhood and attitudes accepting violence and gender inequality.**

NSW Police Force, 2011

**40%**

**Domestic and family violence assaults represent around 40 per cent of all assaults reported to Police.**

**“Over two-thirds of WLSNSW women clients defending AVOs reported that they were the victim of violence in their relationships. Less than 40% of these clients had a final AVO made against them when the matter came before the court.”**

Women's Legal Services NSW 2014

**A BLUEPRINT TO END SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IN NSW**

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