

COAG Advisory panel on Reducing Violence against women  
and their children  
Final report

COAG Advisory Panel on  
Reducing Violence against  
Women and their Children

FINAL REPORT

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[www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au)

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[kidshelpline.com.au](http://kidshelpline.com.au)

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[www.mensline.org.au](http://www.mensline.org.au)

**If you are scared now or in immediate danger, call 000.**

#### COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children – Final Report

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978-1-925238-34-1	COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children – Final Report (Hardcopy)
978-1-925238-35-8	COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children – Final Report (PDF)
978-1-925238-36-5	COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children – Final Report (HTML)

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Dear COAG members,

I present to you the Final Report of the COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children (the Advisory Panel).

Over the last 10 months, the Advisory Panel has engaged extensively with stakeholders and experts both domestically and internationally in the development of this report. We have heard many accounts of the destructive impact of violence against women and their children in Australia. We have also heard of the significant efforts and good work of jurisdictions, service providers and local communities to address violence against women and their children.

Despite these efforts, rates of violence remain unacceptably high. Negative gender-based attitudes continue unchallenged. We need to do more to keep women and their children safe. Collective, long-term action is needed.

In this report, the Advisory Panel recommends a new approach to achieve lasting change. Responses must focus on empowering women and their children. Women must have choice. Perpetrators of violence against women must be held to account and supported to change. The recommendations we have put forward are innovative, practical and deliverable, and are founded on a strong evidence base. I believe that through the implementation of our recommended approach, women and children in Australia will be safer.

This report would not have been possible without input from community representatives, local organisations, experts and service providers. I thank those people for their very valuable contributions. We are also grateful for the advice we have received from various Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies.

Our advice has been designed to inform the Third Action Plan of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*. The information contained in this report will help inform consultations on the Third Action Plan and the work of governments. To support this, I encourage COAG to release the report publicly.

It has been a privilege to work with my fellow Advisory Panel members, all of whom have brought valuable and varied perspectives and expertise to this important work. I thank them for their hard work, extensive contributions and advice.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the support provided to the Advisory Panel through the secretariat in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Yours sincerely,

Ken D Lay APM

Chair

## COAG ADVISORY PANEL ON REDUCING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN

The members of the Advisory Panel are pleased to provide the following report to the Council of Australian Governments



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**Mr Ken D Lay APM**

Former Chief Commissioner of Victoria  
Police



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**Ms Heather Nancarrow**

CEO, Australia's National Research  
Organisation for Women's Safety



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**Ms Rosie Batty**

Founder of Luke Batty Foundation,  
2015 Australian of the Year



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**Ms Maria Hagias**

Executive Director, Central Domestic  
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**Mr Darren Hine APM**

Commissioner of Police, Tasmania



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**Dr Victoria Hovane**

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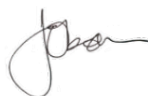
CEO, NSW Council of Social Service



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**Mr Edward Mosby**

Principal Psychologist, Wakai Waian Healing



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**Ms Julie Oberin**

Chair, WESNET (Women's Services  
Network) and AWAVA (Australian Women  
Against Violence Alliance)



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**The Hon Bess Price MLA**

Minister for Local Government and  
Community Services, Housing, Women's  
Policy, Men's Policy, Parks and Wildlife and  
Statehood (NT)



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**Ms Sue Salthouse**

Convenor, Women With Disabilities ACT  
and Director, Didactic Enterprises

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### **Violence against women is disturbingly common in Australia**

One in three Australian women has experienced physical violence, and almost one in five has experienced sexual violence. One in four Australian women has experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of a current or former male partner. However, the true scale of the problem is likely much greater: only a small proportion of women ever reports violence, and many instances of violence go unreported.

### **Violence is varied, insidious and disempowers women**

Violence against women is not only physical: it can include sexual, economic, psychological, verbal or emotional abuse, as well as neglect, property damage, harassment, stalking, or coercive control. All types of violence against women are insidious because they lead to ongoing fear and trauma, and loss of freedom and choice. Violence against women and their children frequently occurs in familiar everyday environments, such as the home, in the workplace, at school and in the local community, with mobile technologies now making it possible for perpetrators to encroach on every aspect of a victim's life.

### **Children are also victims of violence against women**

Around three in four women who cared for children during a previous violent relationship report that those children saw or heard violence. Children who witness violence experience similar trauma and negative outcomes as children who are physically abused. However, children are not always treated as victims in their own right.

### **Violence affects women from all walks of life**

Violence against women is pervasive – it crosses geographic, economic and social boundaries. Young women, women with a lower socioeconomic position, women with disabilities or long-term health conditions, and women living in regional, rural and remote areas are more likely to experience partner violence. Women who are employed and women with post-school qualifications are also at risk.

### **Some women are at greater risk of violence or face greater barriers in seeking help**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised from partner assaults than the general female population. Women with disabilities are also more likely to experience violence than women without a disability. Women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds may face violence as well as other challenges, such as language barriers and social isolation. Women who live in regional, rural or remote areas are often a long way from services and face barriers to escaping violence and seeking support. Women who experience other types of disadvantage and stigma are also at higher risk of violence or can experience difficulties accessing support.

### **Too often we justify and minimize violence against women**

Very few Australians would explicitly condone violence against women. However, it is shamefully common for Australians to justify or minimise it. As a society, we excuse violence against women whenever we seek to justify the actions of perpetrators. Advice such as ‘don’t wear short skirts,’ ‘don’t drink alcohol’ and ‘don’t provoke men’ all implicitly assign responsibility for safety to the victim and justify or minimise the perpetrator’s behaviour. These attitudes begin at a very young age. Australians as young as five years old typically minimise boys’ behaviour and blame girls for bringing violence upon themselves. Underlying these harmful attitudes is a fundamental lack of gender equality in Australia.

### **A new mindset is needed**

It is time to stop placing the burden on women and minimising the behaviour of men who perpetrate violence. A new approach is required that begins by recognising that victims will not be safe if the behaviour and attitudes of perpetrators are not addressed. It should empower women and their children and challenge pervasive community attitudes that reinforce gender inequality. Every woman has the right to feel safe, and so do her children.

### **The Advisory Panel recommends six areas for action to keep women and their children safe**

In each of the six areas, it is vital that action is accompanied by commitment to continuous improvement through ongoing research, monitoring and evaluation, and appropriate resourcing. All six areas for action are of equal priority and significance, and should be addressed simultaneously. This is especially important given that they all intersect and interact closely with each other.

#### **Action Area 1: National leadership is needed to challenge gender inequality and transform community attitudes**

The Advisory Panel recommends addressing the root causes of violence against women: gender inequality and gender biases. Making these long-term changes is vital to laying the foundations for change across all other Action Areas. The Advisory Panel recommends that governments and the corporate sector demonstrate national leadership by building a culture that challenges gender inequality and social norms that support violence against women and their children.

#### **Action Area 2: Women who experience violence should be empowered to make informed choices**

The safety of victims must be paramount. The Advisory Panel recommends that responses should provide women with greater choice, information and control in decision making. Women should be supported to remain safe in the family home, if they choose to do so, and all interventions should ensure that the risk posed by the perpetrator is clearly understood and addressed.

### **Action Area 3: Children and young people should also be recognised as victims of violence against women**

Keeping children safe requires a better understanding of the impacts of violence on them and measures beyond just keeping their mother safe. The Advisory Panel recommends that early intervention and primary prevention should be strengthened to ensure harm is minimised. Research should also be carried out to improve trauma-informed responses to protect children and support them to build resilience, heal and rebuild relationships. Research, and the design and delivery of services specifically for children and young people, should actively involve children and young people.

### **Action Area 4: Perpetrators should be held to account for their actions and supported to change**

Women and their children can only be kept safe if perpetrators change their actions. To date, perpetrators have not been adequately held to account for their behaviours and attitudes and they have limited access to interventions that can change their future actions. The Advisory Panel recommends building a world-class perpetrator intervention system that focuses on perpetrator programmes, and establishing clear pathways to them, and to other support services, for men who are at risk of, or who are, perpetrating violence. Those who do perpetrate violence must face their actions and address them.

### **Action Area 5: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities require trauma-informed responses to violence**

Family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can be especially complex, and some different approaches are needed. The Advisory Panel notes that a history of trauma underlies violence in many communities and recommends developing a trauma-informed conceptual framework for better understanding violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children. It also recommends building an appropriately qualified workforce and improving evaluation of programmes to build the evidence base. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be involved in shaping and delivering solutions for their communities.

### **Action Area 6: Integrated responses are needed to keep women and their children safe**

Responses to violence involve interaction between many different agencies and service providers. The Advisory Panel recommends addressing a range of barriers to enable better collaboration and integration between all agencies and services involved in responding to violence against women and their children, both at the national level and within specific sectors. Integration is crucial in order to better assess risk, reduce fragmentation and duplication, improve efficiency and achieve better outcomes for women and their children.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Action Area 1: National leadership is needed to challenge gender inequality and transform community attitudes

#### RECOMMENDATION 1.1

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should demonstrate national leadership through a shared commitment to building a culture that challenges gender inequality and social norms that support violence against women.

Governments should:

- introduce targets for 50 per cent female representation, including all diversity types, on government boards and in senior leadership positions within the public service
- develop and implement strategies to achieve pay equity, adopt gender-sensitive recruitment practices and introduce gender equality, gender bias and diversity training across the public service
- report on leadership and employment outcomes by gender, including remuneration, in annual reports
- prioritise actions to further improve women's workforce participation and economic security.

#### RECOMMENDATION 1.2

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should work with corporate Australia to establish a national corporate alliance to take collective action to address gender inequality and violence against women and their children.

This alliance should support businesses of all sizes to:

- promote culture change relating to gender equality and diversity awareness among staff, suppliers, customers and the community
- identify and assist victims of violence
- eliminate violence-supportive attitudes and respond to men who perpetrate violence
- safeguard their products and services from being used to facilitate violence
- consider the feasibility of co-investment to support the work of the alliance.

### RECOMMENDATION 1.3

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should commit to a long-term national primary prevention strategy, drawing on the shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia.

As a priority, governments should:

- work with Our Watch to develop a coordinated, consistent national primary prevention strategy
- incorporate ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure activities under the strategy continue to be relevant and effective
- ensure communication developed as a part of the strategy is adapted to reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people with disabilities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, as well as people living in metropolitan, regional, rural or remote areas
- consider opportunities to partner with the corporate and community sectors to deliver primary prevention and communication activities.

### RECOMMENDATION 1.4

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should work with education institutions and professional bodies to ensure that professionals likely to come into contact with victims and perpetrators of violence can identify and respond to violence against women and their children, and understand the impacts of gender and social inequality.

Training should be delivered through:

- higher education institutions that train people likely to have professional contact with victims, their children and perpetrators (including, but not limited to, teachers, nurses, counsellors, childcare workers, social workers, lawyers, immigration staff and general practitioners)
- professional and continuing education bodies for people who have regular contact with victims and perpetrators (including, but not limited to, judges, magistrates, parole boards, family consultants and police). Where possible, regular training should be a mandatory part of ongoing accreditation for all professionals who work on cases related to violence against women and their children.

## Action Area 2: Women who experience violence should be empowered to make informed choices

### RECOMMENDATION 2.1

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should ensure that the preferred response to violence against women and their children is to keep victims safe at home, if they choose to remain in their home and if it is safe to do so. This should be supported by removal of the perpetrator, and through appropriate policy and legislative settings.

Governments should:

- expand 'safe at home' models of intervening in violence against women as the preferred model of support and option for women
- develop a nationally consistent approach to tenancy legislation through the introduction and/or harmonisation of legislation that assists women who choose to remain in their homes and removes perpetrators
- provide financial assistance to allow women experiencing violence to maintain existing housing, irrespective of the nature of the victim's tenancy arrangements (for example, owner-occupier, private renter or public renter)
- ensure that additional resources and support are provided to women with disabilities as required
- strengthen accommodation services for women who need to leave their home either temporarily or permanently.

### RECOMMENDATION 2.2

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should ensure that the opportunities presented by the use of technology are widely understood, and risks mitigated where necessary.

Governments should:

- provide support to police, legal services and frontline services to deliver technology safety advice to women at risk of violence, even if the woman has not formally reported technology-facilitated violence or abuse
- establish a dedicated national point of contact for technical assistance and advice about dealing with technology-facilitated violence
- develop and support training for victims and frontline staff on the use of technology for gathering evidence about a perpetrator's actions
- support forums on technology safety that bring together relevant stakeholders to discuss solutions to emerging problems.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.3**

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should continue to monitor, implement or expand trials of technology to support women who experience violence.

Specific trials should:

- evaluate and further develop the range of accessible online support services by identifying which online services for women work well and expanding them across jurisdictions
- implement remote video access to all courts that deal with cases of violence against women and their children. This should ensure that women do not have to appear face-to-face with, or in close proximity to, the perpetrator if they do not wish to do so.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.4**

The Commonwealth should ensure that migration rules and eligibility requirements for support services do not disempower victims of violence or discourage them from leaving violent relationships.

The Commonwealth should:

- ensure that there are appropriate visa pathways to assist victims of family violence
- revise eligibility requirements to enable more victims of violence to access support services, including income support
- collaborate with state and territory governments and service providers to ensure that temporary residents who are victims of violence can easily access available support services.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.5**

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should implement actions to empower women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and support their communities to challenge gender inequality and respond to violence against women and their children.

Governments should:

- ensure culturally appropriate and high-quality interpreting and translating services are adequately resourced in all programmes or services that involve victims of violence, including where governments engage external service providers
- provide communities with consistent, accessible and culturally appropriate information on violence against women and their children, and on the range of support services available to them
- engage with men and community leaders and support them to establish a community consensus against violence, promote healthy relationships and encourage violent men to change their behaviour
- foster women's and young people's leadership and empower them to challenge violence-supportive attitudes and values.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.6**

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should prioritise research aimed at improving responses and services for women with disabilities who experience violence in all settings.

Governments should:

- improve data collection on the forms of violence experienced by women with disabilities
- identify appropriate responses to violence against women with disabilities, including through participatory research.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.7**

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should support the development and implementation of national best practice standards for women with disabilities who experience violence.

Standards should:

- ensure accessible and appropriate facilities and services
- ensure accessible and appropriate information formats
- reflect the different forms of violence more likely to be experienced by women with disabilities and ensure that this information is included in staff training
- form the basis for ongoing government funding agreements and contracts with service providers
- support women's, disability and mainstream service providers to enable them to adopt these standards.

## Action Area 3: Children and young people should also be recognised as victims of violence against women

### RECOMMENDATION 3.1

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should, when collecting data and carrying out research on violence against women and their children, recognise that children and young people are victims of violence against women in their own right.

Governments should:

- ensure data collected on violence against women includes information on children and young people and their experiences as direct and indirect victims of violence; where appropriate, specific data on diverse groups of children and young people should be collected
- ensure the views and experiences of children and young people are taken into account in the scoping, design and evaluation of services and programmes, where appropriate.

### RECOMMENDATION 3.2

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should develop early intervention initiatives to improve identification of, and responses to, violence that affects children.

Governments should:

- prioritise the development, validation and implementation of perinatal domestic violence screening across all jurisdictions, building on the existing work of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
- work with children and young people to design services that can best support them to report violence, by building on successful initiatives from other areas as well as developing and piloting new ones
- support children and young people to report violence and access services, including through the use of innovative technologies.

### RECOMMENDATION 3.3

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should build on emerging research and best practice approaches to develop child-focused responses to support, and build resilience in, children and young people.

Governments should:

- identify and expand best practice programmes, and pilot new programmes, that strengthen children's resilience and promote healing from trauma, ensuring that they consider diverse groups of children and young people of all ages
- ensure that responses for children and young people are closely integrated with services for women and perpetrators
- continue to design, trial, evaluate and expand initiatives that focus on rebuilding the mother-child relationship and those that embed fathering in perpetrator programmes.

## Action Area 4: Perpetrators should be held to account for their actions and supported to change

### RECOMMENDATION 4.1

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should establish and support a national professional body for perpetrator programmes to build a skilled and sustainable workforce of practitioners, and to ensure programmes meet high standards.

This professional body should:

- develop and implement a workforce capability strategy (including training, mentoring, knowledge exchange and collaboration with other practitioners)
- design, trial and evaluate perpetrator programmes and modes of delivery, including online, and develop options for programmes specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, men with disabilities and those living in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas. This research should be carried out in collaboration with ANROWS, and in partnership with local communities where appropriate
- develop and implement national standards of practice for perpetrator programmes and service providers within two years, to apply in both community and corrections settings, and consistent with the National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions (NOSPI)
- ensure that national standards require perpetrator programme service providers to collaborate and exchange information with relevant services in a timely manner so that the safety of women and their children is prioritised, and to help identify other people at risk
- prepare a proposal for a national accreditation scheme for providers of perpetrator programmes, and a plan for transitioning the sector to the accreditation scheme.

## RECOMMENDATION 4.2

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should collaborate to improve pathways into perpetrator programmes for men who have perpetrated, or are at risk of perpetrating, violence against women and their children.

Governments should:

- strengthen general practitioner and health practitioner referral pathways to perpetrator programmes and other support services (among others, mental health or drug and alcohol support services)
- develop the capacity of men's referral services to provide outreach and ongoing contact with perpetrators with a view to referring them to relevant services (for example, health and accommodation services, financial services or perpetrator programmes)
- trial amendments to law enforcement protocols to ensure that, at the time of a police call-out, perpetrators are referred to an appropriate men's referral service for an initial assessment
- trial court referrals to mandate participation in, and completion of, perpetrator programmes
- ensure that pathways and options for entry into perpetrator programmes are promoted and accessible, including for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, men with disabilities, and people living in regional, rural and remote areas.

## RECOMMENDATION 4.3

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should ensure that perpetrators have clear pathways to services which address factors that escalate violence and/or which are designed for men who are violent towards women and their children.

Governments should:

- ensure perpetrators have access to alternative accommodation and receive appropriate support and case management from men's services, where appropriate
- create clear pathways between perpetrator programmes and health services, drug and alcohol services, financial advice and other support services.



**RECOMMENDATION 4.4**

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should introduce legislation that reinforces perpetrator accountability by removing uncertainty and explicitly making it illegal to use technology to distribute intimate material without consent.

Governments should:

- introduce and enforce strong and consistent penalties for adults who distribute intimate material without consent
- improve community understanding of the impacts and consequences of distributing intimate material.

## **Action Area 5: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities require trauma-informed responses to violence**

**RECOMMENDATION 5.1**

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should support the development of a trauma-informed conceptual framework for understanding family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The framework should:

- be developed in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- recognise the contributing impacts of colonisation, interruption of culture and kinship ties, intergenerational trauma, gender inequality and related social norms which perpetuate family violence
- be used by governments and service providers to design, implement and evaluate responses to family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

**RECOMMENDATION 5.2**

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should continue to build the evidence base on what works to address family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Governments should:

- work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to evaluate existing programmes, using rigorous quantitative and qualitative research methods; measures of success should be appropriate to the community in which a program is trialled
- work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to further expand programmes that demonstrate good outcomes, and design and implement innovative and flexible place-based responses to violence for specific groups.

**RECOMMENDATION 5.3**

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to deliver trauma-informed responses to family violence over the long term.

Governments should:

- ensure that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce delivering family violence responses is appropriately qualified and equipped to deliver trauma-informed strategies to reduce family violence
- support ongoing capacity building and professional development opportunities for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce that delivers family violence responses
- develop initiatives to build the long-term capacity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce that delivers family violence responses.

## **Action Area 6: Integrated responses are needed to keep women and their children safe**

**RECOMMENDATION 6.1**

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should support the development and use of a national common risk assessment framework for violence against women and their children.

This framework should:

- include nationally agreed principles, draw on existing best practice and specify nationally agreed core content
- inform risk assessment tools that are flexible and tailored to different jurisdictions and/or to different high-risk groups
- be applied accurately and consistently by professionals who should also receive regular, high-quality training
- ensure risks associated with all forms of violence against women and their children are appropriately accounted for (including, but not limited to, risks associated with technology, disability, finances or immigration status)
- incorporate guidance on appropriate referral pathways for victims of violence (both women and their children) and perpetrators
- be evaluated and updated at least every three years to ensure relevance and accuracy.

### RECOMMENDATION 6.2

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should examine current funding arrangements aimed at reducing violence against women and their children.

Governments should:

- ensure funding for supporting women and their children, and for perpetrator programmes, is adequate and responsive to changes in demand for services
- support the delivery of sustainable and effective services through the introduction of long-term contracts
- increase current funding for trialling, sharing and expanding new and innovative responses to violence against women and their children
- ensure funding for services that address violence against women and their children can be clearly differentiated from other areas of expenditure
- introduce contracting approaches that encourage collaboration and integration across the sector.

### RECOMMENDATION 6.3

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments, in partnership with the corporate sector and non-government organisations, should commit to a biennial national summit.

The national summit should:

- showcase and recognise Australian and international best practice in addressing violence against women and their children
- provide opportunities to identify, develop and share innovative and integrated approaches
- foster collaboration between experts, practitioners and professionals from a range of sectors, jurisdictions and interest areas.

### RECOMMENDATION 6.4

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should ensure information sharing across government and non-government sectors to support the safety of women and their children.

Governments should:

- review privacy legislation and reduce unnecessary barriers to information sharing
- promote organisational cultures and links that enable information sharing across organisations and jurisdictions
- improve staff understanding of privacy laws and protocols in order to reduce perceived barriers to information sharing.

### RECOMMENDATION 6.5

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should identify opportunities to expand models of co-location and integration that include courts, agencies and services. These models should enhance collaboration and information sharing with the aim of improving the safety of women and their children.

Governments should:

- develop and implement robust information-sharing protocols and opportunities for collaboration
- adopt, expand and/or improve models of co-location and integration of services and courts that have already been successful in some jurisdictions.

### RECOMMENDATION 6.6

All state and territory governments should ensure the corrective services system (including parole boards, corrections officers and community corrections officers) prioritises the safety of women and their children when managing perpetrators.

Governments should:

- establish formal partnerships between all parts of corrective services and other relevant services to ensure the safety of women and their children, especially when perpetrators are released from prison or when they are on community corrections orders
- ensure parole boards making decisions about perpetrators have access to, and are encouraged to use, a nationally consistent risk assessment framework and information from relevant services
- remove any legislative or other barriers to information sharing and collaboration between corrective services and all parts of the system that are involved with cases relating to violence against women.

**RECOMMENDATION 6.7**

Commonwealth, state and territory governments should agree to work together to improve the intersections between family law, child protection and family violence legal systems by implementing the respective elements of the recommendations of the Family Law Council's interim report on families with complex needs.

Increased collaboration and integration should be achieved by focusing on:

- measures that increase information sharing between family courts and other agencies, through approaches including stakeholder meetings, memoranda of understanding, removing legislative and other barriers, and co-location of agencies
- developing a national database of court orders, which could include examining the feasibility and cost of extending the national domestic violence order information sharing system once it is implemented and fully operational.

## SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### National leadership is needed to challenge gender inequality and transform community attitudes

- 1.1 Improve workplace gender equality
- 1.2 Engage corporate Australia to drive change
- 1.3 Adopt a national approach to primary prevention
- 1.4 Educate and train professionals

### Integrated responses are needed to keep women and their children safe

- 6.1 Ensure consistent risk assessment
- 6.2 Sustainably fund effective and innovative responses
- 6.3 Establish a national summit to showcase best practice
- 6.4 Reduce barriers to information sharing
- 6.5 Co-locate and integrate courts and services
- 6.6 Partner better within and between corrective services
- 6.7 Improve integration between family law, child protection and family violence court systems

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities require trauma-informed responses to violence

- 5.1 Develop trauma-informed framework
- 5.2 Build the evidence base
- 5.3 Build workforce capacity

### Women who experience violence should be empowered to make informed choices

- 2.1 Keep women safe at home
- 2.2 Keep women safe online
- 2.3 Use technology to improve women's access to services and responses to violence
- 2.4 Improve support for temporary residents
- 2.5 Inform and engage CALD communities
- 2.6 Prioritise research to inform responses for women with disabilities
- 2.7 Develop best practice standards to support women with disabilities

### Children and young people should also be recognised as victims of violence

- 3.1 Improve data collection and research
- 3.2 Improve early intervention
- 3.3 Build resilience and repair relationships

### Perpetrators should be held to account for their actions and supported to change

- 4.1 Build workforce capacity and set national standards
- 4.2 Improve pathways to support
- 4.3 Address other risk factors
- 4.4 Introduce stricter penalties for the distribution of intimate material

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## INTRODUCTION

In April 2015, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to take urgent collective action to reduce violence against women and their children, including domestic violence, family violence and sexual assault.

The COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children (the Advisory Panel) was established to provide advice to COAG on how to reduce violence against women and their children by identifying areas for national leadership.

Mr Ken Lay, the former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police, was appointed as Chair of the Advisory Panel. Ms Rosie Batty, 2015 Australian of the Year and Founder of the Luke Batty Foundation, and Ms Heather Nancarrow, Chief Executive Officer of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), were appointed as Deputy Chairs. Members of the Advisory Panel are listed in Table 1 and their biographies are provided in Appendix 1.

The Advisory Panel was asked to focus on innovative, practical and deliverable recommendations that could make a real and lasting difference in addressing violence against women and their children in Australia. Its advice builds on the existing efforts of all jurisdictions, through the framework of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (the National Plan), and on the work of local communities and women's services, which have been leading efforts to address violence against women and their children for many decades.

To date, the Advisory Panel has provided two reports to COAG:

- **Report 1 (23 July 2015):** a high-level assessment of current Commonwealth, state and territory approaches to violence against women and their children which identified areas for further national leadership
- **Report 2 (11 December 2015):** advice on the implementation of three priority work areas identified by COAG:
  1. the National Domestic Violence Order Model Law Framework and national domestic violence order information sharing system
  2. the National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions (NOSPI)
  3. strategies to keep women safe from technology-facilitated abuse.

Reports 1 and 2 also contained the Advisory Panel's advice on the development of the National Campaign to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (the National Campaign).

This report is the Advisory Panel's third and final report to COAG. It provides advice on areas for continued national leadership in addressing violence against women and their children in Australia, including through the Third Action Plan of the National Plan, which is due for release in 2016.

The recommendations contained in this report are intended to complement and build on the important infrastructure already in place through national bodies such as Our Watch and ANROWS.

It is vital that action is accompanied by a commitment to resourcing, research, evaluation, reporting, and continuous improvement.

<b>Mr Ken D Lay APM (Chair)</b>	Former Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police
<b>Ms Rosie Batty (Deputy Chair)</b>	Founder of the Luke Batty Foundation 2015 Australian of the Year
<b>Ms Heather Nancarrow (Deputy Chair)</b>	Chief Executive Officer, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)
<b>Ms Maria Hagias</b>	Executive Director, Central Domestic Violence Service (South Australia)
<b>Commissioner Darren Hine APM</b>	Commissioner of Police, Tasmania
<b>Dr Victoria Hovane</b>	Managing Director, Tjallara Consulting Pty Ltd (Western Australia)
<b>Ms Tracy Howe</b>	Chief Executive Officer, New South Wales Council of Social Service
<b>Mr Edward Mosby</b>	Principal Psychologist, Wakai Waian Healing
<b>Ms Julie Oberin</b>	Chair, Women's Services Network (WESNET) Chair, Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)
<b>The Hon Bess Price MLA</b>	Minister for Local Government and Community Services, Housing, Women's Policy, Men's Policy, Parks and Wildlife and Statehood, Northern Territory
<b>Ms Sue Salthouse</b>	Convenor, Women With Disabilities, Australian Capital Territory Director, Didactic Enterprises

## Research and consultations

The Advisory Panel engaged extensively with stakeholders and experts in Australia and internationally to develop this report. It reviewed more than 130 Commonwealth, state and territory government reports and policy documents from the last decade on violence against women and their children. Together, these contained over 1,000 recommendations that are in varying stages of implementation around the country. The current report aims to add some clarity by proposing six clear and intersecting areas for action. The Advisory Panel also received advice from all Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies. This helped inform the Advisory Panel's consultations, findings and recommendations.

To explore key issues in detail, the Advisory Panel formed working groups and carried out targeted consultations on a number of focus areas (Table 2). Overall, members of the Advisory Panel conducted over 120 consultations about all aspects of preventing, identifying, understanding and responding to violence against women and their children. This included 11 roundtables on different focus areas, which were attended by over 175 stakeholders, experts, service providers and academics. A list of organisations consulted is provided in Appendix 2. Advisory Panel members also consulted within their own extensive networks.

**Table 2:  
Focus areas for Advisory Panel research and consultations.**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	Perpetrator interventions
Business engagement	Primary prevention
Children	Technology
Family law and corrective services	Women's services integration
Housing, refuges and women's services	Women with disabilities

## A safety first approach

The advice of the Advisory Panel is underpinned by a **safety first approach** which seeks to ensure that the safety and empowerment of women is paramount in all aspects of policy development and service responses. All women should be safe from all forms of violence, and victims of violence should not be solely responsible for managing their own safety and the risk the perpetrator poses to it. Safety should also extend to any children of women who experience violence.

A safety first approach unifies different aspects of the Advisory Panel's work. It has helped to focus its activities and identify the range of possible areas of action.

The safety of women and their children will be achieved by promoting safe everyday environments, ensuring that violence is recognised as soon as possible, providing immediate responses to violence, facilitating safe and seamless pathways through subsequent services, and building a safer society for future generations.

## Terminology and definitions

**Violence against women** is defined in many ways by different jurisdictions and sectors. For the purpose of this report, 'violence against women' includes a range of behaviours and actions that aim to control a woman through fear. These may include physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse and assault, the threat of violence, coercion, emotional manipulation, financial abuse and forced marriage. References to specific types of violence are included for accuracy when necessary and according to how they are used in source studies and documents. The two main categorisations of violence used in collecting data about violence against women are physical violence and sexual violence, but these categories are neither mutually exclusive nor capture the full range of violence against women and their children.

**Children** refers to dependants of women who experience violence. Children and young people can be affected either directly or indirectly.<sup>1</sup> The Advisory Panel did not consider other forms of child abuse, which were beyond its remit and are addressed in the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*.

**Family violence** is used in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander context to describe the range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses perpetrated within families and communities.<sup>2</sup> It also includes **lateral violence**, which describes how historical and ongoing trauma and social and cultural oppression move through kinship networks, communities

and generations. Addressing violence in this case must take a much wider view than just focusing on the victim-perpetrator relationship. It must also consider the way a number of individuals may work together to harm an individual, family, or another group (for example, through gossiping, undermining, jealousy, bullying, shaming, social exclusion, family feuding, organisational conflict, social pressures and other social dynamics).<sup>3</sup>

**High-risk groups** is used to refer to women at heightened risk of experiencing violence, or women for whom the impacts of violence are often more severe and more prolonged, due to factors such as social and geographic isolation, economic disadvantage, communication barriers, dependence on others and/or limited access to appropriate services. High-risk groups include women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, women with disabilities, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women who live in regional, rural or remote areas, people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer, and women who experience multiple, intersecting types of disadvantage and discrimination.

**Victim** and **survivor** are used interchangeably to convey the understanding that violence against women is a process of victimisation. As noted by the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland, what happens to a person may be beyond their power, but people can be empowered to survive violence and move on with their lives.<sup>4</sup>

**Perpetrator** is used to refer to a person who has committed an act of violence against a woman, even if he or she has not necessarily been charged with, or convicted of, the act. This may include a partner or ex-partner (especially in cases of domestic and family violence), a carer (especially in cases of violence against women with disabilities), a child (especially in cases of elder abuse), or another known person (especially in cases of sexual violence). Perpetrators of violence against women are overwhelmingly men, which is reflected in the terminology used in this report.

**Technology-facilitated violence** includes technology-facilitated abuse (the use of information and communications technologies to send or post defamatory material, abuse or harass, post personal information or material, impersonate another person, or cause an unauthorised function), and technology-facilitated stalking (the use of technologies to monitor communication, activities or movements of another person, via physical property, virtual accounts, online profiles, computer monitoring software or spyware, keystroke loggers and location-based tracking software).

**Mainstream professionals** is used to refer to professionals who work in a range of professions (for example, teachers, nurses or counsellors) and who, as a part of their day-to-day job, come into contact with people who may have experienced or perpetrated violence. **Specialist staff** are human service professionals who work directly with women and children affected by violence or men who perpetrate violence (for example, women's refuge staff, psychologists or men's referral service staff). **Frontline staff** are specialist staff and mainstream professionals that may be the first point of contact for a victim of violence when they enter the system (for example, specialist information and referral service staff or mainstream professionals such as police, general practitioners and lawyers).

**Women's refuges, women's safe houses** or **women's shelters** are residences, typically a house or group of units, which offer support, information and safe accommodation for women, with or without children. Staff at refuges can support victims by offering advice, emotional support, case

management and guidance on a range of services, including for accommodation referral, health, childcare, income support, advocacy and legal matters. Some also provide counselling and therapeutic support for children. The length of stay may be a couple of days to a few months.

**Women's services** or **women's support services** refer to a range of services available to assist women experiencing or escaping from violence, which help women to make changes and choices for the future. These services could include referral, counselling, refuges and shelters, case management and safety planning, financial support and advice.

**Trauma-informed responses** are interventions which are grounded in the understanding that the experience of trauma can have wide-ranging physical, psychological and emotional impacts. Trauma-informed approaches aim to build resilience, or the capacity of victims to adapt to stress and trauma. They are based on:

- an understanding of how trauma affects victims
- an appreciation of the ongoing harms that can result from feelings of fear, helplessness, loss of control or threat of injury
- recognition that traumatic experiences can affect victims' physical, emotional and mental health, as well as their relationships
- an understanding that trauma can be passed through generations through a variety of mechanisms, so addressing trauma histories is central to stopping the passage of trauma into future generations.<sup>5</sup>

## Structure of the report

This report has two parts.

Part A gives an overview of violence against women and their children in Australia. It summarises key findings from research and government reports. The findings suggest that everyday gender attitudes and power imbalances are central to the continued high rates of violence against women and their children in Australia.

Part B outlines six Areas for Action for Commonwealth, state and territory governments to keep women and their children safe.

## PART A: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN IN AUSTRALIA

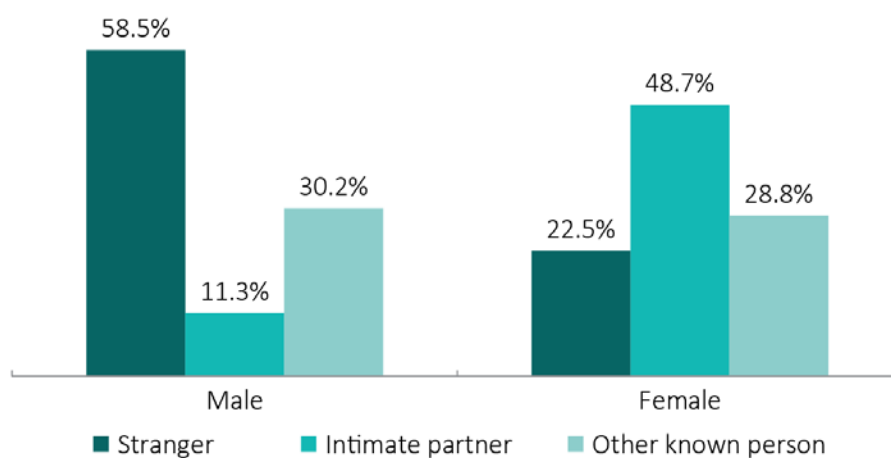
## Violence in Australia is a gendered issue

Violence in Australia differs significantly between men and women, reflecting widespread power imbalances between the two genders. While violence can affect any person regardless of their gender, the types of violence that men and women experience are significantly different.

Women are more likely to be victims of sexual violence (one in five women and one in 22 men) and emotional abuse (one in four women and one in seven men). Men are more likely to be victims of physical violence (almost one in two men and over one in three women).<sup>6</sup> Men are much more likely to perpetrate violence than women. Overall, both women and men are more than three times more likely to have been physically assaulted by a man than by a woman.<sup>7</sup>

Violence against women is overwhelmingly at the hands of someone they know, most frequently a partner or ex-partner (Figure 1). Men, on the other hand, experience a higher rate of violence at the hands of strangers. Where a perpetrator is known to the victim, the offender in cases of violence against women is their partner or ex-partner in almost 55 per cent of cases, compared with less than 20 per cent of cases for men. One in four Australian women has experienced physical or sexual violence from a male partner, compared with one in 12 men from an intimate female partner.<sup>8</sup>

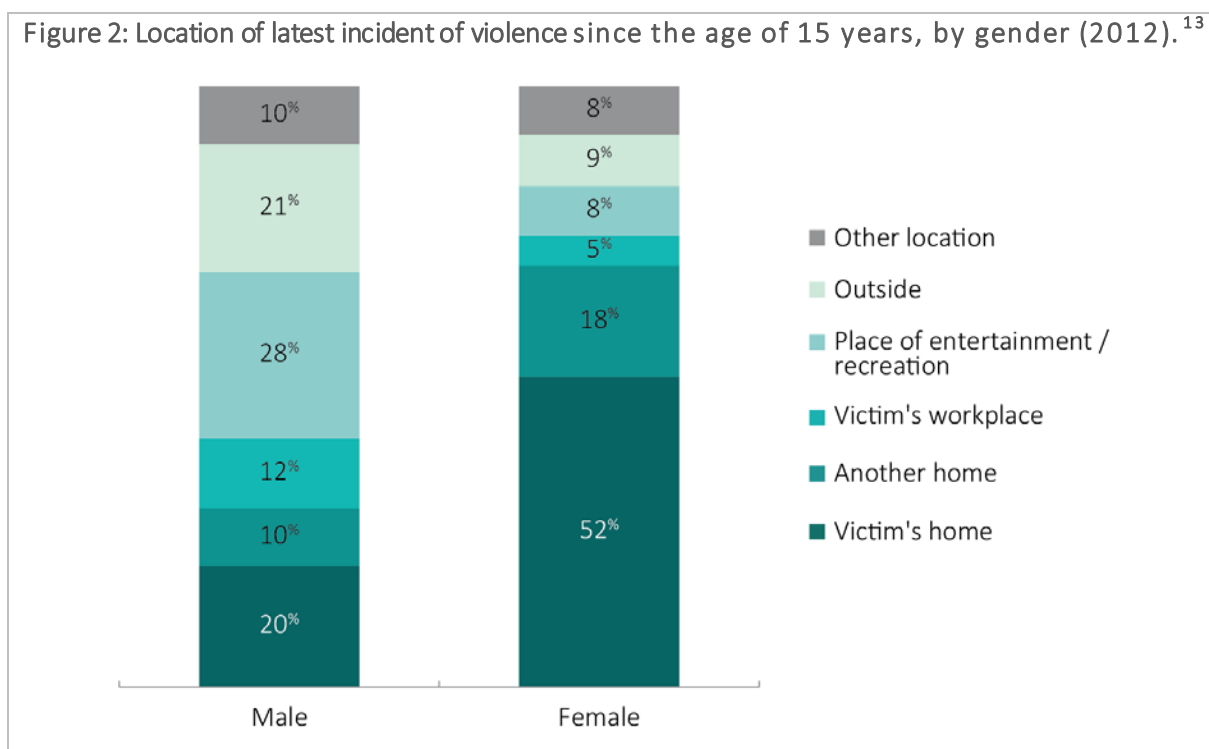
**Figure 1: Relationship of offender to victim of violence in the last 12 months, by gender (2012).<sup>9</sup>**



Between 2001-02 and 2011-12, 488 women in Australia were killed by a partner or ex-partner. This represents 75 per cent of all homicides of women during this period. This is compared with 166 men being killed over the same time period by a partner or ex-partner, which represents 25 per cent of all homicides of men during this period.<sup>10</sup> Across all cases, the offender was male in 77 per cent of cases (503 out of the 654 cases), and female in 23 per cent of cases (151 cases).<sup>11</sup>

Women in Australia are overwhelmingly more likely than men to experience physical violence in 'safe' places – especially in the home (Figure 2). Men are most likely to experience violence in a place of entertainment, such as a pub, nightclub or sporting venue. When violence in the home does occur, men are more likely than women to perpetrate violence and control repeatedly, over a long period of time.<sup>12</sup>

Figure 2: Location of latest incident of violence since the age of 15 years, by gender (2012).<sup>13</sup>



There are important differences between ‘fights’ – the violence typically experienced by men – and coercive control, the violence typically experienced by women. While fights are typically intended to resolve conflict and are generally brief in onset and resolution, coercive control is intended to suppress and disempower, and occurs over longer periods of time.<sup>14</sup> This makes violence against women particularly insidious.

In Australia, more than half the women who have experienced violence by a current (54 per cent) or former partner (58 per cent) had children in their care at the time of the violence.<sup>15</sup> International studies have shown that the presence of children in a household increases the risk of violence between partners.<sup>16</sup>

While the Advisory Panel recognises that men also experience domestic and family violence and sexual assault, the majority of victims are women and their children and the figures support the need to focus on them. However, it is important to ensure men can also access services appropriate to their needs. Services available to them include:

- **Mensline Australia**, a national telephone and online support, information and referral service for men with family relationship concerns. It supports men who are experiencing domestic violence, and assists perpetrators to avoid reoffending. It is staffed by professional counsellors experienced in men’s issues
- **1800RESPECT**, the National Sexual Assault, Family and Domestic Violence Counselling Service, is a free and confidential national telephone and online counselling service for any person, regardless of their gender, who has experienced or is at risk of sexual assault and/or domestic and family violence, and for their family and friends.



## Violence against women is disturbingly common in Australia

Every year, around 4.6 per cent of Australian women experience physical violence, and 1.2 per cent experience sexual violence. Each year, around half a million women in Australia will experience some form of violence at least once.<sup>17</sup>

However, the true scale of the problem is difficult to measure. Surveys of community attitudes to violence (such as the National Community Attitudes Survey) can help to identify trends in the distribution of violence-supportive attitudes. Other data collection tools identify the prevalence of violence against women and their children. These include police recorded incidents, victimisation surveys (such as the Personal Safety Survey), hospital contacts, court data on restraining orders, helpline usage statistics, and women's or referral services usage records. These data collection tools have limitations, but still give an indication of the size, scale and trends of violence against women and their children.<sup>18</sup>

Further, data on violence against women and their children within and between states and territories is difficult to compare due to differences in definitions of violence against women and methods of data collection.<sup>19</sup>

The Advisory Panel has heard that violence against women and their children is significantly underreported. Key reasons identified include:

- most data collection tools only identify violence that has been formally reported or acknowledged. However, of women who have experienced violence from a partner or ex-partner, more than half never make a formal report to the police<sup>20</sup>
- many women only accept that they were in an abusive relationship in hindsight<sup>21</sup>
- there are differences between the rates of women who report they have been the victim of physical and sexual assault through anonymous surveys, and the rates of violence formally reported to authorities
- current data collection methods have poor coverage of some groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and people living in regional, rural and remote areas. For example, the Personal Safety Survey does not collect data in remote areas and in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. In addition, interviews may not be conducted with non-English speaking respondents, due to a limited number of specially trained interpreters.<sup>22</sup>

The Advisory Panel expects that the quality of data on violence against women and their children will improve as the community's understanding of the issue grows, consistency in the system improves, and women's confidence in the available responses increases.

## Violence affects a diverse range of women

While women from all walks of life experience violence in Australia, there are statistically significant differences in the rates of violence experienced by some groups. Age is a significant factor: younger women are much more likely to report having recently experienced partner violence (Table 3). Additionally, women who have a lower socioeconomic position, or women with disabilities or

long-term health conditions, are more likely to experience partner violence than women who do not experience these forms of intersecting disadvantage.

<b>Age (years)</b>	<b>Any violence (%)</b>
18 to 24	3.1
25 to 34	3.8
35 to 44	2.7
45 to 54	2.0
55 or over	0.4

Importantly, however, violence does not just affect women from groups that are typically perceived as disadvantaged. Women who are employed, women with post-school qualifications, and women born in Australia are more likely to have reported partner violence in the past 12 months than women not in the labour force, women with no post-school qualification or women born outside Australia respectively (Table 4). A range of factors may contribute to differences in reporting rates between these groups, but this evidence clearly illustrates that violence can affect any woman and her children.

**Table 4:**  
**Women's experiences of violence by an intimate male partner**  
**in the last 12 months, by selected demographics (2012).<sup>24</sup>**

<b>Demographic characteristic</b>	<b>Any violence (%)</b>
All women	2.1
Employed	2.3
Unemployed / not in labour force	1.8
Lowest quintile of socio-economic advantage	2.9
Highest quintile of socio-economic advantage	1.6
Born in Australia	2.3
Born overseas	1.7
No non-school qualification	1.5
Post-school qualification	2.5
Has a disability or long-term health condition	2.6
Does not have a disability or long-term health condition	1.8

## Some women are at particularly high risk of experiencing violence or more severe outcomes

For women in high-risk groups, there are some significant differences in overall incidence, type of violence experienced, severity of violence, and the capacity to escape from it.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience physical or threatened violence at twice the rate of other women and over their lifetimes are likely to report three times as many incidents of sexual violence.<sup>25</sup> Hospitalisations for non-fatal family violence related assaults for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 34 times the rate for other women.<sup>26</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are also more likely to experience abuse or neglect than non-Indigenous children.<sup>27</sup>

Women with disabilities can experience higher rates of physical and sexual violence compared with other women, and this violence often goes unreported.<sup>28</sup> Women with disabilities experience forms of violence that are particular to their social and economic disadvantage and increased dependency. Their experiences of violence also tend to occur over a longer period of time, resulting in more severe trauma.<sup>29</sup> In addition, children with disabilities are more likely to experience violence, abuse and neglect than other children.<sup>30</sup>

Women born overseas are less likely to report experiencing violence than those born in Australia (Table 4). However, evidence suggests that women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can face more difficulty reporting violence and seeking help. Research suggests that these women are more likely to experience violence relating to uncertain citizenship, and multi-perpetrator violence; that is, violence, shaming and humiliation inflicted by a partner as well as extended family members.<sup>31</sup> Women who are new to Australia can also feel socially isolated, making

them more dependent on their violent partner. Language barriers and cultural norms can compound the problem, making it more difficult for these women to fully understand their rights and the support services available to them in Australia.<sup>32</sup>

Because they live much further away from available resources and support services, women in regional, rural and remote areas may experience a greater severity of physical abuse, greater frequency of violence, and remain trapped in abusive relationships longer than women in metropolitan settings.<sup>33</sup> Specific factors related to living in regional, rural and remote places that can make victims of violence especially vulnerable include geographical and social isolation, availability of firearms, comparative lack of legal protections and access, underresourcing of small police stations, lack of nearby services, and financial insecurity.<sup>34</sup>

Available data indicates that up to five per cent of older people in Australia, especially those aged 65 years and over, experience violence. The most vulnerable age is between 75 and 85 years. Up to 80 per cent of elder violence is perpetrated by family members, and women are twice as likely as men to be abused. Financial and psychological violence are the most common forms, with up to half of all elder abuse being financial abuse.<sup>35</sup>

People who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer experience similar rates of violence against women to others. However, stigma about sexuality can exacerbate violence and its impacts.<sup>36</sup> While many of the recommendations made in this report will support women who identify as a part of this group, the Advisory Panel acknowledges that more should be done to understand the experiences of this community and to tailor responses where necessary.

Women and children seeking asylum can also be at risk of violence. The Advisory Panel shares community concerns about violence against women and their children in regional processing centres. There have been a number of inquiries related to this matter by parliamentary committees.<sup>37</sup> There have been independent reviews commissioned by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection. There is also an ongoing Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs inquiry entitled *Conditions and treatment of asylum seekers and refugees at the regional processing centres in the Republic of Nauru and Papua New Guinea*. The Advisory Panel looks forward to seeing an appropriate response to the concerns raised in the inquiry.

## There are many types of violence committed against women and their children

Violence against women and their children includes a range of behaviours that aim to coercively control a female partner through fear. These may include physical, sexual, emotional, economic, social, cultural, spiritual and psychological abuse (Figure 3). Different types of violence are identified and addressed in different ways, but all types have the same effect of disempowering the victim and reinforcing the power and control of the perpetrator. Many of the recommendations in this report apply to all types of violence. However, there are some specific exceptions, especially regarding sexual violence and assault, which are highlighted in the text of the report.

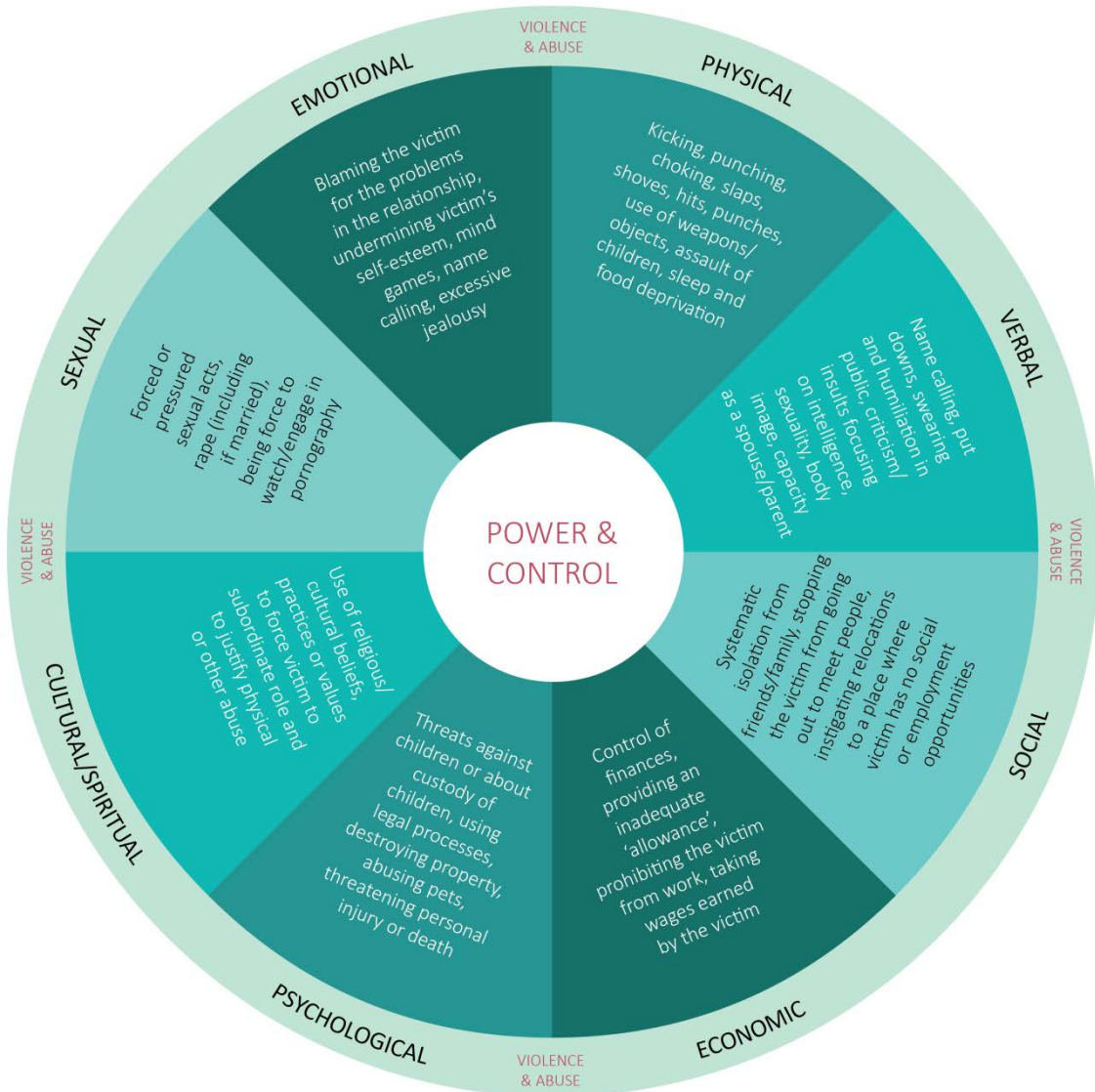
Violence against women and their children ranges on a continuum from ‘typical’ and generally tolerated by society (for example, put downs and name calling) to ‘severe’ and criminal (for example, severe physical or sexual assault or homicide).<sup>38</sup> All forms of violence – from typical to severe – are concerning because the impacts of different types of violence are cumulative and traumatic, and violence often becomes worse over time.<sup>39</sup>

Technology-facilitated abuse is an emerging concern. In one survey, 98 per cent of specialist staff said they had clients who had experienced technology-facilitated stalking and abuse.<sup>40</sup> However, of women who have experienced technology-facilitated stalking, only 44 per cent have ever sought assistance. The main reason women give for not seeking help is their embarrassment about the abuse (85 per cent).<sup>41</sup> This is significant, because of women who experience technology-facilitated stalking, 82 per cent are also likely to experience other forms of domestic violence.<sup>42</sup>

New mobile technologies now make it possible to perpetrate many forms of violence from a distance. They make violence and control easier, more intrusive, and more frequent.<sup>43</sup> Perpetrators abuse women through text, email and instant messages, harass them on social media, publish or threaten to publish intimate photographs of them online, stalk them through GPS tracking software secretly installed on smartphones or vehicles, and monitor their online activity through spyware.<sup>44</sup> While technology can be used to facilitate violence, it is also an important tool that helps women maintain social connections, seek information and support and engage with the world. Technologies can assist victims to recover from violence and enhance their safety. They can also be vital supports in the home, especially for women with disabilities.

Types of violence experienced by women with disabilities differ from the types experienced by women without disabilities. Physical control or restraint, emotional abuse focusing on the disability, sexual contact without valid consent, neglect, refusal of basic hygiene assistance, limiting decision making capacity, denial of mobility and communication devices and assistance animals, forced chemical and physical restraint, forced or coerced contraception or sterilisation, medical exploitation, and restriction of finances are also forms of violence experienced by women with disabilities.<sup>45</sup>

Figure 3: Controlling behaviours and indicators of domestic violence.<sup>46</sup>



## Violence has lasting and corrosive impacts on women and their children

As the violence women experience is more frequently at the hands of a partner, ex-partner or carer, violence against women can occur over long periods of time. Unlike ‘fights’, the types of violence typically experienced by women are associated with suppression and control.<sup>47</sup> Violence may be once-off (for example, some cases of sexual assault), but it is often ongoing. Even if the violence stops or is reported, the trauma often continues over time. The atmosphere of coercive control common in situations of violence against women and their children is typically stifling. This erodes victims’ confidence, relationships and trust, which can take much longer to repair and rebuild than physical injuries.

Because it usually occurs in private spaces, this violence is often perceived as a ‘private’ matter rather than an issue of public concern. Victims and perpetrators may share a home, children, finances, household goods, cars, pets, friends, assets, memories and an emotional connection. This can make it difficult and complicated – logistically, financially, legally, psychologically and emotionally – for victims to seek safety.

Common across most forms of violence against women is regular disempowerment of the victim, and reinforcement of a perpetrator’s dominance, through the coercive and controlling behaviours of perpetrators. This reduces the space women feel they can move in, and restricts them to thinking there is no way out and they are alone. Women who have experienced violence have described their everyday lives as ‘walking on eggshells’, with no escape or ‘space to think’.<sup>48</sup> Living in an atmosphere of constant control, volatility, and at times isolation, is harmful to women and their children.<sup>49</sup>

The socioeconomic impacts of violence against women and their children are significant for the individuals involved, as well as for the friends and communities who support them. Victims bear the majority of costs in terms of pain and suffering, as well as property damage, relocation, living and legal costs.<sup>50</sup> Many women who experience violence find it difficult to find and maintain work, and those that do often struggle with absenteeism and low productivity in the workplace.<sup>51</sup> Financial factors are the most significant predictor of whether a woman experiencing violence remains in, escapes from, or returns to, an abusive relationship.<sup>52</sup>

The socioeconomic impacts are also long-term. Violence is a barrier to sustained labour force participation. This can lead to reduced economic circumstances later in life, and a long-term cycle of reliance on welfare payments.<sup>53</sup>

Violence against women is the leading cause of homelessness for women and their children in Australia.<sup>54</sup> During 2011-14, 36 per cent of the total demand for homelessness services was from victims of family and domestic violence.<sup>55</sup> Women who experience violence need longer periods of homelessness support than other clients; almost one in four women who have used homelessness services to escape violence have had stays of more than 300 days. However, long stays are less frequently supported: 82 per cent of clients who request short-term accommodation have their needs met, compared with 61 per cent of those who require longer-term support.<sup>56</sup> Some women, especially women who require additional supports and aids, new migrants who may have smaller

social support networks, young women who have less well-established housing, and women living in regional, rural and remote areas are particularly vulnerable to homelessness.<sup>57</sup>

Intimate partner violence results in physical injury in around 40 per cent of cases. Bruises, swelling, cuts and burns were the injuries most commonly reported in a 2004 survey.<sup>58</sup> Ten per cent of victims had suffered broken bones or noses and six per cent had sustained internal injuries. More than a quarter of those who sustained injuries required medical attention.<sup>59</sup>

Violence against women can have significant mental health impacts. Women who have experienced gender-based violence have reported higher rates of past suicide attempts, severe mental disorders, general disability and impaired quality of life.<sup>60</sup>

The health consequences and trauma of violence against women can continue even after the violence has stopped. Women who have experienced domestic violence tend to rate their health as poorer and use health services more often than other women, even after they are no longer exposed to the violence.<sup>61</sup> Sexual violence is also associated with ongoing trauma. It likewise affects physical and mental health, as well as interpersonal relationships.<sup>62</sup>

Violence against women and their children can have a life-long impact on children and young people.<sup>63</sup> Violence affects children's mental and physical wellbeing, and can contribute to behavioural issues and poorer educational outcomes.<sup>64</sup> The symptoms may be exacerbated if the violence is chronic or repeated.<sup>65</sup>

Violence can also compromise relationships between parents and their children, which can have ongoing consequences for children's development.<sup>66</sup> Children affected by violence against women also have an increased risk of experiencing other forms of child abuse, such as emotional, physical and sexual abuse.<sup>67</sup> In the most extreme cases, the violence can result in death. Children are the second most common group of victims of domestic and family homicides, after intimate partners, comprising one in five victims.<sup>68</sup>

The impact of violence against women on some groups of children and young people can be exacerbated by other challenges, including marginalisation and discrimination. This is particularly the case for children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer or those with parents who identify as such,<sup>69</sup> children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds,<sup>70</sup> and children living in regional, rural and remote areas.<sup>71</sup>

## The costs of violence against women and their children are high

The direct and indirect costs of violence against women and their children in Australia are estimated to be \$21.7 billion per year (Figure 4).<sup>72</sup> Victims bear a significant proportion of the costs of violence (31 per cent, or approximately \$6.7 billion each year).<sup>73</sup> Commonwealth, state and territory governments then bear 36 per cent of the costs (approximately \$7.8 billion per year), for delivery of health services, criminal justice and social welfare to support victims and their children.<sup>74</sup> The immediate community in which victims live, the children they care for and the employers they work for also suffer from the flow-on costs of violence against women.



The Advisory Panel has heard that there is currently increasing demand for services to deal with violence against women, including crisis and counselling phone lines, health care and support and accommodation centres. This trend is expected to increase as awareness rises and the community calls for more, higher quality and better integrated services to keep women and their children safe and hold perpetrators of violence to account.

There are opportunities to address some rising financial costs by improving the ways violence against women is prevented and addressed. For example, international evidence suggests that:

- Public education programmes which successfully reduce the prevalence of violence have the potential to generate a ten- to twenty-fold return on investment (this is explored further in Action Area 1).<sup>75</sup>
- Programmes to keep women and their children safe in their own homes may be cheaper than crisis accommodation and care. In Barnet in the United Kingdom, a pilot programme that allowed 40 families to stay in their own homes is estimated to have saved more than \$1.48 million in avoided temporary accommodation costs in one year alone (this is explored further in Action Area 2).<sup>76</sup>
- Perpetrator programmes which aim to change men's behaviour and which operate as a part of an integrated system response to violence can offer a ten-fold return on public investment because they can reduce spending on police, criminal justice systems, national health services, local governments and social services (this is explored further in Action Area 4).<sup>77</sup>

Figure 4: The cost per year of domestic violence for various groups (2015).<sup>78</sup>



## The reasons men perpetrate violence against women and their children are complex

As recently as 1989, when Queensland first legislated protection for spousal victims of domestic violence, the debate in the Queensland Parliament focused on what were described as two commonly held Australian views: women are the property of their husbands, and husbands are violent because they are provoked by women.<sup>79</sup>

The sexist attitudes noted in the Queensland Parliament in the 1980s continue to be echoed in current responses to violence against women, as well as in everyday Australian society.<sup>80</sup> Australians as young as five years old typically excuse boys' behaviour and blame girls for bringing violence onto themselves (data is explored in more detail in Action Area 1). These attitudes often develop unknowingly and unintentionally. If unchecked, they can result in people failing to recognise their own violent attitudes and behaviours, excusing violent behaviour and attitudes in others, and doubting and alienating women who feel unsafe.

The reasons that men use violence against women are exceedingly complex. Because violence against women is so complex, and victim safety so difficult to ensure, it is generally easier for researchers to identify factors associated with violence rather than factors that are directly causal.<sup>81</sup> Many associated factors have been identified and reviewed, most recently through a Victorian Royal Commission,<sup>82</sup> Commonwealth Senate Inquiries,<sup>83</sup> and the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland.<sup>84</sup>

Factors which are correlated with some forms of violence, although to a lesser extent with ongoing coercive control, include:<sup>85</sup>

- **drug and alcohol use:** drugs and alcohol have been reported as contributing factors in around 50 per cent of cases of domestic violence in Australia,<sup>86</sup> and victims often suffer more severe injuries in those instances.<sup>87</sup> Perpetrators may use alcohol to justify sexually aggressive behaviour.<sup>88</sup> Female victims have reported that, in their most recent physical assault by a male, the perpetrator was affected by drugs or alcohol in 95 per cent of cases.<sup>89</sup> In turn, acts of violence against women increase the likelihood that they and their children will use alcohol and drugs to cope with the abuse.<sup>90</sup> Substance abuse can also be a barrier to the successful rehabilitation and recovery of perpetrators as it impairs their judgement and is often used to justify or explain violence, which distances the perpetrator from taking responsibility for their actions
- **irregular or intermittent work:** research from the United States has found that women whose male partner experienced two or more periods of unemployment over a five year study period were almost three times as likely to be victims of intimate violence compared with women whose partners were in stable jobs.<sup>91</sup> In the United Kingdom, female unemployment is associated with a higher rate of domestic abuse<sup>92</sup>
- **mental health:** there is a strong association between negative behaviours consistent with domestic violence and abuse, and mental health problems in men.<sup>93</sup> Perpetrators of violence against women are more likely have mental health problems, with one study finding that men who have used some form of negative behaviour against their partners (including domestic violence and abuse) were three to five times more likely to report symptoms of

anxiety than non-perpetrators.<sup>94</sup> However, there are also many perpetrators who do not have mental health problems

- **stress:** higher levels of spousal financial and personal stress are strongly associated with an increased risk of violence against women<sup>95</sup>
- **historical trauma:** in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities especially, histories of trauma, racial discrimination and disadvantage can multiply violence (this is addressed further in Action Area 5).

These factors are addressed further in Action Area 4, particularly in Recommendation 4.3.

The interactions between gender power imbalances and other factors that drive men to perpetrate violence against women remain unclear.<sup>96</sup> However, when these different factors are placed in a broader cultural context of gender inequality – where men’s dominance over women is unquestioningly accepted, and where women have fewer economic, social and political rights and opportunities – violence against women is more likely to result.<sup>97</sup>

Further, in a setting where a perpetrator feels entitled to exert control over a woman and where society justifies his actions, he may not recognise that he is causing harm. This can limit any efforts to intervene.

The Advisory Panel acknowledges that the current work of governments and other organisations to improve public health and welfare will also contribute to addressing perpetrators of violence against women and their children, and will be complementary to the recommendations presented in this report. Of particular note are:

- the recent reforms of mental health services in response to the National Mental Health Commission’s *Review of Mental Health Programme and Services*
- development of the new *National Drug Strategy 2016-2025*, a framework for action to minimise the harms to individuals, families and communities from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs
- development of the next *National Alcohol Strategy 2016-2021* to guide the work of governments, communities and service providers to reduce alcohol related harms
- additional government investment in drug and alcohol prevention and treatment as part of the *National Ice Action Strategy* in response to the *Final Report of the National Ice Taskforce*.

The recommendations of the Advisory Panel focus on measures beyond what is already being done in these areas.

## PART B: SIX AREAS FOR ACTION

## 1 National leadership is needed to challenge gender inequality and transform community attitudes

Gender inequality underpins the social norms and attitudes which enable violence, and often lead people to unknowingly blame victims and justify the behaviour of perpetrators.

Despite ongoing efforts, gender inequality persists across many key indicators. In addition, recent surveys show that many young people have a poor understanding of what constitutes violence and hold attitudes that support, and sometimes even condone, inequality and violence against women and their children.

Stronger national leadership is needed from governments, the corporate sector and the community to challenge gender inequality and transform community attitudes to violence against women and their children. Achieving long-term cultural change is vital to ensuring the success of broader reforms to keep women and their children safe that are outlined in Action Areas 2 to 6.

## Gender inequality and gender norms enable violence and hinder change

Gender inequality is when people are not able to access the same rights, opportunities, responsibilities, resources and rewards because of their gender. It means that differences in roles and biology which may influence equal enjoyment of these rights and responsibilities (for example, child bearing) are not taken into account when drawing comparisons between men and women. It arises when men's and women's perceptions, interests, needs and priorities are not valued equally, and when disadvantage from past inequalities is not taken into account.<sup>98</sup>

According to Elizabeth Broderick, Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner from 2007 to 2015, 'men's violence against women is Australia's most significant gender equality issue. It is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality'.<sup>99</sup> Gender inequality can be a cause of violence because it reinforces the notion that men should be powerful and women less powerful, or even submissive.<sup>100</sup> Gender inequality can also be a consequence of violence because women and girls who experience violence may feel powerless, trapped or afraid, particularly when men and boys who perpetrate violence are not held to account, are forgiven, or even encouraged to continue to be 'tough' or dominant.

National surveys and studies show that the current gender norms that enable violence against women and their children reflect broader gender inequality in society. For example, the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey found that many people justify or excuse the behaviour of perpetrators. The survey found that many Australians believed the main cause of violence against women is men not being able to manage their anger and that rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex.<sup>101</sup> Similarly, a survey conducted for Our Watch in 2015 highlighted how social norms shape the behaviour of young people in their relationships. The survey found that one in three young people did not think that exerting control over someone else was a form of violence. In addition, one in four young people thought that it was 'pretty normal' for boys to pressure girls into sex, and did not think it was 'serious' when a boy insults or verbally harasses a girl in the street.<sup>102</sup>

Conclusions from these repeated national surveys are supported by research carried out to inform the recent development of the National Campaign. This research was presented to the Advisory Panel as a part of its consultations. Children, young people and parents participated in the research, in which they were asked to respond to a series of scenarios presented to them. In one scenario, two groups of school students are on a bus, and a boy throws a bottle at a girl. Research participants were asked to imagine why he might have done so, and how the boy and girl might be feeling. Their responses reflected clear and consistent themes. In particular, they:<sup>103</sup>

- **blamed the victim**
  - 'she wouldn't tell anyone... it's her fault... would stay quiet, doesn't want to make it worse' (a girl aged 15 to 17 years)
  - 'perhaps the girl is not giving him attention' (a boy aged 15 to 17 years)
  - 'she said something he didn't like' (a boy aged 10 to 14 years)
  - 'what did the girl do?' (a mother)
  - 'it takes two to tango' (a father)
- **minimised the behaviour of males**
  - 'he's just trying to be heard' (a boy aged 10 to 14 years)
  - 'can understand why he did it... this is not such a huge deal' (a mother)
  - 'it wasn't that bad... it's not like he punched her... if there was an injury, then it would be bad' (a girl aged 10 to 14 years)

- 'he's just a hormonal guy' (a girl aged 15 to 17 years)
- **empathised with, and protected, males**
  - 'you can understand why he did it and why he probably felt pressure to do it' (a mother)
  - 'boys will be boys' (a father)
  - 'you sometimes don't realise something's wrong' (an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander man, aged 18 to 25 years)
  - 'he's just having a bad day' (a girl aged 15 to 17 years).

The research overwhelmingly showed that, while there is strong community support for reducing violence against women and their children, there is low recognition of where the issue begins.

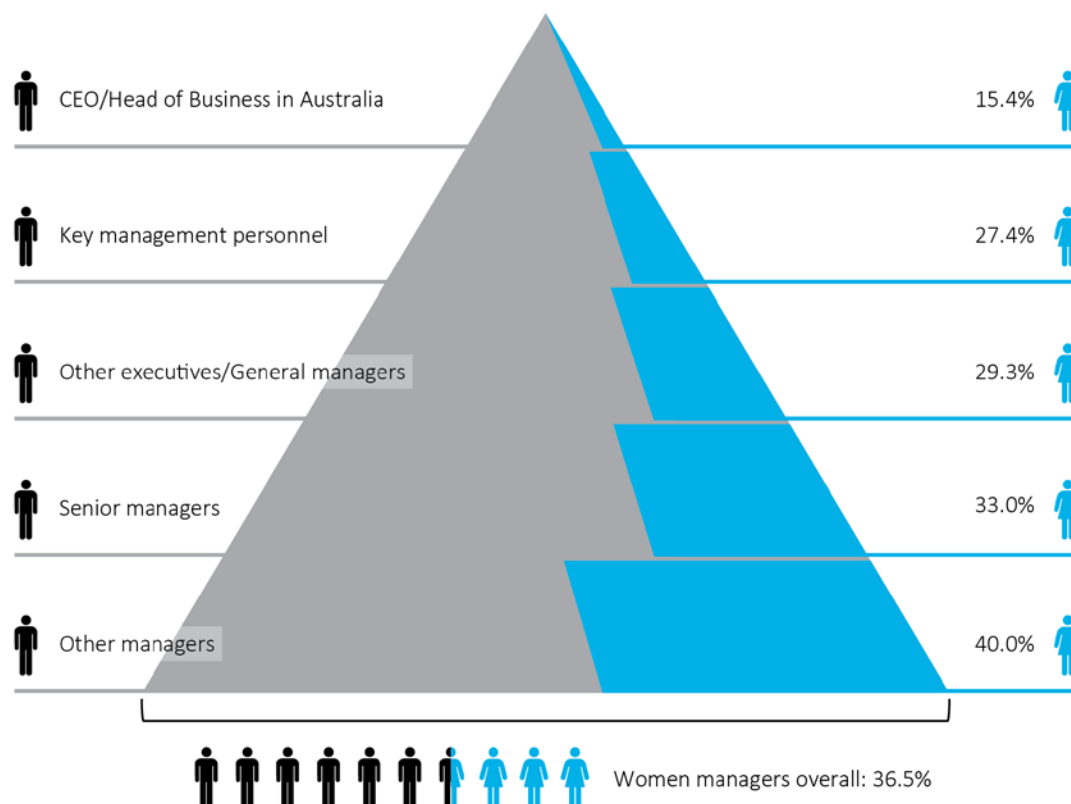
## Gender inequality is widespread in Australia

### Gender inequality in governments, workplaces and society

In Australia, women have historically experienced poorer economic outcomes and had fewer opportunities than men. There is still a gender pay gap across all industries and management levels, with women more likely to work in lower paying occupations and industries. Women comprise just over half (50.2 per cent) of Australia's working age population,<sup>104</sup> but are significantly underrepresented in senior management positions (Figure 5).<sup>105</sup> Across Australia, the representation of women declines steadily with seniority. Women make up 40 per cent of 'other managers' – the lowest level of management – but just 15.4 per cent of Chief Executive Officers or Heads of Business.<sup>106</sup>

Over the course of their lives, women will earn less money than men, take primary responsibility for unpaid caregiving and household chores, and have fragmented careers. This combination of factors can leave women in poor financial circumstances later in life.<sup>107</sup> The gender pay gap is often cited as a proxy for the overall position of women in the workforce. It currently ranges between 13.61 and 17.22 per cent, depending on the measure used.<sup>108</sup> The pay gap substantially reduces women's capacities to be financially secure as they age.<sup>109</sup> It has been estimated that over a working life, a partnered mother will earn about half that of a partnered father: \$1.3 million compared with \$2.5 million.<sup>110</sup> Women's lower earnings are reflected in their superannuation balances, which are less than men's across all age groups. In 2013-14, women aged 55 to 64 years had an average superannuation balance of \$180,013, compared with \$321,993 for men.<sup>111</sup>

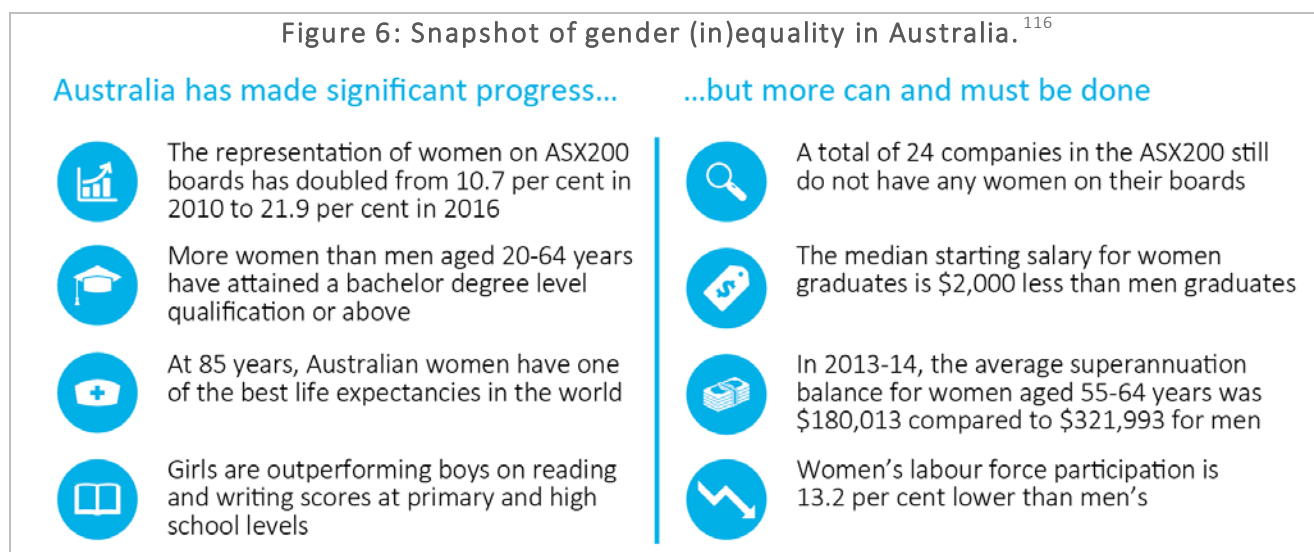


Figure 5: Proportion of women in management positions in Australia (2014-15).<sup>112</sup>

Unequal opportunities and gender biases can perpetuate unequal outcomes. Sexual harassment in the workplace, for example, disproportionately affects women, with one in five aged 18 to 64 years experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace compared with one in 20 men.<sup>113</sup> Gender discrimination is also a problem. In 2014, over 900 senior Australian managers were asked to rate candidates whose applications varied only by name: either 'Susan Campbell' or 'Simon Cook'. Managers were more likely to both interview and hire 'Simon'. In particular, 62 per cent of managers from large organisations said that they would interview 'Simon', versus 56 per cent for 'Susan'. In addition, both male and female managers were more likely to hire 'Simon' rather than 'Susan'.<sup>114</sup> Unequal career opportunities reflect gender biases that are deeply embedded in Australian society.

Progress towards gender equality has been made in recent decades, as measured by key indicators (Figure 6). In addition, there is an increasing focus on gender equality issues by government and other organisations:

- through the G20 leaders' commitment, Australia has committed to reduce the gender gap in workforce participation by 25 per cent by 2025<sup>115</sup>
- non-government organisations, such as White Ribbon and Australia's CEO Challenge, are making significant contributions to addressing workplace gender inequality in Australia
- the Workplace Gender Equality Agency has been established by the Australian Government to promote and improve gender equality in Australian workplaces and work collaboratively with employers to help them improve their gender performance
- Our Watch has been established to drive nation-wide change in the culture, behaviours and attitudes that underpin and create violence against women and children.

Figure 6: Snapshot of gender (in)equality in Australia.<sup>116</sup>

Despite ongoing efforts, gender inequality remains stubbornly persistent across many key indicators. Women from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and women with disabilities face greater challenges because gender inequalities compound social inequalities, discrimination and other disadvantages they experience.

### Gender biases among professionals who deal with violence against women

Subconscious gender biases can result in intuitive responses to violence that focus on what women have done wrong and attempt to justify or minimise men's behaviour.<sup>117</sup> These responses undermine society-wide efforts to deal with violence against women and their children. Gender biases amongst the professionals who should be identifying and intervening in violence can contribute to further victimisation.

Addressing gender biases among professionals likely to come into contact with victims and perpetrators of violence is vital to ensure intervention occurs as early as possible. Early intervention can reduce the impact of violence and ensure better outcomes over the long term, particularly for children.<sup>118</sup> Professionals who have regular contact with women and their children (for example, teachers, nurses and childcare workers) are well positioned to effectively respond to violence by identifying victims and perpetrators and referring them to relevant services, if they are given the skills and knowledge to do so.<sup>119</sup>

Some training is already delivered to frontline workers. For example, Lifeline's DV-alert Program offers both nationally recognised and non-accredited training on domestic violence awareness and response.<sup>120</sup> Between 2011 and 2013, DV-alert delivered 54 workshops to train 741 professionals, and a further 15 workshops to train 257 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals. Following the course, over 90 per cent of participants in the general course and 80 per cent of participants in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander course felt they had the knowledge, skills and confidence to be able to recognise and respond to violence, and refer people experiencing violence to appropriate services.

Police can also be key to the early identification of, and intervention in, violence against women and their children. Nationally, of women who had experienced violence with a previous partner, 26 per cent reported it to the police.<sup>121</sup> A 2012 study highlighted the importance of the initial police response for rural women experiencing intimate partner violence.<sup>122</sup> Police authentication and legitimisation of violence as an intolerable criminal activity empowered women to report violence. On the other hand, inauthentic or negative police responses that trivialised violence eroded trust in the criminal justice system.<sup>123</sup>

Gender inequality can be seen in courts that deal with cases involving violence against women and their children. Domestic violence offenders are typically sentenced more leniently than other violent offenders: they are less likely to be imprisoned, and when they are, they are given significantly shorter sentences.<sup>124</sup> Judges' remarks in court, which reflect widespread social norms, can distance male offenders from their responsibility for violent conduct and minimise their guilt, potentially leading to more lenient sentences and victim blaming.<sup>125</sup> Breaches of protection orders may not be perceived as 'serious' by magistrates,<sup>126</sup> although some recent changes in this regard have been observed by the Victorian Sentencing Council.<sup>127</sup> Further, a lack of knowledge of the complex dynamics of domestic violence by judicial officers, lawyers and court staff can allow perpetrators to use the justice system as another tool for abuse, with harmful results for women and their children. Australian research into Indigenous sentencing courts has highlighted how gendered power imbalances are often present in courts, and that magistrates and Elders do not have the training needed to be able to identify and deal with power dynamics.<sup>128</sup> Some cultural change is occurring among criminal justice institutions in Australia,<sup>129</sup> and these efforts provide a good foundation for future work.

## National leadership is needed to reduce gender inequality and change gender norms

Achieving gender equality in Australian society means ensuring that women are fairly represented across the community and all organisations, with equal workforce participation, representation and rates of pay. It requires ensuring that gender biases and discriminatory attitudes are not tolerated. This is the first step in breaking down underlying drivers of violence against women and their children.<sup>130</sup>

### **Governments should lead by example**

To improve gender equality in Australian workplaces, governments should develop and implement strategies to boost women's workforce participation and economic security. All governments should explore ways to improve these indicators in their jurisdictions, by recognising and addressing hidden gender biases that continue to limit women's participation and advancement. When implementing changes to support diversity and women's participation in the workforce, governments should learn from leading businesses, including National Australia Bank, Telstra, ANZ Bank and Network Ten (Case Study 1).

In recent years, governments across Australia have been seeking to improve the numbers of women on boards and at senior leadership levels, some with and some without targets. These efforts have been met with some success, but in most jurisdictions the gap is still significant and not all have targets (Figure 7).

## CASE STUDY 1

# AUSTRALIAN BUSINESSES LEADING THE WAY

**Businesses are well positioned to play a leadership role in the community, both for achieving gender equality and in reducing violence against women and their children**

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A number of Australian businesses are leading the way in championing gender equality in the workplace and playing their part in addressing violence against women and their children.

**National Australia Bank (NAB)** is highly focused on driving gender equality, from local branches right through to executive teams and boards.

NAB is promoting gender equality, especially at its senior levels, through leadership programmes like NAB Board Ready, a programme that trains female managers to successfully become board directors. Since the programme commenced, women's representation on NAB's subsidiary boards has more than doubled from 14 per cent in 2010 to 36 per cent at 30 September 2015.

**Telstra's** 'All Roles Flex' approach recognises the importance of balancing work and life pressures for women and men. The initiative focuses on outcomes rather than the traditional 36.75 hour week, using technology, workplace design and attitudinal changes to support how staff work.

The initiative has seen profound cultural change and improvements across a number of gender indicators, including:

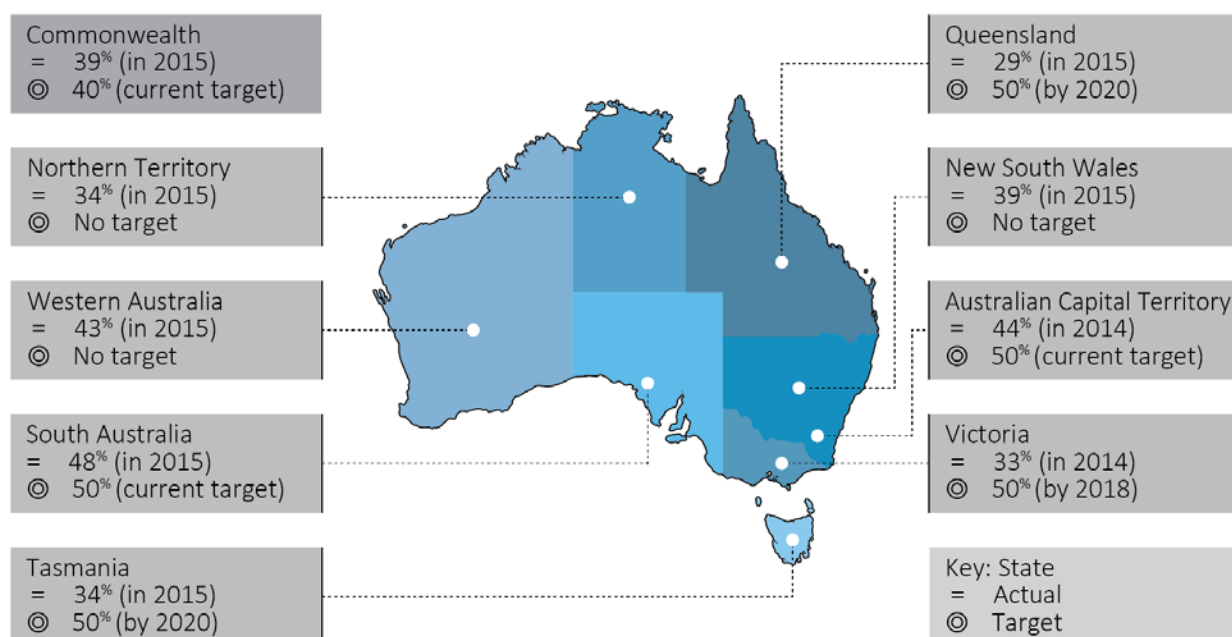
- increases in female commencements with corresponding decreases in female exits
- increases in female representation at management levels
- continued high levels of return from parental leave and retention for both male and female staff.

Some businesses also support staff and customers who experience, or are at risk of experiencing, domestic or family violence or sexual assault. Through broader outreach initiatives, businesses can also influence community attitudes and raise awareness of violence against women.

MoneyMinded is a comprehensive suite of financial education resources for adults, developed by **ANZ** and used by financial counsellors and community educators in assisting people to build their money management skills, knowledge and confidence. The programme has assisted more than 350,000 people (mostly women) to build their financial literacy since 2003 by working with community partners and accredited facilitators across Australia, including staff from women's centres, emergency housing services, family violence services and crisis care.

**Network Ten** showed its willingness to influence community attitudes by providing free television airtime to White Ribbon Australia to help raise awareness of domestic violence among its viewers. The Network screened more than 100 advertisements as part of a campaign that targeted male-dominated programming and aimed to change male attitudes.

Figure 7: Percentage of women on government boards and targets set by different jurisdictions.<sup>131</sup>



In the Commonwealth Government, and every state and territory government, women are underrepresented at senior levels.<sup>132</sup> Some jurisdictions have been more successful than others achieving change, with South Australia setting a good example for other jurisdictions to follow. This government's continued efforts to reduce gender inequality have resulted in 48 per cent female representation on government boards.

As some of the largest employers and purchasers of services in Australia, governments have the potential to lead by example. Specific strategies should include:

- **adopting gender sensitive recruitment practices:** governments should implement recruitment policies that support gender equality, such as ensuring recruitment panels are gender-balanced, offering flexible work arrangements where possible, proactively recruiting and appointing women to leadership positions, and supporting access to child and dependant care where possible
- **reporting on gender employment outcomes:** government agencies should regularly and consistently report on the total workforce, board composition, leadership and remuneration by gender, as well as other gender equality indicators. Reports should track progress on workplace gender equality over time and be made publicly available to set a clear example for other employers to follow
- **providing gender equality, gender bias and diversity training:** public servants should have access to training to raise their awareness of gender equality, gender bias and diversity so they can more effectively counter biases in the workplace and design and implement policies in a way that is more sensitive to gender and diversity
- **providing incentives for action through their networks:** government policies should link procurement processes and requirements to gender equality, equal employment and other relevant targets.

Governments should have the common aim of achieving gender parity in pay and representation on government boards and in senior leadership positions. Each jurisdiction should have the flexibility to tailor

the mechanisms through which they will achieve pay equity and gender balance and the timeframes by which they should be achieved.

### RECOMMENDATION 1.1

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should demonstrate national leadership through a shared commitment to building a culture that challenges gender inequality and social norms that support violence against women.

Governments should:

- introduce targets for 50 per cent female representation, including all diversity types, on government boards and in senior leadership positions within the public service
- develop and implement strategies to achieve pay equity, adopt gender-sensitive recruitment practices and introduce gender equality, gender bias and diversity training across the public service
- report on leadership and employment outcomes by gender, including remuneration, in annual reports
- prioritise actions to further improve women's workforce participation and economic security.

### Corporate Australia has a key role to play

The corporate sector, comprising business and industry, has a key role to play in addressing power imbalances and hidden gender bias, and in ensuring that men and women are seen as equal contributors to Australian society. Their significant and ongoing contact with staff, suppliers, customers and the wider community makes them important influencers with the potential to change community attitudes and behaviours.

Change is already underway to improve gender equality among Australia's businesses (Case Study 1).<sup>133</sup> For example, the Male Champions of Change initiative aims 'to achieve change on gender equality issues in organisations and communities'.<sup>134</sup> Twenty seven per cent of its members have achieved gender balance across their key management personnel, while all remaining organisations are implementing strategies to achieve gender balance.<sup>135</sup>

The corporate sector has also demonstrated in some cases that it can go beyond challenging gender inequality to delivering targeted responses to violence against women and their children. Australian and international businesses are increasingly recognising that violence against women – from condescending attitudes to sexual abuse and homicide – is a workplace issue. Action includes safeguarding products and services from being used to facilitate violence, for example using company cars or mobile phones to stalk or harass women, and providing appropriate support or other interventions for staff who experience or perpetrate violence. The corporate sector can also take action in the way it operates on a day-to-day basis, for example through staff and customer policies and programmes. It can also contribute to the broader community, for example, through in-kind support and philanthropy. Some businesses already contribute, and national collaboration could further enhance these efforts.

International examples illustrate what an influential, coordinated and sustainable response by Australia's corporate sector could look like. Corporate alliances such as the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence

(United States) and the Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence (United Kingdom) have been influential in enabling like-minded businesses to collaborate on projects and support culture change both within and beyond their organisations (Case Study 2).<sup>136</sup> These alliances bring together corporate sector leaders to co-design, promote and coordinate initiatives aimed at addressing gender inequality and reducing violence against women and their children.

All Australian governments should support the corporate sector to establish a national corporate alliance. The national corporate alliance should support the promotion of culture change relating to gender equality and diversity awareness among all staff, suppliers, customers and the community. In addition, it should research and develop tools to support businesses of all sizes to identify and assist employees who experience violence, and address the behaviour of employees who perpetrate it. The terms of reference, structure and approach of the alliance should be negotiated with founding businesses.

The alliance and its activities should be funded by ongoing commitments and co-investment from members to support widespread national change both within and beyond their own organisations.

## RECOMMENDATION 1.2

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should work with corporate Australia to establish a national corporate alliance to take collective action to address gender inequality and violence against women and their children.

This alliance should support businesses of all sizes to:

- promote culture change relating to gender equality and diversity awareness among staff, suppliers, customers and the community
- identify and assist victims of violence
- eliminate violence-supportive attitudes and respond to men who perpetrate violence
- safeguard their products and services from being used to facilitate violence
- consider the feasibility of co-investment to support the work of the alliance.

## CASE STUDY 2

# EMPLOYERS LEADING BY EXAMPLE THROUGH CORPORATE ALLIANCES

The Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence in the United Kingdom is a group of companies and organisations dedicated individually and collectively to reducing the costs and consequences at work of partner violence.

Founded in 2005, the Corporate Alliance is the UK's only business-to-business charitable organisation that advises companies on ways to address and mitigate the risk that domestic violence poses to a company and its employees.

High profile members of the Corporate Alliance include BP, KPMG and The Body Shop. Through its members, the Corporate Alliance reaches around five million employees in the private, public and community sectors.

The Corporate Alliance has flexible offerings for businesses in different sectors, of different sizes, and with different needs. Companies can associate or affiliate with the Corporate Alliance and pay fees for different services, including accredited training, to address domestic violence and the impact in the workplace.

*'The Alliance has been a huge support... Every small business should consider partnering with the Alliance to ensure productivity and a safe, secure work environment.'* – **Matt Hay, Managing Director, Latimer Group**

Members of the Corporate Alliance can access:

- best practice workplace policy templates and implementation guidelines
- communications toolkits to raise workplace awareness
- accredited training sessions and materials
- space to share best practice and experiences with other organisations and experts.

In one year, the Corporate Alliance assisted companies to act on 128 disclosures about incidents of domestic violence made by employees who required immediate support for their safety. All of these employees are safe and in work, and the risk to business was also mitigated.



## Changing community attitudes requires a sustained, nationally consistent approach to primary prevention

Primary prevention refers to public education messages delivered in a range of settings to stop violence before it occurs. Primary prevention strategies aim to address deep-seated attitudes and practices that excuse, justify or even promote violence against women and their children. Primary prevention works across the whole population. It recognises that individual behaviour change cannot be achieved prior to, or in isolation from, broader changes in the underlying drivers of violence across communities, organisations and society as a whole.<sup>137</sup>

Over the past 40 years, Australian governments have achieved significant gains through sustained national leadership on important social issues including road safety, skin cancer prevention and cigarette smoking. In each of these cases, cultural change was achieved through primary prevention initiatives (including public awareness campaigns), research, and supporting regulatory measures. Primary prevention strategies which aim to reduce violence against women and their children in Australia should draw on past experience in these areas.

Work to change social norms relating to gender equality and violence against women is still in its infancy. Research presented to the Advisory Panel shows that young people's attitudes towards violence and gender relations can be categorised in five ways (Figure 8). Forty seven per cent of young people surveyed already understand the damaging impacts of violence-supportive attitudes, but 26 per cent do not understand the message or reject it outright. The remaining 28 per cent of young people recognise that physical violence and control is not acceptable, but feel other forms of controlling behaviour are acceptable.<sup>138</sup>

A National Campaign to address young people's attitudes towards violence and relationships was endorsed by COAG in early April 2015. The Campaign was developed in consultation with the Advisory Panel, and will be launched in the coming months. This Campaign focuses on intervening before violence occurs by addressing the violence-supportive attitudes of young people around respectful relationships and gender equality (Case Study 3).<sup>139</sup>

To support the roll-out of the National Campaign, whole-of-school initiatives should be expanded through the school curriculum, based on the work of Our Watch and White Ribbon, whose work supports school leaders to create more equal and respectful school cultures.<sup>140</sup> Whole-of-school initiatives engage parents, teachers and the broader school community to disseminate positive messages to all parts of the community and influence young people when they are most open to new ideas. Such approaches have been demonstrably effective in other areas including bullying and discrimination, drugs and alcohol, and health and wellbeing.<sup>141</sup> While every state and territory has some programmes focused on promoting respect, equality and responsibility in schools, these should be expanded into every school to ensure that every child is provided messages that promote gender equality. Information should also be provided to help young people to identify and respond to violence in their own relationships. This is covered in more detail in Action Area 3.

## CASE STUDY 3

# GOVERNMENTS AIM TO CHANGE ATTITUDES THROUGH A NATIONAL CAMPAIGN

The Commonwealth and state and territory governments have together committed \$30 million to run a National Campaign to reduce violence against women and their children.

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The Campaign, due to launch in the coming months, will focus on primary prevention and galvanising the community to change young people's attitudes to violence before they become entrenched and lead to negative behaviours. It will be a multi-media campaign, spanning television, newspapers and social media.

The Campaign will target young people as well as those who influence their attitudes and perceptions of appropriate behaviour. It will build on efforts already underway by states and territories to reduce violence against women and their children.

The Campaign will be based on extensive research into the attitudes of Australians towards violence against women, with a focus on young people.

It will also support diverse groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

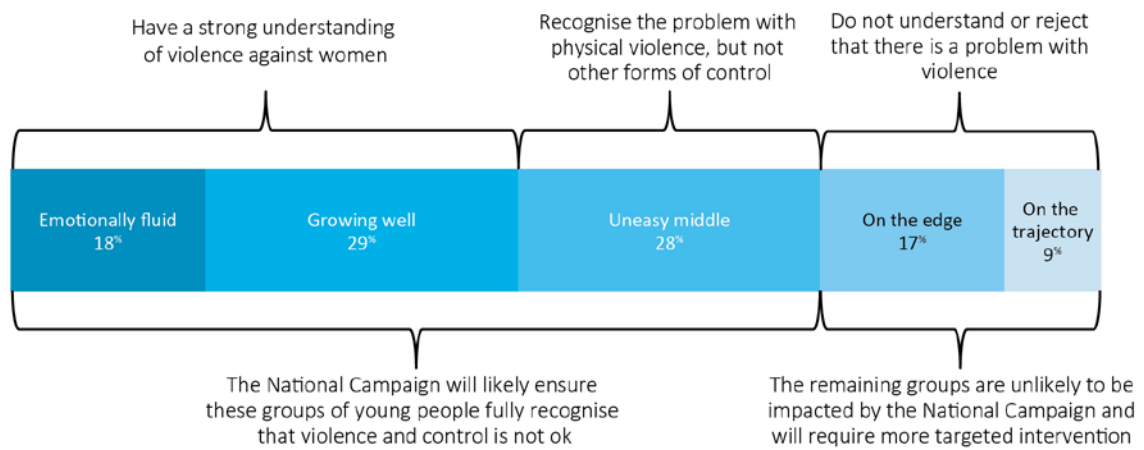
Views were collected from more than 1,000 people through surveys, workshops and one-on-one interviews.

The research uncovered worrying data on young people's attitudes:

- there is a low understanding of what constitutes violating or intimidatory conduct towards women among young Australians
- young Australians persistently minimise or excuse violent and aggressive behaviour, particularly by men towards women
- among young Australians, there is strong passive acceptance of disrespectful conduct towards women.

The Campaign will aim to change these attitudes by encouraging those in positions of influence to reflect on their own behaviours and how they shape disrespectful attitudes in young people.

Figure 8: Young Australians' attitudes towards violence and gender inequality can be categorised in five ways (2015).<sup>142</sup>



A focus on whole-of-school initiatives should reinforce the roll out of respectful relationship education in classrooms. Respectful relationships programmes are holistic, school-based primary prevention strategies that use the education system as a catalyst for cultural change. They provide teaching and learning resources on the themes of gender, power, violence, sex and healthy relationships, and they engage schools, as both education institutions and workplaces, to comprehensively address the drivers of gender-based violence.<sup>143</sup>

Beyond the National Campaign, a sustained, nationally consistent approach to primary prevention is required. Consistent messaging to reinforce positive behavioural norms is at the core of comprehensive prevention strategies.<sup>144</sup> An effective approach to the prevention of violence against women must coordinate and systematise the efforts of multiple stakeholders across Australia, and include partnerships with community organisations, work places, faith-based organisations, sporting clubs and the corporate sector.<sup>145</sup>

To date, collective national commitment to primary prevention has been mixed. Under the National Plan, all Australian governments agreed to establish a national primary prevention organisation, Our Watch, in recognition that motivating community action and changing attitudes would require national level leadership and coordination. Our Watch, VicHealth and ANROWS have since developed a world-first primary prevention framework, *Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence against Women and their Children*, to guide government, private sector, civil society and community efforts to prevent violence against women and their children.<sup>146</sup>

While Our Watch was established in July 2013, not all jurisdictions have become members of the organisation – New South Wales, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory have yet to join.

A lack of coordinated participation by these jurisdictions may lead to the duplication of primary prevention activities and increase the risk of mixed messaging. Lack of consistency can create confused messaging and dilute efforts to ensure population-wide spread, especially given the increasing extent to which the internet and national television are used to disseminate messages.

This mixed messaging may undermine prevention efforts by governments and non-government organisations.

A key reason for the effectiveness of whole-of-school initiatives, for example, is their ability to provide students multiple exposures to key messages across the curriculum and in a range of contexts.<sup>147</sup> School-based primary prevention programmes must be of sufficient duration and intensity to produce change. Children acquire new skills and knowledge through both ‘exercise’ (meaningful repetition and application of information) and ‘intensity’ (exciting opportunities to practise putting new knowledge and skills into action).<sup>148</sup> Similar reasoning could be applied to primary prevention messaging more broadly, especially with communications technologies easily crossing state and territory borders: if multiple messages exist, the impacts of meaningful repetition and intensity can be lost.

To ensure that primary prevention messaging successfully addresses violence against women in Australia over time, all jurisdictions should collectively commit to a long-term national primary prevention strategy. Preventing violence against women must be a shared endeavour, with governments working together in partnership to ensure that primary prevention efforts are consistent and mutually reinforcing.<sup>149</sup> This strategy should build on relevant work already underway, including the work of Our Watch and the National Campaign. It should be regularly and rigorously monitored and evaluated to ensure that activities under the strategy continue to be relevant and effective.

A national primary prevention strategy should focus on addressing young people’s attitudes towards violence and relationships. In particular, messaging should target those young people who struggle to understand the issue or reject that violence against women and their children is a problem (Figure 8). ‘Bystander action’ should also be promoted. Bystanders should be urged to engage and constructively ‘call out’ unacceptable attitudes and behaviour, rather than dismiss or encourage them.<sup>150</sup>

In addition, targeting key influencers is an important part of primary prevention.<sup>151</sup> The national primary prevention strategy should include messaging about how key influencers can engage and role model acceptable attitudes and behaviours. To achieve this, the strategy should engage and partner with stakeholders who have deep and significant reach into local communities and who have the power to influence national debate, such as education providers, businesses, clubs and associations, including sporting clubs, faith-based organisations and the media.

In addition to general messaging, the national primary prevention strategy should include complementary communication tailored to groups for whom the general messaging is unsuited or inaccessible. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, where messaging should be designed in collaboration with local communities and draw on local cultural strengths. Messaging should also be adapted and translated for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, where messages should address violence-supportive cultural values and build on cultural strengths. Primary prevention messages must be accessible and also highlight the types of violence that women and children with disabilities might experience.

It is also vital that messages reach beyond metropolitan areas and into regional, rural and remote communities, because of the high visibility of traditional gender roles in these settings. This includes gender roles that reinforce male power and control over women and view domestic violence as a private family matter.<sup>152</sup> Communities in these areas should be closely involved in the design, development and implementation of messaging and education.

### RECOMMENDATION 1.3

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should commit to a long-term national primary prevention strategy, drawing on the shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia.

As a priority, governments should:

- work with Our Watch to develop a coordinated, consistent national primary prevention strategy
- incorporate ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure activities under the strategy continue to be relevant and effective
- ensure communication developed as a part of the strategy is adapted to reach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people with disabilities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, as well as people living in metropolitan, regional, rural or remote areas
- consider opportunities to partner with the corporate and community sectors to deliver primary prevention and communication activities.

### Ensure a nationally consistent approach to training mainstream professionals

Educating mainstream professionals about the dynamics of gender, power and violence against women can improve the early identification of, and responses to, violence against women and their children. Foundations should be laid in training programmes and courses through compulsory modules, and the importance of this training should be emphasised. Future training for professionals likely to come into contact with victims and perpetrators of violence should build on existing work and relevant competencies in nationally endorsed frameworks. This includes the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, the *National Safe Schools Framework*, the *Australian Curriculum*, the *National Curriculum for Professional Development for Australian Judicial Officers*, and the *Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Curriculum for Australian General Practice*.

Work should build on existing training where possible. For example, some education about violence against women and their children is provided to medical students. However, a study of 15 Australian medical schools highlighted that students currently receive only limited and ad hoc education on the subject. Most degrees dedicated only two hours to the issue, and violence against women was often pushed out of curriculums by competing demands.<sup>153</sup>

Professional and continuing training for workers who have regular contact with victims, perpetrators and their children is also important. This training should be updated regularly and be a compulsory

requirement for regular re-accreditation wherever possible. This should improve the safety of women and their children, as well as the consistency of the system as a whole, so that outcomes do not depend on which magistrate or police officer attends a case. In general, consistency is extremely important when responding to violence against women and their children. It reassures victims of violence that they can trust the system, and reinforces with perpetrators that they will be held to account for harming women and their children.

Police responses, for example, are currently inconsistent; some police are very supportive while others are described as disrespectful, dismissive or desensitised to the victim's report.<sup>154</sup>

In the justice sector, improving knowledge about gender bias and the nature of violence against women can also help to ensure that perpetrators are held to account and victims are treated consistently.<sup>155</sup> Research shows that judicial officers' communication about, and understanding of, violence informs decisions that can protect or endanger victims and their families.<sup>156</sup> Evidence also suggests that some positive change is occurring in some jurisdictions.<sup>157</sup> Further enhancing judicial education, and ensuring ongoing critical self-reflection and rigour across all professionals working in it, will support judicial officers in their roles and improve responses to violence against women and their children. To enable the best support for victims, access to training should also be expanded to non-judicial court staff and others in the justice system, such as support workers and family consultants.<sup>158</sup>

Evidence also suggests that parole board decision making may not reflect a clear and systematic understanding of the complexities of gender inequality and violence against women.<sup>159</sup> The safety of women and their children could be improved if parole boards shared a more consistent understanding of the dynamics of violence against women and their children, as well as if they shared more information with relevant agencies and services. This latter point is addressed in more detail in Recommendation 6.6.

#### RECOMMENDATION 1.4

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should work with education institutions and professional bodies to ensure that professionals likely to come into contact with victims and perpetrators of violence can identify and respond to violence against women and their children, and understand the impacts of gender and social inequality.

Training should be delivered through:

- higher education institutions that train people likely to have professional contact with victims, their children and perpetrators (including, but not limited to, teachers, nurses, counsellors, childcare workers, social workers, lawyers, immigration staff and general practitioners)
- professional and continuing education bodies for people who have regular contact with victims and perpetrators (including, but not limited to, judges, magistrates, parole boards, family consultants and police). Where possible, regular training should be a mandatory part of ongoing accreditation for all professionals who work on cases related to violence against women and their children.

## 2 Women who experience violence should be empowered to make informed choices

When violence occurs, women may follow a range of pathways to seek support and safety for themselves and their children. In many cases, current responses to violence unfairly burden the victim by placing the onus for safety on her and failing to intervene effectively with the perpetrator.

All responses to violence must put women's safety first and start with the premise that the only way to guarantee the safety of women and their children is to address the source of the violence by holding the perpetrator to account (Action Area 4).

At the same time, women should be provided with the options, information and support they need. They should be empowered to make informed choices about how they will respond to, and recover from, violence. This includes the option to stay safely in their homes, if they choose to do so and if supported by a risk assessment (Recommendation 6.1).

## Current responses to violence against women in Australia

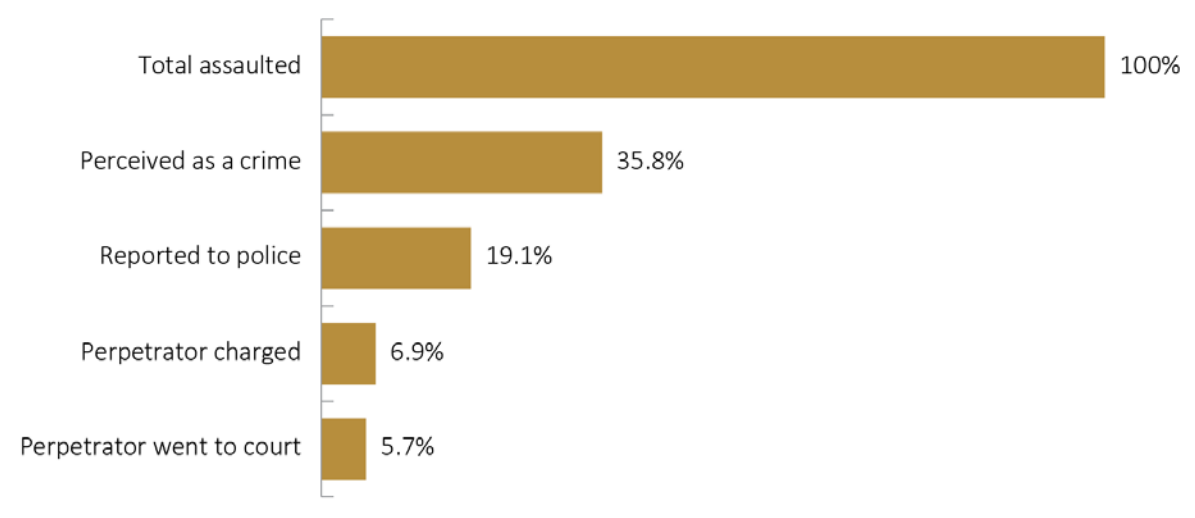
### Some women never report violence

It is estimated that one in four women who have experienced partner violence since the age of 15 years has never told anyone about it.<sup>160</sup> Sexual violence is also underreported (Figure 9).<sup>161</sup> Technology-facilitated violence is also likely to be underreported.<sup>162</sup> The Advisory Panel has heard numerous explanations for this low reporting rate, including the victim:

- not perceiving the violence to be a crime, particularly when the violence is not physical
- accepting that violence is ‘what men do’ or that he won’t do it again
- feeling ashamed
- fearing reporting to the police in case she is not taken seriously or in case the violence escalates
- fearing for her life or the welfare of her children if she reports violence or leaves
- fearing that her children will be removed. This is especially significant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women with disabilities
- fearing deportation
- not having clear pathways or access to support services. This is a significant barrier especially for women in high-risk groups and in relation to newer forms of technology-facilitated violence
- feeling like there is no way out.

A number of these factors often come together in the lives of women who experience violence. As a result, by the time violence is reported – if it ever is – the violence and its impacts can be severe and the situation complex. Recommendations in this report will help to improve reporting of violence against women and their children.

**Figure 9: Women's most recent sexual assault by a male perpetrator, whether the incident was perceived as a crime by them at the time, and subsequent police and court involvement (2012).**<sup>163</sup>





## Women escape violence in different ways

If women report violence to authorities or women's services, they are faced with a complicated range of options and pathways. In the majority of cases, it is assumed that it is up to women to recognise violence, seek support, and leave the situation to protect themselves.

Of the women who have experienced violence and separated from their partner, 51 per cent moved away from home.<sup>164</sup> As described in Part A, this can be logistically, financially, legally and emotionally very difficult, especially if the couple has children. Leaving can be even more difficult in cases where perpetrators are the main providers of financial support, personal care or permanent residency status.<sup>165</sup>

The Advisory Panel acknowledges the invaluable work carried out by services that support victims of violence and their children, including women's services and refuges. Good support exists for some women who experience violence. However, it is clear that the quality and accessibility of services is variable, primarily driven by resourcing constraints. Differences between services include availability on weekends and after hours, the type of information provided, and links to other providers. Resource constraints are discussed in more detail in Recommendation 6.2.

Around half of the women who separate from a violent partner report separating several times prior to the final separation.<sup>166</sup> They return to the violent relationship for a range of reasons, but most commonly because the partner has promised to stop the violence, because they are committed to the relationship, or for the sake of children.<sup>167</sup> One in four women who leave reports that the violence increased after their final separation.<sup>168</sup>

Most women who have left a violent relationship stayed with a friend or relative at some stage (80 per cent). Instead, or in addition, some relocated to a new house or rental property while escaping violence (27 per cent).<sup>169</sup> While numbers of women who use women's refuges and supported accommodation are not always enumerated, these services are also often used, and demand is frequently higher than capacity.

Some jurisdictions have made legislative changes to help victims of violence to leave abusive relationships. For example, the South Australian government has introduced reforms to the *Residential Tenancies Act 1995 (SA)*.<sup>170</sup> The amendments permit victims of domestic violence to terminate leases without financial penalties and to remove their name from a joint lease without the consent of the other party. They also stop a tenant's personal information being listed on a Residential Tenancy Database, and protect victims of violence from being required to pay for damage caused to the property by the perpetrator.<sup>171</sup>

Expecting women and their children to move to alternative accommodation may be effective in some cases, but not in the majority of cases.<sup>172</sup> In many situations, women and their children might be expected to move to refuges or accommodation that may be a significant distance away from family and friends, or are in settings which are less familiar or not as adequately suited to their needs as their homes.<sup>173</sup> One result is that many women who experience violence and want to leave do not: of women who experienced partner violence and never separated from the perpetrator, half (54 per cent) had wanted to leave.<sup>174</sup>

### Some cases will progress to the courts

Only a small proportion of reported cases of violence against women and their children ends up in the courts.<sup>175</sup> Women may be supported in navigating the justice system by legal assistance providers, including legal aid, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal aid, community legal services, and family violence prevention legal services. As with women's services, the capacity of these services to meet demand is also limited by a lack of resources. Resource constraints are addressed through Recommendation 6.2.

For most women and their children who are seeking legal protection, their journey in the court system begins in the state and territory domestic and family violence courts. These state courts provide the immediate response to a crisis.<sup>176</sup> Women may apply for domestic violence orders, which prevent a perpetrator from approaching a victim, through state and territory magistrates' courts; in some cases police can also apply on their behalf. These are civil matters that can then lead to criminal offences if orders are breached or if other criminal charges, such as assault, are made. As women will often be supported by services as cases progress through the courts, there is a need for close communication between the justice sector and women's services. This is addressed further in Action Area 6.

If a woman decides to separate, or is separated from, her violent partner, she may be required to resolve parenting disputes through the family law system, which is separate from the state court system. Parents engaging through the family law system typically have complex issues and are more likely to report a history of domestic and family violence.<sup>177</sup>

Family courts are responsible for resolving parenting disputes that are not suitable for mediation.<sup>178</sup> They make decisions about which parent(s) the child should spend time with. The child's best interests are the paramount consideration in such decisions (see Action Area 6). The child protection system may also be involved if a victim's children are subject to protection orders. State and territory child protection systems deal with serious risks to children when the state is a party to legal proceedings.

The Family Law Council notes that family law services are underutilised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people due to a lack of understanding of family law, and resistance to, or fear of, the system.<sup>179</sup> The Advisory Panel also heard that the formality of courts can deter Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from engaging with them. The Family Court and Federal Circuit Courts have made continuing efforts to improve access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with commitments expressed through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander action plans.

Women with disabilities, women from regional and remote areas, and women with other complex needs (including those in prison) experience difficulty in accessing the courts system, including family law, for a range of reasons (see Action Area 6). For example, the Family Law Council concluded that people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, particularly those in new and emerging communities, face a number of barriers in the family law system.<sup>180</sup> Action plans have been developed to address these concerns.

Some parts of the system can cause women further harm by failing to recognise and understand the impacts of violence and the use of coercive control to disempower victims. In particular, governments are increasingly recognising that facing a perpetrator in court, and possibly also under cross-examination when the perpetrator is representing himself, can cause additional significant trauma to a victim who may have experienced years of coercive control and abuse. This may deter women from pursuing matters through the courts, which means the perpetrator may never be made accountable for his actions.

There is currently limited opportunity for victims to participate in court processes without physically appearing in court. In a small number of courts, victims or perpetrators can testify from a different location via remote witnessing (a hearing with a video link to a site in the court building) or remote video conferencing (a hearing with a video link to a site outside the court building). Some courts allow pre-recorded testimony, although this can make cross-examination and responding to magistrates' or judges' queries complicated.

## Women and their children are not being kept safe enough

It is concerning that many of the current responses to women who report violence can add to a woman's sense of isolation and lack of control over her life,<sup>181</sup> and can discourage her from reporting violence. The Advisory Panel has heard that while many services provide essential safety and support, many responses across the whole system can cause further harm to a woman who has experienced violence, and her children, by adding to her:

- **isolation**, for example, when she is expected to 'just leave' her home or community, to give up her mobile phone, or be separated from a companion animal
- **risk of experiencing violence**, for example, when leaving a violent partner increases the risk of more severe violence
- **powerlessness**, for example, when she lacks accessible information about her choices, rights and options
- **financial stress**, for example, when removal of the perpetrator places additional financial burden on her
- **trauma**, for example, when she is required to face her abuser in court and speak out against someone who has controlled, harmed and disempowered her for a long period of time
- **burden of responsibility**, for example, when the child protection system names her as the protective parent. This makes her, and not the perpetrator, ultimately responsible for the situation. If she fails to protect her children from the perpetrator she risks becoming the subject of a protection order and/or the children may be removed
- **vulnerability**, for example, when she, and the services assisting her, are unaware of the ways technology could also be used to stalk or track her
- **fear**, for example, a woman may fear being deported, fear that the system will not take her seriously, or fear of reprisals from her partner

- **confusion**, for example, when she must navigate complicated and disjointed police, legal, medical, housing and financial support services.

Current responses can also deprive children of supportive and familiar environments, disrupt their schooling and social lives, and strain parent-child relationships.<sup>182</sup>

The Advisory Panel has repeatedly heard that a change in mindset is needed. The accepted view that a woman should flee or escape violence must be challenged. Instead, all approaches to violence against women should prioritise the safety of women and their children, and be based on the understanding that:

- the only way to keep women and their children safe is to deal with the perpetrator in the first instance, and hold him to account in the longer term
- the victim should not have to bear the burden of responsibility for her safety and the safety of her children
- the victim should have choices available to her, and the information and support necessary to make confident and informed decisions about her future
- there should be a focus on ongoing safety of the woman and her children, and recovery from trauma.

## More should be done to keep women and their children safe

### Keep women and their children safe in their homes

‘Safe at home’ models minimise disruption to the victims of domestic and family violence, and can reduce the risk of re-victimisation.<sup>183</sup> This approach removes the perpetrator from the home and supports the woman and her children to remain in the home if she wishes to do so, and if the decision is supported by a risk assessment.

Such models allow women and their children to remain in settings where they have strong support networks – whether for childcare, personal care, employment, health, community, family or cultural support. ‘Safe at home’ models can also allow women with disabilities and their children to stay in their homes or supported accommodation settings, to maintain support and care arrangements already established, and/or to remain in facilities with tailored aids and modifications.

Initiatives which support victims to remain in their homes and communities remain underused and inconsistent across the country. Programmes vary between jurisdictions and they are generally only implemented in capital cities and larger regional towns. Challenges remain to implementing these programmes in regional, rural and remote areas.

International evidence supports the introduction of a ‘safe at home’ model as the preferred response to violence against women and their children. Different national models in Europe, for example the Austrian model and the United Kingdom’s Sanctuary Schemes, are world-class examples of how such an approach could operate in practice (Case Study 4).<sup>184</sup> The Austrian model has been evaluated twice so far, with overwhelmingly positive results in terms of women kept safe and fewer

perpetrators re-offending.<sup>185</sup> In each of these countries, the model has been the normal practice for over 10 years.

Strong overarching national legislation, service integration – including partnerships between governments, women’s services, police and the judiciary – and community education are central to the success of these models, and should also be central to Australian efforts. Public education is addressed in Action Area 1, and integration is addressed further in Action Area 6. In particular, comprehensive links must be made with the judiciary and corrective services, whose work holding perpetrators to account (see Action Area 4) must be closely integrated with services for women. Governments must ensure that there is policy and legislation to facilitate the removal of perpetrators from the home, and sufficient support and accommodation should be available for men who leave the home, if they need it (this is addressed in Recommendation 4.3).

The support required to allow women to stay at home should be determined by a risk assessment, and by asking the victim what they need in order to feel safe. Police in particular are often the first responders to situations of violence against women, and are responsible for deciding whether or not to remove the perpetrator, often by carrying out a risk assessment. Risk assessment is addressed in more detail in Recommendation 6.1.

Supporting women and children to remain in their homes may require upgrading security measures (for example, by installing motion-sensor outdoor security lights, deadlocks, screen doors, home alarms, and/or safety rooms) and ensuring that communications and disability support technologies are not being used for tracking and control. Additional medical and support services may also be required, especially in cases where the victim is a woman with disabilities and the perpetrator is a carer. Providing support for women and their children to remain in their homes can be more cost effective than providing emergency accommodation for them.<sup>186</sup>

Financial and housing support for victims to ensure stable housing in periods of uncertainty and vulnerability may also be necessary, irrespective of their tenancy arrangements. Staying at home can often be costly for a victim, especially in situations where a woman has previously relied on the perpetrator for financial support, where she does not have access to bank accounts, or if she must take time off work to care for herself and her children. Financial support can be achieved through mechanisms such as brokerage funds (for example, by providing short-term rental subsidies or mortgage top ups),<sup>187</sup> or models such as the Victorian Government’s Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response Initiative, which can provide a maximum of \$9,000 for up to 12 weeks to fund immediate support to victims of violence and their children.<sup>188</sup>

‘Safe at home’ initiatives will not be suitable in every case. Some women will not want to stay in the home. Alternatively, even if the system is reconfigured to address perpetrators more effectively, it will not be possible to fully mitigate the risks in every case. For some women in culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and women living in regional, rural and remote areas, approaches suited to their particular situation may need to be developed to overcome barriers specific to them. Approaches should be developed and implemented in close consultation and collaboration with women and their children living in these communities. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, it is particularly important to take a holistic approach that acknowledges local community

dynamics and kinship ties, as well as the risk of lateral violence (this is discussed further in Action Area 5).

Importantly, 'safe at home' initiatives must not undermine the capacity for accommodation and support services to assist women and their children who prefer to leave, or for whom the risk of remaining in the home is too great. Emphasis should be on working towards a nationally consistent model that ensures victims have a choice about whether to remain in their homes or not, with the preferred response being to deal with the perpetrator and keep victims safe at home, if they choose to remain there and if it is safe to do so.

### RECOMMENDATION 2.1

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should ensure that the preferred response to violence against women and their children is to keep victims safe at home, if they choose to remain in their home and if it is safe to do so. This should be supported by removal of the perpetrator, and through appropriate policy and legislative settings.

Governments should:

- expand 'safe at home' models of intervening in violence against women as the preferred model of support and option for women
- develop a nationally consistent approach to tenancy legislation through the introduction and/or harmonisation of legislation that assists women who choose to remain in their homes and removes perpetrators
- provide financial assistance to allow women experiencing violence to maintain existing housing, irrespective of the nature of the victim's tenancy arrangements (for example, owner-occupier, private renter or public renter)
- ensure that additional resources and support are provided to women with disabilities as required
- strengthen accommodation services for women who need to leave their home either temporarily or permanently.

## CASE STUDY 4

# THE 'SAFE AT HOME' MODEL IS INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICE

The 'safe at home' model involves removing the perpetrator of violence so that women and their children can remain safe in their own home.

The 'safe at home' model has been successfully protecting women overseas for over a decade, including in the United Kingdom and Austria. Fundamental to this success has been the shift in public thinking from 'removing the victim' to 'removing the perpetrator.'

In the United Kingdom, 'Sanctuary Schemes' that keep women safe at home were introduced in response to findings in the early 2000s that 13 per cent of homelessness resulted from family violence.

The Sanctuary Schemes vary in how they enable women at risk of domestic violence to stay within the home, but have key elements in common: they are implemented following a risk assessment and/or at request of the victim; and are coordinated by a multi-agency workforce, including Sanctuary Scheme workers, domestic violence support staff, police, and fire services.

The Scheme often involves installing security measures such as security screens on doors and windows and alarms to help keep women safe. The cost of these measures is much less than the cost of providing temporary accommodation.

An evaluation of the United Kingdom scheme found that perpetrators did not breach security measures in the majority of cases and revictimisation was reduced.

The 'safe at home' model in Austria goes a step further by mandating the removal of perpetrators from the home.

Initial eviction and barring orders of 10–20 days are served by police. These orders are a preventive measure and are not contingent on a physically violent act having already taken place.

Longer-term civil law restraining orders of more than three months can then be applied if appropriate. These block all forms of perpetrator contact with the family, removing the perpetrator's sphere of influence so that victims have more space to lodge further proceedings.

In Austria, both types of interventions are linked with mandated perpetrator intervention programmes and services to victims.

In Austria between 1997 and 2004 there were almost 27,000 evictions of perpetrators. In that time, around 12 per cent of perpetrator infringements occurred, suggesting that the punitive measures were effective. Further, the number of victims reporting violence and seeking to access the scheme has risen gradually since the changes. This suggests increasing levels of confidence in the system.

### Minimise the risks associated with emerging technologies

The Advisory Panel heard that when women are properly informed and supported, it is possible to reduce the incidence and impact of technology-facilitated violence, as well as increase the likelihood of perpetrators being caught and sanctioned. While some women's services offer specialised assistance regarding technology-facilitated violence to women, the onus largely continues to be on victims to protect themselves. This often means that a woman is expected to delete her and her children's social media accounts, get rid of mobile phones, purchase and install security software, change email addresses and usernames, and/or avoid uploading any photographs or comments.<sup>189</sup>

Governments and non-government organisations need to develop options to support women in these circumstances so that they are not forced to give up technologies or accounts that provide them with important social connection and support.

Technology safety can be achieved by better informing women and the service providers and frontline staff who support them of the risks associated with technology and how to identify them. Police are particularly important in this regard, because they are often the first to respond to violence and assess risk, and because they provide clear links to the justice sector, including through providing evidence to courts. A national point of contact for technical assistance should be established to advise victims and the professionals supporting them.

It is also important for the judiciary to be aware of changes in technology and associated behaviours which facilitate violence. The judiciary can be informed through ongoing formal education programmes, bench books, discussions with colleagues and evidence presented in individual cases. Recommendations in Action Area 1 (especially Recommendation 1.4 on educating professionals) and Action Area 6 (especially Recommendation 6.2 on a national risk assessment) should consider the dangers and opportunities of technology where appropriate.

The Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner, whose aim is to help children and young people to adopt safe and responsible online behaviour, has been working with a range of relevant bodies, including WESNET, to develop a resource package about online safety for women. This includes translated versions for culturally and linguistically diverse communities. However, technology safety advice remains inconsistent in its scope and availability across the country.

At the same time, collecting digital evidence in the correct way assists in court proceedings against the perpetrator and can help to empower victims. Some training about how to do this is already delivered by WESNET and the Domestic Violence Resource Centre of Victoria (DVRCV). Some jurisdictions incorporate digital evidence training into programmes for police, and their knowledge is updated regularly as technology evolves. Other jurisdictions need to more comprehensively commit to the development and introduction of new training modules. Training packages should be delivered in a range of formats and be accessible across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas.

The American National Network to End Domestic Violence, and particularly its *Safety Net: National Safe and Strategic Technology Project*, is a model of best practice that Australia can build upon (Case Study 5).<sup>190</sup> The National Network is founded on strong partnerships between law enforcement



agencies, the judiciary and technology companies. It researches and teaches the fundamentals of how to recognise and address technology-facilitated violence, and also provides frontline workers with a technical and support service they can consult for up-to-date advice and technical assistance when dealing with cases of technology-facilitated violence. It also provides regular forums on technology safety to bring relevant stakeholders together to discuss solutions to emerging problems. This is especially important because technology and the risks associated with it change rapidly and frequently.

## RECOMMENDATION 2.2

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should ensure that the opportunities presented by the use of technology are widely understood, and risks mitigated where necessary.

Governments should:

- provide support to police, legal services and frontline services to deliver technology safety advice to women at risk of violence, even if the woman has not formally reported technology-facilitated violence or abuse
- establish a dedicated national point of contact for technical assistance and advice about dealing with technology-facilitated violence
- develop and support training for victims and frontline staff on the use of technology for gathering evidence about a perpetrator's actions
- support forums on technology safety that bring together relevant stakeholders to discuss solutions to emerging problems.

## CASE STUDY 5

# THE SAFETY NET PROJECT IN THE UNITED STATES IS TARGETING TECHNOLOGY SAFETY

The Safety Net Project works with communities, government and technology companies to address how emerging technologies affect the safety and privacy of victims of domestic violence, sexual violence and stalking.

The National Network to End Domestic Violence in the United States established the Safety Net Project in response to the increased use of technology to facilitate violence against women.

Since 2002, the Project has recruited, educated and supported a hand-picked network of technology safety trainers to combat technology-facilitated abuse. These trainers help victims of violence and their allies to develop safe technology practices and understand how perpetrators misuse technology to do further harm.

The objectives of the Project are to:

- **work with communities and agencies** to understand how emerging technology affects victims of domestic violence, sexual violence and stalking
- **educate and train** a wide range of community agencies who work with women experiencing all forms of violence on ways to use technology strategically to improve their safety and privacy
- **advocate** for policy change to protect victims and survivors.

As a result of the Project, every region in the United States now has one or more trained technology safety advocates to quickly evaluate how technology is affecting victims of violence, and what to do about it.

In 2013, the Safety Net Project hosted its inaugural Technology Summit, bringing together advocates, victim service providers, law enforcement, technology experts and other professionals to address the intersections of technology, safety and privacy. The Summit also helped build stronger working relationships across the organisations and sectors.

The National Network in the United States is currently working with the Australian Women's Services Network (WESNET) to establish a Safety Net Project in Australia. A number of Australians have already been trained to deliver the United States programme locally.

### Use technology to improve access to services and courts

New and emerging technologies have the potential to improve victims' access to a wide range of support services. Online support services could supplement face-to-face services for women. These services can reach regional and remote areas where there is sufficient bandwidth and service coverage.<sup>191</sup> They can also improve access for at-home mothers, and women with disabilities. Online services offer immediacy, privacy and convenience and, where service models permit, may be available at any time of the day.

In addition, online communication and smartphone devices are the preferred method of communication for young people. Technology-based services may therefore be more suitable for children and young people than other forms of engagement (see Action Area 3).

There are existing examples of good practice to build upon. For example, Relationships Australia Queensland (RAQ) has provided online family dispute resolution services since 2009. RAQ's service provides a safe, secure environment in which a dispute resolution practitioner can actively facilitate mediation sessions. Online mediation proceeds as a face-to-face mediation normally would, but clients log in to the system via their computer, and also connect by phone. The RAQ platform also enables the visual sharing of information online and recording and emailing of notes. An evaluation of the online service identified clear benefits when compared to telephone services. Clients found the online service more convenient and appreciated the way webcams enhanced engagement and increased rapport.<sup>192</sup>

In another example, Relationships Australia South Australia is using existing remote access technologies to develop a secure client portal that can be accessed via a computer or mobile device. The portal will allow staff and their clients to interact online (through chat and SMS) and enable clients to complete screening questionnaires and digitally sign official documents.<sup>193</sup>

A key challenge for the delivery of online services is the need to ensure that both clients and staff have the skills required to engage with technology.<sup>194</sup> Proficiency with technology may be less common among older women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disabilities, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and women with low levels of education or literacy, and these women should be supported to overcome barriers to using technology where the use of it would benefit them.<sup>195</sup> Online services are also less effective in dealing with immediate crises. Technology should therefore be considered as an adjunct to other services.<sup>196</sup> Additionally, organisations should ensure that the adoption of technological solutions does not compromise the safety of women and their children, for instance, if a perpetrator is monitoring the victim's online or smartphone activity through spyware.

Technology also has the potential to reduce trauma and protect women from harm in court settings by enabling remote testimony from both victims and perpetrators. There are particular concerns about victims of violence being cross-examined in the family court by ex-partners who represent themselves.<sup>197</sup> For some women, minimising the need to physically confront their perpetrator may be critical in deciding whether to pursue a matter through the courts. The Advisory Panel has been advised that the Commonwealth is considering the issue of cross-examination in family law matters,

beginning with hosting a roundtable with justice sector stakeholders in 2016. The Advisory Panel supports work to resolve this issue and looks forward to the outcomes.

While remote witnessing already exists in some courts, it is not always used in practice.<sup>198</sup> Further, the use of video conferencing from a location removed from the court (for example, a women's service) is currently very limited. One example is a video conferencing pilot at the Victorian Magistrates' Court (Case Study 6) that is being conducted in collaboration with Women's Legal Service Victoria.<sup>199</sup> This service should be expanded to reduce trauma and re-victimisation. It could particularly benefit women who are located in regional, rural and remote locations, as well as assist people who would have difficulty in attending court (for example, as a result of disability, or the need to care for children). This technology should also be used to allow – sometimes on direction by the magistrate – the perpetrator to participate remotely so that the woman can attend safely in person.

The Advisory Panel notes that different jurisdictions are more advanced than others in integrating technology into the court system. A range of barriers will need to be overcome, including low bandwidth, lack of infrastructure, and limited numbers of trained technicians. Where possible, best practice, for example, regarding staff training and technical solutions, should be shared nationally so that less advanced jurisdictions can build upon the lessons learned by those who are further advanced in trialling and implementing new technologies.

### RECOMMENDATION 2.3

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should continue to monitor, implement or expand trials of technology to support women who experience violence.

Specific trials should:

- evaluate and further develop the range of accessible online support services by identifying which online services for women work well and expanding them across jurisdictions
- implement remote video access to all courts that deal with cases of violence against women and their children. This should ensure that women do not have to appear face-to-face with, or in close proximity to, the perpetrator if they do not wish to do so.

## CASE STUDY 6

# THE MAGISTRATES' COURT OF VICTORIA IS USING TECHNOLOGY TO ASSIST VICTIMS

The Magistrates' Court of Victoria has trialled the use of video conferencing to improve access to the court system, with a particular focus on domestic violence proceedings.

In April 2015, the Magistrates' Court of Victoria partnered with Corrections Victoria to trial the use of internet-based video conference technology at Magistrates' Court and Children's Court venues and prisons across the state.

The trial included video conferencing in family violence intervention order proceedings at the Melbourne Magistrates' Court.

While the use of video conferencing technology for witnesses appearing remotely is not new – and is also used to allow prisoners to participate from within prison – the Magistrates' Court trial has opened up the technology to victims located at remote locations outside the court's premises.

The technology is used to support women who feel unsafe in attending court, while providing women with the opportunity to access legal and other support services remotely.

*'Attending court would have been a great difficulty and added stress.'* - **Trial participant**

As at December 2015, 15 women who experienced violence had used the video conferencing technology.

Feedback from victims, support and legal services and court officials has been highly positive.

*'I rate the experience highly. I felt safe and supported by the worker and well connected with the Court. Every woman should be able to do this.'* - **Trial participant**

The success of the technology is heavily reliant on a stable internet connection so as not to disrupt the court process. This is one limitation that prevents witnesses from participating from their own homes, and may lessen the benefits for women in rural and regional locations.

The Magistrates' Court is also trialling the use of an online application form for family violence intervention orders. While this process does not currently eliminate the need for applicants to go to court to sign the application and seek an order, it does reduce the contact time for victims at courts.

This trial will be rolled out to two additional locations in 2016.

### **Ensure that temporary residents can access support**

There is a significant number of women in Australia who are not permanent residents. On 30 September 2015, there were 1,869,550 temporary entrants in Australia, including 661,550 New Zealand (Special Category 444) visa holders, 425,740 student visa holders and 186,810 Temporary Skilled (subclass 457) visa holders.<sup>200</sup> As 33 per cent of women born overseas have reported experiencing violence since the age of 15 years,<sup>201</sup> it is probable that a similarly high proportion of the women on temporary visas will have experienced violence in their lifetimes.

Current migration rules and associated restrictions on access to support services for people without permanent residency can make migrant women who experience violence financially, socially and legally dependent on the perpetrators of violence. This can further reinforce her disempowerment.

The family violence provision of the *Migration Regulations 1994* was introduced to enable victims of family violence to escape abusive relationships by allowing them to still apply for permanent residency in the case of relationship breakdown with their Australian sponsor.<sup>202</sup> However, access to the provision is currently restricted to those on partner visas and certain skilled stream (business) visa classes, whose holders must follow lengthy and complicated bureaucratic processes to access the provision.<sup>203</sup> A significant number of women in other visa classes (such as prospective marriage visas, student visas and other working visas) cannot access the provision. The Advisory Panel heard from a number of stakeholders reaffirming the view that women in certain visa classes were remaining in unsafe and violent relationships in order to maintain their eligibility for permanent residency.

The vulnerability of women without permanent residency is further exacerbated by their inability to access the support services required for independent living (such as income support, affordable housing, Medicare and subsidised public transport) and limited rights to work.<sup>204</sup>

Migration rules and restriction of access to services should not have the effect of encouraging victims of violence to stay in violent relationships in the pursuit of a migration outcome. All victims of violence should be able to easily access the support services they need to help them live independently from perpetrators, regardless of their migration status. The Advisory Panel acknowledges the importance of maintaining the integrity of Australia's migration and social security systems, but the current system should do more to prioritise the safety of women and their children.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.4**

The Commonwealth should ensure that migration rules and eligibility requirements for support services do not disempower victims of violence or discourage them from leaving violent relationships.

The Commonwealth should:

- ensure that there are appropriate visa pathways to assist victims of family violence
- revise eligibility requirements to enable more victims of violence to access support services, including income support
- collaborate with state and territory governments and service providers to ensure that temporary residents who are victims of violence can easily access available support services.

**Empower women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds**

Australia has one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse populations in the world. Currently, around a quarter of Australia's population was born overseas and a further one fifth has at least one overseas-born parent. Around 20 per cent of the Australian population speaks a language other than English at home, with the most common languages spoken being Mandarin, Italian, Arabic and Cantonese.<sup>205</sup>

Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse communities have unique cultures, ethnicities, religions and migration histories. These can influence the ways they conceptualise and experience violence against women and their children. In some of these communities, gender inequality and cultural norms that accept men's power over women can lead to the 'normalisation' of violence and victim-blaming.<sup>206</sup> In addition, refugees and people fleeing violence can experience compounding factors that increase vulnerability, including uncertain immigration status, prior trauma, social exclusion and racism.<sup>207</sup>

The Advisory Panel heard that strategies that educate and support the community to recognise and respond appropriately to violence against women and their children are important. Men and community leaders can also play a broader role in establishing a community consensus against violence, promoting healthy relationships and encouraging violent men to change their behaviour.<sup>208</sup> It is equally important to foster women's and youth leadership in these communities and empower them to challenge negative attitudes.

For women who are newly arrived in Australia, social isolation and lack of support networks can make them highly dependent on their partner.<sup>209</sup> Some women and men in these communities may have a lack of understanding about what constitutes violence against women in Australia. Language barriers can make it harder for women to understand their rights and responsibilities, and the services available to them.<sup>210</sup>

Access to high-quality interpreting services is of critical importance to women in such situations.<sup>211</sup> Interpreting services enable women to disclose violence and seek help from frontline services. Interpreters can assist women to navigate the support system, and they have a direct impact on the

extent to which support services are effective in responding to the needs of women impacted by family violence.<sup>212</sup>

The Advisory Panel heard that there is currently an insufficient number of appropriately trained interpreters available to meet demand. Professional interpreters with expertise in violence against women are often not provided to women who experience violence, due to low availability of interpreters, insufficient training and support, or the cost to support services.<sup>213</sup> Interpreters are most needed when victims contact police and hospitals, and this often occurs in the early hours of the morning, a time when few interpreters are available. At these times especially, friends, family members and even children are called upon to interpret.<sup>214</sup>

Interpreters that are available may not meet professional standards of accuracy and impartiality, such as those set by the National Accreditation Authority for Translators and Interpreters. As a result, there are many reported instances of interpreters distorting women's statements, imposing their own personal views, and/or encouraging victims to stay in violent relationships.<sup>215</sup> Improving interpreters' understanding of what constitutes violence against women in Australia could help to improve interpreting services to women who experience violence.

Accredited services are available through the Commonwealth Government's Translating and Interpreting Service. This operates on a fee-for-service basis for government funded organisations or agencies.<sup>216</sup> The Advisory Panel heard that the costs associated with accessing quality interpreting services is a barrier to access given the constrained financial environment most service providers operate within.<sup>217</sup> The Commonwealth should ensure that funding arrangements (either with the states and territories, or directly with service providers) include adequate provisions to cover the cost of quality interpreting services to reduce the barriers to access for victims of violence against women and their children.

## RECOMMENDATION 2.5

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should implement actions to empower women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and support their communities to challenge gender inequality and respond to violence against women and their children.

Governments should:

- ensure culturally appropriate and high-quality interpreting and translating services are adequately resourced in all programmes or services that involve victims of violence, including where governments engage external service providers
- provide communities with consistent, accessible and culturally appropriate information on violence against women and their children, and on the range of support services available to them
- engage with men and community leaders and support them to establish a community consensus against violence, promote healthy relationships and encourage violent men to change their behaviour
- foster women's and young people's leadership and empower them to challenge violence-supportive attitudes and values.



### **Better meet the needs of women with disabilities**

Women with disabilities experience substantially higher levels of violence than other women, and violence against them is committed by a wider range of perpetrators, in a greater diversity of settings. Available evidence suggests that women with disabilities are 40 per cent more likely to be the victims of domestic violence than other women,<sup>218</sup> and more than 70 per cent will be victims of violent sexual encounters in their lifetimes.<sup>219</sup> Experiences of violence tend to occur over a longer period of time, resulting in more severe injuries.<sup>220</sup> However, given that many women with disabilities cannot access or are not supported to access services, violence against women with disabilities is acknowledged to be substantially higher than reported.<sup>221</sup>

Women with disabilities who are also Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, or who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer face greater barriers to accessing support due to the intersecting nature of the difficulties and disadvantage they often experience.

Removing the perpetrator can also be more complex in cases of violence against women with disabilities, especially if he also provides personal support and care. Perpetrators of violence against women with disabilities can include intimate partners, other family members or people providing personal care, either in the home or in institutional, public or service settings.<sup>222</sup> Women with disabilities in residential, institutional and service settings frequently experience sustained and multiple episodes of violence, particularly sexual violence.<sup>223</sup>

Some services for women with disabilities contribute to improving their safety (Case Study 7).<sup>224</sup> However, these services are not widespread or nationally consistent.

There remains a significant lack of understanding of the extent, nature and impact of violence against women with disabilities at the individual, institutional, community, service provider and criminal justice system levels, as well as in violence prevention policy.<sup>225</sup> This means it is unclear which responses to violence work better in which situations.

In addition, many service providers do not have a clear understanding of how to identify and support women with disabilities and their children who experience violence. There is a need to build awareness of the types of violence experienced by women with disabilities, so that services and frontline workers can better understand the needs of women with disabilities and the complex circumstances in which violence may occur, and respond appropriately.<sup>226</sup> It is important that women with disabilities participate in research to ensure that findings reflect the diversity of views, experiences and preferences of women with disabilities.

Cross-sector collaboration between the systems that provide services to all women and those that provide disability-specific services is essential to achieving safety for women with disabilities and their children. One way to achieve consistent improvement across the sector is to collaboratively develop a set of national best practice standards for services to better and more consistently support women with disabilities. Standards can be a tool for advocacy, for changing practice in and across organisations, for performance management of services and staff, and for determining funding

eligibility for service providers.<sup>227</sup> They are also an important mechanism through which women with complex needs would be made visible to policymakers, managers, and practitioners.<sup>228</sup>

To enhance responses to violence and keep women with disabilities and their children safe, a set of standards should be developed to inform and guide service improvement. These standards should be flexible to be applied in different settings. They should:<sup>229</sup>

- reflect the voices of women with disabilities
- contain an inclusive definition of violence as experienced by women with disabilities
- acknowledge disability as a risk factor for violence
- require and guide collection of disability data
- promote access to services and information
- foster cross-sector collaboration
- incorporate human rights approaches
- guide workforce development.

Support should be provided to women's, disability and mainstream service providers to enable them to adopt these standards.

Once developed and evaluated, the standards could inform future work with service providers to ensure services adequately support other high-risk groups that may face barriers to accessing support, including women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, older people, and people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer.

The Advisory Panel acknowledges that there are important related processes underway to support women with disabilities who experience violence. The development of a nationally consistent quality and safeguarding system through the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is a particularly critical piece of work. It will be important that a consistent approach is applied within the National Disability Insurance Agency and across the disability service system to respond to violence and integrate referral pathways and responses.

## RECOMMENDATION 2.6

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should prioritise research aimed at improving responses and services for women with disabilities who experience violence in all settings.

Governments should:

- improve data collection on the forms of violence experienced by women with disabilities
- identify appropriate responses to violence against women with disabilities, including through participatory research.

**RECOMMENDATION 2.7**

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should support the development and implementation of national best practice standards for women with disabilities who experience violence.

Standards should:

- ensure accessible and appropriate facilities and services
- ensure accessible and appropriate information formats
- reflect the different forms of violence more likely to be experienced by women with disabilities and ensure that this information is included in staff training
- form the basis for ongoing government funding agreements and contracts with service providers
- support women's, disability and mainstream service providers to enable them to adopt these standards.

## CASE STUDY 7

# IMPROVING THE SAFETY OF WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES

**The Crisis Services Scheme in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) helps women with disabilities who experience domestic violence and sexual assault by finding them a safe place to live.**

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Women with disabilities who try to escape violence often face major barriers, such as lack of an overnight personal care service, a wheelchair accessible taxi or a refuge or hotel with the right facilities at short notice.

The ACT Crisis Services Scheme was introduced in 2014 to break down these barriers by bringing together disability support providers and other crisis response agencies to deliver tailored emergency services to assist women with disabilities. The Scheme is coordinated through the ACT Domestic Violence Crisis Service.

The Scheme also involves specialist homelessness services, case management organisations, individual advocacy organisations, transport providers, police and housing providers. Together, these organisations can meet the unique needs of women with disabilities in emergency situations.

The Scheme is available for women with disabilities who choose to remain in their own home, as well as women who choose to stay with family or friends, or

women who require refuge accommodation.

Women with disabilities can access the Scheme through a 24-hour crisis line and SMS messaging. In the first 12 months of operation, four women and one minor, all with complex disabling conditions, were assisted.

In the development phase of the Scheme, the ACT Human Rights Commission, in conjunction with Scheme participant organisations, delivered disability awareness training to workers in the domestic violence sector.

As an integral part of the Scheme, the Commission's Office, in cooperation with domestic violence and sexual assault organisations, is developing an e-learning training package on domestic violence and sexual assault. Service providers in the ACT disability sector have committed to using this package in staff training and orientation.

### 3 Children and young people should also be recognised as victims of violence against women

Current responses often fail to recognise children of women who experience violence as victims in their own right. Most services are 'adult-centred' and do not meet the needs of children and young people, or consult them on important decisions.

Children and young people can be affected directly or indirectly by violence against women. They can be the victims of violence committed against them, or witness violence perpetrated against their mother. Both are traumatic, and the effects can be long-lasting.

As victims in their own right, children and young people should be supported to recognise and disclose violence, seek assistance, and heal from trauma. To build children's resilience, programmes which focus on rebuilding the mother-child relationship, and perpetrator programmes that engage perpetrators as fathers, should be expanded.

## Violence against women affects children and young people

### Children and young people can be direct and indirect victims of violence

International evidence suggests that there are higher rates of violence against women in households where children are present.<sup>230</sup> Around three in four women (77 per cent) who cared for children during a previous violent relationship reported that the children saw or heard the violence.<sup>231</sup>

Children and young people can experience violence directly by having acts of violence perpetrated against them, and/or indirectly by witnessing violence being perpetrated against their mother. Both experiences of violence have long-term and sometimes equally detrimental effects on children and young people.<sup>232</sup>

Children can be affected directly by being accidentally hurt in attempting to intervene in a violent situation or purposefully hurt, threatened or abducted by the perpetrator as a way to harm their mother. The physical impacts on children of violence against women have rarely been documented, due to the difficulty in differentiating between children affected by violence against women and children who are victims of other forms of child abuse.

Children and young people can be indirect victims of violence against their mothers as a result of:

- hearing the violence
- watching the violence
- being forced to watch or participate in assaults
- being forced to spy on a parent
- being informed that they and their behaviour are to blame for the violence
- defending a parent against violence
- intervening to stop violence
- having to telephone emergency services
- seeing a parent's injuries and having to help 'patch them up'
- seeing parents be arrested
- coping with a parent who alternates between being violent and caring.<sup>233</sup>

Both direct and indirect experiences of violence can have significant long-term impacts on the child and on the mother-child relationship. Children who witness violence experience similar levels of negative psychological and social problems as children who directly experience physical abuse.<sup>234</sup> As a result, being affected by domestic and family violence – where 'affected' describes both direct and indirect violence – is now recognised as a form of child abuse in the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*, the federal *Family Law Act 1975* and some state and territory frameworks and legislation.

### Violence can affect children and young people throughout their lives

Violence affects children in all age groups and it can begin as early as pregnancy. One in five women (22 per cent) who has been pregnant during a current violent relationship experienced violence

during the pregnancy. Of this group, 61 per cent experienced violence for the first time while they were pregnant.<sup>235</sup>

Children whose mothers experience domestic violence during pregnancy have a significantly increased risk of low birth weight and premature birth.<sup>236</sup> Abuse can weaken developing brains and have damaging lifelong effects on a child's learning, behaviour and health.<sup>237</sup> These effects can be prevented or reversed if children are provided with stable, responsive and nurturing relationships in the early years of life.<sup>238</sup> In this case, identifying and stopping violence as early as possible can considerably reduce harm.

Children who are affected by violence in their early, pre-school years have more behavioural problems, social problems, post-traumatic stress symptoms, greater difficulty developing empathy and poorer self-esteem than other children.<sup>239</sup> As they become more emotionally aware over their middle school years (6 to 12 years old), children may blame themselves for their mother's abuse or try to rationalise their father's behaviour.<sup>240</sup>

In adolescence, young people may begin to experience violence in their own intimate relationships. Some young people may experience difficulty forming healthy intimate relationships with peers due to the models of behaviour they experience at home.<sup>241</sup> Other young people may begin to experience violence in their own relationships, even if they have not previously been affected by violence at home.

Throughout their experiences of violence there is limited support available for children and young people who are affected by violence against women, including children and young people living in a household where violence is occurring, and those experiencing violence in their own relationships as they get older. Responses that do exist are mainly either preventive (improving children's capacity to recognise violence through education and primary prevention messaging) or treatment-oriented (counselling and therapy following reporting and initial intervention).

The Advisory Panel has heard how this lack of formal and informal child-centred support can result in children and young people feeling unsupported, unsafe, unconfident, and as if their views and experiences do not count. Further, children and young people may fear speaking out in case something might happen to them or their parents.

### **Responses to violence can be traumatic and may further disrupt the lives of children and young people**

The impacts of violence on children and young people are also multiplied by some current responses to violence against women. Fear of being reported to child protection services, and of the children being removed from their homes and communities, can reduce reporting of violence in households where children are present.<sup>242</sup> This is especially significant for women with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (discussed further in Action Areas 2 and 5), as violence-related child removal is significantly higher in these groups. It has been suggested that mandatory referral to child protection can be detrimental to children in some cases, and that alternative responses may better safeguard the safety of children.<sup>243</sup>

As discussed in Action Area 2, a woman and her children may have to leave their home in order to escape violence. This can isolate children and young people from their homes, families, communities, schools, possessions, pets and support networks during their important formative years. This is of particular concern among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, for whom place, land and kinship networks are especially significant for children's growth and development. Women and children should both have an active voice in decisions which affect them, including a decision to leave the home.

In addition, the majority of crisis response services are 'adult-centred' and do not always meet the needs of children.<sup>244</sup> The scarcity of beds in women's refuges can mean it is difficult for women with children to access emergency accommodation. Further, many women's refuges still do not accept boys over the age of 15 years due to perceived safety concerns.<sup>245</sup> Difficulties in accessing appropriate accommodation, along with the disruption to children's lives caused by moving, reinforces the importance of models that allow women and children to remain safely in their own home (see Recommendation 2.1).

There is a lack of services – both in-person and technology-based – to support children and young people affected by violence. This is despite widespread and increasing use of technology by children and young people: smartphone use by Australian teenagers aged 14 to 17 years has risen from 23 per cent in 2011 to 80 per cent in 2015, while over 80 per cent of Australian teenagers now go online three or more times daily.<sup>246</sup>

The lack of technology-based services may reflect a fear among professionals to incorporate new technologies into current practice, which is something that has been noted among mental health practitioners.<sup>247</sup> It may also reflect a broader lack of understanding about help-seeking behaviours of children and young people, which has been demonstrated in studies on help-seeking for other issues. In a recent national survey of mental illness, for example, while adults estimated that 10 per cent of adolescents were using online services to seek help, a survey of the young people themselves revealed that 52 per cent of adolescents used online services, mainly to find information.<sup>248</sup> Similarly, a trial of an iPad-based self-assessment app by headspace, the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, showed that young people were up to 10 times more likely to disclose issues when answering iPad-based questions in a clinician's waiting room than they were to disclose issues in a face-to-face consultation.<sup>249</sup> Such studies emphasise the importance of involving children and young people in the design, development and delivery of services and supports intended for them.

### **Building resilience and managing relationships can reduce the risk of continued trauma**

The trauma from being affected by violence as a child can continue to affect children and young people throughout their lives. For example, children that are frequently affected by violence can develop symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues which can persist into adulthood.<sup>250</sup> If not addressed, violence also has the potential to affect future generations in different ways through the ongoing effects of trauma.



For this reason, the Advisory Panel supports calls for trauma-informed approaches to supporting children whose mothers experience violence. Trauma-informed approaches aim to build resilience, or the capacity of victims to adapt to stress and trauma (see Terminology and Definitions).<sup>251</sup> Building resilience involves both individual development and fostering a protective social, cultural, political and economic environment around a child. Pathways to resilience must be adapted to a child's cultural setting, age and abilities.<sup>252</sup> There is increasing evidence that rebuilding the mother-child relationship can improve a child's resilience.<sup>253</sup>

Managing the child's relationship with, or protection from, the perpetrator can also be key and the approach taken must depend on the level of risk the perpetrator poses to the child or young person and the other parent, as well as on the preferences of the child or young person. It is vital that they participate in decisions which affect them. In some cases, perpetrator programmes that focus on fathering and rebuilding relationships with children can be effective at both building resilience in children and young people, and in motivating the perpetrator to change their behaviour. In cases where perpetrator intervention is insufficient, however, perpetrators of violence may continue to be a risk to the safety of women and their children. This has been described as the ongoing 'absent presence' of the perpetrator.<sup>254</sup>

Children may continue to be at risk of trauma in situations of shared parenting arrangements, especially when the arrangement involves sharing substantial time with a violent parent.<sup>255</sup> The Advisory Panel has heard that family law is an area of concern when it comes to children's safety. Family law courts are not investigative courts. This means they rely on the evidence in front of them, including from child protection services, to make decisions about parenting arrangements. Information sharing between family violence and child protection services can therefore be central to ensuring the safety of children. This is explored in further detail in Action Area 6.

Finally, the Advisory Panel heard concerns that the child support system can be used by perpetrators to continue to coerce and control victims. Fear of continued contact with the other parent may influence a victim's decisions, for example, to not seek child support, end child support, change collection methods or accept inadequate child support. Avoiding child support obligations can be another form of economic abuse.<sup>256</sup> The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs presented the report on its inquiry into the Child Support Program in July 2015.<sup>257</sup> The Advisory Panel endorses the report's findings on family violence and child support, its emphasis on the need for sensitive and appropriate services to families experiencing violence, and its conclusion that the Commonwealth Government must ensure that the Child Support Program is not used for ongoing abuse.

## Responses to violence against women should recognise children and young people as victims

### **Improve research on children and young people as victims of violence in their own right**

Responses to violence against women need to consistently recognise children of women who experience violence as victims in their own right. Australia needs to move from seeing ‘protecting children’ as a co-benefit of protecting women, to seeing it as promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in their own right.

In order to do this, an improved understanding of children and young people’s own experiences of violence against women is needed. It is also important to better understand the types of services that children and young people might seek and engage with in reporting violence, and the supports and programmes that are most effective at reducing trauma in the longer term.

Children and young people should be actively engaged in this research. Children and young people often have articulate and insightful understandings of the violence that they have experienced.<sup>258</sup> However, they are rarely consulted. Instead, studies into violence against women generally rely on reports of children’s experiences of violence from their parents or carers.<sup>259</sup>

National data collections also need to more strongly consider children and young people in order to better address their needs. Current data holdings on children in family and domestic violence situations are inadequate.<sup>260</sup> In Australia, the majority of data and reporting on family and domestic violence focus on the experiences of women over 18 years of age. The Australian Bureau of Statistics’ *Conceptual Framework for Family and Domestic Violence* discusses the need to consider children and their experiences.<sup>261</sup> However, very few data on children and young people (predominantly just the ages of any children present at a violent event) are collected in the resulting surveys.<sup>262</sup> Other services and agencies that work with women who experience violence should also improve the collection of data on any children those women have, where appropriate.

There are particular gaps in data on the diversity characteristics of children present during violence. Gaps in knowledge mean that the needs of particular groups of children have tended to be neglected in policy responses. For example, a recent mapping of children’s services found there were none specifically tailored for children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.<sup>263</sup> Some resources have since been developed for this group, but these remain extremely limited.<sup>264</sup>

The views and experiences of children and young people should not only be incorporated into data collection, but also into the design and evaluation of programmes and services that prevent and respond to violence against women. Research should include a focus on the experiences and service needs of children with disabilities, as understanding of their specific needs is limited.<sup>265</sup> Research carried out on and with children and young people, including by ANROWS and the Australian Institute of Family Studies, should inform policy responses and service design to ensure the needs of children and young people are better understood and catered for when responding to violence against women.

ANROWS is currently researching how to effectively respond to children's needs, including through integrated approaches that include contact with both victims and perpetrators (integration is discussed in more detail in Action Area 6),<sup>266</sup> as well as programmes that focus on parenting and the mother-child relationship (Case Study 8).<sup>267</sup> Evaluation of current promising responses that target children, as well as trials of new approaches, are needed. This work should recognise that children of diverse ages and backgrounds may have different experiences, and so should focus on diverse groups of children. The research should be accompanied by corresponding funding and resourcing to ensure best practice can be adopted across Australia (see Recommendation 6.2).

Ethical barriers to collecting data on children and young people may need to be reviewed in order to facilitate some research. In this case, the safety of children and young people must be prioritised at all times to ensure that ethical considerations protect children and young people but do not unintentionally restrict the collection of data that can contribute to keeping children and young people safe.

## CASE STUDY 8

# HELPING MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN TO HEAL AND RECOVER TOGETHER

The Children Experiencing Domestic Abuse Recovery (Cedar) programme in Scotland works with children, young people and their mothers who have experienced violence to help them recover and rebuild relationships.

Cedar is a 12 week programme that runs joint and parallel therapeutic sessions with groups of mothers and their children to help them heal and rebuild relationships as they recover from violence.

The purpose of the programme is both to help mothers support their children and also to enable mothers to help each other to move on from the emotional and social difficulties experienced as a result of domestic violence.

Mother and children's groups meet separately and together each week to explore their experiences, understanding and feelings with an emphasis on providing fun and creative activities that keep children engaged and interacting with each other.

*'CEDAR is amazing... It allows you to communicate positively with your children and opens up the wounds, heals them and gives you a focus for the future as a family unit again.'* – **Mother Cedar participant**

Scottish Women's Aid piloted the first Cedar programme in 2008 in three Scottish towns. In its first three years of operation, almost 200 children and young people completed a Cedar group. Almost nine in ten children and young people that started a Cedar programme completed it.

In 2011, the Scottish Government funded an independent evaluation of Cedar led by child protection experts, including Professor Cathy Humphreys from the University of Melbourne.

The evaluation found that the programme had a positive impact on mother-child relationships and increased their knowledge of safety planning and support services. It also helped children to understand that they were not to blame for the violence.

Based on the success of the pilot, the Big Lottery Fund has funded the roll-out of 12 more Cedar programmes across Scotland.

**RECOMMENDATION 3.1**

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should, when collecting data and carrying out research on violence against women and their children, recognise that children and young people are victims of violence against women in their own right.

Governments should:

- ensure data collected on violence against women includes information on children and young people and their experiences as direct and indirect victims of violence; where appropriate, specific data on diverse groups of children and young people should be collected
- ensure the views and experiences of children and young people are taken into account in the scoping, design and evaluation of services and programmes, where appropriate.

**Improve early intervention**

The Advisory Panel recognises that intervening in violence as early as possible can increase the likelihood that children will recover from being affected by violence. Some early intervention is already discussed elsewhere in this report (see in particular Action Area 1, which discusses school-based primary prevention initiatives and the training of professionals to better identify violence). However, there are also possibilities for improving early intervention specific to children and young people.

Given the known risks to pregnant women and their unborn children, pregnancy offers a unique opportunity for screening and intervention to prevent or stop violence, particularly as women are likely to come into more frequent contact with health and support services during pregnancy.<sup>268</sup> Perinatal screening is currently inconsistent across Australia. While some jurisdictions routinely screen all women for violence during pregnancy, others only perform targeted screening if there is reason to suspect violence.<sup>269</sup>

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, through its National Maternity Data Development Project, has explored and outlined options to improve the national consistency of information collected on domestic violence during pregnancy.<sup>270</sup> The Advisory Panel supports the options proposed through this initiative and considers that this work should be progressed as a priority. In the meantime, all jurisdictions should continue to implement or improve screening of pregnant women for violence. This should be supported by training for health professionals who engage with pregnant women to screen for, identify and respond to violence (Recommendation 1.4). It should also be enhanced through the introduction of a common national risk assessment framework (Recommendation 6.1).

Children and young people should also have clear avenues to disclose violence against their mothers and be supported with the right information and advice. Where children and young people recognise violent behaviour in themselves or others, they should have access to tools and programmes that address negative attitudes and promote respectful relationships.

There are some services that provide anonymous counselling for children affected by violence. Kids Helpline, for example, offers a free 24-hour telephone, email and webchat counselling service specifically for children (5 to 12 years) and teens (13 to 25 years) that helps them work through a range of issues, including domestic violence. Increased awareness of violence against women is likely to continue to increase demand for such services, and adequate support for them is essential.

There are very few other options for children to disclose violence perpetrated against their mothers and access information about how best to keep themselves and their mothers safe. This is especially the case if children and young people wish to talk to somebody who they know and trust. Further, the Advisory Panel has heard that because the consequences of disclosing violence are not clear, children and young people can fear speaking out.

At the same time, many young people who experience violence in their own relationships do not tell anyone about their situation. When they do disclose violence, they are most likely to confide in their friends rather than adults.<sup>271</sup> The advice of friends, however, is not always beneficial. Peers may reinforce expectations of aggressive or submissive behaviours, or lack knowledge about where to find help.<sup>272</sup>

Some organisations are using new technology to give children and young people easy access to support, information and advice, especially in situations where violence may be occurring at home. Similar approaches could work well as a form of primary prevention to promote respectful relationships among young people. The Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group has designed an iPad app to teach children how to deal with bullying, and, as already discussed, headspace has trialled similar software for young people to disclose mental health issues in waiting rooms. Technology could be used more extensively as a tool for engaging with children and young people, especially in cases where they experience violence against women or need help to address their own violent attitudes and behaviours. Developing new apps and initiatives should, where possible, build on successful initiatives in other areas, as well as involve the design and development of new pilot projects.

It is vital that any initiatives and interventions, especially those delivered by technology, are suitable for diverse groups of young people to ensure children and young people with different needs and experiences are supported.<sup>273</sup> Risks of the technology being used for abuse should be mitigated (these risks are further discussed in Action Area 2). It is also crucial that the voices of children and young people are taken into account when designing, delivering and evaluating initiatives developed for them.<sup>274</sup>

**RECOMMENDATION 3.2**

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should develop early intervention initiatives to improve identification of, and responses to, violence that affects children.

Governments should:

- prioritise the development, validation and implementation of perinatal domestic violence screening across all jurisdictions, building on the existing work of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
- work with children and young people to design services that can best support them to report violence, by building on successful initiatives from other areas as well as developing and piloting new ones
- support children and young people to report violence and access services, including through the use of innovative technologies.

**Build resilience in children and young people and strengthen their relationships**

There is increasing recognition that strengthening the resilience of children and young people who are affected by violence against women is essential to address and reduce the impacts of trauma and to help them thrive.<sup>275</sup> Resilience, or the capacity to respond to stress and trauma, can be (re)built through trauma-informed models of care and rebuilding relationships. This approach is particularly important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who may be affected by multiple forms of trauma.<sup>276</sup>

Some 'child-centred' services exist, but they are not widespread. A review of the Australian Child Abuse Prevention Programs database found that in the year 2000, of the 1,244 agencies offering programmes for adults, only three per cent (36) offered programmes with a focus on supporting children affected by domestic violence.<sup>277</sup> The Salvation Army's Safe from the Start Program is a good example of a child focused programme that operates within an adult service. The Program uses books and toys to help children to make sense of their experiences.<sup>278</sup> However, such services are currently rare in Australia, and there is still limited understanding about what works best. More programmes that address this should be designed, trialled and piloted, working closely with children and young people.

Programmes and services that aim to reduce trauma and build resilience in children should be closely integrated with services for women (integration is addressed in more detail in Action Area 6). There is increasing evidence that programmes that seek to strengthen the relationship between children and their mothers are effective at reducing trauma.<sup>279</sup> This is because, in some circumstances, violence can compromise relationships between mothers and their children, and this can have ongoing consequences for children's development.<sup>280</sup>

Links with perpetrator programmes should also be explored, with the risks carefully managed. There is emerging evidence that the safety of children and young people can be improved by considering their needs in perpetrator programmes.<sup>281</sup> Programmes which engage perpetrators as fathers can

motivate them to change their behaviour and prevent further acts of violence against women and their children. This can help children to feel, and be, safer.<sup>282</sup> For example, a Canadian programme called Caring Dads has demonstrated success in strengthening fathering attitudes and skills that perpetrators need in order to care for their children, build positive behaviours in their own lives, and reduce the risk of violence against women (Case Study 9).<sup>283</sup> These programmes will not be suitable in all cases, and participation in them should be preceded by a thorough risk assessment (see Recommendation 6.1) and clear integration with services for perpetrators (see Action Areas 4 and 6).

### RECOMMENDATION 3.3

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should build on emerging research and best practice approaches to develop child-focused responses to support, and build resilience in, children and young people.

Governments should:

- identify and expand best practice programmes, and pilot new programmes, that strengthen children's resilience and promote healing from trauma, ensuring that they consider diverse groups of children and young people of all ages
- ensure that responses for children and young people are closely integrated with services for women and perpetrators
- continue to design, trial, evaluate and expand initiatives that focus on rebuilding the mother-child relationship and those that embed fathering in perpetrator programmes.



## CASE STUDY 9

# SOME PERPETRATOR PROGRAMMES FOCUS ON CHILDREN AND FATHERING

The Caring Dads programme in Canada focuses on strengthening fathering attitudes in order to help perpetrators better support their children and change their violent behaviour.

Caring Dads is a 17 week intervention programme for fathers (including biological, step or common-law fathers) who have physically abused, emotionally abused or neglected their children, or exposed their children to domestic violence. The programme also targets fathers who are at risk of these violent behaviours.

The rationale behind Caring Dads is that perpetrators will be more motivated to participate in an intervention and change their violent behaviour if the focus is on the relationship with their children.

*'I'd noticed my oldest child, who is 17, starting to behave the way I was – he thought it was acceptable... My other children were also scared to come near me for a long time.'* – **Caring Dads participant**

To change behaviour, the programme includes weekly group parenting sessions that focus on parenting, fathering, battering and child protection practice to improve the safety and wellbeing of children.

Perpetrators discuss what violent behaviour at home feels like for a child and how they can improve relationships with their children.

The Caring Dads programme also works collaboratively with other service providers to ensure that children benefit (and are not unintentionally harmed) as a result of their fathers' participation in the intervention.

The programme is currently being evaluated, but initial findings show that it has helped reduce rates of violence against some women and improved the attitudes of fathers towards their children. Children also reported consistent improvements in their father's behaviour. The evaluation did not include a comparison group, so further research is needed, but the results are promising.

*'The children love it now. I'm back at home and they know there'll be no arguments or damage to the house.'* – **Caring Dads participant**

Programmes like Caring Dads show the importance of focusing on children to change the behaviour of perpetrators and keep women and their children safe.

## 4 Perpetrators should be held to account for their actions and supported to change

Responses to violence against women and their children have historically paid much less attention to perpetrators than victims. To keep women and their children safe, intervening effectively with the perpetrator of violence is vital. The entire system responsible for perpetrator intervention, including police, courts and corrective services, must hold perpetrators to account for their actions and support them to change their controlling attitudes and violent behaviours.

More effective and consistent treatment of perpetrators is required, both within and across jurisdictions. The National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions (NOSPI) provide a strong foundation by establishing high level standards to guide and measure the outcomes of perpetrator interventions.

Under this framework and following international best practice, a world-class, national approach to perpetrator interventions should be established, with a specific focus on perpetrator programmes. Referral pathways into perpetrator programmes and responses to emerging forms of violence should be strengthened, and factors that escalate violence also addressed.

## There is a range of responses to perpetrators of violence against women in Australia

### Police and referral services may intervene if violence is reported

Perpetrators of violence against women and their children may come into contact with a range of services and the judicial system. This may include police, courts, corrections, perpetrator programmes, child protection, medical professionals and different community services. Together, these make up the perpetrator intervention system.

Men who are concerned about their own behaviour can voluntarily call a men's referral service, or be recommended by a friend or family member. Mensline, for example, provides anonymous and confidential telephone counselling, information and referrals to support services to help men stop using violent behaviour.

The majority of perpetrators, however, do not come to the attention of services and authorities until a police callout. Responding to violence against women is now a major part of police activity.<sup>284</sup> Some jurisdictions have seen positive changes regarding perpetrator accountability, for example, Tasmania's pro-arrest pro-prosecution policy.<sup>285</sup> However, the Advisory Panel has heard that responses in many parts of Australia continue to be insufficient, especially in cases of coercive control (increasing consistency in responses to violence against women and their children is addressed further in Recommendation 1.4).

At a callout, police will often carry out a risk assessment to determine the best course of action (a national common risk assessment framework is proposed in Recommendation 6.1). If they take action against a perpetrator, they may charge him with an offence, and/or refer him to a men's service.

Where police link a perpetrator to a men's referral service, the perpetrator's contact details are provided to the service, which prioritises responses based on the risk the perpetrator presents. Some services, known as 'active' referral services, proactively follow up with the perpetrator, often multiple times. While this proactive approach to follow-up is important, and essential to international 'safe at home' models, active services in Australia are currently limited to only a few locations (Case Study 10).<sup>286</sup>

### Perpetrator interventions are applied by the justice system

The pathway through the justice system of a perpetrator of domestic and family violence (Figure 10) is significantly different to the pathway of a perpetrator of sexual violence (Figure 11). This is largely a result of a historical division between:

- approaches to sexual violence: typically corrections-centred and based on the premise that offenders display criminal risk factors
- domestic and family violence: typically community-centred and based on addressing issues of power and control.

## CASE STUDY 10

# VICTORIA PROACTIVELY REFERS PERPETRATORS TO CHANGE PROGRAMMES

**The Men's Referral Service in Victoria 'cold calls' perpetrators of violence against women to discuss their behaviour and refer them to perpetrator programmes.**

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The Men's Referral Service in Melbourne differs from other referral services because workers telephone perpetrators, rather than waiting for perpetrators to call them.

Firstly, police attend a family violence incident and contact a family violence service. The perpetrator must be informed by police that the referral is being made, but consent is not required.

The referral is received, prioritised and handled by a trained intake worker, who is responsible for attempting to make phone contact with the perpetrator shortly after the violent incident.

The intake worker calls the perpetrator to discuss his behavior and any safety concerns, future intentions and his understanding of any intervention orders. The intake worker also offers information about other support services, such as alcohol and drug, accommodation and mental health services, and refers the perpetrator to a perpetrator programme.

The proactive approach presents perpetrators with an opportunity to reflect on and acknowledge their behaviour and to access programmes that can help them change.

On average, a phone conversation lasts about 15 minutes but no maximum length is set, and calls in high risk situations last much longer.

The same active referral process will be piloted in New South Wales in the near future.

To complement the active 'cold call' approach, there is also an anonymous telephone responsive service, the Men's Referral Service, provided in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania. It provides free, anonymous and confidential telephone counselling, information and referrals to help men stop using violent and controlling behaviour.

Over the last 22 years, the Men's Referral Service has held more than 120,000 conversations with Victorian men about their use of violence.

Figure 10: Overview of the family and domestic violence civil and criminal perpetrator pathways in Australia.<sup>287</sup>

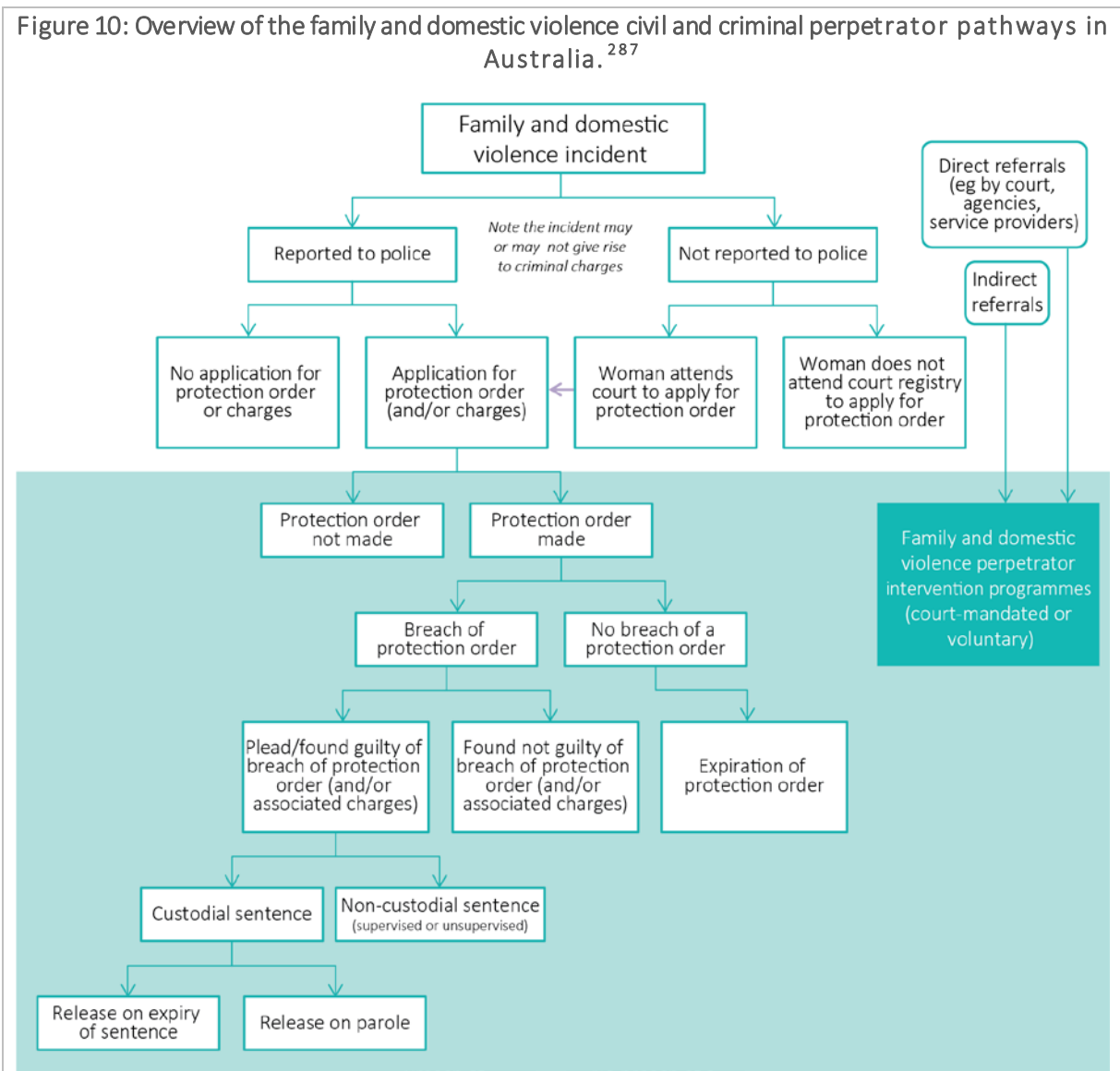
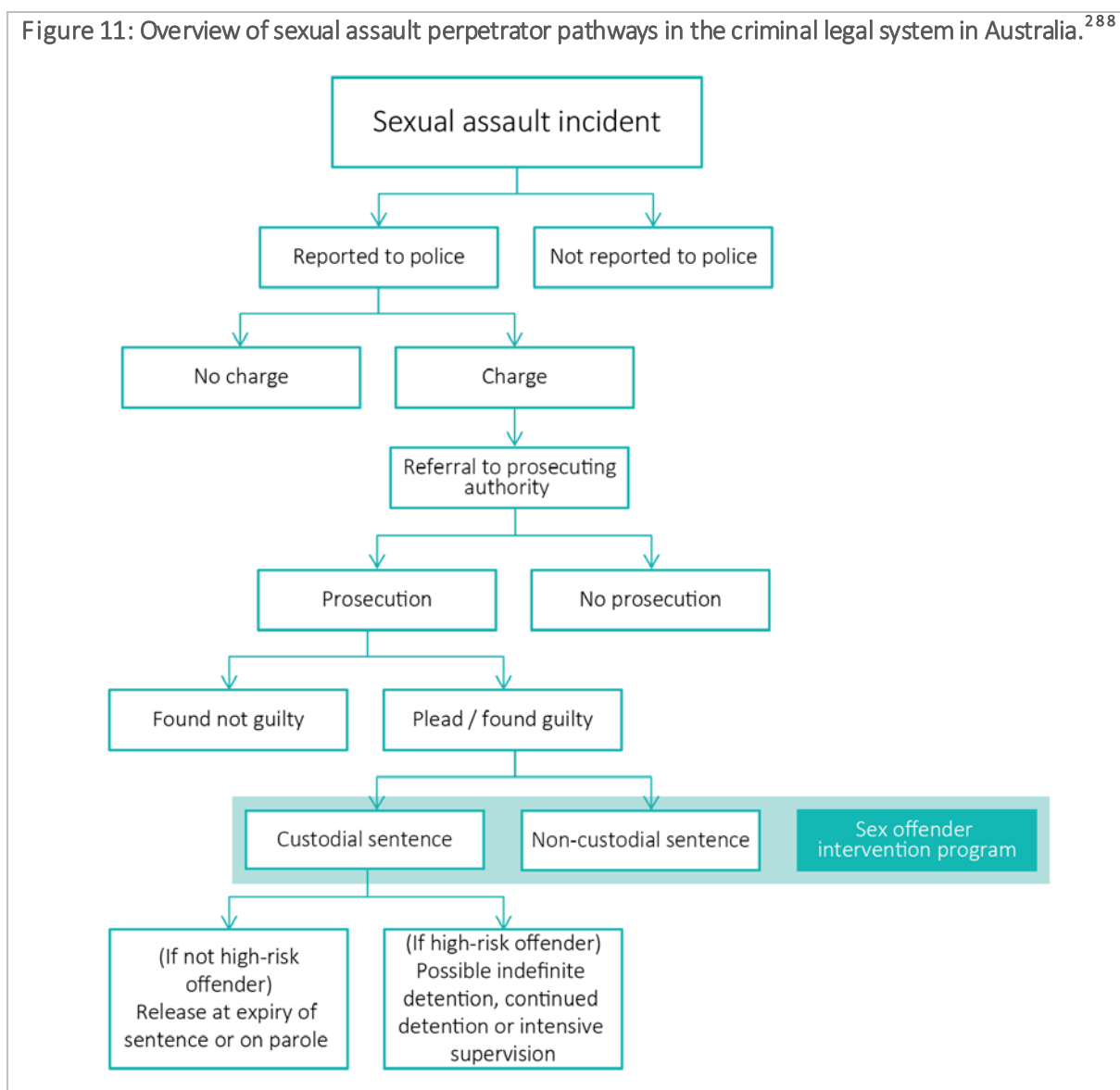


Figure 11: Overview of sexual assault perpetrator pathways in the criminal legal system in Australia.<sup>288</sup>

In some cases, perpetrators of violence against women and their children first enter the justice system through civil protection orders (also known as domestic violence orders or family violence orders) and personal protection orders (also known as personal safety intervention orders; these protect a person from physical or mental harm caused by someone who is not a family member).<sup>289</sup> Orders are made by a court, following an application from a victim or the police. Orders restrain, restrict or prohibit the behaviour of a perpetrator in some way.

Where the conditions of an order are breached, perpetrators will be charged in the criminal justice system. Perpetrators will also be in the criminal system if charged with a domestic violence offence other than a breach of an order, such as assault, property damage, offensive behaviour and trespass. Charges laid on perpetrators vary considerably within and between jurisdictions. For example, in

New South Wales in 2013, of the offenders found guilty of breaching an apprehended domestic violence order, approximately:<sup>290</sup>

- 22 per cent received a bond without supervision, of an average length of 14 months (this means that the perpetrator was released into the community under a set of conditions)
- 18 per cent were fined an average amount of \$432
- 16 per cent received a bond with supervision with an average length of 16 months
- 12 per cent were given a custodial sentence with an average length of four months.<sup>291</sup>

When a perpetrator pleads, or is found, guilty of a criminal offence, the court may impose a custodial (prison) or non-custodial sentence. Imprisonment becomes more likely as the severity of the offence increases. Perpetrators who injure the victim or who have a prior conviction for violence are most likely to go to prison.<sup>292</sup> A review of sentences for domestic violence offences in New South Wales between January 2008 to June 2009 found that the maximum duration of imprisonment for assault with actual bodily harm was three years, while for stalking the maximum was 15 months.<sup>293</sup> Overall, domestic violence offenders are typically sentenced more leniently than non-domestic violence offenders: they are less likely to be imprisoned, and when they are, they are given significantly shorter sentences.<sup>294</sup>

Some change has occurred in some jurisdictions in the past few years. The Victorian Sentencing Council notes a marked change in sentencing outcomes for contravention of family violence intervention orders from 2004-05 to 2014-15. In its 2009 report, the Council found that there was a predominance of fines and adjourned undertakings for contravention of intervention orders. In contrast, its 2013 report found that, against a background of other changes in the family violence system in Victoria, sentencing outcomes had changed considerably: the use of fines had declined and the use of adjourned undertakings and community sentences had increased. For repeat offences, there was an increase in custodial sentences.<sup>295</sup>

In contrast to the response to domestic and family violence, the justice response to sexual assault is addressed entirely in the criminal justice system (Figure 11).<sup>296</sup> A prison sentence is the most common penalty for sexual assault perpetrators, although it is estimated that only about one in 10 reported incidents eventually results in a conviction.<sup>297</sup> A bond is most commonly given to perpetrators convicted of indecent assault. Those convicted of aggravated sexual assault are most likely to receive a sentence of imprisonment. Those with three or more prior convictions are almost guaranteed to receive a prison sentence.<sup>298</sup>

The Advisory Panel has heard several concerns about current justice system approaches to violence against women and their children:

- **sanctions may unintentionally punish the victims:** the imposition of bonds and fines, for example, can result in the unintended consequence of punishing the victim and any children they have by placing increased strain on household finances<sup>299</sup>
- **sentences can give mixed messages about the perceived seriousness of violence, even within jurisdictions:** in Victoria between July 2004 and June 2007, for example, approximately half of perpetrators who received a fine for the first offence also received a fine for the second

offence. Within this time period, many offenders received greater sanctions for their first offence than for subsequent ones<sup>300</sup>

- **sentences tend to be short, so there is insufficient time or opportunity for perpetrators to attend a programme to help them change their violent behaviour:** the duration required for an effective perpetrator programme and waiting times to enter programmes (see Table 5) may be significantly longer than the sentence most perpetrators receive. This means that a perpetrator may have no opportunity to change their violent behaviour prior to release
- **women can experience inconsistent treatment, depending on the police officer, magistrate or judge they engage with:** there is a need for greater self-critical reflective practice by professionals who work with women who experience violence and their children (this is addressed further in Recommendation 1.4).

### Corrective services manage convicted offenders

Corrective services manage convicted offenders in prisons and in the community, including on community based orders and parole. They are responsible for offenders' welfare while they are in prison and on community corrections orders, they connect offenders to programmes and interventions, and they assist transition on release by connecting perpetrators to services such as housing, health, and employment.<sup>301</sup>

Corrective services manage alleged offenders who are held in remand (custody) during court proceedings. A court may order remand if perpetrators have not applied for bail, had bail refused, cannot meet bail or are unable or unwilling to meet the conditions of bail. The presumption of innocence applies and the alleged offender is held in special facilities with fewer restrictions than prison.<sup>302</sup> For all forms of violence against women, it is only when convicted and sentenced that perpetrators are assessed for, and have access to, perpetrator programs.<sup>303</sup> The Advisory Panel considers that there may be opportunities to connect perpetrators to programmes and services that they could attend voluntarily while on remand. In some instances, this period before and during a trial could be used to begin to address behaviour through targeted programmes.

Corrective services are also responsible for community safety, and especially the safety of the victim and her children when the offender is released back into the community. The Advisory Panel has heard concerns that there is currently inadequate consideration of the:

- **impacts of offender release on victims and their children:** it is vital that corrective services connect with victims and services supporting women and their children to ensure that decisions about parole and release are informed by complete information on, and consideration of risk to, the victims. This is addressed further in Action Area 6
- **potential for some factors to escalate the risk of violence:** homelessness, drug and alcohol use and mental health concerns (for example, 19 per cent of prisoners discharged from prison have a high or very high level of psychological distress)<sup>304</sup> can increase risk to women and their children
- **harms associated with new forms of violence:** emerging technologies are generally considered to be merely 'tools' of abuse.<sup>305</sup> In these cases, perpetrator behaviour is frequently discussed using euphemistic, titillating or narrow language (for example, 'revenge



porn') that minimises the negative impact of these behaviours, which can lead to victim blaming and perpetrator exoneration.<sup>306</sup>

To improve the safety of women and their children, better communication and collaboration between corrective services and services for women and perpetrators are necessary. This is addressed further in Recommendation 6.6.

### **Perpetrators of violence may attend a perpetrator programme**

Neither fines nor incarceration on their own are the most effective way to hold perpetrators of violence against women and their children to account because they do not address underlying behaviours and attitudes. Fines may also harm victims and their children, and prison sentences do not do enough to ensure that violence is not repeated once the perpetrator is released. In addition, the incarceration of perpetrators can be especially damaging to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for whom male incarceration rates are already high (this is addressed further in Action Area 5).

Perpetrator programmes are one part of a wider system of interventions that respond to violence against women and their children. Perpetrator programmes are designed to change men's attitudes, beliefs and behaviour to prevent future violent behaviour.<sup>307</sup> Perpetrator programmes may be attended by men who identify, or are identified, as being perpetrators of or at risk of perpetrating violence against women. These are also broadly known as Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs) in the United States, and Men's Behaviour Change Programmes (MBCPs) in Australia and New Zealand, and various models exist.<sup>308</sup>

Perpetrator programmes are run in conjunction with other criminal justice interventions and case management, and in collaboration with victim support services.<sup>309</sup> They are gaining increasing support as a form of perpetrator intervention that can effectively hold perpetrators of violence against women and their children to account for their actions and support them to change, in order to contribute to women's safety.

It is critical that perpetrator programmes work collaboratively with other services and agencies, as part of an integrated, system-wide response to perpetrators (integration is addressed in Action Area 6).

Perpetrator programmes can be delivered in:

- community settings: run by non-government organisations, and mainly for family and domestic violence
- corrections settings: run by corrective services, but these tend to be unavailable to perpetrators on short sentences and are often voluntary.

Despite considerable overlap in the purpose of these programmes, they often operate separately, frequently with different models and types of intervention, and variable levels of evaluation. There are few opportunities for service providers to share professional development, best practice or skills.<sup>310</sup> There is room for increased professional exchange between all of the different services and agencies that offer perpetrator programmes (this is discussed in more detail in Action Area 6, particularly Recommendation 6.6).

Further, because the response to sexual assault is wholly criminalised, perpetrator programmes regarding sexual violence almost entirely take place in corrective services settings; these programmes are significantly different models again, and attendance at them is more frequently mandated.<sup>311</sup> While victims of domestic and family violence may be involved in, and supported by, perpetrator programmes, women who have experienced sexual assault are not involved in the rehabilitation process of the perpetrator. However, there is growing recognition of the cross-overs between sexual assault and family and domestic violence. Sexual assault often takes place in the context of domestic violence, and both often involve coercive control. A perpetrator programme system in Australia should better recognise the links between programmes for domestic violence and sexual violence offenders, and draw on these links to help strengthen programmes more broadly.

Referral pathways into perpetrator programmes vary across jurisdictions. Men may attend voluntarily, or be referred by agencies or services. In some jurisdictions, and especially in cases of sexual violence, their attendance may be mandated by the courts. Programmes are currently not readily available to all perpetrators, including those in high-risk groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The Advisory Panel has heard that in Australia, there is currently a lack of skilled and qualified practitioners to deliver perpetrator programmes. Retention and capability of staff are both challenges. There is also a lack of available services and, where services do exist, there are insufficient places and funding to meet demand. For example, the Advisory Panel has heard that a provider in outer Melbourne is funded to work with almost 400 respondents per year, but they are currently receiving up to 800 police referrals for places in non-mandated programmes per month, in addition to referrals for mandated programmes. There is currently a four month wait for programmes offered by this service. Such waiting times can reduce the effectiveness of perpetrator programmes and put the safety of women and their children at risk (this is detailed further in Table 5).

Overall, there is international evidence to suggest that perpetrator programmes are effective at preventing new episodes of violence and improving the lives of victims. However, current Australian programmes fall short of indicators considered to be best practice in other parts of the world, including those relating to the skills of staff delivering them, the waiting period for attending the programme, the duration of the programme and the levers available to encourage or mandate attendance (Table 5).<sup>312</sup>

**Table 5: Key features of perpetrator programmes, and progress in Australia to date.**

<b>Type of perpetrator</b>	<p>Perpetrators with minimal previous contact with the criminal justice system are more likely to complete perpetrator programmes.<sup>313</sup> These programmes are not suited to extremely dangerous perpetrators, for whom incarceration remains the only option.</p> <p>In Australia, one of the most significant waiting periods for perpetrator programmes occurs at the initial intake and assessment phase, when eligibility for participation in programmes and group work is decided.<sup>314</sup> Entry is often assessed on suitability (including an assessment of risk) and not a first come, first served basis.</p>
<b>Waiting time to begin programme</b>	<p>Perpetrators who enter programmes within two to three weeks of first contact with police are more likely to engage with behaviour change.<sup>315</sup> Delays in entering programmes can de-motivate perpetrators and reinforce the perception of violence against women as not 'serious'.<sup>316</sup></p> <p>Waiting times for entry to perpetrator programmes vary across Australia and often exceed six months. In 2015, over 700 men in Victoria were on a waiting list for several weeks to a few months for an initial assessment, and 225 had to wait a few weeks to a few months to commence a programme after being assessed as eligible.<sup>317</sup></p> <p>A programme currently in operation in Bendigo, Victoria, reduces waiting times to only three weeks by having a series of ongoing three-weekly modules that perpetrators can enter in any order provided demand does not exceed places available.<sup>318</sup></p>
<b>Duration of the programme</b>	<p>Respect (United Kingdom) recommends a minimum of 24 hours of individual sessions or 60 hours of group sessions over six months, to ensure that there are deep changes and not just behaviour disruption.</p> <p>Australian programmes are typically much shorter; for example, No to Violence in Victoria's minimum standards say that programmes should provide a minimum of 24 hours of men's behaviour change group work spread over a minimum of 12 weeks.<sup>319</sup></p>
<b>Motivation of the perpetrator to participate</b>	<p>Public education to reduce justification of perpetrator behaviour, support from victims or the wider community, the chance for greater access to their children, text message reminders, court mandating, and penalties for non-attendance are all possible motivators.<sup>320</sup></p> <p>ANROWS has identified the need for further analysis and evaluation of factors that motivate Australian men to change their attitudes and behaviour.</p>
<b>Tailoring</b>	<p>Programmes tailored to diverse family, cultural, community and disability contexts can potentially improve effectiveness. Individualised case management is key to ensuring a more flexible approach to tailoring interventions.</p> <p>ANROWS has identified this as a strategic research theme.</p>
<b>Quality of staff delivering the content</b>	<p>The success of perpetrator programmes relies heavily on the staff that deliver them. Respect (United Kingdom) assesses staff as a part of their accreditation process, with the objective of helping to foster and build skills consistently across the workforce.</p> <p>Unlike other countries, Australia has no consistent qualifications or professional competencies for practitioners or facilitators of perpetrator programmes. In addition, practitioners often do not have access to appropriate supervision and support. This creates inconsistencies, and can also add additional stress to an already challenging profession.</p>

<b>Context of the delivery of the programme</b>	<p>The context within which perpetrator programmes operate can be as important as the content of the perpetrator programmes. It creates a ‘web of accountability’ around the perpetrator which reinforces the messages from the programme. In culturally and linguistically diverse communities, for example, positive, community-based programmes delivered in partnership with ethnic or religious leaders in non-confrontational settings may be more effective than alternative approaches.<sup>321</sup></p> <p>Programmes in Australia are likely to be most effective when they form part of an integrated system, actively participate in inter-agency alliances and are run alongside other initiatives recommended in this report.</p>
<b>Modes of delivery</b>	<p>There is ongoing debate about whether perpetrator programmes could be delivered online. Online delivery can allow for increased accessibility, especially for men living in regional, rural and remote areas (provided they have internet access), by shift workers, and by men who might be too ashamed to attend a programme in person. However, as perpetrator programmes rely on perpetrators taking responsibility for their actions and facing their peers, mixed-mode delivery may have more impact.</p> <p>More research and evaluation is required to explore the feasibility of new modes of delivery for perpetrator programmes in Australia.</p>

## Perpetrator accountability and support should be improved

### Develop a world-class national approach to perpetrator programmes

Perpetrator programmes are designed to enable perpetrators to change their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, in order to prevent them from using violence in the future. They challenge perpetrators to face their actions. A United Kingdom study on the effectiveness of Respect-accredited perpetrator programmes across 11 locations identified dramatic and significant reductions in the incidence of violence, particularly physical and sexual violence.<sup>322</sup> Perpetrators’ partners were asked to indicate whether they were injured as a result of violence or abuse and had received injuries serious enough to seek (or need) health care. At the start of the programmes, 61 per cent reported injury, of whom 71 per cent needed health care. This reduced to just two per cent 12 months after starting a programme, and none sought health care. The extent to which children were affected by violence also dropped substantially: from 80 per cent at the start of the programmes to eight per cent after completion.<sup>323</sup>

Some Australian states and territories have existing standards to guide the delivery of perpetrator programmes. However, there is little consensus on which features of perpetrator programmes, and whether they are run in community or corrective services settings, are most successful in the Australian context. There is also little evidence about which programmes or interventions work best for perpetrators from different high-risk groups. Further research is required, building on the work of ANROWS. This should include clinical trials in primary care settings,<sup>324</sup> trials of different perpetrator programme models in different settings, and rigorous evaluations of individual programmes to gain a much more detailed understanding of programme effectiveness.

Insights from improved research and evaluation should inform national standards for perpetrator programmes and an accreditation framework, to ensure national consistency and quality in the

delivery of perpetrator programmes. Development of the standard should take into account the complexities of how to define and measure the success of perpetrator programmes, and should ensure that the safety of women and their children is a priority. Such a standard and accreditation should be administered by a national professional body, following the model of the United Kingdom's Respect Accreditation Standard, which is administered by the non-government organisation Respect.

Respect was established in 2000, and is widely considered as an international model of best practice (Case Study 11).<sup>325</sup> It was initially supported by government funding, but the organisation is now self-funded through membership and accreditation fees paid by service providers. In addition to designing, updating and administering standards of practice, it has also improved the quality and consistency of perpetrator programmes by centralising knowledge and expertise, and building and supporting a skilled, professional and sustainable workforce.

A European network exists to achieve similar objectives. The European Network for the Work with Perpetrators of Domestic Violence is a membership association of organisations directly or indirectly working with people who perpetrate violence in close relationships. Its work includes:

- fostering the knowledge exchange of good practices among members
- creating and disseminating training opportunities on the work with perpetrators (including networking events that gather practitioners of perpetrator interventions and victim support, researchers and policy makers to discuss current issues in this work and strengthen personal connections)
- developing and updating evidence based best practice guidelines and standards for programmes working with male perpetrators of domestic violence, and a toolkit for good evaluation practice (these are available in 17 languages)
- promoting the delivery of linked safety and support services for victims, within a coordinated community response
- research and innovation in the field of perpetrator programme work.<sup>326</sup>

An Australian national professional body should be developed based on international best practice. It should contribute to raising standards, effectiveness and consistency of perpetrator programmes delivered in both the community and corrections settings. While programmes may be different in each, they should meet national standards. Accreditation should apply to any and all programmes that aim to change the behaviour and actions of perpetrators of violence against women and their children. All programmes in all settings should be evaluated, and best practice shared.

The Advisory Panel recognises that building something similar to Respect in Australia will take time, and expanding programmes to adequately meet demand will require funding (this is addressed in Recommendation 6.2).

## CASE STUDY 11

# UNITED KINGDOM ORGANISATION ACCREDIT'S PERPETRATOR PROGRAMMES

Respect is a membership association and accreditation body that sets standards for perpetrator programmes in the United Kingdom. The British Home Office supports Respect accreditation.

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Respect is the key membership association for organisations that provide a prevention programme for perpetrators and integrated support services for their women partners and ex partners in the United Kingdom.

Launched in 2001, Respect provides training and toolkits to build the capability of domestic violence workers. It also operates a national helpline for perpetrators and runs networks to share best practice across the country.

Respect is the United Kingdom accreditation body for all perpetrator programmes delivered outside of a probation context.

Respect designs and regularly reviews and updates a national accreditation standard that applies to all organisations providing domestic violence perpetrator programmes in the United Kingdom.

Respect uses the standard to accredit programmes across two stages:

- Initial accreditation as a Safe Minimum Practice can take around 18 months and involves assessing a programme against 60 of the standard's requirements. Unlike full accreditation, the quality of work and its effectiveness are not assessed.

- Full accreditation involves being assessed against every one of the 94 requirements of the standard. Programmes need to achieve a high standard across many competencies, including staff skills, management and service delivery. In addition, every programme must have parallel services for victims.

Successful programmes need to renew their accreditation every three years, or earlier if there are significant changes to the structure or operation of the organisation or programme.

Respect charges a fee for accreditation, which helps make it a self-funding body.

The British Home Office and domestic violence sector organisations endorse Respect's accreditation standard. To be eligible for local and national funding streams, perpetrator programmes need to be fully Respect accredited.

The accreditation process means that perpetrators attending these services are given the best chance possible of stopping their abusive behaviour.

The establishment of a national professional body for perpetrator interventions should, as a first priority, lead the development and implementation of a workforce capability strategy that would include supporting, mentoring and training practitioners, to ensure that practitioners have access to the best available research and opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration. Over time, this could lead to the development of national professional competencies for practitioners.

Tailoring programmes for high-risk groups should also be a key focus of the work of the professional body. This should build on current efforts, including those by:

- Helem Yumba Central Queensland Healing Centre, which draws on its close and respectful relationships with local traditional owners and elders to deliver appropriate interventions in its community. Through its Gatharr weyebe banabe programme (meaning 'Aboriginal man's life change' in Darumbal language), Helem Yumba supports men to address violent behaviour and substance abuse. The programme is built on culturally appropriate and respectful engagement practices, with an emphasis on helping clients to also address other important needs such as housing, family connections, financial and legal matters<sup>327</sup>
- inTouch, which delivers a programme for men from Vietnamese backgrounds. The programme uses a tailored curriculum that integrates culture into educational materials and is delivered by counsellors drawn from the local Vietnamese community. inTouch has also established a family violence group for Arabic speaking men seeking to share their experiences and learn new strategies for strengthening their relationship skills<sup>328</sup>
- Violence Free Families, which is an online programme that can be accessed in regional, rural and remote areas.<sup>329</sup>

#### RECOMMENDATION 4.1

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should establish and support a national professional body for perpetrator programmes to build a skilled and sustainable workforce of practitioners, and to ensure programmes meet high standards.

This professional body should:

- develop and implement a workforce capability strategy (including training, mentoring, knowledge exchange and collaboration with other practitioners)
- design, trial and evaluate perpetrator programmes and modes of delivery, including online, and develop options for programmes specific to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, men with disabilities and those living in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas. This research should be carried out in collaboration with ANROWS, and in partnership with local communities where appropriate
- develop and implement national standards of practice for perpetrator programmes and service providers within two years, to apply in both community and corrections settings, and consistent with the National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions (NOSPI)
- ensure that national standards require perpetrator programme service providers to collaborate and exchange information with relevant services in a timely manner so that the safety of women and their children is prioritised, and to help identify other people at risk
- prepare a proposal for a national accreditation scheme for providers of perpetrator programmes, and a plan for transitioning the sector to the accreditation scheme.

### **Improve referral pathways to perpetrator programmes**

As perpetrator programmes become more widely available and their quality improves, pathways into these programmes and other interventions or supports must be strengthened. There are a number of different routes that perpetrators could follow, and these should be improved upon in general, and also with particular attention to perpetrators from high-risk groups. Improving integration across the system is also important (see Action Area 6). The Advisory Panel has heard that four pathways in particular warrant further investigation: general practitioner and health practitioner referrals, men's referral services, police referrals and court referrals.

It is important that governments equip general and health practitioners to be active partners in addressing men's violence. One in six men who visit a general practitioner in the United Kingdom report some form of violence against a partner, and these men are more likely to report symptoms of anxiety and depression.<sup>330</sup> The World Health Organisation has also recognised the need to strengthen existing responses to violence against women and their children within the health system.<sup>331</sup> The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners has dedicated material on approaches to the identification and management of perpetrators in general practice settings.<sup>332</sup> These could be expanded to enhance the capacity of health professionals to identify men at risk of perpetrating violence against women and link them to appropriate services and supports. As a part of a holistic response to violence, health practitioners should be equipped to refer men to suitable early intervention activities, including perpetrator programmes, as well as to services which address other factors that can escalate the risk of violence occurring (for example, underlying mental health issues, drug and alcohol abuse). The feasibility of general practitioners working through a structured planning process under the Medicare Benefits Schedule should also be considered.

Men's referral services provide another key referral pathway to perpetrator programmes. They have ongoing contact with, and provide support to, perpetrators of violence. They can monitor risk and connect the perpetrator to a range of appropriate support services. Active referral services that proactively follow up with perpetrators as a part of overall case management underpin the success of models such as the Austrian 'safe at home' programme (this is described in Action Area 2 and Case Study 4), and their expansion in Australia should be considered.

Police have a good opportunity to provide direct referrals to perpetrator programmes and men's referral services when they intervene in violence. This already occurs internationally; for example, the United Kingdom and Austrian 'safe at home' programmes keep women safe in their homes while also ensuring that men are removed from the home and are followed up with sanctions, programmes or support as necessary. So that the system can intervene as early as possible, the protocols of law enforcement agencies should ensure that, at the time of a call-out, police can refer a perpetrator of violence against women and their children to relevant services.<sup>333</sup>

Courts provide an opportunity to refer perpetrators to perpetrator programmes and mandate their attendance. Perpetrator programmes are most effective when used as an integral part of the criminal justice response to violence against women and their children.<sup>334</sup> This is already happening in some magistrates' courts in Victoria and South Australia. Magistrates should have the powers necessary, and be willing, to mandate the timely attendance at, and completion of, perpetrator



programmes in appropriate circumstances.<sup>335</sup> When they are issued, such orders should be followed up to ensure the order is complied with, and non-compliance should be met with a swift and certain criminal justice response.

There is also an opportunity for the corrective services system to intervene in violence against women even when perpetrators are not in corrections for the specific offence of domestic violence. Not many men are in prison for domestic violence offences but many men in prison have histories of violence against women and their children. The Advisory Panel heard estimations that in some jurisdictions, up to 50 per cent of criminal offenders also have some sort of domestic violence record. Through a combination of improved screening of all offenders (as already occurs in some jurisdictions),<sup>336</sup> and better access to perpetrator programmes, periods of incarceration for other crimes could also be periods of behaviour change for perpetrators of violence against women and their children.

Finally, the Advisory Panel recognises that in many instances, services for perpetrators are insufficient to meet demand. As referral pathways into programmes strengthen, there will be a growing need for governments to improve availability and accessibility of services. Building the accessibility and availability of services is addressed further by Recommendation 4.1, and ensuring funding necessary to meet demand is addressed by Recommendation 6.2.

#### RECOMMENDATION 4.2

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should collaborate to improve pathways into perpetrator programmes for men who have perpetrated, or are at risk of perpetrating, violence against women and their children.

Governments should:

- strengthen general practitioner and health practitioner referral pathways to perpetrator programmes and other support services (among others, mental health or drug and alcohol support services)
- develop the capacity of men's referral services to provide outreach and ongoing contact with perpetrators with a view to referring them to relevant services (for example, health and accommodation services, financial services or perpetrator programmes)
- trial amendments to law enforcement protocols to ensure that, at the time of a police call-out, perpetrators are referred to an appropriate men's referral service for an initial assessment
- trial court referrals to mandate participation in, and completion of, perpetrator programmes
- ensure that pathways and options for entry into perpetrator programmes are promoted and accessible, including for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, men with disabilities, and people living in regional, rural and remote areas.

### Strengthen case management to address other factors that escalate violence

As more perpetrators enter the intervention system, and especially perpetrator programmes, the full range of factors that escalate violence against women and their children should be addressed as part of a holistic response. Evidence suggests that perpetrators who have economic, social and residential stability are more likely to complete programmes and less likely to reoffend.<sup>337</sup> Different factors, such as addressing historical trauma, must be considered for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; this is covered in more detail in Action Area 5.

Ensuring that men who perpetrate violence against women have housing is central to ensuring the safety of women and their children, especially when women choose to remain at home (see Recommendation 2.1). This can be achieved in different ways. Both the Victorian Men's Case Management and Western Australia's Communicare Breathing Space work with men who are removed from the family home to address immediate needs including housing needs, and assist them to take responsibility for their actions to mitigate the risk of re-offending (Case Study 12).<sup>338</sup> In South Australia, the Integrated Housing Exits Program is a prisons programme that ensures people who have been jailed for less than a year have access to secure housing and case management following their release.<sup>339</sup>

It is widely acknowledged that alcohol and substance abuse by perpetrators increases the frequency and severity of family violence.<sup>340</sup> As previously discussed, mental health concerns, financial stress and homelessness can also play a role. The success of perpetrator programmes, and keeping women and their children safe, relies on addressing these factors in parallel, so that men have the best opportunity to change their attitudes and behaviours.

As part of their case management or 'wrap around' approach to each perpetrator, residential programmes, such as Communicare Breathing Space, provide access to services that address the other factors that can escalate violence. When perpetrator programmes are not part of a residential intervention programme, support services that address these factors should be appropriately linked to perpetrator programmes. This can occur both in the community and in the corrections setting.

#### RECOMMENDATION 4.3

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should ensure that perpetrators have clear pathways to services which address factors that escalate violence and/or which are designed for men who are violent towards women and their children.

Governments should:

- ensure perpetrators have access to alternative accommodation and receive appropriate support and case management from men's services, where appropriate
- create clear pathways between perpetrator programmes and health services, drug and alcohol services, financial advice and other support services.

### **Introduce more consistent penalties for emerging forms of abuse**

Perpetrator programmes and education must be balanced with clear and consistent penalties for perpetrating violence against women and their children. This is especially the case regarding technology-facilitated violence and coercive control which, as previously discussed, tends to be treated as a less significant form of violence than physical violence.

For the Advisory Panel, the use of technology to distribute intimate material without consent is particularly concerning. Yet there continues to be a poor understanding of the damage this form of abuse can do.

All jurisdictions have existing laws which can be used to prosecute the distribution of intimate material without consent. However, existing laws that govern such offences do not adequately capture the scope or nature of these offences.<sup>341</sup>

In Australia, Victoria is the only state or territory to have a specific offence that makes it illegal to distribute, or threaten to distribute, intimate material without consent.<sup>342</sup> South Australia has broader legislation that makes it a criminal offence to distribute an 'invasive' image without consent. At the Commonwealth level, broader telecommunications offences can, and have, been used in relation to using a 'carriage service to menace, harass or cause offence'.<sup>343</sup>

Other jurisdictions tend to rely upon blackmail, voyeurism or indecency offences and breaching domestic violence orders to enforce perpetrator accountability. These existing offences are ill-suited to the diverse types of violence that are captured under the label of 'revenge porn'. Worse still, when offenders are prosecuted under indecency offences it implies that the images, rather than the perpetrator's behaviour, are what is offensive or violent.<sup>344</sup>

The Advisory Panel has also heard that the complex and changing nature of legislation in response to technological advances creates confusion amongst frontline services, police and prosecutors about what is and is not illegal. It also limits community understanding about what is considered 'wrong' and when events should be reported to the police. When violent behaviours cannot even be consistently identified, any efforts to prevent future violence will not work.

To clarify the serious and criminal nature of the distribution of intimate material without consent, legislation should be developed that includes strong penalties for adults who do so. Continued support for agencies, including the Children's eSafety Commissioner, to have strong powers to remove online material should also be a priority. This should send a clear message to the community about the seriousness of this form of technology-facilitated violence.

At the same time, careful consideration should be given to cases where young people share intimate material, both with and without consent. In this case, strong education-based interventions should be available to promote a positive and healthy attitude to relationships and sexuality (see Recommendation 1.3).

**RECOMMENDATION 4.4**

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should introduce legislation that reinforces perpetrator accountability by removing uncertainty and explicitly making it illegal to use technology to distribute intimate material without consent.

Governments should:

- introduce and enforce strong and consistent penalties for adults who distribute intimate material without consent
- improve community understanding of the impacts and consequences of distributing intimate material.

## CASE STUDY 12

# BREATHING SPACE IS A RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMME FOR PERPETRATORS

**Communicare Breathing Space is Australia's only residential programme for perpetrators of violence against women.**

Communicare Breathing Space is a live-in, three month programme in Western Australia for men who are perpetrators of family violence. It houses 12 perpetrators at a time, who each receive individual case management services.

Participants undertake a range of group and individual counselling to acknowledge and tackle their violent behaviours. They also have access to programmes specifically focused on the impact of alcohol and drug addiction and abusive behaviours.

The initiative is funded by the West Australian Department for Child Protection and Family Support.

Perpetrators come to Communicare Breathing Space from a full range of referral sources, including self-referral, although most are through the criminal justice system. There are admission criteria and participation obligations.

To drive accountability, perpetrators are required to contribute to the costs of their lodgings in the programme according to their income.

Throughout the programme, case management services provide direct referrals into other services like employment and onsite skills training for perpetrators - learning to shop, cook and budget for themselves - to make their exit from the programme as successful as possible.

Importantly, Communicare Breathing Space offers a support and referral service to family members.

Since opening in June 2003, Communicare Breathing Space has provided intervention to more than 60 men a year.

## 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities require trauma-informed responses to violence

Violence against women and their children in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is unacceptably high. It is also complex as it is underpinned by historical trauma and oppression, and can be perpetrated through kinship networks and the broader community. The term ‘family violence’ is used here in recognition of this complexity.

Past responses to family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have often not been effective or appropriate, as they have failed to take account of the historical and ongoing trauma present in many communities.

The recommendations in Action Areas 2 (women), 3 (children) and 4 (perpetrators) may be relevant to some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, responses to violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are likely to be more effective when they are informed by an understanding of the trauma experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and when they are designed in collaboration with communities and delivered by a qualified local workforce. Responses to family violence must be comprehensively evaluated, and the programmes that demonstrate good outcomes expanded.

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have a history of trauma

### **Family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is unacceptably high**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience violence at higher rates than the non-Indigenous population. They are likely to report being a victim of physical or threatened violence at twice the rate of non-Indigenous women,<sup>345</sup> and are likely to report three times as many incidents of sexual violence.<sup>346</sup> There are 34 times more hospitalisations for non-fatal family violence-related assaults for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women compared with non-Indigenous women,<sup>347</sup> and over 90 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who have experienced physical violence knew the offender.<sup>348</sup> Living in regional, rural and remote areas can compound the effects of family violence for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Perpetrators of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are also more likely to be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rather than non-Indigenous.<sup>349</sup>

Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is significantly underreported. Research suggests up to 90 per cent of violence is not disclosed.<sup>350</sup> Underreporting can result from lack of culturally appropriate data collection methods, lack of recognition that violence is occurring, distrust of institutions, lack of services, poor relationships with police, fear of the incarceration of men and expectations of ‘payback’ within families and communities.<sup>351</sup> The perceived risk of child removal can also influence women in their decision to report violence and seek support. This underreporting is particularly common in remote areas, where there are a limited range of services and a lack of anonymity.<sup>352</sup>

### **Historical trauma and gender inequality contribute to family violence**

Family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is driven by multiple and intersecting factors. It is deeply rooted in long histories of colonisation, racism, and systemic disadvantage. It is also related to the breakdown and reconfiguration of social structures – often as a result of intentional assimilation policies – leading to family and community breakdown, and the loss of traditional kinship and gender roles.<sup>353</sup> These past traumas can be passed through kinship networks and families from one generation to the next.<sup>354</sup>

Multi-generational trauma associated with the stolen generations and child removal policies is particularly relevant. The historic association between the family courts and ‘welfare’ may raise fears that children will be removed as a result of engaging with court processes. This can deter women with children from reporting violence, which can further perpetuate trauma.

Escalating rates of child protection intervention and removal in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities can make this fear a reality,<sup>355</sup> and can cause significant trauma to children and young people. In 2015, the ‘Taskforce 1000’ project in Victoria found that of 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home-care, up to 95 per cent had been removed as a direct result of family violence.<sup>356</sup> On 30 June 2014, 35 per cent of children in out-of-home care in Australia was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, even though Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

comprise less than five per cent of Australian children.<sup>357</sup> Children removed from their families are also at increased risk of being victims of violence as adults.<sup>358</sup>

At the same time, gender inequality and related violence supportive social norms that predominate Australian society more broadly (discussed in Action Area 1) also contribute to family violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Some of these values are linked to the historical influences of patriarchal colonial societies, while others are linked to local cultural practices and values.

The impacts of historical trauma and gender inequality can be further compounded by alcohol and substance misuse (one way trauma can be passed intergenerationally is through foetal alcohol spectrum disorders) and factors such as poor educational and employment outcomes.<sup>359</sup> For women living in remote locations, a lack of access to services, distrust of local authorities and financial instability can further contribute to the effects of violence and complicate efforts to address it.<sup>360</sup>

These intersecting issues come together to contribute to high rates of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The design and delivery of responses for victims and perpetrators of violence must recognise historical and cultural trauma, the intersecting effects of gender inequality, and the cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.<sup>361</sup> Importantly, past trauma must be acknowledged and understood, so that cycles of violence that are perpetuated through kinship networks and across generations can be interrupted.

Further, as each individual and community has a different experience of historical trauma and shares different cultural and social values, responses that work well in one place may not work in others. For example, the Advisory Panel has heard that much less work has been done to address family violence experienced by Torres Strait Islander people compared with some Aboriginal communities, and programmes developed in Aboriginal settings cannot simply be duplicated in the Torres Strait Islands.

Ultimately, the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the design, delivery and evaluation of responses and services to address family violence is vital to ensuring their success.

## Responses to date have often not been effective or appropriate

There have been significant efforts to improve community safety and address family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Criminal justice responses have formed a large proportion of the action taken to date. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people account for only two per cent of the Australian population, 27 per cent of the total Australian prison population are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and 90 per cent of these are male.<sup>362</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men are more likely to be incarcerated for family violence than non-Indigenous men,<sup>363</sup> and imprisonment rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men who perpetrate violence against women are rising.<sup>364</sup>

Preventive measures have largely focused on addressing drivers of violence such as alcohol and substance misuse. A range of national, state and local initiatives to prevent and address violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities has been delivered over the past 15 years.



Progress towards the Closing the Gap targets set by COAG in 2008 across six ‘pillars’ – infancy and early childhood, education, employment, healthy lives, economic development, and safe and healthy communities – has been varied.<sup>365</sup> More specifically, efforts to improve community safety and address drivers of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to date have focused on:

- diversion and rehabilitation, through the delivery of prisoner rehabilitation and other justice related activities
- delivery of alcohol and other drug treatment services
- violence reduction and victim support through the provision of legal services and family safety activities, particularly for women and children
- improved wellbeing and resilience activities to foster social participation or reduce antisocial behaviour through social and emotional wellbeing counselling
- delivery of shelter/protection within communities through safe houses, refuges and sobering-up shelters
- creation of safe environments and functional communities through community policing initiatives
- situational crime prevention including good street lighting, appropriate housing design, availability of relevant amenities, closed circuit television and reduced access to alcohol
- behaviour change initiatives and activities to strengthen identity through sport, education, arts, cultural activities, group therapy, and similar activities.<sup>366</sup>

Despite significant and sustained efforts by all governments in the past decades, rates of family violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have remained largely unchanged.<sup>367</sup> The Advisory Panel has heard that policies and services that are not specifically designed by, or delivered for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are often not effective. The Advisory Panel has heard multiple explanations for the lack of success to date, including:

- **limited acknowledgement of historical trauma and cultural dynamics:** there is currently no consistent approach to ensuring responses are informed by a nuanced understanding of the cultural and historical drivers of family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Services that do not take local cultural histories, traumas and dynamics into account can be inappropriate
- **lack of community consultation and involvement:** services are less effective without local community input and ownership, but individuals and communities can lack capacity and opportunity to participate in, or drive, the development of programmes
- **in appropriate design and implementation:** variance in workforce capacities and geographical factors are often not taken into account in the delivery of programmes
- **barriers to accessing services:** challenges to service accessibility include remoteness, lack of financial independence, cultural and language barriers, and a lack of appropriately-skilled staff. Lateral violence can also deter victims from reporting violence or seeking support

- **fear of criminal justice responses:** fear of engagement with the criminal justice system and of police responses to victims, perpetrators or children can prevent women from accessing services or reporting violence<sup>368</sup>
- **limited evaluation of interventions:** there is limited data on the effectiveness of policies and programmes targeted at preventing and reducing family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.<sup>369</sup>

## A different approach to addressing violence is required

### Solutions to family violence should be informed by an understanding of history, trauma and place

To improve the effectiveness of responses to family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, policy development, programme design, programme implementation and evaluation by governments, communities and service providers must be informed by a clear understanding of the historical, cultural and trauma-related drivers of violence in these communities. A conceptual framework that captures the historical and cultural context of violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities should be developed to provide this foundation.

The framework should be developed by a leading research organisation with appropriate cultural competencies, in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities. It should complement or link to the work of Our Watch under *Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence against Women and their Children* to develop resources by learning from past efforts and guiding future efforts to prevent family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The framework should be guided by the following themes:

- **history and culture:** the framework should provide a contextual understanding of the intersecting causes and drivers of family violence in different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including historical trauma, breakdown of law and culture, socioeconomic disadvantage, racism and gender inequality
- **trauma:** the framework should have an emphasis on the recognition of past trauma, and the promotion of physical, psychological, emotional and cultural healing. It should support survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment. It should also ensure that child-centred trauma-informed approaches to healing are also included
- **place:** the framework should guide the development of solutions that integrate responses appropriate to the geographic location and community needs, with a focus on healing through connection to culture, family and land, including using informal community-based supports such as ‘yarning’ and healing processes.<sup>370</sup> This is sometimes referred to as being a ‘place-based approach’.

The framework should also provide a basis for identifying, understanding and responding to family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are likely to experience intersecting

forms of disadvantage, including people with disabilities and those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer.

Development of the framework should draw on existing international conceptual frameworks of family violence in indigenous communities. For example, a theoretical framework was developed in Alaska to understand factors that contribute to intimate partner violence in Alaska Native communities. The framework identifies factors that contribute to violence at the interpersonal, institutional/organisational, community and policy levels. The community level takes into account historical trauma due to colonisation and explains how it produces changes in spiritual, social, and economic structures and lifestyles.<sup>371</sup> Intervention strategies informed by the framework include mainstream and tailored services to address intergenerational trauma that are consistent with traditional indigenous values, including healing circles.<sup>372</sup>

In Australia, existing policy frameworks at the Commonwealth, state and territory government levels should also be used to inform the development of a new framework. Relevant work includes:

- the Commonwealth Government's *Violence in Indigenous Communities Report*<sup>373</sup> on the drivers of violence and intersections with culture and trauma
- the *National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework 2009-2015*, which emphasises supporting community ownership of safety and crime prevention activities, and providing the necessary supports to heal and empower communities, and particularly women and children<sup>374</sup>
- the Victorian Government's *Indigenous Family Violence 10 Year Plan*, and in particular its focus on supporting, empowering and enabling Indigenous communities to develop solutions to prevent, reduce and respond to violence.<sup>375</sup>

### RECOMMENDATION 5.1

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should support the development of a trauma-informed conceptual framework for understanding family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The framework should:

- be developed in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- recognise the contributing impacts of colonisation, interruption of culture and kinship ties, intergenerational trauma, gender inequality and related social norms which perpetuate family violence
- be used by governments and service providers to design, implement and evaluate responses to family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

### Evidence about what works must be improved

There is a lack of evidence about the effectiveness of programmes for, or responses to, family violence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.<sup>376</sup> This is the case for both responses for women at risk of (or experiencing) violence and men who are at risk of perpetrating (or who are already perpetrating) violence.

Some existing policies and programmes are improving monitoring and evaluation practices. For example, the Australian Nurse Partnership Program (Case Study 13) is a programme delivered in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that is building a good evidence base by carrying out rigorous programme evaluations.<sup>377</sup> Further monitoring will help to establish whether the programme, or parts of it, is having a positive effect.

However, few existing community safety programmes or initiatives have been evaluated with sufficient rigour.<sup>378</sup> For example, in a recent ANROWS assessment of 24 programmes, only two programmes were assessed as demonstrating a positive reduction in family violence based on strong levels of evidence, even though over 90 per cent of the programmes reported having a positive impact in dealing with family violence.<sup>379</sup> As a result, current evaluation evidence is not generally rigorous enough to justify expansion or modification of programmes.

Existing policies and programmes do not always include resourcing for an evaluation component, especially not longer-term follow-up to assess outcomes that typically require long periods of healing, such as recovery from trauma, rebuilding of kinship ties or reduced family violence. There is a need for more evaluation of programme processes, impacts and outcomes, using both quantitative and qualitative methods.<sup>380</sup> This should include increasing the integrity and consistency of data collection in general, monitoring programme outcomes over the long term, carrying out meta-analyses of programme evaluations, and expanding the use of innovative and appropriate research techniques and trials.

In addition, evaluation methods often fail to incorporate the experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, for example through qualitative data collection to measure intangible outcomes such as healing. The absence of robust evidence is likely to constrain the development of new programmes, and threaten the sustainability of those that are already being delivered.

Including the perspectives of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the design, delivery and evaluation of responses to violence is essential to ensuring the success of initiatives.<sup>381</sup> Opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to drive, shape and evaluate local responses to violence will lead to greater ownership of, and accountability for, the successes of responses. Governments must collaborate with local communities to build their capacity to participate actively in these processes.<sup>382</sup> This will help to ensure that initiatives are 'place-based', or responsive to local dynamics and community factors.<sup>383</sup> Information about initiatives that are making a difference should be shared widely, and such initiatives should be encouraged and supported to expand.

**RECOMMENDATION 5.2**

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should continue to build the evidence base on what works to address family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Governments should:

- work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to evaluate existing programmes, using rigorous quantitative and qualitative research methods; measures of success should be appropriate to the community in which a program is trialled
- work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to further expand programmes that demonstrate good outcomes, and design and implement innovative and flexible place-based responses to violence for specific groups.

## CASE STUDY 13

# BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS WITH COMMUNITIES

**The Commonwealth-funded Australian Nurse Family Partnership Program (ANFPP) is demonstrating the importance of building partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.**

The ANFPP aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers and their children through nurse-led home visits, from pregnancy through to when their child is two years old.

In 2008 the Program was adapted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities based on its effectiveness overseas. The Program supports women to not only improve the health and development of their children, but to develop a vision for their own future through continuing education and employment.

The ANFPP targets first-time mothers within the first 28 weeks of pregnancy. Nurse Home Visitors work with mothers to empower them to be confident parents and to address their own health, social and environmental needs, which may include substance abuse or family violence.

A key feature of the Program is the inclusion of the Family Partnership Worker (also known as Aboriginal Community Workers in some sites) as an integral member of the ANFPP delivery team.

Family Partnership Workers provide a critical link between Nurse Home Visitors, participants, families, local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and health providers.

A 2012 evaluation found that Family Partnership Workers were essential to building community interest and trust in the ANFPP.

The Family Partnership Workers also enhanced access to the Program for mothers and families.

Family Partnership Workers have been viewed as essential partners in the ANFPP team and valued for the 'cultural brokerage' role they play in:

- understanding and interpreting local cultural matters and reinforcing cultural safety
- interpreting in community languages
- developing locally appropriate resources
- promoting the ANFPP within communities
- explaining the program to eligible mothers and gaining consent
- assisting with building the relationships between the Nurse Home Visitors, the client and their families.

Since 2008, the ANFPP has operated in New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory. In 2014 there were 197 participants and outcomes for women and their children have been positive.

Internationally, specific family violence-focused interventions are being added to the Program with promising outcomes. The Netherlands has seen a 40 per cent reduction in family violence for participants. A similar module targeting interpersonal violence is currently being trialled in the United States and will be available shortly for adaptation in the Australian context and implemented for evaluation in 2018.

### **Build capacity so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can drive responses**

Family violence responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and perpetrators of violence are delivered by general community-based services, specialised services which deal with all forms of family violence, and frontline responders. These are staffed by a workforce that includes counsellors, healthcare workers, police and others, many of whom require formal post-school and/or tertiary qualifications.

The Advisory Panel has heard that services are more effective when delivered by suitably qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have the skills to recognise and respond to trauma in their work. However, much of the current workforce is comprised of non-Indigenous people. There is currently no specific strategy to increase the number of qualified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals who can deliver trauma-informed responses and support services to their local communities. There is also little investment in holistic and long-term recruitment, training, support and long-term professional development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce in this area.

Initiatives in some jurisdictions are beginning to address the underrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the professional workforce. For example, the New South Wales Health Education Centre against Violence provides training on culturally competent responses to family violence and delivers community development programmes to strengthen local capacities to prevent violence. This training is delivered by, and for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and provides participants with a professional qualification.<sup>384</sup>

However, a more comprehensive and sustained effort is required in order to equip Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to effectively deliver sustained responses to family violence in local communities. In particular, there should be a focus on:

- **skills, training and capacity building:** activities to build and develop the skills and capacities of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce to deliver culturally appropriate and trauma-informed responses to violence should be developed
- **programme delivery by local communities for local communities:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations should be central to the development, accreditation and delivery of qualifications, training and capacity building activities
- **ongoing professional development opportunities:** the workforce should be given opportunities to further develop competencies to deliver trauma-informed responses through mentoring and professional supervision, reflective practice opportunities and skills transfer and exchange with other professionals
- **building a strong, qualified workforce into the future:** trauma-informed practice should be promoted as a career of choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and supported through the availability of appropriate qualifications. More culturally appropriate and accessible vocational education and training and tertiary education places should be created to accommodate students from a diversity of backgrounds (including men and women from underrepresented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, with

disabilities, or from other at-risk groups). Options such as establishing a professional body to guide and support the design and delivery of qualifications for the entire workforce that delivers responses to family violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should also be considered.

### RECOMMENDATION 5.3

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to deliver trauma-informed responses to family violence over the long term.

Governments should:

- ensure that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce delivering family violence responses is appropriately qualified and equipped to deliver trauma-informed strategies to reduce family violence
- support ongoing capacity building and professional development opportunities for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce that delivers family violence responses
- develop initiatives to build the long-term capacity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce that delivers family violence responses.



## 6 Integrated responses are needed to keep women and their children safe

When victims of violence seek help and support, they can come into contact with a range of agencies and service providers. When responses are poorly integrated, the burden on victims and the risk to their safety can increase.

A range of cultural, financial, physical, policy and legal barriers currently limit the ability of agencies and service providers to offer effective and integrated responses to violence against women and their children.

Integration and collaboration between agencies and service providers can reduce the burden on victims, reduce the risk of further harm, and improve the effectiveness of responses. There are a range of opportunities to improve integration, and a number of barriers to address, at the national, state and territory and community levels.

## Integration can make navigating a complex system easier

### Poorly integrated services can create additional trauma

When a victim reports violence, she and her children may come into contact with a range of government agencies and community-based service providers (described in Action Areas 2 and 3). She may access support services, housing, counselling, health, childcare or financial support services. She might come into contact with the police, state and territory domestic violence courts, magistrates' courts, family courts and child services.

Similarly, a perpetrator may come into contact with a range of services and agencies, including men's referral services, housing, counselling, health or financial services, police, corrective services, courts and parole boards. This is described in more detail in Action Area 4.

The complex needs of victims and perpetrators require interventions involving many agencies and service providers. Responses to violence must be informed by a systemic understanding of the nature of the problem.<sup>385</sup> Approaches that integrate responses for women, their children and perpetrators, which are well established overseas, have had success in improving safety and reducing patterns of violent behaviour (Case Study 14).<sup>386</sup>

In Australia, where integration is not as advanced, the Advisory Panel has heard that in many instances, the burden of responsibility for navigating agencies and service providers is borne by the victims. For example:

- **women may have to repeatedly tell their story and re-live trauma**, for example, if information is not shared between providers
- **women and their children can be put in danger**, for example, if not all information about perpetrators' histories is available to all professionals that make decisions about protecting women and their children
- **navigating the system can be frustrating and time-consuming**, for example, if services are not connected, a woman and her children must spend time moving between them (sometimes visiting multiple courts, services and offices repeatedly and continuously over long periods of time) and managing and navigating complex and apparently contradictory rules, regulations and requirements
- **risk of harm can be underestimated**, for example, if not all services are involved, risk assessments may not consider all relevant information
- **inconsistency in the system can lead to different outcomes**, for example, when outcomes vary depending on which police officer, judge or magistrate works on the case
- **women and their children can lose confidence in the system**, for example, if there is no consistency and the quality of services and agencies varies for women living in different regions.

Where a victim has continuous re-engagement with an array of services and interventions, where she has to re-tell her story, and where she has to face ongoing questioning, disbelief and cross-examination, she is more likely to experience system-generated trauma in addition to the trauma of the violence perpetrated against her.<sup>387</sup> This can also affect a woman's capacity to work, care for her children, and spend time with her support network.

## CASE STUDY 14

# THE MAKING SAFE SCHEME WORKS WITH WOMEN, THEIR CHILDREN AND PERPETRATORS

The Making Safe Scheme in the United Kingdom is an integrated response that supports victims of domestic abuse and their children to stay in the home. Perpetrators are removed, found alternative accommodation and supported to change through targeted interventions.

The Making Safe Scheme is a holistic programme where adult and child victims, as well as perpetrators, are supported by their own case worker. Practitioners meet fortnightly to share information and monitor change in their clients.

Perpetrators can access accommodation, behaviour change programmes, substance abuse counselling and other support for up to two years. They are not required to use all elements of the Scheme unless directed by a court.

The Scheme is delivered through an integrated, multi-agency approach which includes local police, housing providers, councils, and domestic violence and court services.

Evaluations of Making Safe have shown promising results, including lower recidivism rates and cost savings. One evaluation identified a significant difference in patterns of offending behaviour, with participants recording fewer subsequent domestic violence incidents, child protection notifications and drug offending.

Of the victims who chose to remain in their homes, all reported that they felt safer and were able to seek help without fear of intimidation. Children also stated that they could now identify who to talk to, and, following safety planning, what action to take to protect themselves in a crisis incident.

During 2011-12, Making Safe supported 28 victims who wanted to remain with their partner and 68 victims and 85 children who wanted to remain at home without their partner.

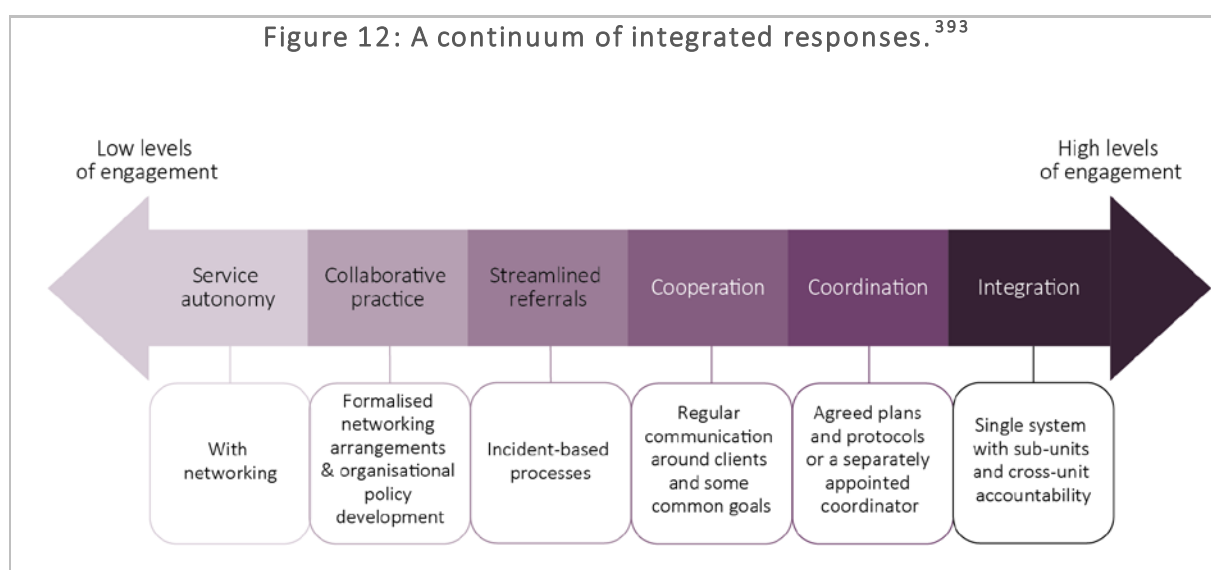
The total cost of Making Safe for 2011-12 was \$249,659. It is estimated that the scheme achieved savings of \$750,387 (a net saving of \$500,728). This included \$557,292 of savings within the local authority through fewer incidents and less demand for children's services, \$103,202 of savings as a result of not having to re-house victims and their children and \$83,472 of savings within the criminal justice system through reduced recidivism.

The sharing of information, knowledge and expertise between agencies and service providers can be crucial to ensuring the safety of women and their children.<sup>388</sup> In addition to the benefits for victims, integrated responses can provide significant benefits to service providers by minimising duplication of services, improving information sharing, enhancing transparency and accountability and increasing the knowledge and skills of frontline staff.<sup>389</sup> It can also enhance the consistency of data to help improve the evidence base for what works, and can ensure that best practice is shared widely and improved upon regularly.

### The benefits of integration and barriers to it

Integrated responses seek to mobilise the ‘entire system’ in response to violence and ensure that it delivers complementary and seamless support to both meet the needs of women and their children, and appropriately respond to perpetrators. By enabling the delivery of holistic and comprehensive services, integration delivers better outcomes for victims,<sup>390</sup> simplifies their journey through service systems and minimises the potential for secondary victimisation.<sup>391</sup>

Integration is sometimes considered to be synonymous with ‘coordination’, ‘cooperation’ and ‘collaboration’, although these latter terms tend to indicate degrees of integration across a continuum of responses (Figure 12).<sup>392</sup>



‘Integration’ is used in a range of different ways and can refer to a spectrum of arrangements and interactions between government agencies and service providers. All Australian jurisdictions are currently pursuing various forms of integrated responses to violence against women. Some of these are quite comprehensive, for example the South Australian Multi-Agency Protection Service (Case Study 15).<sup>394</sup> Others are smaller in scale, for example, liaison arrangements between police and victim support services,<sup>395</sup> developing common policies and objectives, using consistent risk assessment tools (Recommendation 6.1), coordinated leadership, or regular multi-agency conferences (Case Study 16).<sup>396</sup>

## CASE STUDY 15

# SOUTH AUSTRALIAN AND TASMANIAN APPROACHES TO MULTI-AGENCY RESPONSES

**A multi-agency approach to violence against women enables each agency to bring its expertise and views to a case, resulting in a better coordinated and more timely response for victims.**

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Some Australian jurisdictions are implementing multi-agency approaches to keep women and their children safe.

In South Australia, the Multi-Agency Protection Service, or MAPS, was initially set up as a trial in 2014 to coordinate the efforts of police and various government and support agencies.

MAPS is an information sharing initiative that brings together representatives of the police, the state education and child development departments, and health care, housing and correctional services in one location to ensure a coordinated response to high-risk cases.

By co-locating these staff, agencies are able to share information faster and identify emerging patterns of harm before they escalate so that at risk families do not slip through the system.

*‘While information-sharing already occurs between partner agencies, the MAPS concept takes a different approach by co-locating participating agencies under one roof to facilitate real-time information sharing, risk assessments and allocation of responses.’ – South Australian Police Commissioner, Grant Stevens*

Tasmania is also developing an integrated, multi-agency model through a new state-wide Safe Families Coordination Unit led by the Tasmanian Police.

The Unit will bring the best available information from across government together in one place to ensure families at risk are identified and supported as early as possible, with a focus on high risk offenders.

Like the South Australian model, the Unit will include health and human services, education and justice representatives. It will also develop information sharing protocols with non-government agencies.

## CASE STUDY 16

# IMPROVING SAFETY THROUGH COLLABORATION

A new way of working in the United Kingdom is bringing professionals together to improve responses for women in high-risk situations.

Multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs) are regular multi-agency meetings which allow representatives of different agencies that support women experiencing violence to share information about high-risk victims and develop plans to increase their safety.

The agencies that attend the conferences can include police, probation officers, independent domestic violence advisers, children's services, health services and housing support services. By bringing all agencies involved in a woman's case together to share information, coordinated safety plans can be developed quickly and effectively.

The multi-agency conference model was first developed in Wales in 2003, in response to the lack of systematic risk assessment among agencies responding to violence and the need for a forum for local agencies to share information about high-risk victims.

There are approximately 250 multi-agency conferences across England and Wales which, in the 12 months to September 2010, discussed around 45,000 cases (including repeat cases).

Existing research indicates that multi-agency conferences, when delivered in partnership with domestic violence advisers, have the potential to improve safety for women and reduce revictimisation by up to 60 per cent.

Estimations of the cost effectiveness of multi-agency risk assessment conferences have also been completed, with analysis suggesting for every one pound spent on the conferences, at least six pounds of public money could be saved annually on direct costs of domestic abuse to agencies such as the police and health services.

Critical to the effectiveness of multi-agency conferences is better information sharing, partnerships and the involvement of independent domestic violence advisers in representing and engaging victims throughout the process.

*'I received so much support because of the MARAC. Without it, I'd still be in a violent relationship now.'*

**– MARAC participant**

Safe Lives in the United Kingdom, a national organisation dedicated to ending domestic violence, believes that the multi-agency risk assessment conferences are the most important advance in protecting adult victims and their children since the introduction of refuge provision in the 1970s.

Achieving integration requires a number of challenges to be addressed. The Advisory Panel has heard about multiple barriers that are currently limiting the ability of agencies and service providers to collaborate and integrate responses to violence against women and their children. These include:

- **cultural barriers:** such as resistance to information sharing between agencies, poor relationships between agencies and service providers, competing priorities or incompatible understandings of the problem
- **financial barriers:** such as the lack of long-term funding for service providers and the use of contracting models that discourage collaboration
- **physical barriers:** such as where service providers are located in different places and have few opportunities to build relationships with related professionals and share best practice
- **human resource barriers:** such as staff lacking the time, resources or skills necessary for effective information sharing and collaboration
- **policy barriers:** such as difficulties created by conflicting policy objectives and frameworks, inconsistent definitions, tools and practices (for example, in relation to risk assessment)
- **legal barriers:** such as legislation, misconceptions about privacy laws, family law and the potential for inconsistency of parenting and family violence orders.

Many of these barriers can be overcome to keep women and their children safer, and to ensure that perpetrators are held to account.

## National leadership is needed to enable better collaboration and integration

### Assess risk in a nationally consistent way

One of the first points at which there is a need for interaction between many different agencies and service providers is following a report of violence. At this time, a risk assessment will generally be used by the police or service providers to determine which responses might be most suited, and to provide the victim with information and advice about her safety and the safety of her children.<sup>397</sup>

Risk assessments may consider a range of information, including the perpetrator and their history of violence, the victim's welfare, the risks faced by her children, and any other factors (for example, disability, health or financial problems). As a result of a risk assessment, victims might be referred to a women's service to follow up with the victim. From there, they might be referred to a range of support services, including housing, counselling, health or financial support services. Perpetrators may be referred to men's active referral centres, perpetrator programmes, or other support services.<sup>398</sup>

Risk assessments currently vary significantly in the types of information they collect and the types of professionals they consult. For example, services in Queensland use a range of methods for assessing risk. In 2015, the Queensland Government's Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence concluded that the plethora of methods and tools being used to assess risk was leading to inconsistency in the delivery of services. The Taskforce also identified a lack of coordination in the

provision of emergency responses to cases where women and their children were at highest risk of violence.<sup>399</sup>

In South Australia, on the other hand, all government and non-government organisations currently use the Family Safety Framework. The Framework aims to ensure that services to families most at risk of violence are provided in a structured and systematic way, through agencies sharing information and taking responsibility for supporting families to navigate the system.<sup>400</sup>

Common risk assessment frameworks can improve responses to violence against women and their children. By establishing a shared understanding and language for risk, common risk assessment frameworks can:

- ensure consistent, reliable risk assessments based on relevant evidence, so that appropriate risk identification and triaging occurs in every response to violence
- improve communication and collaboration between agencies<sup>401</sup>
- encourage best practice and reduce duplication
- provide the foundation for integrated, consistent responses to violence.<sup>402</sup>

The Advisory Panel recommends that a common national risk assessment framework be developed. The framework would provide the foundation for more consistent, integrated responses to violence against women and their children across Australia. In addition, the framework would create opportunities for national data collection, research and risk assessment tool validation and improvement. It would also assist in cases where victims, their children and/or perpetrators move between states and territories.

A common national risk assessment framework is key to the success of ‘safe at home’ models recommended in Recommendation 2.1. The framework must prioritise the safety of women and their children by focusing on the risk posed by the perpetrator. It should be developed by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments through a collaborative process. It should be regularly evaluated, and updated every three years, to ensure ongoing relevance and accuracy.

It should have two key parts:

1. Mandatory core content: this should be a nationally agreed set of indicators which build on current best practice and which all risk assessments carried out nationwide should take into account. These indicators should include:
  - perpetrator risk
  - other risk factors (for example, disability, immigration status, financial risk, risk of lateral violence)
  - risks of technology-facilitated violence
  - guidance on appropriate referral pathways for women and their children, and perpetrators (perpetrator referral pathways are discussed in more detail in Recommendation 4.2)
2. Flexible content: this should include content that ensures risk assessments can be flexible and tailored to different jurisdictions, sectors, services and contexts.



The intention of a national risk assessment framework is to provide practical guidance that can be implemented by all jurisdictions, without imposing onerous processes or competing with the good work already underway. The Advisory Panel notes that the risk assessments already carried out in many states would not require alteration to achieve mandatory components.

The national common risk assessment framework should inform risk assessment tools used by all professionals who interact with women or children who have experienced violence, including professionals in the police, health, child protection services, domestic violence services, corrections, immigration, social services, disability services and legal services. Core content in risk assessment tools used by all of these professionals must be consistent to ensure the same language and understanding of risk occurs across all services.

While a common risk assessment would not eliminate the need for professional judgement, it would help to eliminate arbitrary decisions. The Advisory Panel recognises that the effectiveness of any risk assessment process will also be contingent on the capacity of frontline staff to appropriately apply it.<sup>403</sup> Staff who use the national risk assessment tool must be provided with regular high-quality training to support them to effectively apply the tool and to understand the dynamics of violence against women and their children more generally (training is also addressed in Recommendation 1.4). Workplace culture should reinforce the importance of applying risk assessments regularly in day-to-day practice.

#### RECOMMENDATION 6.1

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should support the development and use of a national common risk assessment framework for violence against women and their children.

This framework should:

- include nationally agreed principles, draw on existing best practice and specify nationally agreed core content
- inform risk assessment tools that are flexible and tailored to different jurisdictions and/or to different high-risk groups
- be applied accurately and consistently by professionals who should also receive regular, high-quality training
- ensure risks associated with all forms of violence against women and their children are appropriately accounted for (including, but not limited to, risks associated with technology, disability, finances or immigration status)
- incorporate guidance on appropriate referral pathways for victims of violence (both women and their children) and perpetrators
- be evaluated and updated at least every three years to ensure relevance and accuracy.

### **Provide sustainable funding to ensure effective responses and facilitate collaboration**

Sustainable long-term funding and collaborative contracting approaches can be an important enabler of integration.<sup>404</sup> This is in line with conclusions agreed at the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status for Women on the need to allocate adequate financial and human resources to develop and implement measures for the prevention, protection and support services that respond to violence against women and their children.<sup>405</sup>

The Advisory Panel has heard how a lack of funding for many key service providers (including women's services and legal assistance providers) affects their ability to meet demand and develop longer-term programmes. In addition, service providers expect increased demand in response to growing public awareness of the issue of violence against women and their children. In 2013, 46 per cent of domestic violence service providers reported being unable to meet demand for services, and 59 per cent of domestic violence services reported having to limit service levels to try and meet demand.<sup>406</sup> To complicate matters further, the funding for many women's services ends in June 2017, with the expiry of the *National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness 2015-2017*.<sup>407</sup>

The Advisory Panel has heard that the short-term nature of funding cycles (sometimes as little as one year) inhibits the development of innovative and reliable services that can meet the needs of all women seeking support. Funding uncertainty can undermine service providers' ability to recruit, retain and develop high-quality staff. Preparing new funding applications can also occupy a significant proportion of staff time. When services struggle to meet demand, they have limited additional time and capacity needed to build new links with related organisations. These factors can lead to fragmented and localised responses, rather than a comprehensive, integrated response. Funding mechanisms need to be able to respond to changes in levels of demand and to give certainty to services, their staff and clients.

These problems are further exacerbated by combining funding for violence against women with funding for other sectors, such as homelessness. With funding provided under a mix of different funding streams that have a range of stated objectives, it is difficult to ensure domestic violence services have appropriate levels of funding, or to monitor where government funds are being directed in the context of changing levels of demand. Where existing funding is not differentiated from other sectors, funding for domestic violence and sexual assault services should be protected or quarantined in its own dedicated funding stream.

Current competitive tendering arrangements can also lead to perverse outcomes.<sup>408</sup> While the intention of competitive tendering is to provide value for money, programme evaluations are not consistently funded or carried out in order to determine value added. There are also different understandings of success and value. Competition for funds can also generate disincentives for service providers to collaborate or share information. This is especially a problem in regional, rural and remote areas, where competitive tendering can discourage collaboration between the few local services that do exist.<sup>409</sup>

The Advisory Panel has heard particular concerns about the difficulties that some smaller community-based organisations in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities face in competing with larger organisations which do not have cultural competence but which can provide

greater cost efficiencies. Value for money is an important consideration, but the value of community connections should also be considered.

Governments should examine current funding arrangements to ensure that they support greater innovation and collaboration and are adequate to respond to the demands on the sector. Funding arrangements should be developed to facilitate the formation of sustainable and high-quality services and inter-service collaboration. Funded services and consortiums should be continually evaluated and updated in response to improving evidence and changing demand.

Some new funding arrangements that could be considered include extending default timeframes for funding domestic violence services to at least five years, encouraging partnerships between services through linkage grants, or developing a new, dedicated funding stream to ensure that funding to address violence against women and their children can be differentiated and protected from broader funding pools.

#### RECOMMENDATION 6.2

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should examine current funding arrangements aimed at reducing violence against women and their children.

Governments should:

- ensure funding for supporting women and their children, and for perpetrator programmes, is adequate and responsive to changes in demand for services
- support the delivery of sustainable and effective services through the introduction of long-term contracts
- increase current funding for trialling, sharing and expanding new and innovative responses to violence against women and their children
- ensure funding for services that address violence against women and their children can be clearly differentiated from other areas of expenditure
- introduce contracting approaches that encourage collaboration and integration across the sector.

#### **Establish a national summit to showcase best practice and provide opportunities for collaboration**

National level opportunities to share knowledge, build relationships and showcase best practice are central to ensuring that relationships and structures that support integration continue to grow and mature. An ongoing biennial summit would provide such an opportunity and could also be used to provide an update on progress of the National Plan. It should include international and national experts and practitioners, with a focus on sharing solution-oriented best practice approaches for addressing violence against women, particularly for high-risk groups. It should also provide an opportunity for ANROWS and Our Watch to share their latest knowledge and evidence. At the same time, cross-jurisdictional workshops should focus on building partnerships, reducing fragmentation in the system, and sharing innovative and integrated approaches.

COAG has already agreed to hold a 2016 national summit on preventing violence against women and their children, in order to profile best practice and review progress. This will provide significant opportunities to share the latest evidence on preventing and responding to violence against women and reinforce the progress being made. Making the 2016 national summit the first in an ongoing commitment to a biennial summit would ensure the work continues. Importantly, the sector should look beyond Australia to approaches in other countries, a number of whom are at the forefront of addressing violence against women and their children.

Ideally, the summit should aim to coincide with the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Campaign, which runs from 25 November (United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to 10 December (International Human Rights Day). Both of these dates highlight that violence against women is a human rights abuse. The 16 Days campaign, which has been running since 1991, aims to raise awareness about the prevalence and devastating impact of gender violence and is marked by events around the world to celebrate victories of the Women's Rights Movement, challenge policies and practices that allow violence against women and their children to continue, and demand that violence against women be recognised as an abuse of human rights.<sup>410</sup> The Advisory Panel recognises that this is a busy time for the sector, but also recognises the value of contributing to the momentum of activities at this time.

### RECOMMENDATION 6.3

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments, in partnership with the corporate sector and non-government organisations, should commit to a biennial national summit.

The national summit should:

- showcase and recognise Australian and international best practice in addressing violence against women and their children
- provide opportunities to identify, develop and share innovative and integrated approaches
- foster collaboration between experts, practitioners and professionals from a range of sectors, jurisdictions and interest areas.

### Improve information sharing between agencies and organisations

Information sharing between agencies and organisations in the government and non-government sectors is a critical element of an integrated response. Discussion between different agencies and organisations to share details of specific cases is at the core of coordinating tailored responses to violence against women.<sup>411</sup>

Various pieces of Commonwealth and state and territory legislation regulate privacy. Some jurisdictions have introduced legislation specifically related to information sharing in response to violence against women and their children, for example, in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania. In addition, various professional organisations have their own confidentiality requirements regarding when, and with whom, information can be shared.<sup>412</sup> It is important that privacy laws be reviewed by all jurisdictions so that they do not create barriers that unintentionally prioritise privacy over safety.

Concerns about breaching privacy legislation are often cited as the primary reason for agencies and service providers to withhold information. However, many laws equally state that information must be shared in order to keep women and their children safe. The laws that govern information sharing without consent are complex,<sup>413</sup> and misunderstanding privacy legislation can lead to a fear of information sharing. This can lead to cultural barriers to integration.<sup>414</sup> To address this, organisational cultures that enable and encourage information sharing must be fostered and developed. To reduce perceived barriers to information sharing and enable professionals to share information without fear, guidance should be provided to improve staff understanding of privacy laws and protocols.

Information sharing must be guided by a clear understanding of privacy laws, with an emphasis on the safety of women and their children. It should acknowledge:

- the purposes of information sharing are to promote women's safety, to ensure responses are victim centred, and to reduce the need for a victim to tell her story
- all information sharing should be governed by an ethical framework
- transparency and consent are vital so that clients of services are aware of what information is used by a service and how it was obtained.

#### RECOMMENDATION 6.4

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should ensure information sharing across government and non-government sectors to support the safety of women and their children.

Governments should:

- review privacy legislation and reduce unnecessary barriers to information sharing
- promote organisational cultures and links that enable information sharing across organisations and jurisdictions
- improve staff understanding of privacy laws and protocols in order to reduce perceived barriers to information sharing.

## Collaboration and integration should also be improved within and between specific sectors

### Co-locate and integrate courts and other relevant services

There is increasing recognition that courts can place a significant burden on victims and result in secondary victimisation.<sup>415</sup> Reasons for this have been described in Action Areas 2, 3 and 4. One way to reduce secondary victimisation, and to improve perpetrator accountability, is to improve the integration of the services and agencies that the victim, her children and/or the perpetrator are most likely to encounter. This can be achieved in a range of ways, including through physical co-location, improved and regular lines of communication, and others (such as those outlined previously in Figure 12).

Different models of collaboration and co-location are already being developed in Australia, with positive outcomes reported so far. For example, specialised family violence courts operate in several jurisdictions. At two locations of the Magistrates Court of Victoria, the Family Violence Court Division provides:

- specialist magistrates
- family violence court registrars
- court-based applicant and respondent support workers
- family violence outreach workers
- family violence legal services
- dedicated police prosecutors
- additional safety measures.

The Division is a ‘one stop shop’ that enables cases across multiple jurisdictions to be heard including applications for family violence intervention orders, civil personal injury claims, family law parenting orders and compensation and restitution cases.<sup>416</sup> The model enables the magistrate to hear related matters at the same time as the family violence intervention application and empowers the magistrate to direct perpetrators to attend counselling services.<sup>417</sup> The Queensland Government is also trialling an integrated family violence court, which is located at Southport.<sup>418</sup>

In Western Australia and registries in Victoria, child protection workers are co-located in family courts.<sup>419</sup> This facilitates the exchange of timely, relevant information about child protection matters where families and children are engaged in both the state and territory child protection and federal family law systems, which enables more informed decision making about risk. Co-location also fosters collaborative relationships between, and cultures among, professionals in all systems.

Other forms of integration can also reduce the burden on victims, especially in settings where co-location is not possible or practical. The Alice Springs Domestic and Family Violence Outreach Service in the Northern Territory, for example, works closely with a number of other services to provide a strong and flexible support network for women experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, violence in Alice Springs and surrounding town camps. Outreach workers visit women on a regular basis to provide and coordinate a wide range of supports, including safety planning, advocacy, education programmes and early intervention activities including child safety programmes.<sup>420</sup>

Existing models of co-location and integration should be expanded, and new ones trialled.

The Advisory Panel has heard concerns that co-location might create a new bureaucracy in ‘one big building’. While the principles of collaboration and integration are key, there is no reason that there should only be one model for co-location of services, or that collaboration has to involve geographical proximity. What is needed is the ability for agencies to move in and out of each other’s offices and processes to give a service that appears seamless to the client. This will be achieved in different ways; other strategies include creating shared protocols to guide staff, or enhancing opportunities for regular day-to-day collaboration. The objective should be to reduce the burden on women and their children, and their safety should be the main priority.

Importantly, any form of collaboration must be underpinned by the principles of integration and collaboration outlined in Recommendation 6.4, and a strong understanding of the dynamics of gender inequality and violence against women and their children (see Recommendation 1.4).

#### RECOMMENDATION 6.5

All Commonwealth, state and territory governments should identify opportunities to expand models of co-location and integration that include courts, agencies and services. These models should enhance collaboration and information sharing with the aim of improving the safety of women and their children.

Governments should:

- develop and implement robust information-sharing protocols and opportunities for collaboration
- adopt, expand and/or improve models of co-location and integration of services and courts that have already been successful in some jurisdictions.

#### **Build partnerships within and between corrective services**

When perpetrators are in prison, on parole or on community corrections orders, corrections officers have the ability to provide a crucial case management role, in partnership with other services, to manage risk, prioritise the safety of victims and inform perpetrator management and interventions, especially perpetrator programmes (see Action Area 4).<sup>421</sup> Partnerships with other services, and particularly with services for women, can ensure that corrective services manage risk to women and their children as effectively as possible.

All elements of the corrective services system, including for perpetrators in prison, on community corrections orders, and through probation and parole officers who monitor compliance, should develop partnerships with other organisations involved in addressing violence against women and their children. The Advisory Panel has heard that other agencies with whom partnerships should be explored include legal assistance services, health services, child protection and juvenile justice. Joining existing collaborations, and using common tools (such as the risk assessment proposed in

Recommendation 6.1) may be more effective for corrective services than building entirely new networks.

Current parole board decision making processes do not consistently consider how victims might be affected by release of a perpetrator.<sup>422</sup> Pre-sentencing factors, such as criminal history and relationship status, are not generally determinants of a parole decision. Risk assessments may be carried out but they do not consider risk to women and their children; risk assessments developed following Recommendation 6.1 should be applied to better inform these decisions. The Advisory Panel has heard how in some cases, victims will not even be notified of a perpetrator's release, even if he has listed her address as his 'home' address. There is a clear need for professionals appointed to make parole decisions to understand the complexity of violence against women and their children (see also Recommendation 1.4).<sup>423</sup>

The Advisory Panel has heard that to achieve closer collaboration with other agencies, corrective services have identified a need to work on internal culture change, capacity building and building relationships with other agencies, including with police, child protection and women's services. It may also be necessary to review any legislative barriers, or other barriers, to information sharing and collaboration.

Effective partnerships involving corrective services already exist in some jurisdictions. For example, Queensland Corrective Services has worked in partnership with the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Prevention Centre since 2000 to deliver the Men's Domestic Violence Education and Intervention Program (MDVEIP) (Case Study 17).<sup>424</sup> MDVEIP delivers therapeutic intervention services to perpetrators while also establishing and maintaining regular contact with victims, monitoring their safety and providing them with ongoing support. In the community setting, Queensland Corrective Services refers offenders and victims to specialist services for domestic violence intervention and support. MDVEIP also includes mechanisms for detailed communication between probation and parole officers, child safety officers and the women's advocate, so that agencies share all knowledge about individual men.

In Western Australia, the government has committed to adding new partner agencies, including the Department of Corrective Services, to the Family and Violence Response Team.<sup>425</sup> The Family and Violence Response Team is a partnership between the Department for Child Protection and Family Support (which has major policy responsibility for domestic and family violence), the Western Australia police and community sector and family and domestic violence services. It is a collaborative multi-agency approach that works together to improve the safety of child and adult victims of violence following a police callout to an incident. There is a Family and Violence Response Team in every child protection district and most members of the team are co-located.



**RECOMMENDATION 6.6**

All state and territory governments should ensure the corrective services system (including parole boards, corrections officers and community corrections officers) prioritises the safety of women and their children when managing perpetrators.

Governments should:

- establish formal partnerships between all parts of corrective services and other relevant services to ensure the safety of women and their children, especially when perpetrators are released from prison or when they are on community corrections orders
- ensure parole boards making decisions about perpetrators have access to, and are encouraged to use, a nationally consistent risk assessment framework and information from relevant services
- remove any legislative or other barriers to information sharing and collaboration between corrective services and all parts of the system that are involved with cases relating to violence against women.

## CASE STUDY 17

# THE GOLD COAST HAS A UNIQUE AND SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATED MODEL

The Gold Coast has a comprehensive network of services that work together to coordinate responses to violence against women and identify and fill gaps in the system.

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The Gold Coast Domestic Violence Integrated Response (GCDVIR) is an early example of pioneering integrated approaches in Australia. It is a multi-agency, community-based network that was established in 1996 to improve responses to violence against women following high rates of domestic violence and domestic homicides on the Gold Coast.

The primary objectives of the GCDVIR are to enhance victim safety, reduce secondary victimisation and decrease the incidence of domestic violence by improving interagency cooperation and collaboration.

Today, the GCDVIR is a comprehensive partnership between the Gold Coast Domestic Violence Prevention Centre (consisting of a specialist women's support service, a perpetrator programme, and children's counselling), police, corrective services, local hospitals, a specialist domestic violence court, child safety, the Department of Housing, and local women's refuges. Each of these services has a role to play in the response to domestic and family violence.

A key component of the response is the grounding of the perpetrator programme in the women's service. This enables the dynamic exchange of information to ensure that risk is monitored from the women's, perpetrators' and service providers' perspectives. Importantly, the woman's safety is central to all responses and interventions, with her consent and input sought at each step in the process.

Protocols have been developed that outline the roles and responsibilities of each agency and underpin the daily interaction between agencies. This enables information sharing and consultation to occur easily across organisations.

The Gold Coast Domestic Violence Prevention Centre is the lead agency of the Integrated Response and organises monthly meetings to discuss lessons learned and share recent experiences. At each of these meetings, agencies analyse a recent high-risk case to track the way it unfolded and identify any areas for improvement, including any gaps in the system.

The work of the GCDVIR has been recognised with a number of awards, including the Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Award in 2015.

### Improve integration in the courts

A woman's journey in the court system generally begins in the state family violence courts.<sup>426</sup> This family violence state system gives the immediate response to the crisis. If a woman then decides to separate, or is separated from, her violent partner she may need the family law system, which offers longer-term resolution of separation and parenting issues. A woman may also find herself in the child protection system if her children are subject to protection orders. These are three different legal systems, and when they lack integration the safety of women and their children can be impeded.

The *Family Law Act 1975* governs the decisions of the family law system. In 2012, amendments to the Act strengthened the provisions dealing with family violence. The Advisory Panel supports these amendments. The amendments broadened the definition of family violence and clarified that, in determining the best interests of the child, greater weight must be given to protecting children from harm, than to the benefit of a child having a meaningful relationship with both parents. Despite this, the Advisory Panel has heard that there continues to be a misconception that the focus of the family law system is to support shared parental custody in the first instance.

Since the introduction of the 2012 family violence amendments, there have been small, positive shifts in the making of parenting arrangements by family courts to better protect children and young people. For example, between 2012 and 2015, where allegations of both family violence and child safety had been raised, the proportion of children with court orders for shared care fell from 19 per cent to 11 per cent.<sup>427</sup>

However, despite the strengthened family violence provisions, an evaluation of the amendments found three in 10 parents in the family law system were never asked about family violence and safety concerns.<sup>428</sup> One in five parents had concerns for their own safety or their children's safety as a result of ongoing contact with another parent.<sup>429</sup> The evaluation found that around 60 percent of separated parents report a history of emotional abuse and/or physical violence before separation.<sup>430</sup> While the majority of separated parents resolve parenting issues with little or no use of formal family law services, those with a history of domestic and family violence were more likely to report using formal services.<sup>431</sup>

The Advisory Panel has heard a range of reasons to improve integration within family courts, and between family courts and other agencies and services. In particular:

- **family courts lack the capacity to manage risk and families with complex needs without input from other agencies.**<sup>432</sup> Family courts are set up to deal with private disputes, and have no investigative capacity to determine whether family violence has occurred. If family violence allegations have not been disclosed in the state system, there is no external evidence for the family court to rely upon
- **the complicated courts system can add to victim trauma.** The system is difficult for a non-specialist to navigate, it is expensive and slow, and there is no overall co-ordination to assist victims when they move from one system to another. The three different legal systems have different terminology, procedures and processes of decision making

- **inconsistency between parenting orders and family violence orders can arise because of a lack of awareness of previous orders made in another court.** It is often up to the victim to tell the family court about orders in state and territory courts, and this information is not always passed on. In addition, state and territory magistrates appear reluctant to use the provisions in the legislation that allow them to vary parenting orders when making their own family violence orders.<sup>433</sup> Making parenting orders at the same time would reduce the ‘revolving door’ for women seeking protection and the stress and cost of constant court appearances.<sup>434</sup>

In 2015, in response to the terms of reference from the Commonwealth Attorney-General about families with complex needs in the family law system, the Family Law Council recommended measures to improve the interaction of the family law, family violence and child protection systems.<sup>435</sup> This included introducing measures such as stakeholder meetings and memoranda of understanding, removing legislative and other barriers, and co-locating services (co-location is also addressed in Recommendation 6.5 of this report).

The Advisory Panel supports the Family Law Council’s interim report on its first two terms of reference; in particular, the recommendations which focus on ensuring a more co-ordinated national approach to the protection of children, and specifically, the protection of children from family violence. Information sharing, including through the removal of legislative barriers, use of common language and understanding, collaboration and mutual cooperation, as well as encouraging co-location between family law and child protection and also other agencies such as police are important steps in creating such an approach.

A national information sharing platform for court orders also promises to improve coordination between courts. The Advisory Panel notes there may be potential to extend the national domestic violence order information sharing system (agreed by COAG in December 2015), once it is operational, to family court orders. This could be a long-term way to improve national coordination in the family law system. It may be necessary to consider a provisional solution if there are likely to be very long delays in implementing this recommendation.

## RECOMMENDATION 6.7

Commonwealth, state and territory governments should agree to work together to improve the intersections between family law, child protection and family violence legal systems by implementing the respective elements of the recommendations of the Family Law Council’s interim report on families with complex needs.

Increased collaboration and integration should be achieved by focusing on:

- measures that increase information sharing between family courts and other agencies, through approaches including stakeholder meetings, memoranda of understanding, removing legislative and other barriers, and co-location of agencies
- developing a national database of court orders, which could include examining the feasibility and cost of extending the national domestic violence order information sharing system once it is implemented and fully operational.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Advisory Panel member biographies

### Mr Ken D Lay APM

Mr Ken D Lay was Chief Police Commissioner of Victoria Police from 2011 until early 2015. He worked with the police force for over 35 years, with experience in operational, training and corporate roles as well as lengthy periods of service in both the rural and metropolitan areas. Ken has been awarded the Australian Police Medal for distinguished service to policing. Ken has publicly campaigned for cultural change in Australia to address violence against women. As the Victorian Police Commissioner, he saw the damage that family violence and sexual assault can wreak on communities and individuals, and regularly described these challenges as the most significant law and order issue facing the community. Ken encourages everyone to challenge the beliefs, attitudes and practices - no matter how entrenched - which justify gender inequality and contribute to violence against women.

### Ms Rosie Batty

Ms Rosie Batty is a family violence campaigner and the 2015 Australian of the Year and the Pride of Australia's National Courage Medal recipient. In February 2014, Rosie's 11 year old son, Luke, was murdered by his father, Greg Anderson, at cricket practice in the outer Melbourne suburb of Tyabb. Following the murder of her son, she became an advocate for family violence victims and campaigner for the protection of women and children. In 2014 she established the Luke Batty Foundation to assist women and children impacted by domestic and family violence. Rosie is now totally committed to making a difference and has the support of many women and men who also want change and who are prepared to help support her to turn things around and demand a society that offers compassion, understanding and effective support to those affected by family violence.

### Ms Heather Nancarrow

Ms Heather Nancarrow is the Chief Executive Officer of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS). Heather has 35 years of experience working on the prevention of violence against women, including direct service provision, policy and legislation, and research and professional development. Heather was the foundation Director of the Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research, a position she held from 2003 until her move to ANROWS. Heather has held many leadership roles at both the state and national level in regard to policy on the prevention of violence against women. In 2008-09, Heather was Deputy Chair of the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, which produced *Time for Action*, the blueprint for the Council of Australian Governments' *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*.

**Ms Maria Hagias**

Ms Maria Hagias has worked in the domestic violence sector of South Australia for 20 years. She has advocated and informed policy development on gender based violence which has resulted in the implementation of responsive service models that promote women and children's safety and make men who use violence accountable for their behaviour. Maria has participated in a number of national and state committees that inform systemic changes and responses. Through her role as Executive Director of the Central Domestic Violence Service she has worked with the community to change attitudes and address ways of working together to eliminate violence against women. She is the Co-Chairperson of the Coalition of Women's Domestic Violence Services in South Australia and a member of the Premier's Council for Women.

**Mr Darren Hine APM**

Mr Darren Hine joined the Tasmania Police as a cadet in 1980. Upon graduation he conducted uniform and traffic control duties, followed by a six-year posting with Launceston Criminal Investigation Branch as a Detective Senior Constable. Darren was promoted to Sergeant in 1993 and to the rank of Inspector in 1997 when he worked in Business Projects Services. He was appointed Commander in 2000 when he headed Executive Support and Operations Support. In 2002, Darren was appointed Assistant Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of Police in 2008. He was awarded the National Medal in 1995, the Commissioner's Medal in 1999, the Australian Police Medal in 2002 and the National Police Service Medal in 2012. Darren was appointed Commissioner of Police in October 2010 and the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency Board Chair in 2015.

**Dr Victoria Hovane**

Dr Victoria (Vickie) Hovane is an Aboriginal woman from Broome in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Vickie has completed a PhD in Psychology, and is an experienced consultant and practitioner having worked in a number of social welfare, legal, victim and offender services, research projects and advisory roles over the past 30 years. Vickie is also an Independent Director on the Board of ANROWS, a member of the National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Leadership Forum, and the Advisory Panel to the Western Australia Parliamentary Commissioner for Administrative Investigations (Ombudsman's) Family and Domestic Violence Fatality Review Committee. Recent roles have included as a member of the National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Advisory Group, and the Western Australian Mental Health Council.

**Ms Tracy Howe**

Ms Tracy Howe is Chief Executive Officer of the New South Wales Council of Social Service. She is a legally trained advocate with a commitment to human rights, addressing community disadvantage and gender inequality. She has worked in both government and non-government settings, including with Domestic Violence New South Wales as Chief Executive Officer and as a senior legal advisor in the Commonwealth government. She currently sits on the New South Wales Government's Social Impact Investment Expert Advisory Group and is appointed to the New South Wales Domestic and Family Violence Council, the New South Wales Premier's Council on Homelessness and was the New South Wales non-government representative on the National Plan Implementation Panel for the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022*. Tracy was a delegate with the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance at the Commission on the Status of Women at the 57th and 58th sessions held at the United Nations in New York.

**Mr Edward Mosby**

Mr Edward (Ed) Mosby is an Indigenous psychologist who was born on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait and raised in Taroom in South West Queensland. He is currently a general registered psychologist working in private practice. He is experienced particularly in the fields of non-Indigenous and Indigenous mental health issues and Indigenous family and domestic violence. Ed has previously worked as a Therapeutic Team Leader with Helem Yumba, the Central Queensland Healing Centre in Rockhampton. In this role, Ed facilitated and designed the Gatharr Weyebe Banabe programme (in Darumbal language, meaning Aboriginal man's life change) working with men who have used violence against their partners, families and communities. In addition, he also embarked on the design and implementation of a programme connecting incarcerated fathers with their children.

**Ms Julie Oberin**

Ms Julie Oberin is the National Chair of WESNET (Women's Services Network); National Chair of the Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA); a founding member of Homelessness Australia; member of the Victorian Statewide Family Violence Forum; Chair of the Loddon Campaspe Family Violence Advisory Committee; Chief Executive Officer of Annie North Women's Refuge and Domestic Violence Service in regional Victoria; and Australian Board member of the Global Network of Women's Shelters. She has worked in the domestic and family violence sector for 25 years. She is an experienced practitioner both working with women and children who have experienced violence, and also with men who have used violence against family members. She has a strong interest in how technology-assisted abuse is increasingly being used against women and how it can be used to assist in the empowerment of women and to gather evidence against perpetrators.



### **The Hon Bess Price MLA**

The Hon Bess Price MLA is a Warlpiri woman from Central Australia. Bess was elected to the Northern Territory Parliament in 2012, serves as the Minister for Local Government and Community Services, Housing, Parks and Wildlife, Men's Policy, Women's Policy, and Statehood. Born in Yuendumu, Minister Price's first language is Warlpiri; she also speaks Anmatyerr, Pitjantjatjara, Luritja, Western Arrernte, and English. She commenced study to become a teacher at 18, after surviving domestic violence. Minister Price has worked in education, training, public administration, media, community development, interpreting/translating, language teaching and has managed a small business. Minister Price is not only an outspoken advocate for women, children and families in Aboriginal communities but across Australia, campaigning tirelessly for their protection from violence and sexual abuse. In 2013 she was nominated for the US International Women's Courage Award. In 2014 she won the Northern Territory Award for Excellence in Women's Leadership.

### **Ms Sue Salthouse**

Ms Sue Salthouse has worked in the social justice sector since 1996, focusing on the realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of women with disabilities. She is the Co-Chair of the Australian Capital Territory Disability Expert Panel advising on the Australian Capital Territory rollout of the NDIS; a member of the Australian Capital Territory Domestic Violence Prevention Council, and a co-developer of the Australian Capital Territory integrated service response to violence against women with disabilities. She is a former President of Women With Disabilities Australia, and current Convenor of Women With Disabilities, Australian Capital Territory (WWDACT). She is a member of the governing Council of the University of Canberra, and serves as Director on the Board of a number of disability and women's rights non-government organisations. Sue was the Australian Capital Territory Citizen of the Year in 2015.

## Appendix 2: Organisations consulted by, or on behalf of, the Advisory Panel

Adjunct Professor Tom Carroll, University of Sydney  
 Australian Broadcasting Commission  
 Address Housing, New South Wales  
 Alastair MacGibbon, Children's e-Safety Commissioner  
 Alice Springs Women's Shelter  
 Andrew Broad MP, Member for Mallee  
 Anglicare Tasmania  
 Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)  
 Australia and New Zealand Banking Group (ANZ)  
 Australian Bankers' Association  
 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
 Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA)  
 Australian Communications Consumer Action Network (AACAN)  
 Australian Human Rights Commission  
 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)  
 Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)  
 Australian Press Council  
 Australian Securities Exchange (ASX)  
 Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association (ASTRA)  
 Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)  
 Baptist Care NSW & ACT  
 Berry Street, Victoria  
 Beryl Women's Refuge, ACT  
 beyondblue  
 Binaal Billa Family Violence Legal Service NSW  
 Bravehearts  
 CatholicCare Tasmania (formerly Centacare Tasmania)  
 Central Domestic Violence Service, South Australia  
 Centre for Excellence for Child and Family Welfare Inc, Victoria  
 Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University, Victoria  
 Children with Disability Australia  
 Cindy Southworth, National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), United States  
 Coca-Cola Amatil

Commonwealth Bank  
Communicare Inc, Western Australia  
Community Broadcasting Association of Australia  
Corporate Alliance Against Domestic Violence, United Kingdom  
Corrective Services Administrators Conference  
CRA Limited (Rio Tinto)  
Cross Borders Program, NPY Lands  
Curtin University, Western Australia  
Deakin University, Victoria  
Defence Abuse Response Taskforce  
Disability Advocacy Network Australia  
Domestic Violence Crisis Service ACT  
Domestic Violence NSW  
Domestic Violence Prevention Centre Gold Coast Inc  
Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria  
Eastern Community Legal Centre Inc, Victoria  
Eastern Domestic Violence Service, Victoria  
economicSecurity4Women  
Energetica  
Equality Rights Alliance (Women's Voices for Gender Equality)  
Facebook Australia  
Families Australia  
Family Law Council  
Family Violence Prevention Legal Service, Victoria  
Federal Circuit Court of Australia  
First Peoples Disability Network Australia  
Foundation for Young Australians (FYA)  
Free TV Australia  
Galexia  
Google Australia  
Griffith University, Queensland  
headspace (National Youth Mental Health Foundation)  
IDCARE (Australia and New Zealand's National Identity Support Service)  
inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, Victoria  
Independent Media Council, Western Australia  
Jackie Huggins and Associates  
Jewish House, New South Wales

La Trobe University, Victoria  
Legal Aid Queensland  
Legal Aid WA  
Magistrate Anne Goldsborough, Magistrates' Court of Victoria  
Mallee Family Care  
Medibank Health Solutions  
Migrant Women's Support Service Inc, South Australia  
Monash University, Victoria  
Multi Agency Protection Service (MAPS), South Australia  
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service  
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance  
National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence (NASASV)  
National Australia Bank (NAB)  
National Disability Insurance Agency  
National Employment Services Association (NESA)  
National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)  
National Rural Women's Coalition  
News Corp Australia  
No to Violence (Male Family Violence Prevention Association), Victoria  
NPY Women's Council, Northern Territory  
Office of the NSW Ombudsman  
Office of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner  
Our Watch  
People with Disability Australia  
Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council  
Professor Liz Kelly, London Metropolitan University  
Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Ltd  
Raising Children Network  
Rape and Domestic Violence Services Australia  
Reos Partners  
Respect, United Kingdom  
safe steps (Family Violence Response Centre), Victoria  
School of Psychology, Social Work and Social Policy, University of South Australia  
Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care (SNAICC)  
Sexual Assault Support Services, Tasmania  
Domestic Violence and Aboriginal Family Violence Gateway Services, South Australia  
Southern Cross Austereo

Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)  
Support Link Australia  
Swinburne University of Technology, Victoria  
Tangentyere Council, Northern Territory  
Telstra Australia  
The Housing Trust, New South Wales  
The University of Melbourne  
The Walkley Foundation  
The Women's Service Network (WESNET)  
TNS  
Together 4 Kids, Relationships Australia, South Australia  
Uniting Communities, South Australia  
University of Western Australia Law School  
VicHealth  
Victoria Legal Aid  
Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service  
Westpac  
White Ribbon Australia  
Winangali-Marumali  
Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre, New South Wales  
Women With Disabilities ACT  
Women With Disabilities Australia  
Women With Disabilities VIC  
Women With Disabilities WA  
Women's Domestic Violence and Court Advocacy Program, New South Wales  
Women's Legal Service Tasmania  
Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services (WA) (Keeping Kids Safe Project)  
Women's Housing Ltd, Victoria  
Women's Legal Service NSW  
Woolworths  
Young People in Nursing Homes National Alliance

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