



Australian Government
Department of Social Services



Melbourne Consultation Summary

**Fourth Action Plan of the *National Plan to Reduce
Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022***

Summary of Consultation - 12 September 2018



Community engagement workshops facilitated by ThinkPlace,
and report written in collaboration between ThinkPlace and DSS.

*The Department of Social Services acknowledges
the traditional owners of country throughout
Australia, and their continuing connection to
land, water and community.*

*We pay our respects to them and their cultures,
and to Elders past, present and
emerging.*

About this document

This material was commissioned by the Commonwealth of Australia to assist in the collection of information from consultation sessions workshops around Australia. The purpose of this material is to summarise consultations held by the Department of Social Services as part of the development of the Fourth Action Plan in Melbourne, Victoria. This session was facilitated by ThinkPlace.

The Department of Social Services thanks all participants of this discussion for their contributions as part of the development of the Fourth Action Plan. The views expressed in this material do not necessarily reflect those of the Commonwealth, or indicate a particular course of action.

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Key themes

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Primary prevention

- Systemic gender inequality needs to be addressed and linked up with behaviour change prevention activities at a population level.
- Gender equity education should be embedded in schools. The Respectful Relationships program should be expanded and rolled out across all jurisdictions.
- Both male and female role models should be promoting respect and equality.
- A more effective link between primary prevention and engagement with perpetrators should be established.
- Prevention strategies need to be structured and address pay gaps and barriers to finances and housing.
- The capability and capacity of the local government workforce should be built to transform the way people experience their local community.

Leadership in development of policies and principles

- There is a role for the Commonwealth around accountability and leadership, which should continue after 2022 when the National Plan is to conclude.
- The National Plan requires a sustained bipartisan commitment both at Commonwealth and state level.
- Gender equality lenses should be applied to policy and programs at a federal government level in order to drive change (e.g. through board representation and procurement).
- Criminal laws should be build and refined for the different types of family violence (e.g. non-physical forms of violence).
- Funding needs to be more long term to ensure sustainability beyond 12 months, and be flexible enough to enable innovation.

Technology-facilitated abuse

- It is critical to have ongoing training for frontline workers to help with technology-facilitated abuse.
- A collective response is needed against organised extreme men's rights groups using social media for co-ordinated, technology-facilitated abuse and trying to undermine prevention activities.

Key themes

Research and information sharing

- The Fourth Action Plan should continue investment in Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) to further build evidence base and share best practices.
- Governments are also service providers, and should look to scale up practice once it has been proven.
- Concurrent evaluation of programs should occur as they are rolled out to enable continuous improvement; rather than after implementation.

Sexual violence

- There should be a continuation and greater support for local prevention activities with a range of tailored activities within a broader prevention framework.
- Responses must recognise that sexual violence can occur across someone's life (i.e. it is not just an isolated incident).
- People trafficking and sex slavery should be addressed in the National Plan.
- Responses to sexual violence across a number of diverse groups should be tailored. Implementation can that take time and effort to develop to build trust and have the greatest impacts.
- There needs to be a greater understanding of the cultural factors in culturally and linguistically diverse communities that are drivers for violence, and need to be responded to with culturally-appropriate information and behaviour change programs in first languages.
- There are significant challenges for women in migration system, including increased vulnerability and difficulty in maintaining financial capabilities due to temporary visa status.
- Projects should be flexible in accommodating the needs of that community and respond to feedback through implementation (e.g. action research).

Key themes

Collaboration between services

- It is important for responses to domestic, family and sexual violence to engage with universal services. Training and resourcing of universal services to respond to violence is needed.
- There needs to be a more effective link between primary prevention services and engagement with perpetrators.
- Continuation of support and recovery services work on developing strategies to recognise, respond and aid recovery.
- There is a need for greater collaboration with organisations on sharing information about perpetrators.

Workforce capability

- Capability needs to be built across spectrum of organisations that interact with domestic, family and sexual violence; covering both specialist and mainstream organisations (i.e. teachers).
- Long-term recovery services should work with the family as a whole, focusing on the needs of all members involved, noting trauma is not just experienced by the primary victim.
- Due to limited funding longevity, many specialist workers' contracts come to end without any certainty of an extension. This results in workers looking for new roles at the end of contracts and has major staffing impacts.
- Training and building knowledge in front-facing services across government (i.e. Centrelink and housing) are needed.

Children as victims in their own right

- Child abuse by family members is a form of family violence.
- Children must be included in responses as individuals in their own right; not looked at 'just' witnesses of violence.
- There is a need to consider young peoples' experience of violence, and their perspectives in designing responses.
- Offenders can use the system to perpetrate further abuse. There are cases of misidentification of the dominant aggressor who enter into the justice system, and subsequently this has further impacts regarding their children (i.e. custody, Child Protection).



Priority actions

Priority actions

Measurement and evaluation

- Continue, build and expand the national evidence base already established, including local government toolkits.
- Every action decided and included in this Plan needs to draw upon the evidence base.
- Continue building national data sets and commit to 'Counting On Change' (Our Watch) as the National Plan's measurement and evaluation framework.
- Leverage and use the work occurring in Victoria as part of the response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence as a launch pad for other jurisdictions.

National coordination and bipartisan support

- Enable information sharing across jurisdictions by a strong, well-resourced national coordination mechanism.
- Establish a National Training Centre for workforce development.
- Obtain a bipartisan commitment to carry forward the next iteration of the National Plan.
- Clearly define how the National Plan and National Framework for Protecting Children work with other services. Other areas and departments need to be involved in the conversation and held accountable.

Behaviour change

- Build on the Third Action Plan investments in national social marketing campaigns by drawing on best practice.
- Develop a behaviour change campaign with a broader reach and clearer message.

Primary prevention activities

- Further build the evidence base for primary prevention of violence against children and young people.
- Equip prevention and response workforce to understand the evidence base and integrate it into their work.
- National leadership and infrastructure for primary prevention is needed to enable good practice being rollout nationally.
- Local communities should be empowered to design and deliver local services interventions.
- Adopt a whole of schools approach to Respectful Relationships nationally to reach children and adult teachers, ensuring it is well-resourced and from early years to end of school.

Funding

- There is a need to distinguish between investment around actions that are prevention, early intervention and response.

Priority actions

Workforce capability

- Invest in the workforce's capability to address gaps in knowledge and skills to work with specific groups (e.g. culturally and linguistically diverse, aged, women with disability, diverse sex, sexuality and gender, Indigenous).
- There are good mainstream services in Victoria, but there remains a gap for culturally and linguistically diverse women who see these services as being philosophically different (i.e. do not want to leave relationship).
- Build the capacity of secondary workforces (e.g. police, courts, child protection, GPs, psychologists, psychiatrists, lawyers and housing workers) and support them with National Practice Standards.

Perpetrators

- Expand perpetrator services to include accountability based approaches (i.e. to self, family and community).
- Sexual violence and consent services for perpetrators and a broader range of interventions for domestic, family and sexual are needed.

Victim survivors and children

- Victim survivors and children must be heard in the design of policy and programs.
- A national victim survivor advisory council with intersectional subgroups should be established to inform the National Plan implementation.

Continuum of services for better outcomes

- There should be a more co-ordinated and cohesive approach to addressing the issue of domestic and family violence.
- Responses to domestic, family and sexual violence need to be thorough from primary, secondary to tertiary and sexual harassment, to crisis response.
- There are specific communities need to be prioritised across the breadth of interventions, and in the research guiding practice (e.g. cultural, LGBTIQ, disability).

Gender equality lens

- The focus on gender equality is critical, and behaviour change efforts need to occur at population level.
- There are a number of federal government levers for gender equality (e.g. 50:50 boards, procurement, funding agreements, gender audit and policies, Workplace Gender Equality Agency reporting).
- Gender equality should be the framework or lens through which we see everything including policy across government (i.e. assessing how migration and health policies might be contributing to ongoing violence).
- There needs to be infrastructure provided by national and state governments to bring gender equality into local communities.

Scaffolding independence

- Barriers to finances, housing supply, childcare etc. need to be removed to greater enable women's economic independence. This has a direct correlation with the safety of women.