

# Australian Capital Territory Consultation Summary

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

Summary of Consultation 1 Of 2 – 21 July 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 Canberra, Australian Capital Territory. 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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## Participants

- ACT Health
- ACT Youth Advisory Council rep.
- Australian Capital Territory Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS)
- Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)
- Barnardos ACT
- Belconnen Community Services
- Beryl Women Inc.
- Capital Health Network
- Care Financial / CareInc
- Children and Young People's Commission
- ACT Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate – Government Reform
- ACT Community Services Directorate – Children, Youth and Families
- ACT Education Directorate - Policy and Research
- ACT Youth Advisory Council
- ACT Corrective Services
- ACT Community Services Directorate –Inclusion and Participation
- Attorney General's Department
- ACT Office for Disability
- Doris Women's Refuge
- Department of Social Services
- Domestic Violence Crisis Service
- ACT Community Services Directorate - Family Safety
- Harmony Alliance
- Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Relationships Australia
- Women with Disabilities ACT
- Office of Disability
- Women's Centre for Health Matter
- Women's Service Network
- Youth Coalition
- YWCA

## Key themes

### Greater coordination of services

- There are no mechanisms to link the different levels of Government with the community sector. Greater oversight of the broader system, such as a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) working group, should be considered.
- There is a disconnect between the National Plan and the decisions made within the homelessness and legal systems.
- Better holistic case management that is seamless is needed so victims do not have to retell their stories over and over again, and are connected to relevant services to aid their recovery.
- Drug and alcohol services should not make the assumption that violence is being dealt with through domestic and family violence services; and that violence was not just a result of drug and alcohol.

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### Expanded primary prevention and community education activities

- There needs to be focus on creating a better understanding around gender norms in young people. Education could be directed at schools, however must be consistent and ongoing to create generational change.
- The descriptions of domestic, family and sexual violence in media around perpetrators needs to change. The community should be using media to reduce stigma, and working with media to address the way they refer to the perpetrator and victim.
- Help-seeking behaviour needs to be promoted and the stigma associated with it needs to be addressed.

### The unique experiences of women with disability

- The experience of women with disabilities was acknowledged as unique and desperately requiring additional attention and understanding.
- General Practitioners and other generalist services need the skills to recognise the need to have private conversations and understand 'carer' abuse in the context of domestic, family and sexual violence.
- Messages and information about services and who to report to need to be simple and clear (e.g. a card that can be kept in wallets or a list of organisations who can help).

- There is a need for proactive responses to support women with disability post-separation with financial security.

### Addressing technology-facilitated abuse

- Technology-facilitated abuse can encompass surveillance, threats, monitoring and location tracking. Although the forms of technology facilitated abuse will change as technology evolves; these forms of abuse are all part of a “suite of power and control” that needs to be addressed in responses.
- A shared understanding within the sector and the community that abuse is broader than physical violence is needed to better address violence against women.
- Relationships with Family Violence Coordination Unit (FVCU) at ACT Police should be better harnessed to better respond to technology-facilitated abuse.

### Funding for domestic, family and sexual violence services

- There is no specific funding for the “domestic, family and sexual violence system”; rather a homelessness system that interacts with domestic, family and sexual violence.
- Although services and programs are available; they are not sufficient to meet demand.
- Programs are not funded until completion and therefore lack scalability.

### Workforce development

- The ACT is a small jurisdiction and therefore has a small pool of workers.
- More work needs to be done to attract workers to the sector that interacts with women who have experienced domestic, family and sexual violence.
- The workforce needs to reflect the community they work in and support engagement from our community.

### Developing the male workforce

- Leverage existing resources such as “Through young black eyes” for Indigenous fathers to be aware of the impact of behaviour on children.
- There is an absence of male workers within the workforce. More needs to be done to attract men to the sector and engage them as fathers. (e.g. family advocacy support services have a male social worker to help male clients engage in programs and navigate the family law system)

### Better access to justice

- Significant inequality exists within the justice system, as many women are opting out of legal responses due to the time and cost associated with them.
- Perpetrators are using the system for abuse through legal processes.
- Child protection is seen as a large barrier to using the justice system, as many victims are in fear of being held responsible for perpetrator’s actions and having their children removed.

### Visas

- Temporary visas create an additional vulnerability as visa status is used by perpetrators to intimidate and control victims

- Women who end up with uncertain immigration status can't leave emergency accommodation because they have no income, i.e. are not eligible for any income support payments
- DV provisions under the Migration Act need to be extended to all temporary visas not just spousal and distinguished talent due to the vulnerability created.
- For women on temporary visas the system intersections create complexity, vulnerability and leave women trapped, so we need to address the way the Immigration, Income Support, Social Housing and Family Law systems interact to improve pathways to safety for this group of women

## Priority actions

### Primary prevention and community education

- There is a need for peer-based education around gender equality and problematic behaviours for high school ages.
- Greater awareness is needed in identifying domestic, family and sexual violence in mainstream services.

### Better resources for people receiving disclosures

- A portal that links relevant services to people in the ACT and information, for example, about identifying problem behaviours, and provides education to trusted people to whom disclosures are made.
- Ensure that health professionals have time with woman for one-on-one conversations as an opportunity to create a safe space and provide information.

### Workforce development

- A number of different approaches to training is needed depending on the audience. Consideration should be given to online webinars and other modes of learning.
- Training should be shared across the sector, (e.g. strangulation training in the ACT).
- There are opportunities to expand the workforce to include more casual or part-time female workers; and more male workers to work with male clients in particular.

### Remove stigma around getting help

- Use the media to ensure it is not a stigma and work with media to address the way they refer to perpetrators and victims of domestic, family and sexual violence.
- Help-seeking behaviour needs to destigmatised.

### Addressing technology-facilitated abuse

- There should be better ways of reporting abuse, capturing and sharing evidence with authorities.
- There is the potential to use technology to record evidence of abuse; such as recorded messages and videos, as victims usually have technology at hand.
- Police and courts need shared understanding of what kind of digital evidence is helpful.