



Australian Government
Department of Social Services



Consultation Summary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

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

Summary of Consultation - 26 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 Janise Constable.

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 of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Consultation

Department of Social Services

National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum

Djirra

Aboriginal Family Law Services

Yoowinna Wurnalung Healing Service

Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)

Our Watch

Women's Information and Referral Exchange Inc (WIRE)

Victim Survivors' Advisory Council (VSAC)

Attorney-Generals Department

Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet



Key themes

Key themes

Intersectionality

- The intersection of all groups affected by domestic and family violence need to be considered in every part of policy.
- Need to acknowledge the multi-faceted layers of violence.
- Auditing needs to be deeper, more thorough, and be more intersectional.

Negative stereotypes

- Need to address the narrative around domestic violence and the flaws and inaccurate information that surrounds it.
- There is an incorrect assumption that the perpetrator is always an Aboriginal man when the victim is Indigenous.
- Role of the media. They reinforce these negative stereotypes.
- Need to stop thinking about Indigenous people in the deficit.

Fear and Shame

- There are risks involved with mandating reporting, as there is a general distrust of authority and government with certain Indigenous communities.
- Sexual violence is often disclosed after the initial disclosure of domestic or family violence.
- The process of reporting sexual violence is often shameful and painful, so if often revealed later, if at all.

- Sexual abuse is a huge issue and is often not disclosed in Community
 - Many young boys who have experienced this don't receive as much help as young girls.

Data / Research

- There isn't much research in domestic and family violence specifically around Indigenous people.
- When there is research done, it's often done with a siloed approach.
- There needs to be more information sharing.
- What are the origins of violence?
- What are the experiences of ATSI communities versus the general population in regards to experience of domestic and family violence

Primary prevention

- Need to have more specialised training for workers in both mainstream and Indigenous-specific domestic violence services to assist Indigenous women specifically.
- It's vital to have workers that are culturally competent and appropriate for the community they're working in.
- Funding is essential in the running of programs – but often the models are 'tick and flick' in their development and are not always good service design. They just want to tick the right boxes – not necessarily deliver the best product or service.

Key themes

Cultural considerations

- Need to develop practices around self care and develop best practice around minimising risk of vicarious trauma.
- Cultural competency needs to be a priority in mainstream organisations by both developing their worker capacity, but also learning about their local community.
- Need to uncouple ATSI specific services from mainstream services.
- Use of Language and Cultural responses is critically important.
- Should be able to utilise existing cultural resources when addressing domestic and family violence (Elders, leaders Lore / Law, etc).
- There is a need to have trauma-informed responses – this includes reactions to colonisation and genocide.
- Don't just bring in mainstream services – help to strengthen existing Indigenous services.
- Having accredited behaviour change services is a very Western approach to this issue, and doesn't resonate with Community.
 - Especially with Indigenous men, who regularly don't complete these (often mandates) courses.
 - Barriers to local service providers completing these courses are often legislative and cost related.
- Assessment of programs is not done well and doesn't include Community.

Common language

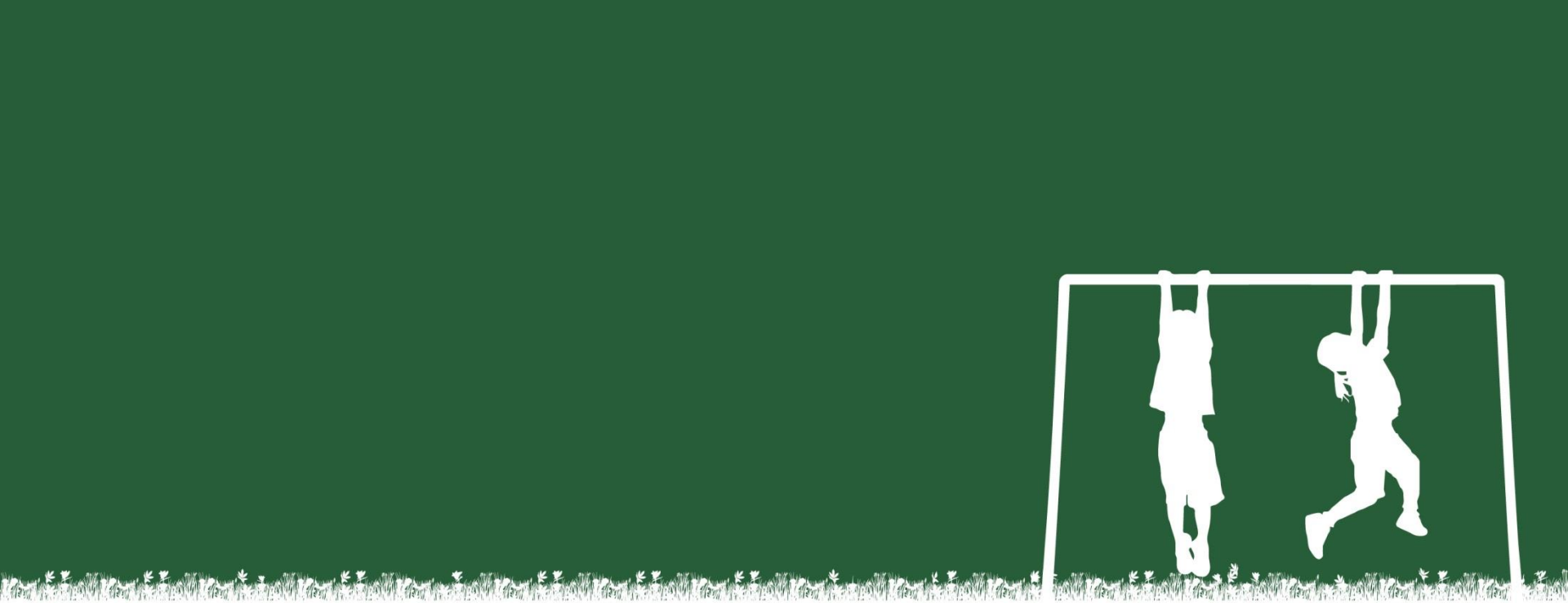
- Describing family violence service as legal service is misleading.

Focus on women

- Main investment should be in women and prevention – not necessarily perpetrators.
- Bring in a trauma-informed client lens.
- Self care is important for both victims and staff.

Giving voice to victims

- Listening to how each community explains how domestic and family violence is in their community.
- Let community have input into assessment.
- Victims need to be the architect of their own lives.



Priority actions

Priority actions

Workforce Development

- Build services with Aboriginal staff and build strength in existing ATSI controlled organisations.
- Mainstream services should be made in consultation with local ATSI people and have KPIs around minimum amount of ATSI members.
- Look at the funding that goes into these organisations.
- Address the power imbalances that can exist between these organisations and victims of domestic and family violence and build trust with participants.
- Make sure that organisations gain the trust of Community before they work in it.
- There is often a huge turnover of staff in these support organisations for victims.
 - There is also difficulty hiring staff, especially in remote and mining areas.
 - How can we get people to stay in these regions? Often with mainstream organisations, victims and community have to deal with a new person every month.
 - There is no trust in these relationships and it goes both ways.
- Need to work with communities to find the solution. They know what they need as well as how to provide it.
- There are too many services that are serving a small population, but people are still slipping through the gaps.
 - Have a regional forum to identify gaps and what is needed and if all organisations in the region are necessary.
 - There is a need to have an audit of services and make these 'fly in, fly out' organisations accountable.

Programs

- Local-based development must occur. Local people understand their community and the challenges they face.
- Co-design approach to program design. Should work with ATSI community to get a deep understanding of the nature of the issue.
- Indigenous people come from inter-dependent, collectivist cultures. There is a level of complexity that needs to be addressed.
- Lack of funding limits and constrains good practice.
- Need to acknowledge that there is diversity within and between communities.
 - Move away from a 'one size fits all' model.
 - A program that work in one community won't necessarily work across all communities.
- Some Indigenous people have become disconnected from culture.
 - Important to teach kids Language, Ceremony; and strengthen culture.

Priority actions

Prevention

- Need to have a framework that reflects ATSI values.
- Model should be respectful.
- What does prevention look like in the Aboriginal space around violence?
- Understanding drivers of violence:
 - Not always about power and control.
 - Adopting the role of the oppressor.
 - Introduced colonisation.
- Acknowledge how first contact has shifted familial roles:
 - People are treated in a way that isn't equitable.
 - ATSI people are excluded from decision making.
 - "Things are done for us, not by us."
 - How do you bring balance back to reflect respectful relationships?
- Targeted approach at children as well as towards women.
- How does the wider community value our culture?
 - Need to not be seen as part of the problem.
- Need to move from punitive model to a health and wellbeing model.
- Strengthen Cultural education
 - Share across wider community as well as Indigenous community.
- Vital to include community members that have used or experienced violence.
- Current model includes feminist theory – but also needs queer theory, decolonization, etc. in order to be more intersectional.
- Indigenous need to be part of all evaluation – not just a tack on at the end.