

Sydney Consultation Summary

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

Summary of Consultation 2 of 2 – 9 August 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 Sydney, New South Wales. 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

- Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)
- Department of Social Services
- Domestic Violence NSW
- Elder Abuse Helpline
- Jannawi Family Centre (Child Sexual Assault Counselling)
- NSW Council of Social Service (NCOSS)
- Relationships Australia NSW
- Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre
- Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services (WDVCAS)
- Women NSW
- People with Disability Australia (PWDA)

- SARC, WA
- Independent Advocate
- Western Sydney University

Key themes

Primary prevention

- It is unclear what the prevention model is in Australia.
- A sustained approach needs to be created that is not focused on funding or political cycles.
- Evaluation is critical for evidence of what works in terms of prevention strategies.
- The #metoo movement has increased awareness of sexual violence but this has had a major impact on the demand on services.

Supporting women with disability

- There needs to be support to address multilayers of structural disadvantage faced by women and children with disability.
- People are not receiving the appropriate level of support because of people focus on disability rather than the person.
- Continuing the process of embedding innovation grant rounds would be valued by the sector.
- There are not enough housing and accommodation options for women with disability.
- The links between the Fourth Action Plan and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) need to be considered. It can not be assumed that issues faced by women with disability will be addressed in NDIS plans.

Long term safety, wellbeing and independence of women and their children

- Disclosure must be encouraged across the whole community to enable sustainable, community-based support for women and their children.
- There should be strategies for women to leave violent relationships, as well as strategies to help women who choose to stay in the relationship.
- The cycle of victimisation should be broken with early intervention and changing the language to empower women and their children.
- Perpetrators need to be held accountable whilst women are supported. Interventions to change the perpetrator behaviour should be available where this is sought out.
- There should be an improvement of data linkages between sectors (e.g. school are aware of families prone to violence).

Workforce capability

- There is a need for an increased understanding of trauma as a fundamental underpinning of responding to violence. This should be in place across services (e.g. education, legal and housing).
- The impacts on the workforce in terms of their own stress and accumulated exposure to trauma related case work and service delivery should be better responded to.

- Placing the person at the centre will be important to enable an integrated approach to address trauma.
- Greater education is needed around the complexity of trauma for emerging workers, including at a tertiary education level.
- Workers should be encouraged to go outside of their field to find the expertise needed.

Access to justice

- Police should be better equipped with new strategies to deal with family violence.
- Specialist courts and legal services to consider and address domestic violence are needed.
- Courts should be safer places for women and children (e.g. separate access, safe rooms and access services from within the courts).
- There should be greater education of Magistrates around family violence through peer-to-peer models.
- The family advocacy support service is effective but is only operational in some areas.
- Consideration should be given to new models of justice (e.g. restorative or intensive support).

Support for Indigenous communities

- Indigenous community-ran programs are needed to encourage women to access appropriate services.
- Long term options that span longer than the government cycles are required to ensure intergenerational issues can be addressed.
- Different systems and supports should work better together (e.g. housing and family violence, crisis and out of home care).
- There is a need for greater investment in cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity across all sectors.

Support for culturally and linguistically diverse communities

- The empowerment model is key to helping culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women and we must seek to build their confidence from a strength-based perspective. The 'right to safety framework' is a good example of positive language that incorporates all communities.
- Federal and state governments need to work together to address changes to visa and immigration clauses, so that the right support can be given to women and children.
- We need a range of community responses that are not solely focused on criminal justice.

Reducing sexual violence

- There is a greater need for evidence-based responses to sexual violence.
- Women need to be made comfortable to feel safe and speak out about their experience with sexual violence. Workers need to be able to enable this.
- Community attitudes should be changed to normalise talking about sexual violence in order to reduce embarrassment and dress stigma.

- There should be a greater understanding of the cohorts that are most vulnerable to sexual violence (e.g. disability, CALD, young people)

Technology-facilitated abuse

- Responses to technology-facilitated abuse need to be able to respond to the ever changing nature of technology (e.g. the response from the legal system or the technology industry).
- Awareness of domestic, family and sexual violence should be raised in an online context.
- Particular focus should be given to those who might be vulnerable to online or technology-facilitated abuse and what this looks like (e.g. older people are one of the largest cohorts active online).

Impacts on children

- Children need to be seen as a focus in their own right, as they are too often seen only in the context of the mother or woman experiencing violence.
- Children aged 1-5 years are not given adequate assessment and service.
- The system should be trauma-informed and focused on stopping the children becoming either a victim and or perpetrator (i.e. intergeneration transmission of violence).
- There is a need for a greater evidence collection to enable the system to be safe and to respond to the needs of children.

Adequate and appropriate crisis accommodation

- There are not enough housing options and capacity for women and children who are experiencing domestic and family violence.
- The lack of funding and funding cycles is affecting the availability of crisis accommodation.
- Tenancy laws across jurisdictions need to better accommodate women and children experiencing violence.
- Women often do not know where to go to seek support.
- Women on various visa types do not have the ability to leave crisis accommodation.

Big shifts

What are the big shifts we want to see in this space?

- From cycle of victimisation and intergenerational trauma go unchanged to breaking the cycles of intergenerational trauma and intergenerational transition of violence
- From limited focus on perpetrator to perpetrator at the centre and kept accountable
- From disclosure to friends to disclosure to the community that knows how to intervene
- From early intervention once to intervention is a pathway of interaction over time
- From default criminal justice system response to alternatives to criminal justice responses
- From court system lacks sensitivity to people experiencing domestic violence to court facilities that reflect needs of people experiencing domestic violence (e.g. access separate, safe rooms)

- From limited definition of abuse focused on physical violence to embodied and understand the full definition of abuse/violence
- From limited education for magistrates to peer to peer education of magistrates
- From no specialist services to specialist legal service on domestic violence related issues
- From treating behaviours not drivers/causes of domestic violence to treating drivers of drivers such as alcoholism, gambling, drugs etc.
- From short term focus to longer term focus
- From too late for triggers to get help to periodic triggers
- From mistrust of services from the indigenous community to communities trust in indigenous led services
- From justice pathway to trauma-centred pathway
- From avoid difficult taboo topic to empowered to speak out
- From identified cohorts to intersectional approach to different communities and cohorts
- From disjointed practice and evidence base to evidence based reflects best practice
- From inaccessible services to accessible services and women know where to go
- From government and NGOs to government, NGOs and corporates
- From children not in focus to children in focus
- From service process options to trauma informed options
- From children lost in the family to children viewed in their own rights