



Australian Government
Department of Social Services



Consultation Summary Complex forms of violence

*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. These notes relate to a consultation 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 of Complex Violence Consultation

Access Community Services Ltd	inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence
Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH)	Medibank
Australian Federal Police (AFP)	Multicultural Centre for Women's Health
Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)	Muslim Women Association
Australian Government Department of Home Affairs	Multicultural Disability Advocacy Association of NSW (MDAA)
Australian Red Cross	National Ethnic Disability Alliance (NEDA)
Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA)	Project Respect
Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA)	Salvation Army
Good Shepherd	



Key themes

Key themes

Definitions

- The definition of family and domestic violence should be expanded to encompass, rather than separate, 'complex' forms of violence (e.g. forced marriage, human trafficking, and dowry abuse).
 - These should be recognised as a form of violence and not separated as an 'other' or 'complex' form of violence.
- Often the types of complex violence people experience are not in isolation (i.e. family violence may exist in association with trafficking; dowry abuse may be experienced as financial abuse or forced marriage).

Intersectionality

- It is important for providers to see the whole person and appreciate their context as well as recognise diversity.
- Culturally appropriate and intersectional approaches to prevention that engage with communities should be developed.
- There is a need to understand the intersection of family (including offshore families), family/domestic violence and an individual's migration status, visa status, and how this in turn impacts on access to services, employment, and housing.
- Assumptions based on existing knowledge and or culture can be dangerous. Each person has their own unique story.

Understanding the needs of communities

- Establishing safety and wellbeing must be the first response to someone experiencing violence.
- The requirement for proof when needing an Apprehended Violence Order (AVO) can be challenging for some members of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds.
- It can be particularly challenging for people from CALD backgrounds to navigate the support system. Many people who experience 'complex violence' are unfamiliar with the support systems available.

Working with communities

- Policies and programs should be co-designed with communities.
- It is important to engage with communities and faith leaders.
- New programs are not necessarily required – there is a need to identify and amplify what is already working.

Barriers to people seeking help

- The cultural expectations from families and its influence can prevent women reporting violence.
- People in refugee communities or with temporary visa are at risk of isolation especially if they have limited awareness of their rights in Australia or the services available.

Key themes

Improving the capacity and integration of services

- Greater capacity is needed to support women affected by complex forms of violence.
- More options for interpreters are needed to account for diversity and so people can choose whether or not to receive interpreter services from someone within their community.
- Referral pathways should be strengthened: there are many programs to support people, however they are not linked and can be difficult to navigate.
- Services sometimes feel limited in meeting the needs of clients because of the program guidelines and funding requirements.
- There is a need for resources to educate health service providers and new migrants about recognising forms of violence, available services, legal and work rights, and cultural attitudes.

New approaches to service delivery

- Service delivery should be holistic (i.e. consider sexual and reproductive health, mental health, physical health etc).
- The Support for Trafficked People Program should be de-linked from the criminal justice system and provide long-term supports.
- A trauma-informed, human rights based approach should be taken for the delivery of services.
- Services should consider early family reunification with families, including offshore and guardianship issues with children.

Law Reform

- Dowry abuse needs to be recognised in the family law system. The recent Victorian law reform (recognising dowry abuse) should be seen as an example for future law reform (e.g. currently there are problems in property settlement matters because dowry is not recognised as abuse).
- Forced marriage should also be recognised in family law definitions.
- Training for decision makers is important to recognise the different forms of violence (such as trafficking, dowry abuse and forced marriage) as well as family and domestic violence.

Fear and implications of visa status

- There is great fear around what will happen to families when immigration status is pending and visa status is uncertain. This results in women not reporting violence.
- Visa conditions (including ineligibility for services and fear of deportation) prevent women coming forward.
- While protection and security may be available within Australia, some have fear of their family who are off-shore.

Data

- More funding is needed to support evaluations of programs to inform future policy. There is a need to enable quality data collection to translate data in to effective policy.
- Collection of data does not consider the privacy and confidentiality agreements service providers have with clients. Some methodologies undermine United Nations principles on data collection.
- Separation of service inhibits our ability to collect and evaluate data.



Priority actions

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Access to supports

- Different services and supports should be available to victims and survivors under one roof (e.g. a central hub).
- Referral pathways should be expanded for services for complex violence.

Expanding definition of domestic and family violence

- Expand the definition of domestic and family violence to include early and forced marriage and dowry abuse.

Workforce capacity and capability

- Increase the currently limited knowledge about how to recognise these forms of violence and where to refer.
- Support mainstream services to increase their workforce capacity to respond to clients in culturally sensitive and appropriate ways.
- Provide appropriate, tailored service provision for all victims (i.e. regardless of migration/visa status).

Coordination and accountability of services

- Ensure intersectional approaches are embedded when addressing domestic and family violence and complex violence.
- Embed greater accountability mechanisms for mainstream services who refer cases they deem too challenging to other services.
- Include basic benchmarks for each state, territory and local government for providing supports for 'complex violence'.
- Be inclusive of all relevant stakeholders when developing strategies and plans.

Coordinating Commonwealth and State strategies

- Link Commonwealth and State plans across all levels of government to the National Action Plan.

Visa conditions

- Adopt a human rights based approach and recognise that people on temporary visas are more vulnerable.
- Undertake a review of visa conditions, particularly for bridging, spousal and study visas.

Early and forced marriage

- Build the capacity of mainstream, specialist and youth services, including increasing the cultural diversity of the workforce and providing cultural intelligence training.
- Foundational principle of approach being co-design and responsive to gaps and priority needs (with consumers and community members).

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C)

- Foster intergenerational, bilingual, peer or community-led conversations to raise awareness and educate communities.
- Reframe the issue in a way that reduces stigma and facilitates communication (e.g. sexual and reproductive health) rather than focus on criminal aspect of the practice in Australia.
- Build the capacity of mainstream services to respond and refer appropriately.