FACT SHEET: Stocktake of primary prevention initiatives in sexual violence and sexual harassment

# Sexual violence and sexual harassment have devastating effects on individuals, families, and communities. A mature system of primary prevention can help stop violence before it occurs. Everyone has a role to play.

**The Fourth Action Plan**

The Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 makes clear that stopping sexual violence and sexual harassment before it occurs is a priority. Primary prevention has a key role to play in achieving this goal.

Primary prevention requires changing attitudes, behaviours and accepted systems that excuse, justify or encourage sexual violence and sexual harassment. It means creating change at the individual, interpersonal, community and societal levels to promote greater equality.

Supporting the continued growth of primary prevention initiatives across Australia will be key to meeting the goals of the Fourth Action Plan and securing the safety and wellbeing of the community.

**Primary prevention in Australia**

Across Australia, governments and specialist service providers are delivering innovative and powerful initiatives aimed at preventing sexual violence and sexual harassment. Over 300 initiatives are currently being delivered today. They range from awareness   
raising campaigns, education and upskilling, to policies and research.

While significant work is being done in this emerging sector, addressing key gaps will further strengthen the impact of primary prevention.

S**tocktake of primary prevention initiatives**

A stocktake of primary prevention initiatives was undertaken in 2020 based on significant research.

The research included:

* 51 consultations with the sector including government and specialist non-government providers
* A survey of primary prevention initiatives which included responses from 86 organisations about 166 initiatives occurring in various states and territories
* A literature review of best practice and existing evaluations.

Each initiative was mapped against the five considerations:

* Addressing the drivers of sexual violence and sexual harassment
* Enhancing coverage of primary prevention initiatives
* Improving the approaches delivered
* Growing maturity of the sector through evidence
* Supportive funding that enables outcomes.

**Addressing the drivers**

This issue considers the extent that primary prevention initiatives recognise and address the drivers of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

**Primary prevention in sexual violence and sexual harassment does not always receive targeted focus:**

It is often combined with prevention in domestic and family violence or delivered through tertiary responses. Questionnaire results showed that out of 315 initiatives, 47 initiatives were specific to sexual violence (Table 1). The unique drivers of sexual violence and sexual harassment risk going unaddressed if not specifically targeted.

**Table 1:** Issues addressed by initiatives-overlap of initiatives with domestic and family violence

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Issues addressed** | **Numbers of initiatives** |
| Only sexual violence | 47 |
| Only sexual harassment | 16 |
| Only domestic and family violence | 41 |
| Both sexual violence and sexual harassment | 20 |
| Both sexual violence and domestic and family violence | 118 |
| Both sexual harassment and domestic and family violence | 0 |
| Both sexual violence, sexual harassment and domestic and family violence | 33 |

Source: N=313 Deloitte questionnaire, 2020. Note: Only 275 respondents reported addressing the issues of ‘sexual violence’, ‘sexual harassment’, ‘domestic and family violence’ or a combination of the three; the remaining respondents only reported addressing gender inequality, or human rights more broadly.

**Primary prevention needs an inclusive and tailored approach that addresses distinct experiences of sexual violence and sexual harassment:**

The four gendered drivers of violence established in Our Watch’sChange the Story framework are:

1. Condoning of violence against women
2. Men’s control of decision making and limits to women’s independence in public and private life
3. Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity
4. Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

These drivers of gendered violence are applicable and well recognised across various groups and settings where sexual violence and sexual harassment occurs. Additional risk factors or the multiple layers of discrimination experienced by distinct groups, such as racism, heterosexism, ableism or ageism also arise, creating added vulnerabilities and distinct experiences of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

21% of the 66 initiatives addressed these other forms of inequality and discrimination.

**Not all drivers receive equal focus to create change:**

The actions for combating violence against women receive varied focus. There are limited programs which focus on male peer to peer relationships that condone violence against women and focus on male gender roles (Table 2).

**Table 2:** Proportion of initiatives based on focus on the drivers and actions to prevent violence

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Drivers and actions to prevent violence** | **Proportion of initiatives** |
| Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relationships | 67% |
| Challenging the condoning of violence | 78% |
| Challenge gender stereotypes and roles | 49% |
| Promote women’s independence and decision making | 36% |

Source: N=288, Deloitte questionnaire, 2020. Note: initiatives may address multiple of the above drivers of violence.

**Existing taboos and barriers inhibit open and necessary discussions on sexual violence and sexual harassment:**

Taboos and barriers around speaking about sexual violence, sexual harassment, sex and the body are not being addressed, preventing discussions about the drivers of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

**Enhancing coverage**

This issue considers the extent that primary prevention initiatives reach the whole population and address the various settings and sectors in which sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur.

**Primary prevention initiatives are unevenly spread across Australia**

Some states and regions deliver fewer primary prevention initiatives (Table 3). Remote areas receive poorer coverage from initiatives than metropolitan and regional areas. Only 59% of initiatives reached remote areas.

**Table 3:** Initiatives across Australia

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Jurisdiction** | **Number of initiatives** |
| Australia-wide | 49 |
| New South Wales | 34 |
| Victoria | 26 |
| Queensland | 23 |
| South Australia | 10 |
| Western Australia | 16 |
| Tasmania | 8 |
| Northern Territory | 6 |
| Australian Capital Territory | 10 |
| Multiple states | 5 |

Source: N=187, Deloitte questionnaire, 2020. Note: Total responses add to 197 as some initiatives are conducted across multiple jurisdictions.

**Primary prevention requires greater attention on men and boys and to varying age groups:**

Whole of life and gender-diverse approaches are not always included in primary prevention (Table 4). Opportunities to engage younger children could be enhanced. Parents and older generations who serve as role models and decision makers are not often directly targeted.

The stocktake results show that 8% of initiatives targeted potential perpetrators, while over 12% targeted bystanders and 15% targeted potential victims. Stakeholders advised that there are few initiatives which specifically target men and boys.

**Table 4:** The proportion of initiatives that target certain life stages

Of the initiatives identified in the stocktake, varying numbers targeted the below demographic groups.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Demographic groups** | **Proportion of initiatives** | **Setting** |
| Boys and girls (below 15 years) | 16% | * Home * Media * Early childhood * School |
| Young people (15-24 years) | 25% | * School and higher education * Workplace * Home * Community |
| Women | 15% | * Home * Workplace * Community |
| Men | 10% | * Home * Workplace * Community |
| Parents and carers | 8% | * Home * Workplace * Community |
| Older persons | 2% | * Home * Community |

Source: N=315, Deloitte questionnaire, 2020. Note: Figures do not add to 100% as some initiatives may have targeted multiple stages of life, while others may have targeted none.

**The needs of diverse communities are not always met through mainstream initiatives:**

Diverse population groups, who are at higher risk of sexual violence and sexual harassment, require greater inclusion in primary prevention initiatives. There is greater focus on “mainstream” experiences of sexual violence and sexual harassment.

The stocktake found that less than 40% of initiatives were targeted to diverse groups. The distinct contexts of sexual violence and sexual harassment experienced by diverse populations risk going unaddressed.

Stocktake initiatives targeted the following:

* 20% target the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
* 13% target people with disability
* 14% target the LGBTIQ community
* 19% target the culturally and linguistically diverse community.

Source: N=315, Deloitte questionnaire, 2020. Note: Figures do not add to 100% as some initiatives may have targeted multiple of the above, while others may have targeted none.

**A more comprehensive approach to primary prevention in sexual violence and sexual harassment in specific sectors and contexts can enhance the impact of primary prevention:**

Specific sectors that would benefit from a more comprehensive approach to primary prevention initiatives in sexual violence and sexual harassment are education and care settings, faith-based communities, the arts and policing and legal professions.

Greater attention on emerging contexts such as the online environment and reproductive coercion is also needed.

The most common targeted settings are:

* Education and care settings
* Workplaces
* Health and care settings.

The least commonly targeted settings are:

* Legal and justice
* The arts and popular culture
* Faith based settings.

Source: N=271, Deloitte questionnaire, 2020.

**Improving approaches and strategies**

This issue maps primary prevention initiatives across the ecological model and considers how they are delivered.

**Greater consistency in the delivery of initiatives across the individual, community and societal level, will effect greater change in attitudes, behaviours and systems:**

Primary prevention should be delivered using a comprehensive suite of initiatives. Currently, awareness raising and upskilling the workforce are relied on as the preferred initiatives for delivering change. Initiatives at the organisational and community level present as areas of need.

**The current suite of mechanisms consists of mainly short term and one-off initiatives:**

Research suggests that attitude, behaviour and system change cannot be achieved in the short term. The current proportion of short term and one-off initiatives, suggest longer term initiatives are needed. Long term initiatives are enabled by appropriate funding.

**Tailoring the delivery of initiatives to distinct groups will ensure community needs are met:**

More tailoring of initiatives for diverse populations will increase effectiveness. This means modifying how initiatives are delivered and by whom they are delivered. Stakeholders in the stocktake consultation advised that mechanisms must be community led and co-designed. Community engagement, role modelling, healing and knowledge circles were key mechanisms for delivering changes in attitudes and behaviours for distinct communities.

**Building a specialist workforce that can deliver primary prevention is needed:**

Primary prevention requires specific skills. Many organisations deliver primary prevention as an ‘extra’, in addition to their core work. That core work may be tertiary responses to sexual violence and sexual harassment or other work unrelated to prevention. This suggests a workforce capacity and capability gap in delivery primary prevention in sexual violence and sexual harassment.

**Table 5:** Initiatives and timeframe

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Approach of initiatives** | **Timeframe** | | | | | **Total number of initiatives** |
| **<6 months** | **6-12 months** | **1-2 years** | **2-4 years** | **>4 years** |
| Awareness raising | 10% | 9% | 19% | 29% | 33% | 63 |
| Upskilling the workforce | 7% | 7% | 21% | 29% | 36% | 36 |
| Community engagement and mobilisation | 11% | 4% | 23% | 22% | 39% | 28 |
| Organization policies | 7% | 4% | 30% | 17% | 42% | 15 |
| Policy and regulation | 4% | 13% | 19% | 27% | 36% | 23 |
| Research |  |  | 16% |  | 84% | 3 |
| **Total** | 8% | 8% | 21% | 26% | 37% | 168 |

Source: N=168, Deloitte questionnaire, 2020. Note: Figures may not add to 100% due to labels being omitted.

**Growing in maturity**

This issue considers the extent that primary prevention initiatives are informed by evidence of what works and are continuously evaluated and improved.

**Limited levels of evaluation and reliance on evidence-based frameworks:**

There are a very small number of initiatives that have been evaluated, limiting the evidence-base of best-practice approaches in Australia. Few initiatives measure or target outcomes, due to difficulties in measurement of attitudes and behavioural change. Short term initiatives and funding were also raised as compounding reasons. In the questionnaire, 36% of participants reported evaluating their initiatives (Source: N=152, Deloitte questionnaire). Longer standing initiatives tended to review and update their work less frequently. Further, 36% of questionnaire participants reported using established frameworks or existing programs to support development of their initiatives (Table 6).

**Love Bites and Change the Story were the most cited existing program or framework used to design initiatives**

**Table 6**: Age and review

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **AGE OF INITIATIVE** | **FREQUENCY OF INITIATIVE UPDATES** | | | | | |
| **Weekly or more** | **Monthly** | **Yearly** | **Every 2-4 years** | **< every 4  years** | **Total** |
| **Less than six months** | 0 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 0 | **6** |
| **Six to twelve months** | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | **4** |
| **One to two years** | 0 | 7 | 10 | 2 | 0 | **19** |
| **Two to four years** | 1 | 1 | 18 | 3 | 1 | **24** |
| **More than four years** | 2 | 5 | 19 | 4 | 2 | **32** |
| **Total** | 5 | 15 | 51 | 11 | 3 | **85** |

Source: N=85, Deloitte questionnaire, 2020. Note: 71% of initiatives’ responses provided an ‘unsure / not applicable’ response to the question about updating or reviewing initiatives. 43% responded ‘unsure / not applicable’ to the question about age of initiative.

**Targeted policy and leadership for primary prevention in sexual violence and sexual harassment is needed to drive momentum:**

Continued leadership and momentum for change at a societal level in sexual violence and sexual harassment is needed. Stakeholders noted that catalysts for change are yet to occur in sexual violence more generally. Where commissions are not available or realistic, specific policy and directives in sexual violence and sexual harassment play a role in leading change.

**Greater collaboration and co-design of community led policy and initiatives is required:**

Stakeholders spoke about the need for greater collaboration and opportunities for co-design. Diverse groups asked for greater inclusion within existing forums and networks. Some stakeholders also advised that primary prevention should be co-designed by survivors of sexual abuse and sexual harassment as well as intended consumers.

**Supportive funding**

This issue considers the extent that primary prevention initiatives are funded in a manner that supports best practice.

**Dedicated funding specifically for primary prevention in sexual violence and sexual harassment is limited:**

Generally, initiatives receive discrete pieces of funding for small projects and rely heavily on government funding sources (Table 7). There is limited longer-term funding, which constrains sustainable practices and the realisation of outcomes on attitude, behaviour and system changes.

**Table 7:**  Initiatives and funding source

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Type of funding** | **Proportion of initiatives** |
| Initiatives receive public funding | 56% |
| Initiatives receive funding from multiple sources | 24% |
| Initiatives are not for profit | 35% |

Source: N=158, Deloitte questionnaire, 2020. Note: Figures do not add to 100% as some respondents may have ticked multiple options, while others may have ticked none.

**Funding for research and evaluation of primary prevention initiatives is limited:**

There is limited funding specifically for evaluation, research and innovation. Evaluation of primary prevention initiatives in sexual violence and sexual harassment is considered a new and emerging sector in Australia.

**Table 8**: Initiatives and funding

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Awareness raising** | **Upskilling the workforce** | **Community engagement and mobilisation** | **Organisational policies** | **Policy and regulation** | **Research** | **Total number of initiatives** |
| **$0-$999** | 50% | 18% | 21% | 5% | 5% |  | 22 |
| **$1,000-$9,999** | 38% | 29% | 17% | 5% | 9% | 2% | 23 |
| **$10,000-$49,999** | 32% | 27% | 16% | 16% | 5% | 3% | 13 |
| **$50,000-$99,999** | 32% | 27% | 20% | 10% | 10% | 2% | 14 |
| **$100,000-$499,999** | 29% | 37% | 18% | 13% | 11% | 2% | 15 |
| **$500,000 or more** | 33% | 17% | 33% |  | 17% |  | 2 |

Source: N=89, Deloitte questionnaire, 2020. Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding error.

Primary prevention in sexual violence and sexual harassment is emerging as a strong and influential sector. Under the guidance of the national policy framework, including the Fourth Action Plan, it can continue to evolve and grow.