



Evaluation of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children (2010-2022)

Prepared for the Department of Social Services

FINAL REPORT

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Glossary

Terminology	Definition
4AP	Fourth Action Plan under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
ANRA	Australia's National Research Agenda to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2020-2022
ANROWS	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
COVID-19	The coronavirus pandemic
DCRF	National Data Collection and Reporting Framework
The Department	Department of Social Services (Commonwealth Government)
DFV	Domestic and family violence
DSS	Department of Social Services (Commonwealth Government)
DV-alert	Domestic and Family Violence Response Training
DV-STMP	Domestic Violence Suspect Target Management Plan
DVU	Domestic Violence Unit
ECAV	Education Centre Against Violence
FASS	Family Advocacy and Support Services

Terminology	Definition
FDSV	Family, domestic and sexual violence
FVPLS	Family Violence Prevention Legal Services
FVSAC	Family Violence Statewide Advisory Committee
GP	General practitioner
HILDA	Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia survey
HJP	Health Justice Partnership
IDFVS	Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Service
ImpEG	National Plan Implementation Executive Group
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer
MARAM	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework
MBCP	Men's Behaviour Change Programs
The National Council	National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children
The National Plan	The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022
NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
NCAS	National Survey on Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
PMR	Performance monitoring and reporting framework (for the Fourth Action Plan)
Protection order	A legal order made to protect victim survivors from further violence and abuse, with different names in each state and territory (including but not limited to apprehended domestic violence order, intervention order, family violence order)

Terminology	Definition
PSS	Personal Safety Survey
RREiS	Respectful Relationships Education in Schools
SHLV	Staying Home Leaving Violence program
The Summit	COAG National Summit on Reducing Violence against Women
UN	United Nations

Disclaimer

Inherent limitations

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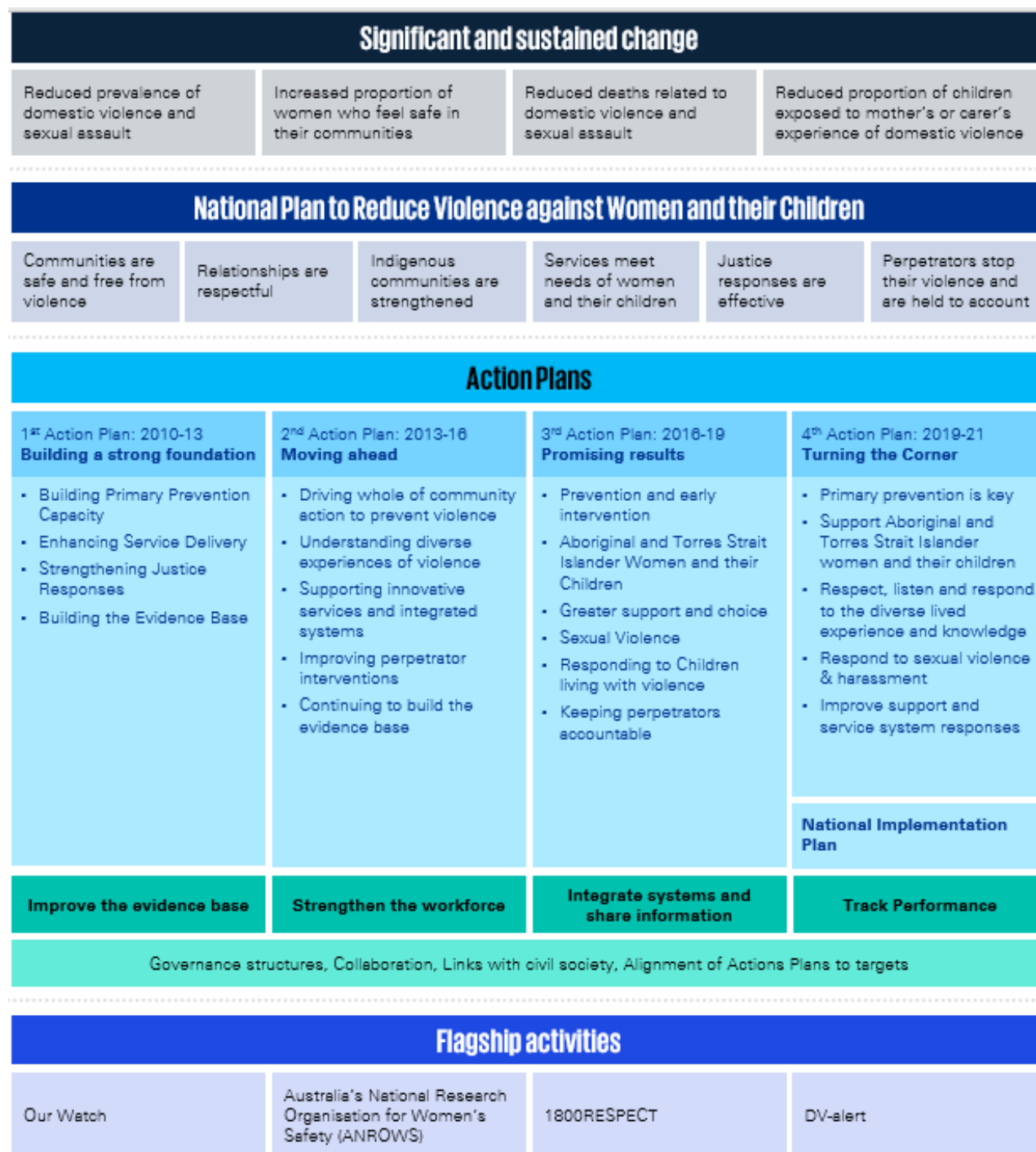
Accessibility

To comply with the Commonwealth Government's accessibility requirements, two versions of this Report are available: a KPMG-branded PDF version and an unbranded Microsoft Word version. The KPMG-branded PDF version of this Report remains the definitive version of this Report.

Executive summary

The National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022 (the National Plan) was established by all Australian Governments to lead the response to improve women's safety. The National Plan was implemented through four three-year Action Plans. The architecture for the National Plan is featured in the figure below:

Figure a1: Architecture of the National Plan



The National Plan included a commitment to conduct an evaluation over the 12-year lifespan, as well as evaluations at the conclusion of each three-year Action Plan. KPMG was engaged to undertake a mixed-methods approach comprising three core components: implementation (process) evaluation; outcomes evaluation; and future directions. The evaluation was informed by a series of data collection methods:

- Quantitative assessment of outcomes
- Desktop research
- Prior research and evaluations of initiatives under the National Plan
- Social media analysis
- Frontline worker survey
- Stakeholder engagement.

Process evaluation findings

The National Plan established a national agenda for addressing family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) and was able to facilitate sustained commitment from all Australian governments. Maintaining women's safety as a national priority was seen as a key achievement of the National Plan. The National Plan was also instrumental in creating and sustaining an authorising environment for FDSV investment, particularly among smaller jurisdictions.

Throughout the life of the National Plan, the Commonwealth, states and territories have undertaken significant activities to implement initiatives under each of the Action Plans. This has also occurred under the backdrop of significant broader state and territory level reforms and initiatives, which made it unclear whether progress was driven at the jurisdictional level or was a product of the National Plan.

The Action Plans however did not adequately respond to the needs of diverse groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women, women with disability, and people from lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ+) communities. As a result, there remain gaps in funding, policy, service, and data collection relating to the experiences of these diverse groups.

Overall, the flagship initiatives of the National Plan were identified as the key achievement of the National Plan, in particular, the establishment of a 24-hour helpline (1800RESPECT), development of a national research agenda by Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety

(ANROWS) and successive awareness-raising campaigns (Our Watch) were highly regarded.

There was a missed opportunity for the Commonwealth leadership to leverage influence with broader national policies and legislation which impact on women's safety, including Family Courts and migrant policies.

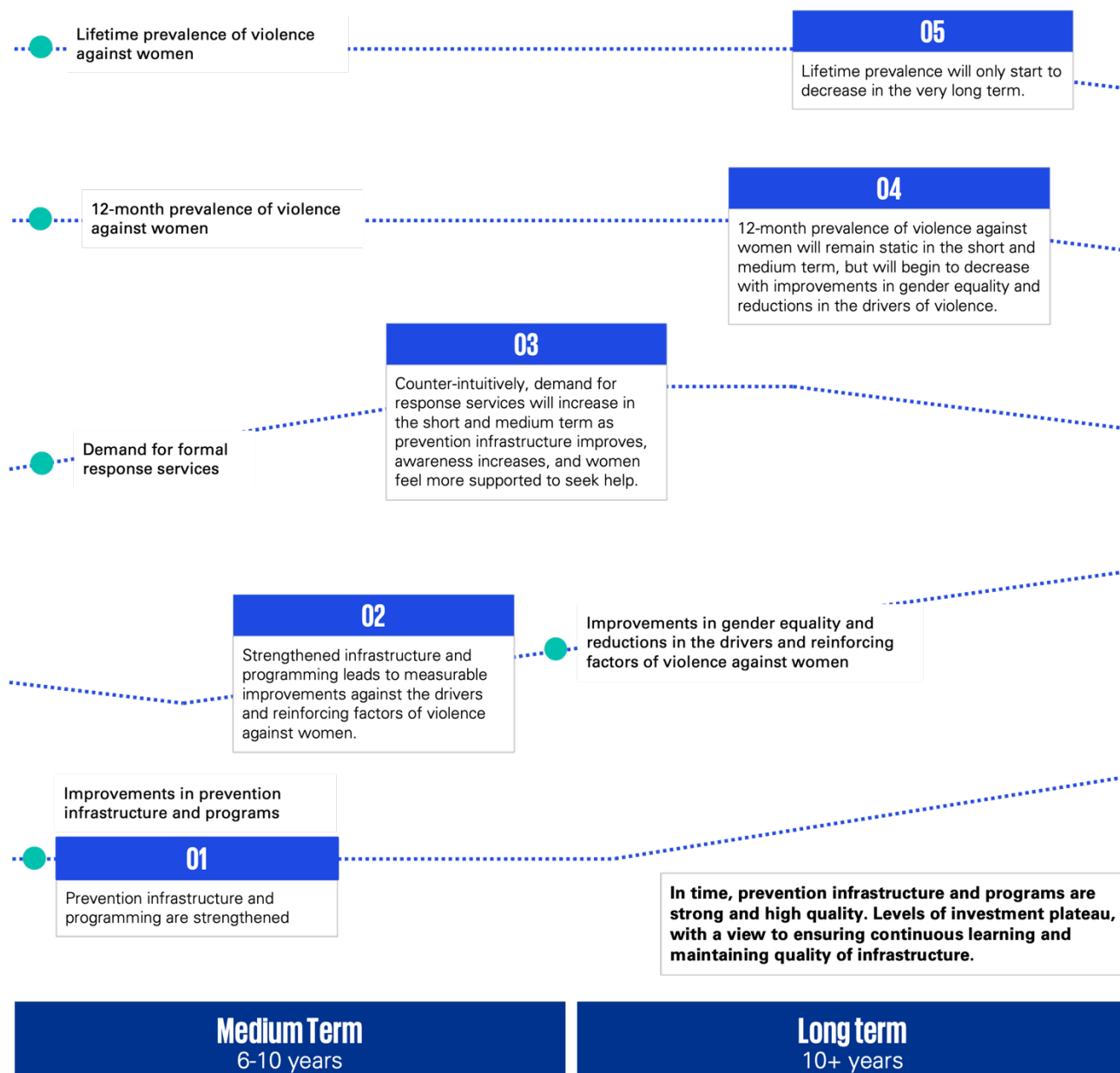
Data collection, monitoring, and reporting continued to be a challenge across implementation. This applied to initiatives under each Action Plan as well as the diverse range of activities undertaken at the state and territory level.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic had a real impact on the implementation of actions and initiatives under the Fourth Action Plan, and also was associated with an increased demand for FDSV services.

Outcomes evaluation findings

Achieving population wide changes to entrenched social problems is challenging to observe in comparatively short periods of time. To be able to detect changes in lifetime and 12-month prevalence of FDSV requires a long-term commitment and the establishment of supportive architecture and infrastructure, which have been established through the National Plan. The expected process for change is outlined in Figure a2, which should be considered when understanding the impact of the National Plan.

Figure a2: Expected process of change



Source: Our Watch and ANROWS, Counting on Change: A guide to prevention monitoring

Bearing this in mind, it was not possible to identify reductions in the prevalence of FDSV, with data indicating increases in reported incidents. This is unsurprising given the established improvements in community awareness of FDSV, the additional investment in services, improved confidence to contact services, greater detection by service providers and improved data collection and reporting systems.

Despite year-on-year fluctuations, there appears to be reductions in the number and rate of female intimate partner homicide from the period prior to the National Plan being implemented, compared with the post-implementation period. However, this can not necessarily be attributed to the

specific initiatives or actions under the National Plan or Action Plans.

Over the life of the National Plan, there have been increases in the proportion of women who feel safe in their communities, while at the same time there was an increase in the proportion of children exposed to violence perpetrated against their mother or caregiver.

The National Plan outlined six national outcomes for governments to deliver over the course of the Plan. Progress towards achieving these outcomes is described in Table a1.

Table a1: Evidence of achieving National Outcomes

National Outcome	Evidence
Communities are safe and free from violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A reduction in community attitudes supportive of FDSV and increased community awareness of FDSV, particularly non-physical forms, was noted over the life of the National Plan. It was identified that concerning attitudes persist that demonstrate victim-blaming, a lack of understanding, and can excuse FDSV. There have been some positive markers for improving gender equality, however, overall gender inequality persists in Australia.
Relationships are respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understandings of respectful relationships have improved among young people and the broader community, supported by Respectful Relationships education in schools and social marketing campaigns. Social marketing campaigns have also supported an increased focus on empowering men to speak up about FDSV.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are strengthened	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Plan provided positive policy leadership on driving local solutions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children and pockets of excellence were noted. It is noted that further commitment is needed to ensure this translates into practice and improves access to culturally appropriate and trauma-informed services.
Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, according to stakeholders, services were meeting the needs of victim survivors to a moderate extent, with responses impacted by low rates of service access and a reactive service system. There is a need for continued investment in workforce development and increased integration between services (for example, specialist and mainstream) and sectors (for example, justice, child protection, housing) to improve experiences for victim survivors. The needs of victim survivors from diverse groups (such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women with disability, and LGBTIQ+ communities) were not being comprehensively addressed by the National Plan. There was also an identified need for increased consideration of children as victim survivors in their own right.
Justice responses are effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The justice response to FDSV is mixed. There have been positive advancements in legislation, training and integration, including the establishment of the National Domestic Violence Order Scheme. However, it is apparent that further improvements are required, including integration with the Family Law Court and child protection systems and in police responses to reports of FDSV.
Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The National Plan brought an increased focus on perpetrators of FDSV and supported improvements to the evidence base for perpetrator intervention. Positive examples of perpetrator intervention have occurred in states and territories. Repeat partner violence remains an issue, with stakeholders emphasising that a focus on the perpetrator of FDSV must be maintained in order to reduce rates of violence.

Source: KPMG, 2022

Other key findings from the evaluation include:

- Through ongoing commitments to workforce development associated with the National Plan, and through other state and territory-based initiatives, the specialist FDSV workforce has been strengthened. There remains a need to further improve the capacity of mainstream workforces to respond to FDSV.
- The evidence base for FDSV responses increased dramatically under the National Plan, driven by the work of the flagship initiatives.
- Despite improvements in data collection and reporting, the National Plan did not adequately track performance of initiatives and actions in achieving the national outcomes.

Future directions

This evaluation has identified a number of lessons and future directions for consideration in developing the new National Plan, and other future policy responses or FDSV reforms (see Table a2).

Table a2. Future directions

Section	Future Direction
General	
Scope of the National Plan	<p>The new National Plan should be clear in consistently defining the inclusions with respect to gendered violence and the application to associated population groups.</p> <p>The new National Plan should encapsulate more inclusive language, to acknowledge the evidence base and experiences of women, girls, and transgender and gender diverse people. It should recognise that people of all marginalised genders are impacted by violence with the same gendered drivers.</p> <p>Inclusion of the voices of people with lived experiences in future evaluation and monitoring activities for the new National Plan will be critical to achieving a full understanding of impact.</p>
Action Plans	
Action Plans	<p>Consideration should be given to retaining the implementation model, with the new National Plan being implemented through rolling Action Plans with agreed priorities and initiatives.</p> <p>Under the new National Plan, any Action Plans should give sufficient regard to the needs of diverse population groups, including addressing gaps in funding, policy, service delivery and data collection for diverse groups.</p>
Flagship initiatives	
Flagship initiatives	<p>The new National Plan should continue to leverage the positive outcomes achieved through the flagship initiatives through recurrent funding.</p> <p>In addition to continuing existing services, there are opportunities to expand service offerings to be more inclusive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (1800RESPECT) and to address training development needs for specialist services (DV-alert).</p>
Commonwealth leadership and coordination	
Commonwealth leadership and coordination	<p>The Commonwealth Government should consider how the new National Plan could better align, integrate, and influence other Commonwealth policy, legislation and programs outside the FDSV sector, in particular intersectionality with the family law system and in supporting migrant women on temporary and other visas.</p>

Section	Future Direction
	For the new National Plan, consideration should be given to building on existing governance mechanisms (for example, the National Plan Implementation Executive Group) to continue progress of collaboration and information sharing.
Information sharing and collaboration through governance, advisory and communication mechanisms	<p>The new National Plan should be overseen by a relevant governance body such as the Implementation Executive Group to reduce duplication and enable collaboration and information sharing.</p> <p>The new National Plan governance arrangements should seek to strengthen collaboration between the Commonwealth, states and territories and service delivery agencies.</p>
Improved service responses for at risk cohorts.	<p>The new National Plan and Action Plans should place appropriate emphasis on place-based co-designed tailored solutions that incorporate the views of people with a lived experience to meet the needs of at risk and diverse cohorts. This should include recognition of healing-focused approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.</p> <p>The new National Plan should seek to increase the capacity and capability of key local stakeholders such as faith leaders and other community members to recognise and respond to disclosures of FDSV by community members.</p>
Impact of COVID-19 pandemic and adaptation to respond to FDSV during the pandemic	Initiatives and programs funded under the new National Plan and Actions Plans should consider mixed modes of service delivery, in the event of further restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in terms of delivering services in a method that meets the needs of diverse individuals and communities.
Foundations for Change	
Strengthen the workforce	<p>The new National Plan and Action Plans should maintain a focus on strengthening the specialist and mainstream FDSV workforces. This could take the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving capacity within specialist services to enable frontline workers to attend training Enabling access to training for workers in rural and remote areas. <p>Building the confidence and competence of mainstream service providers to identify and respond to FDSV.</p>
Integrate systems and share information	<p>The new National Plan and Action Plans should embed and invest in coordination and connection through the FDSV sector.</p> <p>The Action Plans should explore how technological solutions can be optimised to support information sharing and service integration. This could take the form of solutions that enable data sharing between different sectors (for example, sexual assault services and mental health services) to enable wraparound services and prevent victim survivors from retelling their story.</p>
Improve the evidence base	The National Research Agenda should be extended throughout the life of the new National Plan. The National Research Agenda should be supported by adequate and ongoing funding and grants to continue to build the evidence base. The National Research Agenda should be updated periodically to reflect emerging issues in the field of FDSV. The Commonwealth should consider developing a research program

Section	Future Direction
	<p>agreed with states and territories to guide key questions to be answered and assumptions within the research.</p> <p>Initiatives and programs funded under the new National Plan and Action Plans should have dedicated funding to support evaluation and monitoring activities to inform continuous improvement.</p>
Track performance	<p>The new National Plan should have clear and achievable targets that are agreed by Commonwealth, state and territory governments.</p> <p>The new National Plan should be accompanied by supporting documents to inform the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the Plan at an initiative and strategy level. This should include an Outcomes Framework that is informed by a theory of change and robust program logic model. The Outcomes Framework should clearly articulate the outcomes, targets, and associated measures and indicators that will demonstrate progress for the new National Plan.</p> <p>In addition, a monitoring, reporting and evaluation framework should be established at the outset of the new ten-year National Plan to ensure consistent tracking of performance.</p> <p>Initiatives that are funded as part of the new National Plan or Action Plans should give consideration for separate funding to ensure these initiatives are robustly monitored and evaluated to improve the evidence-base of what works, and to inform future funding investment decisions.</p> <p>Data collection, reporting and monitoring requirements for service providers and grant recipients should be streamlined and automated where possible.</p> <p>In collaboration with data custodians, consideration should be given to new and additional data measures to provide a fulsome picture of performance and progress.</p> <p>A key component of work related to monitoring and reporting will be future data development activities by Commonwealth and states and territories, in consultation with the FDSV sector.</p>
National Plan outcomes	
Communities are safe and free from violence	<p>The new National Plan should establish clear and achievable targets in relation to reductions in the prevalence of violence against women and children. To meet these targets, the new National Plan must build on the successes of the incumbent plan in providing the leadership for sustained change.</p> <p>A sustained and expanded focus on primary prevention, particularly targeting young Australians, should remain a priority under the new National Plan. Ongoing media and social media campaigns should target gendered drivers of violence and community attitudes.</p> <p>Services for women and children should be accessible and tailored to their specific needs.</p>
Relationships are respectful	<p>The new National Plan should continue to focus on primary prevention activities, including those targeted at children and young people of all ages, including the before school age. The trials should be considered for scaling up, with consideration for inclusion in the national curriculum for primary school children.</p> <p>Our Watch should receive recurrent funding to continue leading the primary prevention activities at the national level.</p>
Aboriginal and Torres Strait	<p>There is a need for greater tailoring to ensure that the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children are adequately met, not seen as an add-</p>

Section	Future Direction
Islander communities are strengthened	<p>on. The Commonwealth Government, in developing the new National Plan, should consider developing and implementing a dedicated tailored plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. This would need to be accompanied by sustainable longer-term funding to enable meaningful engagement and co-design of local solutions.</p> <p>Responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would benefit from greater consideration of healing solutions, and through increasing the capability of the workforce particular in rural and remote communities.</p>
Services meet the needs of women and their children	<p>The new National Plan and Action Plans should ensure that new or recurrent funding for initiatives or programs is directly targeted to meeting the needs of women and children.</p> <p>Responses to victim survivors and perpetrators should be integrated and multi-disciplinary.</p> <p>The needs of diverse groups of women, children and communities require tailored responses, which specifically address their needs and should not be considered as 'add-ons' or modifications of existing mainstream service responses. This will require community led co-design services with input from those communities that are impacted by violence, including those with lived experiences.</p> <p>Service providers, including government and non-government organisations, should consider expanding the diversity of their workforces to provide a level of comfort to clients and service users from diverse backgrounds to ensure these services are culturally and otherwise appropriate for them to meet their unique needs.</p>
Justice responses are effective	<p>The new National Plan should maintain a focus on justice responses to FDSV including capacity building for police and courts officers. Capacity building should feature recognition of non-physical forms of violence, identification of the predominant aggressor, understanding risks through repeated exposure to perpetrators, and addressing victim-blaming attitudes.</p> <p>The new National Plan and the Action Plans should seek to influence other national jurisdictional policies and processes, such as the Family Court system to ensure victim survivors are supported through these processes and not exposed to ongoing risks.</p>
Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account	<p>The new National Plan should maintain the focus on perpetrator interventions as a key component to the holistic response to FDSV. This should include increasing the availability and accessibility of men's behaviour change programs.</p> <p>Building the evidence base on what works is critical, through continued evaluation of new and existing programs and initiatives, and through the research undertaken by ANROWS and others.</p>

Source: KPMG, 2022

Introduction

1 Introduction

1.1 The National Plan

In May 2008, the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (the National Council) was established to develop an evidence-based plan for reducing violence against women and their children. The National Council report *Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009–2021* recommended that all Australian governments agree to a long-term plan to reduce violence. In response to this recommendation, the Commonwealth Government, in partnership with state and territory governments, developed the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan).

It was an ambitious national plan which involves a collective commitment by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments to making a real and sustained difference to the problem of violence against women and their children. The National Plan was developed in partnership with all states and territories and entailed engagement with over 2,000 community stakeholders, consideration of 370 public submissions, and six expert roundtable forums. It was intended as a national unifying approach, signifying the collective commitment of governments to implement significant and sustainable changes to address the problem of violence against women and their children.

The National Plan also recognised that a whole of community response was required and governments committed to working in partnership with business, researchers and the community sector to develop and implement the National Plan and report on its progress. The Department of Social Services (the Department or DSS) leads the Commonwealth Government's work in responding to violence against women and their children under the National Plan. The National Plan was released by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in February 2011.

1.1.1 Vision and outcomes

The vision of the National Plan was that "Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities". To achieve this vision, governments must be successful in making "a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children over the period of the National Plan."

The high-level indicators of change were agreed as follows:

01	Reduced prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault
02	Increased proportion of women who feel safe in their communities
03	Reduced deaths related to domestic violence and sexual assault
04	Reduced proportion of children exposed to their mother's or carer's experience of domestic violence.

In addition to the target of achieving a reduction in violence against women and their children, the National Plan also identified six key outcomes for all governments to deliver over the 12-year lifespan of the National Plan, with corresponding measures of success:

01	Communities are safe and free from violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased intolerance of violence against women.
02	Relationships are respectful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved knowledge, skills and behaviour of respectful relationships by young people.
03	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are strengthened	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in the proportion of Indigenous women who consider that family violence, assault and sexual assault are problems for their communities and neighbourhoods • Increased proportions of Indigenous women are able to have their say within community on important issues including violence.
04	Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access to and responsiveness of services for victims of domestic / family violence and sexual assault.
05	Justice responses are effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased rates of women reporting domestic violence and sexual assault to police.
06	Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A decrease in repeated partner victimisation.

1.2 Action Plans

Underpinning the National Plan has been a series of Action Plans (see Figure 1). These triennial Action Plans set the priorities for work under the National Plan. Each plan articulated the key actions for working towards a real and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children.

Figure 1: Overview of the four Action Plans



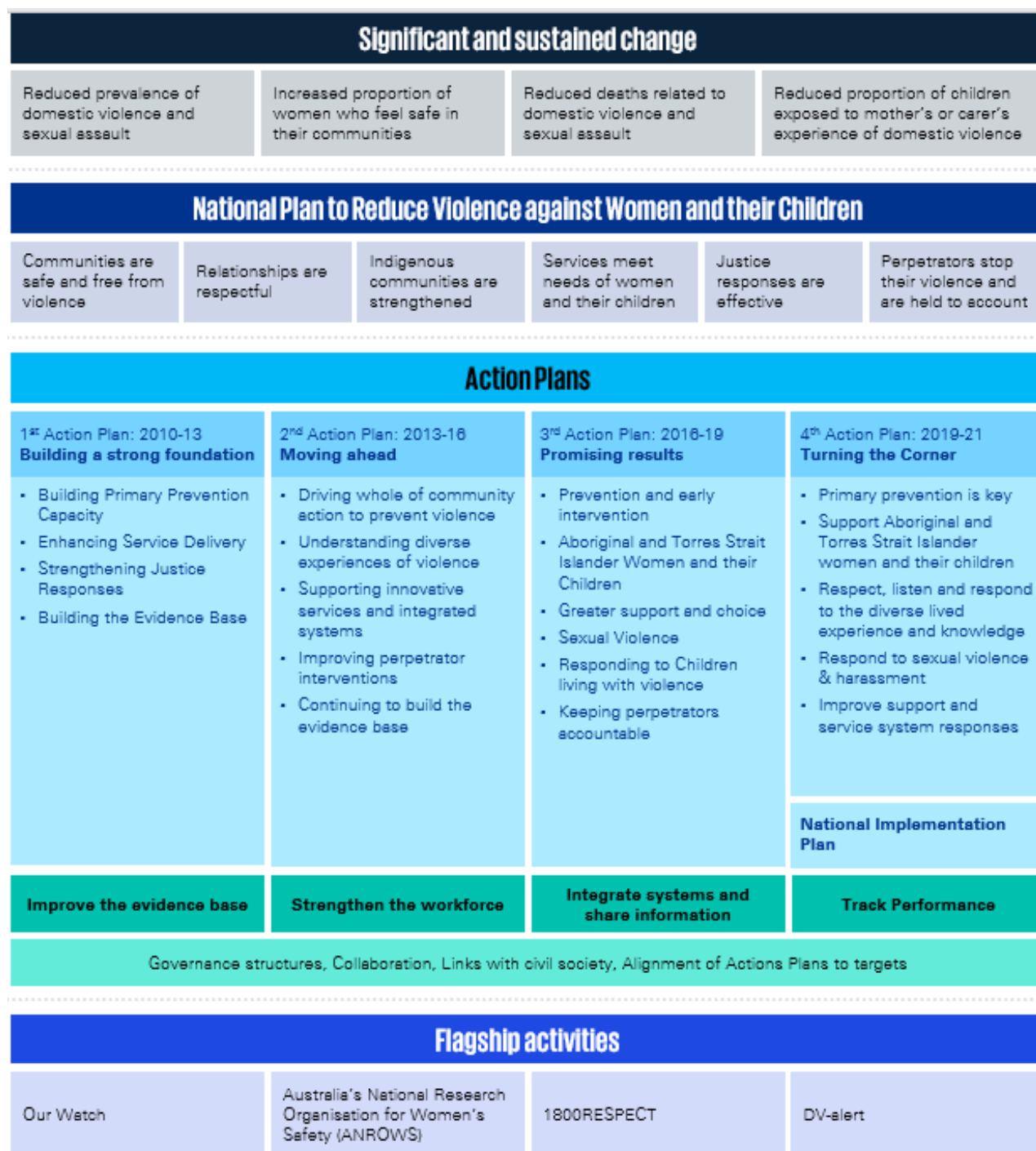
Source: KPMG

1.3 The Australian service landscape

The Commonwealth Government has overarching responsibility for the ongoing administration and delivery of the National Plan through the Department, including providing coordination, establishing governance structures, setting the monitoring and reporting mandate, and maintaining the drive and direction of the National Plan. The Commonwealth is also responsible for implementing the flagship initiatives. Funding responsibility for family, domestic, and sexual

violence (FDSV) services is primarily the responsibility of states and territories, although the Commonwealth, local governments, and non-government organisations also contribute a level of funding. Numerous agencies – including social services agencies, housing agencies, criminal justice agencies, and mainstream health and education services – are all involved in responding to FDSV. The overall architecture of the National Plan is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Architecture of the National Plan



Source: KPMG

While the National Plan provides the vehicle for continuing improved efforts by all levels of government to reduce violence against women and their children, the service delivery system is complex and multi-layered.

States and territories are pivotal to the implementation of the National Plan and delivery of FDSV support services. State and territory agencies are responsible for the provision of specialist services such as counselling and family support programs, perpetrator intervention services, and homelessness services. They are

also accountable for criminal justice responses (via agencies such as Police, Courts and Corrective Services) to FDSV. Further, states and territories oversight mainstream agency responses through managing FDSV responses.

1.4 Overview of the National Plan evaluation

The National Plan included a commitment to conduct an evaluation over the 12-year lifespan, as well as evaluations at the conclusion of each three-year Action Plan. As the National Plan (and Fourth Action Plan (4AP)) are due to end in June 2022, the Department engaged KPMG to conduct an evaluation to assess the implementation of the National Plan, its impact, and its effectiveness in meeting its objectives. This included an evaluation of the 4AP, which is being reported separately. This evaluation was also intended to inform future policy, including the development of the next National Plan.

The evaluation builds on the large amount of work already completed to date and also takes into consideration context and complexity including:

- Other significant inquiries, reviews and evaluations that have taken place throughout the National Plan's duration, and the overlap between the various reforms, recommendations and initiatives occurring at the state and national level
- The diverse nature of initiatives contained within the National Plan ranging from broad community awareness/prevention activities through to direct services to women such as crisis support counselling
- The fact that multiple initiatives can affect the same indicators, making it difficult to attribute changes to particular programs
- The nature of many National Plan initiatives which were aimed at changing societal norms and structures and which are unlikely to bear significant results over a decade or more
- The impact of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) on individuals at risk of FDSV and the impact this had on service providers attempting to respond to the increase in demand
- Challenges in the data that is available including its quality, accessibility and comparability
- The need to recognise the intersectional nature of violence and how other forms of inequality and oppression – such as those experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds;

lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer (LGBTIQ+) people; and people with disability – interact with sexism to contribute to violence against women and their children.

The evaluation approach recognised that the National Plan is complex covering hundreds of diverse activities across multiple settings that have been delivered over more than a decade. The approach recognised the inherent complexity of the policy response, the context in which the National Plan was formulated and implemented, the many stakeholder interests, and the role of the National Plan itself as a mechanism for large scale coordination and collaboration. The evaluation approach is described in detail in Appendix B, with evaluation questions at Appendix C.

KPMG engaged in a mixed-methods approach comprised of three core components:

- Implementation (process) evaluation
- Outcomes evaluation
- Future directions.

The data collection methods for the evaluation include:

- Quantitative assessment of outcomes
- Desktop research
- Prior research and evaluation
- Social media analysis
- Frontline worker survey
- Stakeholder engagement.

More detail on the data collection methods is available in Appendix D.

The following sections draw together and synthesise the findings from these data collection activities to respond to the primary evaluation questions.

1.5 Limitations

Despite the wide ranging and multi-tiered approach to the evaluation of the National Plan, there are several methodological limitations that need to be considered:

- **Detecting change:** Violence against women and children is a deep-seated social problem, with complex drivers that have been entrenched in the Australian community for generations. The concerted efforts from Australian Governments will ultimately result in improvements in responses to violence against women. However, it will take time and generational change to realise meaningful

change. In the short term, reports of FDSV were expected to increase due to greater confidence of victim survivors in identifying violence and reporting to services, enhanced detection by services, and improvements in data collection. The quality and type of data will continue to improve which will enable more robust reporting and a greater understanding of impact.

- **Data availability:** There have been improvements in the collection and reporting of data during the life of the National Plan, as FDSV has gained greater focus and commitment from governments. However, data collection is challenging for complex social problems like FDSV. The primary data collection tools used to inform progress of the National Plan, the Personal Safety Survey (PSS) and the National Community Attitudes Survey provide valuable information to enhance our collective understanding of FDSV. The PSS is a nationally representative community survey of over 20,000 individuals and families. Due to delays associated with COVID-19 pandemic, the most recent data from the PSS is from 2016, some six years before the evaluation. As such, data reported in this report for 2016 does not take into account activities and initiatives from that point onwards.
- **Attribution:** Due to the complex policy landscape in place nationally, with each state and territory concurrently driving reform at the local level through respective strategies and plans, it is not possible to attribute changes that may have occurred since 2010 directly to the National Plan. While we can observe and analyse changes over the period of the National Plan, causal links were not be able to be directly made.
- **Consultation fatigue:** The consultations for the evaluation for the National Plan occurred between 20 July and 17 September 2021, amidst a congested stakeholder engagement landscape, at the Commonwealth, state, and territory level. For instance, consultations for the new National Plan took place in a similar time frame, as the National Summit on Women's Safety roundtables. This can have a real impact on stakeholders, particularly those from frontline services who may be drawn away from service delivery to provide their time to the range of consultation activities.
- **National Plan versus the 4AP:** In an effort to minimise consultation fatigue, it was determined that the consultations assessing the effectiveness of the National Plan and the 4AP would occur concurrently in combined sessions. While facilitators directed participants specifically to the 4AP where that was the subject of inquiry, participants may not have been able to disentangle views towards one or the other. Recency bias may also have favoured discourse in relation to the 4AP, or at least activities that occurred at the same time, due to the proximity, knowledge, and familiarity of this period.
- **Inclusiveness:** The list of stakeholders was carefully curated and checked, with government contacts in each jurisdiction given the opportunity to suggest additional or alternative individuals or groups for inclusion, in both the frontline worker survey and the stakeholder focus groups. However, this may have excluded providers that were not well known to government stakeholders. In addition, a response rate for the frontline worker survey cannot be determined as the size of the workforce is not known, and it is therefore unclear if this has created any systemic bias in the profile of respondents. Respondent sampling was not undertaken as part of survey distribution, and it is therefore not possible to generalise the results of the survey beyond the cohort of respondents.
- **Victim survivors and people with lived experiences:** Consultation with victim survivors, perpetrators, and people with lived experience of FDSV was out of scope for the evaluation. Instead, the focus of the stakeholder engagement activities was on the impact of policy and program decisions associated with the National Plan and the 4AP, and system level understandings and shifts in attitude and behaviour, and was therefore not focused on the experiences of individuals within the community. Feedback received as part of consultations and more broadly indicated that inclusion of the voices of people with lived experiences in future evaluation and monitoring activities for the new National Plan should be a key component of consultation activity
- **Impact of COVID-19:** During the stakeholder engagement period, which ran from 16 April to 17 September 2021, large parts of Australia were subject to lockdown restrictions which had the potential to impact on participation rates due to the need to work from home, while also having to care for young, elderly, and other relatives, including supervising remote learning. In some jurisdictions there was a pause on service delivery, limiting access to services. Further, some services saw an increase in demand for supports,

reallocating their workforce to respond to more immediate needs. While this impacted service delivery, it also impacted on agencies' ability to undertake data collection and analysis.

Implementation of the National Plan



2 Implementation of the National Plan

Key Findings

- Significant work has occurred at the Commonwealth, state, and territory level as a result of initiatives under each of the Action Plans and broader state and territory reforms and initiatives throughout the life of the National Plan.
- The Action Plans did not adequately respond to the needs of diverse groups. There remain gaps in funding, policy, service, and data collection relating to the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, CALD women, women with disability, and people from LGBTIQ+ communities.
- Data collection, monitoring, and reporting continued to be a challenge across implementation. This applied to initiatives under each Action Plan as well as the diverse range of activities undertaken at the state and territory level.
- Overall, the flagship initiatives of the National Plan were identified as the key benefit from Commonwealth coordination of a national approach to FDSV. In particular, the development of a national research agenda and awareness-raising campaigns were highly regarded.

2.1 The four Action Plans

As noted above, the National Plan was implemented through a series of rolling, three-year action plans. In each instance, Commonwealth, state, and territory governments worked together to agree the priorities and initiatives within each Action Plan.

- **The First Action Plan** established the groundwork for the National Plan, building on existing work and affirming the joint undertakings between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments.
- **The Second Action Plan** was informed by a consultation process comprising over 50 written submissions and holding national roundtables attended by around 100 experts and organisations.
- **The Third Action Plan** was also subject to an extensive consultation process, including a series of national workshops and roundtables with over 400 stakeholders including non-

government organisations, academics and businesses.

- To develop the **4AP**, over 600 individuals and 400 organisations were consulted from the family, domestic and sexual violence sectors, the broader community sector, academia and the health, justice, and corporate sectors. These consultations culminated in the COAG National Summit on Reducing Violence against Women (the Summit), held on 2–3 October 2018 in Adelaide. The Summit was attended by over 100 community leaders and stakeholders.

Each Action Plan was subject to a review or evaluation process which considered the effectiveness of implementation to date and whether each Action Plan contributed to the broader outcomes of the National Plan. A summary of findings from each evaluation can be found in the table overleaf (Table 1).

Table 1: Findings of evaluations of each Action Plan

Action Plan	Priority areas	Evaluation findings
First Action Plan (2010–2013)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Building Primary Prevention Capacity 2. Enhancing Service Delivery 3. Strengthening Justice Responses 4. Building the Evidence Base 	<p>In the 2014 progress review ¹, sector stakeholders acknowledged the increased attention on violence against women and their children over recent years, and of the role that the National Plan has played as a platform for action, bringing a growing group of stakeholders together under a common goal.</p> <p>The review positively noted early implementation of initiatives to build the evidence base and primary prevention capacity. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing the Australian National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) • Funding national data work, including commencing development of the National Data Collection and Reporting Framework, and commitment to conducting the PSS and National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS) on a four-yearly basis • Trialling respectful relationships education in different settings • Social marketing campaigns • Establishing an organisation specifically focused on engaging with the community to prevent violence. <p>The review also identified targeted actions to enhance service delivery and strengthen justice responses as important early steps in protecting women and their children from violence. These included setting up national services like 1800RESPECT to support and supplement state and territory services and pursuing justice interventions.</p> <p>During the national consultation process to develop the Second Action Plan, stakeholders consistently identified the importance of tailoring appropriate and sensitive responses to groups of women who have diverse experiences of violence or can be more vulnerable, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, CALD women, and women with disability.</p> <p>The consultation process also emphasised the need to continue to build the evidence base, as well as the ongoing need for nationally consistent data collection and application. Collecting, evaluating and disseminating evidence about ‘what works’ was seen as critical to improving policy and programme responses to violence, as was further national research on a range of associated issues. The importance of collecting data on diverse groups of women was also consistently raised.</p> <p>The review noted that progress against actions under the First Action Plan had laid a strong foundation for future work. It was acknowledged that the First Action Plan was not expected to demonstrate substantial progress</p>

¹ Commonwealth Government of Australia. (2014). Progress Review of the First Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

Action Plan	Priority areas	Evaluation findings
		<p>against the national Measures for Success or Indicators of Change, as progress against these targets and a reduction in prevalence of violence against women and their children more broadly were long-term indicators that would require more time for progress to be seen.</p> <p>The progress review identified next steps for the Second Action Plan, including: ongoing development of primary prevention; continuing and further developing national services; improving responses to the needs of diverse groups of women and of children who experience or witness violence; ensuring that systems and services are responsive and effective; improving justice responses; developing the evidence base; and, improving engagement about the National Plan across media, businesses and local communities.</p>
Second Action Plan (2013–2016)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Driving whole of community action to prevent violence 2. Understanding diverse experiences of violence 3. Supporting innovative services and integrated systems 4. Improving perpetrator interventions 5. Continuing to build the evidence base 	<p>The evaluation of the Second Action Plan found that most of the priorities and actions were implemented as intended across jurisdictions.² Overall, the Second Action Plan's identified priority areas and action areas were considered to have had a positive impact by stakeholders. Priority 5 (Continuing to build the evidence base) was viewed as being the most successful in terms of the progress with and effectiveness of the actions undertaken to date. This was followed by Priority 1 (Driving whole of community action), with most stakeholders considering that the various actions under this priority were effective in driving cultural and attitudinal change to prevent violence against women and children.</p> <p>Priority 4 (Improving perpetrator interventions) was the area that was considered to have been the least effective followed by Priority 2 (Understanding the diverse experiences of violence) with most stakeholders indicating that not enough had been done to account for the needs of high-risk groups like Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, CALD women and women with a disability.</p> <p>The evaluation found that the Second Action Plan built on the foundations of the First Action Plan and made significant progress against the six National Outcomes and their associated measures of success. The evaluation acknowledged that long-term commitment was required to develop and implement evidence-based policy and further improve information-sharing and services for victim survivors.</p> <p>The evaluation identified next steps to be addressed through the Third Action Plan, including: continuing to raise community awareness; delivering specialist services to women from diverse groups; promoting gender equality; engaging with the public through social media; supporting respectful relationships education; improving information-sharing; introducing quality standards for perpetrator intervention programs; considering policy to support victim survivors of sexual violence; and, building the evidence base.</p>

² KPMG. (2017). Evaluation of the Second Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022: Final Evaluation Report.

Action Plan	Priority areas	Evaluation findings
Third Action Plan (2016-2019)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prevention and early intervention 2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children 3. Greater support and choice 4. Sexual violence 5. Responding to children living with violence 6. Keeping perpetrators accountable across all systems 	<p>The process evaluation for the Third Action Plan noted that stakeholder views are often focused on the benefits of having an explicit national approach rather than on progress under specific Priority Areas or on specific outcomes under the Third Action Plan.³ Stakeholders generally viewed the Third Action Plan as successfully progressing the broader body of work achieved under the First and Second Action Plans. There was a general consensus that the Third Action Plan had been broadly successful in creating a more consistent and coordinated policy response to violence against women and their children across different levels of government.</p> <p>The evaluation found that a significant program of work was implemented under each of the Priority Areas, particularly under Priority Area 1 (Prevention and Early Intervention), Priority Area 3 (Greater Support and Choice) and Priority Area 6 (Keeping Perpetrators Accountable). However, there was a more mixed picture of implementation and progress across Priority Area 2 (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children), Priority Area 4 (Sexual Violence) and Priority Area 5 (Responding to Children Living with Violence). Although the Third Action Plan was seen to have enabled a more inclusive policy discourse, many stakeholders perceived a missed opportunity for even greater inclusion of diverse communities in the Third Action Plan and for increased actions to address the issues faced by such communities. Stakeholders indicated that although women from CALD communities and from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities were recognised as priority populations in the Third Action Plan, more work was required to engage these women, to deliver culturally responsive and safe programs and to recognise and meet their specific circumstances and needs.</p> <p>The evaluation noted that there were limited opportunities to assess whether the Third Action Plan had contributed to the National Plan's outcomes due to limited relevant data. The evaluation did not identify significant progress against the Measures for Success or Indicators of Change, with some data points demonstrating positive progress, many remaining stable, and a few areas demonstrating negative progression. The Measures of Success and Indicators of Change were identified as useful for providing high-level and nationally representative trends. However, the authors acknowledged the limitations in evaluating the impact of the National Plan and Action Plans due to the fact that data sources were not tailored to monitor progress of these indicators and measures; that the timeframes needed to see change were long-term; and, that these high-level indicators could not meaningfully describe change and outcomes in relation to the key aims of the National Plan.</p> <p>The evaluation identified implications for the next stages of the National Plan. It was noted that there was an opportunity to consider alternative approaches to understanding outcomes and measures of success, due to the long-term nature of the National Plan outcomes, and the difficulties measuring the complex systems' change involved. It was identified that there was a need for a more coordinated evaluation and monitoring approach for initiatives with the opportunity to create mechanisms to enable ongoing iterative learning. The evaluation</p>

³ Quadara, A., El-Murr, A., Douglas, W., & Muir, S. (2019). Process evaluation of the Third Action Plan 2016-19. Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Action Plan	Priority areas	Evaluation findings
		suggested that the dependencies between systems and policy areas should be mapped to support the achievement of actions that do not sit solely within the FDSV service system. It was also identified that greater clarity around roles and responsibilities between the Commonwealth and state and territory jurisdictions would be beneficial.
Fourth Action Plan (2019-2022)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Primary Prevention is key 2. Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children 3. Respect, listen and respond to the diverse lived experience and knowledge of women and their children affected by violence 4. Respond to sexual violence and sexual harassment 5. Improve support and service system responses 	<p>At the time of reporting, based on information received to January 2022, the implementation of the 4AP has been broadly successful. While a number of initiatives remain delayed, primarily as a result of impacts from COVID-19, all initiatives have commenced and are progressing.</p> <p>A number of barriers and enablers were identified, either supporting or impacting on implementation of initiatives under the 4AP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enablers for successful implementation included collaboration and engagement (across governments, between sectors, with target communities, and with experts), and co-locating services or leveraging existing service structures • The primary barrier for implementation was COVID-19, which impacted on delivery timeframes, redirected workforces to support pandemic efforts, and limited opportunities for consultation due to social distancing requirements. <p>It is difficult to determine the true impact of the 4AP due to a lack of access to appropriate and timely data. The Performance, Monitoring, and Reporting framework (PMR) identifies a number of data sources to measure short- and medium-term outcomes. Data development to address these gaps has been delayed due to COVID-19. However, assessment of available evidence found:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While progress had been made in some areas – such as community attitudes, available service responses, and more engagement with target communities – more can be done • While the 4AP highlighted sexual harassment, there were mixed responses concerning whether this has translated into amended and improved practice • Rates of reported sexual assault increased over the life of the 4AP, however there was also an increased awareness of sexual violence in this time due to a number of high-profile cases being reported in the media • Significant service gaps still exist, such as in affordable housing, service access in rural and remote areas, and co-designed responses with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that address intergenerational trauma. <p>KPMG's evaluation of the Fourth Action Plan identified opportunities for improvement in future policy and plans, including: embedding flexibility into service responses, prioritising data development activities to understand future impact, and ensuring better understanding, funding, and measurement of responses to support diverse groups.</p>

2.1.1 Overall findings

Through analysis of these reviews and evaluations, a number of themes emerged:

- Significant work has occurred at the Commonwealth, state, and territory level as a result of initiatives under each of the Action Plans and broader state and territory reforms and initiatives throughout the life of the National Plan.
- Each review and evaluation noted that the Action Plans had not adequately responded to the needs of diverse groups. Opportunities for improvement that were identified in these reviews and evaluations included the need to increase consultation with victim survivors to better understand and meet their needs; to support continuation and expansion of research, to ensure the delivery of and access to tailored and specialist services, resources and responses that are supported by adequate funding; and to increase the targeting of primary prevention initiatives. There remain gaps in funding, policy, service, and data collection relating to the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, CALD women, women with disability, and people from LGBTIQ+ communities.
- Data collection, monitoring, and reporting continued to be a challenge across implementation. This applied to initiatives under each Action Plan as well as the diverse range of activities undertaken at the state and territory level. Further, it is worth noting that the Australian National Audit Office's (ANAO) June 2019 Performance Audit Report noted that performance monitoring and reporting under the National Plan was not sufficient to provide assurance that governments are on track to achieve the National Plan's objectives and outcomes.⁴ In response to these findings, the Department developed a National Implementation Plan which set out the various initiatives that the Commonwealth, states and territories aimed to deliver under the 4AP and provides information on funding, milestones and intended outcomes. A PMR was also established for the 4AP, however quantitative data was not available at the time of reporting to determine the impact of the 4AP through

the PMR. It is important to acknowledge that government data collection, reporting, and evaluation have increased over the life of the National Plan, underpinned by a commitment by stakeholders to continuously improve data collection and reporting.

In summary there are numerous challenges associated with measuring tangible outputs and outcomes regarding an overall reduction in violence against women and their children. The majority of frontline workers who responded to the survey conducted as part of this evaluation (74.1 per cent) stated that they did not believe there has been a decrease in violence against women and their children in the community since 2010. The community-level prevalence data reported in the Personal Safety Survey showed an increase in emotional abuse and cohabiting violence between 2012 and 2016. However, nearly two-thirds of workforce survey participants (65.4 per cent) agree that the FDSV system is progressing in the right direction to make victim survivors and their families safe.

2.2 Flagship initiatives

The Commonwealth Government has direct responsibility for a number of initiatives under the National Plan including the flagship initiatives which include:

- ANROWS
- Our Watch
- Domestic and Family Violence Response Training (DV-alert)
- 1800RESPECT.

The flagship initiatives are intended to support long-term and whole-of-community commitment to reducing violence against women and their children. Findings from reviews and evaluations of these initiatives, as well as points of discussion from this evaluation's consultation process, are detailed in the sub-sections below.

This section does not feature the *Stop it at the Start* campaign which was a national initiative, jointly funded by Australian governments, which aimed to break the cycle of violence by encouraging adults to reflect on their attitudes and to hold conversations about respect with

⁴ Australian National Audit Office. (2019). Audit-General Report No.45 of 2018-19: Coordination and Targeting of Domestic Violence Funding and Actions.

young people. For more information on *Stop it at the Start*, see Section 6.

2.2.1 ANROWS

ANROWS is an independent, not-for-profit research organisation established to produce, disseminate, and assist in applying evidence for policy and practice addressing violence against women and their children. The research and evidence base driven by ANROWS have underpinned work in the FDSV sector nationwide. ANROWS was initially established in July 2013 as the National Centre of Excellence prior to its renaming in April 2014. ANROWS published the first Australian National Research Agenda (ANRA) in May 2014, after a review of relevant policy documents, gap analyses of existing research, and national stakeholder consultation and engagement.⁵ The four strategic research themes for policy and practice outlined in this ANRA were designed to align with the National Plan's six national outcomes, and covered:

- Experience and impacts
- Gender inequality and primary prevention
- Service responses and interventions
- systems.

ANROWS' inaugural national research program was launched in October 2014 underpinned by three strategic goals:

- To lead and facilitate the coordination of research regarding violence against women at a national level
- To deliver high quality, innovative and relevant research
- To translate and disseminate evidence that can inform policy and practice decisions.

Stakeholders consulted for this evaluation were universally positive about the impact of ANROWS' research agenda. Stakeholders noted that ANROWS' outputs would have been out of reach for individual states and territories to resource independently, particularly for smaller jurisdictions. ANROWS was seen to be contributing to the development of an evidence base and relevant research that was distributed in accessible formats to guide policy and practice decisions, although stakeholders noted that the

accessibility of research could be further developed.

This is consistent with findings from the *Independent Review of ANROWS* in 2020, which stated that ANROWS developed invaluable research for translation into practice by practitioners, but that further work was needed to ensure that research projects were targeted at policy makers as primary stakeholders and could directly impact policy decisions.⁶ The Independent Review identified that ANROWS was responding to calls for the ANRA to be refreshed. This was predicted to support efficient research priority setting, with ANROWS reactively setting a research agenda and priorities with each funding grant at the time of the review. The independent review also recommended that ANROWS engage with diverse stakeholders to build ANROWS' capacity to conduct quantitative and implementation-focused research in addition to their existing qualitative projects. The ANRA has since been updated, with a new version released in October 2020 to cover the period of 2020-2022.⁷ Priority topics in the new ANRA include a focus on: children and young people, the intersecting drivers of violence against women, sexual violence and harassment, and what works to prevent and respond to violence against women.

Representatives of ANROWS consulted as part of this evaluation reiterated the organisation's achievements, whilst also indicating challenges in setting an ambitious research agenda. While funding has historically been provided by Commonwealth, state, and territory governments, ANROWS representatives saw this allocation as being less than that made available to comparable agencies. This was said to impact on resourcing and in turn potential research activities and outputs. For example, ANROWS intended to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific research stream, however advised that this could not occur to the desired extent with the resourcing available. ANROWS representatives advised that the organisation has secured an ongoing budget which they were grateful for and intend to use to retain staff to continue their research. At the time of consultation, it was yet to be determined how this funding would be administered.

Nevertheless, stakeholders were positive in their views of ANROWS. Stakeholders advised that the

⁵ ANROWS. (2014). National Research Agenda to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.

⁶ Deloitte. (2020). Independent review of ANROWS.

⁷ ANROWS. (2020). National Research Agenda to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children: ANRA 2020-2022.

current scope of work has increased the rigor and coordination of research nationally and enabled this evidence to be readily available both nationally and internationally.

2.2.2 Our Watch

Our Watch was formed by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments in 2013 to lead primary prevention of violence against women and their children across Australia, with other jurisdictions subsequently joining. Our Watch has developed a range of evidence-based tools, policies, resources and standards that continue to support the work of governments, practitioners and other key stakeholders. Notably, in 2015, Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth launched *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*.

La Trobe University completed an independent evaluation of Our Watch between 2019 and 2021, which was released in March 2022⁸. At a high level the independent evaluation noted that Our Watch had support from across government and the FDSV sector and its work has had considerable impact on the development of national and state-based primary prevention policy. The evaluation indicated a number of key successes, including:

- The development of a high-quality primary prevention evidence base that has been used to inform policy development, and provides a foundation for future research
- The achievement of national reach at a policy and organisation level
- The promotion of leading practices in primary prevention, driving the conversation through social media platforms
- The achievement of recognition, respect, and value at a national and state government level, and across the FDSV sector
- The provision of support for capacity and capability development in primary prevention activities at an organisational and individual level.⁹

The report suggested a targeted list of future opportunities for Our Watch to consider, including to:

- Foster and increase knowledge exchange between Our Watch and practitioners to understand 'what works' in practice
- Broaden Our Watch's recognition to include individuals and businesses in the community
- Consider reviewing and prioritising Our Watch's objectives to ensure that they are relevant and appropriately targeted
- Consider refining Our Watch's financial support structure to reflect that states and territories have been subject to different funding levels over time and consider facilitating longer funding cycles
- Strengthen relationships with people in diverse communities across rural and regional Australia, with a focus on Western Australia and Queensland
- Improve the accessibility and usability of resources to ensure that they can be adapted by practitioners in communities
- Undertake further work to engage with a diverse range of communities, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, LGBTIQ+ people, people with disability, and those living in regional, rural, and remote areas of Australia.¹⁰

These findings build on those from a 2018 independent summative evaluation of Our Watch, which indicated that:¹¹

- *Change the Story* has provided the evidence base in an Australian context for primary prevention and established a common language to discuss and plan how to address the gendered drivers of violence.
- Our Watch's diverse range of work – including public campaigns, *Change the Story*, *The Line*, supporting respectful relationships education in schools (RREiS), and direct media engagement – have helped to raise awareness of violence against women and their children
- The organisation has played a critical role bringing stakeholders, practitioners and government together to share learnings, connect and coordinate activities nationally

⁸ Forsdike, K., Dyson, S., Seal, E., Hooker, L., O'Sullivan, G., De Silva, D, Donaldson, A., Hooker, L., Burnett, D., Alahakoon, D., & Nicholson, M. (2021). Our Watch Evaluation: Final Report. La Trobe University.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ PwC. (2018). Our Watch, Our Journey: Independent summative evaluation of Our Watch.

- Our Watch's respectful relationships education toolkit has enabled a consistent approach to delivering respectful relationships education within schools.

In the consultation process for this evaluation, stakeholders credited Our Watch – in conjunction with ANROWS – with developing a greater understanding of primary prevention, intersectionality, the dynamics underpinning violence, and the need for different responses to FDSV for different cohorts.

2.2.3 DV-alert

DV-alert has been in place since 2007, prior to the introduction of the National Plan. It is a nationally accredited training program delivered by Lifeline Australia and is designed to build capacity in frontline workers within universal services for whom family violence is not a core function of their role. The aim of the training is to enable attendees to recognise FDSV, respond appropriately, and refer victim survivors to relevant services.

During the course of the National Plan, Lifeline developed specialised accredited and non-accredited training to respond to community need. This training included workshops for frontline workers working with women with disability, perpetrators, complex forms of violence, and specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and multicultural training which includes working with interpreters.

An independent evaluation of DV-alert has been conducted however its findings are not yet publicly available. At a high level, the evaluation found:

- DV-alert has been rolled out to a significant number of participants, with frontline worker participants reporting their knowledge and understanding increased significantly, and that they are better equipped to recognise, respond and refer as a result of attending DV-alert
- Opportunities exist to broaden the reach and impact of DV-alert, including expanding professions that can access training and collaborating with professional and government bodies.

The survey rolled out for this evaluation to service managers and frontline workers who work in sectors relating to violence against women and their children found moderate recognition of DV-alert amongst respondents, with two-fifths (42.2 per cent) of respondents reportedly unaware of DV-alert. While this may indicate that DV-alert could improve in its visibility and uptake amongst the sector, it is worth noting that a significant component of respondents work in specialist FDSV services and therefore are not the target for DV-alert. Comments surrounding DV-alert across consultations and the frontline worker survey were broadly positive where it was known, but it was noted that the training may not meet the needs of specialist workers and may serve best as entry-level training.

2.2.4 1800RESPECT

1800RESPECT is Australia's national telephone and online counselling and support service for people affected by or at risk of FDSV, their family and friends, and frontline workers. A 2020 evaluation of the service conducted by UNSW determined that 1800RESPECT was effective and is perceived to deliver quality counselling.¹² The evaluation indicated that the accessibility of the service 24 hours a day and 7 days a week was valued, as was the flexibility of access via phone or online, and the opportunity to remain anonymous if desired. This was particularly important for jurisdictions that did not previously have a state-based, 24-hour crisis line for victim survivors of FDSV.

1800RESPECT program data analysed for the 2020 evaluation showed that, from late 2017, there was growth in the numbers of callers from New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.¹³ The evaluation indicated that call wait times were reduced when compared with previous versions of the 1800RESPECT model. It was acknowledged that increased wait times can still cause difficulties for callers during high demand periods. The 2020 evaluation was valuable for collecting the views of staff employed by the service.¹⁴ In interviews with counselling staff, it was identified that whilst the service was felt to be highly effective for callers who needed support with FDSV, this may not be the case for those with complex presentations, including mental health challenges, or for repeat callers. A survey

¹² Smyth, C., Cortis, N., Cama, E., Giuntoli, G., Breckenridge, J., & Valentine, K. (2020). Evaluation of 1800RESPECT - Final Report. University of New South Wales.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

of the 1800RESPECT workforce, which was conducted as part of the evaluation, indicated that staff were confident when responding to physical and emotional elements of violence. However, they were less confident in responding to other elements of FDSV, including sexual violence, financial abuse, technology-facilitated abuse, and neglect. Staff safety was also considered in the evaluation, with the workforce identified as at risk of experiencing vicarious trauma, and the majority of staff reporting having experienced bullying, harassment, violence, or threats from callers over the past 12 months. Further, data from the workforce survey indicated insufficient access to regular clinical, professional, or practice supervision for all staff.

The 2020 evaluation stated that stakeholders viewed the 1800RESPECT service as appropriate for diverse groups including young people, people with disability, people who identify as LGBTIQ+, and people of CALD backgrounds.¹⁵ Perspectives on the appropriateness of the service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people varied, with some considering it appropriate and others suggesting that more could be done to encourage engagement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including those in regional and remote areas. Representatives from 1800RESPECT consulted as part of this evaluation noted that intersectionality is an ongoing challenge for the service, as it is for the whole FDSV sector. The service has established partnerships with specialist organisations, including disability organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, to develop specific training on how to respond to specific community needs and to enable recruitment of people from these communities into the service. It was noted that it is challenging to factor in power and control within the unique experiences of women who have a combination of backgrounds within a service that is predominantly online or over the phone:

help us. The mainstream workforce has to be able to navigate that as well as they can.'

– 1800RESPECT representative

'In the sector, I think we are still very much working with intersectionality because we work with those areas separately rather than an integrated approach ... We have done some work, like everybody has, but I think there is still a lot of work to be done. We can't just rely on workforces from those communities to

¹⁵ Smyth, C., Cortis, N., Cama, E., Giuntoli, G., Breckenridge, J., & Valentine, K. (2020). Evaluation of 1800RESPECT - Final Report. University of New South Wales.

2.3 Overall findings

KPMG conducted a social media analysis as part of this evaluation, which provides insights into community awareness and discussion of the flagship initiatives.¹⁶

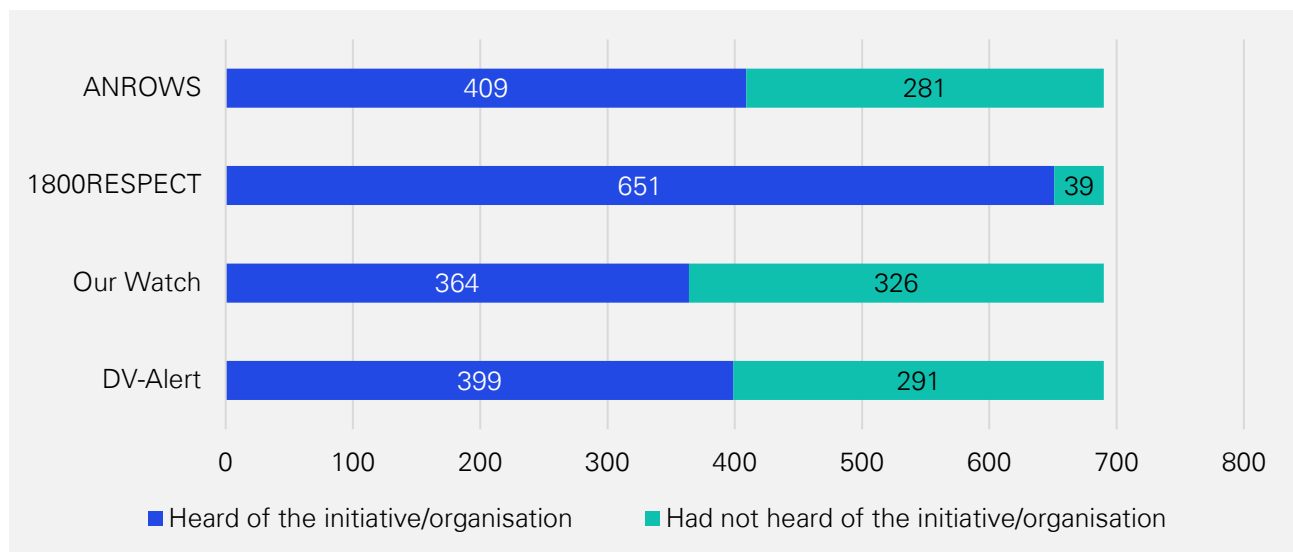
- 1800RESPECT had the highest volume of discussions online out of the flagship initiatives, with an increase in references since early 2021 (aligning with the increase in use of the service). 1800RESPECT was predominantly referenced at the end of news articles or as a hashtag in Twitter discussions to highlight that support and information services are available for people affected by or at risk of FDSV. References to 1800RESPECT had an overall positive sentiment.
- Online discussions around ANROWS related to its research, with people and organisations

sharing partnerships or research papers primarily via Twitter.

- In contrast, Our Watch was predominantly discussed in news articles. Published content by Our Watch's Ambassadors was a key strategy for raising awareness about the flagship initiative, with discussions surrounding acceptable behaviours and gender stereotypes that underpin FDSV.
- DV-alert is a training offering for workplaces and is not expected to have high general community awareness. It is therefore not unexpected that DV-alert had comparatively low mentions identified in the online and social media analysis and was primarily referenced in discussions around domestic violence training needs and federal budgets.

The survey rolled out to frontline workers and service managers showed mixed results for sector recognition of the flagship initiatives (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Survey respondents' recognition of the flagship initiatives under the National Plan



Source: KPMG

Overall, from the analysis outlined above, the flagship initiatives of the National Plan were seen as the key benefit from Commonwealth coordination of a national approach to FDSV. In particular, the development of a national research agenda and awareness-raising campaigns were highly regarded.

¹⁶ See Appendix D for further information on the social media analysis methodology and data sources.



Overall Impact of the National Plan

3 Overall impact of the National Plan

Key Findings

- Over the 12 years of the National Plan, there has not been a reduction in the prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault in Australia; indeed, data is showing an increase in reported incidents. However, it is not clear whether this increase is as a result of greater numbers of incidents, increased reporting due to greater community awareness of what constitutes FDSV, or improvements in detection and recording practices by frontline services including police.
- Data indicates that there has been an increase in the proportion of women who feel safe in their communities since 2010.
- There is considerable variability in the total number of domestic homicides each year, which makes it difficult to determine the impact of the National Plan on this measure. Comparing the period before the National Plan was implemented to the 10 years of the National Plan, there was an observable reduction in the number and rate of female intimate partner homicides.
- Since the release of the National Plan, there has been an increase in the proportion of children exposed to violence.

Under the National Plan, four headline measures were established to indicate change over the 12 years of activity:

1. Reduced prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault
2. Increased proportion of women who feel safe in their communities
3. Reduced deaths related to domestic violence and sexual assault
4. Reduction in the proportion of children exposed to their mother's or carer's experiences of violence.

Findings against these measures are outlined in the sections below. The data that is currently available makes quantitatively assessing the impact of the National Plan difficult. Data collection delays due to COVID-19 and the periodical nature of some of the key data sets means that data may not be up to date. Where appropriate, other data sources including program evaluations have been used to further assess the impact of the National Plan.

3.1 Reduced prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault

Measuring observable reductions in the prevalence of FDSV is challenging. Through efforts at the national, state and territory level there has been increased community awareness of what constitutes FDSV. This, along with additional investment in services to respond to FDSV has improved understanding of violence against women,¹⁷ improved detection of violence by service providers and greater confidence of victim survivors in disclosing violence, suggest that reported rates of violence are likely to increase. While the reported rates are expected

to increase, this does not necessarily indicate that the incidence and prevalence of violence against women and their children in the community has also increased; contemporary reported rates are likely to be closer approximations to the real prevalence of violence, though under-reporting is still expected.

As outlined Our Watch's *Counting on Change* report, changes in the lifetime and 12-month prevalence of violence against women are expected in the long-term and is contingent upon the establishment of appropriate prevention

¹⁷ Webster, K., Diemer, K., Honey, N., Mannix, S., Mickle, J., Morgan, J., Parkes, A., Politoff, V., Powell, A., Stubbs, J., & Ward, A. (2018). Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality. Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) (Research report, 03/2018). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS.

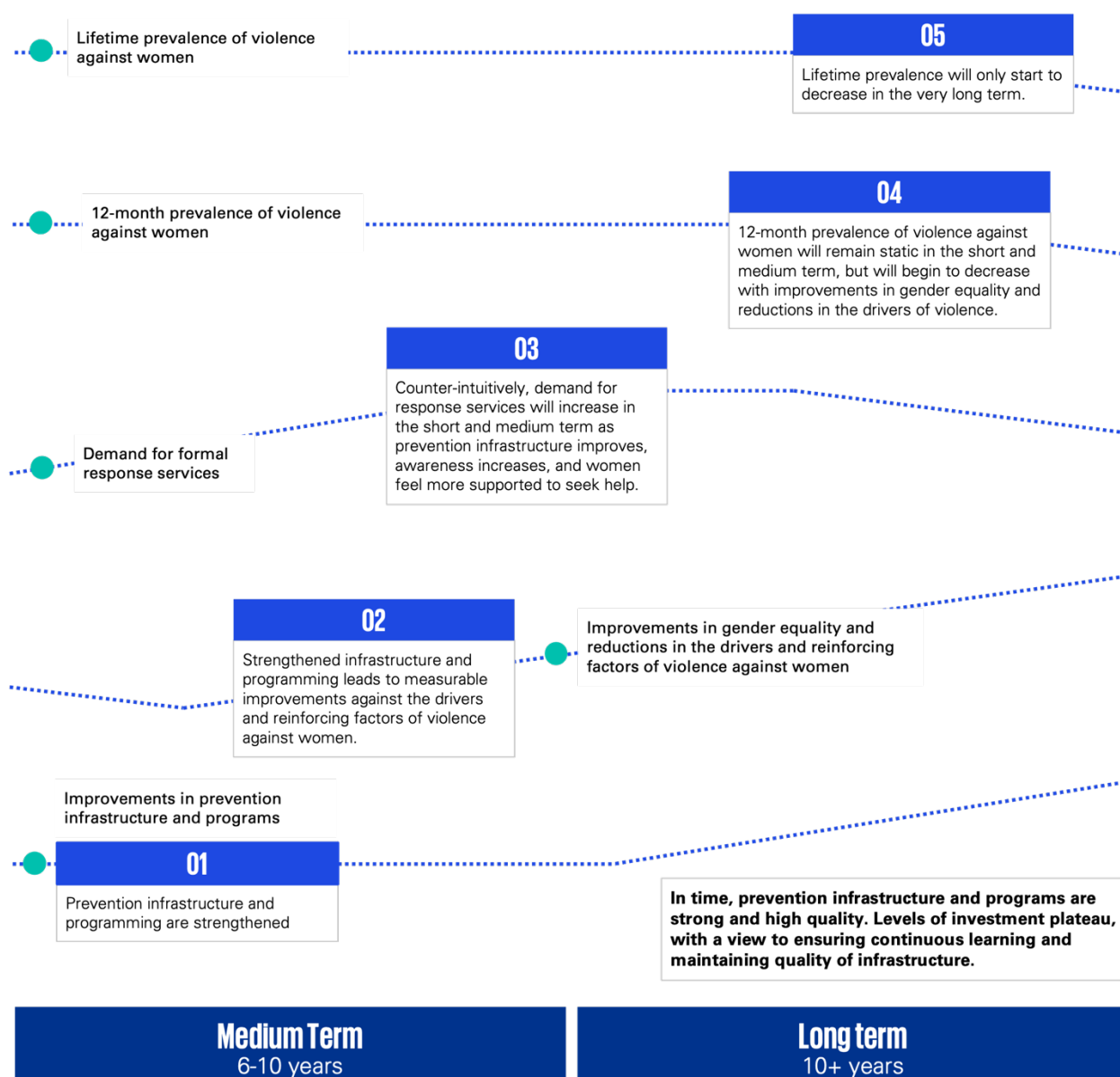
infrastructure that address gendered drivers and reinforcing factors. The National Plan and state-based activities have had a meaningful impact on establishing the architecture that will support longer-term changes. The expected process of change over time is detailed in Figure 4.

Family and domestic violence

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) PSS shows that there has not been a reduction in the reported prevalence of cohabiting

partner violence and sexual violence in Australia across available data points. For women, sexual violence increased between 2012 and 2016. Figure 5 shows the proportion of women who experienced sexual violence, cohabiting partner violence, and emotional abuse from a current partner in the last 12 months (as identified in the ABS's PSS from 2005 to 2016).¹⁸ It shows that there have been statistically significant increases in the proportion of women who report sexual violence and emotional abuse from 2012 to 2016, with the proportion experiencing cohabiting partner violence remaining stable.¹⁹

Figure 4: Expected process of change

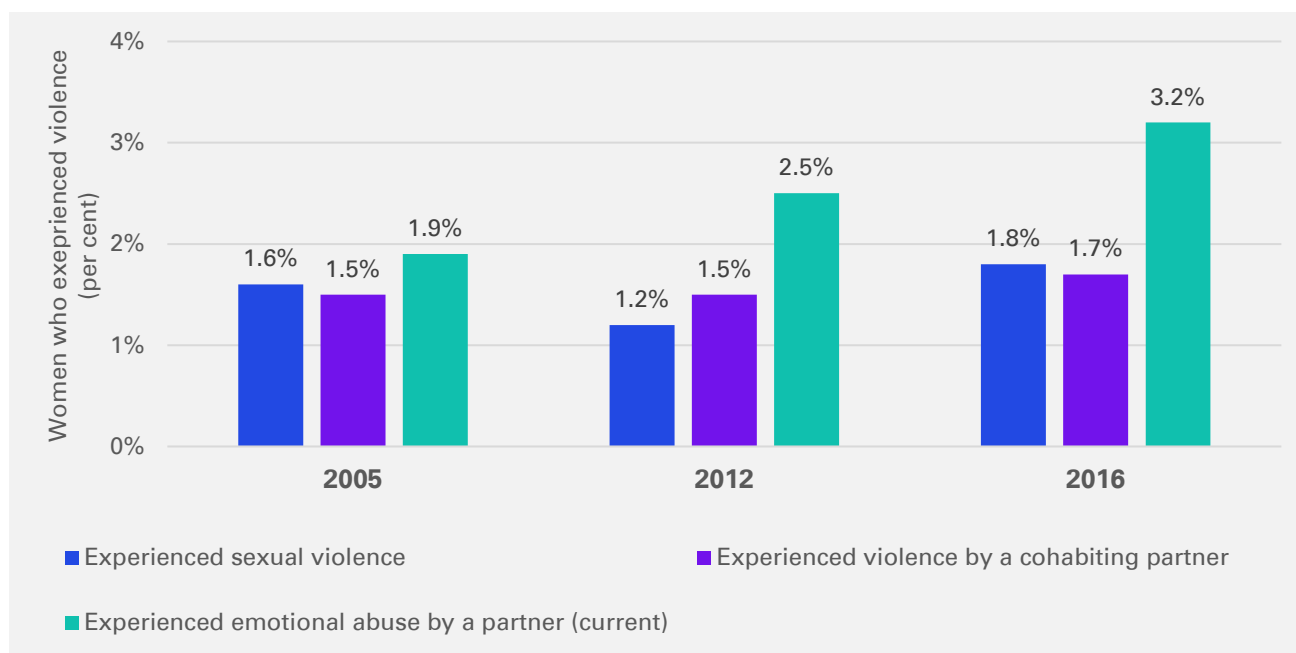


Source: Our Watch and ANROWS, Counting on Change: A guide to prevention monitoring

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2005, 2012, 2016). Personal Safety Survey.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Figure 5: Twelve-month prevalence (per cent) of sexual violence and partner violence experienced by women, Australia



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2005, 2012, 2016). Personal Safety Survey.

An online survey from the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) of over 10,000 women who had been in a relationship in the last 12 months measured the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their experiences of intimate partner violence.²⁰ This survey found that:

- One in ten respondents (9.6%) had experienced actual, attempted, or threatened physical violence from their current or most recent partner in the last 12 months
- One in three (31.6%) had experienced at least one form of non-physical abuse
- One in ten (11.6%) experienced some form of technology-facilitated abuse
- Almost one in 12 respondents (7.6%) experienced actual, attempted or threatened sexual violence.

These findings are not able to be generalised to the wider population and are not comparable with

the PSS findings or an earlier online survey by the AIC during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recent time-series data from the ABS Recorded Crime Victims dataset shows that there has been an increase of 43.6 per cent in the number of reported victim survivors of domestic violence offences²¹, increasing from 7,254 in 2014 to 10,420 in 2020.²² Figure 6 highlights that the number of female FDSV victim survivors increased steadily from 5,992 offences in 2014 to 8,903 in 2020, an overall increase of 48.6 per cent.²³ FDSV perpetrated against males occurred at comparatively lower levels and has remained primarily consistent over time, increasing by 7 per cent overall between 2014 and 2019, but with an increase of just under 13 per cent between 2019 and 2020.²⁴

Overall, there were 70,027 reported instances of domestic violence related physical assaults in 2020, up from 64,967 in 2019.²⁵

²⁰ Boxall, H., & Morgan, A. (2021). Intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: a survey of women in Australia. (Research report 03/2021). ANROWS.

²¹ For this national data, offences include homicide and other related offences, sexual assault and kidnapping/abduction.

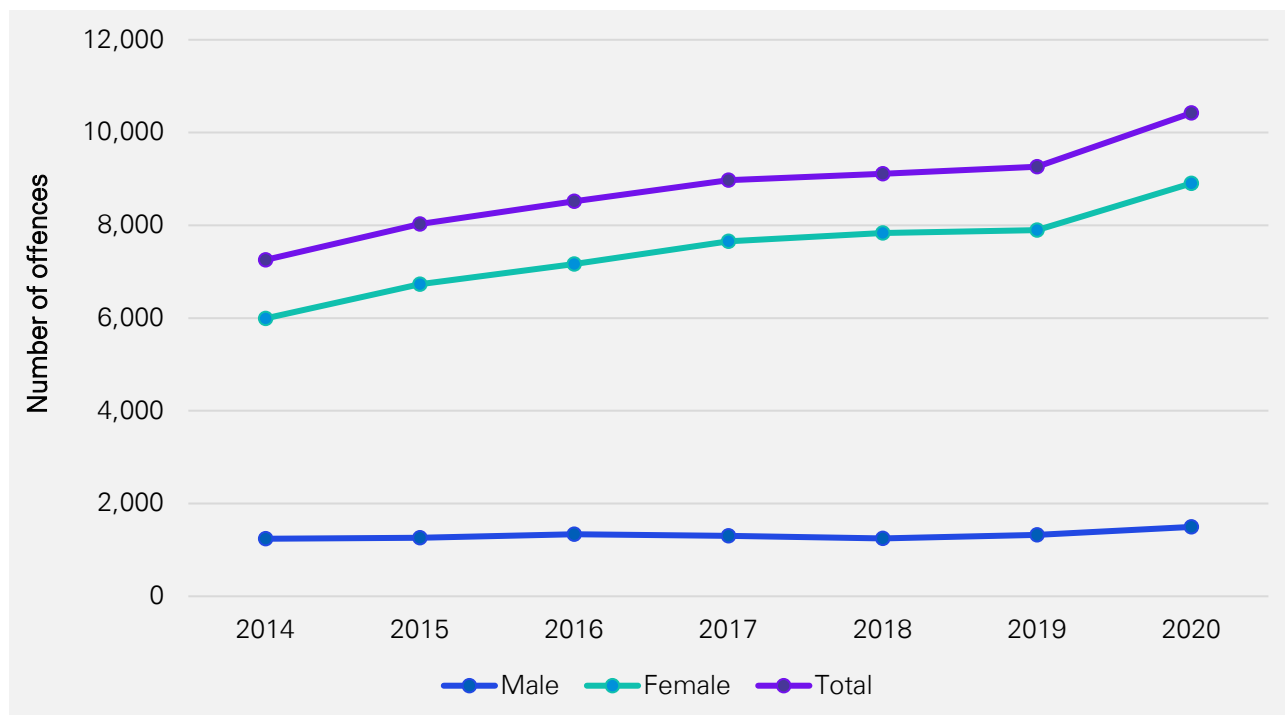
²² Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). 'Recorded crime - Victims'. Data from this dataset for FDSV commenced in 2014 so it is not possible to track trends from the initiation of the National Plan.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid. Domestic violence related physical assaults in this dataset are only recorded in New South Wales, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, and the Northern Territory. Counting rules mean that some victim survivors may be counted twice within these totals as they be classified as a victim survivor of sexual assault and victim survivor of domestic violence assault. Data available for 2019 and 2020 only.

Figure 6: Family and domestic violence offences by year between 2014 and 2020 for males and females, selected states and territories



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). 'Recorded crime - Victims'

As shown in Figure 7, data from the ABS Recorded Crime Victims dataset indicates that, of those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been assaulted, females are more likely than males to have experienced this assault at the hands of a family member, inclusive of current partners (68.6 per cent compared to 47.6 per cent).²⁶ When considering assault perpetrated by a current partner separately, an even larger divide is evident between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female victim survivors and male victim survivors (45.6 per cent compared to 19.8 per cent).²⁷ A similar trend was identified for assault from an ex-partner.²⁸

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) highlights Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's experiences of physical harm over the past 12 months in 2018-19.²⁹ This indicated that 14.2 per cent of females had experienced or been threatened with physical harm, of which 74.4 per cent said the perpetrator was an intimate partner or family member.³⁰

Sexual violence

Recorded incidents of sexual assault have increased through the life of the National Plan. Since 2010, reports of sexual assault for males and females have increased by 45.8 per cent to 27,505 cases.³¹ Figure 8 illustrates the annual change in sexual assault in Australia. All states and territories recorded a rise in sexual assault cases over the period 2010 to 2020 (range: 12.8 to 84.3 per cent). Females represent about 83 per cent of sexual assault victim survivors, a percentage which has remained relatively stable over the 2010 to 2020 period (range: 81.7 to 84.4 per cent).³² Throughout the life of the National Plan, the numbers of female victim survivors of sexual assault increased from 15,909 in 2010 to

²⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). 'Recorded crime - Victims'.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ The term 'physical harm' has been used here to ensure consistency with the term used in data collection for the NATSIHS.

³⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2018-19). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey.

³¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). 'Recorded crime - Victims'.

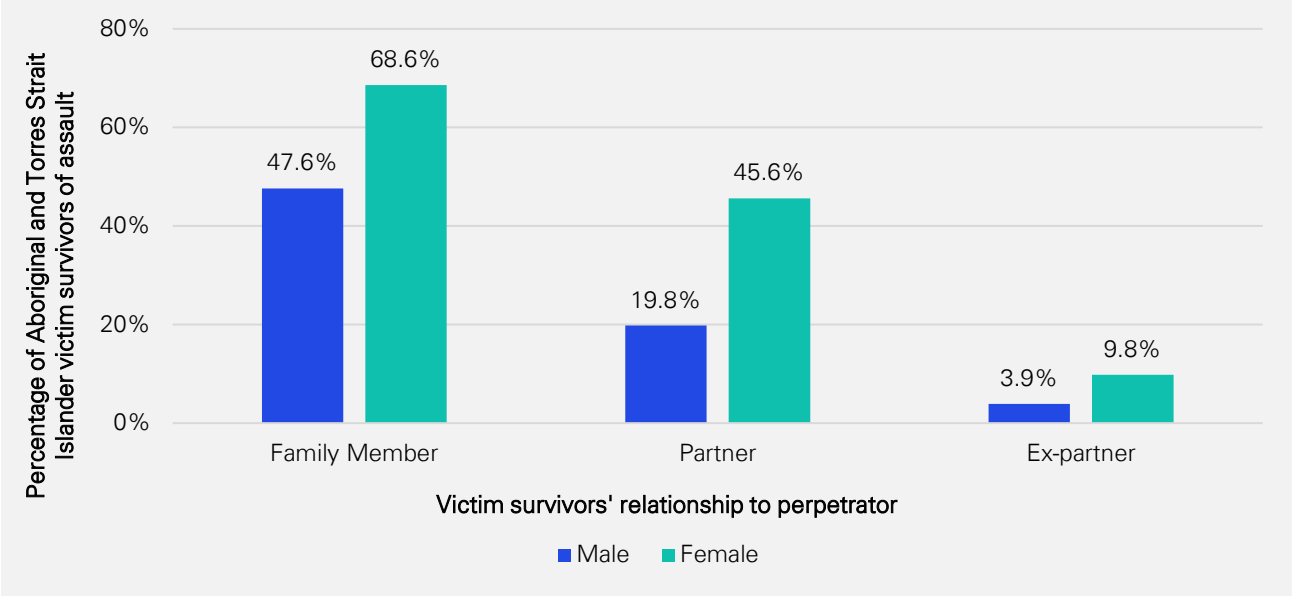
³² Ibid.

23,153 in 2020, an increase of 45.5 per cent (Figure 9).³³

The number of females reporting experiencing FDSV-related sexual assault has grown by 50.1

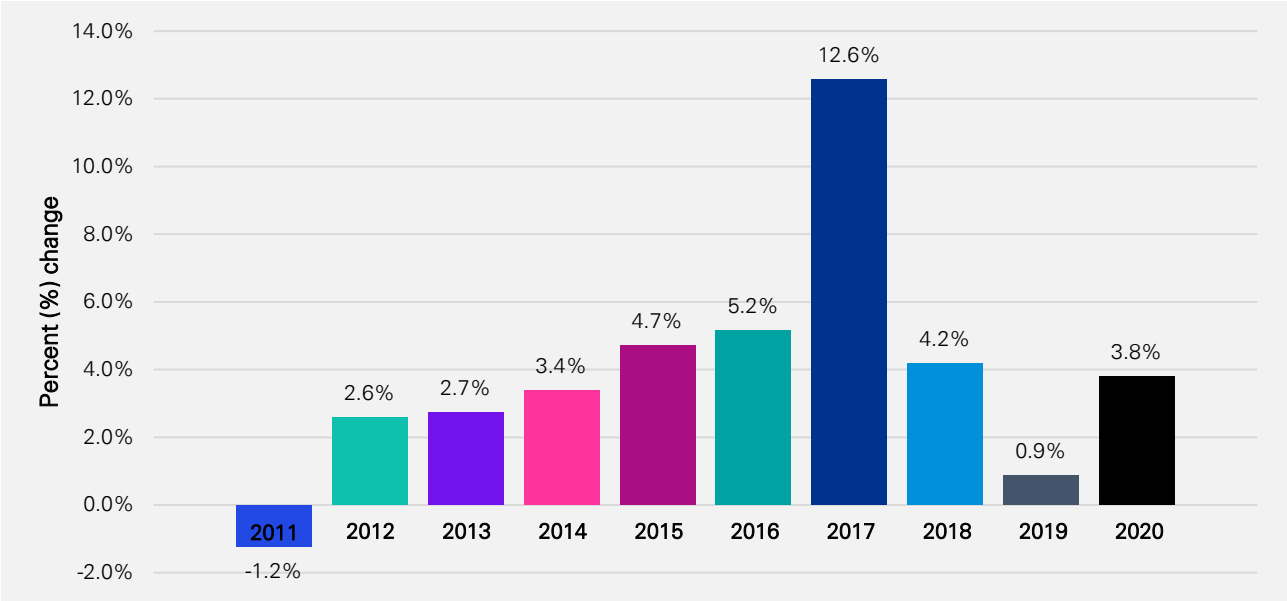
per cent over the seven-year period from 5,811 in 2014 to 8,723 in 2020.³⁴ Increasing proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women reported FDSV-related sexual assault, with cases growing by 24.4 per cent from 2014 to 2020.³⁵

Figure 7: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim survivors of assault by gender and relationship to perpetrator, selected states and territories, 2020



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). 'Recorded crime - Victims'.³⁶

Figure 8: Annual change (per cent) of sexual assault, females Australia



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). 'Recorded crime - Victims'.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

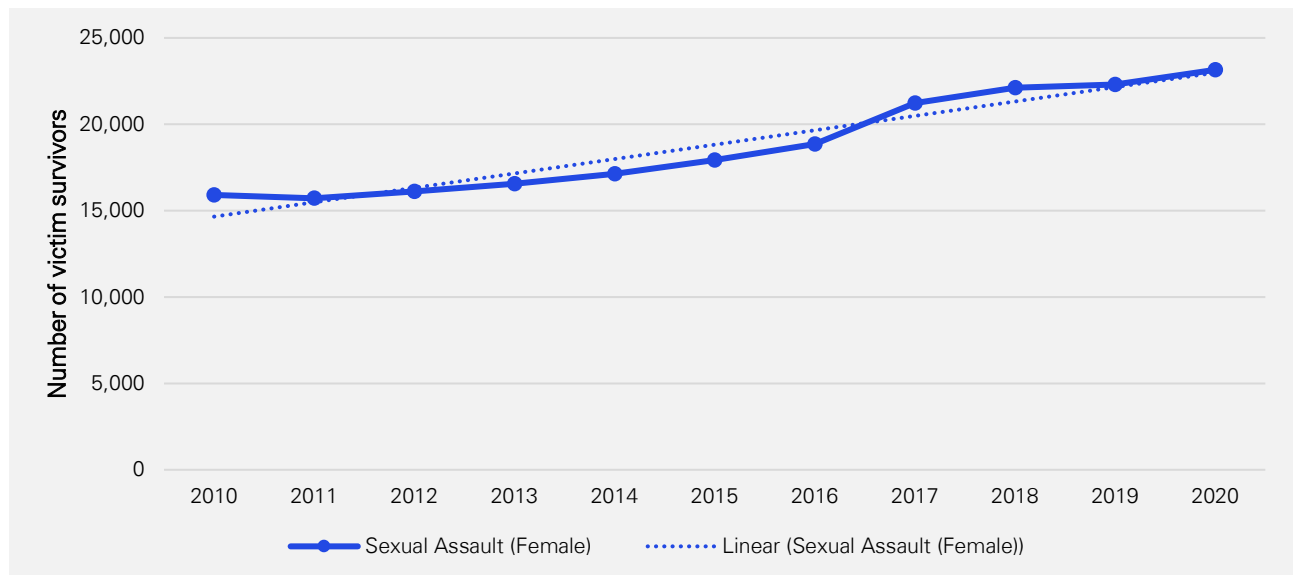
³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Data on assault perpetrated by a family member is inclusive of 'partner', 'parent', and 'other family member'. This data is only available from New South Wales, South Australia, and the Northern Territory.

There is also an increasing trend of sexual assault against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Since 2010, the number of sexual assault cases for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women has increased by 33.1 per cent from 1,055 to 1,404 (Figure 10). There were increases in sexual assault cases amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in all states where data was available in the Recorded Crime –

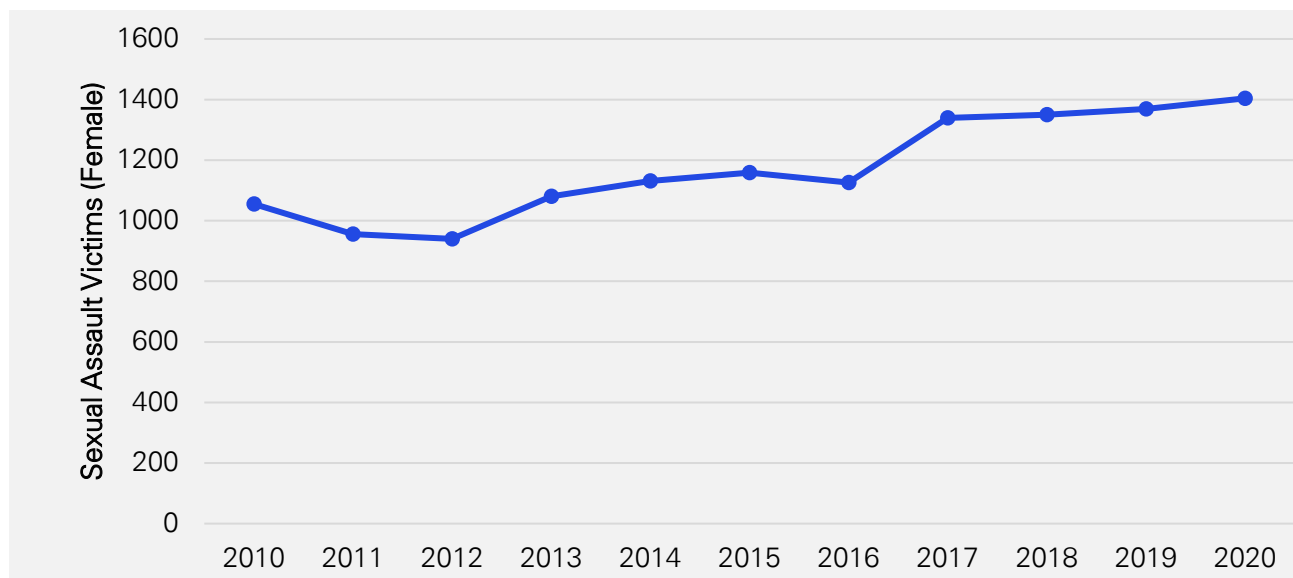
Victims dataset (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, and the Northern Territory).³⁷ First Nations women continue to face barriers to reporting family violence, including child protection concerns, distrust of the police, concerns around homelessness and financial distress, and the potential exclusion from community and family.³⁸

Figure 9: Number of female victim survivors of sexual assault who reported their assault, by year between 2010 and 2020



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). 'Recorded crime - Victims

Figure 10: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female victims of sexual assault, Australia



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2010-2020). 'Recorded crime - Victims'.

³⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2020). 'Recorded crime - Victims'.

³⁸ Langton, M., Smith, K., Eastman, T., O'Neill, L., Cheesman, E., & Rose, M. (2020). Improving family violence legal and support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. ANROWS.

The PSS indicated that the majority of women who experienced sexual assault by a male in the last 10 years knew the perpetrator of the most recent incident (87 per cent), with the most recent incident most likely to occur in the respondent's home (40 per cent), or the perpetrator's home (17 per cent).³⁹

While these data show an increase in reported cases of sexual assault, it is important to consider the social and societal changes that have occurred during this period which have contributed to greater reporting of sexual violence. The increase in reports of sexual assault from 2017 onwards coincides with the global #MeToo movement which gained momentum following a series of high-profile allegations and convictions in the United States and Australia, which may have contributed to an increase in victim survivors reporting their experiences of sexual violence. In the Australian context, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse may have contributed to reporting historical cases of sexual assault. In addition, a greater understanding of consent is understood to be a driver behind increased reporting.

This data is reflected in findings from consultations with government representatives and service providers, who emphasised that they had observed increasing rates of violence against women and their children. The majority of stakeholders who discussed these increasing rates identified that they may be attributable to raised community awareness of FDSV and understanding of the multiple forms that it can take, as well as significant events such as

#MeToo. However, stakeholders were wary of attributing the increase in rates solely to improving community awareness, acknowledging that rates of violence may genuinely be increasing, and that further consideration was needed.

Rates of sexual harassment were identified as increasing slightly in the PSS, with the proportion of women experiencing sexual harassment in the 12 months prior to the survey increasing from 15 per cent in 2012 to 17 per cent in 2016.⁴⁰ The Australian Human Rights Commission's (AHRC) national survey of sexual harassment in Australian workplaces measured a notable increase in the number of women who had experienced sexual harassment at some point in their lifetime when presented with its legal definition, increasing from 21 per cent of women in 2012 to 61 per cent of women in 2018.⁴¹ Similar trends in increasing rates of sexual harassment of women were identified in the workplace setting.⁴² The AHRC National Survey indicated that the percentage of women over the age of 15 who had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the last five years increased from 25 per cent in 2012 to 39 per cent in 2018.⁴³ The perpetrators in these incidents were overwhelmingly male (79 per cent).⁴⁴ The increase in rates of sexual harassment was also interpreted by the AHRC in the context of increased media coverage of sexual harassment and assault, particularly regarding the #MeToo movement in the three months prior to the 2018 National Survey. It was suggested that increased awareness may have contributed to increased willingness to report incidences of sexual harassment.⁴⁵

3.2 Increased proportion of women who feel safe in their communities

Data indicates that there has been an increase in the proportion of women who feel safe in their communities. Findings from the PSS show that a greater proportion of women reported feeling safe in their communities in the most recent survey in 2016 compared to data from the 2005 survey (see Figure 11). Most women did not use

public transport at night, but of those who did, there have been sustained increases in the proportion of women who felt safe doing so at night and being home alone after dark. Increase in safety waiting for or using public transport may be due to implementation of safety initiatives such as closed-circuit television. Between 2012 and

³⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). Personal Safety Survey.

⁴⁰ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). Personal Safety Survey.

⁴¹ Australian Human Rights Commission. (2018). Everyone's business: Fourth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

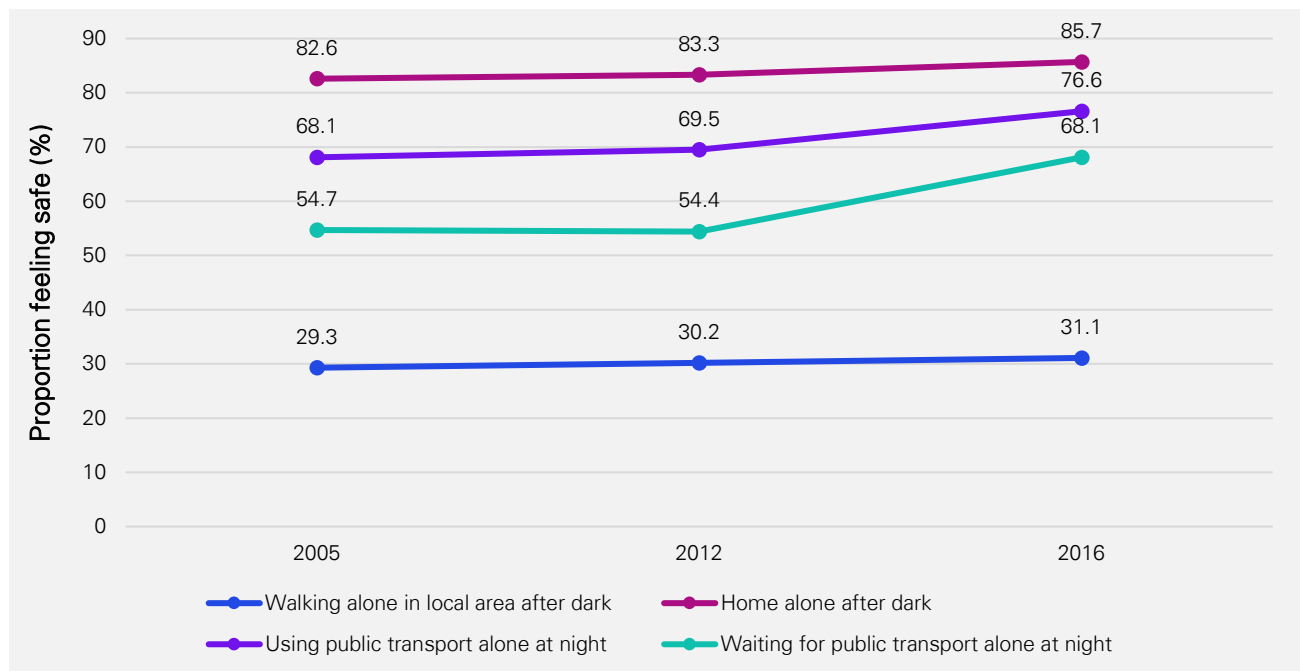
⁴⁵ Ibid.

2016, there were statistically significant increases in the proportion of women who reported feeling safe being home alone after dark, using public transport at night alone, and waiting for public transport alone at night. It is noted that these measures primarily capture women's feelings of safety in relation to potential violence that may be perpetrated by strangers, and therefore cannot be extrapolated to apply to feelings of safety

surrounding the risk of violence perpetrated by known individuals.

The 2017 NCAS includes findings on the ability of bystanders to identify and respond to rates of FDSV, which may influence whether women feel safe in their communities. These findings are discussed in Section 6.1.3.

Figure 11: Women's feelings of safety in the last 12 months in selected situations, proportion (per cent) who felt safe, Australia



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2005, 2012, 2016). Personal Safety Survey.

3.3 Reduced deaths related to domestic violence and sexual assault

Domestic and family violence occurs on a spectrum of severity, which can result in fatalities. While in many circumstances, abusive behaviours will prompt contact with formal and informal supports and offer opportunities for intervention,⁴⁶ in other cases, a fatal incident may be the first recorded episode of FDSV. The presence of FDSV in the relationship may not be revealed immediately and may take some time to be identified through criminal and coronial investigations.

Data from the National Homicide Monitoring Program, managed by the Australian Institute of Criminology, captures details of all homicide incidents in a domestic relationship. From 2009-10 to 2019-20, there were 1,017 domestic homicide incidents recorded in Australia, with almost three-fifths featuring intimate partner homicides.⁴⁷ As shown in Figure 12, there is considerable variability in the total number of domestic homicide incidents each year (range:75 to 103). The low base rate occurrence, from a statistical perspective, means

⁴⁶ Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network. (2018). Data report 2018. Sydney: Domestic Violence Death Review Team.

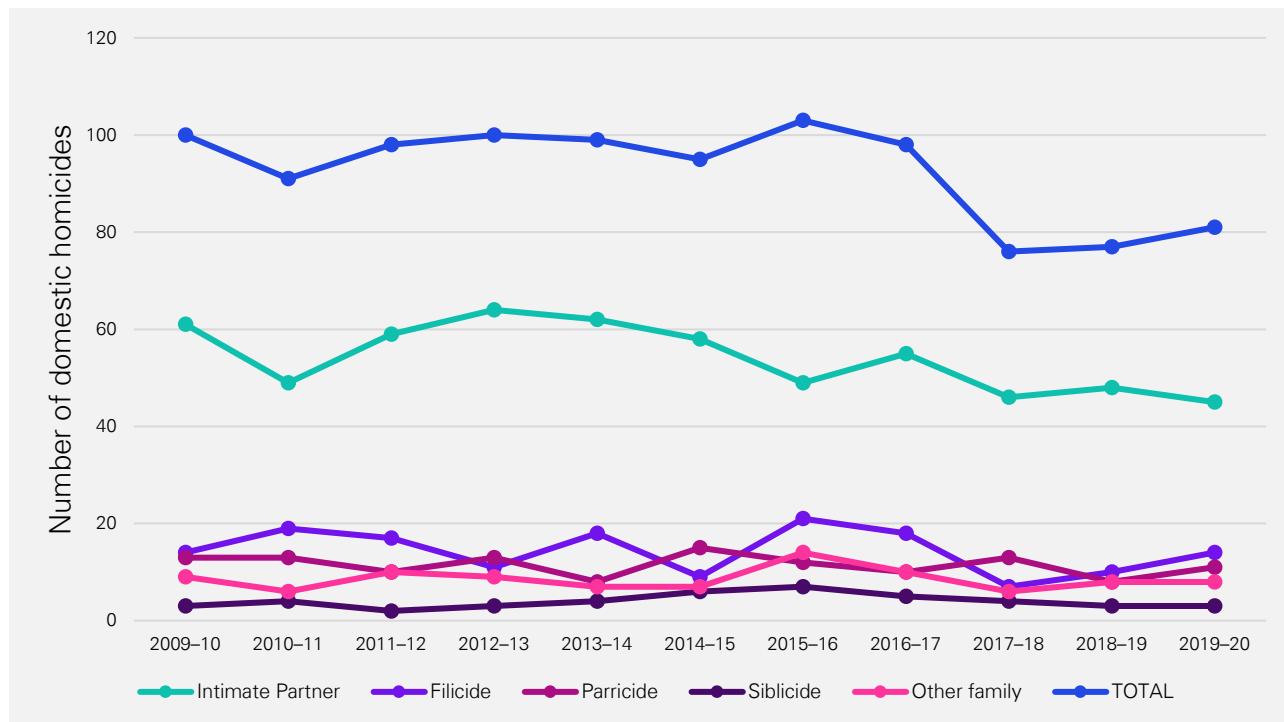
⁴⁷ Serpell, B., Sullivan, T. & Doherty, L. (2022). Homicide in Australia 2019-20. Statistical Report no. 39. Australian Institute of Criminology.

it is not possible to track real changes in homicide rates year on year. Small changes in the numbers of incidents can cause apparent fluctuations which are unlikely to yield statistically significant changes.

As shown in Figure 13, there has been a reduction in the number and rate of female intimate partner homicide incidents. In the ten

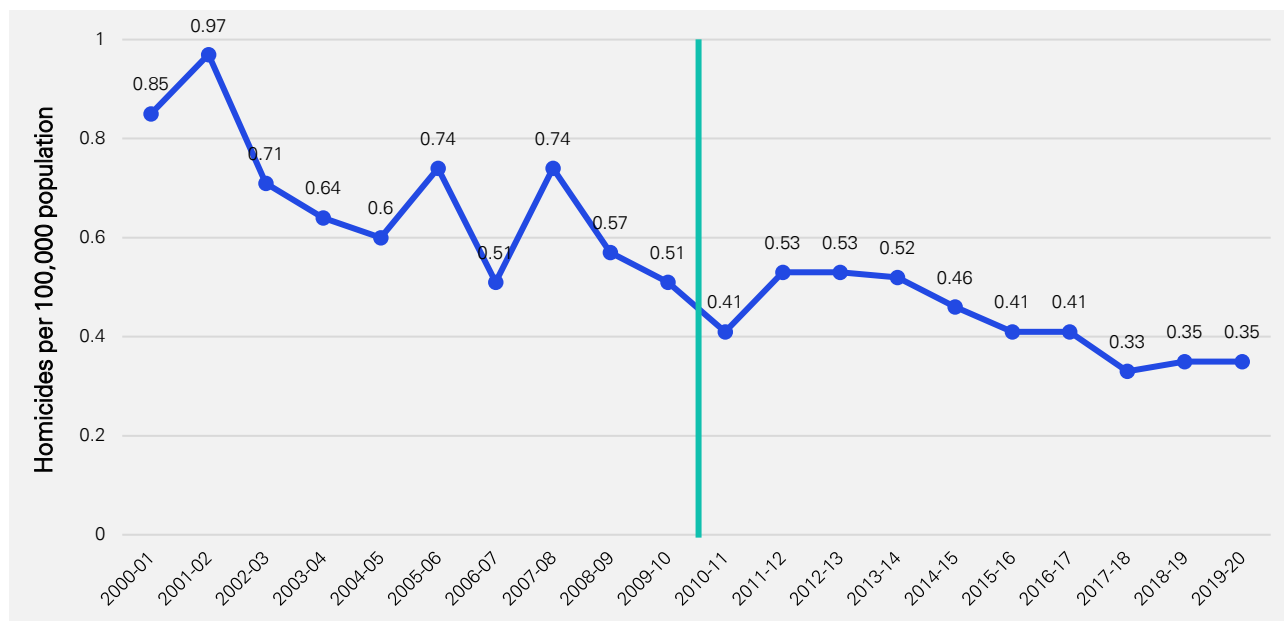
years before the National Plan was introduced, the average intimate partner homicide rate was 0.68 per 100,000 population, compared with 0.43 per 100,000 population across the 10 years of the National Plan where data was available. Over the same periods, the average number of female intimate partner homicide incidents reduced from 53.9 to 40.5 per annum.

Figure 12: Domestic homicide incidents, by homicide type, Australia, FY 2009-10 to 2019-20



Source: Serpell, B., Sullivan, T. & Doherty, L. (2022). *Homicide in Australia 2019-20. Statistical Report no. 39.* Australian Institute of Criminology.

Figure 13: Incidents of intimate partner homicide, female victims, 1999-2000 to 2019-20 (rate per 100,000 population)



Source: Serpell, B., Sullivan, T. & Doherty, L. (2022). *Homicide in Australia 2019-20. Statistical Report no. 39.* Australian Institute of Criminology

The Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network (ADFVDRN), and the respective death review functions in states and territories across Australia enable a more nuanced examination of domestic homicides. The ADFVDRN analyses cases of domestic homicide that occur with an identifiable backdrop of history

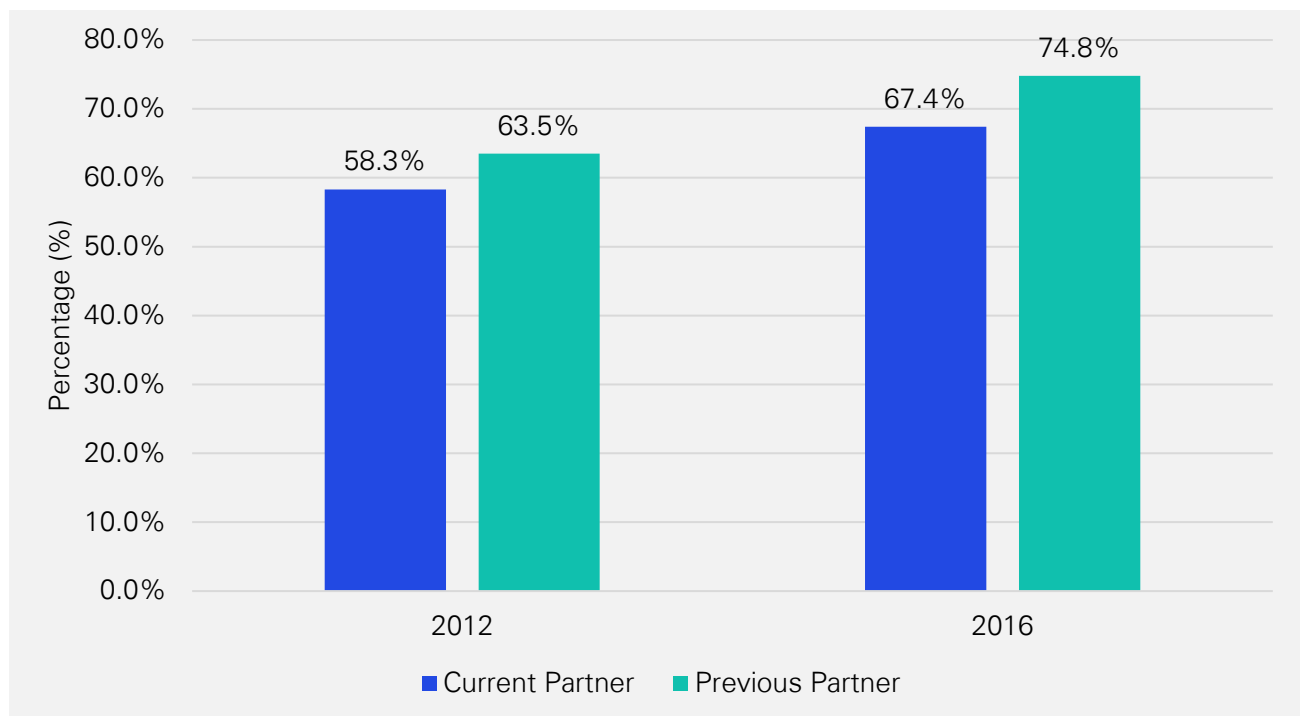
FDSV preceding the fatal episode. The work of the ADFVDRN has shown that three-quarters (77.2%) of intimate partner homicides involved a male killing a female, and in almost all cases, the male was known to be the primary user of FDSV in the relationship, demonstrating the gendered nature of intimate partner homicide.⁴⁸

3.4 Reduced proportion of children exposed to their mother's or carer's experience of domestic violence

Since the release of the National Plan, there has been increases in the proportion of children exposed to violence. Data from the PSS provided by the ABS from 2012 and 2016 shows that, of women with children in their care at the time they were subjected to violence from a cohabiting

partner, the proportion who self-reported that their children heard or saw the violence perpetrated by a current partner and a previous partner has increased over time (as shown in Figure 14).

Figure 14: Children who were exposed to violence against their mother or carer, proportion, Australia



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2012 & 2016). Personal Safety Survey dataset, provided by ABS.

⁴⁸ Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network, and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2022). Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network Data Report: Intimate partner violence homicides 2010 – 2018 (2nd ed: Research report 03/2022). ANROWS.

Overarching arrangements and governance



4 Overarching arrangements and governance

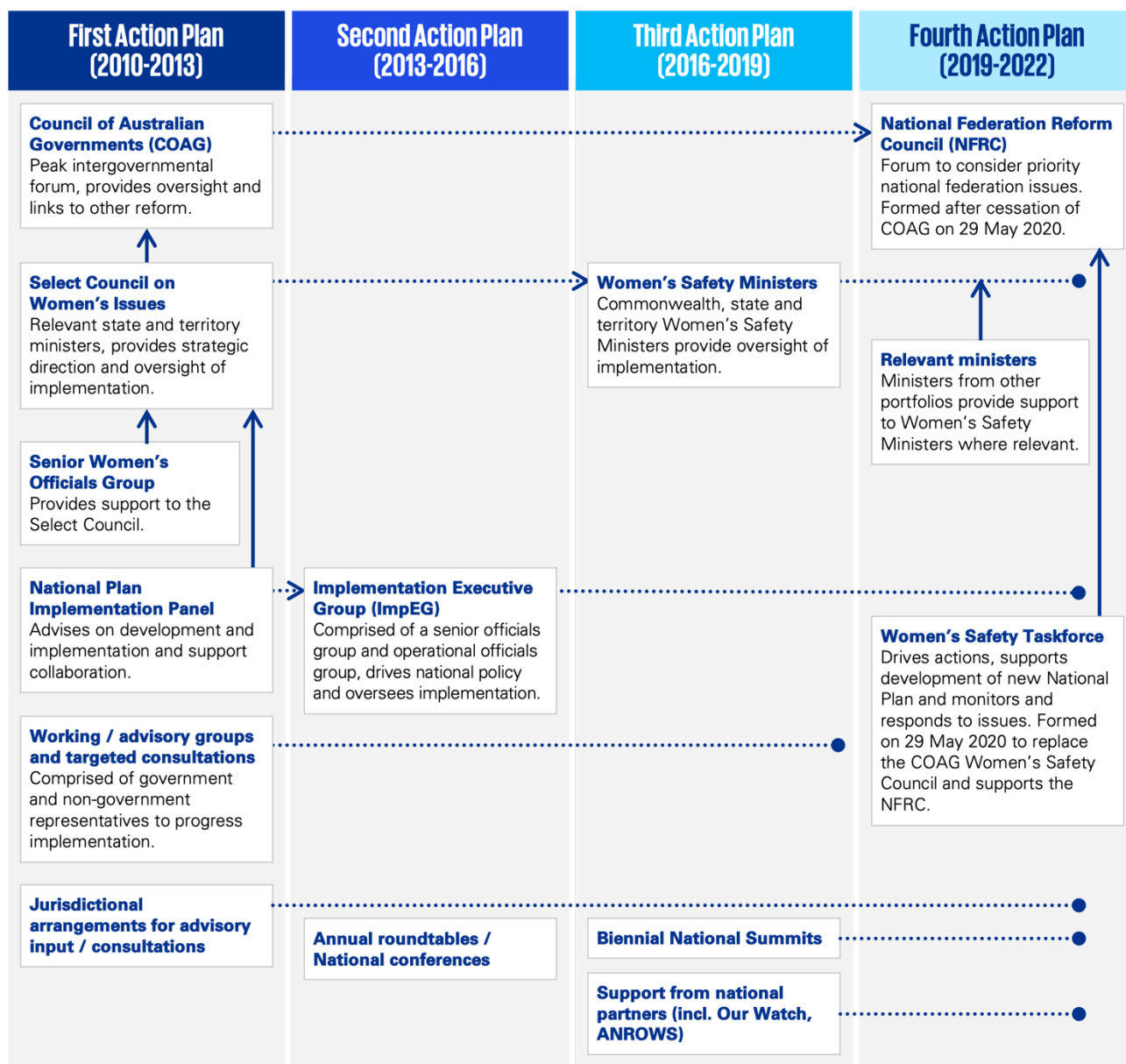
Key Findings:

- The National Plan established a national agenda for addressing FDSV, facilitating sustained commitment and action at a national and jurisdictional level.
- State and territory governments indicated that jurisdictional policy aligned with the National Plan outcomes at a high level, with many government stakeholders crediting the National Plan with creating an authorising environment for FDSV investment. States and territory governments varied on the degree to which they felt progress was driven at a jurisdictional level rather than due to the leadership of the National Plan.
- Stakeholders felt that Commonwealth leadership missed opportunities to foster improved connection with existing COAG reforms and to influence systemic barriers to help-seeking at a national level.
- Collaboration and information-sharing have improved over the life of the National Plan. Frontline service providers reflected that collaboration with organisations, services, and government had improved, whilst government stakeholders emphasised the value of governance structures such as the National Plan Implementation Executive Group (ImpEG) for information-sharing between jurisdictions. It was identified that there was still a need for continued commitment to maximise collaboration and information-sharing to deliver integrated services to victim survivors.
- Whilst there is increased awareness of the needs of diverse groups and increased understanding of intersectionality, the FDSV service system is not comprehensively meeting the needs of diverse groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, CALD women, LGBTIQ+ people, and women from rural and remote communities.
- COVID-19 was associated with increased demand for FDSV services, with social distancing restrictions impacting in-person service delivery. FDSV services demonstrated agility and flexibility to continue delivering services, with many adapting to online delivery.

Stakeholder consultations indicated that the National Plan demonstrated a collective commitment to address FDSV and provide strategic direction, underpinned by Commonwealth, state, and territory leadership in its development and implementation. The governance and information-sharing arrangements that supported the National Plan and its implementation were seen by many stakeholders to be broadly effective and to have

successfully evolved over the course of the National Plan to support the needs of each Action Plan. While the governance and information-sharing arrangements were flexible to changing needs over time, stakeholders identified that they also provided consistency across changes of leadership and successive governments. The evolution of governance arrangements across the life of the National Plan is outlined in Figure 15.

Figure 15: Governance arrangements across the life of the National Plan



Source: KPMG

The governance and information-sharing arrangements that supported the implementation of the National Plan and successive Action Plans enabled the development of a clear national agenda and remit, whilst allowing flexibility for states and territories to implement in response to locally identified needs. Collaboration across and between service organisations and government departments in states and territories and at a

national level was seen by stakeholders to have improved under the National Plan.

The awareness of the different experiences and support needs of diverse groups improved over the course of the National Plan, although stakeholders emphasised that further work is needed to ensure that services meet their needs.

4.1 Commonwealth leadership and coordination

4.1.1 Policy and legislation

Policy leadership

The National Plan establishes a national agenda and clear remit for state and territory governments to address FDSV. As an overarching policy document, the National Plan demonstrates national commitment to reducing violence against women and their children through the provision of long-term strategic leadership from the Commonwealth to support the coordinated approach from states and territories. All levels of government (that is, Commonwealth, state and territory) are responsible for leadership, development, and implementation of the National Plan, whilst responsibility for service delivery and jurisdictional policy remains primarily with state and territory governments. The twelve-year vision of the National Plan helps to set ambitious goals and to support ongoing commitment and buy-in from states and territories. One state government stakeholder identified that it can otherwise be challenging to achieve commitment at a state and federal level beyond the typical three-to-four-year election cycle. Broadly, service provider stakeholders noted that constructive policy and legislation changes have been achieved throughout the life of the National Plan, but that it would take time for these to demonstrate measurable impact on the FDSV service system.

Stakeholders identified that the policy leadership provided by the Commonwealth could be strengthened by the development and introduction of a universal national definition of FDSV and relevant language. The introduction of this language would support furthering consistency in the understanding of and approach to FDSV across jurisdictions and service providers. Stakeholders involved in service provision broadly felt that a systematic and coordinated approach to FDSV was not currently in place, suggesting that further work may be required for the impact of the Commonwealth's policy leadership through the National Plan to be felt by service providers. It was noted by government stakeholders that there is no nationally consistent training or capacity building

approaches or standards for training or mandatory accreditation. This was identified as an area for improvement in ensuring high-quality service delivery to victim survivors of FDSV and could be an opportunity for Commonwealth leadership. It is noted that a specialised understanding is required to support victim survivors from some population groups, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, and a one size fits all model may therefore not be appropriate in all situations.

Alignment with national policy

The National Plan recognised that violence against women and their children does not occur in isolation from other issues, such as homelessness, child abuse or neglect, and can disproportionately impact certain groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children. As such, the National Plan stated that it was important to maintain strong links between the Plan and the following existing COAG reforms:⁴⁹

- **National Indigenous Reform Agreement or 'Closing the Gap' 2008** – A framework aiming to close the gap in life expectancy and opportunities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- **Protecting Children is Everyone's Business** – National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 – A framework aimed at reducing child abuse and neglect
- **The Road Home: A National Approach to Reducing Homelessness, 2008-2020** – A strategic whole-of-government agenda for reducing homelessness
- **National Health Reform agreement 2011** – A national agreement to improve health outcomes for Australians and support the sustainability of the health system

⁴⁹ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2010). National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

- **Commonwealth social inclusion agenda** – A national agenda to support all Australians to participate in economic, social, and civic life.

Stakeholders also identified that other national legislation, policy, and programs could benefit from strong links with the National Plan, including the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Centrelink, the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, migration policies and laws, and the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030.

Despite the intentions of the National Plan to coordinate with existing COAG reform, stakeholders noted that actions under the National Plan typically occurred in isolation from existing national legislation, policy, and programs. This was identified as a missed opportunity to benefit from existing progress, with consultations revealing that stakeholders felt more could be done by the Commonwealth to leverage its position to establish structures and influence systemic change. Stakeholders expressed a desire for greater coordination at a Commonwealth level across policy and programs, with the need for an integrated whole-of-government framework that considers all areas that intersect with the FDSV sector.

In addition, stakeholders identified that there is inadequate consideration of the impact of broader national policy and legislation on victim survivors. The Australian Institute of Family Studies' *Process evaluation of the Third Action Plan 2016-19* noted that there are a number of actions under the National Plan that:

*'...require the commitment of policy areas and systems that extend beyond the community, family law and family violence service systems. The intersections between the drivers of violence against women, barriers to service access and broader structural/systemic issues are becoming better understood, and these policy portfolios increasingly realise the role they can play.'*⁵⁰

This finding was echoed in stakeholder responses in the current evaluation, which noted that Commonwealth policy, legislation, and programs outside of the FDSV sector can impact the experiences of victim survivors and act as a barrier for victim survivors to report and seek services. In some cases, these can unintentionally

create barriers to achieving the outcomes of the National Plan and keeping victim survivors safe. Stakeholders referenced specific areas, including the NDIS, Centrelink, and particularly the Family Court system and temporary visas for migrant women.

The Family Court system was a key area that stakeholders across government and service provision consistently suggested could benefit from increased Commonwealth attention. Stakeholders who discussed the Family Court system universally expressed concern that the system increased the risks faced by women and their children post-separation from a perpetrator. Respondents to the frontline worker survey indicated that the Family Court system can be weaponised by perpetrators against victim survivors by trying to gain custody of children. It was asserted that the Family Court system can incorrectly default to the assumption that shared custody is best for children, even when this may risk exposing children to a caregiver who has perpetrated FDSV. In addition, shared custody arrangements can facilitate ongoing perpetration of FDSV as victim survivors are required to maintain ongoing contact with the perpetrator. Stakeholders broadly felt that the Family Court system was not appropriately equipped to manage the complexities and challenges of addressing FDSV. The Commonwealth government was seen as 'holding the lever' for actioning systemic change in this area, and this was seen as a missed opportunity under the current iteration of the National Plan.

Stakeholders also consistently raised the potential for the Commonwealth to do more to remove systemic barriers experienced by migrant and refugee women on temporary visas. Stakeholders noted that migrant women on temporary visas are often not eligible to access social services or FDSV support services. In addition, perpetrators of FDSV can also use threats around a victim survivor's visa and residency status to dissuade victim survivors from seeking support. Victim survivors may also be hesitant to report FDSV where this may put the residency status of the perpetrator at risk. Stakeholders who raised these concerns felt that Commonwealth systems and legislation were creating barriers for these women. It was noted that this places the burden on the service system and individual states and territories to support these women in novel ways

⁵⁰ Quadara, A., El-Murr, A., Douglas, W., & Muir, S. (2019). *Process evaluation of the Third Action Plan 2016-19*. Australian Institute of Family Studies.

to ensure they don't fall through the cracks as a result.

The experiences of victim survivors as a result of the Family Court and temporary visa legislation were seen as contradictory to the Commonwealth commitment to providing better protection for victim survivors, suggesting that greater coherence between Commonwealth policies and legislation would be beneficial. Stakeholders noted that the Commonwealth should consider the full breadth of legislation and policies that interact with the National Plan and responses to FDSV to ensure that no inadvertent barriers are being created.

Alignment with jurisdictional policy

State and territory government representatives indicated that their jurisdictional policies and programs aligned with the National Plan to varying degrees. Broadly, all stakeholders acknowledged that their jurisdictions were working towards the same intended outcomes as the National Plan but varied on whether they felt that progress towards these outcomes was driven by the National Plan or jurisdictional initiatives. The consultations highlighted three levels of alignment expressed by government stakeholders:

- **Broad alignment:** Limited direct influence of the National Plan at a jurisdictional level, with reporting mechanisms feeling like 'plugging in' existing initiatives to meet National Plan criteria, but with jurisdictional policies remaining broadly consistent with the key outcomes of the National Plan
- **Targeted alignment:** Specific alignment of state or territory FDSV policy and plans with the National Plan, for example, syncing timelines and duration of plans, intentional alignment with key themes
- **Authorising environment:** Use of the National Plan as an authorising environment to justify state or territory investment in FDSV policy and programs.

Stakeholders who discussed having broad alignment with the National Plan explained that state and jurisdictional reform and associated plans were developed independently of, or without waiting for the release of, National Plan documents such as the 4AP or new National Plan. Overall, these stakeholders still felt that their state and territory reform and associated policies

aligned with the intended outcome of the National Plan to reduce violence against women and their children. However, there was hesitancy to assign responsibility for progress to the National Plan due to a number of factors. For some, it was felt that the National Plan reflected work that the jurisdictions were already undertaking, rather than directly spurring this work. This was also a finding in KPMG's *Evaluation of the Second Action Plan*, which indicated that many stakeholders felt that state and territory initiatives and plans were more responsible for change than the National Plan while acknowledging that these broadly aligned with the National Plan outcomes.⁵¹ There were concerns that a lack of clarity between responsibilities of states and territories and those of the Commonwealth may leave some women and children at risk of 'falling through the cracks' and not being supported.

It was noted that there are challenges around transparency that impacted how easily progress could be linked directly to the National Plan, in particular because of limited funding associated with the National Plan to trace to outcomes. Stakeholders who expressed that jurisdictional policy had broad alignment with the National Plan also emphasised the challenges associated with reporting against the National Plan where jurisdictional-level reform does not neatly align. Stakeholders explained that reporting could feel like fitting a 'round peg into a square hole' when leveraging state or territory plans to meet requirements under the National Plan.

In contrast, some jurisdictions reported ensuring targeted alignment between state and territory plans and the National Plan and associated Action Plans. This could involve waiting for the release of the 4AP or new National Plan prior to devising jurisdictional approaches. This included ensuring that timelines, reporting schedules, and key priority areas and outcomes aligned. This approach is supported by findings from previous evaluations of the Second and Third Action Plans, which indicated that state and territory policy frameworks exhibited increasing alignment in policy priorities and definitions with the National Plan.

It was generally acknowledged that the National Plan acts as an authorising environment for states and territories to justify investment in FDSV reform. Stakeholders expressed that it was valuable to have a national mandate to leverage in order to justify jurisdictional funding and

⁵¹ KPMG. (2017). Evaluation of the Second Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022: Final Evaluation Report.

investment, and that national consistency was helpful. While many stakeholders who discussed the value of a national mandate were unclear whether progress should be attributed directly to

the National Plan, they viewed the National Plan as a beneficial overarching framework underpinned by jurisdictional policy and reform.

4.2 Information-sharing and collaboration through governance, advisory, and communication mechanisms

Findings from this evaluation broadly indicate that there have been improvements in levels of collaboration since the implementation of the National Plan. This was observed in collaboration between and across service organisations and between government departments across and within states and territories.

KPMG conducted a national online survey to measure frontline worker perspectives on the effectiveness and impact of the National Plan for frontline workers.⁵² The frontline worker survey indicated that high levels of collaboration were present in frontline service organisations. Approximately half of respondents (49.4 per cent) reported collaborating to a great extent with other organisations, government departments, local councils, or services within the FDSV or related sectors. This was felt to be an increase since the commencement of the National Plan to a slight (35.4 per cent) or moderate extent (32.6 per cent). Respondents expressed differing opinions on whether service providers were delivering integrated services to victim survivors within the FDSV sector and related sectors such as health. Some respondents noted observing improved collaboration between local and state-wide services, but others acknowledged that information-sharing is still a challenge between service providers. Challenges with collaboration and information-sharing between service providers can have a significant impact on victim survivors being able to navigate the service system and may place them at greater risk if their needs are not met. This also creates a risk of perpetrators not being held accountable for their violence, and therefore increasing risk of harm for victim survivors.

Collaboration between frontline service providers and government was also discussed. Most respondents agreed to a slight (37.1 per cent) or moderate (36.5 per cent) extent that they could connect with the appropriate government department or organisation to seek assistance regarding practice, policies, or initiatives to

support women and children. A small proportion of respondents (7.8 per cent) indicated that they could not connect with the relevant government department in this manner, suggesting that there are further improvements to be made.

Responses to the frontline worker survey and in consultations indicated that the ImpEG and other governance structures had reduced duplication, increased understandings of FDSV, and enabled collaboration and information-sharing across government. Many government stakeholders noted that jurisdictional updates about progress in FDSV policy and programs at the ImpEG meetings were beneficial, as were the surrounding discussions. A number of stakeholders who had been involved in the implementation of the National Plan for a longer period noted that the ImpEG has become more reporting-focused than a collaborative information-sharing and discussion forum. There was a sense that this could be improved to foster more meaningful jurisdictional relationships to achieve better outcomes. In addition, stakeholders noted that it was often challenging to contact jurisdictional government representatives on the ImpEG outside of sessions and suggested that collaboration outside of ImpEG meetings could be facilitated by the maintenance of a contact list. Some stakeholders reflected that the inability of ImpEG to meet in person due to COVID-19 social distancing requirements may have also impacted the ability to foster relationships across jurisdictions, whilst others felt that they had adapted to develop and maintain effective working relationships despite these challenges. Broader collaboration and information-sharing between state and territory government was also noted as being partially supported by the Commonwealth and the National Plan through having a nationally agreed-upon approach to FDSV.

While governance and information-sharing arrangements were seen to be positive by representatives of most jurisdictions, it was

⁵² See Appendix D for the frontline worker survey methodology, response rates, and limitations.

identified that current arrangements didn't maximise collaboration between the Commonwealth, states and territories, and mainstream sectors. A number of representatives from state and territory governments noted that a significant degree of collaboration and information-sharing was driven by jurisdictions themselves. In addition, some government stakeholders felt that collaboration and information-sharing had improved within jurisdictions, but not between jurisdictions. The need for more coordination and systematic

information sharing was also identified in the Australian Institute of Family Studies' *Process evaluation of the Third Action Plan 2016-19*.⁵³ This evaluation indicated that stakeholders felt that the perceived 'siloing' and 'fragmentation' of government agencies and services was reflective of the complex nature of the issues and allocation of responsibilities across government. This suggests that improvements to information-sharing and collaboration will take time and investment but will be beneficial to reduce duplication and support sharing of best practice.

4.3 Improved service responses for at risk cohorts (such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, CALD women, and women with disability)

4.3.1 Awareness and availability of service responses

FDSV impacts people from all segments of society, yet there are some population groups that have different experiences of violence or are disproportionately impacted by violence.⁵⁴ These groups include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, CALD women, LGBTIQ+ people, women with disability, and women from regional, rural, and remote communities. Stakeholders reflected that the awareness of the experiences and needs of these diverse groups had increased in the FDSV sector over the life of the National Plan. Stakeholders did identify that the level of community awareness does differ between diverse population groups. It was suggested that rates of violence experienced by women with disability are still underreported compared to other groups. In contrast, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are overrepresented as victim survivors of FDSV, and stakeholders argued that rates of violence will not decrease until the drivers of violence for this group, including the impacts of intergenerational trauma, are addressed. In some jurisdictions, it was acknowledged that community awareness in CALD communities may have been slower to progress than in other cohorts, but that improvements were being seen.

Despite an increase in awareness of the needs and experiences of diverse groups, the current FDSV service system is not comprehensively meeting the needs of victim survivors and their children from these groups. Positive progress was noted through the various community-led and holistic service models across the country. However, stakeholders felt that there were not enough specialist services available to provide appropriate services to victim survivors from diverse groups. It was noted that current services may not meet the needs of CALD women, including migrants and refugees, who may have similar or higher needs than Australian residents but are not as eligible for support. There was concern that services are not culturally appropriate or faith inclusive when supporting victim survivors, with initiatives under the National Plan seen as tailored to Western clients.

Limited access to specialist services was also noted for LGBTIQ+ victim survivors and women with disability. In addition, rural, regional, and remote communities were seen as underfunded to meet the rising need for their services, with limited housing options, extended waiting periods, and victim survivors needing to travel to access services. This was believed to reduce the ability of victim survivors in these communities to exit FDSV situations. Stakeholders emphasised that policy and program responses to the needs and experiences of diverse groups should not be considered peripheral additions to existing policy

⁵³ Quadara, A., El-Murr, A., Douglas, W., & Muir, S. (2019). *Process evaluation of the Third Action Plan 2016-19*. Australian Institute of Family Studies.

⁵⁴ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2019). *Fourth Action Plan - National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*.

and service delivery but recognised in their own right and provided with appropriately tailored services.

4.3.2 Intersectionality

Stakeholders emphasised that there has been increased recognition of the concept of ‘intersectionality’ in FDSV services throughout the life of the National Plan. This underpins the understanding that services and supports need to be able to respond to all aspects of a person’s identity in an inclusive and informed way without requiring people to access multiple services. For example, there is a need to understand that victim survivors with a disability may also identify as LGBTIQ+ or have a CALD background. However, the extent to which this understanding has been translated into practice was questioned, with stakeholders calling for intersectionality to be more clearly articulated through programs, initiatives, and sector development in the next National Plan. As one government stakeholder explained:

‘Something to think about in the future for intersectionality is to think about measures in a truly intersectional way. A person can be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and identify as LGBTIQ+, they might have a disability, live in a rural area. People are complex in themselves. The National Plan has set us up well to understand that there are diverse experiences and we have done well at addressing those. We need to develop in how we address a person in a holistic way and their diverse factors is in progress – this is where to go next.’

– **Government representative**

A review of existing evidence conducted by La Trobe University for Respect Victoria in 2020 indicated that the evidence base for responding to FDSV lacked a focus on particular population groups and intersectionality.⁵⁵ The review indicated that the evidence base had a limited focus on groups such as women with disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, CALD women, and LGBTIQ+ people, and needed improved insight into the differences within these communities and understanding of

intersectionality to adapt interventions to meet the needs of those with intersecting identities.

4.3.3 Differences in help-seeking behaviours

Women and children from diverse population groups may exhibit different help-seeking behaviours and have different pathways into the FDSV service system. Many will access mainstream services as specialist services that address their specific needs may not be available in their communities, or may not be spaces that they feel comfortable in. Stakeholders explained that LGBTIQ+ people may be more likely to disclose experiences of FDSV to their general practitioners (GPs), as were CALD women. CALD women were also likely to discuss experiences with a faith leader as a key point of support. This reflects the need for build capacity of mainstream services and community members to respond to disclosures of FDSV and support victim survivors to access the services they need.

4.3.4 Traditional responses as not appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Stakeholders recognised that the National Plan had supported an improved understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women’s different experiences of violence. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were understood to be overrepresented as victim survivors of domestic violence, with stakeholders emphasising that more needs to be done to address the drivers of violence and deliver access to more culturally safe services that are co-designed and Aboriginal community controlled.

Stakeholders emphasised that traditional service and justice responses to FDSV may not be appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It was noted that victim survivors may not want to leave their families, communities, or Country, and that a traditional justice approach may therefore not be appropriate for these individuals. Accessing justice responses may also put Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim survivors at risk, with respondents noting

⁵⁵ Forsdike, K., Hooker, L., Seal, E., O’Sullivan, G., & Ison, J. (2020). Respect Victoria Evidence Review: Final Report. La Trobe University.

that there is a risk that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim survivors will be arrested or incarcerated for retaliating against perpetrators. It was also discussed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may be hesitant to report perpetrators to the police due to concerns about an over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men being caught in the justice system.

Stakeholders suggested that appropriate services could include healing-focused approaches such as supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perpetrators to work through trauma and supports for families to remain together while addressing FDSV. It was also noted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim survivors who

disclose experiences of violence may experience community backlash and therefore be unwilling to access services.

Concerns about the involvement of Child Protection in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children's lives may also render traditional responses inappropriate. A review of the Victorian Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, conducted by researchers from Monash University, found that most of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders they consulted were concerned that the interaction of that scheme with the Child Information Sharing Scheme may cause Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to disengage from support to avoid the involvement of Child Protection.⁵⁶

4.4 Impact of COVID-19 pandemic and adaptation to respond to FDSV during the pandemic

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020 impacted the FDSV service system and the delivery of the National Plan, requiring adaption and flexibility to continue delivering services. The COVID-19 pandemic and related lockdowns were associated with an increase in demand for services and therefore increased staff workloads.

In addition, many initiatives were delayed due to the reallocation of workloads to support the COVID-19 response, and restrictions on gatherings due to social distancing requirements impacted in-person service delivery. A number of service providers adapted to online service delivery via virtual formats or telehealth. Some services that had previously operated through online service delivery saw an increase in demand for their services in light of COVID-19.

Unfortunately, some initiatives were unable to shift to online delivery or were impacted by concerns about digital literacy and privacy or victim survivor access to technology. In particular, lockdowns and restrictions on movement delayed engagement with certain communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in regional and remote areas.

The impact of COVID-19 on responses to FDSV and the need for flexibility was also recognised and responded to by the Commonwealth government. The National Partnership on COVID-

19 Domestic and Family Violence Responses (2020-2021) and the National Partnership on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses (2021-2023) represented a significant Commonwealth investment in ensuring that states and territories were able to prevent and respond to FDSV during the COVID-19 pandemic. The former involved a commitment of \$130 million, and the latter will invest up to \$260 million. These National Partnerships are underpinned by the understanding of the joint responsibility of the Commonwealth, states, and territories to address FDSV.

⁵⁶ McCulloch, J., Fitz-Gibbon, K., Segrave, M., Benier, K., Burns, K., McGowan, J., & Pfitzner, N. (2020). Review of the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme Final Report. Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Faculty of Arts, Monash University.

Foundations for Change

The background of the page is a deep blue with intricate, concentric circular patterns that resemble ripples or a stylized spiral. The patterns are more pronounced in the upper right and lower right areas, fading into a solid blue towards the left. The overall effect is a sense of depth and movement.

5 Foundations for change

Key Findings:

- Workforce development has been supported by the National Plan and subsequent Action Plans, and implemented by states and territories through associated strategic activity. Stakeholders noted that specialist FDSV workforce capability had improved, although noted the need to improve access to training, to consider the implementation of mandatory training and national standards, and to address burnout and vicarious trauma.
- The ability of the FDSV workforce to meet the needs of victim survivors from diverse groups was questioned by some stakeholders, who suggested that increased diversity in the workforce and long-term funding to develop workforce capacity to deliver trauma-informed and culturally safe responses would be beneficial.
- Mainstream workforces were recognised as a vital part of the broader FDSV service system. Stakeholders identified the need for improved capability building to ensure that mainstream workforces could ensure positive experiences and safety for victim survivors whilst holding perpetrators accountable.
- Information-sharing and service system integration were supported through initiatives under the Third and Fourth Action Plans. Stakeholders in consultations provided varied perspectives on the degree to which service system integration had developed throughout the National Plan, with a clear finding that continued work is needed.
- The National Plan has seen the evidence base for FDSV response improve significantly, driven by the work of flagship initiatives under the National Plan. This has supported an increase in evidence-based responses towards FDSV, as well as improved community awareness. It was identified that there was further work required to ensure that evidence could effectively inform policymaking.
- Tracking performance under the National Plan is challenging, with the high-level indicators of change unable to provide a holistic view of the impact of the National Plan, and there is no nationally consistent data available. Measuring progress can be supported by the PSS, NCAS, NATSISS and other national datasets that provide insights into FDSV.

The foundations for change outlined under the National Plan are the supporting pillars to guide the action plans that would implement and report progress on the National Plan. There have been four action plans released every three years which have been supported by the foundations for change outlined in Figure 16.

Figure 16: Foundations for Change under the National Plan



Source: KPMG

5.1 Strengthen the workforce

The following section outlines the progress made under the National Plan against the four foundations for change. This summary has been formulated through research, consultation and the survey KPMG conducted.

The strengthen the workforce pillar under the foundations for change relates to the strengthening of the specialist and primary prevention FDSV workforces, the capacity building of mainstream workforces, people who work with victim survivors, and people who work with perpetrators in identifying FDSV and supporting responses. This pillar was a target of the Action Plans and focus under the National Plan to ensure workforces could respond to FDSV in the community as well as implement primary prevention. The following section outlines the progress under this pillar as well as the findings from the evaluation activities and research conducted.

5.1.1 Actions Taken Under the National Plan

Under the First Action Plan, DSS undertook a number of initiatives targeted at strengthening the workforce.⁵⁷ These initiatives included national standards for perpetrator programs, national benchmarks for work on primary prevention, and support for frontline staff who have an interest in supporting women who have experienced domestic violence or sexual assault. Along with this, all Australian Governments committed to working together to support the development of a National Workforce Agenda under the National Plan. The progress report of the First Action Plan outlined that the plan did achieve the establishment of the flagship initiatives 1800RESPECT, which provides support to frontline workers who encounter women who have experienced violence, and DV-alert which

provides a Domestic Violence Response Training program.⁵⁸ The AVERT training package was also released which targeted lawyers, judges, counsellors and other professionals in the family law system and provided multi-disciplinary training to these individuals. No progress was reported in the First Action Plan against the development of a National Workforce Agenda.

The Second Action Plan also took a focus on workforce in the national priorities it committed to.⁵⁹ Under the implementation of the Second Action Plan, the government committed to extending the funding of DV-alert until 2016 to provide nationally accredited training as well as specialist training for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, and new training for workers from CALD backgrounds. DV-alert also aimed to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men's training programme and produce Indigenous-specific material for use in mainstream services. Under the implementation of the Second Action Plan, the Commonwealth also developed the Family and Domestic Violence Strategy, which aimed to provide a consistent framework for businesses to respond to customers and staff who are affected by family and domestic violence.⁶⁰ The evaluation of the Second Action Plan found progress had been made through the Workforce Development Program on Gender and Disability and the It Stops Here initiative in New South Wales that aimed to increase the capability of the FDSV frontline sector workforce.⁶¹

As part of the Third Action Plan, DSS funded the University of New South Wales to undertake a national survey of FDSV workers in 2017.⁶² The findings from this survey were used to inform the Workforce Development Agenda and training needs for the FDSV sector, in line with National

⁵⁷ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2010). National Implementation Plan for the First Action Plan 2010-2013: Building a Strong Foundation.

⁵⁸ Commonwealth Government of Australia. (2014). Progress Review of the First Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

⁵⁹ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2013). Second Action Plan 2013-2016: Moving Ahead - Of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ KPMG. (2017). Evaluation of the Second Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022: Final Evaluation Report.

⁶² Cortis, N., Blaxland, M., valentine, k., Mahoney, N., Chung, D., Cordier, R., . . . Green, D. (2018). National Survey of Workers in the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Sectors. Social Policy Research Centre and Gendered Violence Research Network: University of New South Wales.

Priority 3.2(a).⁶³ The survey revealed indicators of workforce diversity, with 4.9 per cent of respondents having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, 3.7 per cent having a disability, 7.5 per cent speaking a language other than English at home, and 8.0 per cent identified as LGBTIQ+. Over one in five (22.4 per cent) workers who support victim survivors through frequent contact, received more than six days of FDSV training in the last 12 months, which was higher than those who have less frequent contact with victim survivors. Respondents reported that further training on risk assessment and therapeutic approaches would be most valuable to their work. Two-thirds (65.9 per cent) of respondents received individual supervision monthly or more frequently, with most respondents reporting being satisfied with the frequency and quality of supervision they received.

The 4AP under Action 7 committed to building the workforce capability to ensure the delivery of high quality, holistic, trauma-informed, and culturally safe supports that respond to the complex needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children to help support more culturally safe and appropriate specialist service delivery.⁶⁴ Action 16 also aimed to enable workforces to provide trauma-informed support, with a focus on safety and recovery, to victim survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence. Furthermore, Action 17 aimed to collaborate across services, sectors and workforces to ensure responses to women affected by domestic, family and sexual violence are coordinated, meet women's needs, avoid women having to retell their story, and promote their recovery.

The first progress report of the 4AP outlined the achievements under Action 7 including the launch of WorkUp Queensland, a workforce capability and capacity building service, work in Victoria to build the family violence capability in the youth and alcohol, and other drugs sector, the development of a Northern Territory Workforce and Sector Development Plan, and the capacity

building of NSW Health's sexual assault services.⁶⁵ Under Action 16, progress was made through Our Watch aiming to deliver the university-based learning and development pilot, the independent evaluation of the DV-alert program and subsequent adaptations to mode of delivery, the piloting in Western Australia of 'one stop hubs' for specialist services, the development of a Common Risk Assessment and Management Framework in the Australian Capital Territory, and the delivery of training to the FDSV sector in Queensland on responding to the needs of people from diverse backgrounds. Under Action 17, progress was made in Victoria through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) and the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, which enables information-sharing between authorised organisations to assess and manage the risk of FDSV.

In 2021, researchers at Flinders University received funding from ANROWS to conduct research on the nature of FDSV work and the implication for the workforce across three key domains: victim survivors, perpetrator, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specialist services.⁶⁶ This research seeks to generate an evidence base to support workforce practices across these domains. This project will explore the complexities of working in the FDSV sector as well as understand workplace culture and examine individual practices through document analysis, interviews and observation. This research is due for completion in February 2024.

Better workforce development outcomes have been experienced through the workforce development activity delivered by Our Watch, a flagship initiative under the National Plan.⁶⁷ Our Watch has made progress in defining what the scope of the primary prevention workforce should include and has promoted strategies for effective workforce development. Our Watch has developed internal systems and processes to share insights and support a consistent approach to workforce development across the organisation. Greater external collaboration for

⁶³ National Priority 3.2(a): 'Review the specialist domestic, family and sexual violence workforce and frontline workforces that engage with women and their children who have experienced violence or with perpetrators. Identify gaps and challenges faced by these workforces and recommend actions that could be undertaken by employers and funding bodies to strengthen the workforce.' as per Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2016). Third Action Plan 2016-2019 Of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

⁶⁴ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2019). Fourth Action Plan - National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

⁶⁵ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2020). First Progress Report for the Fourth Action Plan (2019-2022).

⁶⁶ Wendt, S., Natalier, K., & Seymour, K. (2021). Strengthening Australia's domestic and family violence workforce. Retrieved March 7, 2022, from <https://www.anrows.org.au/project/strengthening-australias-domestic-and-family-violence-workforce-2/>

⁶⁷ Our Watch. (n.d.). Workforce Development Project Interim Report.

workforce development has also occurred through information sharing between national, state and local stakeholders through the National Local Government Association Prevention of Violence Against Women Network.

At the jurisdictional level, a range of activities have been implemented to strengthen the FDSV workforce. While some of these may have been directly associated with the National Plan, others have been implemented as part of state-based reform activities or strategies.

These include:

- In Victoria, in response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, a FDSV workforce census is undertaken every two years to support workforce planning and development. The first census was completed in 2017, followed by a 2019-20 iteration. The 2019-20 census findings were reported separately for specialist and primary prevention workforces as well as across the entire sector.⁶⁸ Over 5,000 responses were received between November 2019 and March 2020. Census findings explored core activities and role responsibilities, employment conditions, supervision and support, training, health and wellbeing, and career/future intentions of the workforce.
- A Family Violence Specialist Training Needs Survey of 367 specialist FDSV and primary prevention professionals was conducted in Victoria in 2017-18.
- The Queensland Government committed to enhance the capability and capacity of the FDSV workforce as a key priority under the *Not Now, Not Ever* report.⁶⁹ The Queensland Government demonstrated this commitment through a partnership between the Healing Foundation and ANROWS to provide professional development across a range of areas to strengthen sector capability (WorkUp Queensland). A critical element of this partnership is to address working with vulnerable groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people with a disability.
- In the Northern Territory, the Girls Can Boys Can and Old Ways are Strong primary prevention projects were seen to increase workforce capacity and knowledge of primary

prevention. See Section 6.3.4 for further discussion of these initiatives.

5.1.2 Workforce development for specialist FDSV and sexual assault responses

The consultations highlighted a significant improvement in the specialist workforce throughout the life of the National Plan with stakeholders expressing that the workforce is much more qualified than it was before. They also highlighted the increase in specialised competencies in the sector including the understanding of trauma-informed work. One respondent even quoted as saying:

'I think the early pioneers of the women's sector were passionate and now they are qualified and passionate'

– Sector worker

The frontline worker survey showed that overall, one-half (50.7 per cent) of respondents identified that the level of training and capacity building currently offered to the workforce operating in the FDSV or related fields is appropriate. A small proportion of respondents, about one-in-eight (11.7 per cent), strongly disagreed that the level of training and capacity building is appropriate. Respondents felt that their organisations were supportive of them accessing the training available but that funding agreements did not always allow for an appropriately trained workforce. Respondents would like to see training be made mandatory and ongoing in their workplaces to ensure continuous improvement. It was acknowledged that some organisations are required to have a trained workforce in their funding agreements. Access to training was not always seen as equitable by survey respondents who felt that it was at times not sufficiently funded or prioritised due to surging demands on organisations.

Access to training was seen as a concern for regional and rural workforces who often experience higher costs to access training, accounting for travel costs. Regional and rural areas also lack formal training institutions such as TAFE and Universities which often supply staff to services in metropolitan areas. However, this

⁶⁸ Family Safety Victoria & Orima Research. (2021). Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence – Summary Findings Report.

⁶⁹ Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland. (2015). Not now, not ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland.

cost was acknowledged to have been alleviated with COVID-19 and the ability to undertake training virtually.

Findings from the consultation process indicated that a consistent national approach to training and capacity building in the sector would greatly improve the level of workforce capability within the sector. There is currently a lack of national standards for training or mandatory accreditation for the workforce to ensure equality and optimal responses to domestic and family violence. Promisingly, a National Standards of Practice Manual for Services Against Sexual Violence exists that sets standards for workforce competence and guidance for training and development in responding to sexual violence.⁷⁰ However, the lack of a consistent national approach across all elements of FDSV also leads to piecemeal initiatives by organisations and jurisdictions to the capacity building of individual workforces. Stakeholders would like to see government investment for training match the increase in investment for research and evidence, so organisations can implement the expansion of the evidence base within their services.

Investment in workforce development for specialist FDSV services was delivered under the 4AP. Our Watch was funded to deliver the Workforce Development Project to increase the skills, number, and coordination of professionals involved in the prevention of violence against women in Australia.⁷¹ Whilst enacting systems change is a long-term endeavour, an interim evaluation report indicated that promising foundational change was occurring. This foundational change included improvements within Our Watch on the understanding of the primary prevention workforce, consideration of potential strategies and approaches for workforce development, and the degree of collaboration and coordination on workforce development. In addition, foundational change occurred outside of Our Watch through improved collaboration and information sharing between national, state, and local stakeholders. This interim evaluation highlights that progress is occurring at a systems level in workforce development for specialist services, with scope for additional and longer-term improvements.

Findings from the frontline worker survey as well as the consultation process indicated that there was concern shared among stakeholders that the FDSV service system was not meeting the needs of diverse groups, with specific reference made to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, CALD women, including migrants and refugees, LGBTIQ+ people, women with disability, children and young people, and those living in rural and remote areas. During consultations, stakeholders reported that victim survivors from diverse groups do not see themselves in the workforce when they are accessing services. Stakeholders felt that specialised training for workers to be able to respond to these cohorts as well as the employment of a diverse workforce, was an important component of strengthening the workforce.

Progress was made under the 4AP to build capacity within the workforce to be able to deliver trauma-informed and culturally safe responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children. Funding under the plan also led to organisations being able to recruit staff from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Stakeholders would like to see longer-term and sustainable funding in this area, to be able to continue and further enhance the community trust in these workforce initiatives to be able to deliver trauma-informed approaches.

The consultation activities identified high levels of burnout and vicarious trauma experienced in the specialist FDSV sector. Similarly, Family Safety Victoria's 2019-20 Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence revealed that 64 per cent of the specialist workforce have had to access support for instances of backlash or abuse whilst undertaking work.⁷² This pressure creates a high turnover of FDSV specialist staff leading to workforce shortages in an already strained sector. Stakeholders suggested that funding for separate training to be completed by staff outside of their normal work hours would help alleviate some of the pressure and time demands placed on the workforce. There was also concern raised around the workforce shortages in the sector leading to services relying on technically insufficient workers, as there is no minimum qualification expectation set by government for specialist FDSV services. This is a particular issue seen in

⁷⁰ National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence. (2021). Standards of Practice Manual for Services Against Sexual Violence (Third Edition).

⁷¹ Our Watch. (n.d.). Workforce Development Project Interim Evaluation Report.

⁷² Family Safety Victoria & Orima Research. (2021). Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence – Summary Findings Report.

services working with perpetrators, and especially in rural and regional areas.

Activities to strengthen the workforce have largely focused on responding to crises, with less focus on primary prevention. A skilled workforce is critical for primary prevention and future workforce development activities should continue to focus on this element.

5.1.3 Capacity building for mainstream services

The consultation process highlighted stakeholder support for mainstream services to prioritise responding to FDSV as part of their core service delivery. Mainstream services were recognised as part of the broader service system responding to FDSV, and include homelessness, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and education services, as well as hospitals and GPs. Victim survivors may disclose experiences of FDSV or seek support outside of the specialist FDSV service system, and mainstream services may be required to provide support or act as pathways into the FDSV system where appropriate. It was suggested that mainstream services should recognise that FDSV responses should be considered as an element of their business-as-usual operations. Stakeholders suggested that mainstream services should be encouraged to recruit with FDSV capability in mind as well as implementing set targets for the workforce to meet in relation to FDSV responses. They would like to see the role of mainstream services in the FDSV support system redefined and articulated to the sector. Layering of training throughout the mainstream service system would help to ensure frontline staff are all speaking the same language and supporting women towards the right service responses. This was seen as a particular problem in regional and remote areas where specialist services reported a lack of support from mainstream services in responding to FDSV in these communities.

Family Safety Victoria's *2019-20 Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence* indicated a gap in confidence and training regarding FDSV between specialist and mainstream workforces.⁷³ The census demonstrated that 61 per cent of specialist practitioners involved in family violence response were extremely or very confident that they had

the skills to perform their roles, whilst only 28 per cent of the broader family violence response workforce were confident. This was also seen in the primary prevention space, with almost half (49 per cent) of primary prevention practitioners indicating that they were at least very confident, whilst only one-in-five practitioners from the broader workforce felt so (20 per cent).

Key mainstream workforce areas that were identified by frontline worker survey respondents as needing additional training included:

- Housing
- Child protection
- Health
- Mental health
- Homelessness
- Social support
- Primary and secondary education providers.

It was noted that a lack of FDSV training in these workforces can cause victim survivors to face additional barriers to escaping FDSV, such as challenges accessing housing or experiencing victim-blaming from child protection. Findings also highlighted the need for greater training around emerging forms of violence in the specialist workforce including technology-facilitated abuse. Specialist training is required for workers to be able to adequately identify and respond to the intersection between technology and abuse. Furthermore, specialist training in trauma-informed responses is also crucial to ensure the effective delivery of FDSV services to victim survivors.

One stakeholder explained the importance of training and confidence in the mainstream workforce in relation to disclosures of violence:

'There needs to be more training for people working in environments where they may become aware of family violence but are not specifically in the industry - teachers, nurses, doctors etc. These people are often mandatory reporter[s] but they receive very little training on how to handle a situation which requires a report. The initial response that victims receive when they make a disclosure is so important and can really determine their long-term safety.'

⁷³ Family Safety Victoria & Orima Research. (2021). *Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence – Summary Findings Report*.

**– Respondent from a legal service
working with victim survivors and
perpetrators**

The importance of managing disclosures appropriately was discussed in the Final Evaluation Report of Our Watch's RREiS program that was delivered to Victorian high school students in 2016.⁷⁴ This report identified an increase in disclosures from students during and following the implementation of the program and identified that receiving support following a disclosure, can help change trajectories for students impacted by violence. This is also a significant risk to individuals if their disclosures are not handled appropriately. While the RREiS program includes briefings to staff on managing disclosures, feedback from staff indicated that they did not feel confident responding. As such, it was emphasised that schools should ensure that staff and students are aware of and are competent in responding appropriately to disclosures of abuse or perpetration in future.

The frontline worker survey and consultation process indicated that stakeholders felt there was insufficient FDSV training and awareness in the justice system, which contributed to inadequate justice responses to FDSV. A lack of training and understanding of the nuances of FDSV, in particular non-physical forms of violence, along with ongoing victim-blaming attitudes were seen as key issues. Furthermore, there is a lack of training around emerging forms of violence such as coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse. This leads to the justice system's inability to respond proportionately to the risks experienced by victim survivors, especially contemporary risks that have led to an increase in the severity and complexity of violence. Stakeholders suggested the alleviation of pressure and case load for police, would enable an improved response to instances of FDSV in the community. Improved rostering and reduction of caseload would also lead to police being able to prioritise FDSV training to increase their capacity.

Innovative practices have been witnessed in the legal sector to be able to assist women experiencing violence through integrated access and partnerships in legal services. An innovation in this field is the Health Justice Partnerships (HJPs) training which has increased legal access, literacy, and positive legal outcomes for FDSV,

family law and other services.⁷⁵ It has also seen an improved feeling of safety and wellbeing from women and their children accessing legal services through the increased training received by the legal sector in FDSV.

The importance of managing disclosures and providing pathways into specialist FDSV services was emphasised for primary healthcare professionals. The *Recognise, Respond, Refer* program provides front-line training to primary healthcare professionals and received additional Commonwealth funding under the 4AP to continue activity. This program is intended to equip general practice staff with the skills to identify abuse, and to respond and refer to support services if required. This recognises that healthcare professionals are often the only link that victim survivors have to community services more broadly and can therefore represent a critical point for intervention and support.

The consultation process raised questions around the training in the health sector in responding to FDSV instances in diverse cohorts, especially CALD and migrant and refugee women. Refugee and migrant women reportedly may be more likely to disclose experiences of FDSV to health workers rather than other community leaders and services. This highlights the need for improved training for the health workforce to be able to adequately respond to the disclosures in a culturally appropriate and effective way. Health services also need to be better trained in identifying trauma responses to FDSV in women and children in order to be able to effectively treat injuries relating to trauma.

Consultations highlighted the lack of trauma-informed responses and capability to be able to respond to diverse cohorts in mainstream services. Stakeholders had many examples of instances of diverse cultural groups such as refugee and migrant women being turned away from frontline services or victim-blaming due to a lack of cultural awareness. Similarly, responses can be inadequate if they do not take a trauma-informed approach to the services. This capability is lacking within mainstream services in comparison to specialist services. Furthermore, integration between responses from the health, police and specialist sectors is yet to be formalised which prevents more joined-up service delivery from occurring.

⁷⁴ Our Watch. (2016). Respectful Relationships Education in Schools: The Beginnings of Change - Final Evaluation Report.

⁷⁵ Social Compass. (2019). An Evaluation of the Pilot Program of Specialist Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships: Final Report.

Similarly, stakeholders highlighted the lack of capability in the mainstream service system to be able to respond to perpetrators. Greater understanding and a toolkit for how to work with men who have harmed women would help to be able to better respond to perpetrators in the community. Training in the mainstream service system needs to ensure the system acknowledges the need to hold the perpetrator to account rather than women and their children. This is especially the case for the justice system including police and courts.

Training for government in FDSV awareness and response was highlighted as an issue in the frontline worker survey and consultations. By having government departments effectively trained in FDSV, collaborative partnerships will be enabled between government and their service system counterparts. This will help create a better relationship between funders and service providers as well as address FDSV that exists within the workplaces of government.

The consultations highlighted the need for better integration in the training of the mainstream service system. This includes ensuring equity in training availability between larger and smaller organisations who may not have the same level of funding. It also means linking programs in with other community groups, such as schools, where training, education and awareness raising are already occurring to better equip the mainstream workforce.

Consultation findings indicated that the increased community awareness of FDSV resulting from the National Plan has assisted mainstream workforces in supporting victim survivors and encouraging them to seek support. However, dedicated funding for training and capacity building of community groups and leaders was seen as a potential blind spot by stakeholders. Since these leaders and organisations support mainstream and specialist services to identify and respond to instances of FDSV, training could help to maintain and improve this capability by these groups.

5.2 Integrate systems and share information

Family, domestic and sexual violence occurs across all demographics and in all parts of Australia. Responding to and preventing FDSV is the responsibility of all individuals and services. Specialist FDSV providers play a critical role in responding to episodes of violence and working with victim survivors to ensure their safety. Specialist services however operate as part of the broader FDSV system. By sharing the information within an integrated service system, it allows for the needs of the individual to be more effectively met without retraumatising the victim survivor. This also allows for more coordinated approaches between services systems and jurisdictions. This leads to more joined-up approaches to tackle increasingly complex forms of violence and to have equity in responses to violence.

Under the Third Action Plan, the Commonwealth Government committed to working with communities to deliver integrated local responses, to improve information sharing and integrated case management to reduce the

burden carried by victim survivors, and through the Indigenous Family Safety Program create better links and information sharing between local police and service providers.⁷⁶

To support the implementation of the 4AP actions and priorities, the Northern Territory government committed \$6.49 million per year for three years towards FDSV prevention, perpetrator intervention, and services for victim survivors through the *Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028: Safe, respected and free from violence*.⁷⁷ This includes a commitment to implementing the Domestic and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme to support information-sharing between government and service providers in a timely manner, as well as the development of a risk assessment and management framework.⁷⁸ The *Domestic and Family Violence Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2018* was passed in 2018, creating a new domestic and family violence information

⁷⁶ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2016). Third Action Plan 2016-2019 Of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

⁷⁷ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (n.d.). Implementation Plan. Retrieved March 17, 2022, from National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children: <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/implementation-plan/>

⁷⁸ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (n.d.). Information sharing scheme. Retrieved March 17, 2022, from National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children: <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/initiative/information-sharing-scheme/>

sharing scheme to support this commitment to timely information-sharing.⁷⁹

As part of the funding under the 4AP, the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department also provided \$11 million of funding to improve information sharing between the family law, family violence and child protection systems.⁸⁰ This funding was directed at a pilot co-location model that places family law officials in state and territory family law courts, and at efforts to scope potential technological solutions to enable timely information-sharing across the family law, child protection, and family law court systems.

An independent evaluation of the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) pilot found that the program was effective, but that greater investment and review of the Community Legal Assistance Services System was needed to ensure data was timely, accurate and accessible to users.⁸¹ Training was also required to ensure users were getting the optimal functionality out of the information sharing scheme. This pilot scheme has been welcomed by the jurisdictions who have noted the complexities of legal systems not being able to cross jurisdictional boundaries when some women and their children live across multiple state borders.

During consultations for the National Plan evaluation, representatives from the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia highlighted that they have their own tri-state region cross-border justice scheme which allows police to exercise their powers in the other jurisdictions, which has not been highlighted under the National Plan. These stakeholders noted that this piece of legislation could be innovative nationally for overcoming this challenge. Stakeholders also noted that the postponement of automation on the national information sharing project for protection orders which, was withdrawn in 2018, has hampered progress towards information sharing in the legal system.

The Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Service (IDFVS) is an initiative by the New South Wales Government to provide a multi-agency, integrated and coordinated response to FDSV in

target communities.⁸² An independent evaluation conducted found that the program had significantly increased the wellbeing of recipients and they had received multiple layers of wraparound support through coordinated service provision. The program was also found to be a cost-efficient solution to integrated service delivery for FDSV. However, there was a greater need for the diversity in the IDFVS workforce and services to be able to provide services to diverse cohorts. There was also a call for greater training amongst staff and management of IDFVS to ensure continuous learning and improvement.

Throughout consultation, varied responses were given around whether the service system integration had developed over the life of the National Plan. Some service organisations felt they still worked in siloes of each other which they found problematic as the same families normally access various services across the service system. Furthermore, most needs of clients are usually complex and cut across sectors requiring a dual health or social care response. For example, some organisations raised the intersection between mental health and disability with the complex trauma that women with a disability have faced in institutions. By further integration between the sectors, more holistic health responses can be undertaken to meet the increasingly complex needs of women and their children. Finally, greater integration of specialist and mainstream services has also been identified as an area of improvement by organisations. Greater integration between these services, especially in regional areas, will help provide optimal responses to women and their children experiencing FDSV who often come into contact with both the specialist and mainstream service systems. However, most stakeholders acknowledged that the integration between specialist and mainstream services that has occurred has greatly strengthened FDSV awareness in generalist services and their responses.

One initiative highlighted as contributing towards coordinated approaches, system integration and information sharing was the ImpEG.⁸³ This group comprises Commonwealth, state and territory

⁷⁹ Domestic and Family Violence Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2018

⁸⁰ Attorney-General's Department. (n.d.). Family violence. Retrieved March 17, 2022, from <https://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/families/family-violence>

⁸¹ Williams, E., & Westhorp, G. (2019). Family Violence Prevention Legal Services: National Evaluation Report. Charles Darwin University: Northern Institute.

⁸² UNSW. (2018). Integrated domestic and family violence service (IDFVS) evaluation report.

⁸³ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (n.d.). Implementation Plan. Retrieved March 17, 2022, from National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children: <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/implementation-plan/>

government representatives to drive the national policy agenda for FDSV, support work to progress the national priorities and to provide governance over the overarching implementation of the National Plan. Members of the ImpEG noted how the governance body had increased information sharing and collaboration between the jurisdictions and between the state and Commonwealth governments. They have used the forum to share learnings of their own policy and programs and to test ideas to respond to challenges, such as the rise of violence throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Jurisdictions have noted that the development of a more coordinated national approach has been supported by increased sharing of solutions and 'what works' between jurisdictions. However, some stakeholders have identified that it is difficult to share information and collaborate cross-jurisdictionally if you are not a member of ImpEG and that there could be improvements outside of that formal mechanism.

The instability of the workforce in the FDSV specialist, mainstream and government sectors was cited as hampering progress towards integration and information sharing. Stakeholders consulted highlighted that high turnover rates in these sectors hinder efforts made in collaboration, as the integrated service response is often reliant on personal and professional relationships which can take time to establish. Furthermore, information sharing is challenged by the complexity of referral pathways developing as the service system has expanded for FDSV. To

overcome this, there is a need for greater embedding and investing in the coordination of the service system. Furthermore, greater integration between FDSV specialist agencies such as ANROWS and Our Watch will continue to help facilitate the connectedness of the FDSV sector.

Stakeholders in the sector would like to see a greater utilisation of technology to support integration and information sharing. One stakeholder was quoted as saying:

'Technology is used to perpetrate violence, but it also represents an opportunity how technology can help us make a difference in complex social problems.'

Sector worker

Stakeholders would like to see deeper partnerships developed with technology and innovation leaders to bring disruptive thinking to the FDSV space for better outcomes. It has also been recommended that in the future National Plan and subsequent action plans that more focus and attention is given to sectors such as technology and data outside of the social care sector. Stakeholders noted that this National Plan had a large focus on the social care service system without much consideration for other sectors that intersect, or could intersect with FDSV responses.

5.3 Improve the evidence base

The evidence base has improved significantly under the National Plan and its research priority setting and funding. This has seen an increase in evidence based responses towards FDSV reduction in Australia. This has largely been driven by the flagship initiatives implemented under the National Plan, specifically ANROWS and Our Watch. Stakeholders agree that improving the evidence base through these initiatives has been one of the major achievements of the National Plan. There is a continued need to improve mechanisms to translate research into practice through greater targeting and refreshed research agendas.

ANROWS is jointly funded by state and territory governments and is the lead research body in Australia for the production and dissemination of evidence to reduce violence against women and their children. ANROWS has produced Australia's National Research Agenda to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2020-2022, under the National Plan to further advance the improvement of the evidence base for FDSV responses.⁸⁴ ANROWS was launched in 2014 and has since released a number of key research reports and thought leadership pieces outlined in Table 2 below.

⁸⁴ ANROWS. (2020). Australia's National Research Agenda to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (ANRA) 2020-2022. Retrieved March 16, 2022, from <https://www.anrows.org.au/about/national-research-agenda-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children/>

Table 2: List of Key ANROWS Reports

Report Title	Author(s)	Publication Date
Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network Data Report: Intimate partner violence homicides 2010–2018	Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network	22 Feb 2022
Economic insecurity and intimate partner violence in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic	Dr Hayley Boxall and Anthony Morgan	31 Jan 2022
Rante-rante ampe Marle and Urreye: “Safe, Respected and Free from Violence” projects evaluation	Dr Chay Brown	10 Nov 2021
“Chuck her on a lie detector”: Investigating Australians’ mistrust in women’s reports of sexual assault	ANROWS: Kate Minter, Dr Erin Carlisle, Dr Christine Coumarelos	1 Nov 2021
Intimate partner violence during the COVID-19 pandemic: A survey of women in Australia	Hayley Boxall and Anthony Morgan	11 Oct 2021
Technology-facilitated abuse: A survey of support services stakeholders	Dr Asher Flynn	21 Jul 2021
What works? Exploring the literature on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing programs that respond to family violence	Professor Bronwyn Carlson	30 June 2021
Improved accountability: The role of perpetrator intervention systems	Professor Donna Chung	30 June 2020
Crossing the line: Lived experience of sexual violence among trans women of colour from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds in Australia	Professor Jane M. Ussher	18 June 2020
Best practice principles for interventions with domestic and family violence perpetrators from refugee backgrounds	Professor Colleen Fisher	29 April 2020
Australians’ attitudes to violence against women and gender equality. Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS)	Kim Webster	30 November 2018
Women, disability and violence: Barriers to accessing justice: Final Report	JaneMaree Maher	27 April 2018
Innovative models in addressing violence against Indigenous women: Final report	Harry Blagg	29 Jan 2018
Domestic and family violence protection orders in Australia: an investigation of information-	Annabel Taylor	31 Oct 2017

Report Title	Author(s)	Publication Date
sharing and enforcement with a focus on interstate orders: Final report		
Domestic violence and women's economic security: Building Australia's capacity for prevention and redress: Final report	Natasha Cortis	24 Oct 2016
Media representations of violence against women and their children: Final report	Georgina Sutherland	6 Jun 2016
Violence against women in Australia: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey, 2012: Research report	Peta Cox	22 Oct 2015
Examination of the burden of disease of intimate partner violence against women in 2011: Final report	Julie Ayre	30 Oct 2016
Seeking help for domestic violence: Exploring rural women's coping experiences: Final report	Sarah Wendt	14 Sept 2017

The process of setting national priorities for research under the Action Plans and the ANRA has been useful in improving the evidence base for priority populations, and areas of interest for policymakers and service organisations.⁸⁵ This has brought greater focus to these priority areas and enabled recommendations into policy solutions for these cohorts. However, the independent evaluation of ANROWS found that policymakers are unable to link their program design and funding for particular projects to individual ANROWS reports.⁸⁶ However, all acknowledged that ANROWS had played a role in their policy decisions.

The independent evaluation has shown that ANROWS would benefit from articulating their primary audience as policymakers to further refine the evidence base they are building.⁸⁷ Stakeholders were concerned that research may not always be translating into practice in the policy landscape due to a lack of clarity and targeted research reports towards policymakers. By making their reports more accessible and having a larger focus towards implementation, ANROWS will have a greater effect on developing evidenced based approaches to FDSV responses. However, stakeholders during consultation for the

National Plan evaluation highlighted the impact that the ANROWS Senior Officials Policy Research Groups had on their policy development by being able to hear from academics and other jurisdictions. This had led to open reflections on what is occurring in the FDSV landscape and how this influences policy.

Throughout consultation for this evaluation, stakeholders emphasised the importance of ANROWS' role in expanding the evidence base and the success they had in achieving this aim. One stakeholder even asserted that:

'ANROWS is the best thing that could have come from the plan.'

State government representative

Stakeholders believed that an increase in community awareness of FDSV and its forms can be directly attributed to the research, initiatives and campaigns produced by ANROWS. Many stakeholders noted that they also directly implemented ANROWS' research into their evidence based interventions and highlighted the ongoing development of the 'What Works' framework as a key support for these

⁸⁵ Deloitte. (2020). Review of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS).

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

interventions. ANROWS has also been attributed the increase in awareness around primary prevention in the past few years and the increase of the focus of primary prevention in policy and practice.

Alongside ANROWS, Our Watch has also been a significant flagship initiative undertaken by the government for improving the evidence base. Our Watch developed key strategic frameworks for primary prevention of FDSV against women and their children:

- The **Change the Story Framework** which guides a coordinated and effective national approach to preventing violence against women
- The **Changing the Picture Framework** which is a national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children
- The **Counting on Change** guide for policymakers, researchers and other stakeholders on measuring population-level progress towards the prevention of violence against women and their children
- The **Changing the landscape** evidence-based resource that was published by Our Watch and Women with Disabilities Victoria in 2022 to support the prevention of violence against women with disabilities.

La Trobe University's independent evaluation of Our Watch found that in its first seven years, Our Watch successfully drove and influenced the research and policy across primary prevention of FDSV against women and their children.⁸⁸ Those who have engaged with Our Watch highlighted their increased capacity in creating and undertaking evidence-based primary prevention activities directly through the resources it provides, including frameworks and training materials. Each state and territory have also acknowledged the influence of Our Watch's research on their primary prevention policy agendas.

Consultation throughout the course of the National Plan evaluation also found that Our Watch had greatly contributed to community awareness of FDSV and improvement of the evidence base. Stakeholders acknowledged that

Our Watch had significantly influenced the understanding of the differing layers of violence against women, how this effects different cohorts and the primary prevention responses required to address these. One stakeholder noted:

'I think the Our Watch work has been the key highlight during this time, especially the Change the Story framework, and framing the issue of violence against four gendered drivers.'

Service provider

Stakeholders also linked the contributions of Our Watch to primary prevention to the initiatives targeted under the 4AP, especially the third phase of the *Stop it at the Start* Campaign that ran in early 2021.

Our Watch was also funded under the 4AP to develop the National Primary Prevention Hub which aims to provide information-sharing and collaboration between specialist and mainstream organisations and sectors. An interim evaluation of the National Primary Prevention Hub found that there was a high level of engagement with its content and that feedback was positive in delivering value to participants.⁸⁹

The independent evaluation conducted by La Trobe University found that Our Watch can continue to improve the evidence base through working with practitioners on the ground to examine frameworks in practice, increasing influence amongst individuals and businesses in the wider community, continuing to strengthen relationships with diverse communities and improving the ease of access to resources for practitioners, focusing on an intersectional approach.⁹⁰ It was noted that Our Watch's funding structure inadvertently promotes a reactive rather than proactive approach to prevention activities, and Our Watch is not able to be 'all things to all people', with additional effort required to meet the needs of rural and regional communities as well as diverse population groups. It was also noted that Our Watch could increase their reach by improving the accessibility and functionality of finding resources through their website, especially to those from diverse backgrounds.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Forsdike, K., Hooker, L., Seal, E., O'Sullivan, G., & Ison, J. (2020). Respect Victoria Evidence Review: Final Report. La Trobe University.

⁸⁹ Our Watch. (2021). National Primary Prevention Hub Interim Evaluation Report.

⁹⁰ Forsdike, K., Dyson, S., Seal, E., O'Sullivan, G., De Silva, D., Donaldson, A., Hooker, L., Burnett, D., Alahakoon, D., and Nicholson, M. (2021). Our Watch Evaluation. Department of Social Services

⁹¹ Ibid.

5.4 Track performance

The track performance pillar under the foundations for change refers to the measuring of progress against the high-level indicators of change identified in the National Plan.⁹² These four high-level indicators include:

- Reduced prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault
- Increased proportion of women who feel safe in their communities
- Reduced deaths related to domestic violence and sexual assault
- Reduced proportion of children exposed to their mother's or carer's experience of domestic violence.⁹³

These indicators have been criticised as limited to measure the performance of the National Plan. Measurement activities have also covered small areas of each of the indicators rather than providing a holistic view.⁹⁴

The 4AP also laid out further commitments in regard to the track performance pillar under the foundations for change. These included a commitment that governments would:

- Work together to build on the current measures of success
- Identify and define clear indicators, and relevant data sources, to measure success
- Focus on 'mining' existing data and information on violence to provide a useful picture of progress
- Work towards addressing key gaps in the data
- Use data to continually improve strategies
- Continue to invest in the PSS and the NCAS as critical measures of progress towards reducing violence against women and their children.⁹⁵

Measuring progress has been acknowledged to be difficult as there is no nationally consistent data set to be able to measure progress. The ANAO's Report in 2019 highlighted a number of findings in relation to the tracking of progress and monitoring and evaluation of the National Plan.⁹⁶ The report found that there has been a lack of attention given to implementation planning and performance measurement across the life of the National Plan by the DSS. Despite this, ANAO recognised that the Department had established the correct governance arrangements to effectively implement the National Plan with clear accountabilities and the right decision-making processes. The report also found that the Department had taken the right funding and actions to achieve certain outcomes under the National Plan. However, the Department could not demonstrate how they had taken these actions based on current available evidence or data. The report concluded that for the future implementation of the National Plan, the Department would have to develop new measures of success, data sources and evaluation plans to improve public transparency of the progress of the National Plan.

The National Data Collection and Reporting Framework (DCRF) will act as a guide for organisations about the collection of data by identifying key data items and recording formats to improve the reporting of FDSV data.⁹⁷ The ABS outlines six measurable elements as organising principles for FDSV data including context, risk, incident/experience, responses, impacts and outcomes as well as programs, research and evaluation.^{98 99} The DCRF was committed to be operational by 2022; however the ANAO has found that the Department cannot

⁹² Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2013). Second Action Plan 2013-2016: Moving Ahead - Of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children.

⁹³ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2010). National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022.

⁹⁴ Australian National Audit Office. (2019). Audit-General Report No.45 of 2018-19: Coordination and Targeting of Domestic Violence Funding and Actions.

⁹⁵ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (n.d.). Implementation Plan. Retrieved March 17, 2022, from National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children: <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/implementation-plan/>

⁹⁶ Australian National Audit Office. (2019). Audit-General Report No.45 of 2018-19: Coordination and Targeting of Domestic Violence Funding and Actions.

⁹⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2014) Foundation for a National Data Collection and Reporting Framework for family, domestic and sexual violence.

⁹⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2021). Family, domestic and sexual violence data in Australia.

⁹⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2013). Defining the Data Challenges for Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence.

demonstrate that jurisdictions are on track to deliver against this outcome.¹⁰⁰

The Commonwealth has also committed to continue the PSS and NCAS every four years.¹⁰¹ The PSS was conducted by the ABS again in 2021 (after delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic), collecting information on the nature and extent of violence experienced by Australians.¹⁰² The NCAS was also conducted by ANROWS again in 2021 and is a general population telephone survey of attitudes towards, and awareness of, violence against women.¹⁰³ The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) is conducted by the ABS every six years, and includes a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's experiences of FDSV. Furthermore, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) included an additional section on physical harm in the 2018-19 survey which contributes to the data collection under the National Plan.¹⁰⁴ In the 2020-21 Federal Budget, the Commonwealth committed to establishing the first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Personal Safety Survey to measure the prevalence of FDSV against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.¹⁰⁵ All these activities contribute to tracking the performance of the National Plan.

Alongside the DCRF, monitoring and evaluation of the National Plan to track progress occurs through the PMR framework which was developed to support the monitoring of progress of the 4AP.¹⁰⁶ This evaluation will draw together data from a range of evaluation activities, including some that feature in the PMR framework, including social media analysis, quantitative assessment of outcomes and consideration of prior research and evaluations to inform the evaluation of the progress of the National Plan. Several evaluations have been carried out across the life of the National Plan, including progress reports and evaluations of each Action Plan using the PMR framework. Independent evaluations have also been conducted of the various initiatives under

the National Plan, 52 of which were reviewed by KPMG as part of this evaluation.

During consultations for the National Plan evaluation, stakeholders noted how important it is to capture diverse voices and voices of people with lived experience in future evaluation and monitoring activities. This was seen as crucial to ensure the effective monitoring and evaluation of the progress of the National Plan. Furthermore, it was also suggested that tracking of performance of initiatives under the National Plan was difficult to conduct due to the short-term and pilot funding arrangements of the programs. This meant that initiatives were not receiving dedicated funding to evaluate their effectiveness of implementation as funding cycles often only saw them through program design and establishment. These funding cycles do not promote the improvement of the evidence base or the use of monitoring and evaluation activities in program improvement.

In summary, through the life of the National Plan there has been a substantial commitment to data collection and reporting with increases in the volume and level of reporting data against the national outcomes. As noted in the ANAO report, there had been a lack of attention given to implementation planning and performance measurement across the life of the National Plan. The PMR was subsequently developed to inform monitoring and reporting for the final Action Plan. Acknowledging the variety of data challenges, the National Plan has not adequately facilitated the development of a consistent tracking of performance over time. Monitoring, reporting and evaluation findings have not clearly informed improvements and enhancements to subsequent action plans and activities. There is an important opportunity for this to be established to track progress of the new National Plan.

¹⁰⁰ Australian National Audit Office. (2019). Audit-General Report No.45 of 2018-19: Coordination and Targeting of Domestic Violence Funding and Actions.

¹⁰¹ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (2013). Second Action Plan 2013-2016: Moving Ahead - Of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children.

¹⁰² Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (n.d.). Implementation Plan. Retrieved March 17, 2022, from National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children: <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/implementation-plan/>

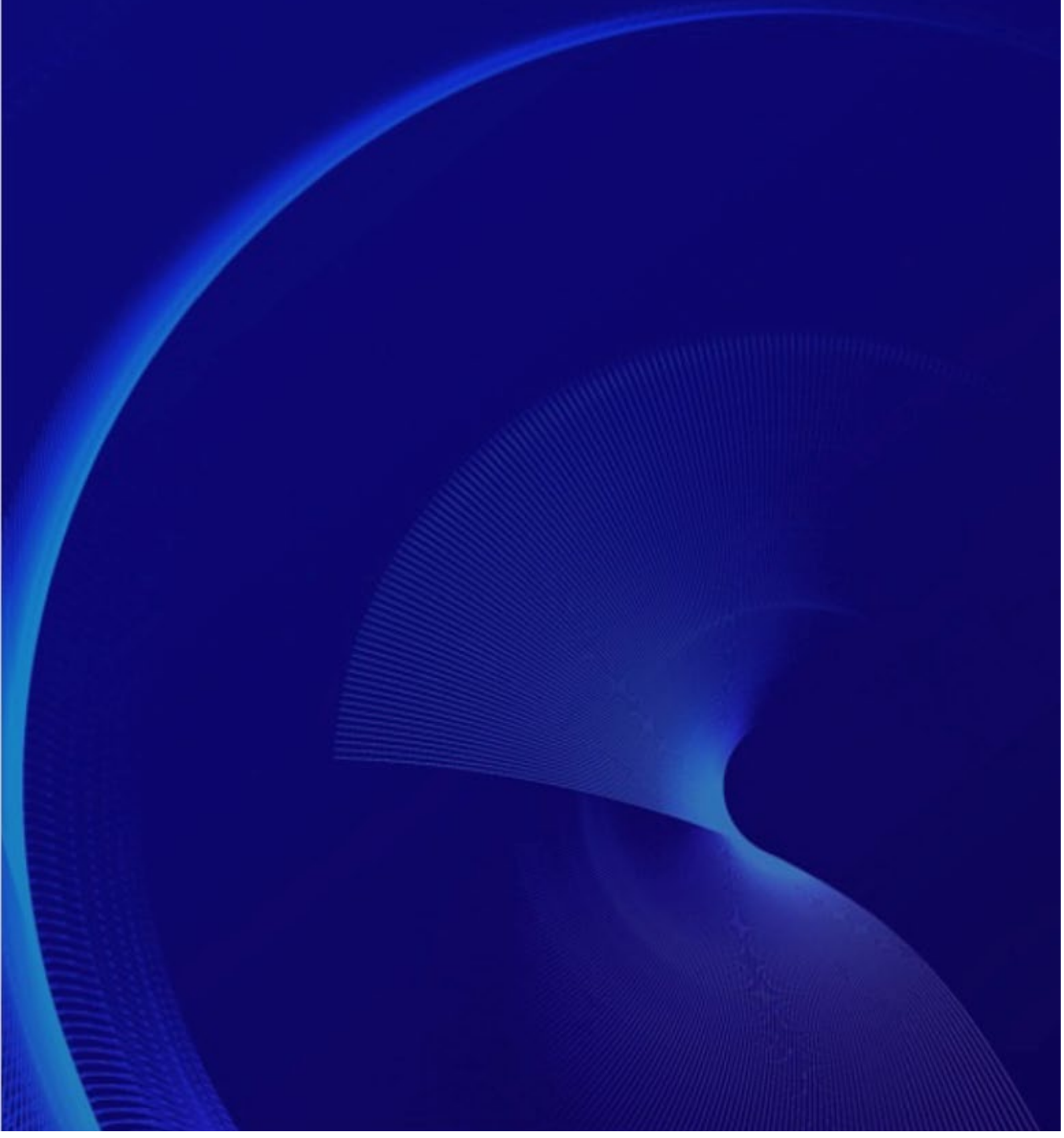
¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Department of Social Services. (2021). Historic investment in women's safety and domestic violence support: Budget 2021-22 paper. Microsoft Word - 20. Factsheet - Budget 2021-22 - Womens safety investment - 11 May (dss.gov.au)

¹⁰⁶ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (n.d.). Evaluation of the National Plan. Retrieved March 16, 2022, from National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children: <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/initiative/evaluation-of-the-national-plan/>

National Plan Outcomes



6 National Plan Outcomes

Key Findings:

- A reduction in community attitudes supportive of FDSV and increased community awareness of FDSV, particularly non-physical forms, was noted over the life of the National Plan. It was identified that concerning attitudes persist that demonstrate victim-blaming, a lack of understanding, and can excuse FDSV.
- Over the life of the National Plan there has been improved community support for gender equality. However, despite these gains, gender inequality persists in Australia.
- Stakeholders reflected positively on the increased focus on primary prevention under the National Plan. Understandings of respectful relationships have improved among young people and the broader community, supported by Respectful Relationships education in schools and social marketing campaigns. Social marketing campaigns have also supported an increased focus on empowering men to speak up about FDSV.
- The National Plan provided positive policy leadership on driving local solutions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, and pockets of excellence were noted. It is noted that further commitment is needed to ensure this translates into practice and improves access to culturally appropriate and trauma-informed services.
- Stakeholders suggested that services were meeting the needs of victim survivors to a moderate extent, with low rates of service access and a reactive service system. There is a need for continued investment in workforce development and increased sector and service integration to improve experiences for victim survivors. There was also a need for increased consideration of children as victim survivors in their own right. Whilst the needs of victim survivors from diverse groups were not being comprehensively addressed by the National Plan and FDSV service system, stakeholders noted positive progress through a number of initiatives.
- The justice system response to FDSV is varied. Positive advancements in legislation, training, and integrated and cross-jurisdictional responses to FDSV were identified across the National Plan. However, victim survivors demonstrate a lack of willingness to report incidents of FDSV, police responses need improvement, and challenges faced by victim survivors in the Family Court and Child Protection systems need to be addressed.
- The National Plan brought an increased focus on perpetrators of FDSV and supported improvements to the evidence base for perpetrator intervention. Positive examples of perpetrator intervention have occurred in states and territories. Repeat partner violence remains an issue, with stakeholders emphasising that a focus on the perpetrator of FDSV must be maintained in order to reduce rates of violence.

The National Plan outlined six national outcomes for governments to deliver over the course of the Plan, which would be supported by actions and priorities in each Action Plan. These national outcomes were intended to support the overall target of reducing violence against women and their children. The national outcomes and associated measures of success are:

01	Communities are safe and free from violence	Increased intolerance of violence against women
02	Relationships are respectful	Improved knowledge, skills and behaviour of respectful relationships by young people
03	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are strengthened	Reduction in the proportion of Indigenous women who consider that family violence, assault and sexual assault are problems for their communities and neighbourhoods

		Increased proportions of Indigenous women are able to have their say within community on important issues including violence
04	Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence	Increased access to and responsiveness of services for victims of domestic / family violence and sexual assault
05	Justice responses are effective	Increased rates of women reporting domestic violence and sexual assault to police
06	Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account	A decrease in repeated partner victimisation

6.1 Communities are safe and free from violence

National Outcome 1 identified that community social norms and attitudes regarding gender equality and traditional gender stereotypes are key predictors of violence against women and their children. As such, the National Plan targeted an increase of the community's intolerance of violence against women by promoting a community-wide response, focusing on primary prevention, and advancing gender equality.

6.1.1 Community attitudes towards violence against women

Community attitudes towards violence against women were defined as the key measure of the success of National Outcome 1. ANROWS notes that predictors of support for domestic violence include a low level of understanding of the behaviours that constitute violence against women and a low level of support for gender equality.¹⁰⁷ The NCAS demonstrated a reduction in support for domestic violence between 2009 and 2017, with the 2017 NCAS identifying that the majority of Australians reject attitudes that are supportive of violence against women. A reduction in support for FDSV was seen through a decrease in the percentage of people who believed that domestic violence could be excused

if it resulted from someone getting angry and temporarily losing control, or if they regretted the violence afterwards (see Figure 17).

The NCAS also demonstrated declining support for the idea that violence can be excused if alcohol is involved, and that intimate partner violence is a private matter. Few Australians believe that women are lying about sexual assault if they do not report immediately (11 per cent), nor that women should have to deal with violence on their own (7 per cent).¹⁰⁸ The community's understanding of violence against women had also increased since the previous survey, with more respondents able to recognise most of the behaviours that constitute violence against women.

The NCAS did highlight that concerning attitudes towards violence against women do persist. The findings indicated that 1 in 5 respondents believe that domestic violence is a normal response to stress, and 1 in 3 believe that a woman is responsible for continued violence if they do not leave their partners.¹⁰⁹ In addition, 1 in 3 think it is natural for a man to want to appear in control of his partner in front of his friends.¹¹⁰ In relation to sexual violence, 2 in 5 respondents believe that women make false allegations of sexual assault

¹⁰⁷ ANROWS. (2017). 2017 NCAS Summary Report: Are we there yet? Australians' attitudes towards violence against women & gender equality.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

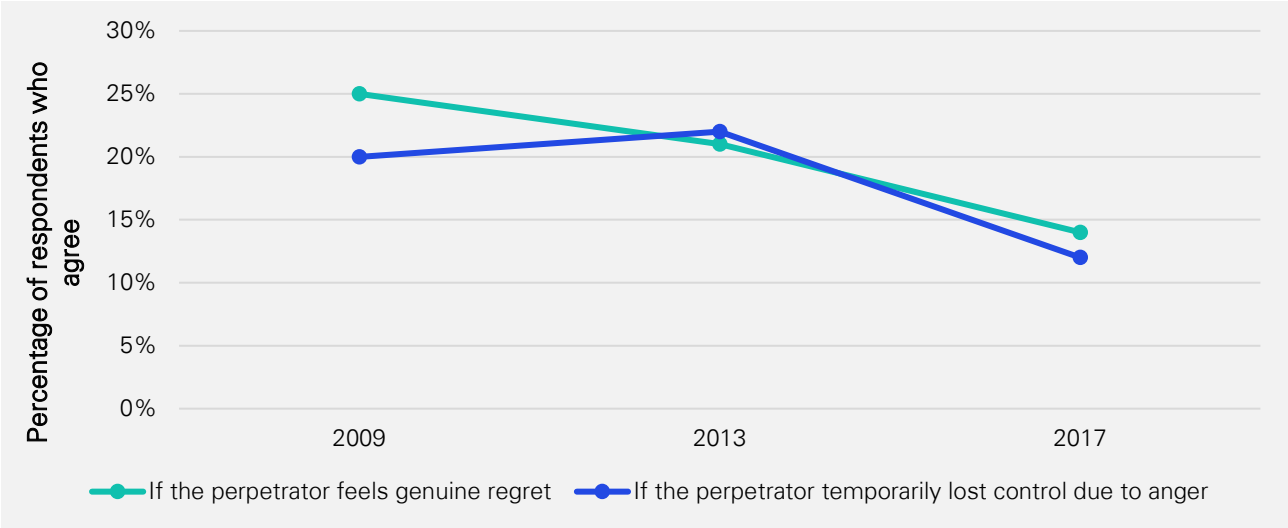
¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

to punish men.¹¹¹ There has also been a declining awareness among the general population since 1995 that men are more likely to commit acts of domestic violence, with 74 per cent in 2009, 71 per cent in 2013, and 64 per cent in 2017 (see Figure 18).¹¹² This decline is also seen in responses from young people aged 16 to 24 years.¹¹³ Whilst 60 per cent of young people

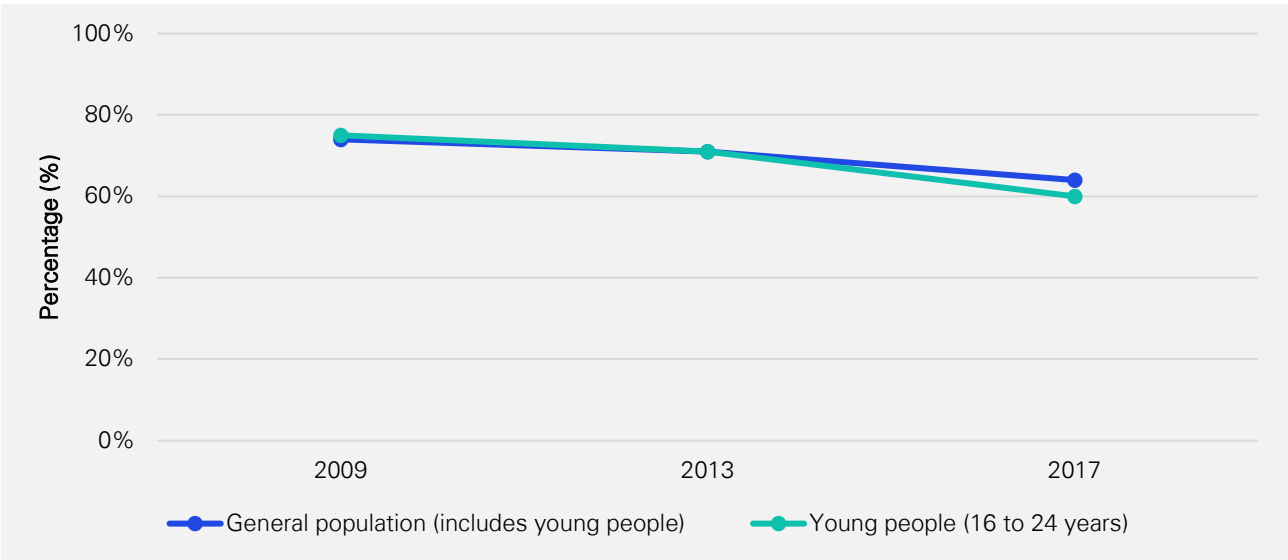
recognise that men are more likely than women to commit domestic violence, this has dropped from 71 per cent in 2013. This decline has been occurring since 2009, when 75 per cent of young people recognised this.

Figure 17: Belief that domestic violence can be excused, between 2009 and 2017



Source: ANROWS. (2017). 2017 NCAS Summary Report: Are we there yet? Australians' attitudes towards violence against women & gender equality.

Figure 18: Percentage of awareness that men are more likely to commit acts of domestic violence, trend between 2009 and 2017 by general population and young people (aged 16 to 24 years)



Source: ANROWS. (2017). 2017 NCAS Summary Report: Are we there yet? Australians' attitudes towards violence against women & gender equality.

¹¹¹ ANROWS. (2017). 2017 NCAS Summary Report: Are we there yet? Australians' attitudes towards violence against women & gender equality.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ ANROWS. (2017). Young Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality: Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS).

In consultations conducted by KPMG for this evaluation, stakeholder views on community attitudes towards violence against women varied somewhat. Most stakeholders acknowledged that community awareness of violence against women had improved throughout the life of the National Plan, and that there was improved language to describe non-physical forms of violence, such as coercive control. Many stakeholders referenced pivotal events such as the #MeToo movement as responsible for increased community awareness. The frontline worker survey indicated that respondents felt that community members are able to recognise FDSV to a slight (61.9 per cent) or moderate (29.6 per cent) extent. A small proportion of respondents (4.5 per cent) felt that community members were not able to recognise FDSV at all, a perspective that was echoed by a number of stakeholders in consultations who expressed that they felt that community attitudes had not changed significantly over the life of the National Plan. A number of stakeholders identified that, while awareness may have increased, there was limited understanding of the gendered drivers of violence. Notably, a number of stakeholders across government and service providers identified that they had seen a substantial increase in backlash and men's rights activism alongside an increase in community understanding of FDSV, particularly among young people.

The stakeholder comments regarding concerning attitudes among young people aged 16 to 24 years are supported by NCAS data. While gradual improvement in attitudes and understanding of FDSV among young people have been identified over time, concerning attitudes were noted in the most recent NCAS results. The survey indicated that young men are less likely than young women to recognise all of the non-physical forms of violence and abuse as domestic abuse.¹¹⁴ The number of young people suggesting that men and women are equally likely to perpetrate domestic violence has increased from 23 per cent in 2009 to 36 per cent in 2017.¹¹⁵ In regard to sexual violence, one in seven (14 per cent) young people believe that many allegations of sexual assault made by women are false.¹¹⁶

These findings suggest that community attitudes towards violence against women have improved over the life of the National Plan, but that there are key areas of concern that warrant additional focus to ensure that communities are safe and free from violence.

6.1.2 Addressing gender inequality as a driver of violence against women and their children

Gender inequality is understood to be a driver of violence against women and their children. The second edition of the Our Watch *Change the Story* framework, an evidence-based framework for best practice primary prevention that addresses the gendered drivers of violence, explains that:

*'There is a strong and consistent association between gender inequality and levels of violence against women, and significant consensus in the international evidence that examining the ways in which gender relations are structured, and the social context of gender inequality is key to understanding the underlying conditions that produce violence against women... Gender inequality cannot be disentangled from other social injustices because gendered inequality frequently intersects with other forms of structural and systemic discrimination, inequality and injustice.'*¹¹⁷

Stakeholders in consultations with KPMG agreed that fundamental change to address gender inequality needed to occur before violence against women could be meaningfully and significantly addressed. A number referenced the *Change the Story* framework as being a fundamental resource in identifying the gendered drivers of violence and progressing understanding in this area. However, stakeholders acknowledged that there was significant progress required to translate this understanding into meaningful reductions in gender inequality, with one stakeholder stating:

¹¹⁴ ANROWS. (2017). Young Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality: Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS).

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Our Watch. (2021). *Change the story*. A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia (second edition).

'...there is still considerable work to go around changing those community attitudes that we know are drivers of violence against women in general, such as sexist perceptions and views of women's roles in society.'

– State government representative

Data on workforce participation and remuneration can provide an insight into the level of gender inequality in Australian society. Results from the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey surrounding paid work indicate that there has been some convergence in recent years between the earning distributions of men and women in full-time work.¹¹⁸ However, this must be interpreted alongside findings that men have lower rates of transitioning out of employment and higher rates into employment than women.¹¹⁹ This is understood to be primarily due to the impact of childbirth on women's employment participation.¹²⁰ The latest data from the Labour Force Survey suggests that women's workforce participation rate has returned to pre-pandemic levels. However, there is still a notable gender gap in workforce participation rates, with 62.3 per cent of women participating in March 2022 compared to 70.8 per cent of men.¹²¹ Understanding the gender pay gap, which refers to the difference between men and women's average earnings in the workforce, also helps to identify gender inequality in paid work. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency reported that Australia's national gender pay gap was 13.8% as at February 2022, with women earning on average \$255.30 less than men per week.¹²² In addition, while there are some improvements between 2011 and 2019, the HILDA survey shows that there is still a notable gap between men and women's superannuation balance at the

time of retirement. The survey indicated that men who retired between 2015 and 2019 had a mean superannuation balance of \$476,744, whilst women had a mean of \$289,277, which had increased from \$253,027 in the period between 2011 to 2015.¹²³

Gender inequality was demonstrated through findings on unpaid work in the HILDA survey. The results indicated that women undertake more unpaid work on average per week than men.¹²⁴ The only exception to this gender imbalance occurs when females are considered 'dependent children' in a household, in which case they do not undertake more unpaid work on average than males.¹²⁵ Positively, the survey highlighted a reduction in the gap between women and men's unpaid weekly work hours between 2002 and 2019, reducing from 28.8 hours to 20.9 hours.¹²⁶ This was attributable partly to an increase in men's unpaid work but primarily due to a reduction in women's unpaid work. However, unpaid work still places a significant time burden on women compared to men, with men conducting 27.8 hours of unpaid work on average in 2019 compared to 48.7 hours for women.¹²⁷ The gendered division of unpaid work was notable in opposite-sex couples, who have similar average time until the arrival of their first child. Following this, women's time spent on unpaid work and total time spent on work increases drastically, despite a decline in paid work. The HILDA survey highlighted that this divide after the birth of the first child persists, with a difference in unpaid working time of over 26 hours a week still present after 10 years.¹²⁸

The HILDA survey also highlights community attitudes towards marriage, parenting and work that can provide insights into levels of gender inequality in community. The survey findings highlighted that attitudes have become less

¹¹⁸ Wilkins, R., Vera-Toscano, E., Botha, F., & Dahmann, S. (2021). The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 19: The 16th Annual Statistical Report of the HILDA Survey. Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research - The University of Melbourne.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Wilkins, R., Vera-Toscano, E., Botha, F., & Dahmann, S. (2021). The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 19: The 16th Annual Statistical Report of the HILDA Survey. Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research - The University of Melbourne.

¹²¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2022.). Labour Force, Australia.

¹²² Workplace Gender Equality Agency. (2022, February). Australia's Gender Pay Gap Statistics. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://www.wgea.gov.au/publications/australias-gender-pay-gap-statistics>

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Wilkins, R., Vera-Toscano, E., Botha, F., & Dahmann, S. (2021). The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey: Selected Findings from Waves 1 to 19: The 16th Annual Statistical Report of the HILDA Survey. Melbourne Institute: Applied Economic & Social Research - The University of Melbourne.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

traditional between 2005 and 2019. There were increases in agreement that a working mother can have as good a relationship with her children as a non-working mother and decreases in agreement that mothers shouldn't work if possible, that pre-school children with a working mother will suffer, and that a man should earn money while a woman cares for the home and children.¹²⁹

The 2017 NCAS also demonstrated improved support for gender equality since the previous survey, highlighting that most Australians believe that men and women can play a range of roles regardless of gender.¹³⁰ However, the survey did find that 2 in 5 Australians believe that many women exaggerate how unequally women are treated in Australia and that nearly a quarter of Australians see no harm in telling sexist jokes about women.¹³¹

Jurisdictions have progressed work targeting gender inequality and associated attitudes through primary prevention initiatives in states and territories. These are discussed in Section 6.1.4 and Section 6.2. Addressing gender inequality through primary prevention initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is discussed in Section 6.3.4.

The focus on gender inequality and the gendered drivers of violence through Our Watch's Change the Story framework and broader state and territory initiatives represents a positive step in reducing violence against women. Data from the HILDA survey and NCAS indicate that improvements in gender equality are identifiable, but that significant further work is required to reduce inequality between men and women. This reflects the perception from stakeholders that gender inequality is still a significant driver of violence against women.

6.1.3 Rates of violence against women and the community response

Rates of violence against women have increased over the life of the National Plan. Data from the

ABS' PSS and Recorded Crimes – Victims dataset, as well as the AHRC's national survey of sexual harassment in Australian workforces, demonstrates increases in sexual violence, assault, and harassment, as well as physical and non-physical domestic violence. These rates of violence are interpreted in the context of rising awareness of FDSV. Rates of FDSV are discussed further in Section 3.1 of this report. It is acknowledged that changing the gendered attitudes that underpin violence against women is a long-term endeavour.

Data from the NCAS indicates that Australians' understandings of the behaviours that constitute FDSV have improved significantly between 2013 and 2017, particularly regarding non-physical forms of violence.¹³² These non-physical forms of violence included: repeated criticism, control of a partner's social life, financial abuse, stalking, and harassment through repeated emails or text messages.¹³³ This was reflected in the consultations, where a number of stakeholders identified that the understanding that FDSV can take many forms has increased, particularly with reference to the use of newer terms such as 'coercive control'. Stakeholders felt that this introduction of new language and definitions had empowered some women to identify their own experiences of abuse.

The ability of bystanders to identify and respond to incidents of FDSV is important to consider as rates and understanding of FDSV increase. The 2017 NCAS results positively demonstrated that the majority of Australians indicated that they would act, or would like to act, when witnessing abuse or disrespect towards women.¹³⁴ However, the results indicated that people tend to underestimate the support that they would receive from their friends if they did act.¹³⁵ Conversely, the AHRC National Survey indicated that the propensity of bystanders to act when witnessing workplace sexual harassment had declined from 51 per cent in 2008 to 35 per cent

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ ANROWS. (2017). 2017 NCAS Summary Report: Are we there yet? Australians' attitudes towards violence against women & gender equality.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² ANROWS. (2017). 2017 NCAS Summary Report: Are we there yet? Australians' attitudes towards violence against women & gender equality.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

in 2018.¹³⁶ The NCAS results highlighted that respondents' willingness to act was also dependent on the form of FDSV that was being witnessed.¹³⁷ When witnessing a male friend who was verbally abusing a female partner, 98 per cent of respondents stated they would be bothered and 70 per cent said that they would act.¹³⁸ In contrast, 76 per cent of respondents would be bothered by a male friend telling a sexist joke about women, and only 45 per cent stated that they would act.¹³⁹ This suggests that further community understanding of the gendered drivers of violence and the diverse forms that FDSV can take is required to encourage bystander action.

6.1.4 Primary prevention under the National Plan

Primary prevention is a key element of ensuring that communities are safe and free from violence. The need for a focus on primary prevention through research and practice was identified as a key strategy to achieve safer communities in the original National Plan. Progress on primary prevention under the National Plan was driven by Our Watch and the increased focus on primary prevention as a key priority of the 4AP. Primary prevention initiatives have also been delivered at the state and territory level across jurisdictions.

Stakeholders consistently referenced Our Watch as leading progress on primary prevention, particularly under the 4AP. Specific references were made to the value of the *Stop it at the Start* national primary prevention campaign, which has been funded under the National Plan since the Second Action Plan. The *Stop it at the Start* campaign aims to engage adult influencers in young people's lives to support young people to reset their attitudes towards FDSV.¹⁴⁰ The third phase was released under the 4AP, and stakeholders noted that it had high public recall, a useful bystander lens, and a focus on the gendered drivers of violence. This finding was reflected in initial evaluation research of the third phase reported by the DSS, which indicated that

68 per cent of influencers recalled the campaign and 73 per cent of those recalled taking action as a result.¹⁴¹ These actions included having conversations with young people about respectful relationships and reconsidering or changing the way they behaved towards others. Stakeholders also reflected the value of the *Change the Story* framework, which frames violence against women against four gendered drivers, and the National Primary Prevention Hub, which supports collaboration and information-sharing between the specialist and mainstream sectors. The National Primary Prevention Hub was funded under the 4AP and an Interim Evaluation Report in 2021 indicated that the Hub had a substantial audience, high engagement in events, and demonstrated evidence of new connections being made.¹⁴²

One stakeholder explained the importance of the National Plan and Our Watch in progress on primary prevention, stating:

'Without the National Plan, we probably wouldn't have made the progress that we have in primary prevention. Just the establishment of Our Watch and the work they've been able to do and leveraging it to the National Plan is great. The work around Change the Story, and the way that they have been able to deliver that as a national framework and piece of best practice that is linked to the National Plan is another good example. Most people that you speak to in the sector have an awareness of Our Watch and Change the Story. Many people have an awareness of the gendered drivers of violence.'

Federal government stakeholder

The focus on primary prevention was heightened under the 4AP as it was identified as a key priority area. This increased focus was identified by stakeholders, who agreed that the 4AP was successful in increasing the focus on primary prevention at a national and jurisdictional level.

¹³⁶ Australian Human Rights Commission. (2018). Everyone's business: Fourth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces.

¹³⁷ ANROWS. (2017). 2017 NCAS Summary Report: Are we there yet? Australians' attitudes towards violence against women & gender equality.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (n.d.). Stop it at the start campaign. Retrieved March 16, 2022, from National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children: <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/initiative/stop-it-at-the-start-campaign/>

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Our Watch. (2021). National Primary Prevention Hub Interim Evaluation Report.

Primary prevention programs that were funded by states and territories also provide positive examples. The Tackling Violence program in New South Wales is a community education, early intervention and prevention program that aims to reduce FDSV by building awareness, and promoting positive attitudes and behaviours through engagement with Rugby League Clubs.¹⁴³ The program is comprised of a code of conduct with associated penalties, annual education sessions, community awareness activities, and referrals and support arrangements that link to FDSV services. The program was delivered in primarily regional and remote locations with high rates of FDSV, low socio-economic conditions, and high populations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. An evaluation of the program delivery for 2017 to 2018 found that sport was an effective setting for FDSV prevention, and that the core components of the program aligned with best practice FDSV prevention techniques.¹⁴⁴ The evaluation indicated that players had an increased awareness and confidence in standing up to FDSV, with anecdotal evidence for reduced perpetration of violent behaviours.¹⁴⁵ Opportunities for improvement included the processes in place for responding to breaches of the code and cooperating with local police were identified.¹⁴⁶ The Victorian government has demonstrated continued investment in the development and delivery of primary prevention initiatives targeting behaviour change and challenging the gendered drivers of violence. Under this funding, Respect Victoria has delivered eight evidence informed behaviour change campaigns since June 2019, all of which were developed in consultation with key stakeholders, including communities and members of the public.¹⁴⁷

Primary prevention targeted specifically at sexual violence and harassment have commenced in a number of jurisdictions since July 2021. White Ribbon Australia has hired Primary Prevention Officers to deliver primary prevention activities in local communities that have a focus on reducing gender inequality and preventing violence against

women, including sexual violence. Universities Australia are developing sexual harassment and violence prevention materials targeted at university students, to be distributed through member universities. LGBTIQ+ Health Australia and the University of New South Wales co-designed and developed evaluation tools to support the evaluation of pilot sexual violence prevention programs targeted at LGBTIQ+ communities. This was completed in December of 2021, with potential pilot project recommendations currently under consideration.

The evidence base for primary prevention of sexual violence and harassment has also developed. In July 2020, the Department commissioned a stocktake report of primary prevention initiatives covering sexual harassment and sexual violence in Australia. This report found that primary prevention for sexual harassment and violence is often delivered within broader frameworks around gender-based violence and FDSV, and this does not reflect that sexual violence and harassment can have different drivers and therefore require different primary prevention approaches.¹⁴⁸ An evidence review and data synthesis conducted by researchers at La Trobe University considered existing evidence for primary prevention initiatives targeted at sexual violence and harassment to identify effective program types.¹⁴⁹ The report concluded that sexual violence and harassment educational interventions that were delivered in tertiary education settings and targeted at 'at-risk' groups, including victims and perpetrators, were effective at preventing sexual violence or harassment. Bystander education and relationship interventions that involved young people were seen to influence the gendered drivers or influencing factors of sexual violence and harassment but could not demonstrate an impact on behaviours.

It was noted that achieving reduced rates of violence through successful primary prevention initiatives would require sustained investment and systemic changes at the Commonwealth level to address the gendered drivers of FDSV. Some stakeholders noted that the current focus on

¹⁴³ ARTD Consultants. (2019). Tackling Violence Evaluation.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Department of Social Services. (2021). Primary Prevention Behaviour Change Programs. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/initiative/primary-prevention-behaviour-change-campaigns/>

¹⁴⁸ Deloitte. (2020). Stocktake of primary prevention initiatives in sexual violence and sexual harassment.

¹⁴⁹ Hooker, L., Ison, J., O'Sullivan, G., Fisher, C., Henry, N., Forsdike, K., . . . Taft, A. (2020). Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence and Harassment Against Women and Girls: Combining Evidence and Practice Knowledge - Evidence Review and Data Synthesis. La Trobe University.

primary prevention was narrow, and may not encompass the experiences of diverse groups, nor be applicable in all jurisdictions. It was noted that achieving success through primary prevention would also be dependent on the ability of FDSV services to engage. Stakeholders noted that the FDSV service system is currently focused on crisis response due to high demand, and their

ability to support prevention or early intervention is therefore limited.

6.2 Relationships are respectful

National Outcome 2 reflected that respectful relationships could be supported through primary prevention that shapes the attitudes and behaviours of young people. Progress against this outcome has occurred throughout the life of the National Plan, primarily through national social marketing campaigns such as *The Line*, *Stop it at the Start*, and *Doing Nothing Does Harm*, and the delivery of the Respectful Relationships Education in Schools (RREiS) pilot in some states and territories.

6.2.1 Respectful relationships education in schools

In September 2015, during the period of the Second Action Plan, Version 8.0 of the Foundation to Year 10 Australian Curriculum was endorsed by Education Ministers.¹⁵⁰ This version of the curriculum framework included multiple arenas where respectful relationships education could be delivered, particularly under the Health and Physical Education (HPE) curriculum area.¹⁵¹ Under the HPE curriculum, students are able to learn about respectful relationships, understanding and negotiating consent, managing relationships online and offline, and dealing with relationships that include a power imbalance.¹⁵² The Australian Curriculum has since been updated, with Education Ministers endorsing the revised Version 9.0 on 1 April 2022.¹⁵³ This new version has a focus on 'strengthening the explicit

teaching of consent and respectful relationships from F-10 in age-appropriate ways', and will be available online from Term 2 of 2022.¹⁵⁴ The inclusion of this focus in the Australian Curriculum enables jurisdictions to take a variety of local actions to embed respectful relationships education in schools.

In 2013, Our Watch was funded by the Victorian Government to plan and deliver an RREiS pilot in Victorian high schools. The pilot was delivered to 4,000 Year 8 and 9 students and 1,700 school staff in 19 Victorian schools across four school terms in 2015.¹⁵⁵ As a result of the program, students' knowledge about gender, gender inequality, and violence increased.¹⁵⁶ Students were able to demonstrate sophisticated understandings of these concepts through discussion in focus groups. In addition, students' knowledge of, attitudes towards, and confidence in understanding domestic violence, gender equality, and respectful relationships improved.¹⁵⁷ Notably, male students also reflected on the impact of their behaviours or potential behaviours on relationships with others.¹⁵⁸ Increased awareness, attitudes, behaviour, and language related to gender equality and respect were noted among both staff and students, with improved behaviour identified in classrooms.¹⁵⁹ It was noted that schools experienced increased disclosures related to experiences of violence, perpetration, sex, sexuality, and gender identity, as a result of the pilot.¹⁶⁰ It was emphasised that staff need to be provided with appropriate training

¹⁵⁰ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority. (2015). Tracked changes to F-10 Australian Curriculum.

¹⁵¹ Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority. (2015). Tracked changes to F-10 Australian Curriculum.

¹⁵² Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority. (n.d.). Respect matters. Retrieved March 16, 2022, from <https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/resources/curriculum-connections/portfolios/respect-matters/>

¹⁵³ Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. (2022). Media Release: Updated Curriculum Raises Standards. Sydney: ACARA. Retrieved from <https://www.acara.edu.au/docs/default-source/media-releases/endorsement-ac-media-release-2022.pdf>

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Our Watch. (2016). Respectful Relationships Education in Schools: The Beginnings of Change - Final Evaluation Report.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

and procedures to ensure that these disclosures are handled appropriately.¹⁶¹ All schools involved in the pilot were in the process of updating their policies and procedures to embed gender equality and respect in school culture.¹⁶²

In 2017 and 2018, Our Watch delivered a Respectful Relationships in Primary Schools Pilot that was funded by the Myer Foundation alongside the Victorian and Queensland Governments. The pilot was delivered to Year 1 and 2 students in 18 primary schools across Queensland and Victoria from mid-2017 to the end of 2018. Findings from the final evaluation of the pilot suggested that it is possible for primary schools to implement and deliver a whole school approach to RREiS that successfully addresses the drivers of gender-based violence.¹⁶³ After six months, stereotypical gender attitudes among students were diminishing, with schools demonstrating a sustained commitment to RREiS and a lack of tolerance for gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment.¹⁶⁴

Consultations conducted by KPMG revealed that stakeholders across government and non-government service providers are generally supportive of RREiS as a potential primary prevention strategy. Stakeholders identified that RREiS is a key potential primary prevention strategy, targeting a reduction in rates of violence against women and their children through intervention with young people. One stakeholder explained that:

'We aren't going to see change [in rates of violence] until we change the drivers, which is long term cultural and generational change. Our next generation will have gone through Respectful Relationships education and haven't known anything else, they're the ones who will change things for us.'

– State government representative

In addition, stakeholders identified that respectful relationships education could be delivered outside

of the primary and high school setting. One stakeholder suggested that:

'We do not have to wait until children get into school settings to actually have a strong curriculum around respectful relationships. When you think about mobilising those conversations in an early years settings [sic], it should be ideally that you have those conversations in-home. You can have it in childcare, you can have it in preschools.'

– Representative from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence support service

These stakeholders also emphasised that RREiS should be considered as only one component of modelling respectful relationships to young people and equipping them with knowledge and skills. It was noted that broader societal attitudes around gender must also be addressed, and that young people are exposed to attitudes and beliefs in the home. The evaluation of the RREiS pilot in primary schools suggested that more could be done to include parents and families in RREiS education to ensure that children are modelled respectful relationships at home.¹⁶⁵

6.2.2 Understanding of respectful relationships

Young people's understanding of respectful relationships and FDSV has improved over the life of the National Plan. The NCAS indicated that young people aged between 16 and 24 years had a relatively consistent understanding of the physical forms of domestic violence in both 2013 and 2017.¹⁶⁶ However, there was a notable increase in young people's knowledge of the non-physical forms of violence (Figure 19).¹⁶⁷ Young people exhibited an increased understanding that repeated criticism, control of a partner's social life, stalking, and repeated harassment through email or texts were forms of FDSV.¹⁶⁸ The largest

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Our Watch. (2021). Respectful relationships education to prevent gender-based violence: Lessons from a multi-year pilot in primary schools.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Our Watch. (2021). Respectful relationships education to prevent gender-based violence: Lessons from a multi-year pilot in primary schools.

¹⁶⁶ ANROWS. (2017). Young Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality: Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS).

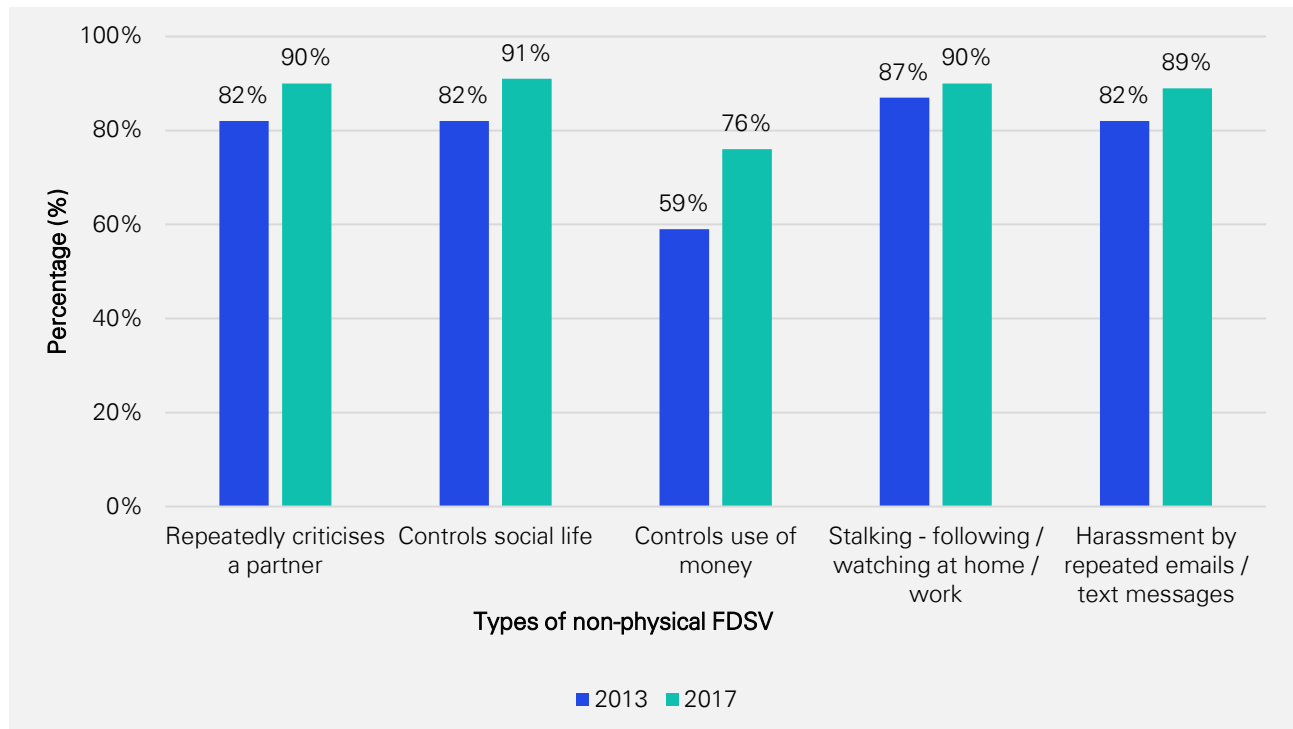
¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

increase was recorded for the understanding that controlling a partner through denying them money

was a form of FDSV, increasing from 59 per cent in 2013 to 76 per cent in 2017.¹⁶⁹

Figure 19: Understanding of the non-physical forms of FDSV among young people aged 16 to 24 years



Source: ANROWS. (2017). Young Australians' attitudes to violence against women and gender equality: Findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS).

More broadly, the frontline worker survey showed respondents felt that community understanding of consent and respectful relationships had improved to a slight (48.4 per cent) or moderate (22.8 per cent) extent. This suggests that community understanding of respectful relationships is moving in a positive trajectory, but there is further improvement to be made.

The community understanding of respectful relationships has been supported through the implementation and delivery of social marketing campaigns. Our Watch delivers the social marketing primary prevention initiative *The Line*, which is targeted at young people aged 14 to 20, to support and encourage healthy and respectful relationships among young people. In an evaluation of *The Line* conducted by Kantar Public, recognition of the campaign had increased alongside significant changes in young people's attitudes between a benchmark survey in September 2015, and the fifth follow-up survey in May 2017.¹⁷⁰ The evaluation indicated that young people who recognised the campaign were more likely to display knowledge and behaviours

supportive of respectful relationships when compared with their peers who did not recognise the campaign. In particular, they were:

- More likely to have spoken with another person about healthy relationships (28 per cent and 17 per cent respectively)
- More likely to know how to get consent prior to sexual activity (75 per cent and 66 per cent respectively)
- More likely to be confident talking to a partner about something that had upset them (79 per cent and 67 per cent respectively).¹⁷¹

These findings indicate that equipping young people with the knowledge and understanding of respectful relationships can improve their behaviours.

The *Stop it at the Start* campaign was also referenced by stakeholders as supporting the community's understanding of respectful relationships. This initiative is discussed in Section 6.1 of this report.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

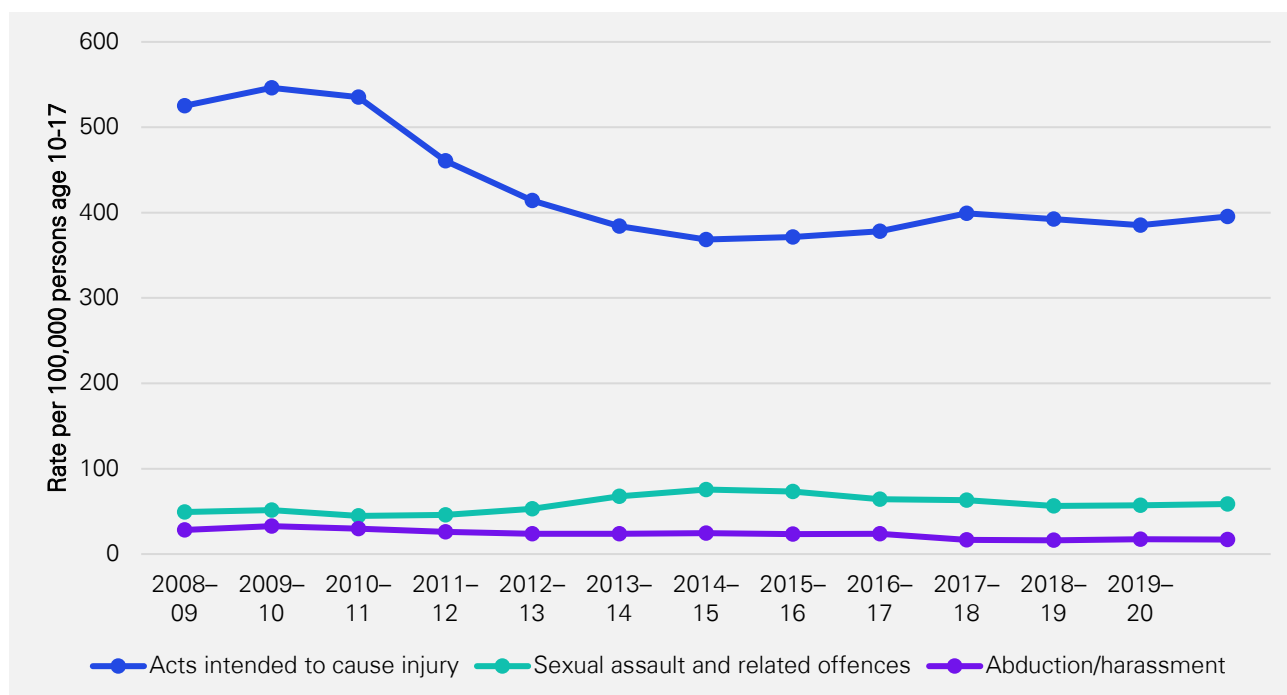
¹⁷⁰ Kantar Public. (n.d.). Tracking change: Snapshot evaluation findings for The Line campaign 2015 to 2017.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

Offending by young people may also indicate understanding of respectful relationships. ABS data of incidents since the release of the National Plan are mixed. As outlined in Figure 20, there has been an improvement in the number of young people committing acts intending to cause injury

(however it is unclear the relationship of the victim to the young person). Unfortunately, there has been a slight increase in the number of sexual assault and related offences committed by young people. Rates of abduction/harassment have remained stable from 2008-09.

Figure 20: Rate per 100,000 young people, age 10-17, committing acts intended to cause injury, sexual assault, or abduction/harassment, selected states and territories, 2008-09 to 2020-21



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics, Recorded Crime – Offenders, 2020-21

6.2.3 Social marketing campaigns empowering men to speak up

To address gendered violence against women, it is vital to include men in the solution. Social marketing campaigns and primary prevention strategies under the National Plan have included a focus on empowering men to speak up against violence.

A key campaign focused on empowering male bystanders is the Doing Nothing Does Harm campaign produced by Our Watch.¹⁷² Phase 2 of this campaign was implemented in 2021, and targeted men who typically recognised incidents of disrespect to women as problematic and requiring intervention, but identified that they lacked the confidence and knowledge to do so.¹⁷³ One in five men recalled seeing the advertising, with the campaign message that bystanders should act when witnessing disrespect towards women was understood by most men, with 96 per cent agreeing that it was an important message.¹⁷⁴ Exposure to the campaign was associated with improvements in men's awareness and recognition of disrespectful

¹⁷² Quantum Market Research. (2021). Our Watch's Doing Nothing Does Harm Campaign Evaluation: Interim Market Research Report.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

behaviour compared to Wave 1.¹⁷⁵ Improvements were also identified in men's feeling of responsibility to take action (71 per cent), understanding of how to take action (64 per cent), and their confidence to take action (68 per cent) when witnessing disrespectful behaviour towards women.¹⁷⁶ The campaigns increased men's stated beliefs that they would support bystander action in future, and recognition that doing

something is positive while doing nothing is harmful.¹⁷⁷

In addition, the campaign helped men to see that there are a variety of actions to demonstrate disapproval of disrespect, including body language, showing support for women, and directly calling out disrespect.¹⁷⁸

6.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are strengthened

National Outcome 3 focused on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop local solutions to reduce violence against women and their children. This involved an increased focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to be community leaders, whilst supporting men to reject FDSV. Whilst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are intended to be considered across all outcomes of the National Plan, it was also recognised that they need a tailored and additional response to reflect the disproportionate rates of violence they experience compared to non-Indigenous women.

6.3.1 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's perspectives on violence

The NATSISS indicates that the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who consider

FDSV to be a concern for their communities has not changed significantly between 2008 and 2014-15.¹⁷⁹ At both data collection points (i.e. before the National Plan in 2008 and approaching the mid-point in 2014-15), over one-quarter of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women considered family violence to be a problem for their community (see Figure 21).¹⁸⁰ The proportion identifying sexual assault or rape as a problem in the community decreased slightly between 2008 (12.1 per cent) and 2014-15 (9 per cent).¹⁸¹

More recent data from the NATSISS is not available to determine whether these perspectives have changed throughout the implementation of the Third and Fourth Action Plans.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

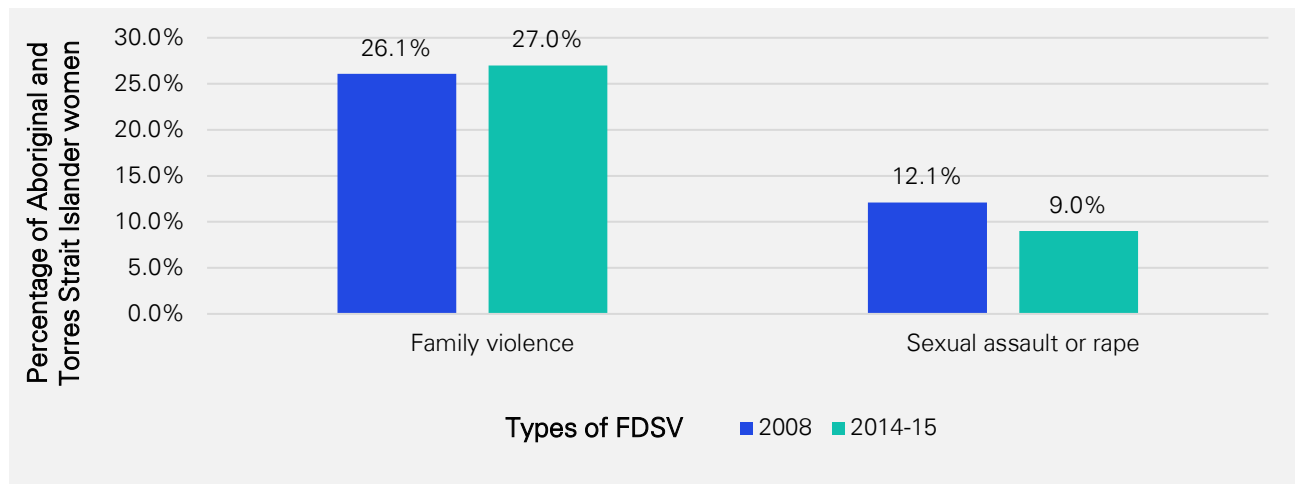
¹⁷⁸ Quantum Market Research. (2021). Our Watch's Doing Nothing Does Harm Campaign Evaluation: Interim Market Research Report.

¹⁷⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15.; Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2009). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

Figure 21: Percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who consider types of FDSV to be problems for their community



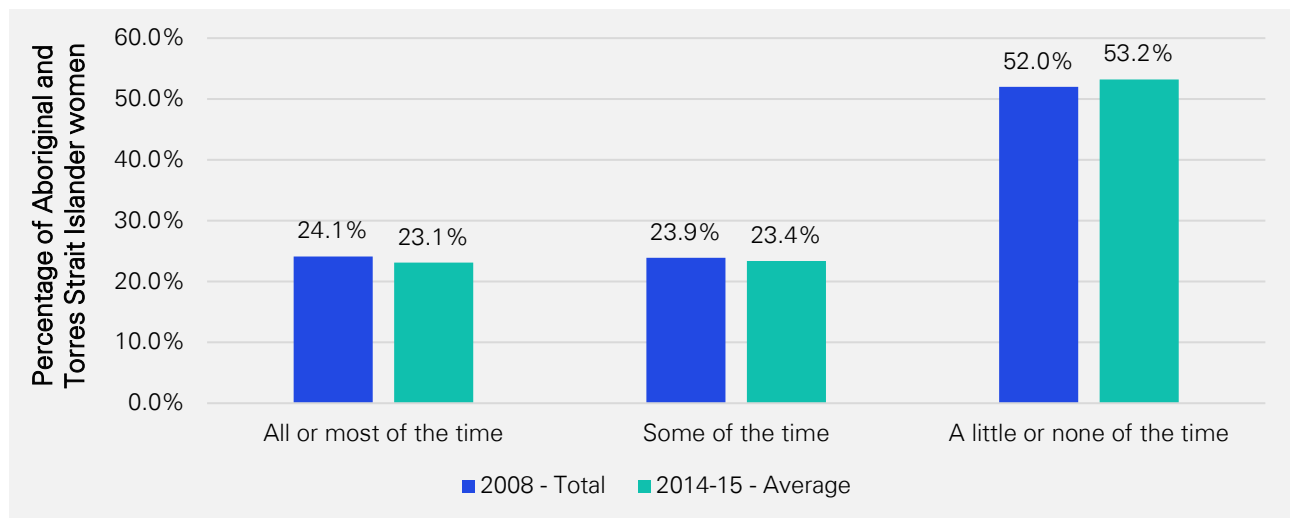
Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15.; Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2009). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008.

The NATSISS also asked Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women whether they felt they could have their say within their community on important issues. Responses were largely consistent between 2008 and 2014-15, with more than half of women indicating they have little or no say on important issues in their community (Figure 22).¹⁸² In 2014-15, respondents were disaggregated by whether they had experienced FDSV in the previous 12 months or had no experiences of physical violence in that period. There were only minor differences between these groups on their ability to contribute to important discussions, with women who had experienced FDSV in the previous 12 months slightly less likely to feel they could have their say (see Figure 23).¹⁸³ These groups have been aggregated into the '2014-15 – Average' category below for easy comparison with 2008 data.

¹⁸² Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15.; Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2009). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008.

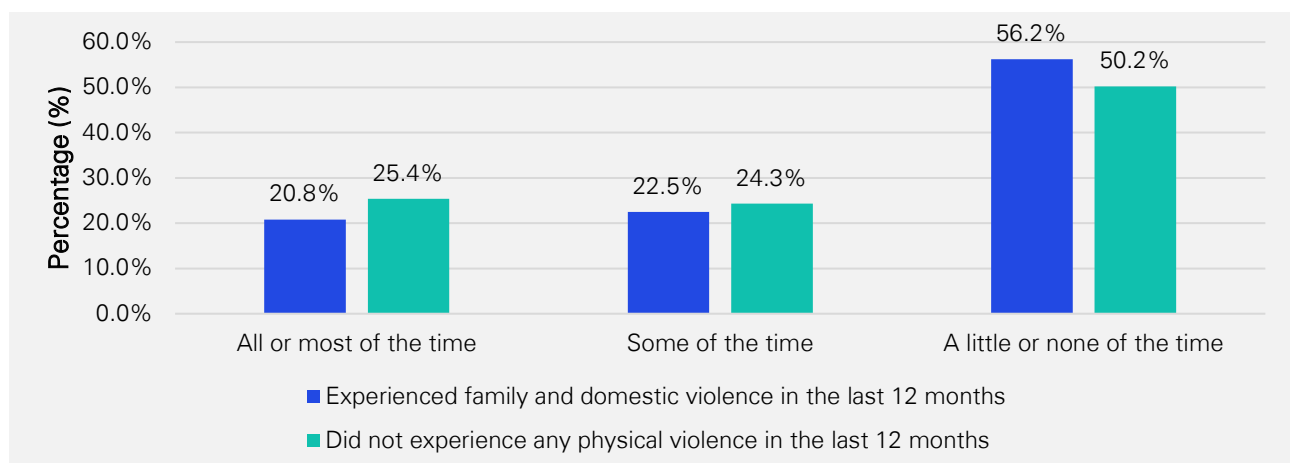
¹⁸³ Ibid.

Figure 22: Percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who feel they can have their say within community on important issues, trend between 2008 and 2014-15



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15.; Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2009). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008.

Figure 23: Percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who feel they can have their say within community on important issues in 2014-15, separated by experience of domestic violence in the last 12 months



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014-15.

6.3.2 Driving change through local solutions

The National Plan and Action Plans have identified the need for local solutions and co-design with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Stakeholders noted that the National Plan has delivered positive policy leadership in this space by strengthening the language around, and focus on, the development of local solutions. Further work was needed to ensure that this understanding is translated into practice, with a lack of clarity among state and territory stakeholders around how the National Plan is driving local solutions in communities.

One stakeholder noted that progress on community-led action planning and engaging Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in their jurisdiction, was primarily led by state frameworks and alignment with the Closing the Gap targets. It was identified that there is strong capacity and knowledge within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities about key local challenges and appropriate solutions that could be harnessed through co-design of services and programs to ensure they meet the needs of communities, and have adequate 'buy-in' to achieve success.

6.3.3 Access to culturally appropriate and trauma-informed services

The National Plan facilitated marginally improved access to culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children who experience violence. Stakeholders recognised that service delivery should be client focused, culturally informed, trauma-informed, and reflect recognition of intergenerational trauma and triggers. While examples of improved access were identified under the National Plan, stakeholders emphasised that more work was required to improve the scope of this access.

The design and implementation of culturally appropriate services is underpinned by a number of critical elements. These elements were identified in a process evaluation of initiatives under the Third Action Plan.¹⁸⁴ Under the Third Action Plan, the Department provided funding to 14 service providers across Australia that work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in rural and remote areas. The funding was intended to support initiatives covering trauma-informed therapeutic services, men's behaviour change programs (MBCPs), intensive family case management, and victim survivors' services through legal service providers. The process evaluation of these programs indicated that a holistic approach to treatment that recognised FDSV as embedded in extended families and communities yielded higher program interest, engagement, and retention, producing a reduction in family violence.¹⁸⁵ Positive outcomes were also associated with initiatives that engaged informal and formal community institutions to create networks of support for participants.¹⁸⁶ Clinicians

delivering services identified that using storytelling and narrative therapeutic approaches was effective.¹⁸⁷ It was also identified that staffing initiatives with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff was vital, as it supported the development of community trust and rapport.¹⁸⁸ In addition, this staffing approach helped to ensure that programs and initiatives were relevant to communities.¹⁸⁹

A positive example of improved access to culturally appropriate services was the commitment of \$13.5 million by the Commonwealth to First Nations specific measures under the 4AP.¹⁹⁰ This funding was intended to facilitate greater support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children in remote areas and areas of high need, and to provide practical intervention programs for those at risk of experiencing or using violence.¹⁹¹ The service delivery element of this funding was led by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), which engaged in co-design with nine communities to identify appropriate service providers to collaborate with. This co-design occurred with providers, experts, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander facilitators, and community attendees including elders' groups, who provided guidance and local context. As a result of this co-design, service providers developed delivery models that were based on best practice, included holistic approaches supporting education and engagement, provided boys and men with tools to address trauma and have positive relationships, and incorporated both cultural healing practices and Western trauma treatment therapies.¹⁹²

Improved access to culturally appropriate services was also demonstrated through the delivery of support through the FVPLS programs funded through the NIAA.¹⁹³ FVPLS providers deliver

¹⁸⁴ Cahill, M; Brown, RA; Baker, G; Barnes-Proby, D; Sandrini, H. (2021). Australia's Third Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children, Priority Area 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and Their Children - Final Report. RAND Corporation.

¹⁸⁵ Cahill, M; Brown, RA; Baker, G; Barnes-Proby, D; Sandrini, H. (2021). Australia's Third Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children, Priority Area 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and Their Children - Final Report. RAND Corporation.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services). (n.d.). Greater support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children in remote areas and areas of high need and practical intervention programs to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Retrieved March 16, 2022, from National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children: <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/initiative/greater-support-for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-women-and-children-in-remote-areas-and-areas-of-high-need/>

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Williams, E., & Westhorp, G. (2019). Family Violence Prevention Legal Services: National Evaluation Report. Charles Darwin University: Northern Institute.

culturally safe specialist legal services for family violence matters and aims to prevent, reduce, and respond to incidents of FDSV involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.¹⁹⁴ The Commonwealth Government has provided funding and support for the delivery of the FVPLS program since the Second Action Plan, with continued funding under the 4AP allocated to increase the capacity of existing FVPLS to deliver support. In a national evaluation of FVPLSs conducted by Charles Darwin University, it was suggested that FVPLSs support the fostering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership, which is a key strategy under Outcome 3.¹⁹⁵ The report indicates that many of the services have female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander chief executives, managers, and Board members. Women's leadership is also fostered through direct connections with women in local communities.¹⁹⁶ Women are supported by FVPLS community support officers and paralegal support workers to use their initiative, develop new skills, and communicate their learnings to community.¹⁹⁷ In addition, where initiatives are co-designed with community, women are supported to use and develop leadership skills through engagement in the design process.¹⁹⁸

Progress towards culturally appropriate and trauma-informed services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has also been achieved at a state and territory level. In Victoria, the Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong People, Strong Families (2018-2028) ('Dhelk Dja') agreement is a community-led response that commits Aboriginal services and government to ending family violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria and is underpinned by self-determination.¹⁹⁹ The agreement will be led through three-year action plans and is supported by the Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum that consists of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, regional action groups, and relevant state government departments.

While pockets of excellence were identified, stakeholders felt that there were not a sufficient number of services to deliver culturally appropriate and trauma informed support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perpetrators

and victim survivors. Stakeholders also suggested that the National Plan and Action Plans could benefit from increased recognition of the need for healing-informed approaches. Access to services was a particular challenge for victim survivors and perpetrators living in rural and remote areas. These individuals are often required to travel significant distances to metropolitan areas, which can be prohibitively expensive and necessitates them to leave Country. In addition, victim survivors face risks when accessing services in rural and remote communities, such as a lack of privacy or perpetrators knowing the location of safe houses.

A stakeholder from a service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children positively noted that there had been an increased drive to deliver culturally safe services with a trauma-informed lens but acknowledged that more needed to be done to translate this into improved access. It was suggested that building the workforce and developing workforce capability would be a positive step to achieving improved service delivery:

'Building workforce capability in responding to violence in a culturally informed way, and valuing and engaging the expertise of Aboriginal communities in creating and leading change, is lacking and is critical.'

– Stakeholder from a service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children

Building workforce capability would support providers to recognise that different communities and language groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have different experiences, protocols, culture, and traditions. An example of building workforce capability is evident in the NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV).²⁰⁰ The ECAV aims to support workforce development by delivering training programs in prevention and response for violence, abuse and neglect, including the Aboriginal Qualification Pathway, a three-tiered training program for Aboriginal workers in FDSV and child

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ State Government of Victoria. (n.d.). Dhelk Dja - a partnership with Aboriginal communities to address family violence. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from <https://www.vic.gov.au/dhelk-dja-partnership-aboriginal-communities-address-family-violence>

²⁰⁰ Inca Consulting. (2021). Evaluation of the NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence, Aboriginal Qualifications.

protection.²⁰¹ The pathway includes the Advanced Diploma of Aboriginal Specialist Trauma Counselling and the Graduate Certificate in Human and Community Services. In an evaluation of the ECAV Aboriginal Qualifications, these programs were found to be well regarded and supported students to develop their skills and cultural competency.²⁰² The initial success of these platforms suggests that supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers to develop skills to support communities through prevention and response is valuable.

Stakeholders emphasised that the short-term and time-limited funding under the National Plan was of particular concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The short-term nature of funding was seen as inadequate to appropriately engage in co-design with local communities. Furthermore, short-term funding meant that many communities had experienced pilot programs that were discontinued, leading to a lack of trust in communities. This finding was echoed in the process evaluation of the Third Action Plan initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.

6.3.4 Consideration of the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women across all outcomes of the National Plan

The needs and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have been reflected in the National Plan but did not receive significant consideration across each outcome. Positively, the overarching strategy and evidence base for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children has improved notably under the National Plan. In particular, stakeholders noted that the increased focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the 4AP was positive. This increased focus has supported states and territories to justify jurisdictional funding of new and existing initiatives to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. However, stakeholders broadly indicated that the

needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children, and communities were often considered as an 'add on' to mainstream services and policies and did not receive adequate consideration in their own right. The default short-term and fixed-term funding arrangements under the National Plan do not meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as they do not provide appropriate time to engage in co-design or develop community trust. Stakeholders emphasised that increased tailored services, co-design, and community-led solutions were required across all National Plan Outcomes to achieve improvements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Whilst stakeholders noted that the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were not appropriately considered, a number of initiatives that occurred throughout the life of the National Plan can be referenced as potential exemplars for future progress.

The delivery of FVPLSs under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy was seen as supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children's access to justice (Outcome 5). The national evaluation of FVPLS conducted by Charles Darwin University indicated that FVPLSs improve access to justice for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim survivors who would not otherwise engage with the western justice system.²⁰³ FVPLSs can support victim survivors to access protection orders, compensation, some forms of civil and administrative law, and in some cases can support victim survivors as witnesses.²⁰⁴ The outcomes of access to FVPLSs include increased understanding of the justice system, reduced rates of drop out from legal processes, more successful prosecutions and appropriate sentences, appropriate protection orders, and reduced breaches.²⁰⁵

Primary prevention initiatives were also targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to improve attitudes towards gender equality and violence (Outcome 1). ANROWS conducted an evaluation of primary prevention initiatives in remote Northern Territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.²⁰⁶ The evaluation focused on two key initiatives, the Girls Can Boys Can project aimed to create gender-

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Williams, E., & Westhorp, G. (2019). Family Violence Prevention Legal Services: National Evaluation Report. Charles Darwin University: Northern Institute.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ ANROWS. (2021). Rante-rante ampe Marle and Urreye: "Safe, Respected and Free from Violence" projects evaluation.

equitable early childhood messaging, and the Old Ways are Strong project, aimed to challenge colonial narratives and the understanding of FDSV as an inherent element of culture. The evaluation indicated that participants were likely to have highly gender-equitable views regarding gender roles, and attitudes, and were mostly likely to improve around perceptions of what girls and boys can and can't do.²⁰⁷ However, further work is still required as 52 per cent of participants still indicated that they felt violence is justifiable in some situations in the final survey.²⁰⁸ The evaluation also considered the primary prevention workforce, with key informants in the evaluation indicating that they were not aware of any dedicated primary prevention workforce in the Northern Territory.²⁰⁹ This indicated that service providers have been delivering primary prevention services in addition to their main roles.²¹⁰ Positively, workforce capacity was seen to have

been developed by the two projects, with staff exhibiting increased knowledge of primary prevention and understanding of the drivers of violence.²¹¹ The evaluation recommended that dedicated primary prevention positions and programs should be funded and ongoing training programs for specialist and mainstream workers should be delivered.²¹²

A focus on perpetrator accountability was also present in initiatives delivered for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Outcome 6). The 'What's your plan?' program was designed to increase compliance with protection orders among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander defendants.²¹³ Whilst the process evaluation of this initiative could not comment on outcomes, it was seen as an innovative program with widespread implementation in New South Wales courts.²¹⁴

6.4 Services meet the needs of women and their children

National Outcome 4 identifies that specialist and mainstream services are vital to support victim survivors of FDSV. Services must meet the needs of victim survivors, supported by the 'first door approach', that ensures women's first point of contact with the service system is capable and compassionate, and reduces the need for repetition of their story. This outcome also acknowledges that services must be flexible to meet the diverse needs of their clients, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, CALD women, women with disability, and LGBTIQ+ women, and should recognise children as victim survivors in their own right.

6.4.1 Meeting the needs of women and their children

The ability of the FDSV service system to meet the needs of women and their children is a key

focus under the National Plan. This can be partially understood through the rates of access to FDSV services. The 2016 PSS indicates low rates of access, highlighting that only 54.4 per cent of women sought support or advice after an incident of domestic violence with their current partner, a decrease from 61.0 per cent in 2012.²¹⁵ The rate of seeking advice or support was higher for women reporting previous partner violence (62.9%) in 2016. The PSS results demonstrate that there is a reliance on friends and family members as the main support accessed by victim survivors who sought support or advice, followed by counsellors and health professionals (see Figure 24 and Figure 25). The data was collected in a different format across the 2012 and 2016 collection periods and therefore cannot be compared directly. Respondents were also able to highlight multiple services accessed.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Ibid.

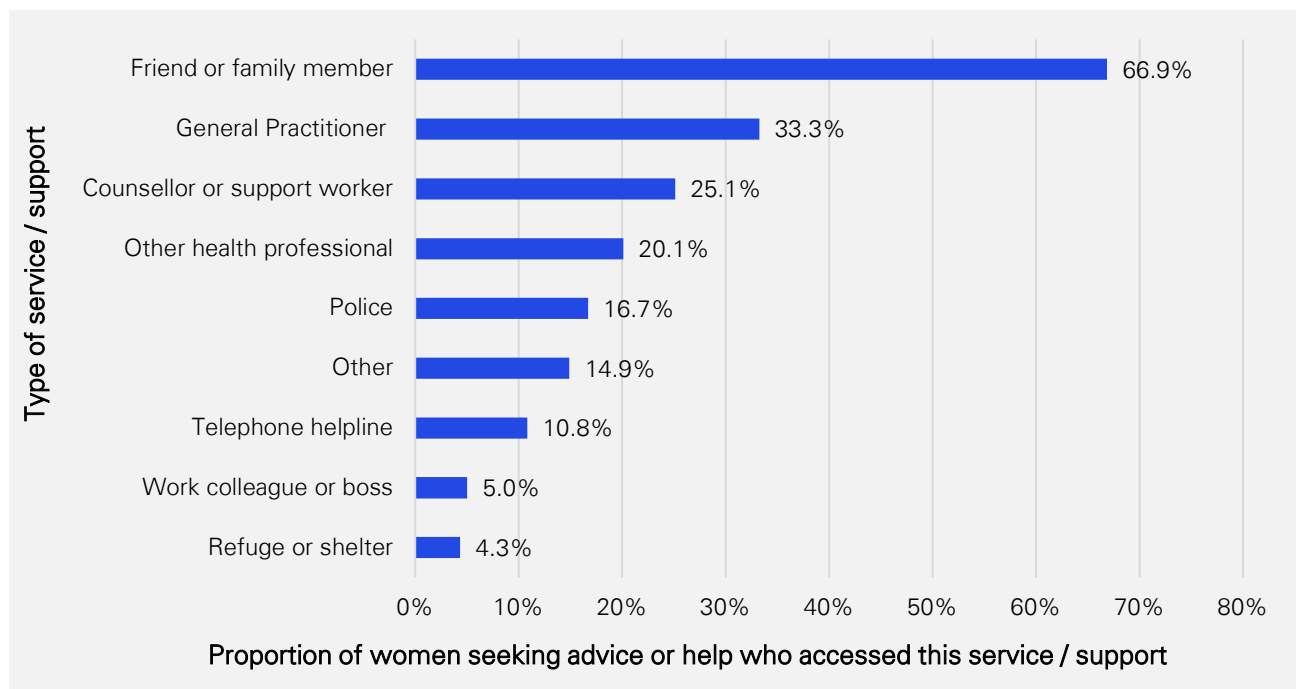
²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Nelson, P. (2018). 'What's your plan?' process evaluation. NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

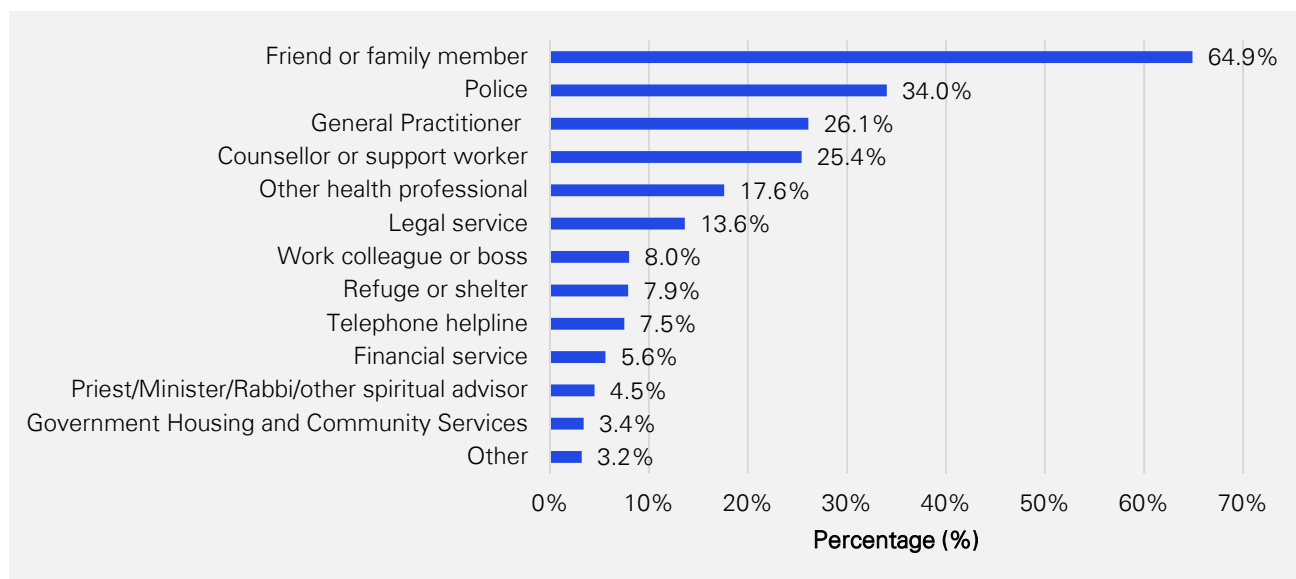
²¹⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). Personal Safety Survey.

Figure 24: Types of services accessed by women who experienced current partner violence (2016)



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). Personal Safety Survey.

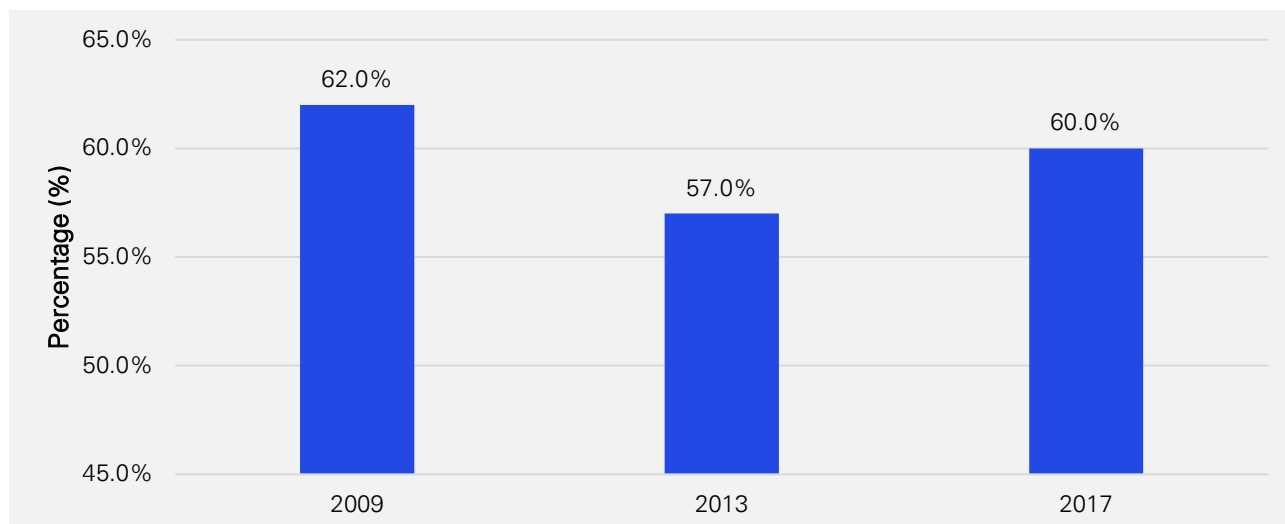
Figure 25: Types of services accessed by women who experienced previous partner violence (2012)²¹⁶



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2012). Personal Safety Survey.

²¹⁶ 'Other services' refers to legal services, financial services, government housing and other community services. 'Other' supports include work colleagues or boss, religious minister, and other.

Figure 26: Percentage of respondents who agree with the statement "If I needed to get outside advice or support for someone about a domestic violence issue, I would know where to go"



Source: ANROWS (2009, 2013 and 2017), National Community Attitudes Survey

The NCAS found slight decreases in the number of respondents agreeing with the statement that "if I needed to get outside advice or support for someone about a domestic violence issue, I would know where to go" (Figure 26). While the biggest drop was between 2009 and 2013, this improved slightly in 2017.

The frontline worker survey revealed insights into the degree to which the FDSV service system meets the needs of women and their children. While acknowledging the increase in the number of initiatives to respond to FDSV, the majority of respondents felt that initiatives under the National Plan had only met the needs of women and children to a slight extent (59.4 per cent), or not at all (12.6 per cent). Similarly, the majority of respondents felt that these initiatives had only resulted in improved safety for women and children to a slight extent (47.5 per cent), or not at all (18.3 per cent). More promisingly, respondents felt that victim survivors and their family and friends were confident and willing to access services in the FDSV and related sectors to a moderate (35.8 per cent), or slight extent (53.8 per cent). Stakeholders across state and territory governments, and service providers raised that funding was a critical issue for service delivery in the FDSV sector. It was noted that short-term time-limited funding was commonplace under the National Plan, which impacted the ability of providers to address increased demand for services. Respondents felt that the National Plan was not adequately resourced at a service level, with concerns that some services were being defunded at a national level. Funding arrangements were also identified as impacting the ability of services to attract, retain and train skilled workers to deliver services. Respondents raised concerns

that the FDSV service system is reactive rather than proactive to FDSV due to the high demand on services, combined with funding and resourcing challenges. This reactive focus impacts the ability of the FDSV sector to deliver other necessary services, including primary prevention, perpetrator intervention, support for victim survivors to stay in relationships, and long-term support to victim survivors.

6.4.2 Workforce development across specialist and mainstream services

Workforce development in specialist and mainstream FDSV services was identified as a critical issue in responding to FDSV. Stakeholders and respondents to the frontline worker survey indicated that the specialist workforce had become more qualified and specialised over the life of the National Plan. Opportunities for improvement were identified in the accessibility of training, the potential for mandatory accreditation and national standards, improved responses for women and children from diverse groups, and a reduction in burnout and vicarious trauma among specialist workers. The mainstream workforce was recognised as a key element in the response to FDSV, with stakeholders and frontline survey respondents emphasising that increased training and capability building would facilitate improved outcomes for victim survivors encountering mainstream services. Workforce development across specialist and mainstream services is discussed further in Sections 5.1.2 and 5.1.3 in this report.

6.4.3 Increased sector and service integration

Training for individuals in mainstream and specialist services should be accompanied with increased integration between services and across the sector, to improve the first point of contact experience for victim survivors, and to identify and respond to their needs. A number of examples of integration have been achieved throughout the life of the National Plan, with opportunities to further support system integration under the next National Plan.

Common risk assessments can serve as a useful tool for improving first point of contact experiences for victim survivors. These risk assessments and associated information-sharing systems can reduce the reliance on victim survivors repeating their stories and can improve the delivery of services and support. A widely recognised example is the MARAM framework in Victoria, which is used by professionals and specialists who encounter victim survivors and perpetrators of FDSV, to ensure a shared understanding and responsibility for assessing and managing risk.²¹⁷ The 2019-20 Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence identified that awareness of the MARAM framework was present among the workforce in Victoria.²¹⁸ The majority of the specialist workforce (92 per cent) were aware of the framework, whilst 79 per cent of the primary prevention workforce and 53 per cent of the broader workforce were.²¹⁹ When asked what would improve their confidence in performing their role, all workforces indicated that information-sharing and collaboration were the most important factors.²²⁰

The importance of information-sharing and common risk assessment was also emphasised in other jurisdictions. The Tasmanian Safe at Home program is an integrated criminal justice system response to FDSV that supports victim

survivors to access a suite of supports.²²¹ An Internal Performance Review Report of the program in 2014 indicated that this access is supported by information-sharing arrangements that enable services to respond to the needs of women and their children without requiring victim survivors to repeat their stories.²²² In 2019, the Family Violence Service System Review Report for Tasmania recommended that the government explore further opportunities for information sharing and common risk management.²²³ These included considering the introduction of a common risk assessment tool, and identifying an appropriate information sharing platform to support integration of responses to FDSV across government and non-government services.²²⁴

Another strategy for improving first point of contact and the delivery of integrated support to victim survivors is the introduction of the hub or network model. The Orange Door network in Victoria is an example of an integrated hub, supporting the 'no wrong door' approach, by providing an entry point into the continuum of service provision for those experiencing family violence.²²⁵ The Orange Door network was established in response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence.²²⁶ The design of the network was informed by consultation with people who had experience of navigating the service system, as well as service providers, to understand ways to provide easy and seamless access across the service system.²²⁷ *The Orange Door 2018 evaluation report* indicated that, while the experiences of clients were unable to be assessed, a high level of commitment by all agencies involved to deliver integrated practice was noted, and the initiative was stood up successfully in a short timeframe.²²⁸

A similar integrated service system response has been delivered in New South Wales through the Safer Pathway initiative, which was developed as part of New South Wales' FDSV reform.²²⁹ Safer Pathway aims to streamline referral pathways,

²¹⁷ Victorian Government.(2021). Annual Report on the Implementation of the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework.

²¹⁸ Family Safety Victoria & Orima Research. (2021). Census of Workforces that Intersect with Family Violence – Summary Findings Report.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Tasmanian Government Department of Justice. (2015). Safe at Home: Internal Performance Review Report 2014.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Department of Communities Tasmania. (2019). Family Violence Service System Review Report.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ State of Victoria (Family Safety Victoria). (2021). The Orange Door: Annual Service Delivery Report 2019-2020.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ PwC. (2019). The Orange Door 2018 evaluation: Evaluation Report.

²²⁹ ARTD. (2019). Safer Pathway Evaluation.

provide an effective and timely response, reduce the need for victim survivors to re-tell their story, promote a shared understanding of FDSV, and provide victim survivors of FDSV at serious risk of further harm with a prioritised inter-agency response supported by information-sharing. A 2019 evaluation of the program indicated that it was meeting its intended objectives of ensuring a consistent and timely response to victim survivors, although it was noted that some elements could be further refined, such as improvements to the consistency of the safety assessment tool delivered by police.²³⁰

The value of a hub or network model for victim survivors was emphasised in an evaluation of the pilot program of specialist Domestic Violence Units (DVUs) and HJPs, which were delivered Australia-wide and funded under the National Plan.²³¹ This evaluation indicated that staff of the DVUs, HJPs, and partner organisations where services were being delivered in a co-located space or in a hub model, indicated that this empowered victim survivors to access multiple services in one location, that communication and information-sharing were enhanced, and that case coordination was simplified and streamlined.²³² Further information on this initiative is provided in Section 6.5 of this report.

The impacts of information-sharing on victim survivors should also be considered when designing first point of contact and information-sharing approaches. The review of the Family Violence Information-Sharing Scheme in Victoria, which was developed in response to the Royal Commission into Family Violence, discusses the impact on victim survivors.²³³ The legislation underpinning the scheme came into effect in February 2018 and removed significant barriers to information-sharing that often impede organisations' ability to conduct risk assessments.²³⁴ Through a phased approach, organisations involved in the scheme were extended from specialist family violence services to include broader services such as mental health

and drug and alcohol services, schools, and hospitals.²³⁵ The majority of the women consulted in the review recognised the value of information-sharing in reducing repetition of their story, assessing risk, facilitating referrals, and ensuring a helpful service response.²³⁶ However, a number of women were concerned about the misinterpretation of this information and the lack of information shared about perpetrators.²³⁷ These women were concerned that information-sharing could expose them to negative judgement from Child Protection and the subsequent loss of their children.²³⁸

Stakeholders consulted as a part of the National Plan evaluation indicated that progress had been made towards greater system integration since 2010. The frontline worker survey asked stakeholders to reflect on levels of collaboration between organisations, Government Departments, Local Councils, and services within the FDSV and related sectors. The majority of respondents worked with other agencies to a moderate (34.1 per cent) or great (49.4 per cent) extent, with most feeling they could connect with the appropriate Government Department or organisation to seek assistance regarding practice, policy, or initiatives to a slight (37.1 per cent) or moderate (36.5 per cent) extent. The majority of respondents who felt able to comment noted that improvements in collaboration between government departments, local councils, organisations, and other support mechanisms have occurred over the life of the National Plan to a slight (35.4 per cent) or moderate (32.6 per cent) extent. However, stakeholders noted that a lack of coordination between government services continued to cause challenges for victim survivors navigating the broader system to address their complex needs, such as housing and Centrelink. This causes frontline service workers to dedicate a significant amount of time advocating for the needs of their clients. It was noted that information-sharing broadly remains a challenge, with reports that

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Social Compass. (2019). An Evaluation of the Pilot Program of Specialist Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships: Final Report.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ McCulloch, J., Fitz-Gibbon, K., Segrave, M., Benier, K., Burns, K., McGowan, J., & Pfitzner, N. (2020). Review of the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme Final Report. Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Faculty of Arts, Monash University.

²³⁴ Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor. (2020). Report of the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor – As at 1 November 2019.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ McCulloch, J., Fitz-Gibbon, K., Segrave, M., Benier, K., Burns, K., McGowan, J., & Pfitzner, N. (2020). Review of the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme Final Report. Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Faculty of Arts, Monash University.

²³⁷ McCulloch, J., Fitz-Gibbon, K., Segrave, M., Benier, K., Burns, K., McGowan, J., & Pfitzner, N. (2020). Review of the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme Final Report. Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, Faculty of Arts, Monash University.

²³⁸ Ibid.

services continue to work in siloes despite authorising legislation enabling information exchange. As a result, many victim survivors are retraumatised through requirements to repeat their stories to access services.

6.4.4 Meeting the needs of diverse groups at risk of experiencing violence

Stakeholders consulted for the evaluation discussed the ability of the FDSV service system to meet the needs of diverse groups at risk of experiencing violence. Stakeholders noted positive progress through a number of community-led and holistic service models that had been developed and implemented in states and territories. However, concerns were expressed that the FDSV service system was not comprehensively meeting the needs of groups disproportionately impacted by violence, specifically regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, CALD women, LGBTIQ+ people, women with disability, children and young people, and those living in rural and remote areas. It was suggested that the FDSV service system lacks the resources and flexibility to deliver culturally appropriate support for victim survivors, with the majority of initiatives under the National Plan seen as tailored for mainstream society and not enough specialist services available. It was expressed that responses for these groups cannot be 'add-ons' or modifications to existing services, with the need for the development of co-designed services with those with lived experience. It was suggested that a service that caters for those most at risk would meet the needs of all victim survivors and may therefore represent a model by which all FDSV services could be designed. Furthermore, victim survivors do not see themselves reflected in the services they access, with calls for a more diverse FDSV workforce.

The understanding of the needs of diverse groups had increased in the FDSV sector across the life of the National Plan. Stakeholders emphasised that there was increased recognition of the concept of 'intersectionality', that highlights that services need to respond to all aspects of a victim

survivor's identity without requiring them to access multiple specialist services. It was unclear how much this has been reflected in practice, with stakeholders calling for intersectionality requirements to be more clearly identified in the next National Plan to end violence against women and their children. Stakeholders also noted that the specialist FDSV sector does not always have knowledge and understanding of nuances experienced by women and children from diverse groups.

These stakeholder perspectives are supported by an evidence synthesis of primary prevention of violence against women with disability conducted for Respect Victoria, that indicates gaps in understanding of their experiences and needs.²³⁹ The review identified that women with disability experience violence at higher rates than those without disability.²⁴⁰ It was acknowledged that primary prevention initiatives should be supported by an understanding of risk factors and prevalence for women with disability, yet the evidence base in this area is limited.²⁴¹ The review indicated that the majority of studies focused on education for women with disability, and whilst these had positive outcomes for awareness and behaviour, they were identified as problematic for placing the responsibility for preventing violence on women with disability rather than holding perpetrators accountable, or preventing violence at a community or institutional level.²⁴² It was identified that there is a need for a comprehensive evidence-based approach to primary prevention of FDSV perpetrated against women with disability.²⁴³

A review of the grants from the Third and Fourth Action Plans, that were administered for agencies to respond to FDSV in CALD communities, identified that many service offerings did not adequately identify the scope of their activities, nor were initiatives established with outcomes frameworks, which limited the ability to determine the effectiveness of some of these programs.²⁴⁴

Stakeholders as part of the National Plan evaluation expressed significant concern with respect to the inclusivity of the National Plan, with language considered to not represent all those from the LGBTIQ+ community who have diverse

²³⁹ Sutherland, G., Krnjacki, L., Hargrave, J., Kavanagh, A., Llewellyn, G., & Vaughn, C. (2021). Primary prevention of violence against women with disability: Evidence synthesis. The University of Melbourne.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ KPMG. (unpublished). Review of Effectiveness of CALD Grant Initiatives – Full Report & Appendix.

experiences of gender-based violence and FDSV. For example, the National Plan being for “women and their children” was said to exclude other genders and relationships with same gender partners. This lack of inclusivity extended to service delivery options and served to further marginalise this at-risk vulnerable group. It was stated that people in the LGBTIQ+ community may be reluctant to seek help from FDSV services as they were perceived to not be appropriate or understanding of people with diverse sexualities and/or genders.

Frontline worker survey respondents were asked about the degree to which collaboration between services supported responses to women disproportionately impacted by violence. Approximately two-fifths of respondents to the frontline worker survey felt that collaboration between services had improved to a slight extent across the life of the National Plan in responding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, CALD women, women with disability, and people who identify as LGBTIQ+. Notably, approximately one-fifth of respondents felt that collaboration had not improved at all in responding to these women.

6.4.5 Meeting the needs of children

During consultations for the National Plan evaluation, stakeholders questioned whether children were recognised as victim survivors of FDSV in their own right under the National Plan, or just through their attachment to their mother as a victim survivor. It was noted that children are not typically supported with the services they require as clients or victim survivors through FDSV frontline services. A number of stakeholders noted that this was reflected in the use of the language ‘women and their children’ in the National Plan, which invoked the sense that children were considered as ‘add ons’ to women who had experienced violence. This was reflected in the treatment of children in the Family Law system where a history of FDSV was present. The Family Law system was criticised for appearing to prioritise parental rights over the rights of children to have safety and distance from caregivers who had perpetrated FDSV. One respondent explained that:

‘Family Law has also placed 90 per cent of my clients at greater harm post-separation, as they continue to have to be in contact with the perpetrator as they have biological children together. I have also seen horrific parenting orders come out of Family Law that seem to have zero understanding of the intersection of [domestic and family violence] and Family Law, and that those experiences do not operate in siloes. My clients often disclose feeling trapped, stuck, and wondering ‘when is it [domestic and family violence] ever going to end’ because of the ongoing contact they are required to have due to Family Law’s assumption that perpetrators deserve contact. [Domestic and family violence] should be GREATLY considered when included with Family Law matters, however I have never seen an order that seems to reflect any considerations for safety for the children and the [mum], despite significant evidence that points to the dangers of contact with the perpetrator.’

– Respondent from a counselling service for victim survivors

A small number of programs and initiatives implemented throughout the National Plan provide exemplars for recognising children as victim survivors. The New South Wales IDFVS specifically identifies children as victim survivors of FDSV and delivers services directly to children as clients in their own right.²⁴⁵ These services are negotiated and agreed to by the parent client of the service, and include safety planning and security equipment, child specific counselling and group work, brokerage, advocacy in Family Law matters, and liaison with school and childcare.²⁴⁶ In Victoria, therapeutic services are available to victim survivors of family violence across the state, including specific services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. A minimum of 40 per cent of these therapeutic services is provided directly to children and young people.

Stakeholders also identified that children and young people should be considered a target group for primary prevention initiatives. It was noted that primary prevention during childhood and

²⁴⁵ Zmudzki, F., Breckenridge, J., Newton, B., Delaney, M., & Valentine, K. (2018). Evaluation of the Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Service Program. University of New South Wales.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

adolescence represents a unique opportunity to challenge the gendered drivers of violence before they become ingrained beliefs. Progress in this area has been partially achieved through RREiS

programs, with further and more comprehensive investment required to investigate opportunities to engage children and young people in prevention.

6.5 Justice responses are effective

National Outcome 5 emphasises that civil and criminal justice responses to FDSV must be improved to support women and their children who have experienced violence. This reflects the understanding that domestic violence and sexual assault are crimes and require effective justice intervention to support the prevention of further violence.

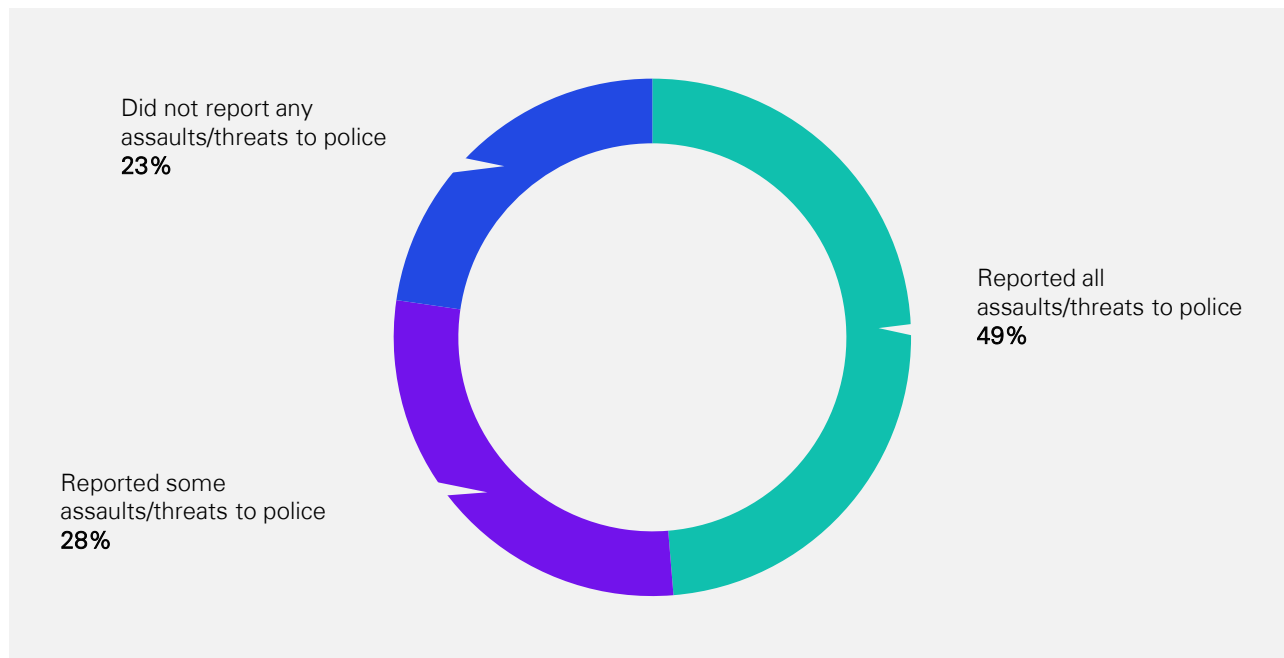
6.5.1 Rates of reporting

The rates of women reporting FDSV to police provide an insight into the effectiveness of justice responses. While rates of FDSV are increasing, the reported rates still drastically underestimate the extent of the issue. The PSS highlighted that police were not contacted by the victim survivor, or someone else on their behalf, about violence

by a current partner in 82.1 per cent of cases where violence occurred.²⁴⁷ For women who experienced violence from a previous partner the proportion who did not contact police about violence was lower (64.7%).

The PSS also highlights the rates at which women with a restraining order issued against a violent previous partner, reported threats and assaults to police during the restraining order period (see Figure 27). Just under half (49 per cent) of victim survivors reported all threats and assaults to police, whilst 28 per cent reported some.²⁴⁸ Over one-fifth (22 per cent) of victim survivors with a restraining order did not report any threats or assaults to police.²⁴⁹ This highlights that a significant percentage of women who experience violence during a restraining order period, do not report to police.

Figure 27: Percentage of women who reported threats or assaults to police during a protection order period against a previous partner



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). Personal Safety Survey.

²⁴⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). Personal Safety Survey.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

The AHRC National Survey indicated that the majority of people (83 per cent) who experienced workplace sexual harassment did not make a formal report or complaint, regardless of gender.²⁵⁰ Among those who did report, the most common outcome was that the harassment ceased (44 per cent).²⁵¹ However, the survey also indicated that 43 per cent of victim survivors who made a formal complaint experienced negative consequences, which could include being ostracised by co-workers, receiving disciplinary action, and denial of progression opportunities.²⁵² While the reasons for a lack of willingness to report sexual assault were not directly reported in this survey, these negative consequences should be considered when interpreting the results.

In addition, findings from the NCAS in 2017 indicated that 1 in 6 respondents believed that women make false allegations of sexual assault in order to punish men.²⁵³ Lack of community support for women reporting or making allegations of sexual assault may reduce willingness to report.

6.5.2 Improved access to justice for women and their children

The National Plan has seen a wide range of initiatives and programs introduced to improve justice responses to FDSV. This has included specialist FDSV training for magistrates, the inclusion of police in interdisciplinary meetings, victim survivors being able to attend court via video-link, and the co-location of justice services. Advances in legislation, particularly regarding the criminalisation of coercive control in some jurisdictions, were considered a positive first step by stakeholders. Stakeholders did express caution around the potential unintended consequences of coercive control legislation, which may impact on women and victim survivors if applied inappropriately. The introduction of these initiatives and legislative change were acknowledged to likely take time to translate into a cultural shift.

Stakeholders broadly acknowledged that police responses to FDSV require further improvement to ensure positive outcomes for victim survivors.

Stakeholders across consultations and the frontline worker survey indicated that first responder police officers reportedly require additional training to be able to adequately identify and respond to FDSV, in particular coercive control and other non-physical forms of violence. Police responses were broadly noted to be inconsistent, slow, and deprioritising victim survivors' safety through prevalent victim-blaming narratives. Concerns around inadequate police responses were particularly noted in cases where non-physical forms of violence, such as coercive control, were present, or in situations where victim survivors of FDSV had retaliated against a perpetrator in self-defence. Furthermore, stakeholders expressed concerns that breaches of protection orders were not responded to with urgency commensurate to the risk faced by victim survivors. This poor response to FDSV was considered to be impacting victim survivor's willingness to report to police.

The justice system's response to FDSV also incorporates the systems of the Family Court and Child Protection. There were concerns among stakeholders that the National Plan, being led at the Commonwealth level, had missed an opportunity to address the challenges experienced by victim survivors in the Family Court and Child Protection systems. Stakeholders noted that navigating the broader court system and Family Court can be re-traumatising, drawn out, and requires victim survivors to face their abusers. The Family Court system can be weaponised by perpetrators against victim survivors through attempting to gain custody of children. Shared custody arrangements can also require victim survivors to have ongoing contact with perpetrators post-separation, which is a highly dangerous period. Victim-blaming narratives were also identified in court responses to FDSV, often taking the form of women being made responsible for their children's experiences or witnessing of violence and for not leaving their partners earlier. An internal performance review of the Tasmanian Safe at Home program in 2014 aimed to minimise the impact of contact with the justice system on women and their children but noted a lack of specialist support for child witnesses called in family violence cases.

²⁵⁰ Australian Human Rights Commission. (2018). Everyone's business: Fourth national survey on sexual harassment in Australian workplaces.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ ANROWS. (2017). 2017 NCAS Summary Report: Are we there yet? Australians' attitudes towards violence against women & gender equality.

Some cross-jurisdictional responses have been developed and implemented to support integrated justice responses for victim survivor and perpetrators. A notable example is the National Domestic Violence Order Scheme, which was introduced in 2017.²⁵⁴ This scheme means that protection orders issued in any Australian state or territory are recognised and legally enforceable across all jurisdictions.²⁵⁵ In addition, the cross-border justice scheme in South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory allows police to operate across borders.²⁵⁶

Commonwealth initiatives have also been aimed at improving access to justice for women and their children. The Lighthouse Project is a risk screening project, which involves screening parenting matters for family safety risk at the point of filing, triaging matters according to the identified level of risk, providing additional assistance to those at risk, and operating a specialist list (known as the Evatt List) to resolve cases assessed as being at high risk of family violence. The pilot was initially funded through the 2019-2020 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook, with the Commonwealth government committing \$13.5 million over three years, and has been delivered in Adelaide, Brisbane, and Parramatta. In an independent evaluation of the pilot, commissioned by the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, the pilot was found to be achieving its objective of improving the way the Court identifies and responds to the risk of family violence.

6.5.3 Integrated justice responses

Integrated justice responses have been established under the National Plan to provide support to victim survivors, hold perpetrators accountable, and achieve improved outcomes in the criminal justice system.

The Family Advocacy and Support Services (FASS) was established with funding under the Third Action Plan to provide integrated duty lawyer and social worker services for victim survivors and perpetrators of FDSV. An evaluation of the FASS was conducted by Inside Policy and indicated that the FASS was associated with increased client awareness of FDSV, increased help-seeking, increased delivery of supports, and achievement of positive legal and social outcomes.²⁵⁷ For many clients, engagement with the FASS enabled them to identify that they had experienced family violence.²⁵⁸ The provision of support to perpetrators and victim survivors helped to reduce the negative impacts of the justice system on both.²⁵⁹ Key enabling elements of the FASS included the provision of support to clients at an early stage in the legal process, enabling continuity of duty lawyer support across jurisdictions, and delivering integrated legal and social supports in real time in courts.²⁶⁰ It was acknowledged that the FASS could not address the systemic factors impacting experiences with the family law system, and that further reform would be necessary.²⁶¹

The National Plan also provided \$15 million in funding in 2015 to develop and pilot innovative legal assistance service models for women at risk of or experiencing FDSV.²⁶² This funding supported 14 DVUs and HJPs across Australia.²⁶³ Social Compass conducted an outcome evaluation of the DVU and HJP services that indicated positive outcomes for victim survivors.²⁶⁴ Clients of the services had increased access to timely legal support, increased their knowledge of legal process, and ultimately experienced better legal outcomes. Clients and their children identified an improved sense of safety and wellbeing as a result of engagement with the services. Clients were also supported to address non-legal issues such as financial, parenting, and housing issues through the case management and advocacy elements of the DVU and HJP services. This included assistance with

²⁵⁴ Attorney-General's Department. (n.d.). National Domestic Violence Order Scheme. Retrieved March 22 2022, from <https://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/families/family-violence/national-domestic-violence-order-scheme>

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Northern Territory Government of Australia. (2016). Cross-border justice. Retrieved March 22, 2022, from <https://nt.gov.au/law/crime/cross-border-justice>

²⁵⁷ Inside Policy. (2018). An Evaluation of the Family Advocacy and Support Services Final Report.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Social Compass. (2019). An Evaluation of the Pilot Program of Specialist Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships: Final Report.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

immigration issues for CALD clients, for whom this can be a significant barrier to accessing support for FDSV. The evaluation highlighted that high numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, CALD women, and women with disability were accessing these services. In interviews, these women reported feeling safe, respected, and supported, indicating that the services delivered were tailored and culturally appropriate. It was identified that DVUs could be supported to better meet the needs of clients and local demand through increased resources.

The Safe at Home program is an integrated criminal justice response to FDSV delivered in Tasmania that supports a range of services to support women and their children, whilst simultaneously holding perpetrators accountable.²⁶⁵ The program is pro-intervention and aims to improve victim survivors' short- and long-term safety, to hold perpetrators accountable for crimes, reduce the incidence and severity of

FDSV, and minimise the negative impacts of interaction with the justice system on victim survivors.²⁶⁶ An Internal Performance Review Report of the program from 2014 indicates that the program provided an effective short-term response.²⁶⁷ The suite of coordinated services and case coordination support delivered under the program was supported by information-sharing arrangements that prevent victim survivors from repeating their stories and enables immediate risks to safety to be addressed quickly. In addition, stakeholders recognised that increased support services minimised the impact of the criminal justice system on victim survivors, and that the Court Support and Liaison Service supported victim survivors to stay engaged in the court process. It was acknowledged that the ability of the program to deliver outcomes was impacted by inadequate funding arrangements, and that more offender interventions were needed to achieve long-term safety for victim survivors.

6.6 Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account

National Outcome 6 emphasises the importance of holding perpetrators to account through a zero-tolerance approach to violence. This outcome was intended to be supported by appropriate arrests, consistent sentencing, consequences for breaching orders, and perpetrator intervention programs.

The National Plan brought an increased focus on perpetrators of FDSV, with commitment to building the evidence base and developing perpetrator interventions that are enabled by collaboration across the service system. Stakeholders noted that the increased focus on developing the evidence and breadth of interventions for perpetrators intensified under the 4AP.

6.6.1 Rates of repeat partner victimisation

The National Plan aimed to reduce rates of repeat partner victimisation for victim survivors of FDSV. The PSS indicated that rates of repeat partner victimisation for women varied between 2012 and 2016 (see Figure 28).²⁶⁸ There was a small increase in reported rates of repeat partner violence from a current partner in the last 12 months between 2012 and 2016. The proportion of women who experienced current partner violence and experienced more than one incident increased slightly from 54.6 per cent in 2012 to 55.2 per cent in 2016.²⁶⁹ For repeat partner violence from a previous partner, there was a greater magnitude decrease from 61.5 per cent in 2012 to 45.4 per cent in 2016.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁵ Tasmanian Government (Department of Justice). (2020). About Safe at Home. Retrieved March 22, 2022, from Safe at Home: <https://www.safeathome.tas.gov.au/>

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Tasmanian Government (Department of Justice). (2020). Safe at Home: Internal Performance Review Report 2014.

²⁶⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2005, 2012, 2016). Personal Safety Survey.

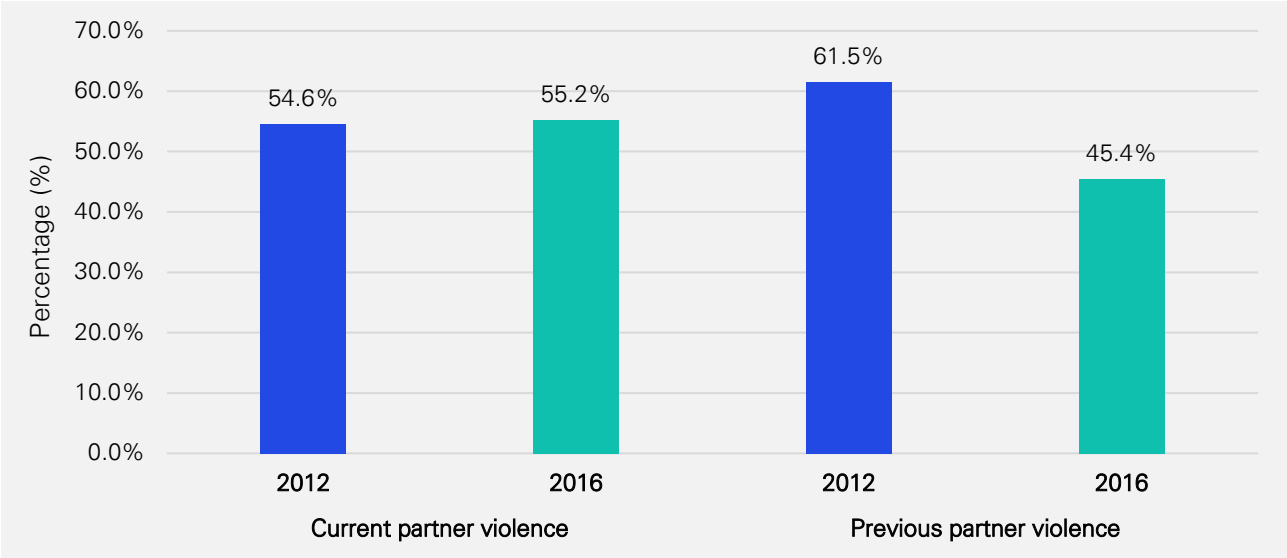
²⁶⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2005, 2012). Personal Safety Survey.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

The PSS also highlighted the rates at which women with a protection order issued against a previous partner experienced further incidents of

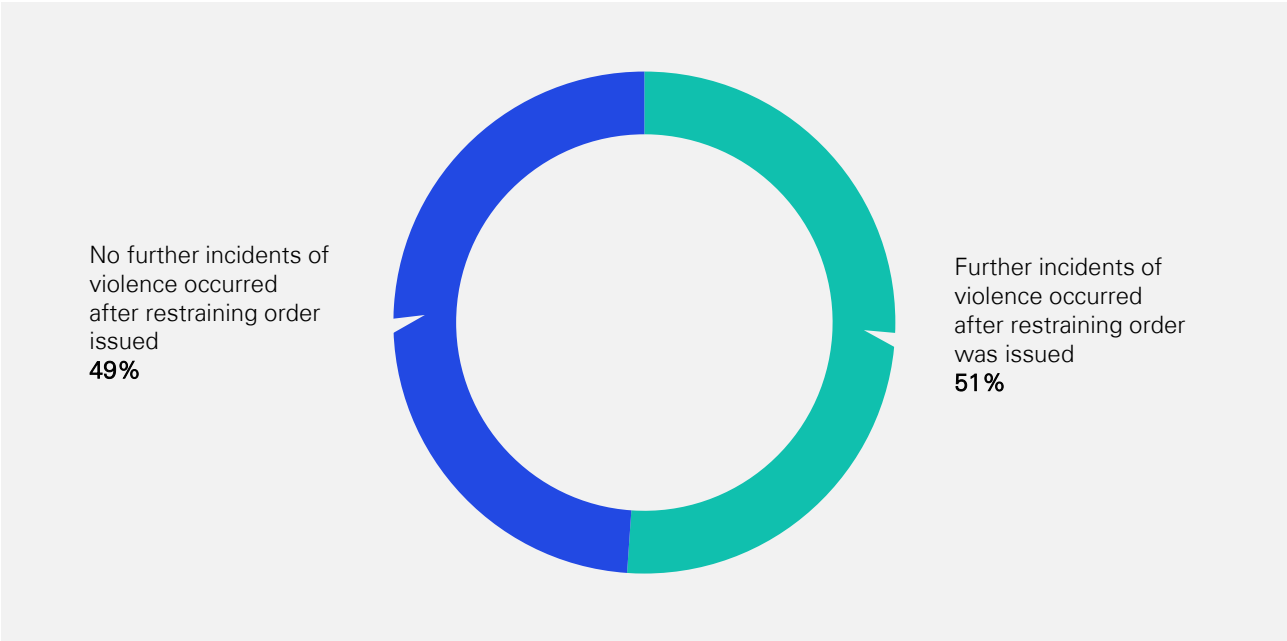
violence, with just over half (51 per cent) indicating that further incidents occurred (see Figure 29).²⁷¹

Figure 28: Rates of repeat partner violence for women who have experienced violence from a current or previous partner in the last 12 months



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2012 & 2016). Personal Safety Survey dataset, provided by ABS.

Figure 29: Percentage of women who experienced further incidents of violence after a protection order was issued against a previous partner



Source: Based on Australian Bureau of Statistics data. Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2016). Personal Safety Survey.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

6.6.2 Improvements in the evidence base for perpetrator interventions

Investment in developing the evidence base has underpinned the focus on perpetrators in the National Plan. ANROWS launched the Perpetrator Interventions Research Stream in 2016 in response to the emphasis on perpetrator interventions in the Second and Third Action Plans.²⁷² This research stream is intended to improve the evidence base for stopping men's violence against women and holding perpetrators to account.

Research publications completed under this stream include programs for perpetrators who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men, LGBTIQ+ people, young people, and perpetrators from refugee backgrounds.²⁷³ The research stream includes a focus on best practice evaluation approaches across these cohorts and in innovative ways, and investigates strategies for effective design and evaluation of intervention programs.²⁷⁴ This direct investment in developing the evidence base for perpetrator interventions under the National Plan is a positive step in ensuring perpetrator interventions are tailored and effective.

6.6.3 Perpetrator intervention and accountability

Perpetrator intervention services received increased recognition as key components of the holistic response to FDSV. Stakeholders acknowledged that genuine progress in reducing rates of violence against women and their children would require a focus on and inclusion of perpetrators. One stakeholder from a perpetrator intervention service explained:

'We certainly won't fix the problem of women and children being harmed by not focusing on the men who are committing those offences and / or coercive control. I would really be keen to see the National Plan focus, without diminishing resources for women, but on providing innovation

and development around the perpetrator space at early levels.'

– **Non-government organisation representative**

This stakeholder reflected improvements in the inclusion of service providers for perpetrators in broader discussions about FDSV, reflecting that:

'I have worked with perpetrators for decades. We have some interesting and different approaches, but what is absolutely required is that integrated approach. 10 or 12 years ago, we weren't even welcomed to the room on discussions around DV [as a perpetrators' service].'

Some stakeholders did express concern that a greater number of perpetrator intervention programs would reduce funding for frontline crisis services for victim survivors, highlighting that the development and introduction of these services should be accompanied with additional funding to the sector. While improvements in attitudes towards perpetrator interventions were noted in the service system, it was acknowledged that community attitudes towards FDSV still place significant emphasis on women to keep themselves and their children safe, without adequate consideration of perpetrator accountability. This was reflected in stakeholder reports of service responses that held victim survivors responsible for protecting their children from the perpetrator in the child protection system. It was considered positive that increased attention is being paid to the perpetrator, but it was believed that the focus under the National Plan was not adequate, with further commitment and focus required to produce any impact on rates of violence.

A positive example of an intervention that places accountability on the perpetrator is the Staying Home Leaving Violence (SHLV) program in New South Wales.²⁷⁵ The SHLV program works in cooperation with the NSW Police to remove the perpetrator from the family home so that their partner and children can remain. This places the accountability and consequences onto the perpetrator, reduces a number of practical barriers to leaving a violent relationship, and is

²⁷² ANROWS. (n.d.). Perpetrator Interventions Research. Retrieved March 22, 2022, from <https://www.anrows.org.au/perpetrator-interventions-research/>

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ University of New South Wales. (2014.). Staying Home Leaving Violence Evaluation Report.

accompanied with a range of supports for victim survivors including safety planning, home security, and financial management assistance. At the time of exit from the program, 93.3 per cent of clients were living in safe accommodation, 83 per cent believed that their children were safer, and typically had a significantly higher average wellbeing score than clients at commencement.²⁷⁶

Perpetrator intervention programs have also been associated with reductions in violent behaviour. In New South Wales, the Government delivered specialist community based MBCPs in four locations from 2015.²⁷⁷ These services were intended to support male perpetrators of FDSV to interrogate their behaviours, and develop new behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs. The MBCPs were delivered over 12 to 32 weeks, included four modules of two-to-four-hour sessions, and were underpinned by a trauma-informed and feminist theory approach that emphasised issues of gender inequality.²⁷⁸ Changes in abusive and violent behaviour were noted as a result of the program. For MBCP Provider 1, 69 per cent of participants strongly agreed that their behaviour was now less threatening or violent towards their current or previous partner.²⁷⁹ Almost four-fifths of participants from MBCP Provider 2 (78 per cent) indicated high levels of progress towards a reduction or cessation of violence.²⁸⁰ The majority of facilitators from MBCP Providers 3 and 4 (89 per cent) reported a perceived reduction in both physical and sexual violence among participants.²⁸¹ In addition, the majority of current or ex partners of participants from Providers 3 and 4 (86 per cent) also reported a perceived reduction in violence.²⁸² These changes were partially attributed to improved communication strategies as a result of involvement, with perpetrators more able to navigate difficult situations and conversations. Providers reported that partners, ex-partners, and children of perpetrators experienced increased safety through their engagement with providers, and the providers' involvement in Safety Action Meetings

that could facilitate additional referrals.²⁸³ The role of facilitators was key in engaging perpetrators, with female facilitators seen to bring a complementary perspective to the programs whilst vulnerability in male facilitators generated open discussion. The delivery of support in a group setting also allowed men to reflect on their own behaviours through hearing other men's accounts of their actions.

The Room4Change six-month residential therapeutic perpetrator service in the Australian Capital Territory provides insights into how to evaluate the success of perpetrator programs beyond solely a reduction in violence. The Room4Change program is intended to help men to address violence and simultaneously support their families to remain in their home.²⁸⁴ The success of the program was measured through reduction in the frequency and intensity of violence, but also through whether women reported feeling safer as a result of the perpetrator's involvement in the program.²⁸⁵ The majority of the women involved in the program reflected that they felt safer knowing that someone was working with their partner and that their experiences of abuse were validated.²⁸⁶

In Victoria, two perpetrator accommodation services have been established to support victim survivors to remain safe at home by enabling perpetrators to be removed from the home. The Perpetrator Accommodation and Support Services program was established in 2020 and provides an average of 14 days of short-term emergency accommodation. This is accompanied with brokerage, intervention support, and links to wraparound services to support perpetrators to engage in behaviour-change. An evaluation of the program indicated that it was successfully increasing the safety of victim survivors during the period of increased safety risk that follows a perpetrator's legal exclusion from the home.²⁸⁷ Longer-term accommodation services are also available in Victoria for perpetrators. The Medium Term Perpetrator Accommodation Service was

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ University of New South Wales. (2019). Men's Behaviour Change Program Evaluation Summary Report.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Payne, J. (2021). Room4Change in the ACT: A developmental evaluation of processes and outcomes. Australian National University Centre for Social Research and Methods.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ No To Violence. (2021). Evaluation of the Perpetrator Accommodation and Support Service.

established in 2021 and provides medium-term accommodation of up to 6 months for perpetrators, accompanied with case management. This program is currently being evaluated.

Stakeholders indicated that the police and justice systems have room for improvement in holding perpetrators accountable. It was explained that justice processes are often slow and not commensurate with the level of risk and trauma experienced by victim survivors. Frontline workers described examples of perpetrators not receiving any consequences after multiple incidents of FDSV and indicated that police could be slow to address breaches of protection orders. As a result, perpetrators were not felt to be held to account for their violence by police or the courts, eroding confidence in the ability of the justice system to protect women and their children.

A trial of electronic monitoring for perpetrators titled Project Vigilance, was conducted by Tasmanian Police under the Safe Homes, Safe Families reform agenda and provides an insight into potential avenues for improvement to police responses to FDSV and holding perpetrators accountable. While it was acknowledged that introducing electronic monitoring would not prevent perpetrators who were intent on causing harm from breaching protection orders it was intended to reduce police response time and increase the anticipation of consequences for perpetrators.²⁸⁸ The evaluation of the trial indicated that victim survivors were less likely to experience violent contact with a perpetrator whilst fitted with an electronic monitoring device.²⁸⁹ Victim survivors reflected having an increased sense of safety during the trial.²⁹⁰ However, follow-up data indicated that electronic monitoring devices cannot guarantee long-term safety once removed, with almost half of victim survivors reporting subsequent incidents of violence.²⁹¹ Perpetrators reflected feeling increased accountability as the device provided an

opportunity to change their behaviour and was associated with consequences.²⁹² While further tracking of perpetrators is required to determine whether electronic monitoring increased convictions for FDSV and associated offences, it was noted that the majority of offenders who committed further offences were arrested and charged.²⁹³

The Tasmanian Safe at Home program had a pro-arrest and pro-prosecution policy that was seen as a strength for ensuring that perpetrators were held accountable for FDSV.²⁹⁴ The immediacy of potential arrest and accountability was seen to be a strong deterrent for some offenders, although a lack of interventions for low and medium risk offenders was seen as a missed opportunity to prevent repeat offences.²⁹⁵ It was noted that the pro-arrest and pro-prosecution policy can cause issues where the victim survivor is not supportive of prosecution.²⁹⁶

In New South Wales, a proactive policing response to potential and actual perpetrators of FDSV has been developed and trialled with positive results. The NSW Police Force have implemented a modified version of the Suspect Target Management Plan (DV-STMP), specifically for domestic violence offences.²⁹⁷ The DV-STMP aims to reduce crime by identifying individuals at risk of offending, notifying them that they are being monitored, and actively policing their behaviours. The DV-STMP was seen to reduce domestic violence offending primarily through deterrence.²⁹⁸ However, there were concerns that individuals being monitored under the DV-STMP may retaliate against victim survivors or pressure them not to report violence, which may impact the safety of victim survivors and the validity of findings that indicate reduced rates of violence.²⁹⁹

Some perpetrator interventions have shown limited effectiveness in reducing recidivism and suggest that further development of the evidence base is necessary. The EQUIPS Domestic Abuse Program is a behaviour change program for medium to high-risk FDSV perpetrators who are

²⁸⁸ Winter, R., Herrlander Birgerson, E., Julian, R., Frey, R., Lucas, R., Norris, K., & Matthewson, M. (2021). Evaluation of Project Vigilance: Electronic Monitoring of Family Violence Offenders. Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ Tasmanian Government (Department of Justice). (2015). Safe at Home: Internal Performance Review Report 2014.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Tasmanian Government (Department of Justice). (2015). Safe at Home: Internal Performance Review Report 2014.

²⁹⁷ Yeong, S. (2020). An evaluation of the Suspect Target Management Plan. NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

serving custodial or community-based sanctions and have a history of FDSV. The program commenced in 2015 and includes 20 two-hour sessions delivered weekly or biweekly by trained facilitators that address topics such as sexual and relationship skills, identifying abuse, and elements of CBT. An evaluation of the program indicated that there was no evidence that the program improved rates of re-offending for participant perpetrators compared to those who were referred but did not commence.³⁰⁰ The evaluation suggested that improved access to therapeutic programs for perpetrators under community supervision could have more positive outcomes.³⁰¹

Stakeholders noted that perpetrator intervention programs and men's programs can receive some community backlash. One stakeholder described the regular backlash they received when

publicising new perpetrator intervention programs:

'It feels important to state that every time we publicise new services for men, we immediately get trolled or receive vexatious / abusive calls from MRA's [Men's Rights Activists] who seem to think we are out to get them rather than the real fact that we are here to support them. I have personally received death threats. Quite simply we are tackling an age-old power differential and patriarchy has a way of morphing to survive!'

– **Peak body representative**

³⁰⁰ Rahman, S. & Poynton, S. (2018). Evaluation of the EQUIPS domestic abuse. NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

Future Directions



7 Future Directions

As the National Plan approaches its conclusion, a new National Plan is being developed to supersede it. This section outlines how findings from this evaluation and lessons from the National Plan should be considered in developing the new National Plan and other initiatives. This includes implications for future policy responses from the evaluation findings to inform future directions for FDSV reforms in Australia.

These future directions align with:

- The **scope** of the draft for the new National Plan. This includes clear definitions and use of inclusive language.
- The **model** of separating broad direction with the National Plan and implementation through the Action Plans. This includes consideration of the needs of diverse groups in any implementation or action plan.
- The **elements** of the National Plan: flagship initiatives, Commonwealth leadership and coordination, foundations for change, and the National Plan's outcomes. This includes clear governance, better alignment with other nationwide policies, better tracking of performance, and prioritising meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Section	Finding	Future Direction
General		
Scope of the National Plan	The National Plan aimed to reduce violence against women and their children. The majority of funded initiatives focused on responding to intimate partner violence with less attention to violence in family relationships. The terminology in the National Plan does not adequately consider children as victim survivors in their own right, not just as extensions of their mother.	The new National Plan should be clear in consistently defining the inclusions with respect to gendered violence and the application to associated population groups.
	Stakeholders from the LGBTIQ+ community felt that the language in the National Plan, that is being for cisgender 'women and their children' exclude other genders and relationships with same gender partners.	The new National Plan should encapsulate more inclusive language, to acknowledge the evidence base and experiences of women, girls, and transgender and gender diverse people. It should recognise that people of all marginalised genders are impacted by violence with the same gendered drivers.
	Feedback received as part of consultations and more broadly indicated that the monitoring and evaluation activities associated with the National	Inclusion of the voices of people with lived experiences in future evaluation and monitoring activities for the new National Plan will be critical to achieving a full understanding of impact.

Section	Finding	Future Direction
	Plan did not adequately represent the voices of people with lived experience.	
Action Plans		
Action Plans	<p>Significant work has occurred at the Commonwealth, state, and territory levels as a result of initiatives under each of the Action Plans and broader state and territory reforms and initiatives throughout the life of the National Plan.</p> <p>Reviews and evaluations of respective Action Plans identified that they had not adequately responded to the needs of diverse population groups (for example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, CALD women, women with disability and people from LGBTIQ+ communities).</p>	<p>Consideration should be given to retaining the implementation model, with the new National Plan being implemented through rolling Action Plans with agreed priorities and initiatives.</p> <p>Under the new National Plan, any Action Plans should give sufficient regard to the needs of diverse population groups, including addressing gaps in funding, policy, service delivery and data collection for diverse groups.</p>
Flagship initiatives		
Flagship initiatives	<p>The flagship initiatives were seen as the key benefit of the Commonwealth coordination of a national approach to FDSV. The establishment of a national research agenda and broad reaching awareness-raising campaigns were well regarded across the sector.</p> <p>The research developed by ANROWS was considered invaluable in translating evidence into practice for practitioners, however this has yet to translate to influencing policy decisions at the national and state level.</p> <p>Our Watch has been pivotal in providing the evidence base in an Australian context for primary prevention and has earned great support across government and the FDSV sector.</p> <p>DV-alert has been rolled out to a large number of training recipients to increase the capacity of frontline workers in universal (that is, mainstream) settings.</p> <p>1800RESPECT has been effective in delivering support and counselling in flexible around the clock modalities. While the service has been assessed to be appropriate for diverse groups (for example, CALD women, LGBTIQ+ people), it has been identified that more could be</p>	<p>The new National Plan should continue to leverage the positive outcomes achieved through the flagship initiatives through recurrent funding. In addition to continuing existing services, there are opportunities to expand service offerings to be more inclusive for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (1800RESPECT) and to address training development needs for specialist services (DV-alert).</p> <p>The new National Plan should also focus on ensuring that the research developed by ANROWS can continue to be translated into policy and practice.</p>

Section	Finding	Future Direction
	done to encourage engagement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly in regional, rural and remote areas.	
Commonwealth leadership and coordination		
Commonwealth leadership and coordination	<p>The National Plan was effective in establishing the national agenda to address FDSV and an enduring commitment from Commonwealth, state and territory governments to reduce violence against women. The National Plan remained prominent throughout its 12-year implementation and across successive ministers and governments.</p> <p>The National Plan operated in a complex policy landscape, including state-based FDSV strategies and plans, as well as intersecting with other COAG reform priorities. The National Plan had broad or targeted alignment with state-based plans and was able to influence the authorising environment to justify state and territory investment in FDSV policy and programs in many jurisdictions.</p> <p>The governance mechanisms established under the National Plan have matured and endured. The National Plan Implementation Executive Group has helped to reduce duplication, and enable collaboration and information-sharing processes.</p>	<p>The Commonwealth Government should consider how the new National Plan could better align, integrate, and influence other Commonwealth policy, legislation and programs outside the FDSV sector, in particular intersectionality with the family law system and in supporting migrant women on temporary and other visas.</p> <p>For the new National Plan, consideration should be given to building on existing governance mechanisms (for example, the National Plan Implementation Executive Group) to continue the progress of collaboration and information sharing.</p>
Information sharing and collaboration through governance, advisory and communication mechanisms	<p>Since the start of the National Plan, there is evidence of greater collaboration between and across government and service delivery partners. The National Plan and its agreed-upon approach to FDSV have contributed to improvements in information sharing. However, as noted in the Third Action Plan process evaluation, siloing and fragmentation continued to be a problem.</p> <p>There was an identified need for the Commonwealth Government to take an increased coordination role, and to further improve governance and information-sharing mechanisms to maximise collaboration between the Commonwealth, states and territories, and mainstream sectors.</p>	<p>The new National Plan should continue to be overseen by the Women's Safety Taskforce or a similar cross-government body which comprises representatives from states and territories. Implementation of the new National Plan should be led by a relevant governance body such as the Implementation Executive Group to reduce duplication and enable collaboration and information sharing.</p> <p>The new National Plan governance arrangements should seek to strengthen collaboration between the Commonwealth, states and territories and service delivery agencies</p>
Improved service responses for at risk cohorts.	The experiences of violence experienced by at-risk diverse groups of women and their children remains differentially understood. There has	The new National Plan and Action Plans should place appropriate emphasis on place-based co-designed tailored solutions that incorporate the views of people with a lived

Section	Finding	Future Direction
	<p>been increased recognition of intersectionality across the sector, however the service response largely remains fragmented.</p> <p>The traditional service and justice responses to FDSV may not be appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, families and communities.</p> <p>Women and children from diverse backgrounds may exhibit different help-seeking behaviours. CALD women may be more likely to disclose experiences of violence with faith leaders, while LGBTIQ+ people may be less likely to access specialist services.</p>	<p>experience to meet the needs of at risk and diverse cohorts. This should include recognition of healing-focused approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.</p> <p>The new National Plan should seek to increase the capacity and capability of key local stakeholders such as faith leaders and other community members to recognise and respond to disclosures of FDSV by community members.</p>
Impact of COVID-19 pandemic and adaptation to respond to FDSV during the pandemic	<p>The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the introduction of innovative and flexible approaches to service delivery. Adaption to online service delivery was achieved for some, but not all programs and initiatives. Lockdown and social distancing restrictions had a meaningful impact on some communities, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and rural and remote communities.</p>	<p>Initiatives and programs funded under the new National Plan and Actions Plans should consider mixed modes of service delivery, in the event of further restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but also in terms of delivering services in a method that meets the needs of diverse individuals and communities.</p>
Foundations for Change		
Strengthen the workforce	<p>Strengthening the FDSV sector workforce was recognised across successive Action Plans as critical to delivering services and providing support for victim survivors of FDSV. Traditionally, specialist services have been the primary provider of supports for victim survivors of FDSV, however there is a growing realisation that responding to FDSV is the responsibility of all agencies that come into contact with victim survivors, their children and perpetrators of violence.</p> <p>The National Plan and Action Plans saw progress in development of the Workforce Development Program and the Workforce Development Agreement. The flagship initiatives DV-alert, ANROWS, Our Watch and 1800RESPECT have demonstrated positive outcomes for frontline workers. DV-alert established the development of nationally accredited training, as well as specialist training for working with diverse populations such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and CALD communities. Activities have also been driven at a jurisdictional level to strengthen the FDSV workforce, with some directly associated with the</p>	<p>The new National Plan and Action Plans should maintain a focus on strengthening the specialist and mainstream FDSV workforces. This could take the form of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving capacity within specialist services to enable frontline workers to attend training • Enabling access to training for workers in rural and remote areas • Building the confidence and competence of mainstream service providers to identify and respond to FDSV • Investing in developing the primary prevention workforce.

Section	Finding	Future Direction
	<p>National Plan and others implemented as part of state-based reform activities and strategies.</p> <p>The level of training provided within the sector was considered to be appropriate for half of the frontline survey respondents. While organisations were generally considered to be supportive of training and workforce development, there are challenges in practicality. For frontline services, time spent in training and capacity building often came at the expense of service delivery to victim survivors. Access to training was not perceived as equitable, in particular for staff in rural and remote areas.</p>	
Integrate systems and share information	<p>Through the life of the National Plan there has been a sustained investment in information sharing practices and legislation.</p> <p>Integrated responses have been implemented across jurisdictions, under the National Plan but also through state-based policies and plans. Integrated service responses have yielded positive outcomes, but there are opportunities to improve integration between specialist and mainstream services.</p>	<p>The new National Plan and Action Plans should embed and invest in coordination and connection through the FDSV sector.</p> <p>The Action Plans should explore how technological solutions can be optimised to support information sharing and service integration. This could take the form of solutions that enable data sharing between different sectors (for example, sexual assault services and mental health services) to enable wraparound services and prevent victim survivors from retelling their story.</p>
Improve the evidence base	<p>The evidence base of what works in responding to FDSV has improved materially under the National Plan, through the establishment of ANROWS and Our Watch, setting of the national research agenda, and increased research funding. This has been identified as one of the major achievements of the National Plan.</p> <p>The breadth of research and evidence that has been produced, particularly through the work of ANROWS is significant. The establishment of national research priorities has improved the evidence base for priority populations and has positively impacted translating evidence into practice.</p>	<p>The National Research Agenda should be extended throughout the life of the new National Plan. The National Research Agenda should be supported by adequate and ongoing, funding and grants to continue to build the evidence base. The National Research Agenda should be updated periodically to reflect emerging issues in the field of FDSV. The Commonwealth should consider developing a research program agreed with states and territories to guide key questions to be answered, and assumptions within the research.</p> <p>Initiatives and programs funded under the new National Plan and Action Plans should have dedicated funding to support evaluation and monitoring activities to inform continuous improvement.</p>

Section	Finding	Future Direction
Track performance	<p>The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) identified a lack of implementation planning, and performance monitoring and evaluation of the National Plan. A Performance, Monitoring and Reporting (PMR) Framework was developed to support tracking progress of the Fourth Action Plan. The development of the PMR identified gaps in consistent data collection approaches.</p> <p>The proliferation of pilot programs under the National Plan were not routinely evaluated to determine their effectiveness. Dedicated funding for program evaluation was not always set up. Monitoring and reporting requirements were often burdensome for service providers.</p>	<p>The new National Plan should have clear and achievable targets that are agreed by Commonwealth, state and territory governments.</p> <p>The new National Plan should be accompanied by supporting documents to inform the monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the Plan at an initiative and strategy level. This should include an Outcomes Framework that is informed by a theory of change and robust program logic model. The Outcomes Framework should clearly articulate the outcomes, targets and associated measures and indicators that will demonstrate progress for the new National Plan.</p> <p>In addition, a monitoring, reporting and evaluation framework should be established at the outset of the new ten-year National Plan to ensure consistent tracking of performance.</p> <p>Initiatives that are funded as part of the new National Plan or Action Plans should give consideration for separate funding to ensure these initiatives are robustly monitored and evaluated, to improve the evidence-base of what works, and to inform future funding investment decisions.</p> <p>Data collection, reporting and monitoring requirements for service providers and grant recipients should be streamlined and automated where possible.</p> <p>In collaboration with data custodians, consideration should be given to new and additional data measures to provide a fulsome picture of performance and progress.</p> <p>A key component of work related to monitoring and reporting will be future data development activities by the Commonwealth, and states and territories, in consultation with the FDSV sector.</p> <p>Data collection activities require adequate ongoing funding as a commitment to building the evidence capable of tracking progress over time.</p>

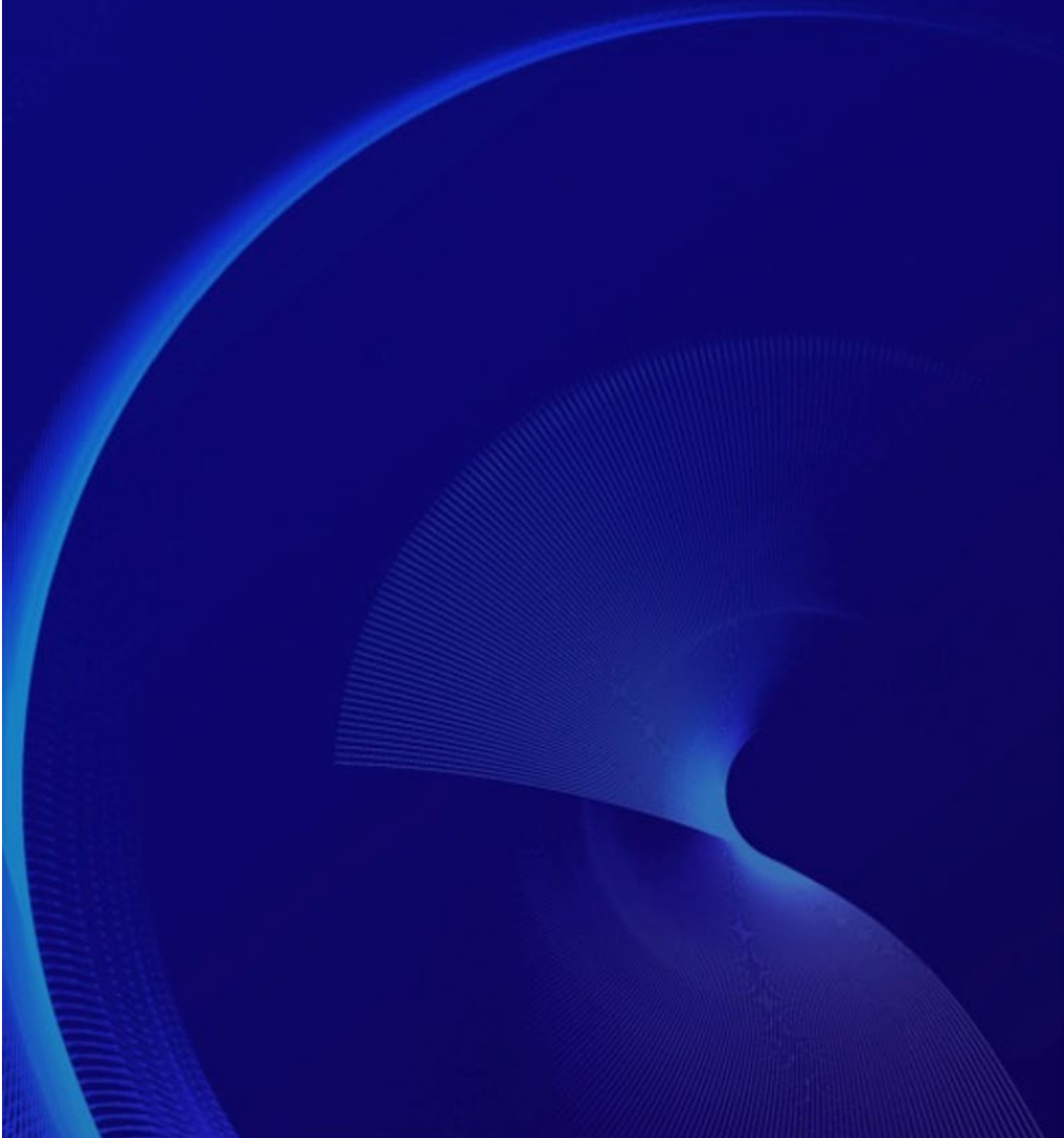
Section	Finding	Future Direction
National Plan outcomes		
Communities are safe and free from violence	<p>A key outcome that has been achieved through the National Plan is demonstrable improvement in community attitudes that condemn violence. Results from the 2017 NCAS show reductions in core beliefs that domestic violence is excusable in certain situations, and improvements in recognising behaviours that constitute FDSV. Some negative attitudes persisted with unacceptable proportions of the population accepting that FDSV is a normal response to stress, and that a woman is responsible for continued violence if she does not leave an abusive relationship. There was declining awareness that men are more likely to perpetrate FDSV. Among young people, there was an increase in the proportion who believe men and women are equally likely to perpetrate domestic violence.</p> <p>Observations of improved awareness are not necessarily associated with greater understanding of the gendered drivers of violence. Gender inequality continues to be experienced, with sustained focus required to bring about changes in views about women and their roles in society. Some markers of gender inequality (for example, unpaid work, superannuation balances, traditional gender roles) have improved but significant gaps remain.</p> <p>Recorded rates of violence against women have shown an upward trend over the life of the National Plan. While it is speculated that this is due to increased rates of recognition that violence is unacceptable and greater reporting to formal services, workers in the field suggest that there has been no reduction in violence. The presentations may be becoming increasingly complex and risky.</p> <p>The National Plan and Action Plans have maintained a focus on primary prevention to ensure community safety by stopping violence before it happens. The work of Our Watch has been crucial in advancing primary prevention, in particular the <i>Stop it at the Start</i> and <i>Change the Story</i> campaigns. It may be years before these primary prevention activities impact rates of violence through sustained intervention and investment.</p>	<p>The new National Plan should establish clear and achievable targets in relation to reductions in the prevalence of violence against women and children. To meet these targets, the new National Plan must build on the successes of the incumbent plan in providing the leadership for sustained change.</p> <p>A sustained and expanded focus on primary prevention, particularly targeting young Australians, should remain a priority under the new National Plan. Ongoing media and social media campaigns should target gendered drivers of violence and community attitudes.</p> <p>Services for women and children should be accessible and tailored to their specific needs.</p>

Section	Finding	Future Direction
Relationships are respectful	<p>There are positive indicators that community attitudes, in particular those of younger Australians are demonstrating a greater understanding of what a respectful relationship should look like, how to identify disrespectful behaviours and how to respond. Our Watch has been critical in leading the way through successive activities which have seen iterative improvements in awareness and recognition. The respectful relationships programs have been successfully trialled in school settings, with positive outcomes observed in early primary school years, indicating the criticality of reaching children from young ages.</p>	<p>The new National Plan should continue to focus on primary prevention activities, including those targeted at children and young people of all ages, including the before school age. The trials should be considered for scaling up, with consideration for inclusion in the national curriculum for primary school children.</p> <p>Our Watch should receive recurrent funding to continue leading the primary prevention activities at the national level.</p>
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are strengthened	<p>Through the life of the National Plan, there has been an observable investment in co-designed and community-led initiatives to address violence impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and communities. Limited funding structures contribute to an inability to embed these practices in communities. There are a number of initiatives that have been implemented as part of the National Plan that have shown promise in the primary prevention and justice responses to FDSV for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and communities.</p> <p>Communities have witnessed numerous programs ‘piloted’ which are repeatedly short-lived with a lack of evaluation to determine effectiveness, only to be replaced with new programs that suffer the same shortcomings. Communities are fatigued by this which also serves to erode trust.</p> <p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women feel they have little input into decisions made about them and their communities.</p>	<p>There is a need for greater tailoring to ensure that the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children are adequately met, not seen as an add-on. The Commonwealth Government, in developing the new National Plan, should consider developing and implementing a dedicated tailored plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. This would need to be accompanied by sustainable longer-term funding to enable meaningful engagement and co-design of local solutions.</p> <p>Responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would benefit from greater consideration of healing solutions, and through increasing the capability of the workforce particular in rural and remote communities.</p>
Services meet the needs of women and their children	<p>Through the life of the National Plan there has been a substantial investment in implementing initiatives to address FDSV, which was widely recognised as a key achievement of the National Plan. However, it was felt that many of these initiatives did not sufficiently meet the needs of women and their children.</p> <p>Services for women and children from diverse groups at risk of experiencing violence have shown positive progress through the implementation of community-led holistic service models. However,</p>	<p>The new National Plan and Action Plans should ensure that new or recurrent funding for initiatives or programs is directly targeted to meeting the needs of women and children.</p> <p>Responses to victim survivors and perpetrators should be integrated and multi-disciplinary.</p> <p>The needs of diverse groups of women, children and communities require tailored responses, which specifically</p>

Section	Finding	Future Direction
	<p>these were not available and accessible to all. In the absence of this, mainstream services and the FDSV sector more broadly lacks knowledge and understanding of the nuances experienced by these groups. Victim survivors from diverse groups may not 'see themselves' in the services that are offered to them</p> <p>Some people within the LGBTIQ+ community may be reluctant to seek help from FDSV services as they were considered to be not appropriate or understanding of their diverse sexualities and/or genders.</p>	<p>address their needs and should not be considered as 'add-ons' or modifications of existing mainstream service responses. This will require community-led co-design services with input from those communities that are impacted by violence, including those with lived experiences.</p> <p>Service providers, including government and non-government organisations, should consider expanding the diversity of their workforces to provide a level of comfort to clients and service users from diverse backgrounds that these services are culturally and otherwise appropriate for them to meet their unique needs.</p>
Justice responses are effective	<p>For a myriad of reasons, victim survivors continue not to report all episodes of violence, threats, sexual assault, and harassment. Justice responses are evolving. Particular initiatives that have been introduced during the life of the National Plan include specialist FDSV training for magistrates, the inclusion of police in interdisciplinary meetings, victim survivors being able to attend court via video-link, and the co-location of justice services. These are supported by proposed legislation to criminalise coercive control in some jurisdictions.</p> <p>Findings suggest that police responses to FDSV require further improvement, through additional training to adequately identify and respond to FDSV, in particular to coercive control and other non-physical forms of violence.</p> <p>Victim-blaming attitudes persist from across police and court services. The Family Court system was identified to re-traumatise victim survivors, and shared custody arrangements require ongoing contact with abusive partners.</p> <p>Through the National Plan a range of integrated justice responses have been established to support victim survivors and hold perpetrators accountable. Evaluations have shown improved outcomes including access to legal supports, increased information sharing between services and increased help-seeking behaviours.</p>	<p>The new National Plan should maintain a focus on justice responses to FDSV including capacity building for police and courts officers. Capacity building should feature recognition of non-physical forms of violence, identification of the predominant aggressor, understanding risks through repeated exposure to perpetrators, and addressing victim-blaming attitudes.</p> <p>The new National Plan and the Action Plans should seek to influence other national jurisdictional policies and processes, such as the Family Court system to ensure victim survivors are supported through these processes and not exposed to ongoing risks.</p>

Section	Finding	Future Direction
Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account	<p>Many victim survivors continue to experience repeated episodes of violence including after protection orders had been issued. The National Plan brought an increased focus on perpetrator accountability through developing perpetrator interventions and building the evidence base. A dedicated perpetrator intervention research stream was established by ANROWS, focuses on best practice approaches for perpetrators from diverse backgrounds, which has contributed to effective tailored interventions.</p> <p>Across the National Plan, a series of perpetrator intervention initiatives and programs were funded and trialled. Some programs have demonstrated reductions in the severity and frequency of violence, while others have shown limited effectiveness in reducing recidivism, indicating the variance across programs, cohorts and settings.</p> <p>Perpetrator interventions, including men's behaviour change programs, are not resourced to meet the demands on their services. Waitlists can be long, particularly in regional and remote areas.</p>	<p>The new National Plan should maintain the focus on perpetrator interventions as a key component to the holistic response to FDSV. This should include increasing the availability and accessibility of men's behaviour change programs.</p> <p>Building the evidence base on what works is critical, through continued evaluation of new and existing programs and initiatives, and through the research undertaken by ANROWS and others.</p>

Appendix



Appendix A: Overview of key policies and frameworks 2010-2022

New South Wales



Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016-2021: Safer lives for women, men and children was developed in response to increasing public attention and policy reform to respond to FDSV. The Blueprint had six priority areas of action across prevention, early intervention, support for victim survivors and perpetrators, and systemic improvements. While it broadly aligns with the National Plan, the Blueprint incorporates existing state policies including specific portfolio responses in the justice and health sectors.

NSW Sexual Assault Strategy 2018-2021 was a comprehensive framework aimed at improving prevention and response to sexual assault.

The NSW Women's Strategy 2018-2022 is a whole-of-government policy framework that aims to advance the economic, social, and physical wellbeing of women and girls in NSW.

Victoria



Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence (2016) made 227 recommendations to re-orient and improve Victoria's family violence system, from significant systemic reforms (such as the rollout of Support and Safety Hubs and the redevelopment of the Common Risk Assessment Framework), to sector-specific initiatives aimed at enhancing the capacity of each of the health, justice and community services systems to respond to and support individuals and families at risk of experiencing family violence.

All recommendations were accepted by the Victorian Government. Significant reform is underway guided by Ending family violence – **Victoria's 10-year plan for change, supported by a 10-Year Investment Plan and Rolling Action Plans.**

Free from Violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence is focused on the primary prevention of family violence and violence against women, and preventing violence before early intervention or crisis response is required. The strategy is underpinned by a vision of a Victoria that is free from violence. To be supported by a series of rolling action plans, the strategy fulfils recommendation 187 of the Royal Commission.

Safe and strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy aims to prevent violence against women by promoting gender equality.

Queensland



Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016-2026 was informed by a report of the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence, *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an end to domestic and family violence in Queensland*. It targets prevention, early intervention, crisis response, and recovery. The Strategy seeks to support a whole-of-community response to FDSV and create lasting cultural change

Prevent. Support. Believe. Queensland's Framework to address Sexual Violence sets out the government's vision for a Queensland where everyone lives free of the fear, threat or experience of sexual violence. To support implementation of the framework, a whole-of-government action plan to address sexual violence was released in October 2021.

The Queensland women's strategy (2022-2027) provides a framework for strengthening the rights of women and girls, and progressing towards gender equality in Queensland

Western Australia



Path to Safety: Western Australia's Strategy to Reduce Family and Domestic Violence 2020 – 2030 sets out a clear whole-of-government and community plan for reducing and responding to FDSV over the next decade. The strategy is supported by three action plans and has four focus areas: Aboriginal Family Safety, Act Now, Primary Prevention, and System Reform.

Stronger Together – WA's Plan for Gender Equality seeks to provide a framework for coordinated action across government, business, organisations, and individuals to address gender inequality in Western Australia over a 10-year period.

South Australia



Committed to Safety: A Framework for addressing domestic, family and sexual violence has three key focus areas – primary prevention, service and support, and justice – with a range of short, medium and long-term actions spanning four years. The framework also has a strong focus on providing coordinated and targeted support to specific population groups such as young people, Aboriginal women and communities, women with disabilities, CALD women, older women, and people living in regional and remote communities.

The South Australian Women's Leadership and Economic Security Strategy (2021-2024) aims to improve women's economic participation and security, as well as increasing opportunities for leadership across sectors.

Tasmania



Safe Homes, Families, Communities – Tasmania’s action plan for family and sexual violence 2019-2022 is the Tasmanian Government’s whole-of-government action plan to respond to FDSV. The action plan includes three priority areas of primary prevention and early intervention, response and recovery, and strengthening the service system.

The Tasmanian Women’s Strategy 2018-2021 provides a framework for achieving gender equality in Tasmania through joint action from government, the private sector, and the wider community. A new draft strategy for 2022-2027 has been released for public consultation

Australian Capital Territory



The ACT Women’s Plan 2016-26 highlights the principle that all women and girls have the right to be safe and live without fear. The implementation of the Second Action Plan 2020-22 Equity, seeks to improve outcomes for women and girls, and improve gender equity across the Australian Capital Territory. This supports the Safer Families Reforms on preventing and responding to FDSV, delivered through the Australian Capital Territory Government’s Office of the Coordinator-General for Family Safety.

The Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Program, which began in 2021, will develop inclusive, evidence-based and effective recommendations for responding to and preventing sexual violence.

The ACT Women’s Plan 2016-26 aims to progress gender equality for women in the ACT by promoting women’s economic status, social inclusion, and safety and wellbeing.

Northern Territory



Domestic, Family & Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018–2028 aligns with the National Plan and builds on the Northern Territory Government’s previous strategy, Safety is Everyone’s Right. The Framework includes Action Plan 1, focusing on the first phase of implementation.

The Northern Territory Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework is a priority under Action Plan 1, focusing on a whole-of-government, whole-of-community approach to preventing and responding to sexual violence.

The Northern Territory Gender Equality Statement of Commitment and Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025 have been introduced to drive gender equality for women, men, and individuals with diverse identities in the Northern Territory.

Appendix B: Evaluation of the National Plan

While governments have directed significant investments towards reducing and preventing violence against women and their children, the evidence base about what works best to address this complex social problem remains under-developed; particularly as it relates to vulnerable cohorts such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and women with a disability.

In 2014, the Department released an Evaluation Plan for the National Plan, articulating the approach to determine its effectiveness as an overarching policy on an ongoing basis; inform the focus of future directions of the National Plan; and remain responsive to emerging priorities. There are a range of evaluation activities that sit within this overarching evaluation approach including:

1. Reviews of each three-year Action Plan, including how these have contributed to the National Plan and how each Action Plan builds on the previous Action Plan/s
2. Annual progress reporting
3. Evaluation of flagship activities³⁰²
4. Underpinning evaluation activities.³⁰³

Further to this, in 2019 the Australian National Audit Office report highlighted the need for improved performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting of activities funded under the National Plan to provide assurance that governments are on track to achieve the agreed outcomes and targets, and improve transparency.³⁰⁴ In response, DSS produced an Implementation Plan against which progress is being monitored in progress reports on the 4AP.³⁰⁵ Two progress reports have been developed outlining this progress.

This evaluation built on prior evaluation work within the National Plan and recognised the complexity of the context in which the National Plan is being administered.

B.1 Overview of approach

The evaluation approach recognised that the National Plan covers a diverse range of activities that have been delivered across multiple sectors over more than a decade. The approach recognised the inherent complexity of the policy response, the context in which the National Plan was formulated and implemented, the many stakeholder interests, and the role of the National Plan as a mechanism for large-scale coordination and collaboration. The evaluation aimed to identify the broad impact of the National Plan and examine gaps or disconnects in the system that decrease the overall effectiveness of investments being made by governments in various programs under the National Plan.

The approach to the evaluation of the National Plan was conducted at two levels: evaluation of the core purpose of the National Plan and synthesis of previous evaluations of initiatives that have been implemented over the course of the National Plan.

Evaluation of the core purpose

The National Plan set a long-term, national approach to make a significant and sustained reduction in levels of violence against women and their children. The National Plan was based around a whole-of-government and whole-of-community response to achieving a reduction in violence against women in Australia. This evaluation sought to determine how the National Plan enabled such a unified approach and promoted collaboration between states and territories. To do this, KPMG analysed system level responses and inter-linkages between programs and outcomes at a system-wide level. Population level change, including broad trends and generalisable observations at the national level, were also considered.

302 The flagship activities include Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Limited (ANROWS); the telephone and online counselling service, 1800RESPECT; the free training program, DV-alert; the primary prevention organisation, Our Watch; the social marketing campaign, The Line; and White Ribbon Australia.

303 This includes an analysis of the data available to measure women's safety such as the Personal Safety Survey (PSS) conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), death review data and the National Survey on Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women (NCAS) conducted periodically by ANROWS.

304 Australian National Audit Office, 2019, Coordination and Targeting of Domestic Violence Funding and Actions report no. 45 2018–19

305 Available at <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/implementation-plan/>

Synthesis of previous evaluations

Evaluating a national reform provides an opportunity to collate evaluations from a range of sources and synthesise key themes. KPMG synthesised existing evaluations of flagship activities, as well as evaluations of programs and activities that have been more complex and had significant funding, impact, innovation, risk or profile. KPMG has also synthesised common findings and major themes from existing evaluations for groups or clusters of programs which have common target audiences, service configurations, and objectives. This enabled the collation of a single source of information relating to evaluated activities to prevent, reduce, and support women and their children affected by violence.

B.2 Evaluation domains

Three evaluation domains were established to inform assessment of progress towards the National Plan target and high-level indicators of change. These domains are outlined below.

- **Overarching arrangements and governance:** A defining feature of the National Plan is how it brings together efforts across jurisdictions, sectors and policy areas to drive national improvements in reducing violence against women and their children.
- **Foundations for change:** The National Plan identifies four foundations for change which are perceived to underpin the successful implementation of the National Plan:

Strengthen the workforce

Integrate systems and share information

Improve the evidence base

Track performance.

- **Six National Outcomes** were set for the National Plan:
 1. **Communities are safe and free from violence:** Promoting community involvement, focusing on primary prevention and advancing gender equality will help foster positive and respectful community attitudes that are critical to Australian women and their children living free from violence in safe communities.
 2. **Relationships are respectful:** Changing and shaping attitudes and behaviours of young people is critical to preventing FDSV in the future. The National Plan supports individuals to develop more equal and respectful relationships.
 3. **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are strengthened:** The

National Plan is focused on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to develop local solutions to prevent violence. This includes encouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to have a stronger voice as community leaders, and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men to reject violence.

4. **Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence:** Specialist and mainstream services must be responsive and flexible in meeting the diverse needs of their clients, with improved collaboration between services so that women do not have to tell their story multiple times.
5. **Justice responses are effective:** Work will be undertaken to improve the legal response to FDSV, and to promote responses from criminal justice agencies. Systems need to work together effectively to be responsive to women's safety and to prevent further violence.
6. **Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account:** Preventing and reducing violence against women requires strong laws that are effectively administered and hold perpetrators to account.

B.3 Methods

KPMG used a mixed method design to provide insights into the effectiveness and efficiency of the National Plan. This supported the assessment as to whether, over its 12-year lifespan, the National Plan was delivered as intended, and achieved its vision to deliver a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and children in Australia.

The evaluation comprised three core components:

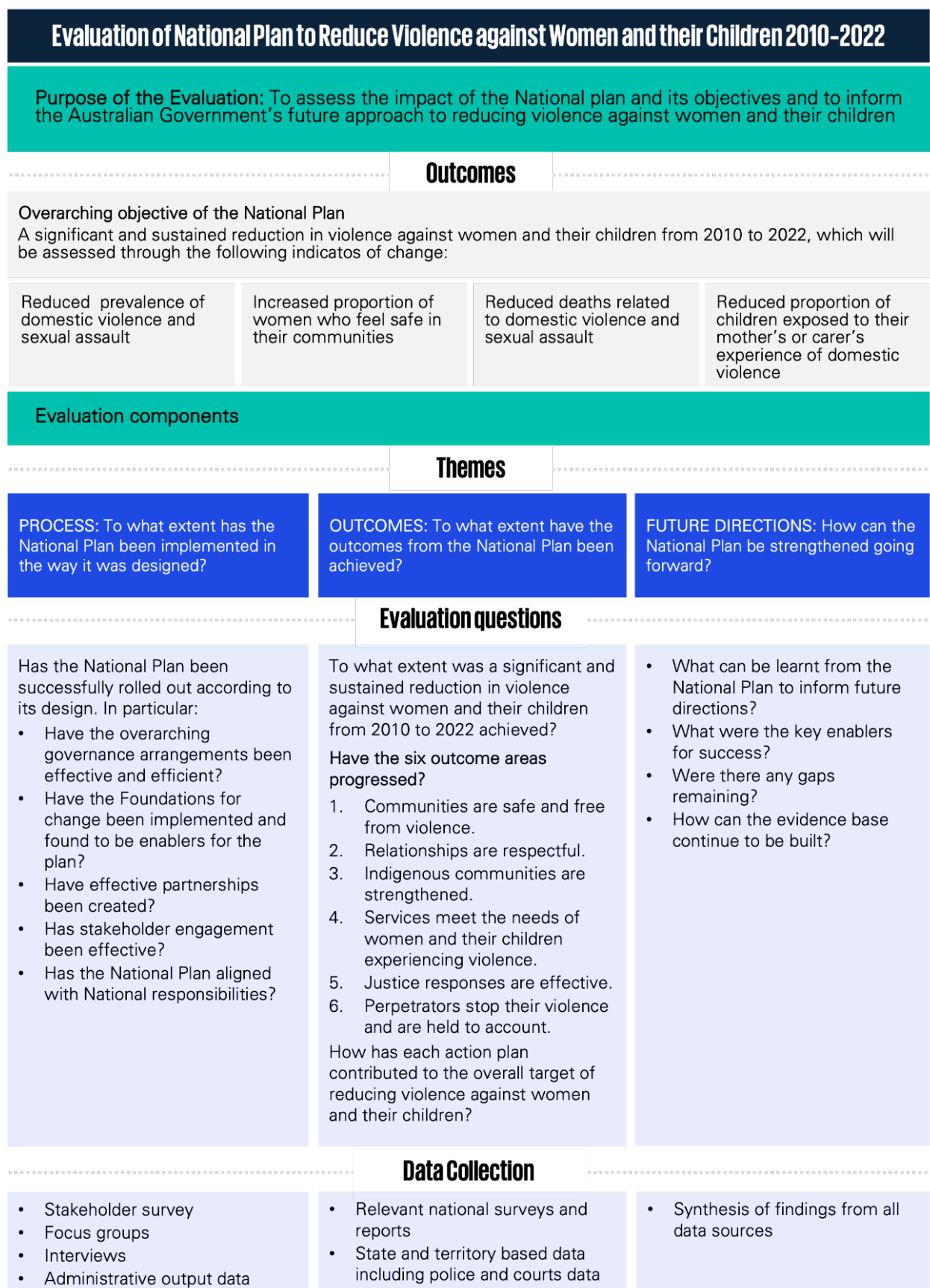
- **Implementation (process) evaluation:** This considered the extent to which the National Plan was implemented as planned. Specific components considered included governance arrangements; the foundations of change; partnerships and stakeholder engagement; barriers and enablers of successful implementation; and areas for improvement. Consideration was also had to the context in which implementation occurred, parallel developments, and jurisdiction-specific considerations.
- **Outcomes evaluation:** This considered the outcomes achieved throughout the span of the National Plan (12 years) against the

longer-term objective of the National Plan, and in the six key outcome areas. The analysis considered the cumulative impact of the National Plan, on short, medium, and longer-term outcomes.

- **Future directions:** This drew out the implications for future policy responses from the evaluation findings to inform future directions for FDSV reforms in Australia.

The evaluation components are illustrated in the high-level evaluation framework overleaf.

Figure B1: Framework for the evaluation



Source: KPMG

B.4 Evaluation questions

Overarching evaluation questions were developed to understand progress towards the National Plan objectives, outcomes, and priorities. These span each of the evaluation components as set out below.

- To what extent was a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children from 2010 to 2022 achieved?
- How and to what extent, did the National Plan influence FDSV policy and programs in Australia?
- How were the National Plan and associated Action Plans implemented and delivered? Was there a cumulative effect and were efficiencies achieved?
- How, and to what extent, did the National Plan contribute to achieving its stated outcomes?
- What has been the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and were initiatives under the National Plan adapted to be able to respond to FDSV during the pandemic?
- What lessons can inform policy and programs beyond 2022?

The evaluation questions and their alignment with data collection methods is in Appendix C.

B.5 Data collection methods

KPMG has used a range of data collection methods to provide a comprehensive picture of how the National Plan has been rolled out, and what has been achieved over the life of the National Plan. The main data collection methods employed as part of the evaluation are:

- Quantitative assessment of outcomes
- Desktop research
- Prior research and evaluation
- Social media analysis
- Frontline worker survey
- Stakeholder engagement.

Further descriptions are provided in Appendix D.

B.6 Limitations

Despite the wide ranging and multi-tiered approach to the evaluation of the National Plan and 4AP, there are several methodological limitations that need to be considered:

- **Attribution:** Due to the complex policy ecosystem in place nationally, with each state and territory concurrently driving reform at the local level through respective strategies and plans, it is not possible to attribute changes that may have occurred since 2010 directly to the National Plan. While we will observe and analyse changes over the period of the National Plan, causal links will not be able to be made. As such, where change is identified, it has not been possible to untangle the discrete impact of the National Plan from the ongoing efforts of all initiatives that were in operation at the same time.
- **Consultation fatigue:** The consultations for the evaluation of the National Plan and the 4AP occurred amidst a congested stakeholder engagement landscape, at the Commonwealth, state, and territory level. For instance, consultations for the new National Plan took place in a similar timeframe as the National Summit on Women's Safety roundtables. This can have a real impact on stakeholders, particularly those from frontline services who may be drawn away from service delivery to provide their time to the range of consultation activities.
- **Recall and recency bias:** Facilitators directed participants to consider the entirety of the National Plan implementation period, including pre-2010, during the consultations. Many participants were not involved in the sector or the implementation of the National Plan for the entire period, with some citing only short periods of tenure. This limited attribution of perceptions across the entirety of the National Plan implementation period.
- **Differentiating the National Plan with the 4AP:** In an effort to minimise consultation fatigue, it was determined that the evaluation of the National Plan and the 4AP would occur concurrently in combined consultation sessions. While facilitators directed participants specifically to the 4AP where that was the subject of inquiry, participants may not have been able to disentangle views towards one or the other. Recency bias may also have favoured discourse in relation to the 4AP, or at least activities that occurred at the same time, due to the proximity, knowledge, and familiarity of this period.
- **Inclusiveness:** The list of stakeholders was carefully curated and checked, with government contacts in each jurisdiction given the opportunity to suggest additional or alternative individuals or groups for inclusion, in both the frontline worker survey and the stakeholder focus groups. However, this may

have excluded providers that were not well known to government stakeholders.

- **Generalisability:** For the frontline worker survey, it was not possible to determine the breadth of distribution of the online survey link, and as such establish a coherent response rate. This means that survey results are not able to be generalised to the broader FDSV frontline worker cohort; rather, the findings only reflect the views of those who completed the survey.
- **Victim survivors and people with lived experiences:** The evaluation scope deliberately did not include consultation with victim survivors, perpetrators, and people

with lived experience of FDSV. The focus of the stakeholder engagement activities was on the impact of policy and program decisions associated with the National Plan and the 4AP, and system level understandings, and shifts in attitude and behaviour, not the experiences of individuals within the community.

- **Impact of COVID-19:** During the stakeholder engagement period, large parts of Australia were subject to lockdown restrictions which had the potential to impact on participation rates due to illness and balancing working from home with caring responsibilities.

Appendix C: Evaluation questions – National Plan

Data Collection methods	Quantitative data	Desktop research	Prior Research and evaluation	Interviews and focus groups	KPMG survey	Social media analysis
Evaluation questions						
Overall impact of the National Plan will be assessed against the following outcomes						
Reduced prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault.	X					
Increased proportion of women who feel safe in their communities.	X					
Reduced deaths related to domestic violence and sexual assault.	X					
Reduced proportion of children exposed to their mother's or carer's experience of domestic violence	X					
Domain 1: Overarching arrangements and governance						
To what extent has the National Plan supported sharing of good practice across jurisdictions?		X	X	X		
How well does the National Plan link with, influence and inform other plans of government e.g. closing the gap, homelessness, protecting Australian children?		X	X	X		
How has each action plan contributed to the overall target of reducing violence against women and their children?		X	X	X	X	
To what extent have governance, advisory and communication mechanisms established for the National Plan facilitated stakeholders to work together?			X	X	X	
To what extent has the National Plan enabled collaboration with the non-government and corporate sectors?			X	X	X	X
To what extent has the National Plan enabled improved service responses for at risk cohorts (such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women, and women with disability)?		X	X	X	X	X
What have been the added benefits and efficiencies from taking a national approach? Are there drawbacks from taking a national approach?			X	X	X	X
What has been the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and were initiatives under the National Plan adapted to be able to respond to FDSV during the pandemic?		X	X	X	X	
Domain 2: Foundations for change						
Strengthen the workforce						

Data Collection methods	Quantitative data	Desktop research	Prior Research and evaluation	Interviews and focus groups	KPMG survey	Social media analysis
Evaluation questions						
Overall impact of the National Plan will be assessed against the following outcomes						
To what extent has the specialist domestic and family violence and sexual assault workforce been developed to enhance their role in preventing and/or responding to violence against women?			X	X	X	
To what extent has the mainstream workforce (for example, GPs, hospitals, alcohol and drug, education, homelessness, child protection, police, corrections) been equipped to undertake early identification and intervention or referral for women experiencing violence?			X	X	X	
Integrate systems and share information						
To what extent has the National Plan promoted and supported the need for coordinated approaches and responses to violence against women and their children and its prevention, across jurisdictions, sectors, related policy areas?		X	X	X		X
To what extent has the National Plan resulted in system integration activities? Has this resulted in better outcomes for women and children?		X	X	X	X	X
Improve the evidence base						
To what extent has ANROWS performed its role in enhancing the quality and quantity of the evidence base in responding to domestic, family and sexual violence? Has the process of setting research priority areas under the National Plan been effective?		X	X	X		
To what extent has the Our Watch performed its role in enhancing the quantity and quality of the evidence base in relation to primary prevention?		X	X	X		
Has the National Plan resulted in increased national research funding and quality outputs (e.g. evidence-based findings, publications, data availability)?		X	X	X	X	
To what extent has the evidence been translated into more effective response to domestic, family and sexual violence including policies, procedures and legislation?			X	X	X	
Track performance						
Has the National Plan facilitated collection of data across the National Data Collection and Reporting Framework to enable improved tracking of performance over time?		X	X	X	X	
What proportion of activities conducted under the National Plan have featured monitoring and evaluation elements?		X	X	X	X	

Data Collection methods	Quantitative data	Desktop research	Prior Research and evaluation	Interviews and focus groups	KPMG survey	Social media analysis
Evaluation questions						
Overall impact of the National Plan will be assessed against the following outcomes						
What more can be done to assess effectiveness of the National Plan?		X	X	X	X	
Communities are safe and free from violence						
Has the community's intolerance of violence against women increased?	X					
To what extent has the National Plan been effective in preventing, responding to and speaking out against violence against women and their children?			X	X	X	X
How effectively has the National Plan maintained a strong focus on primary prevention?		X	X	X	X	X
To what extent has the implementation of the National Plan addressed gender and social inequality as a fundamental link to addressing violence against women and their children?			X	X	X	X
Relationships are respectful						
Have the knowledge, skills and behaviours for respectful relationships by young people improved?	X		X	X		
To what extent have young people shown an improved understanding of the importance of respectful relationships?			X		X	X
To what extent have adults and young people been supported to model respectful relationships?			X		X	X
How effective have social marketing campaigns and other National Plan prevention strategies been in engaging a greater number and diversity of men to speak out against violence against women?	X		X		X	X
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are strengthened						
Has the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who consider that family violence, assault and sexual assault are problems for their communities reduced?	X					
Has the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are able to have their say within their communities on important issues, including violence increased?	X					
To what extent has an enhanced leadership role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women been fostered within communities and broader Australian society?			X	X	X	

Data Collection methods	Quantitative data	Desktop research	Prior Research and evaluation	Interviews and focus groups	KPMG survey	Social media analysis
Evaluation questions						
Overall impact of the National Plan will be assessed against the following outcomes						
How has the National Plan supported communities to drive change through local solutions, for example, self-determination, culturally safe spaces and community control?			X	X	X	X
To what extent has the National Plan facilitated improved access to culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children who experience violence, recognising the impact of intergenerational trauma?		X	X	X	X	
How have the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children been considered across all outcomes of the National Plan?		X	X	X	X	
Services meet the needs of women and their children						
Has access to, and responsiveness of, services for victim survivors of DFV and sexual assault increased?	X					
To what extent has the National Plan enhanced first point of contact for women to identify and respond to needs?		X	X	X	X	X
How have specialist FDSV and sexual assault services been supported to meet the needs of women who are facing intersectional challenges and are disproportionately impacted by violence including women with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ communities, women from regional and remote communities, women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds?			X	X	X	
To what extent have mainstream services (for example, homelessness, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, hospitals) been supported to identify and respond to needs?			X	X	X	
To what extent have integrated services responses, inclusive of specialist and mainstream services been established and resulted in improved outcomes for women and their children?			X			
To what extent to mainstream and specialist services meet the needs of children who are exposed to violence against their mother or caregiver			X			
Justice responses are effective						
Has the rate of women reporting domestic violence and sexual assault increased?	X					
To what extent has the National Plan helped improve access to justice for women and their children in the civil and/or criminal justice systems?		X	X	X	X	

Data Collection methods	Quantitative data	Desktop research	Prior Research and evaluation	Interviews and focus groups	KPMG survey	Social media analysis
Evaluation questions						
Overall impact of the National Plan will be assessed against the following outcomes						
To what extent has the National Plan supported justice systems to work better together and with other systems?			X	X	X	
Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account						
Has there been a decrease in repeated partner victimisation?	X					
Has the National Plan facilitated improvements in the adequacy and availability of evidence about perpetrator interventions?		X	X	X	X	
To what extent has the National Plan facilitated greater collaboration and information sharing across agencies and systems to reduce the risk of recidivism?		X	X	X	X	

Appendix D: Data collection methods

D.1 Quantitative assessment of outcomes

Objective	Key Activities
Quantitative assessment of impact and outcomes under the National Plan.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Collect data from the time period 2010-2022 (where available)2. Assess and conduct baseline analysis where feasible; and trend analysis if there are sufficient data points3. Consult with stakeholders regarding interpretation of findings and trends, and consider findings from jurisdictions which do not have a national plan4. Report on progress of data under development.

The overall impact of the National Plan was assessed according to whether the following trends (specified in the 2014 Evaluation Plan) have been achieved over time:

- Reduced prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault
- Increased proportion of women who feel safe in their communities
- Reduced deaths related to domestic violence and sexual assault
- Reduced proportion of children exposed to their mother's or carer's experience of domestic violence.

In assessing these trends, consideration was given to the fact that prevalence rates may have changed due to increases in awareness or historical reporting, as opposed to increases in actual incidents of violence.

In addition to assessing overall impact, the evaluation has examined whether there has been progress in the six national outcomes outlined in the National Plan. The data analysed for this evaluation has been contextualised with other pertinent information (including stakeholders' interpretation of results) to provide relevant

context and insights on outcomes under the National Plan and 4AP.

Key data sources that were used to formulate these assessments include the National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey; the Personal Safety Survey; the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey; the National Survey of Workers in the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Sector; Sexual Harassment Surveys; as well as other relevant reports from national data sources. The evaluation also examined death review data and information garnered from the HILDA survey.

The widespread impacts of COVID-19 have resulted in delays in collecting data for some key data sources, particularly the PSS. The Australian Institute of Criminology also collected additional data to capture the prevalence of FDSV in the 12-month period from March 2020 to March 2021, to understand the extent of violence during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, the evaluation has reported separately on data collected during the COVID-19 pandemic, firewalling this from any established time series.

D.2 Desktop research

Objective	Key Activities
Describe the context in which the National Plan has been operating from a local and global perspective.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Desktop review of significant local and global events2. Develop a timeline of key developments.

KPMG conducted desktop research, guided by the key evaluation questions, to analyse significant local and global events (e.g. Royal Commissions and high-profile DFV-related deaths)

that have created changes in the approach to how Governments, community, and service providers have been responding to the issue of violence against women and children over time.

D.3 Prior research and evaluation

Objective	Key Activities
Determine findings and key lessons from prior research.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Identify prior research for inclusion2. Develop a database for findings and recommendations3. Develop a coding system on implementation, outcomes and strength of evidence.

Findings and key lessons from prior research were analysed. Prior work that was examined include the National Plan; all Action Plans; the National Council report *Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009–2021*; prior evaluations and monitoring under the National Plan; prior evaluations of flagship initiatives; evaluations of jurisdictional reforms; and evaluations of significant programs, initiatives and innovations. The evaluation also considered ANROWS' 'What Works' Framework and the Australian Productivity Commission Indigenous Evaluation Strategy.

Given the large volume of prior research that was available, KPMG developed an excel database and coding system to classify and categorise prior work according to the key evaluation themes:

- To what extent has the National Plan been implemented in the way it was designed?
- To what extent have the outcomes from the National Plan been achieved?
- How can the National Plan be strengthened going forward?

D.4 Social media analysis

Objective	Key Activities
Assess the impact of community awareness raising activities under the National Plan.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Consider evaluations of current media campaigns under the National Plan2. Collect information of social media footprint under the National Plan and conduct social media analysis.

A component of the National Plan is raising community awareness through social media and other community engagement strategies.

Correspondingly, KPMG conducted a social media analysis to assess the reach and effectiveness of the National Plan.

The social media analysis used hybrid research techniques combining a review of key datasets through the social media research tool Brandwatch, and open-ended social media research, backed by human analysts. Quantitative data was categorised from mentions submitted about the National Plan, and surrounding initiatives across Australian Twitter mentions, pre-identified Facebook accounts from media, politicians and industry groups, posts on Reddit, and online news articles.

There were over 242,581 mentions submitted about the National Plan between 1 July 2010 and 30 July 2021. A sample of mentions were

analysed for each National Plan initiative, 1800RESPECT, ANROWS, DV-alert and Our Watch, and discussions about the National Plan and Action Plans.

Twitter data was leveraged using Brandwatch to provide insights surrounding gender, occupation, and demographics. KPMG's key influencer identification methodology was used to classify key opinion leaders. Analysis was conducted of publicly available information on the Facebook pages and Twitter accounts of the National Plan's initiatives' social media accounts, to benchmark and provide insights from the last five years for Twitter, and 12 months for Facebook.

D.5 Frontline worker survey

Objective	Key Activities
Engage with frontline and wider sector stakeholders in all Australian jurisdictions to understand the impact of the National Plan 'on the ground'.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop a national online survey 2. Identify stakeholders to distribute the survey 3. Identify stakeholders to complete the survey 4. Roll out national survey to identified stakeholders.

KPMG developed a national online survey to measure stakeholder perspectives regarding the effectiveness of the National Plan. The survey was developed in consultation with DSS, and was distributed to a range of government, non-government and community stakeholders involved in responding to violence against women and their children. The survey was also distributed through the networks of state and territory contacts, and the National Indigenous Australians Agency. Prior to distribution, the survey was tested with identified stakeholders from several jurisdictions.

Engagement through an online survey was considered the most appropriate method of engagement to be able to reach the widest audience possible, minimising the burden of completion.

This was distributed to numerous stakeholders across government, non-government, and community sectors involved in responding to violence against women and their children. In April 2021, the survey was distributed via a link in emails to approximately 180 government, non-government and community stakeholders from each state and territory, as well as service providers that operate at a national level. Recipients were also encouraged to share and promote the survey link with their networks. The

survey was live for approximately one month, from 16 April 2021 to 21 May 2021.

The survey comprised of 24 questions – primarily closed style questions (e.g. radio or multiple tick box options) with two free text questions – and used clear and simple language to avoid ambiguity, and facilitate ease and accuracy of response. The survey included primary evaluation questions aimed at assessing the high-level success of the National Plan and secondary evaluation questions aimed at assessing the delivery of key actions under the 4AP. In addition to understanding stakeholder views on the effectiveness of the National Plan, the survey sought to determine how well the relationships between government and the non-government sector are working on delivering on the National Plan, and to identify the extent of collaboration across different sectors. It also aimed to identify opportunities to improve service responses and focus areas for future policies.

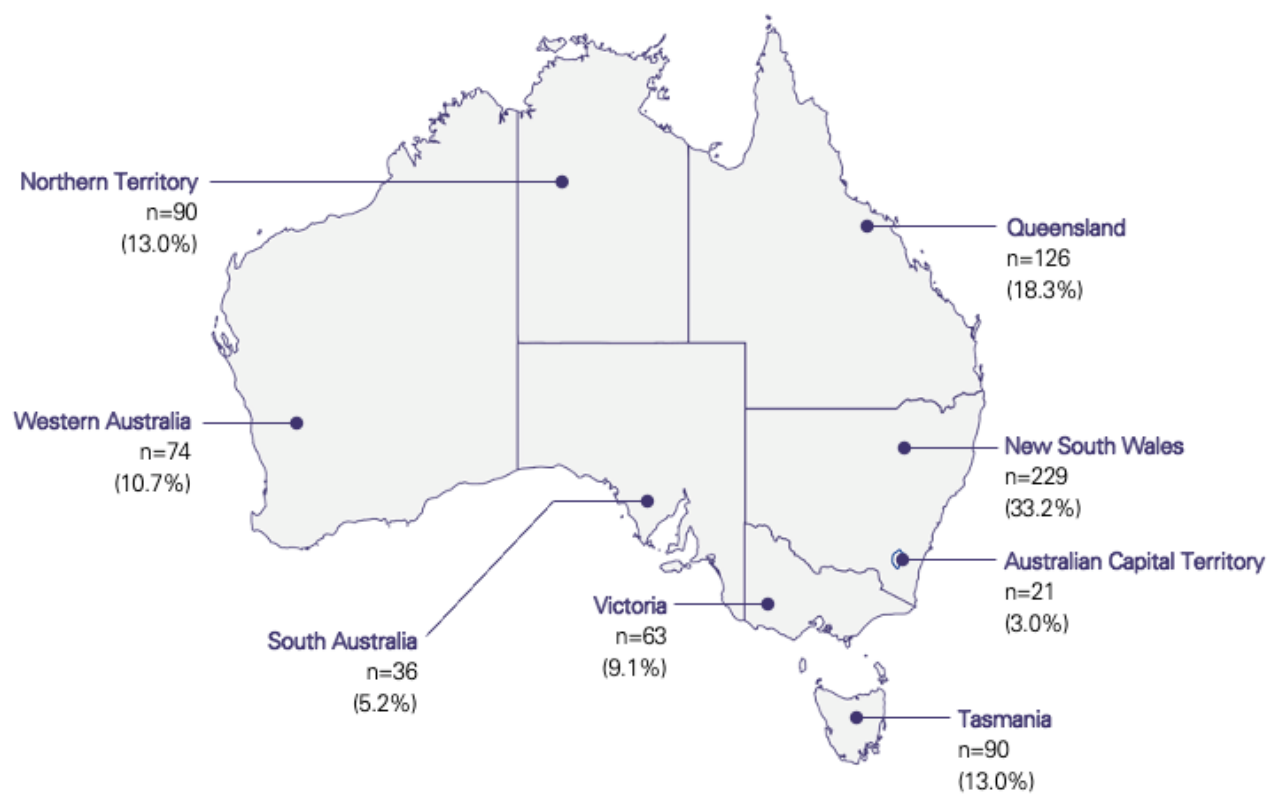
A total of 690 frontline workers from across Australia completed the survey. The geographic breakdown is outlined in Figure D1. The most responses were received from stakeholders in New South Wales and Queensland. The comparatively low number of responses from Victoria was reportedly due to 'consultation fatigue' as service providers were subjected to a

variety of consultation activities around this time for national and state-based initiatives.³⁰⁶

As the size of the workforce is not known, the response rate cannot be determined. It is not known if there was any systematic bias in the profile of respondents and if this had the potential to impact on survey responses related to equity and access.

Respondent sampling was not undertaken as part of the survey distribution. Accordingly, it is not possible to translate the findings from the survey to the broader sector workforce. Caution must be exercised not to generalise the results from this survey beyond the cohort of survey participants.

Figure D1: Survey responses by geographical breakdown (n=690)



Source: KPMG, Stakeholder Survey 2021

D.6 Stakeholder engagement

Objective	Key Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Engage with government, corporate and community sector stakeholders in all Australian jurisdictions through interviews and focus groups to: Report on implementation of Foundations for Change (including partnerships, governance, and impact on state and territory policy) Gauge effectiveness of response Provide interpretation of outcomes.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">Identify stakeholders to consultConduct interviews and focus groups with identified stakeholders.

³⁰⁶ Analysis of incomplete survey responses revealed a similar geographical distribution. State or territory was reported for 123 of 183 incomplete responses (67.2%). Incomplete survey rates were reported for: Australian Capital Territory (n=5, 4.1%), New South Wales (n=47, 38.2%), Northern Territory (n=11, 8.9%), Queensland (n=12, 9.8%), South Australia (n=5, 4.1%), Tasmania (n=19, 15.4%), Victoria (n=11, 8.9%), and Western Australia (n=13, 10.6%).

Stakeholder engagement is a vital component of this evaluation, and important in understanding the effectiveness and impact of the National Plan on the ground.

All consultations were facilitated in a virtual environment due to ongoing restrictions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Consultations took place between July and September 2021. Interviews were conducted by a skilled and experienced facilitator who was supported by a

scribe, who documented all discussions. Focus groups (and the interview with the National Indigenous Australians Agency) were co-facilitated by a First Nations facilitator to ensure that a cultural lens was applied to all discussions.

A total of 124 people participated in these stakeholder engagement activities, with group sizes ranging from one to 18 participants. The list and schedule of stakeholder engagements is outlined in Table D1.

Table D1: Stakeholder interviews and focus groups

Interviews	Consultation date	Focus groups	Consultation date
Australian Capital Territory Government representatives	3 August 2021	Australian Capital Territory NGOs	19 August 2021
New South Wales Government representatives	12 August 2021	New South Wales NGOs	20 August 2021
Northern Territory Government representatives	27 July & 11 August 2021	Northern Territory NGOs	30 August 2021
Queensland Government representatives	10 August 2021	Queensland NGOs	26 August 2021
South Australian Government representatives	22 July 2021	South Australia NGOs	24 August 2021
Tasmanian Government representatives	11 August 2021	Tasmania NGOs	31 August 2021
Victorian Government representatives	17 September	Victoria NGOs	14 September 2021
Western Australian Government representatives	27 July 2021	Western Australia NGOs	24 August 2021
National Indigenous Australians Agency	20 July 2021	National NGOs	9 September 2021
Commonwealth central agencies	29 July & 6 August 2021	All state and territory government agencies	23 August 2021
Flagship initiatives	27 July, 28 July & 18 August		
Data custodians	3 August 2021		

Source: KPMG, 2021



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