

## **Statement from Delegates - 2021 National Summit on Women's Safety**

### **Purpose and background**

Everyone has the right to safety. Addressing all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic, family and sexual violence, must be a priority for all Australians to achieve our shared vision of a community free of violence against women and children.

The National Summit on Women's Safety (Summit) took place on 6 and 7 September 2021, with thematic roundtables held on 2 and 3 September 2021. Almost 400 people, including people with lived experience of gender-based violence, academics and researchers, advocates, business leaders and parliamentarians came together to discuss how we can work together to end violence against women and children.

These discussions will inform actions under the National Plan to end violence against women and children (next National Plan).

The National Federation Reform Council Women's Safety Taskforce (Taskforce), made up of Commonwealth, State and Territory Women's Safety Ministers, has responsibility for developing the next National Plan. The next National Plan will be the primary mechanism to guide investment by all governments to end gender-based violence. This includes how we achieve Target 13 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) which aims to reduce all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls by at least 50 per cent by 2031, as progress towards zero. It also includes working collectively to deliver on the four Priority Reform Areas under the National Agreement.

This Delegate Statement captures the voices of Summit delegates and participants, including those with diverse lived experience. This includes delegates from each jurisdiction nominated by members of the Taskforce, as well as members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence and the National Plan Advisory Group. It has been drafted by the lead delegates nominated by each jurisdiction. It is not an exhaustive record of the richness of the discussions that have been held over four days, but a summary of key themes and ideas identified by delegates.

Listening must continue beyond the Summit, so that all voices are heard and inform the design of actions in the next National Plan. We call on the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to make ending gender-based violence a national priority.

### **Reflections on the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022***

Acknowledging that women are more likely than men to experience family, domestic and sexual violence, as well as other forms of violence outside the home, including violence in institutional settings, stalking and sexual harassment in public spaces, and technology-facilitated abuse<sup>1</sup>, the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (2010-2022 National Plan) brought together the collective efforts of all Australian governments to address all forms of violence against women together for the first time.

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<sup>1</sup> ABS. 2017. Personal Safety, Australia Survey

Under the 2010-2022 National Plan, governments worked together to establish key infrastructure and strengthen service responses to prevent and address violence against women and their children, including through establishing Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), 1800RESPECT, the *Stop it at the Start* campaign, support for specialised services, emergency accommodation and safe at home programs and supporting work across sectors to provide a holistic service system.

While the 2010-2022 National Plan set a solid foundation and improved people's knowledge and understanding of both violence against women and gender inequality, there is much more to be done to end violence against women and children and to measure progress and ensure we are investing in the right way. Fundamental to this are our efforts to invest in prevention and address the gendered drivers of violence against women, across the policies, practices and structures that reinforce gender inequality and individual behaviours and attitudes.

Conversations at the National Summit focussed on building on these strong foundations and progress our collaborative national efforts to end violence against women and children. We must reflect on both the successes and limitations of the 2010-2022 National Plan, to build on what still needs to be achieved, resourced and finalised.

Importantly, the Summit also considered emerging issues that impact women and children living free from all forms of violence. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments have a once in a generation opportunity to create a policy framework to drive the cultural and systemic change needed to prevent violence against women and interrupt the patterns of behaviour that enable the violent and abusive behaviour predominantly used by men.

Conversations at the Summit also emphasised that under the 2010-2022 National Plan, we have not seen improvements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. Across all levels of government, not enough has been done to capture the voices of First Nations people and to embed community-led solutions developed and delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

We have a chance to reimagine and transform aspects of our society and economy in ways that will not only increase resilience and help the country recover more rapidly from this crisis, but that will also boost and fast-track our efforts to prevent violence against women and advance gender equality.

## Summit discussions

### Panels

Participants had the opportunity to hear from and ask questions of a range of expert panellists. The expert panels were an opportunity to share emerging evidence, highlight promising and effective practice and hear directly from those working to end all forms of gender-based violence.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders' experiences of family, domestic and sexual violence* panel recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must lead the design and implementation of culturally appropriate and trauma-informed prevention work and responses to violence, and discussed a specific plan for First Nations women. The *Financial freedom: creating economic security and escaping financial abuse* panel explored the interactions between women's economic security and independence and their safety, including the need for action to prevent financial abuse and the provision of more secure housing. The *Roadmap to Respect@Work* and *Violence against women is everybody's business* panels discussed the role that governments, organisations and employers are taking and can play in preventing violence through gender equality initiatives,

providing safe working environments for women and supporting women who are experiencing violence within or outside the workplace.

The *Alter the course: perpetrator interventions, coercive control and early intervention* panel discussed how we can all better identify the risk of violence and abuse in order to change outcomes for women and children and how we can hold perpetrators to account in order to change their behaviour and prevent men's perpetration of violence. The *Policing and justice responses* panel investigated the role of the justice system in responding to violence and supporting victim-survivors to report and seek justice. The *Preventing and responding to sexual violence* panel examined the importance of addressing the gendered drivers of violence against women to prevent it occurring, including promoting respectful relationships as a means of preventing sexual violence and the specific responses required to support victim-survivors of sexual violence.

## Roundtables

The Roundtable sessions were an important opportunity for experts to have in-depth discussions on key priorities for the next National Plan. Roundtables were closed to the public to provide privacy and safety for people to share personal or sensitive information.

Roundtables explored the different situations and diverse lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, women and children with disability, migrant and refugee women and communities, children and young people in their own right, older women, LGBTQIA+ people and women in regional and remote areas and how these intersect with experiences of violence and require tailored, culturally appropriate responses. Discussions covered system reform across specialist and mainstream services, health systems and legal services. There were discussions on specific experiences of violence, including coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse and improving perpetrator interventions and working with men and boys. The need for primary prevention across all of these domains was acknowledged, as was the need to address the systems and structures that perpetuate gender inequality.

## Delegates' priorities for the next National Plan

Across all issues, the next National Plan must:

- Continue to build on our strong base in **primary prevention** to stop violence before it starts and achieve long-term attitudinal, cultural, systemic and behavioural change.
- Be backed by **long-term bipartisan investment by all governments across prevention, intervention, response and recovery**. Investment should support both existing services that are doing good work, as well as new responses, and should provide long-term service level funding for frontline services, including housing and advocacy. This must take into account consideration of needs-based funding. Across all policy issues, delegates called for clarity about the roles of different levels of government to avoid overlap and confusion on the frontline, and to ensure service delivery gaps are filled. Governments have an important role to lead on this issue, as well as ensure coordination across systems including in partnership with industry and organisations. A transparent governance mechanism to facilitate this should be part of this next National Plan including systematic engagement with experts and non-government organisations.
- Recognise that **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must lead responses for their communities** and that the next National Plan must ensure that the **commitments in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap are embedded across every element**. The next National Plan must adhere to the principles of

self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people outlined under the National Agreement. This requires all stakeholders to prioritise effort to tackle systemic racism and in the promotion of culturally-safe practices and holistic approaches that also address trauma.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must have their own First Nations specific Action Plan to address family safety under the National Plan and be empowered to lead all actions and responses in their communities.
- Prioritise **working with men and boys** to disrupt and prevent the attitudes and behaviours that can lead to violence, and seek to engage men in leadership positions across the community to articulate the need for change in their context.
- Listen, engage and be informed by **diverse lived experiences**, particularly those of victim-survivors, who are crucial to informing the development of policies and solutions and understand what works. Race, age, disability, culture, gender, including gender identity, amongst others forms of identity, impact on this lived experience. Victim-survivors of gender-based violence must be involved in decisions that impact upon their lives.
- **Support gender equality** and address the **complex intersection of gender inequality with other forms of discrimination, inequality and disadvantage**. Delegates called for this to be considered across primary prevention, early intervention, crisis and recovery, and across all service systems so that specialist support is available to all, including those who require more complex or nuanced service responses. Community-led responses must be prioritised.
- Emphasise the critical role of **effective research, data and evaluation** to inform investment and program improvement and enable us to track our progress and performance. This should build on existing evidence bases, such as the Personal Safety Survey and National Community Attitudes Survey. This should be long term and enable measurement of the underlying drivers of violence and national progress on primary prevention.
- Recognise the importance of **justice and healing from trauma** and the need for government support to allow healing from undisclosed and unresolved trauma caused by violence against women and children.
- Emphasise that **addressing men's violence against women and children must be targeted across all settings**, including work, education, public, institutional and other community spaces, as well as at home. This must include prevention work addressing dominant forms of masculinity, rigid gender stereotyping and male peer relations based on aggression.
- Ensure there is **training and workforce development and support** across sectors such as the police, justice systems, and frontline services, to ensure responses and supports for domestic, family and sexual violence are appropriate for all people, regardless of their background or lived experience and across the spectrum of specialist prevention, intervention, response and recovery services.
- **Continuously improve the justice system** to ensure people impacted by sexual, domestic and family violence are able to achieve justice and people using violence and abuse are held to account, and explore alternative transformative strategies to prevent and address violence.
- Recognise that **community-led and place-based responses** are critical in addressing diverse forms of gender-based violence through the promotion of strong and lasting partnerships with community organisations.

- Ensure **children and young people are acknowledged as victims and survivors** of violence in their own right, with serious life-long negative consequences and economic costs.
- Link with other national strategies and initiatives, so we have a **coordinated and cross-sectoral approach to ending all forms of gender-based violence**, especially domestic, family and sexual violence.
- Recognise that ending violence against women is **everybody's business** and everybody has a leadership role to play, particularly **business**. This can include thinking critically about how businesses can foster gender equality in their workforces, design of products and services to make them safer and prevent misuse, and whether ingrained systems are unintentionally enabling attitudes and behaviours that support gender-based violence.

## Prevention must be our focus, to stop violence before it starts

Primary prevention must continue to underpin our long-term strategy to stop violence against women and children and others impacted by gender-based violence in all its forms, before it starts. This includes not only changing attitudes and behaviours at the individual level but simultaneous actions across the socio-ecological model at organisational, community, systemic and social levels across all settings – where people learn, work, live and play and with individuals, families and in the community.<sup>2</sup> There must be full civic participation and visible leadership by women from all cultures, in all sectors, including government, business and community. We must listen to voices from diverse communities and work together to tailor prevention and early intervention responses to their needs.

Included in preventative approaches is a need to address reinforcing and exacerbating factors that can intensify family, domestic and sexual violence, including the perpetrator's own lived experience of violence, trauma, disability and the use of alcohol and other drugs. For example, noting the high rates of alcohol abuse by perpetrators, and the disproportionately high rates of brain injury among perpetrators, further work needs to be done to better understand how exacerbating factors can influence violent behaviours and, where appropriate, work in partnership with industry to address these factors.

## Achieving gender equality is key to preventing violence

Regardless of identity, ability, race and status, all women have the right to live and work free from violence and harassment. We must also address the social context of gender inequality to create an enabling environment that allows us to address the gendered drivers of violence, which intersects with other social injustices and in which violence is more likely to occur. This includes ensuring women's equal representation in leadership and decision-making roles and addressing the policy and structural blockers to women's economic security and financial security. This should taking into account reforms to paid parental leave, the critical role of superannuation, income support, access to childcare and support for older women who are particularly at risk of financial insecurity. It must recognise the joint role of government, business and unions in coming together to develop universal access to paid family and domestic violence leave.

We must also recognise the gendered impacts of COVID-19 particularly its impact on women's safety and economic security, and the opportunities our pandemic recovery presents to further reduce gender inequality. We note that the National Cabinet has agreed

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<sup>2</sup> 'Change the Story', OurWatch, [www.ourwatch.org.au/change-the-story/](http://www.ourwatch.org.au/change-the-story/)

to develop a nationally consistent reporting framework on women's economic security objectives.

## **Improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a priority**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, women, children and men are entitled to live their lives in safety and full human dignity. Family violence is abhorrent, is about a lack of respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and has no place in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander societies, however solutions to this are complex, multi-faceted and require long term commitment and action. There must be a standalone National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander action plan under the National Plan.

Implementation of the next National Plan will support the Government's commitment on the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, particularly in relation to the four reform priorities and Target 13. It must draw on existing commitments and machinery, such as the Coalition of Peaks, so that the two strategies work together in partnership.

The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities impacted by all forms of violence can only be addressed with responses that are led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations in the identification, design, implementation and evaluation of all efforts. National Plan arrangements that deals with violence against women and children that is inclusive of, and informed by, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It must be based on genuine partnership with, and full participation from, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including by drawing on the knowledge of community elders.

The next National Plan must adhere to the principles of self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people outlined under the National Agreement. This requires all stakeholders to prioritise effort to tackle systemic racism and in the promotion of cultural safe practices and holistic approaches. Building the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities is required to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to lead in decision-making and the delivery of services across all areas of family violence responses. The Aboriginal community-controlled health services sector and other Aboriginal community-controlled organisations have a central role in strengthening families, preventing violence at an individual and community level, and supporting healing from intergenerational trauma and operationalising Aboriginal self-determination.

We recognise that the breadth of disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people combined with the intergenerational trauma of colonisation, past police and practices of governments and institutions has contributed to the unacceptable levels of violence they experience. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be supported to lead tailored and culturally appropriate responses. This is not just through family violence specific programs but across all areas of disadvantage and all aspects of policy making and service delivery, particularly health, well-being, housing, child protection, education and employment. Government officials and community members must feel they can be fearless and bold in reporting violence. Programs and service delivery must be adequately resourced and supported so that they are capable of achieving the stated goals of governments. We need a proactive system of service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities focused on building functional, healthy communities.

The next National Plan must enable delivery to meet local needs in order to achieve sustainable improvement in reducing the experience of family violence, especially the disproportionate impacts in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We urge governments to commit to an urgent plan of action. Governments must put in place bold targets to focus policy making over the short, medium and longer term or to fund programs

so they are capable of meeting these targets, and these must be measured with robust accountability and monitoring mechanisms.

### **Affordable, accessible long-term housing and inclusive, culturally-appropriate crisis accommodation is fundamental to the safety and recovery of victim-survivors and must be a priority**

Access to safe and affordable housing must be a key part of the next National Plan. This includes investment by all levels of government to deliver an adequate supply of new social and affordable housing to ensure victim-survivors fleeing violence can recover and thrive. Emergency accommodation, transitional housing and long-term housing are all critical. There must be investment in both programs that support women and children to stay safely in their home, alongside programs focussed on men who use violence, including transitional accommodation where safe. There must be better integration between housing and other support systems, such as the NDIS.

Housing responses must also recognise and respond to the particular challenges faced by women with disability, LGBTQIA+ people and migrant and refugee women seeking to leave violent relationships, for whom existing housing options may not be safe, accessible or culturally appropriate. It must also recognise that older women are the fastest growing cohort experiencing homelessness. We must also take into account the specific needs in remote and very remote communities.

### **The experience of women with disability must be listened to and embedded in all prevention and responses**

All definitions, legislation, policies and reforms, from primary prevention through to response and recovery, must be inclusive of women and girls with disability, including the unique types of violence and the settings in which it can be experienced. Policies should reflect that disability can be acquired as a result of domestic and family violence, particularly acquired brain injuries. All systems must be accessible for women and girls with disability, including social security, child protection, mental health, NDIS, education and housing. Responses must recognise that technology is an important tool for women with disability to engage, communicate and access services.

Women with disability must be central to all discussions and responses must recognise the intersections with other forms of discrimination experienced by women across a range of backgrounds and experiences. In particular, ensuring that the NDIS has a mechanism to provide emergency assistance for women with disability who are subject to domestic violence and sexual assault, particularly where a carer is perpetrating violence.

### **We must recognise and respond to migrant and refugee women's experiences of family, domestic and sexual violence**

The systemic barriers and the diversity of experiences that directly impact migrant and refugee women in Australia must be addressed within the next National Plan across all areas. Service and policy responses should be embedded in design from the beginning, not as an afterthought. Sustainable funding for specialist cultural and faith-based family violence services and enhanced capacity for specialist generalist family violence services are required for comprehensive service responses. We need to translate good design and evidence about what works into action, with long term funding. Partnerships for early intervention, prevention, response and recovery must be community-led. Culturally safe and appropriate models for healing are needed, and men's programs need to embed cultural and language considerations as well as community expertise in delivery. Multicultural and settlement sector organisations must be resourced for prevention, education and support

with families and communities, and mainstream services must be supported to improve their responses, including by accessing interpreter services to improve accessibility, harnessing the role of bilingual and bicultural community workers.

Responses for victim-survivors from migrant and refugee backgrounds must occur through a safety lens, human rights framework and universal access. The role of faith, language and culture in migrant and refugee communities should inform strengths-based models for healing. None of these factors make anyone inherently inclined to violence, rather the root of violence is gender inequality across all sections of society. The next National Plan must address the precarious situation of women on temporary visas experiencing violence, including access to working rights, income support, healthcare and housing, is critical. There must be investment in community-led and practice-informed research into migrant and refugee women's experiences as well as into best practice across prevention, early intervention, response and recovery.

### **LGBTQIA+ communities must be included in the National Plan**

The next National Plan needs to include LGBTQIA+ people in every aspect. It needs to recognise the gendered drivers of violence experienced by LGBTQIA+ people, such as cisgenderism and heteronormativity, and rigid gender stereotypes and norms, which impact on all people experiencing gender-based violence, and the overrepresentation of trans, gender diverse and non-binary people as victim-survivors of family and domestic violence. The next National Plan must be genuinely intersectional, and address the needs of LGBTQIA+ people who experience structural oppression on multiple axes, such as LGBTQIA+ with disability. We need secure and sustainable funding for LGBTQIA+ community controlled organisations. This approach needs inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people in mainstream policy and program development, as well as through targeted initiatives.

Better resourcing is needed to enable collaboration between the specialist domestic, family and sexual violence sector and the LGBTQIA+ sectors to ensure successful and ongoing partnerships which create a strong LGBTQIA+ service sector and an inclusive and responsive domestic, family and sexual violence sector. There must be investment and cohesive data collection across all intersecting service systems, such as housing and homelessness systems, domestic and family violence specialist services, and inclusion of LGBTQIA+ people in all relevant data collections. We must recognise that within the LGBTQIA+ human rights movement, there are populations and communities with varying experiences and needs including bi+ women (cis and trans), lesbian women (cis and trans), trans women, trans men, Brotherboys and Sistergirls, non-binary people, gay and bi men (cis and trans), intersex people and asexual people.

### **Children and young people must be visible in the next National Plan and be considered in their own right**

If we are serious about preventing violence against women, we need to get serious about preventing violence in childhood. Children and young people should be acknowledged as victims and survivors of violence in their own right, with serious life-long negative consequences and economic costs. Children must be visible in the National Plan. Protecting children and young people is also crucial to prevent domestic and family violence and sexual assault in later life. The next National Plan should include a focus on prevention, response and recovery efforts for children.

Services across systems must work together and cannot be siloed. Formalising partnerships between specialist services and child protection systems will help provide collective interventions that do not further harm children and support families to recover from trauma of violence. While adults must be held to account for ensuring children are safe, children

should also be empowered with the tools and language to identify their own experiences, and supported to access services and raise concerns with others. Children's voices and lived experience should inform policy and practice. We must also alter the pathway for children and young people who are using domestic, family and sexual violence in the home to support families as a whole in this context. Resources and programs must support safety in the home environment, and responses must recognise the role that schools and early learning centres can play. We must provide early intervention and culturally-safe family support services with the aim of reducing rates of child removal, while taking full responsibility for the safety, health and wellbeing of children in the out-of-home care system.

### **People living in regional, rural, remote and very remote areas must have access to appropriate and quality services**

People in regional, rural, remote and very remote communities must not be left behind, particularly when it comes to infrastructure, such as housing, health services, technology, and transport. Local communities must be empowered and resourced to develop local, place-based solutions to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in their communities. There must be greater focus on ensuring reliable, accessible and appropriate support services in these areas, especially in remote communities. Innovative solutions should be used to link services, such as health or veterinary services, and specialist domestic violence services. Service arrangements must take into account the increased costs of providing services in these communities and needs-based funding must be provided, including for data and evaluation. These must be co-designed with communities, and policies and projects must recognise voices of lived experience to ensure they are effective and safe.

Responses must be locally designed and delivered, and recognise specific challenges experienced by those at risk of gender-based violence in these communities, such as help with livestock or pets, access to housing, or the need to access cash payments to be able to leave violent relationships. Mainstream counselling responses must be able to respond to localised challenges to ensure women receive appropriate support. Specialist sexual assault services must be available for women in all areas. Mainstream counselling responses must be able to respond to localised challenges to ensure everybody impacted by domestic, family and sexual violence is able to access culturally safe and trauma-specialist support. This must also reflect the specific and unique needs of people in remote and very remote communities, as well as the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other communities with diverse backgrounds (such as those living with disability, LGBTQIA+ people and CALD communities).

### **Survivors have a right to be supported to recover and heal**

Trauma caused by gender-based violence undermines survivors' quality of life, with significant physical, mental, psychological and economic impacts, and has intergenerational impacts. Many survivors have not had the opportunity to seek therapeutic support, meaning that many live with unnecessarily prolonged trauma impacts, extending the harm they experience. Adequate funding for specialist services will allow more survivors to disclose violence against them and to process the trauma violence causes. It is crucial that all parts of the system responding to sexual assault undergo specialist training to adequately address current cultural issues that act as barriers to responding effectively to the needs of those impacted by sexual assault.

Crisis responses are not enough. Women and children, and other survivors of sexual, family and domestic violence, have a right to high-quality support to recover from trauma, recognising that this may take a significant period of time. Specialist sexual assault services, in particular, have great expertise providing therapeutic support, but are not resourced

adequately to provide this to all the survivors who request it, let alone who require it. Many survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence, including sexual harassment and sexual slavery, have no access to services promoting healing and recovery. This includes access to programs and supports that help to re-establish their lives and build community in order to thrive. The next National Plan must facilitate ending cycles of trauma, including intergenerational trauma. This will benefit all victim-survivors, and particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who have experienced disproportionately high levels of violence. This requires a move from limited concepts of being trauma informed to being trauma and healing aware. The next National Plan should be informed by a national victim advisory group.

### **Sexual violence, including sexual harassment, must be given significant focus**

Sexual violence must be addressed, both as a form of gender-based violence and as a separate crime in its own right, and in a way that puts victim-survivors at the centre of responses. We need a clear shared definition of sexual violence that recognises the continuum of sexual violence, and a holistic life span approach must be implemented across all jurisdictions. Responses to sexual violence in the next National Plan must include primary prevention, early intervention, crisis, legal and justice processes and recovery, healing and restitution. Recovery and healing require specialist services to support survivors for as long as needed; this is currently constrained by resources. The next National Plan must also recognise and resource work on harmful sexual behaviours, in particular to support children and young people using them to stop. These must include greater legal consistency, including a nationally consistent definition of consent across all states and territories. Governments should provide national leadership to help decrease attrition rates across Australia and implement measures to minimise re-traumatisation of survivors as they move through the criminal justice system, and there must be consideration of alternative models of response. The criminal justice system must be safe, accessible and trauma-informed for victim-survivors.

Sexual violence in all its forms across the lifespan must be addressed, including child sexual abuse, sterilisation of women and girls with disability and unnecessary medical procedures on intersex infants, sexual violence within the context of domestic and family violence and abuse including in institutional settings, female genital mutilation/cutting, technology-facilitated sexual abuse and sexual violence and assault in the workplace.

All governments should continue to deliver on relevant recommendations to prevent and address sexual harassment in Australian workplaces. The Commonwealth Government must continue to prioritise delivery of all recommendations of the Respect@Work Report. This includes a positive duty on workplaces to take reasonable and proportionate measures to eliminate sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and victimisation.

### **We must work with men, and invest in changing perpetrators' behaviour**

All men play an important role in preventing violence against women. We need to shift the dial on dominant and harmful notions of masculinity that drive violence against women. The system presents an overwhelming burden on victim-survivors and must be re-thought to shift that burden to the person using the violence. Victim-safety needs to be at the centre and this includes removing perpetrators from the home, which requires adequate accommodation options. This needs to occur everywhere, from keeping victim-survivors in the home where safe, social service response, and police and justice responses.

Greater investment is needed in action-based research – we must further develop a suite of evidence-based interventions to respond to the diversity of men using violence and abuse with the focus on keeping victim-survivors safe. We need to work with men who use, or are

at risk of using violence, and across a range of settings and at the institutional, community and individual level. There must be greater investment in perpetrator interventions, and these must be informed by risk assessment and mitigation, evidence and lived expertise, including of men who have been through the system. Programs need to be tailored and focus on localised and culturally appropriate responses, underpinned by evidence about what works, and conducted by qualified and capable staff who understand the nuances of this highly specialist work.

Data on what drives men to perpetrate violence needs to be built and will require the active participation of all states and territories. This data must inform responses across the system – primary prevention, early intervention, response and sustaining behavioural change and recovery. All men’s behavioural change programs must include a well-resourced victim-survivor support aspect to ensure the intervention is not creating unintended risks. We must commit to building capability for those who work with men that meets agreed strong national standards, without diluting best practice. We must encourage workplaces to address their employee experiences with expertise.

### **We must improve and appropriately resource the service system responses required to support women and children**

Health, financial security and housing are critical to ensure good health outcomes – women’s basic needs must be met to enable them to leave violent relationships and support their recovery. We need to support specialist family, domestic and sexual violence services and better equip mainstream services to respond and identify solutions. Health services must be affordable, culturally appropriate and accessible, so that all women and children are able to access holistic, integrated, wrap-around, multi-sectoral services. Services must be available and accessible for all, regardless of location, socio-economic status, background or identity. There must be greater investment and support to improve referral pathways, especially between GPs, specialist services and financial counselling systems. Health systems need to better support women and children experiencing or at risk of violence. Whole of community, multidisciplinary, wrap around responses are required. Funding must take into account that programs must be localised, so that programs and models are developed and embedded within the systems of each area or jurisdiction.

Greater and sustained investment is needed, including in services that provide culturally appropriate and targeted support and in workforce development. Consistent definitions of gender-based violence across Australia will support improved responses, intervention and risk assessment. The National Partnership Agreement should provide powerful and coordinated partnership for the life of the next National Plan, but needs clear targets and measures to ensure accountability, as well as transparency to help services operate. There is also the need to ensure services maintain the ability to advocate for both individuals and systemically, and are supported by funding models to do so. Survivors must also maintain the right to their own stories for advocacy.

### **We must improve our legal responses for all forms of violence including coercive control**

There must be clear and consistent definitions of domestic, family and sexual violence. We must have a national conversation about coercive control to ensure a shared language and understanding. Any definitions of violence, including one which refers to coercive control, must be carefully considered and defined and must be the most expansive definition. National principles must focus on a whole of system understanding of coercive control. Education, culture change, awareness raising are key, particularly for police, lawyers, and the judiciary. There must be meaningful consultation with culturally-safe conversations that take into consideration the unintended consequences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and others who are disproportionately impacted by the justice system.

This is a whole-of-system issue – not just a legal system issue, with reform required across systems, to hold perpetrators to account and support victim-survivors, such as through better access to legal advice. Businesses have a role to play in understanding coercive control and supporting their staff and service users who experience it.

Improving legal responses means that the legal system, including the family law system is safe, accessible and inclusive. The risk of family violence is highest at time of separation and for victims of family violence ‘separation’ continues from the point of relationship breakdown until parenting arrangements are finalised. Several inquiries into the family law system have made important recommendations to improve the experience and safety of victims of family violence in the family law system. These recommendations must be considered and, where appropriate, implemented. Recent initiatives introduced in the family law system are demonstrating important benefits for families experiencing family violence. These initiatives need to be evaluated and, where shown to be effective, expanded and sustainably funded.

We also need to see law reform on particular forms of gender-based violence that remain legal and that disproportionately affect particular groups of women and children, including women and girls with disability, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children

### **We need to focus our attention on the abuse facilitated by technology and to the abuse and disrespect of women online**

Technology-facilitated abuse causes real enduring harms and may be a red flag for future violence. Workforces must be better supported to access training and information on how perpetrators are misusing technology, including new and emerging technologies, to pose risks to women. Technology and financial sectors are already taking action to call out and prevent this misuse, and the private sector should be supported to continue this leadership and ensure safety by design is embedded in all products and services. These changes in culture can complement and support regulatory and legal responses.

Better support must be provided for young people and women when they experience technology-facilitated abuse so they can continue to use technology, but also to enable recovery so they can feel safe online, especially given increased use of technology due to COVID-19. Increased education and training for frontline service providers, police and the justice system is needed to ensure a shared understanding of the reality and impact of technology-facilitated abuse and holding abusers accountable. The focus must be on the behaviours of the abusers, not the technology being misused. Responses must recognise the disproportionate impact of technology-facilitated abuse on some women, for example, women with disability. Responses should also include using technology for good.

### **Addressing gender-based violence is everyone’s business**

Preventing, responding and addressing gender-based violence is everyone’s business. Although gendered in nature, a whole of community response is required to eradicate the scourge of gender-based violence.

We must see work conducted across all settings – work, education, sport, community – to call out disrespectful behaviour and embed gender equality.

All settings need to be able to better respond to the experiences of victim-survivors and enable people who use violence and abuse to start the journey to changing their behaviour so that we end gender-based violence.