

FOURTH ACTION PLAN

National Plan to Reduce Violence against
Women and their Children 2010–2022

An initiative of the Commonwealth,
state and territory governments



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FOURTH ACTION PLAN 2019–2022

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DEDICATION

The Fourth Action Plan is dedicated to the countless women and children who are victims and survivors of violence, to those who are left to rebuild, and to those who have lost their lives. It is for the women whose stories continue to inspire our work and drive us to do more. We celebrate those people and organisations who work tirelessly with, and for, all women affected by violence and acknowledge their ongoing contributions to eradicating violence against women and their children.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The National Plan is an initiative of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. We acknowledge the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, water and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to Elders past, present and emerging.

SUPPORT

Help is available if you, or someone you know, is experiencing violence. In the case of an emergency call 000. For information, support and counselling contact 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732) or visit www.1800respect.org.au. This service is free, confidential and open 24 hours a day.

FOREWORD

THE NATIONAL PLAN

Ten years ago, the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (2008–09) produced *Time for Action: the National Council's Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009–2021*.¹ This provided the blueprint for the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*² (the National Plan), which was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and released in February 2011.

The 12-year National Plan aims to connect the important work being done by all Australian governments, community organisations and individuals to ensure that each year, fewer women experience violence and more women and their children live safely. The National Plan recognises that violence against women and their children is a complex problem that requires a long-term plan of action.

ABOUT THE FOURTH ACTION PLAN

“This is an opportunity to reflect on how far we’ve come, and where we’re going in our efforts to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in rates of violence against women. Although we know there is still a long way to go, it is also time to celebrate the passion and commitment of the sector working toward the National Plan goals.”

Ms Libby Lloyd AM, Chair of the former National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, speaking at the 10th Anniversary of the release of *Time for Action* (10 May 2019)¹⁵

The Fourth Action Plan continues to support the six overarching National Outcomes that all governments are working towards over the life of the National Plan (see bottom of pages 5–6).

It has been devised through extensive consultations with hundreds of people affected by violence, and the people working to stop it

FOURTH ACTION PLAN – AT A GLANCE

FOURTH ACTION PLAN PRINCIPLES

Reducing violence against women and their children is everyone's business and we all have a role to play

We must address gender inequality to stop violence – women will never be safe if they are not equal

The voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must inform responses to the family and sexual violence experienced in their communities

We must address the diversity and lived experiences of women and their children affected by violence

Where children are involved, responses must be age appropriate, child-centred, and tailored to their specific needs and stages of development

Actions must be evidence-based and help build an understanding of what works to respond effectively to, and prevent, violence against women and their children

System and service responses must work to end the cycle of violence, keep people safe

TURNING THE CORNER

“Family violence is still an epidemic and it will be for some time. It is a serious abuse of human rights in our advanced and privileged culture and must continue to be addressed as an absolute priority, by both our Federal and state governments, and by our current leaders, as they also recognise the impact family violence has on their workplace.”

Rosie Batty AO, family violence advocate, Australian of the Year 2015 (24 January 2016)¹⁶



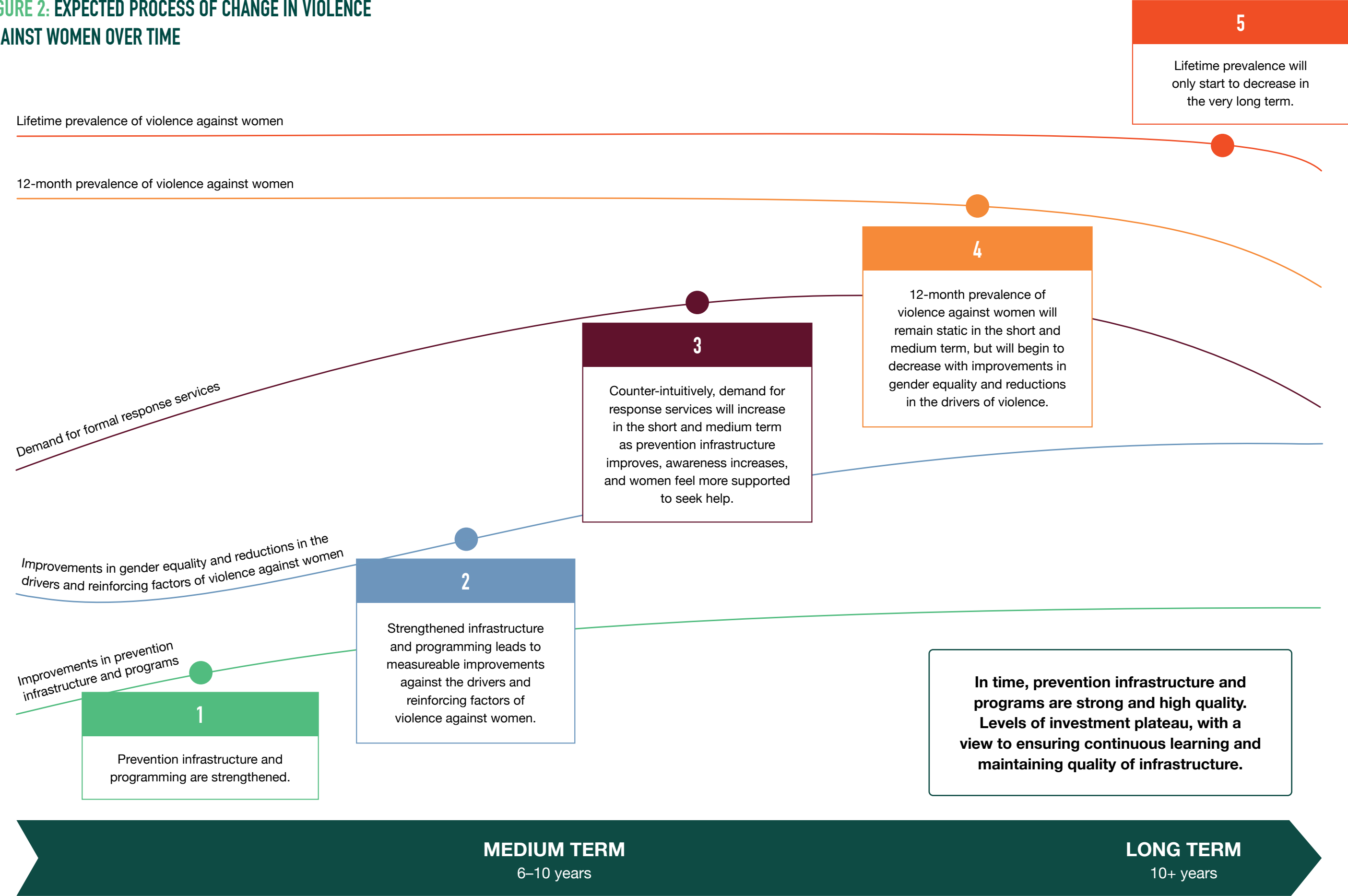
Other factors, such as drug and alcohol use, mental health and poverty, may also interact with, or reinforce, gender inequality and contribute to increased frequency and severity of violence against women and their children.¹⁹ However, these factors do not drive violence in and of themselves.

For example, we know the systematic discrimination and ongoing trauma experienced in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities plays a big part in how communities experience violence²⁰ and people who have experienced violence as children may be more prone to experiencing or inflicting violence as adults.²¹

Gender inequality affects everyone in a negative way, including men. For example, men are less likely to seek professional help or talk about their problems with friends or family, and this can have devastating consequences.²²

Gender equality works to benefit everyone by addressing these limitations and harmful stereotypes.

FIGURE 2: EXPECTED PROCESS OF CHANGE IN VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OVER TIME



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

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT IN COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDES

In recent years, the Australian community's knowledge, awareness and attitudes towards violence against women and their children have improved. These changes have been captured as part of the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS).²⁴ This is the world's longest-running survey of community attitudes towards violence against women.

The 2017 NCAS²⁵ found:

- Most Australians do not endorse violence against women.
- Most Australians support gender equality and are more likely to support gender equality in 2017 than they were in 2013 and 2009.
- Australians are more likely to understand that violence against women involves more than just physical violence in 2017 than they were in 2013 and 2009.
- Australians are

VICTORIA'S ROYAL COMMISSION INTO FAMILY VIOLENCE

The Royal Commission into Family Violence³² was established in 2016 in the wake of a series of high-profile deaths related to family violence in Victoria.

The Royal Commission was tasked with identifying the most effective ways to:

- prevent family violence
- improve early intervention
- support victims
- hold perpetrators accountable
- develop and refine system responses
- better coordinate community and government responses
- evaluate and measure the success of strategies, frameworks, policies, programs and services.

The Royal Commission recommended strategies to transform Victoria's approach so as to:

FOURTH ACTION PLAN NATIONAL PRIORITIES



THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES INFORM ALL PRIORITY AREAS AND ACTIONS UNDER THE FOURTH ACTION PLAN

- 1 Reducing violence against women and their children is

NATIONAL PRIORITY ONE

PRIMARY PREVENTION IS KEY

“We have to create a society that is more equal in terms of gender equality, and one that better reflects our diversity and difference, and in doing that we will actually come to address some of the key drivers of violence against women and children in the first place.”

Natasha Stott Despoja, Our Watch, Board Chair (15 April 2019)³⁶

Prevention is the most effective way to eliminate violence against women and their children, and that is why it is at the core of the Fourth Action Plan.³⁷ Primary prevention means stopping violence before it occurs. It means changing the behaviours and norms, in all areas of society, that excuse, justify

NATIONAL PRIORITY TWO

SUPPORT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN

Women have been clear that they and their families must play a key role in decision-making. Indigenous peoples must be acknowledged as equal and indispensable partners in designing policy and legislative frameworks that enable diverse solutions, and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to determine their own futures, on their own terms.

June Oscar AO, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner (25 June 2019)⁴⁰



During the COAG National Summit on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates told us that this higher rate of violence stems from deep issues around dispossession, intergenerational trauma and gender inequality.⁴⁶ We also heard from many delegates about how the impact of past government practices and more recent experiences of incarceration, child removal and systemic racism prevent many Indigenous Australian victims from reporting violence and seeking help from police and other services.⁴⁷

A range of complex and sensitive factors drive this.

They include:

- mistrust of mainstream legal and support services to understand and respect the needs, autonomy and wishes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- lack of understanding of legal rights and options and how to access supports at times of crisis
- fear and experience of having children

NATIONAL PRIORITY THREE

RESPECT, LISTEN AND RESPOND TO THE DIVERSE LIVED EXPERIENCES AND KNOWLEDGE OF WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN AFFECTED BY VIOLENCE

“ If she does happen to be living with a disability, this violence can take on additional forms and may include putting medicines out of reach deliberately, denying access to assistive equipment, refusing to assist with personal care and verbal abuse about the disability. Worse, the violence is often perpetrated over a much longer period of time, at relentless intensity and may involve several perpetrators. Where a home is adapted to her needs or she relies on that perpetrator for essential personal supports it is much, much harder to imagine how one could find any pathway to safety. ”

Sue Salthouse, Disability Advocate and Our Watch Ambassador (2 December 2016)⁵⁰

NATIONAL PRIORITY FOUR

RESPOND TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

“The recent high-profile stories of abuse have emphasised the importance of victims of sexual harassment and assault being able to come forward, tell their stories and be believed.”

Kate Jenkins, Sex Discrimination Commissioner (5 March 2018)⁸⁰

Sexual violence can be both a form of domestic and family violence and a standalone crime. Like domestic and family violence, sexual violence is gendered, which means that more women experience sexual assault and sexual harassment than men.⁸¹

Reported rates

FORMAL SUPPORT SERVICES

Formal support services need specialised skills and systems to meet the unique experiences and needs of all Australian women and their children experiencing violence, particularly those affected by multiple forms of discrimination or inequality.

INFORMAL SUPPORT MECHANISMS

Informal support mechanisms can play an equally important role in recognising, referring and supporting victims and survivors.

FIGURE 6: VICTIM AND SURVIVOR INTERACTIONS WITH DIFFERENT SUPPORT SERVICES



INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

Violence against women and their children is widely recognised as a fundamental violation of human rights.



Australia is taking a leading role on the international stage, to promote gender equality and eliminate violence against women and girls. The Fourth Action Plan shows how Australia has taken a leadership role in violence prevention, a key part of how Australia meets its international commitments.

FIGURE 7: UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Sustainable Development Goals include a standalone goal on gender equality (Goal 5) and specific targets on ending violence against women.



LINKS TO BROADER AUSTRALIAN POLICY REFORMS

The Commonwealth and state and territory governments are implementing many other significant initiatives that complement and support the National Plan. These initiatives contribute to ensuring women and their children are safe by supporting them in all aspects of their lives and throughout their lifetime.

 JURISDICTION	 HOUSING	 WOMEN	
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FIGURE 8: NATIONAL PLAN GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

