



Government of Western Australia
Department of Communities

Path to Safety

Western Australia's strategy to reduce family and domestic violence 2020-2030



Acknowledgement of traditional custodians of Western Australia

The Western Australian Government proudly acknowledges the traditional custodians of country and recognises their continuing connection to their lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal cultures, and to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the courage and dignity of women and men who not only stand up and say no to violence but who take action to challenge violence and hold perpetrators accountable.

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Message from the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence | 4 |
| Path to Safety: Western Australia's strategy to reduce family and domestic violence 2020-2030 | 6 |
| Overview | 10 |
| The call for change | 12 |
| Family and domestic violence in Western Australia | 14 |
| Understanding family and domestic violence | 18 |
| The work so far | 20 |
| Connecting our work | 22 |
| Achieving the vision | 24 |
| Everyone has a role | 28 |
| Focus Area 1. Aboriginal Family Safety | 30 |
| Focus Area 2. Act now | 34 |
| Focus Area 3. Primary Prevention | 42 |
| Focus Area 4. System reform | 46 |
| On language | 51 |
| Endnotes | 52 |

Message from the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence

Everyone should be safe in their own home. Always.

Yet many Western Australians regularly experience family and domestic violence in their relationships, within the very walls that are supposed to help keep them safe.

The stark reality is that Western Australia has high rates of family and domestic violence. To address this situation, effective long-term and systemic change is needed.

The importance of building safe and respectful communities cannot be overstated as we work to end the scourge of family and domestic violence across our State.

While personal and family relationships largely play out in private, the consequences of family and domestic violence are often public matters. Individuals, families, communities, workplaces and medical services also carry the burden of assaults, absenteeism from work, cumulative harm and – in the most tragic instances – death. We also know the devastating toll that family violence takes on Aboriginal people, families and communities.

Path to safety: Western Australia's strategy to reduce family and domestic violence 2020-2030, is our plan to address family and domestic violence through whole-of-community change over the next decade.

It is based on extensive consultation, research and evidence, specialist expertise from the field and contributions from those who have generously and courageously shared their personal experiences. Our strategy makes the case for change.

Since 2017, the McGowan Government has invested an additional \$53 million to establish more services, new programs and improve justice processes through our Stopping Family and Domestic Violence policy. We are determined to keep the focus on reducing family and domestic violence because the costs are simply too high.

Path to Safety outlines the steps we need to take to reduce family and domestic violence in WA. We recognise that current and past efforts to achieve this goal are a critical stepping off point. Our actions need to have a sustained focus on keeping survivors safe as well as accountability for the damaging behaviour of perpetrators – both at individual and system levels. Our strategy is about guiding collective effort – across government, community and justice services and business.

Family safety for Aboriginal women, children and men is a particular priority, in recognition that community-controlled services and community-led initiatives are the foundation to support and healing for First Nations people impacted by family violence. We have already begun the work on developing a plan focused on Aboriginal family safety to address family violence impacting Aboriginal people, families and communities. It will sit separate to and alongside Path to Safety.

Hon Simone McGurk MLA
Minister for Prevention of
Family and Domestic Violence



Western Australia has a long-standing network of funded services with specialist expertise in supporting those experiencing family and domestic violence. Informed and knowledgeable first responders, such as police and refuge teams, are critically important and can save lives.

Business and industries' ongoing focus on safety and productivity has led to increased recognition of family and domestic violence prevention as a workplace responsibility. More broadly, improved community awareness and understanding of family and domestic violence, who is affected and its far-reaching impacts are key to reducing violence at home. This awareness can foster the conditions needed for survivors and perpetrators to seek help with confidence, without shame and before it is too late.

To stop family and domestic violence before it escalates, people need to be able to recognise controlling behaviours. Reinforcing a community-wide stand point that victims are never to blame for this violence and equipping future generations with respectful ways to relate to others is important. Our ambition is to foster a culture that stops family and domestic violence from happening in the first place. Fundamentally, this work is about respect and valuing women and girls as equal partners. It involves addressing the drivers of family and domestic violence, joining with other sectors and workforces and expanding our interventions to address inequality in all its forms.

We dedicate this strategy to all of those who are surviving or have survived this abuse in our community. It also honours those who did not.

**Thank you to everyone who has been involved
in the development of Path to Safety.**

**It will guide us in our determination to
stop family and domestic violence.**

Path to Safety: Western Australia's strategy to reduce family and domestic violence 2020-2030

Vision

A Western Australia where all people live free from family and domestic violence

Goal

To reduce family and domestic violence in Western Australia

Purpose

To guide a whole-of-community response to family and domestic violence in Western Australia from 2020–2030

Guiding principles

People in Western Australia should be safe in their relationships and in their homes

Perpetrators are solely responsible for their actions – victims must not be blamed

Effective solutions are locally tailored, culturally safe and trauma informed

The safety and wellbeing of victims is the first priority

Women's safety is linked to gender equality

Men and boys are integral to the solution

Children and young people exposed to domestic violence are victims

Everyone has a role in stopping family and domestic violence

There is a 'no wrong door approach' to service delivery

Implementation

Aboriginal Family Safety

Action Plan 1

Responding to COVID-19, consolidating existing efforts and partnering for change

Action Plan 2

Building on the foundations and innovating for progress

Action Plan 3

Measuring impact, sustaining change and planning for the future

Monitor, evaluate and review

2020

2022

2026

2030



Our focus

Outcomes

We will work with Aboriginal people to strengthen Aboriginal family safety

- Aboriginal family safety is supported and enabled by a dedicated strategy, co-designed and led by Aboriginal people.

We will act now to keep people safe and hold perpetrators to account

- Adult and child victims are safe and supported to recover and thrive.
- Perpetrators are visible, held to account and supported to change.
- People at risk of experiencing or using violence are identified early and supported to access effective, evidence-based interventions.
- Responses meet people's diverse and intersecting needs.

We will grow primary prevention to stop family and domestic violence

- The whole community acts to prevent family and domestic violence.
- People engage in respectful relationships across all areas of life.
- Conditions that support victim blaming, violence, discrimination and inequality are challenged and addressed.

We will reform systems to prioritise safety, accountability and collaboration

- Safety is improved through better information sharing and data collection.
- The right attitudes, skills and knowledge are in place to keep people safe.
- Support services are person-centred and easy to access.
- Legislation, policy and procurement enable an effective, coordinated response.

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Priority Actions

- Work with Aboriginal people and communities to co-design and implement an Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy.
- Strengthen the role of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and Aboriginal communities to design and deliver culturally appropriate responses for Aboriginal people.
- Ensure actions to prevent and reduce family and domestic violence are flexible, culturally responsive and culturally secure to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people.

- Ensure victims have immediate, early and ongoing access to safety and are supported to recover.
- Support the long-term recovery and wellbeing of children who have experienced family and domestic violence.
- Connect perpetrators with timely, evidence-based interventions to support accountability and behaviour change.
- Develop tailored responses that consider people's diversity and intersecting needs.

- Grow capability to deliver primary prevention in Western Australia (WA).
- Support and implement primary prevention programs, such as those focussed on healthy, respectful relationships and gender equality, across settings and cohorts.
- Collaborate across government on policies and actions to address inequality and other conditions that reinforce violence.
- Partner with groups and organisations from the community and private sectors to strengthen awareness of and responses to family and domestic violence.

- Improve data collection and information sharing to keep perpetrators visible and victims safe through risk informed practice.
- Build specialist and mainstream workforce capability and capacity to identify and respond effectively to family and domestic violence.
- Collaborate across the service system and with community leaders to deliver connected, coordinated, person and family centred responses.
- Refocus systems to prioritise victim safety and address factors that blame and re-traumatise victims.

Overview

This is our ten-year strategy to realise the vision of a Western Australia where all people live free from family and domestic violence.

Informed by research, lessons learned from efforts so far, and through consultation with over 2,800 people and 281 community organisations and groups in Western Australia, our framework for change has four focus areas with intersecting and mutually reinforcing outcomes:

- 1 Work with Aboriginal people to strengthen Aboriginal family safety**
- 2 Act now to keep people safe and hold perpetrators to account**
- 3 Grow primary prevention to stop family and domestic violence**
- 4 Reform systems to prioritise safety, accountability and collaboration**

While some excellent services are already in place, often the right service is not available at the right time to meet needs. Much still needs to be done to improve the attitudes and conditions that enable family and domestic violence in Western Australia.

We have listened to the voices of Aboriginal people who advocated strongly for a separate, stand-alone strategy focusing on **Aboriginal Family Safety**. This is our first priority, in recognition of the disproportionate impact of family violence on Aboriginal women, children, families and communities and the need to respond to the different drivers of violence experienced by Aboriginal people. Co-designed and led by Aboriginal people, this work will determine the best ways to achieve lasting change to support safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal people, families and communities.

We have heard that we need to **act now** to address the imperative for timely and effective responses to achieve safety and long-term recovery for victims, as well as managing the multiple risks that perpetrators present.

Rates of family and domestic violence remain unchanged. Current investment and organisation of resources focuses on secondary and tertiary responses and interventions. Preventing violence from occurring in the first place requires an expansion to the way we currently work. We will **grow primary prevention** as a key pillar in our long-term commitment to address family and domestic violence. Community awareness and engagement

initiatives will actively challenge the attitudes and social conditions that enable violence to occur.

Sustained change requires broader community responsibility, alongside integrated efforts to stop family and domestic violence. Western Australia has a dedicated network of specialist services, peak bodies, community organisations, private industries and government agencies committed to working together on family safety. **System reform** will respond to the imperative to build coordinated and collaborative responses to family and domestic violence with robust, wrap-around support to keep victims safe and hold perpetrators to account. Government agencies and community sector services will work together to provide culturally appropriate, holistic, safe and accountable responses to victims and perpetrators, streamlined pathways through the service system, and coordinated service delivery between agencies and systems.

A public health approach is the basis of Path to Safety: Western Australia's strategy to reduce family and domestic violence 2020–2030 (the Strategy). Our efforts are focused on developing, delivering and testing interventions across the continuum of primary prevention, early intervention and crisis response. Work needs to happen at individual, family and whole-of-population levels. At its heart is the commitment of an engaged, experienced family and domestic violence workforce, and a clear community mandate, expressed through comprehensive state-wide consultation, to act and bring about change.

The call for change

Family violence is one of the most important social and health issues in modern Australia, it is the biggest threat to our collective wellbeing. Family and domestic violence needs to be core business for all government, legal, community services, private sector.

Quote from community consultation

The WA community has issued a clear imperative to be bold and brave: to do things differently, expand the focus beyond responses to the immediate impacts of family and domestic violence by addressing its root causes, changing violent behaviours and violence-supporting attitudes and creating long-term safety and healing.

The Strategy is informed by data analysis, research, consultations across Western Australia and work with experts from government, the specialist family and domestic violence sector and academia. It is contextualised by the voices and lived experiences of the WA community reflecting that ending family and domestic violence is everybody's business.



At consultations held across the State, people living in WA have emphasised the clear and urgent need to create a shared vision of safety and respect for all people in our community.

What we heard

We must act now to address this ongoing crisis.

Victim blaming and community attitudes have not changed fast enough.

Supports must be easier to navigate and readily available.

We need to increase attention and resourcing to address perpetrator accountability and support behaviour change.

We need to better understand and respond to the needs of children and young people as victims in their own right.

There must be a specific focus on Aboriginal family safety and the drivers of violence experienced by Aboriginal people.

Increased focus should be given to the needs of people who are especially vulnerable to family and domestic violence.

Workforces must be family and domestic violence informed.

Family violence is an entrenched epidemic that we've lived with since time began, so we've got a long way to go. But I do believe the tide is turned. It's no longer a subject that only occurs behind closed doors

Rosie Batty, after being awarded 2015 Australian of the Year.

Family and domestic violence in Western Australia

Family and domestic violence is a continuing community emergency that requires an urgent response.

Western Australia has the second highest rate of reported physical and sexual violence against women in Australia. Reported rates of violence have increased steadily since 2008¹. For every incident that is known, many more go unreported.

The prevalence of family and domestic violence continues alongside high rates of perpetrator recidivism and a complex support system that is difficult to navigate.

In Western Australia:



In 2018-2019, WA's Family and Domestic Violence Response Teams triaged **47,623** family violence incident reports.²



In 2018-2019, **11,975** family violence restraining orders were lodged, equalling 75% of the total restraining orders filed.³

There are high levels of disparity between metropolitan and regional WA

Recorded assaults occurring in a family context in WA from WA Police crime statistics:⁴

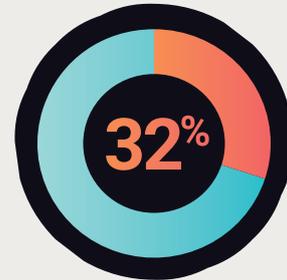
472 per 100,000
(Metro)

1,204 per 100,000
(Regional)

Community attitudes in Australia continue to condone violence:

One in five people in Australia believe:

- violence results from a woman making a man so angry that he hits her when he didn't mean to.
- a lot of what is called domestic violence is really just a normal reaction to day-to-day stress and frustration.⁵



believe victims are partly responsible if they don't leave.⁶

In Australia:



Three in five Aboriginal women have experienced physical or sexual violence perpetrated by a cohabitating or non-cohabitating partner.⁷



Aboriginal women are **32 times** more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be hospitalised from family violence.⁸



1 in 16 (0.5 million) men have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a cohabiting partner since age 15.⁹



1 in 6 (1.6 million) women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a cohabiting partner since age 15.¹⁰

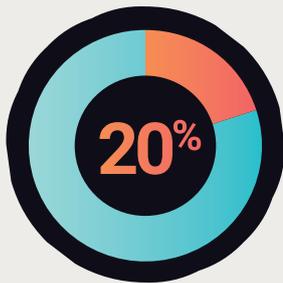


Aboriginal people experience family violence at vastly disproportionate rates.¹¹

The legacy of dispossession, the Stolen Generations and the impact of policies from successive governments has contributed to the significant disadvantage and trauma experienced by Aboriginal people, their families and their communities.

People experience significant barriers in accessing support and achieving safety

Although evidence does not suggest that victims from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are more likely to experience violence, evidence shows they are less likely to receive the supports they need.¹²



As few as **20 per cent** of victims currently contact the police for assistance.¹³



Two out of five Australians would not know where to go to get help for a domestic violence issue.¹⁴

The impacts for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence are long lasting.¹⁵

Between 2009 and 2015 the total cost of family and domestic violence to WA Health was \$51.9 million for people admitted to hospital for assault related injuries.¹⁶

As many as 56% of youth homelessness cases are linked to family and domestic violence.¹⁷



Family and domestic violence towards children, young people and adults is a primary cause of:

- anxiety and depression
- early pregnancy loss
- suicide and self-harm
- substance abuse and alcohol use disorders¹⁸
- young people entering Out-of-Home Care.

Children living in families with family and domestic violence are more likely to experience:

- low self-esteem
- learning difficulties
- behavioural problems
- depression
- bullying
- homelessness

with long-term impacts on their wellbeing.¹⁹

This Strategy – through clear action and commitment to Aboriginal family safety, acting now to keep people safe, primary prevention, and reforming systems to prioritise safety, accountability and collaboration – is the next step toward a future where all people in Western Australia live free from family and domestic violence.

Understanding family and domestic violence

Family and domestic violence is a pervasive, catastrophic and complex social problem with justice, community safety and public health consequences. It takes many forms and occurs across all cultural groups, ages and sexual diversity groups. Some abusive behaviours can be identified easily, while others are difficult to recognise. However, all can result in a gradual degrading of the victim's sense of autonomy and an increase in their experience of fear. Family and domestic violence is complex and contributing factors can amplify its impact.

What is family and domestic violence?

Family and domestic violence is an ongoing pattern of behaviours intended to coerce, control or create fear within a family or intimate relationship. This includes physical harm or threats of physical harm, financial, emotional and psychological abuse, sexual violence or any other behaviour which causes the victim to live in fear.²⁰ Many adult and child victims live with perpetrators who use coercive patterns of control and may not realise that what they are experiencing is family and domestic violence.

Gender inequality is a key driver of violence against women

Change the Story, the national framework for the primary prevention of violence against women, identifies the following expressions of gender inequality as specific drivers of violence against women:

- Condoning of violence against women – in social norms, attitudes, structures and practices.
- Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public life and relationships.
- Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity.
- Male peer relations and forms of masculinity that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.²¹

Family violence impacting Aboriginal people, families and communities

In addressing Aboriginal family safety, it is important to recognise the ongoing discrimination and inequality faced by Aboriginal people as a driver of and context for family violence.

The ongoing impacts of dispossession, inter-generational trauma, structural disadvantage, the destruction of culture, loss of cultural identity, racism, and the fracturing of families and communities must be acknowledged as contributing to Aboriginal people's experience of violence.

The term family violence is used here to identify a range of abusive behaviours within intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities.²²

Although family and domestic violence affects victims of all genders and backgrounds, the overwhelming majority of victims are women and their children, and the majority of perpetrators are men.²³

Some groups are at greater risk of family and domestic violence and/or face barriers to supports:

- Aboriginal women²⁴
- women with disability²⁵
- women who are homeless
- pregnant women
- women separating from their partners
- older women²⁶
- women experiencing financial hardship
- young women²⁷
- women living in regional and remote areas
- people who identify as LGBTIQ+
- women who are or have been incarcerated
- women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds²⁸
- people who experienced abuse or family and domestic violence as children.

Actions to address these underlying drivers are critical to prevent violence against women, which includes family and domestic violence.

Understanding the impacts of family and domestic violence for different groups of people

Recognising and responding to the diversity of the Western Australian community and the complexity people experience in their lives will be key to taking effective action under the Strategy. Intersectionality refers to types of discrimination or disadvantage that can intersect and compound, impacting the risk, experience and response to family and domestic violence for different population groups. Intersectionality presents barriers for victims and perpetrators seeking accessible, appropriate and responsive services and supports.

Applying an intersectional lens to the Strategy's delivery means investigating and addressing the systemic biases and structures that drive and perpetuate negative outcomes for people, especially where they overlap and compound. The intersectional approach will prioritise the experiences and needs of Aboriginal people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, refugees and migrants, people with disability, older people, people who identify as LGBTIQ+,

people living in regional and remote areas, sex workers and people who are or have been incarcerated.

Substantive equality recognises that policies, processes and systems that are put in place to address some groups, may be discriminatory toward others. This can create systemic discrimination. Applying the principles of substantive equality recognises that in order to achieve equal outcomes across the community, different approaches may need to be applied that are responsive to the needs of diverse communities.²⁹

Other intersecting factors, such as mental ill health and problematic use of alcohol and other drugs, can compound the severity and consequences of family and domestic violence. Mental ill health and the use of alcohol and other drugs do not cause family and domestic violence, but their contribution to the frequency and severity of violence and abuse means consideration of these factors is critical in the responses developed under this Strategy.

The work so far

The Strategy builds on the strong foundation of previous Western Australian initiatives to stop family and domestic violence. The Strategy will support doing more of what works and address gaps identified through reviews and consultations.

Recent actions being delivered through the Western Australian Government's Stopping Family and Domestic Violence policy reflect a clear commitment to increase support through measures focused on safety and accountability. There has been significant investment in financial counselling services, a new domestic violence counselling service in the Peel region, funding to the RSPCA to support the Pets in Crisis program and increasing capacity to deliver culturally appropriate supports. A second Communicare Breathing Space in Maylands is providing family violence perpetrators with intensive residentially based intervention; holding them accountable for their use of violence and changing their behaviour.

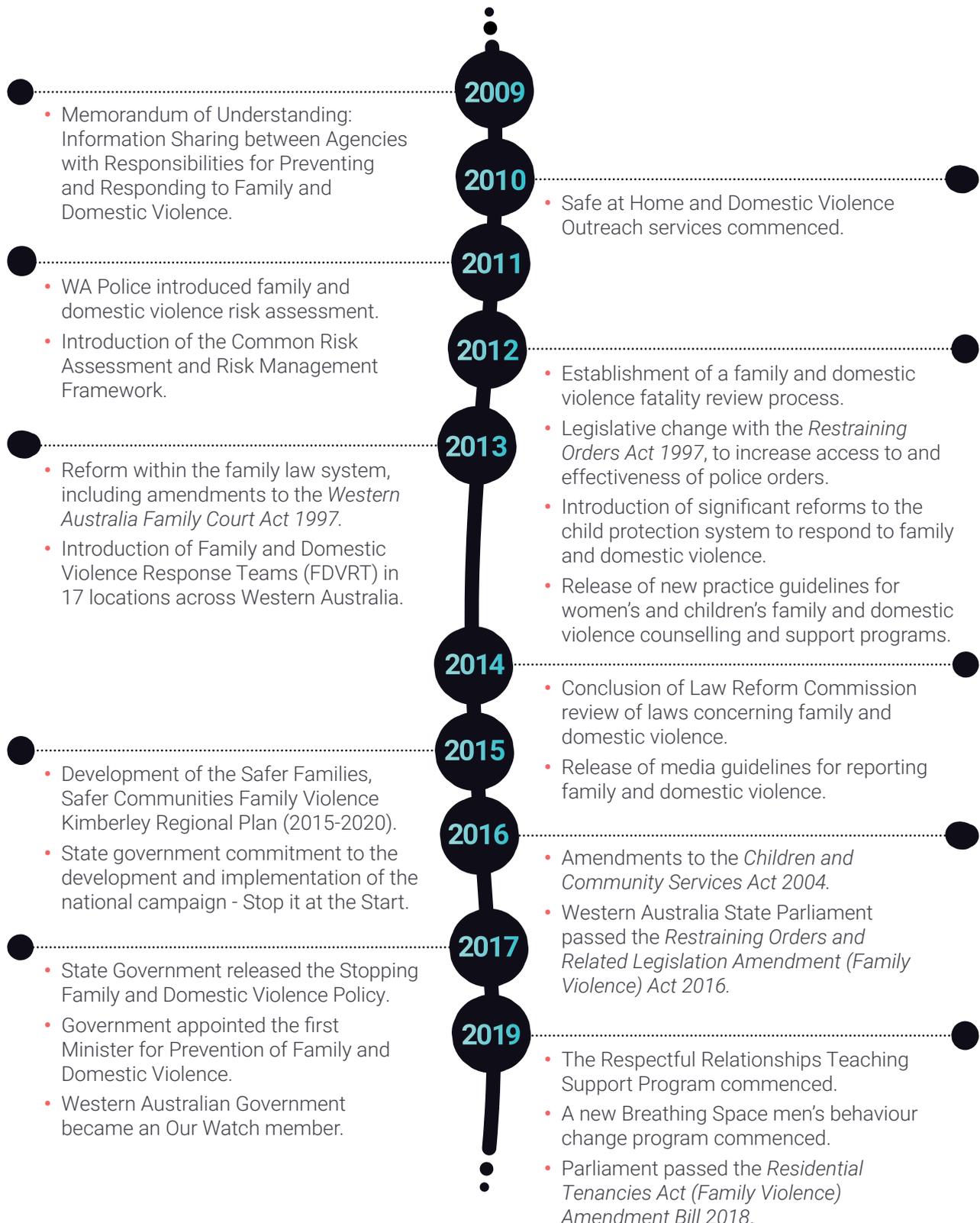
Legislative changes to the Residential Tenancies Act 1987 (the RTA) have been designed to better meet the needs of tenants experiencing family and domestic violence. Victims now have the choice to stay or leave their tenancies and if desired, make their rental homes safer with timely, improved access to lock changes and other security upgrades.

State government agencies have taken action to increase family and domestic violence awareness across mainstream services and workforces, so that victims and perpetrators are provided with appropriate and safe responses wherever they are engaged. These actions include joining Our Watch, the national organisation for the prevention of violence against women. This is a critical first step in building capacity for primary prevention in WA, along with implementation of the Respectful Relationships teaching support program currently underway in select schools across WA. Other important steps include the roll out of dedicated family and domestic violence training to frontline police officers, paid family and domestic violence leave for Western Australian public sector employees and expanded training for health professionals to strengthen antenatal responses to family and domestic violence. Collectively, these and other initiatives are providing immediate and longer-term interventions to keep victims safer and support their recovery, as well as ensuring there are more opportunities for perpetrators to change their behaviour.

Many other important initiatives have contributed to increasing victim safety and perpetrator accountability over the past decade.

A history of initiatives to address family and domestic violence

A timeline to highlight some critical initiatives to addressing family and domestic violence over the last 10 years in Western Australia.



Connecting our work

Stopping family and domestic violence requires a systems approach encompassing primary prevention, early intervention, crisis support and tertiary services. This means community, all levels of government, the community services sector and private organisations working together towards this shared goal. Alignment with and collaboration on related state and national reforms and strategies is an important pathway to achieve this. Various Government policies, strategies and initiatives that are in place or under development will have overlapping actions and outcomes. The solutions to family and domestic violence intersect with – and depend upon – addressing other issues such as elder abuse, homelessness, gender inequality and children at risk. These solutions are the collective responsibility of a number of government organisations and require a whole-of-government approach that aligns with the WA Government’s Our Priorities targets. Key strategic intersections are listed over page and this list will continue to grow and evolve.

The three Action Plans supporting this Strategy will respond to these intersections, outlining opportunities for collaboration and integration to support better outcomes.

WA Government Initiatives

Our Priorities: Sharing Prosperity

A Path Forward: Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy

Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Gender Equality

All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10 Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030

Action Plan for At Risk Youth 2020-2025

Early Years Initiative

Target 120

State Disability Plan

Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Accommodation Support Strategy

WA Housing Strategy 2020-2030

WA Veterans and Families Strategy

WA Strategy to Respond to the Abuse of Older People (Elder Abuse) 2019-2029

WA Youth Strategy

Rapid Response Framework for children and young people in care and those with a care experience

Western Australian Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2021-2025

WA LGBTI Health Strategy 2019-2024

Western Australian Women's Health and Wellbeing Policy

Western Australian Men's Health and Wellbeing Policy

Western Australian Alcohol and Drug Interagency Strategy 2018-2022

Western Australian Multicultural Policy Framework

National Policies and Frameworks

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

Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia

Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children

National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020

Closing the Gap framework

National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians (Elder Abuse) 2019-2023

National Housing and Homelessness Agreement

Reports and Inquiries

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

WA Coroner's inquest into the death of Andrea Pickett

Law Reform Commission: Enhancing family and domestic violence laws

Community Development and Justice Standing Committee 'A measure of trust: How WA Police evaluates the effectiveness of its response to family and domestic violence'

WA Ombudsman: Investigation into the issues associated with violence restraining orders and their relationship with family and domestic violence

WA Ombudsman's fatality reviews

Achieving the vision

A long-term approach

This Strategy sets out our framework for addressing family and domestic violence as a significant public health issue affecting the physical, emotional, financial and social wellbeing of individuals and the community in Western Australia. This approach encompasses a wide range of interventions that will work in parallel to tackle family and domestic violence across different settings and using different tactics.

Primary prevention strategies at a whole of population level will aim to decrease the incidence of family and domestic violence in the population over the long-term, by intervening to change the social conditions which enable violence to occur. This includes addressing violence supportive attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and cultural norms through a systemic approach supporting gender equality. Early intervention responses will engage with people who are at increased risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of family and domestic violence to prevent escalation and reduce harmful consequences at individual, family and community levels. Crisis and post-crisis responses will continue to work to keep victims safe and hold perpetrators to account, again with a focus on supporting long-term recovery and wellbeing for individuals, families and communities.

Policy, legislation and system reform will support and enable on-the-ground initiatives across these priority focus areas. Action on all levels is needed to create change that will stop family and domestic violence in Western Australia. Long-term planning, investment, time and evaluation are essential components to ensuring the sustainability of that change.

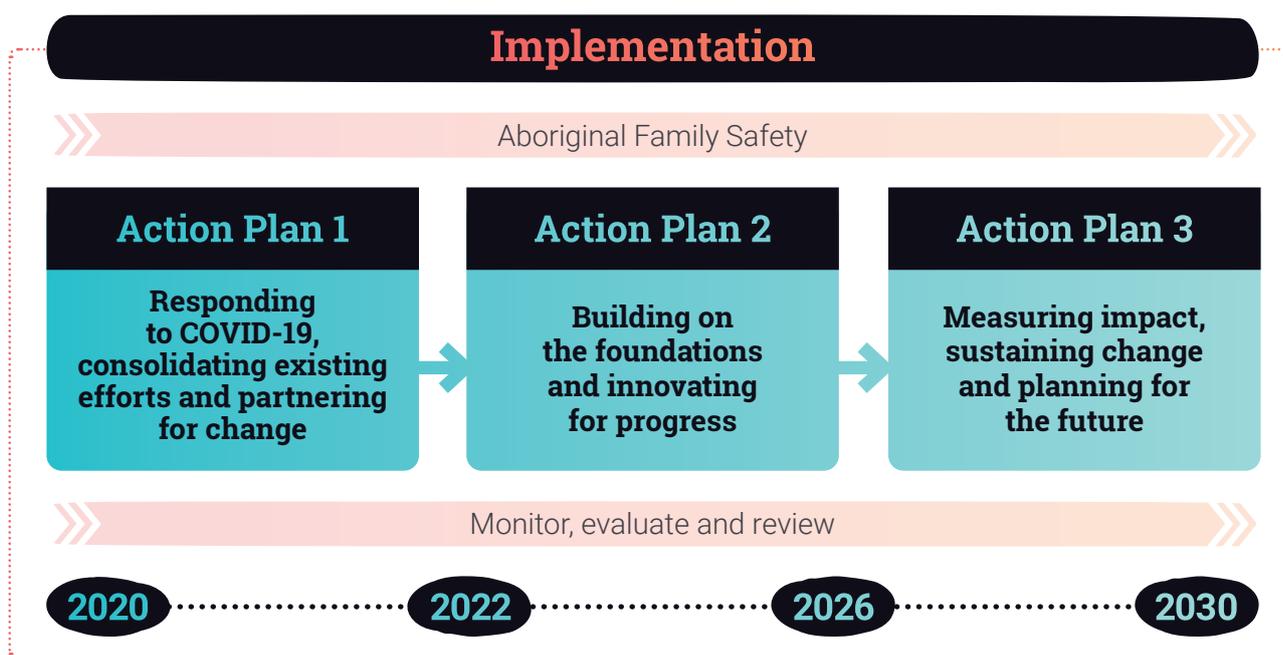
Three action plans will support the implementation of the Strategy through the next decade. An initial two-year action plan will focus on initiatives that respond to particular needs arising during the COVID-19 emergency response and recovery phases. Specific COVID-19 actions will address the significant concerns raised about the impact of social isolation and economic measures on rates, complexity and severity of family and domestic violence in the community. Emergency responses implemented during this phase will be informed by the existing evidence base about what works to keep people safe, and will build on and evolve current practice in the family and domestic violence sector.

In addition to responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the first action plan will consolidate the foundations and partnerships that will support the long-term outcomes of the Strategy.

Implementation of Action Plan 2 over the next four years will build momentum and innovate for progress, putting in place both tactical and long-term initiatives and expanding strategic and practice intersections across the range of settings that have a role in addressing family and domestic violence. During this phase we will build capability, continue to support safety and collaboration and increase accountability.

During the four years of Action Plan 3 we will focus on driving long term outcomes that prevent violence, drawing on a strong evidence base. This phase is also the time to measure the impact of our actions and identify remaining challenges and opportunities as we sustain change into the next decade.

Priority actions across the four focus areas set the high-level direction to achieve the outcomes of the Strategy. Each Action Plan will detail the specific initiatives that will support the priority actions, along with who will be responsible and by when.



Initiatives under each Action Plan will be informed by emerging data along with the established evidence base including contemporary research and learnings from local knowledge about what works, as well as what we heard during the state-wide consultation process. Actions will be developed through a co-design approach to incorporate practice wisdom and lived experience.

All Strategy initiatives will maintain a focus on responding to people’s diverse and intersecting experiences, providing trauma-informed supports, and supporting effective, local solutions.

Measuring and reporting success

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure continuous improvement, make progress and demonstrate change. Throughout the ten-year life of the Strategy, regular checks will be made to ensure the Strategy is working and to assess whether adjustments are needed. This reflects the public health approach underpinning the Strategy, recognising the importance of building and sharing evidence about what works so that successful responses can be adopted more widely.

An evaluation framework will be designed during the first Action Plan, in consultation with stakeholders. It will draw on and link with the WA Government's Outcomes Framework and be informed by the work of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and Our Watch, the national organisation for the prevention of violence against women.

The evaluation framework will detail how actions will be evaluated over the 10 years of the Strategy. It will include performance measures which focus on progress towards the action plans' implementation; and outcomes-based measures that demonstrate impact towards ending family and domestic violence and addressing the social determinants that allow it to occur.

Progress and outcomes will be reported annually to the Premier, relevant Ministers and the Community Safety and Family Support Cabinet Sub-Committee (CSFSCSC). Progress updates will be made publicly available throughout the Strategy's timeframe.

Oversight and implementation

A focus on governance is particularly important because of the complexity of family and domestic violence and the fact that many systems are involved in the response to it.

Safe Systems Coalition³⁰

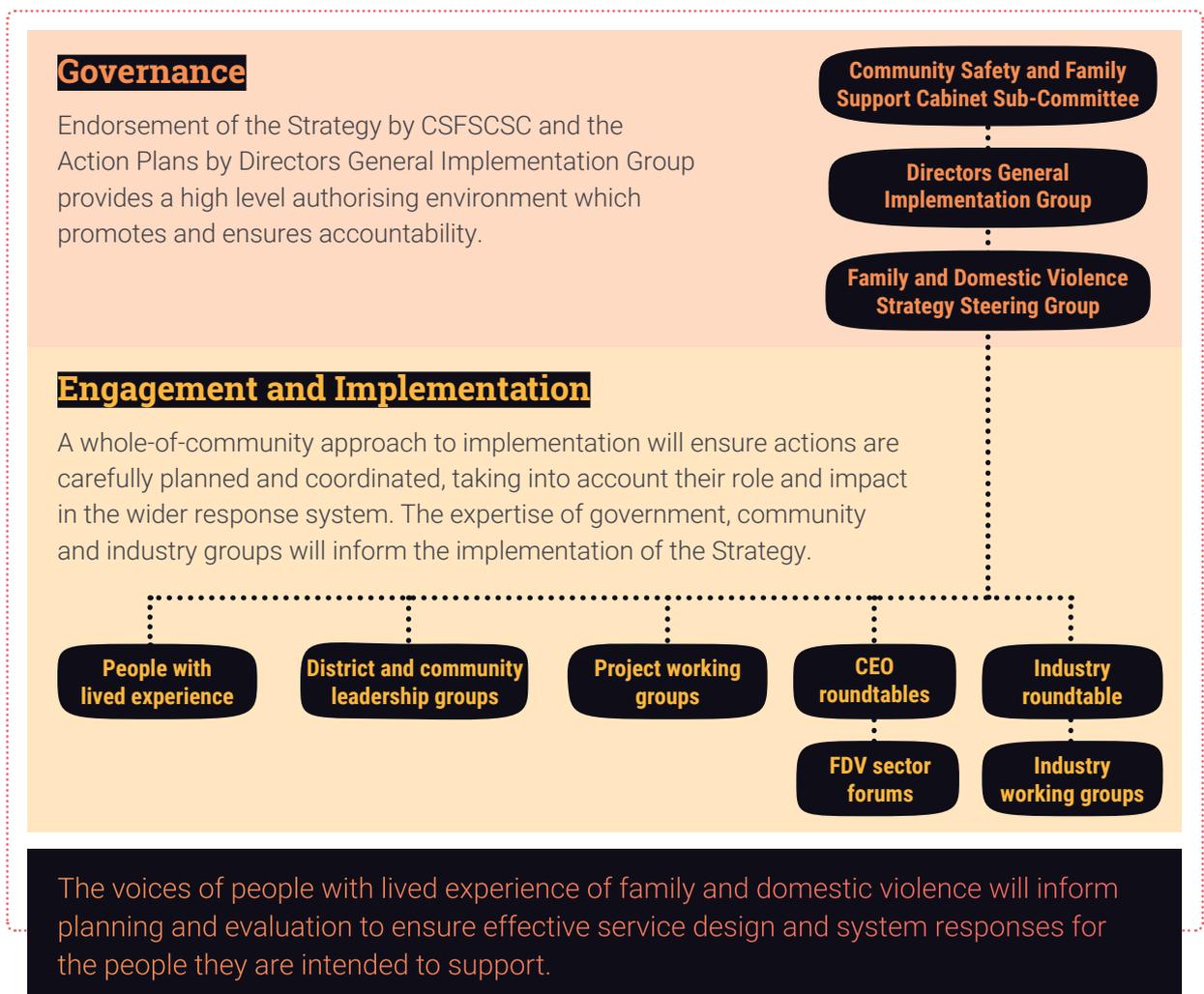
Robust governance and strong engagement will enable the collaboration and integration needed across systems to implement the Strategy and support the safety and wellbeing of women and children.

Governance

High level leadership on family and domestic violence and endorsement of the Strategy and Action Plans will provide the authorising environment to support implementation across diverse settings. A Family and Domestic Violence Strategy Steering Group, comprised of senior representatives from key government and sector organisations, will oversee the Strategy's implementation.

Engagement and Implementation

A whole-of-government approach to implementation will ensure actions are carefully planned and coordinated, taking into account their role and impact in the wider response system. Lead organisations will engage with government, community and industry groups in culturally appropriate ways to plan and implement the actions to support the Strategy.



Everyone has a role

The successful implementation of the Strategy requires a whole-of-community approach with clearly defined roles and responsibilities. This creates a shared strategic vision and synergies that enable services and community to work together to stop violence in our communities.

The Western Australian Government, community services sector, academia, the private industry and the broader community are committed to work together to increase safety and wellbeing.

By defining and understanding our respective roles through the Action Plans, we can further improve the ways in which we work together to achieve our vision and target our efforts to achieve the greatest impact.

Australian Government

The Australian Government has an important role to play in shaping the national direction and allocating time limited funding to support the priorities identified under the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022.³¹ This is a national initiative, supported by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), which includes four action plans to achieve change. The plan aims to connect the work occurring across all states and territories, community services and community members, to end violence against women.

The Government also contributes funds to the homelessness sector through the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement, of which family and domestic violence is considered a priority area. These funds support WA crisis responses and the Safe at Home programs.

Other areas of federal responsibility can have a direct or indirect impact on the family and domestic violence sector. These include but are not limited to community legal services, welfare and income support services, immigration services and family and separation services.

State Government

The Department of Communities is the lead agency coordinating strategy and policy direction in the prevention of family and domestic violence in Western Australia. However, it does not and cannot work alone. Family and domestic violence impacts people across the lifespan and intersects with the work of many government agencies. People experiencing or using violence may be in contact with services funded or directly provided by agencies such as the Department of Justice, WA Police, Legal Aid WA, the Department of Health, the Mental Health Commission and the Department of Education. Other government bodies with knowledge and expertise critical to the prevention of family and domestic violence include the Commissioner for Children and Young People, the WA Equal Opportunity Commission and the Ombudsman Western Australia.

The Department of Communities has a statutory responsibility to ensure that children impacted by family and domestic violence are supported to live in an environment that is free from harm. The imperative to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal children in care must be considered in conjunction with policies for the reduction of family and domestic violence.

Machinery of Government reform in Western Australia has created opportunities to focus on whole-of-government objectives, align strategic priorities and find synergies that support collaborative solutions to complex issues. This is most effective when the State Government agencies are united by a shared strategic vision such as this Strategy's.

Local government and community organisations

Local governments have close connections and contact with their local communities. This direct involvement with community members, community organisations and various community initiatives provides valuable prevention and early intervention opportunities.

Local councils are comprised of civic leaders. Their diverse connections with community members provides opportunities for place-based primary prevention strategies that reach a broad range of people in a variety of settings. Local councils can operationalise strategic policy directions in ways that are meaningful to their communities, and which demonstrate leadership and a shared commitment to ending family and domestic violence.

Community services sector

Specialist family and domestic violence services have a long history of providing invaluable support to women and children experiencing family and domestic violence. In Western Australia, specialist services excel in the provision of advocacy, risk assessment, risk management, safety planning and a range of other expertise that inform service design and support victim safety and perpetrator accountability. Specialist services are known for the resourceful ways that they support clients by driving philanthropic involvement and leveraging resources to meet outcomes.

Peak bodies in Western Australia serve a role in political advocacy, research contributions and building the capability of the community services sector.

The WA Government procures peak body supports to build sector capabilities, provide policy guidance and advocacy, create pathways to wellbeing and deliver good outcomes for the individuals, families and communities with whom they work.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) have unique strengths in delivering trusted, culturally secure services to Aboriginal people and communities. ACCOs contribute to Aboriginal communities' empowerment and self-determination. ACCOs are also well-placed to improve the capability of government and non-ACCO service providers in delivering culturally responsive services to Aboriginal people.

Business and philanthropic organisations

In Western Australia the family and domestic violence sector is supported by a number of business and philanthropic initiatives. This important contribution to the safety of adults and children is an essential component of a whole-of-community approach to stopping family and domestic violence. Support from business and philanthropic organisations has enabled innovation in the development and delivery of prevention, early intervention and response services. Many commercial organisations are also delivering best practice family and domestic violence and gender equality policies in their own workplaces.

Western Australian community

Every person in Western Australia has a role to play in reducing and preventing family and domestic violence. Violence against women will not end without collective community action. By ensuring people are informed about the nature, drivers and impact of family and domestic violence, we are better placed to promote initiatives and strategies that support the elimination of violence. Each one of us has a responsibility to explore our own personal attitudes, beliefs and behaviour – and take action to be part of the solution.



Focus
Area

1 Aboriginal Family Safety

We will work with Aboriginal people to strengthen Aboriginal family safety

Priority Actions

Work with Aboriginal people and communities to co-design and implement a dedicated Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy.

Strengthen the role of ACCOs and Aboriginal communities to design and deliver culturally appropriate responses for Aboriginal people.

Ensure actions to prevent and reduce family and domestic violence are flexible, culturally responsive and culturally secure to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people.



Aboriginal women and children are significantly over-represented as victims of family violence, and their experiences of violence are compounded by service system responses that often fail to meet their needs.³² The practical, cultural and philosophical differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal family violence result in some Aboriginal women finding 'mainstream' responses neither suitable, nor appropriate to their needs.³³ This is exacerbated by a lack of culturally informed responses and service systems that can be difficult to navigate. Existing services and systems often contain barriers and deterrents to reporting and access by Aboriginal people. This can be compounded by a deep mistrust of mainstream authorities stemming from the impact of past injustices and poor treatment.

Family violence is not a part of Aboriginal culture. Aboriginal people experience ongoing harm and trauma resulting from dispossession of land and identity, the Stolen Generations and systemic discrimination. These drivers of inequality and disadvantage are key to understanding Aboriginal people's disproportionate experience of family violence and why healing and cultural security needs to be at the centre of responses for all Aboriginal people and communities.³⁴

In 2017, the Department of Communities reviewed the cases of 433 children in care (approximately 10% of children living in Out-of-Home-Care at that time), which included 226 Aboriginal children. 89% of these Aboriginal children had lived experience of family violence.

What we heard in consultations:

- The need for cultural healing.
- Services delivered by Aboriginal people and organisations are valued.
- Aboriginal kinship systems, gender roles and responsibilities differ significantly from Western family structures.
- Government should increase Aboriginal engagement and representation in decision making and prioritise Aboriginal organisations as service providers for Aboriginal people.
- Stronger services for Aboriginal people should be achieved through new approaches to procurement and capacity building with Aboriginal organisations.
- The way forward should involve a dedicated approach to Aboriginal family safety developed in genuine partnership with Aboriginal people.

We are committed to collaborating with Aboriginal people and communities in WA to develop an Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy, supporting locally informed and led preventative approaches and responses that are based on strengths, culture and local solutions to enable healing and safety. This is grounded in a substantive equality approach, which recognises that to genuinely address the systemic discrimination that Aboriginal people have experienced, and achieve equal outcomes, a different approach needs to be applied that is directly responsive to the needs of Aboriginal communities.³⁵ We have listened to our stakeholders who told us that Aboriginal people, and particularly Elders and leaders, want to work in partnership with Government to lead the creation of strategies to address the drivers of violence and responses to family and domestic violence in their communities.

The Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy will be co-designed and delivered with Aboriginal people to prevent and respond to family violence in ways that are culturally secure and responsive to the experiences of Aboriginal people across our State. At the centre of the approach will be recognition of and response to the diversity of WA's Aboriginal people. This diversity is experienced in terms of culture, kinship systems, roles of women and men, experience of trauma and geographical context.³⁶ Taking a whole-of-community public health approach, the Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy will address the needs of victims and the accountability of the perpetrators to change behaviour.

Access to cultural knowledge, protocols and a strong sense of identity, including women's and men's business, can prevent violence and improve wellbeing. In some cases, Aboriginal people's experiences of dispossession, racism and trauma have disrupted and eroded cultural practices that can prevent or stop violence. Recognising and building upon the existing strengths, resources and resilience of Aboriginal people and communities is critical to improving Aboriginal family safety and wellbeing.³⁷ This will include acknowledging, supporting and expanding the effective work already being done by ACCOs in Western Australia.

I have heard firsthand how in the face of overwhelming adversity, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women condemn the structures that produce injustice, and in the same breath speak about how we can rebuild a society that is vibrant, healthy and free from discrimination.

June Oscar
Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner³⁸

A Aboriginal people have the solutions for Aboriginal people.

Participant - Aboriginal Family Safety Summit

Local solutions:

Martu and WA Police collaboration

In the Pilbara region of Western Australia, the Martu are the traditional owners extending from the Great Sandy Desert in the north to around Wiluna in the south. Across this country, Martu share a common law, culture and language.

A significant number of Martu in the Pilbara who breach violence restraining orders, protective bail orders and police orders do not understand the conditions placed on them. Victims of violence, who are protected by an order or bail conditions, will often choose to reunite with the perpetrator, unaware that this will lead to a breach of the order, and in turn, a jail sentence.

Martu leaders believe they have a possible solution to help their people understand what the court or police order says. The Martu have designed coloured cards with images and words in Martu and English. These cards are issued by local Police, to Martu people who are subject to an order or bail conditions.

The blue card is a Police Order and shows two figures fighting with a diagonal line through the drawing. In big letters on the card are the words “you two stop it!” and then, in Martu, “jurrangkupula”. On the back is the order for the parties to separate for three days.

The yellow card is a Violence Restraining Order showing figures of a man and a woman standing apart with a double-edged arrow between them. The words “stay apart” are written in English and Martu. On the back of the card, police will fill in the start and end dates.

Martu leaders say family violence is a big problem for their people. They are proud of the card idea which is currently being trialled by Newman police. This initiative builds on similar programs developed by the Martu, which help bridge the gap between mainstream criminal justice systems and cultural understandings of law. This program has already proven to be a good engagement tool for local police, who are benefiting by learning Martu words and phrases.

“We believe that the central way to effectively break the cycle of violence is through community-driven, trauma-informed approaches to family violence that prioritise cultural healing and restore strength, dignity and self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities – especially women and children.

Strong Families, Safe Kids Policy Paper³⁹



Focus Area

2 Act now

We will act now to keep people safe and hold perpetrators to account

Priority Actions

Ensure victims have immediate, early and ongoing access to safety and are supported to recover.

Support the long-term recovery and wellbeing of children who have experienced family and domestic violence.

Develop tailored responses that consider people's diversity and intersecting needs.

Connect perpetrators with timely, evidence-based interventions to support accountability and behaviour change.



Victim safety and wellbeing

Reviews, inquiries and service provider consultations show that the current service system offers a range of high quality supports and services for women and children. Yet these services may not have sufficient resourcing or capacity to meet need.⁴⁰ As a result, service providers report that their work is often crisis driven with limited capacity for earlier identification, engagement or longer-term support. Despite limited capacity, Western Australian specialist family and domestic violence services find innovative and resourceful ways to support early intervention and long-term support.

Service delivery models are mainly geared towards supporting separation or working with women and children escaping the perpetrator. There are limited examples of safe, whole-of-family interventions, for families that can either support couples to remain safely in a relationship together or wish to reunify.

To create safety for women and children, and to support them to recover and thrive, we will grow the capacity of earlier intervention and crisis response services to:

- Identify women and children at risk early and refer them to appropriate support.
- Enable women and their children to remain safe at home where they wish to do so.
- Provide a continuum of care from point of identification to post-crisis recovery.
- Deliver services that are person-centred, risk and trauma informed and accessible.
- Provide family-centred supports that build safe and respectful relationships.
- Meet the needs of women and children from diverse backgrounds and deliver culturally appropriate services.

In community consultations we heard:

- It is not always easy to find out where or how to get help.
- Specialist services are invaluable for assisting victims with a range of support needs, and navigating the service system.
- Crisis accommodation is not suitable for everyone.
- Information silos mean victims must repeat their story.

Supporting earlier intervention will include identifying touch points in the community and ensuring a no-wrong-door approach to safety and support. People experiencing family and domestic violence often need information, social support and legal advice on a range of issues such as family law, child protection, housing and tenancy law, debt and financial issues, child support, immigration and restraining orders. Actions under the Strategy will focus on making this available at an early stage to support people's safety and wellbeing and help them make informed choices.

Some groups are at greater risk of family and domestic violence and/or face barriers to supports:

- Aboriginal women
- women with disability
- women who are homeless
- pregnant women
- women separating from their partners
- older women
- women experiencing financial hardship
- young women
- women living in regional and remote areas
- people who identify as LGBTIQ+
- women who are or have been incarcerated
- women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- women with vulnerable visas
- people who experienced abuse or family and domestic violence as children.

Recognising and understanding the way in which the experience of family and domestic violence intersects with the specific needs of people of diverse backgrounds will require work with groups to better understand the barriers they experience and develop targeted solutions. Supports will be tailored to people's individual and cultural needs rather than providing a one-size-fits-all approach.

Throughout the life of the Strategy we will apply an intersectional lens to give consideration and priority to the experiences and needs of individuals and groups at greater risk of experiencing family and domestic violence. This will include addressing systemic biases and structures that perpetuate negative outcomes for people. Factors such as mental ill health and problematic use of alcohol and other drugs, which do not cause violence but can compound its severity and consequences, will be kept in close focus in the design and delivery of responses.

“Victims of family and domestic violence from CALD backgrounds are less likely to report family and domestic violence to police, or to access services, ‘because of a perception that these services would not understand their particular situation and respond appropriately.’⁴¹

“Domestic and family violence is about power and control, and children who experience this type of behaviour are also victims. If they are not given support they can suffer long-term consequences in their lifetime.

Angela Hartwig, CEO Women's Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services WA⁴²

Children and Young People

A child or young person does not need to see, hear or be directly targeted to be negatively impacted by family and domestic violence. Children and young people exposed to family and domestic violence are considered primary victims. Exposure to family and domestic violence may include being the target of violence, witnessing violence and being impacted by violence that is directed at other family members.

Substantial evidence confirms the negative and long-lasting impacts that exposure to family and domestic violence has on a child's health, social and educational outcomes.⁴³ Exposure to family and domestic violence at any age also increases the risk of people experiencing or perpetrating violence in their own relationships, which if not addressed may continue into their adult relationships.⁴⁴

The behaviours or circumstances of many 'at risk' young people may come to the attention of various tertiary services such as education, health, police or child protection. At these points of contact, it can be challenging to identify 'at risk' young people who have been exposed to family and domestic violence and to recognise the link between trauma, learnt behaviours and their current life trajectory. Some young people's antisocial or negative behaviours, attitudes and actions may serve as early warning signs.

Directing efforts toward children and young people is crucial to ending intergenerational family and domestic violence. This includes providing support to heal from trauma and understanding how past experiences of trauma may impact their current life path. Efforts must also be focused on primary prevention and early intervention strategies that support young people toward healthy ways of relating with others.

The high prevalence of family and domestic violence in child protection cases cannot be ignored.⁴⁵ A recent Department of Communities analysis of 600 children entering care identified that in 88% of cases, family and domestic violence was a significant issue contributing to or causing harm. The need to improve protective responses to children and young people was a communicated strongly in the Strategy's consultation process. While supports for children do currently exist within Western Australia, the Strategy will build the capacity of the family and domestic violence service system to support children and young people, as well as the capacity of the child protection system to appropriately respond to family and domestic violence. This work will align with related State Government initiatives and commitments, including the Youth Strategy, Action Plan for At-Risk Youth and implementation of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse.

The Strategy will enhance access to long-term support services to help adult and child victims recover, secure stable accommodation and access intensive services that meet the needs of children and young people as victims in their own right. Building on existing good practice and providing long-term, holistic and trauma-informed support for whole families will support victims and their children to recover and live healthy lives.

“We believe that focusing on the impact of violence on children and young people is likely to be the best point to start dialogue about ending violence in the community.

Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (Aboriginal Corporation)

Practice Example:

Partnering with adult survivors to enhance children's safety and wellbeing

Safe and Together Model, USA

The Safe and Together Model is an internationally recognised suite of tools and interventions designed to help child welfare professionals become trauma and domestic violence informed.

This child-centred model derives its name from the concept that children are best served when we can work toward keeping them safe and together.

The model provides a framework to work with victims and perpetrators, improving worker competencies and cross system collaboration.

Program pilot outcomes of the training in Florida indicate that in a model with case workers, child protection investigators and domestic violence advocates, removal of children from families dropped by 20.6%. With further training, removal rates had dropped even further six and 12 months later.

The Department of Communities (Communities) has partnered with Stopping Family Violence to deliver Safe and Together training to staff across regional WA. Communities is also partnering with the Safe and Together Institute to build additional activities to increase capacity across the service sector and create a more family and domestic violence proficient system in WA.

Perpetrator accountability and behaviour change

Perpetrators use violent and abusive tactics to coerce, control and create fear. This behaviour is deliberate, systematic and escalates when a perpetrator's control is threatened. This can be particularly heightened during service intervention or following relationship breakdown.⁴⁶ Existing services are often dependent on women and their children leaving the perpetrator, which can place women in more danger. Perpetrators may resist change, avoid services, deny responsibility and use service systems to further abuse.⁴⁷

The capacity of the service system to create accountability and effect behaviour change is currently limited by the need for:

- Greater understanding about family and domestic violence within the justice system, police, child protection, health services, community-based service providers and legal sectors.
- Availability of voluntary and mandated men's behaviour change programs and other support services.
- Culturally appropriate behaviour change programs.
- Evidence on what works to change behaviours.

Holding perpetrators accountable requires an integrated and coordinated approach which sends a very clear message that family and domestic violence is not tolerated. Relying solely on a perpetrator's internal motivation for change is insufficient. The community and service system must provide the external motivations for change and to manage risk.

In community consultations we heard:

- Early intervention is needed to influence men's behaviour before entrenched patterns are developed.
- More services are needed for men at the point of pre-crisis, crisis and post crisis.
- Behaviour change and co-occurring substance use must be managed together.
- Good access to legal advice is essential for victims and perpetrators.
- Programs for Aboriginal men should be Aboriginal-led and grounded in place and culture.

Viewing (perpetrators) as bad people is a very simplistic way of looking at what is a very complex problem. We've got to think of them (as) more than just the behaviour that we want to stop. Absolutely as a society, we need to say it needs to stop. (But) how do we expect them to change if we don't give them an opportunity to change?

Damian Green, CEO Stopping Family Violence⁴⁸

Over the life of the Strategy we will build an effective web of accountability through increased collaboration between services and agencies, streamlined responses and routine exchanges of risk relevant information, mechanisms to identify episodes of family and domestic violence and enact consequences for the perpetrator and pathways to suitable interventions.⁴⁹

We will focus on:

- Building capacity to engage earlier with people who have perpetrated violence and those who display behaviours that demonstrate a risk of perpetrating violence.
- Monitoring of perpetrators.
- Assessment of perpetrator pattern-based risk.
- Consistent messaging that violence won't be tolerated.
- Providing 'best fit' perpetrator programs including culturally appropriate responses.
- Consistent use of consequences or sanctions to respond to known episodes of violence and abuse.

This will be underpinned by ensuring that service options for perpetrators also recognise and respond to the impacts of trauma, grief and loss of identity in men. A broad range of services, departments and agencies can and do work collectively to promote and support perpetrator accountability. Considering how WA engages with perpetrators is important and will strengthen our understanding of perpetrator accountability, and how best to support people who use violence to change their behaviour.

“Until we adjust the lens and bring those who use violence and coercion more clearly into view - until we intervene at the source of the problem - the cycle of this violence will simply roll on.”⁵⁰

Case studies: John and Mark

Provided by Midlas

John is a perpetrator of family violence and the respondent listed on an application for a Family Violence Restraining Order (FVRO). He has attended court to contest the making of a Final Order. John has no legal representation, no understanding of what a FVRO is and what it means and has had no contact with his wife and children since the interim order was made. John doesn't understand the process and is disruptive during the trial, rebutting statements and speaking out of turn. The judge considers the evidence and an FVRO is made protecting his wife and children. John understands that he cannot go near the house his wife and children live in, so he presents at the children's school a week later to see if he can talk to them at lunch time. John has breached the FVRO and will now be charged with a criminal offence.

Mark is a perpetrator of family violence and the respondent listed on a FVRO. He has attended court for the final hearing. Mark speaks to the Community Legal Centre duty lawyer at Court and gets information about what to expect and how he needs to conduct himself. Mark conducts himself well in court. The judge considers the evidence and makes the FVRO order against Mark. Mark speaks to the duty lawyer who explains what the requirements are, what the terms of the FVRO are and what are Mark's responsibilities. Mark understands what he needs to do and does not breach the FVRO. Mark is later able to begin supervised access visits with the children and begin a men's behaviour change program.



Focus Area

3 Primary Prevention

We will grow primary prevention to stop family and domestic violence

Priority Actions

Grow capability to deliver primary prevention in Western Australia.

Collaborate across government on policies and actions to address inequality and other conditions that reinforce violence.

Support and implement primary prevention programs (such as those focused on healthy, respectful relationships and gender equality) across settings and cohorts.

Partner with groups and organisations from the community and private sectors to strengthen awareness of and responses to family and domestic violence.



Efforts in prevention are about taking a long-term approach to stop violence before it starts.

To support this, the social determinants that allow family and domestic violence to occur need to be understood and addressed. These are the social norms, structures and practices, and deeply embedded community attitudes and behaviours which reinforce gender stereotypes and roles, power and relationships. Gender inequality is the leading driver of violence against women, and evidence shows that family and domestic violence is a gendered issue.⁵¹ Although family and domestic violence affects victims of all genders and backgrounds, most victims are women and their children, and the majority of perpetrators are men.⁵²

Gender inequality is a driver of violence because it perpetuates a society underpinned by values that place women as unequal to men. Such ideas are reflected in all areas of daily life, including political and economic structures, social and workplace contexts, and personal and family relationships and practices. When women are perceived as less important or less valued than men, disrespectful and abusive ideas and behaviours toward women become normalised and tolerated.⁵³

Primary prevention activities in WA are currently limited. Misconceptions about family and domestic violence and victim blaming continue to be perpetuated in the wider community and media. Violence supportive attitudes exist and contribute to the barriers faced by victims in accessing safety and justice.



In Australia, violence supportive attitudes in the community have only marginally reduced in 18 years.⁵⁴



1 in 3 Australians believe that if a woman does not leave her abusive partner, then she is responsible for the violence continuing.⁵⁵

In community consultations we heard:

- Agreement that family and domestic violence is everyone's business.
- Support for well-planned, long term community education initiatives and targeted awareness campaigns.
- There is a need to develop targeted prevention initiatives for priority settings including workplaces, schools and sporting clubs.

Enabling the community to form a web of accountability around the perpetrator is dependent on stopping normalisation and acceptance of violence across the whole community. Preventing family and domestic violence is a whole-of-community responsibility and governments, organisations, the media and individuals all have a role to play. In families, workplaces and social settings there are opportunities to challenge and change the social norms, structures, practices, attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate gender inequality and drive and excuse gender-based violence.

The Strategy will establish a whole-of-community primary prevention framework across all areas where people live, work and play. We will achieve this by expanding the capacity for primary prevention in Western Australia, linking and partnering with related strategic initiatives and service delivery across the system. Specific focus will be given to intersections with Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Gender Equality to achieve gender equality.

“When the issue comes up we take a zero tolerance for violence view. Nothing justifies it. We need to be alert to possibilities for introducing the topic when conversation drifts in a relevant direction.

The many students with direct knowledge of it in their own homes and neighbourhoods need to be helped to understand this and engage with people who can help them.

Governor Kim Beazley⁵⁶

“Preventing family and domestic violence is essential for the health and wellbeing of Western Australians. Unless we get better at preventing it in the first place, our communities and support systems will continue to be overwhelmed.

Safe Systems Coalition⁵⁷

Practice Example:

WA Respectful Relationships Teaching Support Program.

Communities is working with the Department of Education and Starick to support school staff to teach students about healthy and positive relationships in the context of family and domestic violence prevention, and the implementation of a whole-of-school approach to violence prevention.

The WA Respectful Relationships Teaching Support Program (Respectful Relationships) is informed by a growing body of research, policy and practice in primary prevention in school settings and is tailored to WA.

Respectful Relationships initiatives working with young people form a critical component of Australia's National Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children 2010-2022. The third Action Plan under the National Plan includes a commitment to support schools and teachers to deliver age-appropriate and evidence-based respectful relationships education to all students.

Respectful Relationships recognises that school communities can play a part in promoting healthy and respectful relationships and the message that violence is never OK. Schools can play an important role in breaking the cycle of violence by teaching young people how to recognise and challenge violence against women and build respectful relationships.

In developing culturally secure approaches to prevent Aboriginal family violence the ongoing discrimination and inequality faced by Aboriginal people will be recognised as drivers of and context for the violence that people may experience.

Other forms of discrimination and inequality (such as racism, ageism, disability discrimination, homophobia and transphobia) also drive or contribute to family and domestic violence. Prevention initiatives will recognise and address these factors in their own right and where they intersect with gender inequality.



Focus Area

4 System reform

We will reform systems to prioritise safety, accountability and collaboration

Priority Actions

Improve data collection and information sharing to keep perpetrators visible and victims safe through risk informed practice.

Refocus systems to prioritise victim safety and address factors that blame and re-traumatise victims.

Collaborate across the service system and with community leaders to deliver connected, coordinated, person and family centred responses.

Build specialist and mainstream workforce capability to identify and respond effectively to family and domestic violence.



The needs of people impacted by family and domestic violence are complex. The current response systems aim to address these needs, and some services provide high quality supports. However, the range of services that adult and child victims require, and the lack of coordination between service providers has inadvertently resulted in a system that is difficult to navigate, and which requires victims to re-tell their story multiple times when accessing services.

Many agencies and services interact with adult and child victims and/or perpetrators, with a responsibility or opportunity to contribute to victim safety and perpetrator accountability. Individually, services may hold information that could be pivotal to managing risk, supporting adult and child victim safety or that could contribute to a perpetrator's journey toward accountability. Lack of collaboration leads to duplication, which results in victims and families having to repeat information and incur costs as they move within the system. This presents barriers to effective information sharing to proactively manage risk and hold perpetrators to account. Formalising a collaborative and coordinated response to sharing such risk relevant information is recognised as best practice.

To address the need for system reform, this Strategy focuses efforts on fostering collaborative, integrated responses between government and non-government agencies, and community-based services.

Efforts to improve victim safety and perpetrator accountability across systems will address the way that perpetrator information is recorded and shared. Information such as offence tracking, patterns and history of violence, static and dynamic risk, and the impact of violence on children, young people and families are essential pieces of information. Together, they will underpin an integrated response to family and domestic violence that

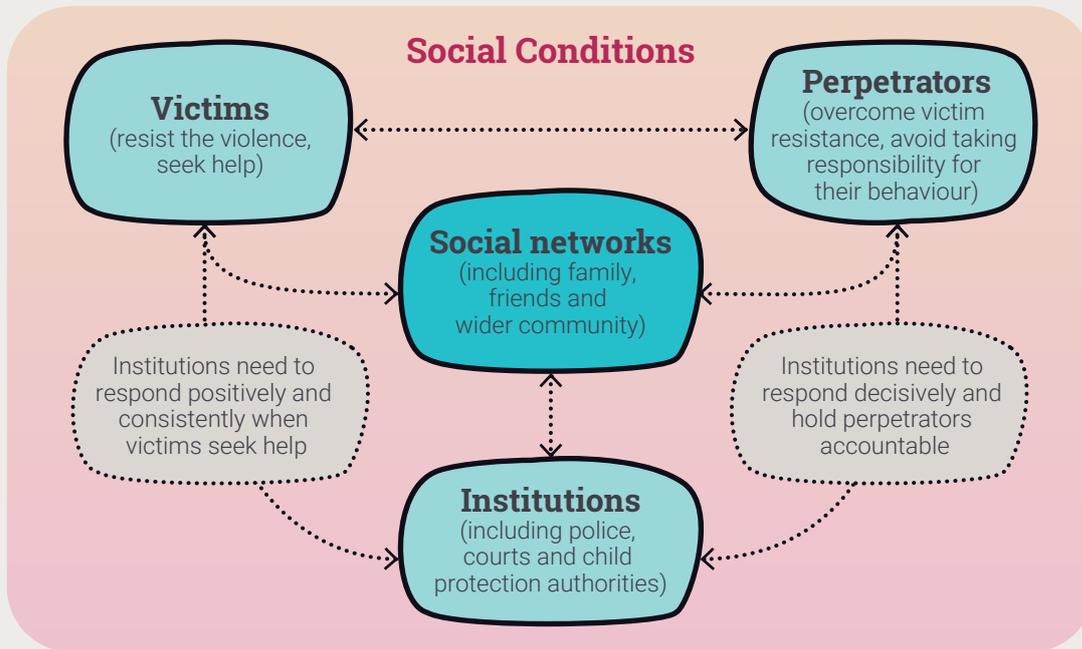
In community consultations we heard:

- Strong, coordinated leadership across government must push for change and break down silos.
- Government agencies and community sector services need to approach family and domestic violence as their core business.
- An updated, well understood common risk assessment framework is needed.
- Services need sustainable, adequate, long-term funding.
- Strong workforce capability to understand family and domestic violence is essential.
- The justice system, more than any other, must be a specific focus for reform.

is inclusive, responsive, risk-informed, collaborative and prioritises safety. Building the capacity to collect, share and use data, information and intelligence will inform intelligent system and service design.

The justice system must be accessible, risk-informed and integrated. The justice system includes the criminal justice and civil law systems, and involves police, prosecution services, courts (including the Family Court and Children's Court), judicial officers, prisons, custodial and non-custodial corrective services, parole boards, legal practitioners and the legal resistance sector. Decision makers in the justice system need improved access to shared, risk-relevant information and training to support understanding of family and domestic violence.⁵⁸ Wherever possible, elements of the justice system should be integrated to save families the trauma and inconvenience of navigating multiple courts, and to provide a consistent response to perpetrators.

A Response-Based Practice Model



Source: Adapted from Ombudsman Western Australia 2015.⁵⁹

Perpetrators' decisions to commit acts of family and domestic violence, and victims' responses to these acts of violence, are not done in isolation of their social conditions or those of other parties.

They are connected to the responses they anticipate and responses they receive from their familial and social networks, including family, friends and neighbours (the 'social network response'). They are also connected to responses they anticipate and responses they receive from institutions including police, courts, the judiciary, child protection authorities, refuges, the media, doctors, nurses and counsellors (the 'institutional response').⁶⁰

The response that victims receive at the point of family and domestic violence disclosure impacts the ongoing willingness of the victim to engage and feel safer.⁶¹ We will address behaviours and attitudes that condone violence, punish the victim and collude with the perpetrator within front-line and other support services, through a range of workplace and workforce development strategies.

Families often engage with a range of unconnected services which fail to provide a holistic response. A whole-of-family approach is needed to enhance connections between services such as child protection, health services, legal support services and courts.⁶² The Strategy will focus efforts to ensure that all people working in services

and workforces that come into contact with victims and perpetrators will:

- place victim safety at the centre of responses
- provide a seamless pathway through the service system
- understand family and domestic violence and are informed by risk and needs
- be able to provide a whole of family response that attends to safety, behavioural change and accountability.

Models and practices will be underpinned by information and data sharing, within the right legislative settings and agency agreements. There will be no wrong door for victims and responses will be inclusive, regardless of their point of entry.

Service Profile

Family and Domestic Violence Response Team – Pilbara and Midwest Gascoyne

The Family and Domestic Violence Response Teams were established in 2013. They are a joint initiative of WA Police, Communities and various community service agencies with expertise in family and domestic violence. The teams keep child and adult victims of family and domestic violence safe and ensure risk management and accountability of perpetrators through an integrated response system.

Mission Australia is the community service partner for the Family and Domestic Violence Response Team in the Pilbara and Midwest Gascoyne regions of Western Australia.

In the Midwest Gascoyne a Family and Domestic Violence worker from Mission Australia, based in Geraldton, works in partnership with a child protection worker and two police officers to assess and triage all family and domestic violence reports across the Murchison region, an area of 660,000km that spans from Exmouth in the north to Dongara in the south and Wiluna in the east.

The collaborative arrangements allow for multiple perspectives and coordinated responses to family and domestic violence in the region. Many of the situations investigated by the team involve other issues besides family and domestic violence, including alcohol and other drug use, mental ill health and housing and homelessness associated with a large transient population. The team can make service referrals for the victims and perpetrators of the violence.

The model often works very successfully to provide an integrated service, but can be compromised by long waiting lists and a lack of available service infrastructure. Given the vast geographic area covered by the team, there is a strong need to develop and maintain effective networks within a range of appropriate support services in regional and remote communities.

Commissioning the right services

The specialist family and domestic violence service system will be considered over the life of the Strategy, in partnership with service providers, to ensure the right mix of services are delivered, in the right places, at the right times. Commissioning and procurement processes will focus on the sustainability of services and longer contracting periods will be implemented to support investment in outcomes. This approach will enable increased focus on assessing whether services are successfully addressing the individual needs of their clients.

Evaluation will be built into funded programs and services from the beginning to inform the evidence base for future investment. Services that align with the priorities and principles of the Strategy and provide the best outcomes at the best value to achieve the long-term vision of a Western Australia where all people live free from family and domestic violence, will be prioritised.

On language

Aboriginal people

The term Aboriginal people used throughout this Strategy is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Gendered language

Family and domestic violence is grounded in gender inequality. The individual, societal and structural mechanisms that give primacy to the wants, needs and dominance of men in public life are the same mechanisms that can result in women being mistreated in private. Any use of gendered language within this document reflects that to address family and domestic violence in Western Australia, we must be committed to addressing gender inequality.

Perpetrator

This document refers to people who have used violence in their relationships as perpetrators. The use of this terminology within the Strategy refers to the person that has caused or inflicted harm and is not reflective of the person's identity or capacity for change. This document is intended to be inclusive of anyone inflicting harm within their family relationships and as such includes people (including young people) who may show early signs of problematic beliefs, values and attitudes and who, with early intervention, may move towards more respectful ways of relating.

Service system

This term is used here to refer to the entirety of the 'system' that responds to family and domestic violence. It includes specialist family and domestic violence services, police, courts, legal services, the corrections system, health services, sexual assault services, education, child protection and family services, housing and homelessness services, and mental health and alcohol and other drug services. It is important to note that this is not a system that has been designed but rather is a set of arrangements that are largely locality based and which come together at times in relation to people's experience of family and domestic violence.

Victim

People who have experienced violence have different preferences regarding the terms used to describe them. Common terms that may be preferred are victim, survivor and people with lived experience. This document refers to people who have experienced family and domestic violence as adult and child victims. This is in acknowledgment of the harm caused by family and domestic violence and is not reflective of the person's full identity.

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Women's Domestic Violence Helpline

9223 1188 or 1800 007 339

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Men's Domestic Violence Helpline

9223 1199 or 1800 000 599

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Kids Help Line

1800 551 800

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1800 RESPECT

1800 737 732



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