



Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

This consultation draft strategy document was developed by the Department of Communities and the Department of Justice, with the Australian Institute of Family Studies, Tjallara Consulting, and the University of Western Australia Mediation Clinic

Warning: This draft strategy contains detail related to sexual violence, including sexual assault, sexual harassment and issues related to abuse and neglect of children, which some readers may find distressing.

Services and support.

If you or someone close to you is in distress or immediate danger, please call 000. Support is always available if you or someone you know has experienced sexual violence. Below is a list of sexual violence support services.

<to be inserted once strategy is finalised>

Language

We acknowledge that no single set of terms suits all situations and people. No exclusion or harm of people is intended in the terms used in this strategy. We use inclusive language while acknowledging that evidence indicates that sexual violence is primarily perpetrated by men against women. We also acknowledge that people of diverse sexualities and gender identities are impacted by gender-based violence, often in complex and intersecting ways. Language used in this document reflects the language of key national frameworks, including the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032 and Our Watch: Change the Story.



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Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to outline a draft of the Western Australian Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy. The draft strategy will be tested through public consultation to identify what elements and approaches should be included in the final strategy.

The purpose of the strategy is to:

- prevent sexual violence by guiding prevention, early intervention and service delivery in Western Australia
- improve service responses and outcomes for victim-survivors of sexual violence
- hold people who use sexual violence to account and provide avenues for behaviour change.

The draft strategy takes a whole of government approach in its focus and is directed at sexual violence experienced across the life course.

This document is divided into two sections. Section 1 provides background information regarding what we know about sexual violence. Section 2 outlines the draft strategy.

Section 1: What we know about sexual violence

Defining sexual violence

Sexual violence is sexual behaviour towards another person who does not consent, has withdrawn consent or cannot consent to the behaviour.

Sexual violence is a continuum of behaviours ranging from comments of a sexual nature, sexual threats, sexual touching and the distribution of sexual images to forced sexual activity, including trafficking another person for sexual purposes. It may involve force, coercion, manipulation or deceit.

Sexual violence can happen to anyone and it can be used against a person at any stage, from infancy to old age. We know from the 2021/22 Personal Safety Survey (PSS)¹ that 2.2 million women and 582,400 men reported experiencing sexual violence since turning 15 years of age. For women, the highest rate of sexual violence is experienced by girls and young women under 18² and young women in their twenties.³ The research shows that no age group is immune to experiencing sexual violence: 1% of people (mainly women) aged 65 and over reported an experience of sexual abuse in the preceding 12 months in AIFS National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study.⁴

Sexual violence causes victim-survivors physical and psychological harm, and leads to adverse impacts on their education, employment, relationships and socio-economic wellbeing. Sexual violence is mainly perpetrated by adult men against women and girls but is experienced by people of all genders. Sexual violence takes place in many different settings,⁵ including the home, workplace, social, recreational and educational environments.⁶ Sexual violence is often perpetrated by someone

known to the person who experiences sexual violence,⁷ and can be chronic and persistent.⁸ Sexual violence may be perpetrated by intimate partners as part of a pattern of family and domestic violence.⁹

Causes of sexual violence

The causes of sexual violence are diverse, multilayered and grounded in power inequality. Sexual violence often overlaps with and occurs alongside other forms of violence. Using the socio-ecological model can be helpful for understanding the causes of sexual violence. The socio ecological model considers individual factors such as peoples' psychology, beliefs and behaviours as well as societal factors that can influence sexual violence including community attitudes, social norms and cultures, organisational practices and political structures.

<Potential diagram – socio ecological model to be inserted here>

There are factors that contribute to a culture that supports and enables sexual violence, such as the presence of alcohol and other drugs,¹⁰ family contextual factors,¹¹ the use of pornography and exposure to sexualised media images. Other factors are associated with cultural and community values, social norms and community attitudes.¹² Attitudes such as sexism, racism, ableism and biphobia, transphobia and homophobia held by some in the community influence the occurrence and perception of sexual violence. For example, results from the 2021 National Community Attitudes Survey showed that 24% of respondents believed that it is common for sexual assault accusations to be made against men as a way of 'getting back' at them. This perception is contrary to the evidence base with false allegations of sexual assault being exceedingly rare.¹³

Intersectionality

To prevent and respond to sexual violence effectively it is important to recognise that each person's experience of sexual violence is different and that many in our WA communities experience additional challenges because of their identity or their personal circumstances (e.g. racism, ableism, heterosexism, ageism, sexism – males as victims). Adopting an intersectional approach is critical for understanding the range of factors that can affect the ways in which an individual might experience or perpetrate sexual violence; it is critical for creating a holistic understanding of the issue.

Experiences of sexual violence are influenced by power relationships. Research to date indicates that women are more likely to experience sexual violence than men.¹⁴ In addition to gendered experiences of sexual violence, there is recognition that those who experience multiple forms of disadvantage based on unequal power relationships may be at greater risk of experiencing sexual violence. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), in 2020, identified four primary groups who experience these unequal power relationships and are more likely to experience sexual assault. They include people who:

- are homeless
- have a disability
- identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse, or have intersex variations

- have previously experienced sexual assault at another stage in their lives.¹⁵

AIHW also noted that the following groups may also be more likely to experience sexual assault than the general population:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- women from some culturally and linguistically diverse communities (CALD), including those seeking asylum or who come from refugee backgrounds.

These groups are more likely to experience sexual violence due to systemic, structural and political inequalities that further intersect with gender and gender inequality to disproportionately impact women in these groups.¹⁶

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are reported as disproportionately experiencing sexual violence. Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women does not exclusively occur in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and is not exclusively perpetrated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men.¹⁷ Sexual violence remains a hidden issue as a result of feelings of shame, not wanting to bring shame on the family, and a fear of being ostracised if disclosed.¹⁸ Sexual violence is also viewed as being inextricably linked to family violence and alcohol and drug use, and is described as having become normalised in some communities, with victims wondering whether the violence was their fault.¹⁹

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples emphasise the links between colonial patriarchal violence, the ongoing legacies of racism, intergenerational trauma, alcohol use, cognitive disabilities, jealousy, ongoing systemic discrimination and experiences of sexual and other forms of violence today.²⁰ They indicate that the legacies of colonial violence have resulted in:

- a profound mistrust of policing, the criminal justice and child protection systems and other government agencies
- a fear of losing children to child protection systems
- the threat of homelessness
- fear of isolation and losing the only family and other support systems known to victims
- a predominance of mainstream western services, which may not be experienced as being culturally safe
- reluctance to disclose and seek help from such agencies²¹
- a belief that victims won't be believed and supported appropriately so there is no point in disclosing or seeking help.

As a result, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples emphasise the need for different approaches to preventing and responding to sexual violence within their communities.

Culturally and linguistically diverse communities

CALD communities have diverse cultures, religions, languages, levels of skills or qualifications, and social and political backgrounds.²² Research emphasises the importance of using an intersectional approach to understanding experiences of family and sexual violence in CALD communities, which recognises:

- the trauma of settlement processes due to a loss of culture, identity and economic status
- that patriarchal beliefs may become strengthened through the settlement process
- the potential for distrust of police, criminal justice systems and other government agencies
- language barriers, inaccessible information, and inconsistent access to interpreters (and interpreters known to the victim or perpetrator)
- lack of information on how to recognise sexual violence or where to access supports
- fear of losing custody of children, community stigma, social ostracism and isolation
- potential for loss of financial supports and access to resources when leaving violent situations.²³

Based on these unique experiences, prevention and responses to sexual violence within CALD communities are likely to require specific approaches.

Other factors

Other factors that increase a risk of experiencing sexual violence include:

- age – young people are more likely to be victims of sexual violence
- being in an intimate partner relationship
- undertaking sex work – sex workers are entitled to a safe and respectful workplace. However, data on sexual violence in sex worker communities indicate a group that are much more likely to experience sexual violence than other people²⁴ – this includes in their working environment as well as in their personal lives.²⁵

Industry and workplace behaviour

In 2022 a national survey into sexual harassment in the workplace highlighted that sexual harassment is widespread and pervasive, and one in three people had experienced sexual harassment at work in the preceding five years.²⁶ This figure is comprised of two in five women (41%) and just over one in four men (26%) having experienced sexual harassment in the workplace in the preceding five years. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were more likely to have experienced workplace sexual harassment than people who are non-Indigenous (56% and 33% respectively). The report noted that the majority of people who had experienced sexual harassment in the workplace did not formally report their experience because it was easier to stay quiet or they did not think it was serious enough. Of people who did make a formal report, one in eight were labelled as a troublemaker (12%), were ostracised, victimised or ignored by colleagues (13%) or resigned (13%).

The national survey report also identified workplace settings where there is a greater risk of experiencing sexual harassment. Women were more likely to be sexually harassed in nearly all industries. Young people, people from the LGBTIQ+ community, and people with disability are also disproportionately affected by workplace sexual harassment. Research shows that workplaces with high rates of

sexual harassment are often male dominated, have a masculine culture and a hierarchal power structure.²⁷ The report notes that in addition to having a devastating and profound impact on individuals, workplace sexual harassment also undermines workplace productivity and imposes a significant economic cost on Australian society.

In Western Australia, the 2022 report of the parliamentary inquiry into the sexual harassment of women in the traditionally male-dominated FIFO mining industry highlighted that sexual harassment was prevalent, and that known risk factors for sexual harassment were also prevalent including, poor culture (e.g. attitude ‘... that’s the way it’s always been’, abuse of alcohol), gender inequality and power imbalances (e.g. sexual exploitation and a lack of accountability for people who choose to use violence).²⁸ Acknowledging the important role the mining industry plays within the state, the government is committed to working with the industry to change the culture and to eliminate gender inequality and the sexual harassment of women within the industry.

Impacts of sexual violence

Sexual violence causes harm. This harm can include mental health challenges,²⁹ negative psychological and emotional impacts including suicide, negative impacts on physical health, social life, relationships, work and community life and substance use.³⁰ Victim-survivors may also experience secondary victimisation as a result of responses by the criminal justice system, and financial costs through loss of earnings and earning capacity.³¹

Experiences of sexual violence are linked to further victimisation. Findings from a longitudinal study on women’s health in Australia highlighted that women who had experienced sexual violence during childhood were at greater risk of experiencing recent violence (50%), they were twice as likely to report recent sexual violence, 33%–59% more likely to report recent domestic violence, and approximately 60% more likely to have reported recent physical violence, compared to those who had never experienced sexual violence during childhood.

Witnesses to the National Inquiry into the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families reported their experiences of sexual exploitation, with one in six (17.5%) reporting sexual victimisation,³² with many reporting symptoms of complex and intergenerational trauma and experiencing poor outcomes across a range of socio-economic, psychological and emotional areas of wellbeing.³³

Child sexual abuse

The first Australian study on the prevalence of child maltreatment, including sexual abuse, was released in April this year.³⁴ Based on a survey of 8,503 Australians aged 16 and over, the study revealed a disturbingly high prevalence of child sexual abuse with almost 3 in 10 (28.5%) participants reporting experiencing sexual abuse before the age of 18.³⁵ Women were almost twice as likely as men to report child sexual abuse (37.3% for women compared to 18.8%) and even higher prevalence (52%) was recorded for gender diverse respondents. Sexual abuse commonly co-occurred with other types of abuse, especially physical abuse, emotional abuse and

exposure to domestic violence³⁶ and almost one in 10 (7.8%) reported adult family members were the perpetrators.

The impacts of child sexual abuse can be lifelong with potential for profoundly detrimental effects on a child's health, safety and development.³⁷ These impacts may be immediate and/or short-term, or may lead to long-term developmental, mental, physical and social problems.³⁸ Adult victim-survivors of child sexual abuse are at particular risk of experiencing negative impacts from sexual abuse including: suicidal behaviour; psychiatric disorders such as schizophrenia and post-traumatic stress disorder; substance misuse, future victimisation and offending.³⁹ Not all victims will experience these difficulties, and family support and strong peer relationships appear to be important protective factors for reducing the impacts and improving outcomes when appropriate support is provided.⁴⁰

Issues in focus

There are some key issues that need to be considered in addressing sexual violence.

Harmful sexual behaviours

There is increasing recognition that a large proportion of children's experiences of sexual abuse involve other children, and that these behaviours involve different patterns of behaviour to adult offending.⁴¹ The term 'Harmful Sexual Behaviours' has been widely adopted to reflect a key distinction from adult offenders, that children may lack the capacity to recognise that they are causing harm, and that most children cease behaviours with a better understanding of the meaning and impact of behaviours, and as they reach key developmental milestones.⁴²

Recent evidence has demonstrated a compelling link between exposure to family and domestic violence and other adverse childhood experiences and the commission of sexual and other violent offences among male youth. A study by Ogilvie and colleagues of adverse childhood experiences among young men on supervision orders in Queensland demonstrated that those involved in sexual offences had a particularly high rate of adverse childhood experiences, especially exposure to family and domestic violence and sexual abuse victimisation, compared to violent and non-violent male youth in the sample.

Pornography

The link between pornography use and sexual violence perpetration is not straightforward;⁴³ however, this does not mean that there is not a connection. It is important to consider the messages that pornography generate and how they impact attitudes, beliefs and behaviours, especially of children and young people, in relationships. For example, there may be a connection between the use of pornography and attitudes on sex and gender roles that may be related to the use of sexual violence.⁴⁴ Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) research indicates that pornography is widely available and frequently used, including by young people. It indicates that, in Australia, 44% of children aged 9–16 years have seen sexual images in the last month.⁴⁵

The widespread use of pornography is an undeniable feature of our society and can be a mechanism that amplifies stereotypes about gender, sexism, objectification of women and attitudes that support violence. Frequent use of pornography and early age access and exposure to pornography clearly has the potential to influence sexual practices and attitudes towards sex and violence depending on the type of pornography consumed. Evidence indicates that pornography consumption is associated with reduced sexual safety such as not wearing condoms and participating in less safe sexual acts.⁴⁶

Technology and sexual violence

As technology continues to expand into our lives, the means to use technology to facilitate sexual violence has increased. The types of behaviours that perpetrators inflict on others through technology include online sexual harassment, gender-based abuse, cyber stalking and sexual exploitation and coercion.⁴⁷ Research shows types of behaviours being perpetrated online were found to be similar to those which predated the technology but that technology had enabled extended ways of perpetrating such behaviour.⁴⁸

Coercive control

Although there is no agreed definition of coercive control currently in Australia – Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) defines it as: ‘a course of conduct aimed at dominating and controlling another (usually an intimate partner but can be other family members)’.⁴⁹ The use of coercive control can be used in perpetrating sexual violence or the use of sexual violence can be one tactic in a range of behaviours to control or dominate another person, particularly in the context of an intimate partner relationship.

Societal attitudes towards sexual availability in relationships and prior consensual sex can contribute to the cultural understanding that intimate partner sexual assault is less harmful or serious than other forms of sexual violence. There is also evidence of increased risk of violence to women in relationships where sexual violence is a feature, including an elevated risk of being killed by their partner.⁵⁰

Shame and stigma

A key element of sexual violence is the shame associated with experiencing it and the destructive effect this has on a person’s core being and sense of identity.⁵¹ Shame can impede a victim’s recovery by damaging self-esteem but also by ensuring silence about their traumatic experience, creating a barrier to reporting as well as help seeking. Stigma about sex, gender and sexual behaviour, including misconceptions about gender roles and sex, is a key factor in why shame so frequently accompanies the experience of sexual victimisation.⁵² Enabling conversations around sex and sexual violence and appropriate sexual behaviour can offer opportunities to reduce shame and stigma and encourage healthy discussions about respectful behaviour.

Barriers to reporting or disclosing sexual violence

Those who experience sexual violence often find it difficult to disclose their experiences for a range of individual and systemic reasons and some groups of people experience more barriers than others. Feelings of shame, stigma and being ostracised from family, fear of violent repercussions, fear of not being believed, and fear of system responses are key barriers to disclosing sexual violence. These barriers to disclosure can be magnified in small or regional, remote and isolated communities. Generally, sexual violence is only disclosed to a third party by about half the people who experience it.⁵³ Disclosures are most commonly made to family members and friends (71%), helplines (27%) and general practitioners (21%), with less than 10% reported to police.⁵⁴

Sexual violence in Western Australia

Sexual violence is a significant issue of concern in WA. Generally, most of those who use sexual violence are male (nationally, they were aged between 25 and 44 years), and those who experience sexual violence are primarily female and aged between 10 and 17 years. Most sexual offences were reported in the metropolitan area compared with regional areas.⁵⁵

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) *Recorded Crimes – Victims* report shows that in WA:

- Over a quarter (27%) of all sexual assault incidents were family and domestic violence related.
- Most victim-survivors were female (86%).
- A higher proportion of males (80%) than females (59%) were aged under 18 years at the time of the incident.
- Most sexual assaults occurred at a residential location and did not involve the use of a weapon.⁵⁶

According to national court data, in WA:

- Sexual offences have the lowest conviction rate.
- Most convictions of sexual offences are the result of guilty pleas, with far fewer convictions following a trial, and this relationship remains unchanged over time.⁵⁷

Challenges for service delivery

WA is the largest state in Australia and has a culturally and linguistically diverse population with 3.3% of the population identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, and approximately 32.2% of its population born overseas.⁵⁸ While most families spoke English in the home, 21.2% of WA households used a non-English language.

In addition, geographical factors, including distance, remoteness and a dispersed population, present unique challenges to service delivery in WA. While most of WA's

population is in Perth and in the south of the state, WA has the challenge of delivering services to people who live in regional, remote and very remote communities spread across most of its land mass.

Policy context

Sexual violence is a significant issue of concern in Western Australia, as well as nationally and internationally. Preventing and addressing sexual violence requires a multi-pronged and sustained approach.

The nature of sexual violence means that all parts of government must be engaged and committed to eliminating it. It means that all sectors must contribute, within their area of focus, to reducing and eliminating the factors that drive sexual violence. This includes changing attitudes through education, improving access to services for groups most likely to experience it, addressing myths in the community and clarifying the facts around sexual violence while communicating with consistent messages. It means reflecting on changes in our justice system to improve legal responses to sexual violence.

The strategy aims to create the necessary links between government, the service sector, the community, industry and workplaces, in a collective effort to prevent and respond to sexual violence in WA. The strategy does not stand alone but is conceived as a plan to bring together all the mechanisms that need to be activated. It is designed to work with several key national and state reforms and strategies, supporting collaboration, coordination of prevention activities and responses, and shared goals. These relevant policies are listed in Tables 1 and 2.

The strategy aims to be a clear guide to direct the work that is needed across Western Australia to eliminate sexual violence and ensure that those who have been affected by it receive the support they need. This strategy should be viewed as:

- a statement that all parts of government in Western Australia are aligned to work together to eliminate sexual violence; and
- a guide for how government will work with non-government organisations and sexual violence sector, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and CALD, LGBTQIA+ and disability organisations non-government and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to prevent and respond to sexual violence.

Table 1: Overview of Government of Western Australia policies and frameworks⁵⁹

Path to Safety: Western Australia's Strategy to Reduce Family and Domestic Violence 2020–2030	WA Multicultural Policy Framework 2018
Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Gender Equality	Western Australian Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2021–2025
Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy 2022–2023: Western Australia's Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Aboriginal Women and Children	Western Australia Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex Health Strategy 2019–2024
Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy – Western Australia 2021–2029	Rapid Response Framework for children and young people in care and those with a care experience
At Risk Youth Strategy 2022–2027	WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015–2030
A Western Australia for Everyone: State Disability Strategy 2020–2030	All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10 Year Strategy to Homelessness 2020–2030
WA LGBTI Health Strategy 2019–2024	WA Housing Strategy 2020–2030
WA Strategy to Respond to the Abuse of Older People (Elder Abuse) 2019–2029	Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Accommodation Support Strategy
Western Australian Women's Health and Wellbeing Policy	Western Australian Men's Health and Wellbeing Policy
Western Australian Mental Health Promotion, Mental Illness, Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention Plan	Framework for understanding and guiding responses to harmful sexual behaviours in children and young people
Western Australian Government response to the Community Development and Justice Standing Committee Report 2: 'Enough is Enough' Sexual harassment against women in the FIFO mining industry.	

Table 2: Overview of relevant national policies and frameworks

National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032	Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (in progress)
National Agreement on Closing the Gap	National Youth Policy Framework
Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protection Australia's Children 2021–2031	Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2017
National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030	Changing the Landscape: A National Resource to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls with Disability
National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians (Elder Abuse) 2019–2023	Respect @ Work National Inquiry into Sexual Harassment in Australian Workplaces
Standards of Practice Manual for Services Against Sexual Violence: National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence	National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People
Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia (2nd Ed.)	Change the Picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children
National Housing and Homelessness Agreement	Vision 2030: Blueprint for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention
National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030	National Men's Health Strategy 2020–2030
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan	Fourth National Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy

Rights-based approach to considering sexual violence

A rights-based approach to sexual violence frames sexual violence as a violation of the human right that all people should have to their safety and personal security. It is a helpful approach for responding to intersectionality and the needs of at-risk groups in Western Australia's diverse community.

International frameworks

- United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disability
- International Labor Organisation Convention 190: Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work

Questions for consideration: Section 1 – What we know about sexual violence

- Does this section capture the background and context of sexual violence that's needed for the strategy?
- Are there any gaps in our understanding?
- Have we captured the picture of sexual violence in WA?
- What actions would you like to see in this Strategy?

Section 2: The Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy

Goal

The Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy (the Strategy) aims to reduce the incidence of sexual violence and the harm it causes, as well as increase acknowledgement of responsibility and accountability for the harm caused by those who use sexual violence. It can achieve this through coordinated responses across the four domains of prevention, early intervention, response and recovery. To facilitate this, an intersectional, integrated prevention and response framework is needed, with actions outlined in Implementation Plans.

Vision

All people in Western Australia have the right to be free from sexual violence, coercion or intimidation and to have access to sexual health information, education and services.

Principles

This draft strategy is underpinned by key principles relevant to the scope and implementation of the Strategy. These principles will:

- direct focus to the people experiencing sexual violence and their families
- identify the priority to be accorded to Aboriginal self-determination in the prevention of and response to sexual violence
- guide an approach that is holistic and inclusive in nature, takes a life course perspective and accounts for intersectional issues and experiences
- emphasise collective responsibility and collaboration
- encourage innovative responses and investment in practice improvements.

Person centred

The voices of people with lived experience are valued and included in the design, delivery and evaluation of sexual violence prevention and response and systems and services support the dignity, agency and self-determination of the people they serve.

Prioritise and support Aboriginal self-determination

Western Australia's diverse Aboriginal communities are supported to develop and deliver localised, place-based, Aboriginal-led, Aboriginal-delivered sexual violence prevention and response initiatives.

A life course and inclusive approach to implementation

Prevention and response initiatives address the multiple and intersecting forms of inequality and discrimination that drive sexual violence and are accessible, inclusive, culturally safe and tailored to different needs across the life course.

Collective responsibility and collaborative action

There is collective responsibility and accountability for preventing and responding to sexual violence across the WA community including families, communities, the private sector and governments at all levels.

Sustained investment in improving practice

There is collective responsibility and accountability for investing in and supporting workforce development across all sectors, and for establishing evidence-informed, lived experience-informed, good practice guidelines for working with people who experience sexual violence and people who use sexual violence within WA's diverse communities.

Innovation through technology

Harnessing technology to prevent and respond to sexual violence, including primary prevention messaging, and improving access to services and supports for those who live in regional and remote areas.

Domains for action and implementation

Stopping sexual violence in WA needs action at multiple levels. To do this action is required in the four domains of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing. This section provides a broad overview of each of these domains and focus areas, which will be further developed within action plans accompanying this Strategy.

1. Prevention

Stopping sexual violence before it happens

What it looks like: Sexual violence is prevented through behaviour change at all levels within the WA population. Governments, organisations, the service systems, communities and families work together to address community attitudes that enable sexual violence and undermine the provision of respectful, affirming and appropriate responses to victim-survivors.

Focus areas

- Reduce stigma around sexual violence to enable public discussions around how to prevent and respond to it.
- Improve community education about respectful relationships and healthy intimacy.
- Build knowledge and understanding of gender equality and safe, respectful relationships in all workplaces and industries.

- Build knowledge and skills among children and young people across WA's diverse communities about safe, respectful and healthy relationships to counter unhealthy messages conveyed by pornography about intimacy.
- Build greater knowledge and understanding of the key drivers and contexts of sexual violence in Aboriginal communities, and appropriate responses to those who use sexual violence.

2. Early intervention

Stopping sexual violence from escalating and prevent it from recurring

What it looks like: Sexual violence is prevented by identifying and working with early signs of sexual violence across all levels within WA's population, to stop it from escalating or preventing it from recurring. High risk populations are engaged to change the trajectories of sexually violent behaviour and to reduce the risk of these behaviours developing; for example, children and youth with harmful sexual behaviours.

Focus areas

- Build the capacity of the service system to provide evidence-informed, accessible, programs and support services within WA's diverse communities, based on the principles of ongoing supervision and continuous improvement.
- Build the capacity of ACCOs to deliver place-based, evidence-informed programs and support services based on the principles of ongoing supervision and continuous improvement.
- Engage and work with populations at risk of using sexual violence, including children and youth with harmful sexual behaviours, to promote prosocial, respectful relationships and healthy intimacy.

3. Responses

Efforts and programs used to address existing sexual violence

What it looks like: Responses to sexual violence are integrated, trauma-informed and centred on the safety and needs of those who experience sexual violence. People who use sexual violence are held accountable for their behaviour and supported to reduce their violence through responses that promote prosocial attitudes and beliefs, and respectful behaviour towards others. Responses address community attitudes that enable sexual violence and undermine the provision of respectful, affirming and appropriate responses to victim-survivors, and effective programs for people who use sexual violence.

Focus areas

- Provide high quality responses to high-risk groups across the life course – women and children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTQIA+ people, those with disability.
- Increase the number of services providing holistic, trauma-informed support for people who experience sexual violence within WA's diverse communities.

- Improve responses to sexual harassment and sexual violence in industries and workplaces. ..
- Improve understanding of and responses to children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviours
- Improve criminal justice responses to sexual violence that is a crime.
- Strengthen victim-survivor-centred, trauma-informed justice responses.
- Increase perpetrator accountability and the availability of programs and services.

4. Recovery and healing

Helping to break the cycle of sexual violence and reduce the risk of re-traumatisation

What it looks like: Responses and support to heal from sexual violence must be accessible, trauma-informed and centred on the specific, individual recovery and support needs for people who have experienced sexual violence. Eliminating shame from experiencing sexual violence and encouraging victim survivors to have a voice, to be heard and believed will contribute to building better recovery processes. Victim survivors should have the opportunity to inform improvements in Western Australia's recovery and healing responses. Enabling community conversations about sexual violence, respect and healthy sexuality in Western Australia will increase the opportunities to develop an ongoing narrative of what respectful sexuality looks like into community life. People who use sexual violence must be the final point for the cycle, prevented from causing trauma to others and receiving support to recover from their own trauma histories.

Focus areas

- Strengthen responses and supports to enable long-term recovery.
- Support recovery initiatives that respond to the experiences of Aboriginal peoples and communities.
- Support recovery initiatives that respond to the experiences of members of CALD and LGBTQIA+ communities, those with disability, sex workers and those who are homeless.
- Enable community conversations about healthy sexuality
- Support victim survivors to contribute to improved models of recovery and ensure their experiences are acknowledged and built into future responses.

Draft Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Strategy

VISION

All people in Western Australia have the right to be free from sexual violence, coercion or intimidation and to have access to sexual health information, education and services.

PRINCIPLES

Person centred	Prioritise and support Aboriginal determination	A life course and inclusive approach to implementation	Collective responsibility and collaborative action	Sustained investment in improving practice	Innovation through technology
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DOMAINS

Domain 1 Prevention	Domain 2 Early Intervention	Domain 3 Responses	Domain 4 Recovery and Healing
<p>Outcome Sexual violence is prevented through behaviour change at all levels within the WA population.</p> <p>Governments, organisations, the service systems, communities and families work together to address community attitudes that enable sexual violence and undermine the provision of respectful, affirming and appropriate responses to victim-survivors.</p> <p>Focus Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce stigma around sexual violence to enable public discussions around how to prevent and respond to it. Improve community education about respectful relationships and healthy intimacy. Build knowledge and understanding of gender equality and safe, respectful relationships in all workplaces and industries. Build knowledge and skills among children and young people across WA's diverse communities about safe, respectful and healthy relationships to counter unhealthy messages conveyed by pornography about intimacy. Build greater knowledge and understanding of the key drivers and contexts of sexual violence in Aboriginal communities, and appropriate responses to those who use sexual violence 	<p>Outcome Sexual Violence is prevented by identifying and working with early signs of sexual violence across all levels within WA's population, to stop it from escalating or reoccurring.</p> <p>High risk populations are engaged to change the trajectories of sexually violent behaviour and to reduce the risk of these behaviours developing; for example, children and youth with harmful sexual behaviours.</p> <p>Focus Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build the capacity of the service system to provide evidence-informed, accessible, programs and support services within WA's diverse communities, based on the principles of ongoing supervision and continuous improvement. Build the capacity of ACCOs to deliver place-based, evidence-informed programs and support services based on the principles of ongoing supervision and continuous improvement. Engage and work with populations at risk of using sexual violence, including children and youth with harmful sexual behaviours, to promote prosocial, respectful relationships and healthy intimacy. 	<p>Outcome Responses to sexual violence are integrated, trauma-informed and centred on the safety and needs of those who experience sexual violence. People who use sexual violence are held accountable for their behaviour and supported to reduce their violence through responses that promote prosocial attitudes and beliefs, and respectful behaviour towards others.</p> <p>Responses address community attitudes that enable sexual violence and undermine the provision of respectful, affirming and appropriate responses to victim-survivors, and effective programs for people who use sexual violence</p> <p>Focus Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide high quality responses to high-risk groups across the life course – women and children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTQIA+ people, those with disability. Increase the number of services providing holistic, trauma-informed support for people who experience sexual violence within WA's diverse communities. Improve responses to sexual harassment and sexual violence in industries and workplaces. ... Improve understanding of and responses to children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviours Improve criminal justice responses to sexual violence that is a crime. Strengthen victim-survivor-centred, trauma-informed justice responses. Increase perpetrator accountability and the availability of programs and services. 	<p>Outcome Responses and support to heal from sexual violence must be accessible, trauma-informed and centred on the specific, individual recovery and supports needs for people who have experienced sexual violence. Eliminating shame from experiencing sexual violence and encouraging victim survivors to have a voice, to be heard and believed will contribute to building better recovery processes.</p> <p>Victim survivors should have the opportunity to inform improvements in Western Australia's recovery and healing responses. Enabling community conversations about sexual violence, respect and healthy sexuality in Western Australia will increase the opportunities to develop an ongoing narrative of what respectful sexuality looks like into community life. People who use sexual violence must be the final point for the cycle, prevented from causing trauma to others and receiving support to recover from their own trauma histories.</p> <p>Focus Areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen responses and supports to enable long-term recovery. Support recovery initiatives that respond to the experiences of Aboriginal peoples and communities. Support recovery initiatives that respond to the experiences of members of CALD and LGBTQIA+ communities, those with disability, sex workers and those who are homeless. Enable community conversations about healthy sexuality Support victim survivors to contribute to improved models of recovery and ensure their experiences are acknowledged and built into future responses.

SYSTEM ENABLERS

Proposed model for implementation

Action plans will guide the implementation of the Strategy.

1. First Action Plan: Building on the foundations and continuing to grow prevention, early intervention and responses. It recognises existing work to prevent and respond to sexual violence.
 - a. Map current sexual violence service and policy system as it exists in WA and its capacity to meet current and future need for delivery of:
 - i. high quality care and support to those who experience sexual violence
 - ii. high quality programs and services to those who use sexual violence
 - iii. knowledgeable and highly skilled workforce to deliver high quality responses.
 - b. Assess the findings of the Department of Justice' review of the criminal justice responses to sexual offending and the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia's review of sexual offence laws in WA.
 - c. Engage industries where there are high levels of sexual harassment or other forms of sexual violence to appropriately prevent and respond to these actions.
 - d. Improve knowledge and understanding of the key drivers and contexts of:
 - i. sexual violence in Aboriginal communities, and appropriate responses to those who use sexual violence.
 - ii. Aboriginal models of recovery and healing for those who experience sexual violence.
 - e. Improve knowledge and understanding of the key drivers and contexts of:
 - i. sexual violence for people with disability and in the CALD and LGBTQIA+ communities and those who use sexual violence.
 - ii. appropriate models of recovery and healing for those who experience sexual violence.

Second Action Plan: Identifying impact, sustaining change and planning for the future.

System Enablers

Action plans will consider mechanisms to provide for the development of systems that support collaboration, data collection and information sharing, and workforce development.

Governance

A whole of government, industry and community structure should be developed and implemented to oversee and monitor implementation and progress of the Strategy. People from groups who are more likely to experience sexual violence, such as the Aboriginal, CALD, disability and LGBTQIA+ communities, those who are homeless and those with lived experience should be included.

Monitoring and reporting

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are essential to ensure continuous improvement, make progress and demonstrate change. Proposed models of governance include regular monitoring to ensure the Strategy is working and to assess where adjustments may need to be made. Central to this approach would be the need to share information so that evidence about successful responses can be shared more widely.

It is proposed that an evaluation framework will be developed and will detail the initiatives that will be evaluated over the duration of the Strategy. It could include performance measures that focus on progress towards the action plans implemented and demonstrate impact towards creating safety and freedom from fear of sexual violence.

Questions for consideration: Section 2 – The Strategy.

Framing of Strategy

Do we have the right purpose, vision, principles, domains and system enablers?

- Is there anything we have missed or should be changed?
- Do we need different or more focus areas under the domains?
- Have we reflected a whole-of-government approach?
- Have we reflected across the life course?

Questions for consideration: Section 2 – The Strategy.

Governance and accountability

Do we have the right approach to governance, monitoring and reporting?

- From your perspective, what governance structure will enable the Strategy to be effectively implemented, monitored and adjusted as a whole of government strategy?
- What supports or enablers does your sector need to monitor, assess or evaluate progress on actions?
- How should progress and outcomes be reported back to the relevant sectors?

Glossary

Consent: Consent is where a person freely and voluntarily agrees to participate in a sexual interaction. Consent requires ongoing and mutual communication and decision making and can be withdrawn at any point. Legal definitions of sexual consent vary between states and territories, with reforms in some jurisdictions amending the legal definitions of consent; for example, to adopt an affirmative model of consent that requires a person to take active steps to say or do something to find out whether the other person consents to the sexual activity. While the age of consent differs between jurisdictions, children under the age of consent cannot consent to sex or sexual acts. A person must also have the cognitive capacity to consent to the sexual activity at the time and must not be:

- misled about the nature or purpose of the sexual activity
- influenced by someone abusing their position of authority, trust or dependency.

In the context of forced marriage, a person does not freely or fully consent to the marriage because of threats, deception or coercion, or because they are incapable of understanding the nature and effect of the marriage ceremony, or the individual is under the age of 16 years.⁶⁰

Additional glossary terms to be included (list may be expanded)

Image-based sexual abuse: refers to the non-consensual creation, distribution or threatened distribution of nude or sexual images as a means of extortion, control, sexual gratification, voyeurism, increased social status or monetary gain.⁶¹

Evidence informed/Evidence-based: ‘Describes models, approaches or practices found to be effective through evaluation or peer reviewed research. Evidence is usually published and may be found in full or summarised in academic research documents, organisational reports, program evaluations, policy papers and submissions. There is a strong evidence base for strategies to prevent gender-based violence. As our understanding of what drives violence against women and children in different population groups and settings increases, the evidence base will continue to evolve.’⁶²

Harmful sexual behaviours: Recognising that a large proportion of children’s experiences of sexual abuse involve other children⁶³ and that these behaviours involve different patterns of behaviour to adult offending⁶⁴ researchers have begun investigating children’s **Harmful Sexual Behaviour** (HSB). This term has been widely adopted to reflect a key distinction from adult offenders, that children may lack the capacity to recognise that they are causing harm⁶⁵ and that most children cease behaviours with a better understanding of the meaning and impact of behaviours, and as they reach key developmental milestones.⁶⁶ HSB includes a wide range of behaviours, which tend to be discussed in terms of their developmental appropriateness/inappropriateness.⁶⁷

Trauma informed: ‘Trauma-informed care and practice recognises the prevalence of trauma and its impacts on the emotional, psychological and social wellbeing of people and communities. Trauma-informed practice means integrating an understanding of past and current experiences of violence and trauma in all aspects of service delivery. The goal of trauma-informed systems is to avoid re-traumatising individuals and support safety, choice and control to promote healing.’⁶⁸

Cultural safety: A culturally safe environment is one that is safe for people to have their identity and community acknowledged and respected. It creates conditions of shared meaning, knowledge and understanding in an atmosphere of mutual dignity and respect to work towards each other's specific needs.⁶⁹

Intergenerational trauma: Intergenerational trauma refers to the transmission of trauma from one generation to the next, and can occur via a variety of mechanisms including through epigenetics;⁷⁰ the impact of attachment relationships with caregivers; the impact of parenting and family functioning; the association with parental physical and mental illness; and disconnection and alienation from the extended family, culture and society.⁷¹

Intersectionality: Intersectionality refers to the varied experiences of disadvantage and the intersection of forms of inequality and structural and systemic discrimination that enable sexual violence and other forms of violence. The multiple forms of inequality and discrimination – for example, gender inequality, ableism, homophobia and racism, intersect to impact the prevalence and dynamics of sexual violence. Inequality in its various guises can enhance the ability of perpetrators to use sexual violence and limit the consequences and responses for them.⁷² This strategy acknowledges the intersectionality inherent in people's experiences of sexual violence.

Life course approach: A life course perspective is based on the view that vulnerabilities and strengths may manifest across an individual's life span and that the experience of harm in adulthood and later in life may be linked to the experience of harm earlier in life. This perspective also seeks to understand social pathways in the context of socio-historical conditions across an individual's life.⁷³

Socio-ecological approach: Ecological theory was first developed by Bronfenbrenner (1986) and has since been adapted for various contexts including family and sexual violence. The model reflects relevant individual and relationship level factors for the person who experiences the sexual violence and the person using sexual violence. It also reflects organisational and community-level issues. More broadly, it reflects system and institutional level factors and, at the broadest level, the model refers to societal/cultural norms and beliefs.⁷⁴

Public health approach: This approach aims to understand how the drivers of violence manifest across the personal, community and social levels (or the socio-ecological model) of entire populations to create the conditions for violence to occur. It considers prevention as a health measure across the entire population to benefit the maximum number of people. It emphasises the value of implementing multiple, mutually reinforcing strategies across the three levels of the population.⁷⁵

Theory of change: A theory of change explains how a particular set of actions, such as in a project or policy, will lead to the results, and how the intended impacts of that will change as a result.⁷⁶

Sexual violence continuum: The sexual violence continuum is a conceptual model of the expansive spectrum of behaviours and experiences considered to be sexual violence, including sexual harassment and sexual coercion and the attitudes and power imbalances that underpin these behaviours. In 2006, the continuum was further developed to include the intersectional experiences of discrimination and inequality that further impact sexual violence experiences.

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