

National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children Consultation

Due 31 July 2021

Link to consultation survey where we shall submit – [‘Have your say’](#)

1. Are you responding as an individual or as a representative of an organisation? (required)

- I’m responding as an individual
- I’m responding on behalf of an organisation

2. What does your organisation see as the major issues for people experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence?

(250-word limit)

Jesuit Social Services works with some of the most disadvantaged members of the community, providing services and advocacy in justice and crime prevention; mental health and well-being; settlement and community building; education, training and employment; housing and homelessness, gender justice and ecological justice.

The impact of family violence (FV) on women, children, families, communities and society as a whole is profound. There is a compelling need to address its causes by supporting boys and men to live respectful, accountable and fulfilling lives.

Through our experience, we have seen the adverse impacts of FV on children and adolescents. Exposure to FV is a risk factor for later use of violence. Existing legislation and response systems are, understandably, geared to adults and do not meet the complex needs of adolescents using violence who may have also experienced violence. Responses to police call-outs also at times result in adolescent involvement with the criminal justice, out of home care and homelessness systems.

Experiencing child sexual abuse can be a risk factor for developing harmful sexual behaviours. These behaviours are often abuse-reactive or trauma-related and we strongly believe in addressing the dearth of primary and secondary prevention interventions that address their causes.

Limited safe and secure housing is another major issue, particularly for young people and women involved with the justice system who often experience repeated FV upon leaving custody when returning to violent homes/homelessness.

3.1 How relevant are the below outcomes and priorities for a strategy to prevent family, domestic and sexual violence for all Australians?

	Highly relevant	Relevant	Neutral	Less relevant	Not relevant
Communities are safe and free from violence	X				
Relationships are respectful	X				
Indigenous communities are empowered to strengthen their own responses to family, domestic and sexual violence	X				
Services meet the needs of people experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence	X				
Systems supporting people experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence work effectively together	X				
Justice responses are timely and effective	X				
Perpetrators are held to account	X				

People who experience family, domestic and sexual violence are heard and have their experiences acknowledged	X				
Build the evidence base	X				
Understanding individual experiences of violence across diverse groups and individuals	X				

3.2 Are there any other priorities that your organisation feels would make a difference to prevent family, domestic and sexual violence beyond those listed in the question above?

(250-word limit)

There is a strong need for increased coordination between responses to FV (police, courts, specialist and generic support services) to ensure that all members of a family's needs are addressed. For example, greater integration of FV services with support for alcohol and other drug misuse, and mental health concerns is urgently required as these are often contributing risk factors to violence, harmful behaviours and housing instability.

As a provider of settlement support for newly arrived families, we have observed that CALD women who experience violence in the home may lack some of the skills and knowledge required to successfully seek help and navigate the FV system. We must ensure that the FV response system is culturally safe and sensitive to the needs of diverse communities. This means providing greater support for CALD women to identify if they are experiencing FV and navigate the FV support system as well as the transfer of funding and resources to Aboriginal Community Organisations to ensure support for Aboriginal communities in line with self-determination.

We strongly believe in addressing entrenched disadvantage as a root cause of FV. Governments must invest in effective universal services targeting education, health and family services, as well as access to safe and affordable housing.

4.1 What are the most important things we can do to support people who are experiencing family, sexual and domestic violence?

	Highly relevant	Relevant	Neutral	Less relevant	Not relevant
Psychological and emotional support which is accessible and affordable	X				
Community support	X				
Support from employers	X				
Safe housing	X				
Financial security	X				
Being heard, supported by others and better understood by others	X				
Receiving an appropriate response from authorities (an educated, trauma-informed response, i.e. not over or under reporting)	X				
Removing perpetrators from victim/survivors' homes		X			
Perpetrator intervention programs	X				
Moving victim/survivors to a new area			X		
Specialist counselling programs for victim/survivors	X				
Counselling programs for perpetrators	X				
Employment programs	X				
Spiritual counselling			X		

Installing home security systems and/or enabling victim/survivors to access personal alarms					X
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4.2 Are there any other things we can do to support people who are experiencing family, sexual and domestic violence?

(250-word limit)

Jesuit Social Services advocates for national coordinated data collection and research to understand and address the complex causes of FV and inform evidence-based interventions. While the draft framework includes reference to gender equitable values, attitudes and behaviours should be the focus of primary prevention efforts. This should include rigorous place-based data to understand how attitudinal data is linked to a range of harmful behaviours including the use of violence. Building on our [Man Box research](#) with Australian men aged between 18 and 30, we are using our adolescent Man Box survey in single-sex and co-ed schools to tailor programs and curriculum in partnership with school communities. The Adolescent Man Box is the first study that focuses on the attitudes to manhood (endorsement of stereotypical masculine norms) and the association between these and a range of harmful behaviours. The survey, subject to funding to support this work, also has the potential to serve as an important longitudinal evaluation tool.

The period of adolescence is a crucial time to work with students to support them to develop into the best person they can be. In line with this, alongside our work, we have observed the effectiveness of the Rights Resilience and Respectful Relationships Curriculum in Victorian schools in challenging rigid adherence to gender norms – a key driver of the use of violence against women. We advocate for this to be expanded nationally with the federal government playing a role sharing best practice, including related to effective implementation, across states.

5. What is working well to prevent family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia?

(250-word limit)

Jesuit Social Services has established The Men’s Project to prevent violence and other harmful behaviours prevalent among boys and men, and build new approaches to improve their wellbeing and keep families and communities safe. We have developed new approaches to adolescent FV:

- RESTORE and Starting Over – restorative justice group conferencing pilots in response to adolescent family violence which show early promising results and are currently being evaluated by the University of Melbourne (Starting Over was previously funded by DSS).
- Family Assisted Adolescent Response – new evidenced-informed model for responding to police call-outs to adolescent FV, focused on family safety. The model works with families, police and other agencies, intervening early in partnership with police to prevent adolescents becoming entrenched in the criminal justice, out of home care or homelessness systems.

We have developed workforce capacity-building projects for people working with men and boys to engage on issues related to stereotypical constructions of masculinity (a key driver of violence) including:

- Modelling Respect and Equality - supports participants to develop greater self-awareness, learn how to model and promote positive change, and recognise and challenge problematic attitudes and behaviours.
- Unpacking the Man Box workshops - provide a range of participants (social workers, well-being staff, teachers, students, faith leaders and parents) with awareness of negative consequences associated with outdated forms of masculinity and tools/resources to foster healthier forms of masculinity.

Internal evaluations of both programs find participants reported significant improvements in their level of knowledge, understanding, confidence, motivation to affect change.

6. What should be done to improve the prevention of family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia?

(250-word limit)

We recommend for the Commonwealth to fund research and data collection initiatives to build a strong evidence base informing primary and secondary prevention efforts:

- Incorporate data within the National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women survey to better understand behaviours and attitudes in relation to The Man Box norms.
- Provide funding for the national roll-out of our Adolescent Man Box Survey.
- Fund research and program development to address the root causes of harmful sexual behaviours among young people behaviours such as our Worried About Sex and Porn Project (WASAPP) where we are collaborating with academics, practitioners, and governments to co-design an online early intervention for children and young people.
- Funding for evaluations to further inform program development and support for those experiencing FV.
- Funding to support highly vulnerable and at-risk populations (women exiting prison)

We strongly advocate for increased investment in primary and secondary prevention activities:

- Funding to work therapeutically with the whole family to understand the complex causes of FV.
- Investment in workforce capacity-building across large institutions, based on our Man Box research, MoRE program and Unpacking the Man Box workshops, to support people who work with boys and men.
- Funding to Restore and Starting Over on a long-term basis to provide restorative responses to adolescents showing violent behaviours in the home.
- Investment in national early intervention programs for adults who are worried about their sexual thoughts or behaviours in relation to children, (funding for Stop it Now!).

7. If you could recommend three priorities for a strategy to prevent family, domestic and sexual violence, what would they be?

(250-word limit)

- Promote cultural and attitudinal change around issues of masculinity and gender to support primary prevention of violence efforts including building workforce capacity across schools, community and social services, health, justice, child protection and other sectors that engage with men and boys.
- Together with adequate resources for services that respond to family violence including support for victims of violence, fund the development, delivery and evaluation of interventions that intervene earlier to address violence and other harmful behaviour particularly where there are significant gaps in the service system including the prevention of child sexual abuse and responses to adolescent family violence.
- Fund the production and sharing of knowledge about the attitudes of men and boys including how these attitudes impact behaviours.

8. Is there anything else you would like us to know?

(250-word limit)

We strongly believe that Aboriginal-led FV primary prevention that is culturally safe, meeting the specific needs of Koorie communities is critical to preventing FV. In addition, flexible assertive outreach and relational models of working where people are engaged in relationships of trust and understanding have been effective in preventing FV. Our Connexions program engages with young people who have multiple, complex and concurrent needs such as mental health and substance misuse and provides an integrated support response through professional service of counselling, casework and advocacy.

It is critical for the Commonwealth to focus on disadvantaged and highly vulnerable and over-represented cohorts. We believe that safe and stable housing plays a critical role in preventing FV. Our programs (ReConnect, Perry House,

Link Youth Justice Housing Program) provide transitional/supported housing and therapeutic supports to vulnerable cohorts.

Rates of FV have increased since the onset of COVID-19 related restrictions and we are concerned that the cycles of lockdown occurring nationally will have profound and ongoing impacts. We therefore advocate for the Federal Government to urgently act and invest in a coordinated approach that responds to the needs of vulnerable cohorts most affected by COVID-19 restrictions, preventing FV.

Given the issue of FV is managed by the states, we recommend for greater national coordination to keep victim/survivors safe if they move interstate.

N.B. When we discuss 'risk', we highlight that this may be a contributing factor, rather than a solely determining factor shaping trajectory towards using violence.

9. Which of the following statements best describes your organisation? (Select all that apply)

- Family, domestic and/or sexual violence service (local community)
- Family, domestic and/or sexual violence service (state-wide)
- Family, domestic and/or sexual violence service (national)
- State/territory government
- Federal government
- Service for children and/or young people
- First responder (e.g. police, ambulance)
- Research organisation
- Education facility (e.g. university)
- Health (e.g. hospital, GP)
- Housing/Homelessness Services
- Corporate Sector
- Legal or judicial
- Other

We are a social change organisation working to build a just society where all people can live to their full potential. We partner with community to support those most in need. We work to change policies, practices, ideas and values that perpetuate inequality, prejudice and exclusion.

10. Which state or territory does your organisation operate in? (Select all that apply)

- Australian Capital Territory
- New South Wales
- Northern Territory
- Queensland
- South Australia
- Tasmania
- Victoria
- Western Australia

National

11. Does your organisation specialise in working with specific cohorts? (Select all that apply)

People who have experienced violence (victim/survivors)

Aboriginal

Torres Strait Islander

Cultural and Linguistically Diverse

LGBTIQ+

People with disability

Women

Men

Children

Young People

Age care

Perpetrators

None of the above

Other

12. Does your organisation specialise in any of the below types of support service? (Select all that apply)

Sexual violence

Family violence

Domestic violence

Crisis response (e.g. first responders)

Mental Health

Safety and wellbeing

Housing

Financial counselling

Legal services

Other

Your organisation's Postcode

3121