

# NSW DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE BLUEPRINT FOR REFORM 2016-2021:

SAFER LIVES FOR WOMEN, MEN AND CHILDREN



Health  
Women NSW

**NSW MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

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# MINISTER'S INTRODUCTION

I am delighted to present the NSW Government's *Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016-2021* which will create safer lives for women, men and children. The Blueprint sets out the direction for a domestic violence system for the next five years that will prevent violence, intervene early with vulnerable communities, support victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and deliver evidence-based quality services to make victims safer and support their recovery.

The Blueprint is the culmination of an intensive process of consultation with hundreds of people affected by domestic and family violence as well as the people working tirelessly to stop it. The insightful contributions of victims, frontline workers, non-government service providers, peak organisations and government officials have been vital. These insights have guided the Blueprint and serve to tackle one of society's most complex problems.

Domestic and family violence is a crime. It includes any behaviour, in an intimate or family relationship, which is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling, causing a person to live in fear. The NSW Government is serious about taking action on this crime, and is leading the nation in domestic violence reform. The NSW Premier's priority to reduce domestic violence re-offending by 2019 by holding perpetrators to account ensures offenders receive appropriate interventions to change their behaviour. This helps victims and it reduces revictimisation, especially for women and children.

The 2016-17 Budget doubles the investment in specialist domestic violence initiatives to over \$300 million over the next four years. This is in addition to the hundreds of millions of dollars the government spends each year to combat domestic and family violence through mainstream services in justice, police, health, child protection, social housing and homelessness services.

The new investment in specialist domestic and family violence services delivers the funding to make the Blueprint possible.

An effective domestic and family violence service system needs commitment and action across all parts of government working in close partnership with non-government organisations, the private sector and the broader community.

I look forward to working with our partners to implement this Blueprint and improve the service system over the coming years.



**Pru Goward MP**

Minister for Women

Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

# BLUEPRINT ACTIONS



## 1. Preventing domestic and family violence

Violence is prevented through changes to attitudes, social norms and structures that underpin domestic and family violence



## 2. Intervening early with vulnerable communities

Population groups at higher risk of domestic and family violence are identified early and supported



## 3. Supporting victims

Timely and appropriate services are available to keep victims safe, increase their resilience and meet their needs

### In the next 12 months we will:

Launch an **Innovation Fund** to support primary prevention initiatives

Develop a **NSW prevention and early intervention strategy** to set a coordinated agenda for violence prevention activities at a local level across NSW

Hold community **domestic and family violence forums** including in rural, regional and high risk communities

Design a **NSW research agenda** to measure violence supportive attitudes

Implement the **Third Action Plan** of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women & Their Children 2010-2022*

Launch an **Innovation Fund** to support intervention initiatives with individuals and groups who are at risk of domestic and family violence victimisation or perpetration

Develop a **NSW prevention and early intervention strategy** to set a coordinated agenda for prevention and early intervention activities, including engagement with organisations representing Aboriginal people, people with disability, the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer communities, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Expand **Tackling Violence** to new areas with the highest incidence of domestic and family violence and high Aboriginal populations, and introduce workshops with young Aboriginal women

**Target interventions** in currently funded services for children and adolescents at risk of domestic and family violence

Rollout **targeted ethical bystander initiatives** for high risk communities

Launch an **Innovation Fund** to support innovative crisis responses to improve victim safety and recovery

Continue the statewide rollout of **Safer Pathway** to 21 new sites, while continuing the evaluation currently underway

Extend Safer Pathway support to **male victims**

Increase support for frontline **Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service** to meet new demand from increased Police referrals

Conduct an **inter-agency review of the domestic and family violence service system** to improve outcomes for victims and offenders, better integrate existing programs and ensure the sustainability of the system

Continue the significant investment in **Social Housing** to ensure victims have accommodation options when they leave a violent relationship

### In 2017-18 and beyond we will:

Evaluate funded **prevention initiatives**

Integrate **violence prevention** into NSW Government workplaces by supporting policies that promote non-violence

Shift the focus of early intervention initiatives onto **those at risk of perpetrating** domestic and family violence, for example young people at risk of offending

Evaluate funded **early intervention initiatives**

Evaluate the **Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme**

Continue the statewide rollout of **Safer Pathway** informed by the evaluation

Advocate for ongoing **Commonwealth funding of homelessness services** beyond the life of the current National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness



#### 4. Holding perpetrators accountable

Perpetrator accountability is embedded in system responses, and perpetrators receive timely and effective behaviour change interventions



#### 5. Delivering quality services

Services provided to victims and perpetrators are evidence-based and of the highest quality



#### 6. Improving the system

There are strong mechanisms for governance, planning and accountability, and services are aligned to achieve outcomes

#### In the next 12 months we will:

##### Increase and **improve behaviour change interventions for high-risk domestic and family violence offenders**

Trial initiatives to reduce Apprehended Domestic Violence Order breaches through **behavioural insights** strategies

Expand non-government organisation community-based **men's behaviour change** interventions

Develop the capacity of the **community-based men's behaviour change sector**

Implement a statewide referral pathway between Police and the **Men's Referral Service** to help offenders change behaviour

Rollout the first two **Police High Risk Offender Teams** to target recidivist offenders and investigate domestic and family violence incidents

Assess the feasibility and effectiveness of providing **accommodation for perpetrators** to reduce immediate reoffending

Trial **GPS tracking** of domestic and family violence offenders

Review the **Minimum Standards** for Men's Behaviour Change programs

Consider best practice strategies to engage **Aboriginal men and women in behaviour change** interventions

Co-design **service quality standards** with the non-government organisation sector for domestic and family violence services and **training requirements** for mainstream services

Support **skills development, training and capacity building** for the non-government organisation sector to improve risk assessment and safety planning for families with complex needs

Develop **new models of intervention for families** with multiple and complex needs to align service responses across child protection, health, mental health and drug and alcohol services

Develop **competency training** opportunities for service providers to ensure they can respond appropriately and effectively with Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, as well as people with disability

Develop system-wide **performance metrics and data collection** mechanisms across the service system, including improving data collection in at-risk communities

Strengthen **governance and accountability** across the service system through the Domestic and Family Violence Reforms Delivery Board

Review and improve **regional governance** to support coordinated regional and local decision making across the service system

Convene a Minister's **domestic and family violence Corporate Leadership Group**

Enable opportunities for NSW **co-investment** with the Commonwealth and private sector

Conduct an **inter-agency review of the domestic and family violence service system** to improve outcomes for victims and offenders, better integrate existing programs and ensure the sustainability of the system

#### In 2017-18 and beyond we will:

##### Continue expansion of **community-based perpetrator interventions**

Continue implementation of initiatives to address the **Premier's Priority** to reduce domestic and family violence re-offending

Prepare for implementation of **service quality standards** for domestic and family violence service system by 2020

Embed **evaluation** into all NSW Government funded domestic and family violence services

Introduce **streamlined procurement** arrangements for domestic and family violence specialist services to reduce contractual/administrative burden and encourage collaboration

Explore **social impact investment opportunities** for the private sector to invest in domestic and family violence services



# 1. PREVENTING DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

**Embedded population-wide primary prevention activities that are effective in changing the underlying causes of domestic and family violence.**

**An effective system that addresses both the causes and symptoms of domestic and family violence.**

Preventing domestic and family violence extends beyond public awareness and general education campaigns about domestic and family violence. It calls for action from all quarters of society to think about and re-frame messages around gender equity, power and relationships to ensure respectful attitudes and behaviour towards women and build social structures that support equality and safety.

An increased focus on primary prevention activities throughout NSW will likely result in a change in those community attitudes that contribute to domestic and family violence, and an eventual reduction in domestic and family violence perpetration. Effective primary prevention will require engagement with all communities across NSW, and in particular those groups at higher risk of experiencing domestic and family violence, such as Aboriginal communities, people with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse communities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer communities.

Prioritising prevention will not come at the expense of funding for support and recovery services for victims of domestic and family violence, rather it will work to reduce the occurrence of domestic and family violence in the first place, to reduce demand for crisis and recovery services, and to bring about other long-term benefits across the whole population.



**"Communities in NSW have a responsibility to tackle the structures that condone violence and drive effective intergenerational change. Community leaders and Elders are well equipped for this role... Violence is preventable but only with all parts of the community, government, mainstream and specialist sectors working together sharing common understandings, goals and measures."**

[PEAK ORGANISATION]



## 2. INTERVENING EARLY WITH VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

**Early intervention activities reach those who are at higher risk of experiencing violence.**

**Focus early intervention initiatives on both those at risk of experiencing and those at risk of perpetrating violence.**

Early intervention initiatives aim to identify and support communities and individuals at higher risk of experiencing violence before they become victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. These communities include those who experience higher rates of violence than the general population, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people with disability, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer communities, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

Evidence provided to the Blueprint consultation process suggests that these groups are more likely to be disengaged from early intervention services. For example, in many cases, services are not accessible for people with disability and not sufficiently culturally competent to be helpful for Aboriginal clients.

Currently, services that are termed 'early interventions' are most often designed to assist clients who have experienced domestic and family violence from escalating further into crisis, rather than intervening before any violence has occurred. The focus needs to shift towards intervening early in situations where there is a risk of domestic and family violence, so that violence never eventuates.



**"Early intervention in specific settings, particularly high-risk communities with elevated rates of domestic and family violence or barriers to seeking support, must be integrated with local service design and tailored prevention responses if we are to effectively challenge violence in the long term."**

[PEAK ORGANISATION]



### 3. SUPPORTING VICTIMS

**A system that is responsive to different types of client need and provides access to information and support at any stage of experiencing domestic and family violence.**

**A networked and coordinated system that is able to wrap around the victim and address their varying and multiple needs.**

It is critical that victims of domestic and family violence receive flexible, person-centred services to support them through immediate crises and as they deal with the longer-term effects of their trauma. Services that may be needed include police, justice, health care, housing, family support and counselling services. Victims who are unable to access these services can face serious consequences, including homelessness, financial distress, child protection interventions, and increased risk to their safety.

Service users and providers reported that the domestic and family violence service system is for the most part complex and fragmented. The NSW Government's Safer Pathway reforms have begun to address this, with the establishment of multi-agency Safety Action Meetings and coordinated referrals to support services through Local Coordination Points. However, the complexity and lack of integration across the service system requires further improvement, as victims often have to approach a range of services, and repeat their story many times, to get the support they need.

Additionally, there can be variation in the availability of services across the state, with some people not able to access certain types of support because of where they live, or factors such as their age, gender, disability, cultural background or language.

Many families who experience domestic and family violence also have complex needs such as drug and alcohol addiction, mental health and child protection issues. It is important for the service sector to be able to identify and respond to the multiple needs of victims including those that exist alongside their experience of domestic and family violence.



**"Like you go to one service saying, "Okay I really need help," and they say, "Oh, okay, we'll refer you to this service," so you're constantly being referred from place to place. Then you have to repeat your story... You have to relive everything that happens."**

[CLIENT INTERVIEWEE]



## 4. HOLDING PERPETRATORS ACCOUNTABLE

**A system that identifies and responds to domestic and family violence as part of a pattern of behaviour.**

**A system-wide consistent assessment of risk that considers the causes of violent behaviour. Support services for perpetrators are based on increasing victim safety.**

**Behaviour change interventions for perpetrators are timely and embedded into the domestic and family violence response.**

A system-wide, coordinated approach to perpetrator interventions is needed to better hold individuals to account for their behaviour and improve victim safety by reducing re-offending.

A key issue identified through the Blueprint consultations was the need for more men's behaviour change programs across NSW, including Corrective Services programs. Community-based men's behaviour change programs that meet the NSW Minimum Standards are an effective method for engaging men in examining their use of violence.

Men's Behaviour Change strategies need to be flexible and evidence-based, providing a range of approaches that are effective with different groups, including offenders with high-risk behaviour, Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people with drug and alcohol addiction.



**"Due to lack of specialist skills, and in some instances policy that forbids working with perpetrators, many men are rendered invisible when the family comes to notice and domestic and family violence is identified. This can lead to either unsafe engagement with both parties and/or no referral for the man to a skilled men's service. Men are falling through the large gaps and are not held accountable for their behaviour and the cycle of violence continues."**

[SERVICE PROVIDER]



## 5. DELIVERING QUALITY SERVICES

**Mainstream and specialist service providers who are supported to provide consistent, high quality services to victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence.**

**A system that provides consistent, high-quality responses to those experiencing, exposed to or using domestic and family violence regardless of location or where they first came into contact with the service system.**

Consistent service quality is important to ensuring that victims of domestic and family violence receive the services they need to help them in their journey of recovery, and so that perpetrator accountability is achieved through high quality and effective interventions.

At present, there are no service quality standards for the domestic and family violence sector to ensure that victims and their families receive a consistent level of support that assist in recovering from violence, irrespective of when or where they come into contact with the service system.

Many organisations do not have specific policies and guidelines to respond to clients affected by domestic and family violence, which may result in inadequate support to both victims and perpetrators. A consistent and high level of knowledge among mainstream service providers about what domestic and family violence looks like, and how to support people affected by domestic and family violence (including with appropriate referrals), will result in reduced numbers of victims and perpetrators falling through the cracks in the service system.



**"In relation to domestic violence specialist services and training, there needs to be a standard of training set and mandated and domestic violence specialist practitioners should be required to be registered to ensure they are appropriately qualified and monitored, including standards for individual supervision."**

[SERVICE PROVIDER]



## 6. IMPROVING THE SYSTEM

**A domestic and family violence service system that is transparent and accountable, with shared accountability for common policy goals across Ministers and Government agencies. Including an accountability framework that articulates clear performance measures.**

**Commissioning practices from Government that are flexible, streamlined and focused on achieving outcomes.**

**Access to alternative funding sources.**

Given the wide range of needs of victims and perpetrators of domestic and family violence, effective system coordination and governance is essential. This includes coordinating the overarching policy that shapes services and interventions, as well as the processes by which government engages the non-government sector to deliver services.

Building a transparent and accountable domestic and family violence system also means improving the way in which data is collected and used to measure performance against an agreed set of system and population outcomes.

To improve cohesion across the domestic and family violence sector there is a need for whole of government planning and accountability to create a system of services that are better aligned and flexible enough to respond to clients' needs.



**"The biggest factors which prevent further collaboration include prescriptive program level agreements from funding bodies which make it hard to go outside program parameters."**

[SERVICE PROVIDER]

# DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE IN NSW



**One in six Australian women, and one in 20 Australian men** have, since the age of 15, **experienced physical or sexual violence** from a partner they have lived with.<sup>1</sup>



For **62% of the women who had experienced physical assault** by a male perpetrator, the **most recent incident was in their home.**<sup>2</sup>



The rate of **reported domestic violence-related assault** in NSW has been **increasing** over the period 2010-11 to 2014-15.<sup>3</sup>



The **ten local government areas** with the **highest rates of domestic violence-related assault** are in rural NSW.<sup>4</sup>

Women are over **three times more likely** to experience violence from an intimate partner **than men**.<sup>5</sup>



The rate of **reported domestic violence-related assault for Aboriginal females** in NSW is **four times higher** than for the whole female population.<sup>6</sup>

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