

2026-27 Federal Budget Submission: Investing in Preventing Gender-Based Violence



Prepared by Our Watch

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Acknowledgement of Country

Our Watch acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay respects to Elders past and present and recognise the continuing connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to land, culture, knowledge, and language for over 65,000 years.

As a non-Aboriginal organisation, Our Watch understands that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is a whole of community issue. As highlighted in Our Watch's national resource *Changing the picture*, there is an intersection between racism, sexism and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Our Watch has an ongoing commitment to the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, who continue to experience violence at significantly higher rates than non-Aboriginal women. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who continue to lead the work of sharing knowledge with non-Aboriginal people and relentlessly advocate for an equitable, violence-free future in Australia.

About Our Watch

Our Watch is a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. We are an independent, not for profit organisation established by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments in 2013. All Australian governments, including the Australian Government, are members of Our Watch.

Our vision is an Australia where women and their children live free from all forms of violence. We aim to drive nation-wide change in the culture, behaviours, attitudes and social structures that drive violence against women.

Guided by our national framework, *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia*, we work at all levels of our society to address the deeply entrenched, underlying drivers of violence against women, especially those stemming from gender inequality.

We work with governments, practitioners and the community, at all levels of Australian society, to address these drivers of violence in all settings where people live, learn, work and socialise.

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2026-27 Budget Recommendations

The 2026-27 Budget is a critical opportunity to build on the Australian Government’s commitments and investment, as well as important work already underway nationally, to prevent and end gender-based violence.

To achieve the vision of the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children* (the National Plan) and *Working for Women*, there are opportunities to build on the important foundations and activities underway. This requires sustained and scaled investment in primary prevention.

Gender-based violence remains a national crisis: the Australian Femicide Watch recorded 105 women were killed in 2024, and a further 48 as of 28 August 2025.¹

These harms have profound social and economic costs. The cost of violence against women is estimated at \$21.7 billion annually, with at least \$4.7 billion as government expenditure, including \$1.9 billion in lost productivity.²

- KPMG (2016) estimated that violence against women and their children cost Australia \$22 billion in 2015–16, with an additional \$4 billion once under-reported violence against particularly vulnerable women is included.³ Indexed for inflation alone, this is equivalent to around \$28–34 billion per year in 2024–25 dollars.⁴
- Over the same period, FDV-related sexual assault victimisation rates rose by 78% (2014–2023) and FDV-related assaults recorded by police have also increased.⁵
- As an illustration, if we assume a 20% increase in cost-driving incidence/visibility as a conservative approximation, the total economic cost could now be in the order of \$34–40 billion per year.

The Australian Government’s modelling finds that “every dollar invested in preventive health saves an estimated \$14.30 in healthcare and other costs”.⁶ In addition, the Women’s Economic Equality Taskforce estimates that \$128 billion could be added to the economy by boosting women’s workforce participation and productivity.⁷

Investment in primary prevention is a key vehicle for reducing the overall fiscal impact of violence against women. It can contribute to budget sustainability by bringing forward future spending in other areas which makes overall expenditure lower over the longer-term and can support boosts in productivity.

To achieve our collective vision of ending gender-based violence there is a need for:

- All parts of the system to work together, including across primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery.
- Sustained and scaled investment across the system, including in primary prevention
- Clear and coordinated whole of government action at a Commonwealth, state and territory level

- Robust governance mechanisms, including across the National Plan and *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic, and Sexual Violence*.
- Strong foundations for primary prevention, including a skilled and appropriately resourced workforce.
- Strong national monitoring of progress in prevention, including short, medium and long-term outcomes.

Specifically, the 2026-27 Budget is an opportunity for the Australian Government to further strengthen and embed primary prevention by:

- 1. Establishing a National Primary Prevention Investment Framework**, similar to the framework recommended by the Productivity Commission as part of its review of the care sector.
- 2. Commit to ongoing, sustainable funding for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence.**
- 3. Develop a National Workforce Development Strategy** with a primary prevention stream.

These investments directly deliver on or support *Working for Women* and the National Plan, and support the Government's commitment to gender-responsive budgeting. They also recognise the need to establish a coordinated, longer-term approach to investing in primary prevention as a first step, aligning directly with the objectives of the National Plan. By embedding these funding approaches, governments can ensure that prevention efforts are not only effective and enduring but also reflect the vision and commitments outlined in the National Plan, driving meaningful progress towards ending violence against women and children across Australia.

1. Establishing a National Primary Prevention Investment Framework

Primary prevention requires a whole-of-government approach to ending gender-based violence. Addressing the drivers of violence requires activity across multiple government portfolios, and the benefits that flow from addressing the drivers accrue across multiple policy areas. Gender-based violence is complex and a whole-of-government approach ensures policy coherence, shared accountability and alignment across portfolios to make government investment most effective.

Whilst there have been important investments by successive governments in primary prevention, overall, there remains significant underinvestment in prevention.

The Productivity Commission's *Interim Report: Delivering Quality Care Services* offers analogous observations on government investment in prevention in the care sector. The Commission noted:

Government programs are often sector specific- or limited in coverage – in short, funding can be siloed – yet prevention activities can often produce benefits across different sectors and policy or program areas. The agency and level of government that funds a prevention program is not always the same as those that benefit (through future avoided costs). Focusing on the gains from prevention to only one portfolio or level of government risks underestimating the overall benefits of prevention.⁸

The Commission made a number of comments in relation to the need for a new approach to prevention funding and has recommended in its Interim Report, the establishment of a National Prevention Investment Framework to support government investment in prevention

(in the context of care). The Commission's Report is instructive in articulating the potential benefits, considerations and approaches to implementing such as framework.⁹

Additionally, the Victorian Department of Treasury and Finance's Early Intervention Investment Framework provides a useful model for consideration. It is used to fund programs across education, social services, health and justice systems and has resulted in significant budget benefits.

As a result, Our Watch encourages the Australian Government to consider this approach in the context of ensuring there is a rigorous, coordinated and long-term approach to adequate investment in primary prevention to achieve gender equality and end gender-based violence.

Such a Framework could provide guidance to agencies on modelling second and third round fiscal effects, and long-term benefits of prevention activities. It could also be accompanied with changes to Budget Process Operational Rules, including to allow for second round- fiscal effects in policy costings relating to preventive programs.

In line with Recommendation 3.1 of the Productivity Commission's Delivering Quality Care More Efficiently Interim Report, Our Watch recommends that the Australian Government consider the development of a Primary Prevention of Gender-Based Violence Investment Framework.

2. Ongoing, sustainable investment in *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic, and Sexual Violence*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children experience disproportionate rates of violence, and violence that is often more severe and more complex in its impacts. Preventing this violence must be a national priority. It requires dedicated attention and resourcing to address the many complex drivers of this violence, encompassing the ongoing impacts of colonisation and racism as well as gender inequality.

Target 13 of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2020-2030* states that by 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced by at least 50%, as progress towards zero. As noted in the 2024 Commonwealth Implementation Plan Actions Status Report, there is insufficient data to monitor progress towards this Target. It is likely that progress on Target 13 has been insufficient to meet this target.

The development of *Our Ways- Strong Ways- Our Voices* represents an important milestone. The release of the Plan presents a vital opportunity to provide a clear national framework focused on preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children that reflects the vision and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

Our Watch recommends that funding is committed to support *Our Ways- Strong Ways- Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic, and Sexual Violence* in the 2026-27 Budget.

Ensuring investment in the Plan, including for implementation, governance, monitoring and evaluation, is a crucial part of ensuring its effectiveness. As a result, Our Watch recommends funding be committed as part of the 2026-2027 Federal Budget.

3. A National Workforce Development Strategy

The National Plan recognises the importance of building and strengthening the workforce. Our Watch recognises the commitments of the Australian Government to boosting the capacity of the domestic, family and sexual violence sector, including through the recent workforce survey and some additional investment.

However, one of the key missing elements of current approaches to and investment in ending violence against women is ensuring that there is a strategic and coordinated approach to having a skilled and appropriately resourced workforce available across primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery nationally.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's *'Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Workforce Overview'* reveals high turnover and burnout in the DFSV sector due to difficult work conditions. Nearly half of workers have faced bullying, harassment, violence, or threats from clients in the past year—rising to 66% for those in daily contact with perpetrators. As a result, 48% feel emotionally drained and 45% feel pressured to work harder.¹⁰ The value of ensuring a skilled workforce has been recognised and highlighted by Our Watch, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission, as well as key stakeholders across the sector.

As a result, Our Watch considers that there is significant value in the development of a new National Workforce Development Strategy. The Strategy could be used to identify the existing workforce and its needs, gaps in the workforce, and opportunities to strengthen the workforce.

The development of the Strategy should build on existing work, including the workforce survey already being conducted by the Commonwealth Government and additional funding for frontline workers. Importantly, development and implementation of the Strategy requires involvement by State and Territory Governments

The Strategy should encompass primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery workforces, noting the connected but also disparate needs of each workforce.

Our Watch recommends the development of, and investment in implementation of, a National Workforce Development Strategy under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children, across primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery

There are also opportunities to build expertise to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQ+, migrant and refugee communities and people with disabilities.

This approach reflects development of strategies in other policy areas, including for example the *National Mental Health Workforce Strategy 2022-2032* which aims to build a sustainable mental health workforce in Australia to meet the increasing demand for mental health services.

Endnotes

- ¹ Australian Femicide Watch (2025). *The Red Heart Campaign Memorial*. Viewed on 28/08/2025
- ² KPMG (2016). *The Cost of Violence Against Women and their Children*. Prepared for the Department of Social Services; AIHW (2022). *Economic and financial impacts of domestic and family violence*. pp. 12–13.
- ³ KPMG (2016). *The Cost of Violence Against Women and their Children*. Prepared for the Department of Social Services; AIHW (2022). *Economic and financial impacts of domestic and family violence*
- ⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics Consumer Price Index Reserve Bank of Australia. (2025). Consumer Price Index Data.
- ⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2024). Recorded Crime – Victims, Table 5. Viewed on <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/responses-and-outcomes/police/fdv-reported-to-police#changed>
- ⁶ Australian Government. (2024). *A fit and healthy Australia. 2024-25 Budget* <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-05/budget-2024-25-a-fit-and-healthy-australia.pdf>
- ⁷ Women’s Economic Equality Taskforce. *Women’s Economic Equality: A Roadmap for Action*. Final Report, Australian Government, October 2023. Available at: https://ncwa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/WEET_Final_Report.pdf.
- ⁸ Productivity Commission (2025), *Delivering Quality Care More Efficiently*, Interim Report, Canberra, 58.
- ⁹ Productivity Commission (2025), *Delivering Quality Care More Efficiently*, Interim Report, Canberra, 58-70.
- ¹⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. FDSV Workforce. Last updated 28 Feb 2025 from <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/responses-and-outcomes/fdsv-workforce>