

National opportunities for prevention of violence against women

March 2025



**Our
Watch**

Preventing violence
against women



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-Indigenous organisation, Our Watch understands that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is not an 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander problem.' 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 a significantly higher rate than non-Indigenous women. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who continue to lead the work of sharing knowledge with non-Indigenous people and relentlessly advocate for an equitable, violence-free future in Australia.

Violence against women and girls a national crisis

IN AUSTRALIA

Every nine days

One woman is killed by a current or former partner every nine days on average.¹

37 women murdered

37 women were murdered by an intimate partner in 2024.²

12% of women

12 per cent of women had experienced sexual harassment by a male in the previous 12 months in 2021-22.³

\$22 billion

The estimated cost of violence against women in 2015-16 in Australia was \$22 billion.⁴



Primary prevention in Australia

The following document outlines key national opportunities for primary prevention in Australia including:

- 1. Develop a National Workforce Development Strategy with a prevention stream**
- 2. Standardise and strengthen media codes of practice on reporting on violence against women**
- 3. Ongoing, sustainable investment for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence.**

The Commonwealth and State and Territory governments have jointly committed to ending violence against women in one generation under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*.

The National Plan provides an important national framework, supported by clear actions and mechanisms for measuring progress and outcomes, for ending violence against women. The Plan recognises that a comprehensive and holistic approach to preventing violence against women needs a continuum of interdependent, interlinked and mutually reinforcing strategies. This means there is an important role for work and investment across primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery.

The commitments and activities outlined and funded under the National Plan build on support and investment in primary prevention by successive Commonwealth governments and complement other prevention work happening across Australia.

However, there is still significant work to do to stop this violence before it starts. Our Watch and others have made a range of recommendations and suggested actions over a long period. However, Our Watch has identified three specific opportunities for 2025 to build on existing work that will make a significant difference at a national level.

Key opportunities for primary prevention

1. Develop a National Workforce Development Strategy with a prevention stream



The Commonwealth Government has committed to taking action to end violence against women, including through the National Plan.

The National Plan recognises the importance of building and strengthening the workforce. However, one of the key missing elements of current approaches to 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 value of ensuring a skilled workforce has been recognised and highlighted by Our Watch,⁵ the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission, as well as key stakeholders across the domestic, family and sexual violence sector.

A National Workforce Development Strategy (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 can build on existing work, including a workforce survey already being conducted by the Commonwealth Government and additional funding for frontline workers.

The Strategy should encompass primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery workforces, noting the connected but also disparate needs of each workforce. There are also opportunities to build expertise to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, LGBTIQ+, migrant and refugee communities and people with disabilities.

2. Standardise and strengthen media codes of practice on reporting on violence against women



The media can be a powerful driver of social change and help stop violence before it starts. Strong media reporting on violence against women and their children can help readers, listeners and viewers understand how widespread the issue is, who is affected, what drives it, and how it can be prevented.

Australian research suggests a clear link between media reporting and gendered attitudes and beliefs about violence. For example, 15 per cent of incident-based media reports of men's violence include elements of 'victim-blaming', such as the victims' actions – like drinking, flirting with the perpetrator, going home with them, or being out late at night – suggesting this contributed to the violence.⁶

Importantly, there is a role for government to play in supporting media organisations to improve reporting of violence against women.

Building on existing work, Our Watch suggests an independent review of the current media industry be undertaken to ensure regulatory frameworks are consistent across all platforms and organisations.

This review could consider the current suite of industry-led standards and codes of practice to include a new violence against women standard, as well as the best approach in enforcing these standards. Currently, the Australian Press Council has Specific Standards of Practice for the Coverage of Suicide which are binding on all publications subject to its jurisdiction. These tools have been useful in encouraging consistent and respectful reporting on suicide. Similar standards for reporting on violence against women could be rolled out across all media types. These standards should include specific criteria for the coverage of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

3. Ongoing, sustainable investment in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience disproportionate rates of violence, and violence that is often more severe and more complex in its impacts.⁷

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 recently released 2024 Commonwealth Implementation Plan actions status report, there is insufficient data to monitor progress towards this Target.⁸ It is likely that progress on Target 13 has been insufficient to meet this target.

The development of the *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic, and Sexual Violence* (Family Safety Plan) is an important milestone. It 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 the delivery of Family Safety Plan in the next budget process immediately following release of the Plan; including funding for implementation of the actions, monitoring and evaluation of the Family Safety Plan, and governance arrangements.

Further Information

Our Watch welcomes the opportunity to continue to provide advice or assistance in relation to potential opportunities for the primary prevention of violence against women and girls.

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- 1 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2019). [Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story.pdf](#).
 - 2 Australian Institute of Criminology (2024). [Intimate partner homicide dashboard](#).
 - 3 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023). [Personal Safety, Australia: 2021-22: Sexual harassment](#).
 - 4 KPMG. (2016). The cost of violence against women and their children in Australia, KPMG.
 - 5 Our Watch. (2023). [Growing with change: Developing an expert workforce to prevent violence against women](#).
 - 6 Sutherland et al. (2016). Media representations of violence against women and their children.
 - 7 Our Watch. (2018). [Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children](#).
 - 8 National Indigenous Australians Agency. (2025). [2024 Commonwealth Implementation Plan actions status](#).