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# Our Watch Submission to the South Australian Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual 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 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 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 the national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. We are an independent, not for profit organisation established in 2013. All Australian governments, including the South 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, structures, systems, institutions, as well as legislative and policy frameworks that drive violence against women. Guided by our ground-breaking national frameworks, *Change the story (2<sup>nd</sup> ed 2021)*, *Changing the picture (2018)* and *Changing the landscape (2022)*, we work at all levels of our society to address the deeply entrenched, underlying drivers of violence against women. 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.

Our Watch provides expert advice and support to the South Australian Government as a member of Our Watch in relation to primary prevention. Our Watch also works with and alongside the South Australian Government and a range of key stakeholders and organisations to undertake primary prevention work in South Australia, including work across the key settings of sport, workplaces, higher education, and local government, as well as new and innovative projects with communities such as LGBTQIA+ and refugee and migrant people.

## Executive Summary

This submission addresses the three prevention-focused questions outlined in the Royal Commission's [Issues Paper](#):

1. What causes domestic, family, and sexual violence?
2. What works, or will work, to prevent domestic, family, and sexual violence?
3. What existing initiatives are directed at addressing the attitudes and systems that drive domestic, family, and sexual violence? Are they effective?

To answer these questions, this submission outlines Australia's shared, evidence-based, whole-of-population approach for the primary prevention of violence against women outlined in [Change the story](#), as well as drawing on Our Watch expertise in primary prevention.<sup>1</sup> This approach aligns with South Australia's shared commitment to ending violence against women, as outlined in the second [National Plan to end Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032](#).

This submission discusses how to build the essential foundations that enable this prevention work to occur; the techniques that can be used to implement prevention activities; and the priority settings to reach all South Australians where they live, learn, work, socialise and play. In making this submission, Our Watch emphasises that to be most effective primary prevention must occur alongside effective, well-resourced efforts across early intervention, response, and recovery.

To build a South Australia where every woman and child lives free from violence, Our Watch encourages the Royal Commission to adopt and make recommendations in relation to the key elements of prevention outlined in this submission, including (but not limited to):

- Introducing a stand-alone primary prevention strategy.
- Building the foundations for prevention, including building the prevention workforce.
- Engaging men and boys.
- Taking an intersectional approach to prevention.
- Supporting evidence-based respectful relationships education (RRE).

In making recommendations, Our Watch also encourages the Royal Commission to consider the importance of:

- The need for whole-of-government approaches.
- Centring diverse victim-survivor voices in program design and implementation.
- The importance of phased implementation and strengthening existing initiatives, building on the important work already occurring across SA.
- The need for prevention strategies that are evidence-based, intersectional, and comprehensive.

South Australia, like the rest of Australia, is in the early stages of its primary prevention journey, however, there are already a range of activities, programs, and initiatives across government, private and community sectors in South Australia to build on. This submission considers existing programs in South Australia, highlighting opportunities to strengthen effective or promising practice. We also provide examples of promising and effective prevention activities in other jurisdictions. Key examples include evidence-based policy frameworks, respectful relationships education, and community-led prevention efforts.

In addition to addressing the prevention focused questions of the Royal Commission's *Issues Paper*, Our Watch proposes a set of principles for the Commission to consider in examining South Australia's policies, legislation and systems aimed at preventing and responding to domestic, family, and sexual violence. We also identify some key learnings from the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, as the only other jurisdiction to have had a Royal Commission on this issue and emphasise the importance of ongoing accountability mechanisms and evaluation.

In making this submission, Our Watch emphasises the importance of engaging appropriately with the diversity of people and organisations which represent people with lived experience of gendered violence and other forms of structural oppression and discrimination.

## **Contact**

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspects of this submission or to provide further, more detailed advice over the course of the Royal Commission.

Please contact Amanda Alford, Director of Government Relations, Policy and Evidence, at [amanda.alford@ourwatch.org.au](mailto:amanda.alford@ourwatch.org.au) to discuss.

## Introduction

Our Watch welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the South Australian Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence.

This Royal Commission offers a rare opportunity to create a South Australia where every woman, child and community lives free from violence.

Currently violence against women is pervasive in South Australia. An estimated 39 per cent of women (279,300) have experienced violence (physical and/or sexual) since the age of 15, including:

- 21 per cent of women (151,400) experiencing sexual violence.
- 31 per cent of women (220,000) experiencing physical violence.

This is in line with the national average.<sup>2</sup>

An estimated 29 per cent of women (202,200) in South Australia have experienced violence, emotional abuse, or economic abuse by a cohabiting partner since the age of 15, which is two per cent higher than the national average.<sup>3</sup>

These prevalence rates are directly linked to unequal and discriminatory structures and systems and harmful attitudes and beliefs. The [2021 National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women Survey \(NCAS\)](#) found that while between 2017 and 2021, South Australians showed significant improvement in their understanding of violence against women and in their rejection of gender inequality, sexual assault and sexual harassment, there is still room to further improve understandings and attitudes. For example, a substantial proportion of South Australian respondents (38 per cent) continue to believe domestic violence is perpetrated by men and women equally.<sup>4</sup>

Violence against women in South Australia and across the country is widespread and serious. However, it is preventable.

Primary prevention is one part of what is needed to embed a comprehensive and holistic approach to violence against women. This must involve a continuum of interdependent and interlinked strategies, with efforts across the 'stream' or spectrum of prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery. It also requires efforts across the life course.

A 'primary prevention' approach aims to stop violence before it happens. Primary prevention includes the whole population, inviting people as individuals, communities, and organisations to address the underlying gendered drivers of violence against women in governments, schools, workplaces, sport, relationships and at home so that everyone is safe and has equal opportunity regardless of gender.

The evidence, outlined in Australia's shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women [Change the story](#), indicates that the drivers of violence against women are gendered and occur in the social context of gender and other inequalities. Importantly, there are a range of reinforcing factors, such as alcohol and gambling, which can exacerbate and impact the severity and dynamics of violence against women.

The primary prevention approach outlined in *Change the story* sits alongside our other evidence-based frameworks that address violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (*Changing the picture*) and violence against women and girls with disabilities (*Changing the landscape*). It is crucial to address the intersecting and overlapping drivers of violence against women that are based on racism, colonisation, ableism, homo-, bi-, and transphobia, ageism and classism that can shape the dynamics and prevalence of gendered violence for particular cohorts across the South Australian community.

It is also crucial to build on and strengthen existing primary prevention work occurring throughout South Australia. There are already a range of primary prevention activities, programs and initiatives occurring across the government, private and community sectors in South Australia that provide a solid foundation for strengthening primary prevention approaches across the state.

The Royal Commission has a unique opportunity to lead South Australia towards significant, community-wide changes in preventing domestic, family, and sexual violence.

## Terminology

Our Watch and the key evidence-based frameworks adopt the language and scope of 'violence against women' or 'gendered violence'. While domestic, family, and sexual violence are the most common forms of violence against women, there are other forms of violence that women experience that are not captured by this framing, including, for example, sexual harassment, violence against women in residential care, online abuse, reproductive and other forms of coercion (for example, withholding medication or disability aids), and trafficking of women. The broader term 'violence against women' is better able to encompass the whole range of different forms of violence against women that occur across diverse contexts, but that share gendered drivers, and is aligned with the framing used in the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.

Our Watch acknowledges the inherent limitations of binary language and recognises that the category of 'women' is a socially constructed one, and part of a binary system of sex and gender categories that does not represent the gender diversity of the population.<sup>5</sup> The framework's definition of a woman includes anyone who identifies and lives as a woman, which includes cisgender and trans women. Intersex, transgender and gender diverse people further challenge the assumption that binary biological sex determines a binary gender.<sup>6</sup>



## Principles

Our Watch welcomes the overarching focus of the Royal Commission on examining existing policies, legislation, administrative arrangements, systems, structures, and funding in South Australia. We support the focus on coordination in the terms of reference as a critical part of this work to guide South Australia's efforts across prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery.

We encourage the Royal Commission to consider the following principles regarding its approach and engagement over the course of the Royal Commission:

### Principles regarding approach:

- Align with the international human rights framework and focus on upholding South Australia's obligations in full.
- Use a gender lens in all investigations and analysis of data and evidence. As domestic, family, and sexual violence are known to display highly gendered patterns, a gender lens is critical in understanding and explaining the gendered dimensions of this issue and its impacts on women, men, and transgender and gender-diverse people.
- Centre intersectionality to account for the diversity of people's experiences and identities, and to address the multiple intersecting systems of oppression and discrimination, power and privilege that shape the social context of gender inequality such as sexism, racism, colonialism, classism, heteronormativity, cisnormativity, homo-, bi- and transphobia, ableism, and ageism.
- Align with the [National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children \(2022-2032\)](#) and the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan \(2023-2025\)](#).
- Acknowledge that a comprehensive and holistic approach to violence against women must involve a continuum of interdependent, interlinked strategies across the spectrum of primary prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery, and understand the relationship between these approaches.
- Utilise a diverse evidence-base that prioritises specialist prevention expertise and a rigorous evidence base that includes quantitative and qualitative data, academic and grey literature, and evaluations.
- Draw on the advice and knowledge of practitioners, victims and victim-survivors, recognising the wisdom, experience and expertise of those who have been working in the South Australian context for decades, and the emerging evidence-base of domestic, family, and sexual violence-based organisations, services, systems, and programs.
- Consider evidence, experiences, and lessons from other jurisdictions.

### Principles regarding engagement

- Prioritise Aboriginal self-determination and engage broadly with Aboriginal people and communities.
- Centre the diverse experiences and voices of victims and victim-survivors.
- Engage broadly with governments, the private sector, civil society, and the community, and incorporate community consultation where appropriate to ensure recommendations that implementation reflects expertise and community needs.

# 1. What causes domestic, family, and sexual violence?

The evidence, including specifically the evidence-based national framework, *Change the story*, identifies that gender inequality sets the social context in which violence against women occurs, and makes clear that the drivers of this violence are gendered. It provides evidence-based guidance on the primary prevention of violence against women – that is, to change the underlying social conditions that produce and drive this violence, and that excuse, justify or even promote it - to prevent it happening in the first place.

The first edition of *Change the story* (2015) was developed by a three-way partnership led by Our Watch, with the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS). It reviewed national and international evidence on violence against women and prevention strategies, featuring expert-authored short research pieces and substantial consultations with over 400 stakeholders. The second edition (2021) builds on this evidence, summarising the latest research on prevention, drivers of violence, effective practices, and necessary systems for sustained prevention. It incorporates new international and Australian evidence and extensive stakeholder input since 2015. Both editions were guided by advice and input from a national technical advisory group, membership of which included expert advisors from academia, government, and the non-government sector.

The prevention pillar of the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children (2022-2032)* draws on *Change the story*. The National Plan and the *First Action Plan (2022-2025)* also draw on this evidence through its prevention objectives that aim to address the gendered drivers of violence against women (National Plan prevention objectives 1,2,5).

## 1.1. The gendered drivers of violence against women and the social context of gender inequality

To end men's violence against women, we need to address the underlying drivers and social context that enables this violence to occur.

There are four drivers of men's violence against women that are crucial to address to stop this violence before it starts. These drivers are gendered and arise from discriminatory structures, norms, and practices that shape people's experiences in all parts of society; where people live, learn, work, play and socialise. These include, for example, social norms such as the beliefs that underpin gender stereotyping; practices such as differences in childrearing practices for boys and girls, or gender bias in organisational recruitment practices; and structures such as pay differences between men and women.<sup>7</sup> Such norms, practices and structures encourage women and men, girls and boys to adopt distinct gender identities and stereotyped gender roles within a gender hierarchy that historically positions men as superior to women, and masculine roles and identities as superior to feminine ones.

The gendered drivers create environments in which women and men are not considered equal, and violence against women is both more likely, and more likely to be tolerated and even condoned.<sup>8</sup> By acting and addressing these gendered drivers, prevention of violence

against women is achievable. *Change the story* details how these drivers manifest in different ways (pp. 36-45).

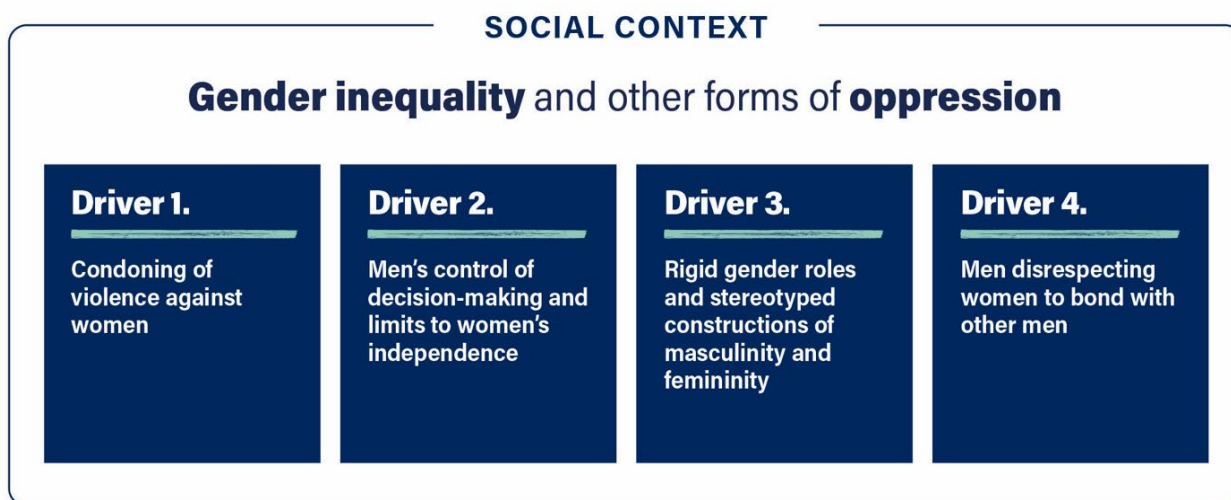


Figure 1: The gendered drivers of violence against women and the social context of gender inequality and other forms of oppression – [See alternative text for Figure 1.](#)

The drivers of men’s violence against women are both simple and complex: they are simple, because there is clear evidence that violence against women is inextricably bound to gender inequalities in public and private life; and they are complex because they should not be considered in isolation from a range of social, political and economic factors.<sup>9</sup>

Understanding these gendered drivers is critical to understanding men’s violence against women, because they explain the prevalence and persistence of gendered violence across the population. Australia’s communities and institutions are still marked by gender inequality. In its legal and political systems, in workplaces, in the family, in organisations and in community groups, men continue to hold the majority of power and influence, particularly white, heterosexual, cisgender, able-bodied men with higher levels of education and income.<sup>10</sup>

While gender is always relevant in explaining violence against women, it may not be the most significant factor in every context. Other forms of oppression, discrimination and disadvantage (as well as power and privilege) intersect with and affect the relative influence of these (See Sections [1.3](#) and [2.2](#) below for more on this point).

## 1.2. Reinforcing factors of violence against women

Another group of factors that we call *reinforcing factors* play a role in *reinforcing, exacerbating, or influencing* the occurrence or dynamics of violence against women.<sup>11</sup> They are part of the story of violence against women, but focusing on these reinforcing factors by themselves will not achieve prevention goals for all people across society. These reinforcing factors are:

- **Reinforcing Factor 1: Condoning of violence in general** – either informally, by reactions of families or communities, or formally, such as through weak laws, which can lead to a ‘normalisation’ of violence as a part of everyday life.
- **Reinforcing Factor 2: Experience of, and exposure to, violence** – Direct experience of violence or maltreatment as a child, as well as children’s exposure to violence perpetrated against their mothers or other female caregivers, can have profound, compounding lifelong impacts.<sup>12</sup> These experiences are also significantly and positively correlated with adult experiences of intimate partner violence.
- **Reinforcing Factor 3: Factors that weaken prosocial behaviour e.g., alcohol and gambling** – A range of stress factors and environmental conditions, including neighbourhood-level poverty, disadvantage and isolation; environments dominated by male peer relations; natural disasters and crises; alcohol; and gambling, can compromise the ways in which people might otherwise act to demonstrate empathy and respect for women and uphold gender equality and non-violence.
- **Reinforcing Factor 4: Backlash and resistance to prevention and gender equality** – Backlash and resistance can be understood as any active or passive action, behaviour or attitude that seeks to block change, uphold the status quo of gender relations, or re-establish male privilege and power. Backlash is a more aggressive form of resistance, which can involve verbal or online attacks, or actual physical violence. Resistance to gender equality and prevention work also intersects with resistance to other forms of equality and rights-based social change which can create particularly heightened risks of violence against women who experience intersecting forms of oppression.

While the gendered drivers are a constant underlying presence in society, the reinforcing factors are more context specific.

Stopping violence against women and children requires consideration and action in relation to the drivers and reinforcing factors, acknowledging the complexity and need to take a holistic approach to preventing violence against women.

### ***Children and domestic, family, and sexual violence***

Children can be victims of domestic, family, and sexual violence in their own right. For example, a recent report found that 76 per cent of filicides in Australia occur in the context of domestic and family violence that involves a history of child abuse and/or intimate partner violence. The study found that perpetration of filicide is predominantly gendered.<sup>13</sup> The majority of filicides are perpetrated by men, and when fathers kill their children, it often follows a history of perpetrating intimate partner violence. When mothers kill their children, it often follows a history of having experienced intimate partner violence.<sup>14</sup>

The 2023 Australian Child Maltreatment Study found that 43.8 per cent of young people aged 16-24 have been exposed to domestic violence, while 40.2 per cent have experienced more than one form of abuse (physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect or exposure to domestic violence).<sup>15</sup> Early trauma can affect the developing brain with profound and lifelong impacts, while childhood exposure to violence against women normalises violence as an expression of masculinity in relationships. Without intervention, this developmental pathway can lead to a higher risk of perpetration of partner violence for boys and potential victimisation for girls.<sup>16</sup>

The prevention of violence against women efforts more broadly will likely have a positive impact on the rates of childhood experiences of violence. This is particularly relevant in the context of reinforcing factor two, experience of and exposure to, violence, and the four gendered drivers. The impact of children's negative and traumatic experiences can be lessened by positive relationships and exposure to gender-equitable, non-violent norms and *Change the Story* provides examples of actions to support these efforts.

### 1.3. Intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression

Gender inequality sets the social context for violence against women. However, violence against women is often experienced in combination with other forms of structural inequality and discrimination such as racism, religious and cultural discrimination, colonialism, ableism, homo-, bi- and transphobia, ageism, and classism.<sup>17</sup> These intersections create systems of structured inequality, characterised by the unequal distribution of power, wealth, income, and social status.

Our Watch has identified the following intersections as priority areas for our work and have developed, or are in the process of developing, dedicated frameworks and/or innovative projects to address violence against particular groups in the community.

- **Gender inequality, racism, and colonialism.** *Changing the picture* (2018) is Our Watch's dedicated framework for the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- **Gender inequality and ableism.** *Changing the landscape* (2022) is Our Watch's dedicated framework for the prevention of violence against women and girls with disabilities.
- **Gender inequality, homophobia, transphobia, and heteronormativity.** Our Watch is currently working to develop a dedicated framework, in partnership with Rainbow Health Australia, that addresses violence against LGBTIQ+ people and communities.
- **Gender inequality and racism.** Our Watch is currently working to build a deeper, shared understanding of the nature and drivers of violence against refugee and migrant communities and the actions needed to address this violence.

These dedicated frameworks are discussed in further detail under Question 2.

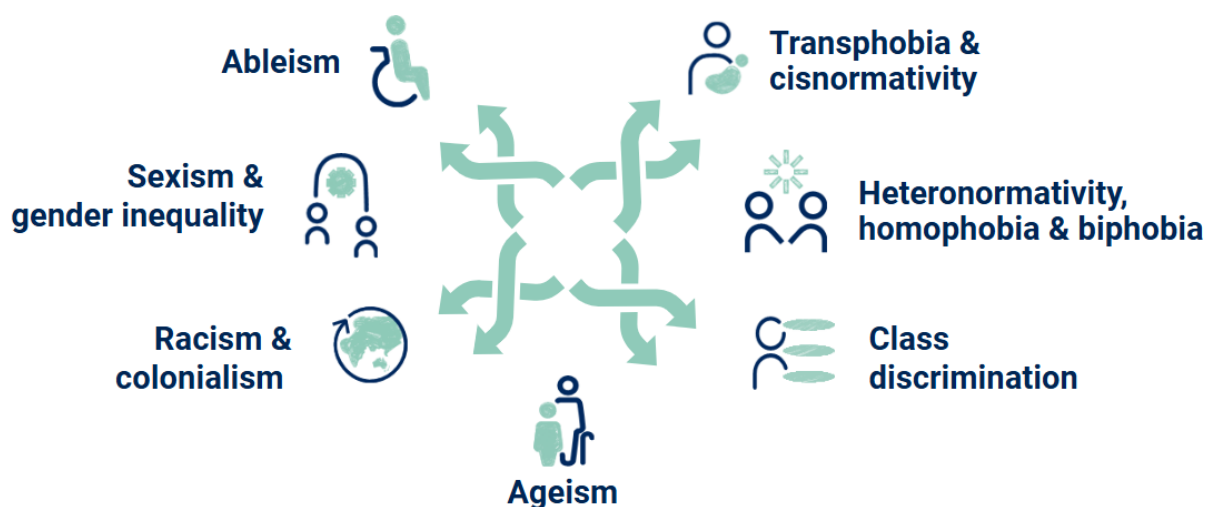


Figure 2: Violence against women occurs in the context of multiple intersecting forms of oppression, discrimination, power, and privilege- [See alternative text for Figure 2.](#)

#### 1.4. Perpetration of violence

Overwhelmingly, violence against women in Australia is perpetrated by men.<sup>i 18</sup> Research shows that the majority of violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ people is also perpetrated by cisgender men.<sup>19</sup>

Violence against women is committed by men from across the social and economic spectrum.<sup>ii</sup> But while men who choose to use violence against women may be in the minority, many more men either participate in, do not challenge, or remain silent when confronted with sexism, violence-supportive attitudes, or situations where women are experiencing harassment. Nor do they actively challenge other men who exhibit forms of masculinity that are correlated with sexism and violence. We discuss how to engage men and address harmful forms of masculinity in [Section 2.4](#) of this submission.

The lack of national data on perpetrators and perpetration of violence continues to be a significant issue. The recent announcement of ANROWS funding for a NSW perpetrator study is welcome, as is the release of data on sexual violence perpetration by the Australian Institute of Criminology. However, a national perpetrator strategy and study, potentially

<sup>i</sup> While there are women who use violence in their relationships with men, the dynamics and drivers of this violence are different from the violence that men use in their relationships with women. Women who use relationship violence often do so to assert their personal autonomy *from* a partner, rather than to exercise personal authority or coercive control *over* a partner, and often use force in self-defence or retaliation. Women are more likely to use psychological, verbal, and emotional force than other kinds of violence, and when they use physical force, it is less likely to cause severe physical harm. Most women identified as using force are themselves victim-survivors of domestic or family violence or childhood abuse.

<sup>ii</sup> While men who use violence do make a conscious choice to do so (and this framing is important in encouraging individual men to take responsibility for their actions, and be accountable for them), this choice is influenced by a range of individual, familial, community, organisational, structural and societal factors that come into play over the course of a man's lifetime. For further nuanced discussion on the issue of choice and men's perpetration, see *Men in focus*, pp. 41–43.

complemented by state and territory studies, that produce comprehensive national data encompassing all forms of violence, remains a key opportunity for governments at a national as well as at a state and territory level.<sup>20</sup>

## 2. What works, or will work, to prevent domestic, family and sexual violence?

Despite the overwhelming prevalence and impact of violence against women, violence is preventable. Our Watch's evidence outlines a series of approaches that are critical to the effectiveness and sustainability of primary prevention. These approaches include:

- A primary prevention approach
- Addressing the essential actions
- Taking an intersectional approach
- Engaging men and addressing harmful forms of masculinities
- Prioritising the essential foundations to enable primary prevention
- Working across the life course
- Taking a whole-of-setting-/sector approach
- Focusing on monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.

### 2.1. A primary prevention approach

Primary prevention means stopping violence against women from occurring in the first place by addressing the underlying drivers that are outlined under [Section 1.1](#). This approach requires changing the social conditions that give rise to this violence; reforming the institutions and systems that excuse, justify or even promote such violence; and shifting the power imbalances and social norms, structures and practices that drive and normalise this violence.<sup>21</sup> This upstream approach aims to address the gendered drivers and gender inequalities that manifest at all levels of our society and engages the most amount of people to change the story of violence against women.



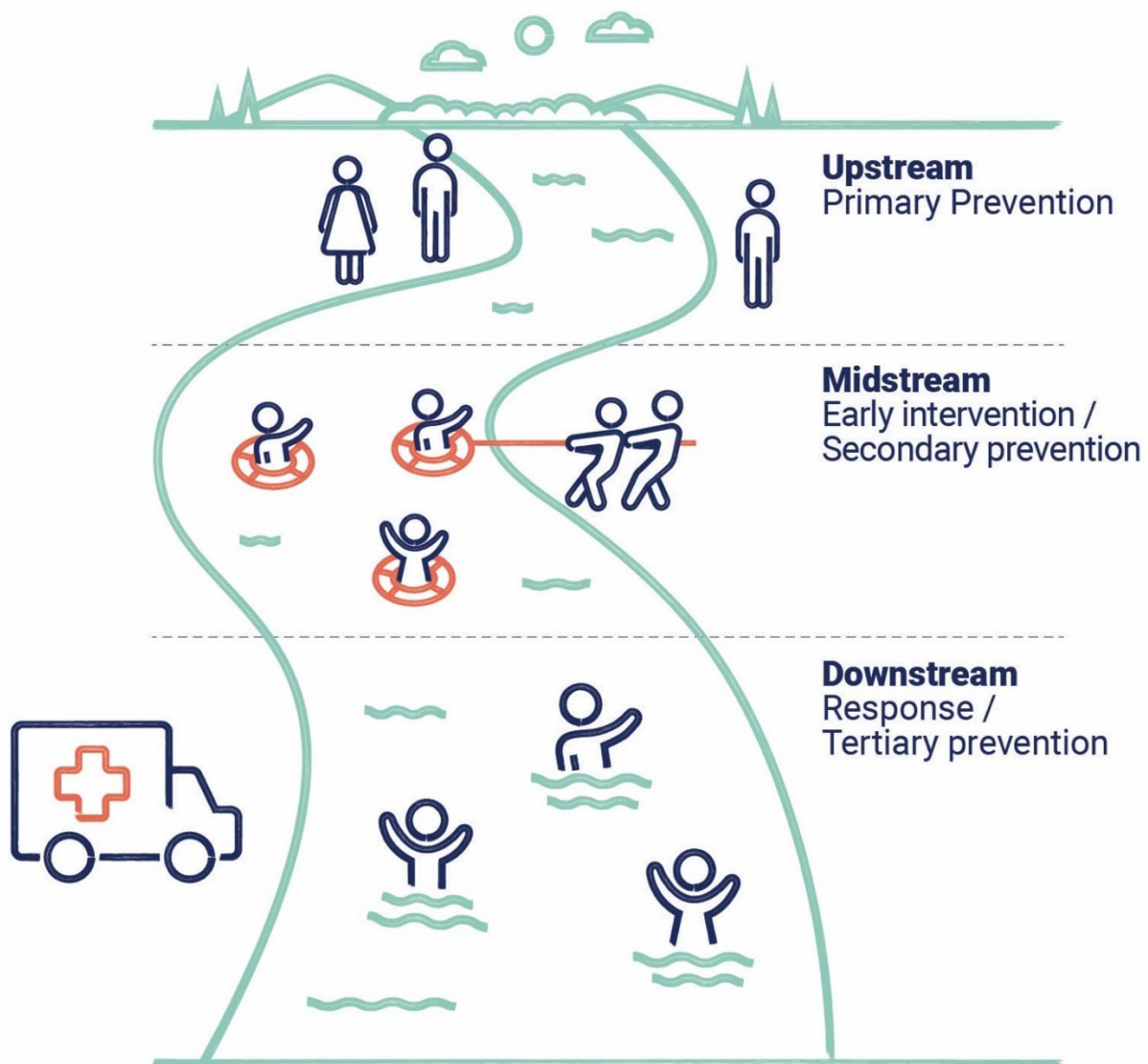


Figure 3. Primary prevention of violence against women as an 'upstream' approach  
– See alternative text for Figure 3.

Primary prevention is one part of what is needed to embed a comprehensive and holistic approach to violence against women. This must involve a continuum of interdependent and interlinked strategies, with efforts across the 'stream' or spectrum of crisis response, early intervention, healing and recovery, and prevention.

These different parts of the spectrum of crisis response, early intervention, healing and recovery, and prevention are distinct; they have different techniques, audiences and aims. Prevention is an 'upstream' approach (see Figure 5 above) to get the most amount of people involved to help avoid people falling into the 'river' of violence – which complements 'downstream' approaches of early intervention and crisis response, which aim to keep people afloat and eventually pull them out of the water. All aspects of work along this spectrum, while distinct, are mutually supportive and equally necessary. Programs, services, and initiatives may also contain elements of more than one approach – for example,

involvement in prevention activity can be an important part of healing and recovery for victim-survivors.

Violence against women remains a national emergency. However Our Watch's recent *Report Card: Tracking Progress in Prevention of Violence Against Women* shows that there have been slow but significant improvements across many of the key measures of progress in the prevention of violence against women. This includes:

- Australians' attitudes and understandings of violence against women and gender inequality have improved significantly since 2013.<sup>22</sup>
- Violence against women has decreased over the past ten years.<sup>23</sup>
- There have been significant steps towards building the foundations necessary for effective primary prevention work (see [Section 2.5](#)).<sup>24</sup>

There is still significant work to do in South Australia and across Australia to end violence against women and their children. However, by working with governments, businesses, practitioners, and the community to address the drivers of violence in all settings where people live, learn, work, and socialise, our shared vision of an Australia where women and their children are free from violence is achievable.

## **2.2. Addressing the essential actions**

*Change the story* outlines eight essential actions to address the gendered drivers of violence and the social context in which it occurs.<sup>25</sup> They are essential because violence against women will not be reduced or prevented unless the underlying reasons for why violence occurs, or drivers, are shifted, and the wider social context that enables violence against women to occur is also changed.

The essential actions are intentionally broad, to emphasise that there are many ways of taking these actions at different levels of policy and practice, and many ways that different stakeholders can take these actions. Examples of possible activities include increasing understanding of the negative impacts of gender stereotyping on children, young people and adults (Action 3); or using policy, regulatory and legislative mechanisms to increase women's workforce participation, and address the gender pay and superannuation gap (Action 5). Further examples are provided in *Change the story* (pp. 62-64).

## THE ESSENTIAL ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE GENDERED DRIVERS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ARE:

ESSENTIAL ACTION 1	ESSENTIAL ACTION 2	ESSENTIAL ACTION 3	ESSENTIAL ACTION 4
<b>Challenge</b> condoning of gender-based violence	<b>Promote</b> women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships	<b>Foster</b> positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles	<b>Strengthen</b> positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, boys and girls

## THE ESSENTIAL ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE SOCIAL CONTEXTS THAT GIVE RISE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ARE:

ESSENTIAL ACTION 5	ESSENTIAL ACTION 6	ESSENTIAL ACTION 7	ESSENTIAL ACTION 8
<b>Promote</b> and <b>normalise</b> gender equality in public and private life	<b>Address</b> the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination, promote broader social justice	<b>Build</b> safe, fair and equitable organisations and institutions by focusing on policy and systems change.	<b>Strengthen</b> positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys, in public and private spheres

Figure 4. The eight essential actions to prevent violence against women – [See alternative text for Figure 4.](#)

### ***Supporting actions to address the reinforcing factors***

*Change the story* also outlines a series of supporting actions to address the four reinforcing factors of violence against women. Examples include improving the regulation of alcohol in ways that help change harmful social norms relating to the intersection of violence, alcohol, gender and gendered social/organisational contexts (reinforcing factor 3, action 11), and supporting and advocating for healing strategies and other efforts to mediate the impacts of past and ongoing occurrences of violence and trauma, including child abuse (reinforcing factor 2, action 10).

Strategies that address the four reinforcing factors can make an important contribution to preventing violence against women, particularly when they are based on, and informed by, an understanding of the gendered drivers of violence.<sup>26</sup> These actions, and examples of how they can be implemented, are outlined on pages 67-69 in *Change the story*.

## 2.3. Taking an intersectional approach

Applying an intersectional lens to violence against women means examining how other forms of structural inequality and discrimination intersect with the gendered drivers of violence to both exacerbate and produce particular forms and patterns of violence.

Effective prevention works, and works most effectively, when an intersectional lens is applied. An intersectional approach should be integrated in both policy and practice, and at all stages of prevention activity, from design through to implementation and evaluation.<sup>27</sup>

### ***Address racism and colonisation to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women***

As custodians of some of the longest surviving cultures in the world, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people successfully managed interpersonal, family and community relationships for over 60,000 years prior to colonisation. *Changing the picture* makes clear that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is not a part of traditional culture. When violence occurred prior to colonisation, it was regulated and controlled and bore no resemblance to the kinds of violence and abuse seen today. Many aspects of traditional culture and customary law were respectful and protective of women. Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women today must be seen in light of a continuum of ongoing violence experienced as a result of the colonisation process. This genocidal violence has included murder; rape; slavery; sexual exploitation; theft of land; removal of children; and denial of cultural and spiritual heritage, language, and freedom of movement.<sup>28</sup>

*Changing the picture* conceptualises this historical, contemporary, and gendered context as three relevant sets of factors that drive violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. They include:

- **The ongoing impacts of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**, such as intergenerational and collective trauma; systemic oppression, disempowerment, and racism; destruction of traditional cultures, family, and community relationships; and personal exposure experience and exposure to violence.
- **The ongoing impacts of colonisation for non-Indigenous people and in Australian society**, such as racism, indifference, disrespect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures; racialised power inequalities; discriminatory policies and practices; and the condoning of violence.
- **Gendered factors** – both gender and inequality in a general sense, and specific gendered drivers of violence that are a consequence of colonisation.

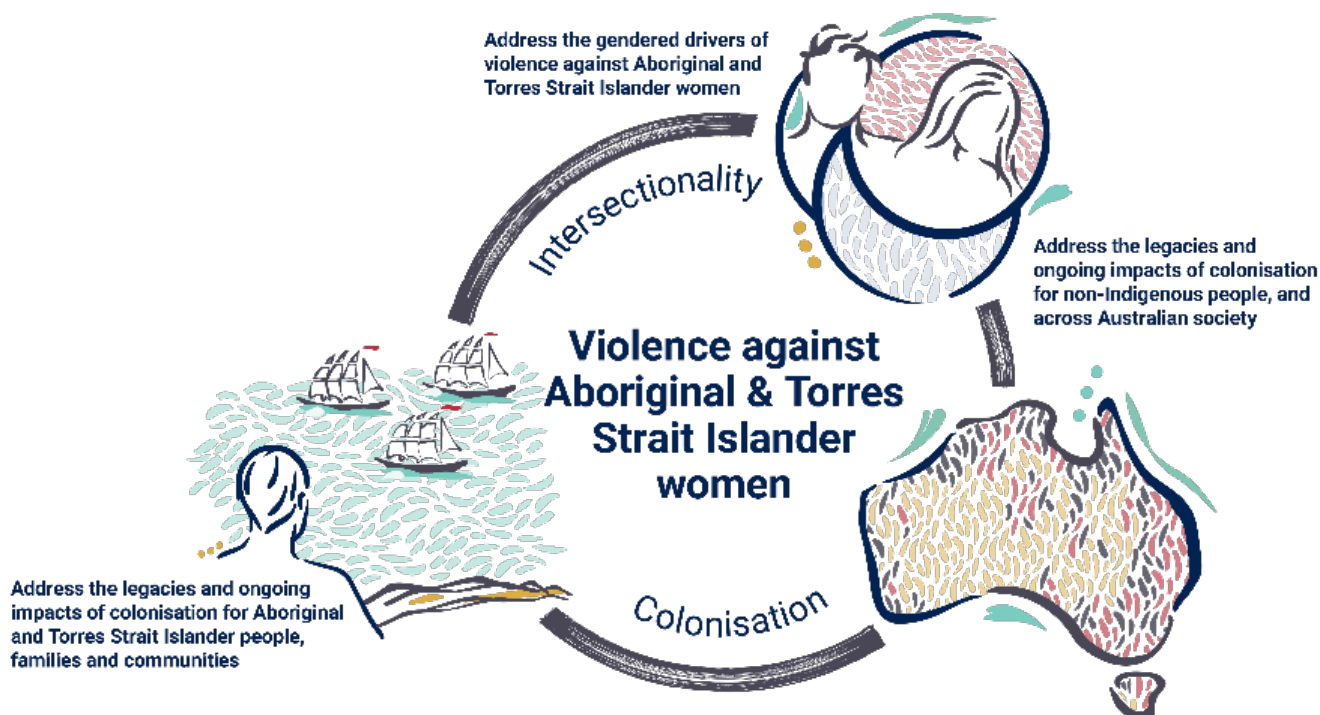


Figure 5: Essential Actions to address the drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women – [See alternative text for Figure 5.](#)

*Changing the picture* outlines a set of essential prevention actions to address these underlying drivers and supporting actions to address other factors that exacerbate violence outlined in Figure 7.<sup>29</sup>

*Changing the picture* also outlines principles to ensure prevention efforts are safe, appropriate, effective, and informed by evidence about good practice, including an emphasis on self-determination, community ownership and community control, cultural safety, trauma-informed practice, and prioritising and strengthening culture.<sup>30</sup>

In addition, there has been several recent inquiries, reviews, and policy developments, which will be important for the Royal Commission to integrate into its findings and recommendations to ensure that it adopts the most up-to-date evidence and advice. This includes:

- The latest [Productivity Commission’s Annual Data Report](#) on Closing the Gap targets.
- The Australian Human Rights Commission’s [Wiyi Yani U Thangani \(Women’s Voices\)](#) project led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, June Oscar.
- The forthcoming findings and recommendations of the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs [Inquiry into Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children \(due August 2024\)](#). Our Watch’s submission to the Inquiry can be found [here](#).
- [The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025](#), and the forthcoming standalone Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Plan (Our Ways – Strong Ways

– Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan 2025-2032) (consultations ongoing, draft expected by the end of 2024).

- The forthcoming findings of the Northern Territory coronial inquest into the deaths of Miss Yunupingu, Ngeygo Ragurk, Kumarn Rubuntja and Kumanjayi Haywood, which marked the first time domestic, family, and sexual violence deaths from across the Northern Territory have been examined collectively (expected second half of 2024).

Our Watch encourages the Royal Commission to seek input from the National Family Safety Plan Steering Committee and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence, who work on the implementation of the current plan, and from a broad range of Aboriginal stakeholders in its activities.

### **Address ableism to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities**

Violence against women with disabilities is serious and prevalent. 65 per cent of women with disabilities report experiencing at least one incident of violence since the age of 15.<sup>31</sup>

*Changing the landscape* explains the need to address gender inequality and ableism at every level of society and shift the norms, structures and practices that drive and reinforce violence against women and girls with disabilities. It outlines six essential actions to address the underlying drivers of violence against women and girls with disabilities:

ESSENTIAL ACTION 1	ESSENTIAL ACTION 2	ESSENTIAL ACTION 3	ESSENTIAL ACTION 4	ESSENTIAL ACTION 5	ESSENTIAL ACTION 6
<b>Address the underlying social context</b> that gives rise to violence against women and girls with disabilities	<b>Challenge the acceptance and normalisation</b> of violence against women and girls with disabilities	<b>Improve attitudes towards</b> women and girls with disabilities by challenging ableist and sexist stereotypes	<b>Promote the inclusion</b> of women and girls with disabilities in all aspects of life	<b>Promote women and girls with disabilities'</b> independence, agency and participation in leadership and decision-making	<b>Engage men and boys to challenge</b> controlling, dominant and aggressive forms of masculinity

Figure 6. The six essential actions to tackle the underlying ableist drivers of violence against women and girls with disabilities – [See alternative text for Figure 6.](#)

The *Framework for Action to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls with Disabilities for South Australia*, provided to the South Australian Government in July 2024, translates *Changing the landscape's* essential actions into a set of recommended actions that are tailored to the South Australian jurisdictional context and align with the recommendations from the [Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability](#).

### **Address homo-, bi- and transphobia to prevent violence against LGBTIQ+ people and communities**

The [National Plan](#) recognises that LGBTIQ+ people experience gender-based violence, including high rates of domestic, family and sexual violence.<sup>32</sup> Evidence indicates that there is significant overlap between the drivers of violence against women and LGBTIQ+

communities, including rigid gender norms, heteronormativity and cisnormativity.<sup>33</sup> For example, narrow social ideas about bodies, sex and gender can devalue and stigmatise LGBTIQ+ people's identities and relationships, which drives violence against these communities.<sup>34 35</sup>

Our Watch supports the work and expertise of specialist LGBTIQ+ organisations in leading the prevention of violence against their communities.<sup>iii</sup>

Further collaborative work between primary prevention organisations and LGBTIQ+ organisations is also needed to build a nuanced and inclusive approach to primary prevention of gender-based violence for all. Our Watch has recently partnered with [Rainbow Health Australia](#) to co-develop a new national framework over the next 3 years, which will support more people to understand and take action to prevent gender-based violence against LGBTIQ+ people and communities. Our Watch will share reflections and further work on this project over the life of the Royal Commission.

The Royal Commission provides an important opportunity to map the gaps and opportunities in South Australia's domestic, family, and sexual violence services to ensure they are inclusive and accessible for a diverse range of victim/survivors, including those from LGBTIQ+ communities. A dual approach of specific resourcing for LGBTIQ+ services, while simultaneously bolstering inclusive practice in domestic, family, and sexual violence services, is critical to address homo-, bi- and transphobia in South Australia.<sup>iv</sup>

### ***A prevention approach that reflects the needs of migrant and refugee communities***

For migrant and refugee communities, racism, sexism and other forms of oppression and discrimination intersect to drive increased levels of gendered and racialised violence towards women from these groups. [Change the story](#) highlights that migrant and refugee women are often subjected to forms of violence that relate to their uncertain citizenship, where perpetrators threaten them with deportation.<sup>36</sup> Migrant and refugee women can often arrive from countries and circumstances with insecure visa status, which can increase their exposure to violence and poverty, minority status, and disrupted family and community support systems.<sup>37</sup>

The *Primary prevention in migrant and refugee communities* (PPMRC) project is a new area of work at Our Watch that seeks to build on existing primary prevention approaches to ensure they are responsive and reflect the needs of migrant and refugee communities. Using an intersectional approach, the project seeks to work in culturally safe ways with aims of two-way working to ensure that prevention efforts are safe, appropriate, effective and informed by evidence about good practice when working with migrant and refugee communities.<sup>38</sup> Initial stakeholder engagement in South Australia (and across the country) has led to various findings that contribute to the knowledge base around intersecting forms

<sup>iii</sup> We recognise the effective primary prevention work led by LGBTIQ+ organisations including Rainbow Health Australia's [Pride in Prevention](#) resources, ACON's [Say It Out Loud](#) campaign, and Zoe Belle Gender Collective's [Transfemme](#) resource (among other examples).

<sup>iv</sup> This dual approach was a key recommendation of the Victorian Royal Commission and contributed significantly to progress in inclusive and safe services for LGBTIQ+ people and communities.

of oppression and opportunities for collaborative efforts and approaches, with the potential to significantly strengthen the impact of prevention efforts in multicultural communities. Our Watch will share reflections and further work on this project over the life of the Royal Commission.

## **2.4. Engaging men and addressing harmful forms of masculinities**

Engaging men and boys in discussions about healthy relationships and non-violent behaviour helps to break the cycle of violence, reduces the incidence of family violence, and contributes to the overall safety and well-being of communities.

There are strong connections between men's rigid adherence to socially dominant forms of masculinity, men's sexist attitudes and behaviours, and men's perpetration of violence against women, as evidenced in Our Watch's resources *[Men in Focus: Unpacking masculinities and engaging men in the prevention of violence against women](#)* and *[Men in Focus practice guide: Addressing masculinities and working with men in the prevention of men's violence against women](#)*.

Men who form a rigid attachment to dominant ideas, or 'norms of masculinity', are more likely to demonstrate sexist attitudes and behaviours, perpetrate or excuse violence against women, and are also less likely to intervene when other men are displaying sexist or violent behaviour.<sup>39</sup> The social norms, attitudes and practices that men may feel pressure to conform to and support include autonomy, dominance and control, aggression and toughness, risk-taking, stoicism and suppression of emotion, hypersexuality and heterosexuality.<sup>40</sup> The correlation between attitudes to violence and gender equality and violent behaviours is reinforced by data in the recently published national study *[Man Box 2024: Re-examining what it means to be a man in Australia](#)*.<sup>41</sup> The study found a quarter of Australian men aged 18 to 30 personally agree with the Man Box rules – 19 rules that represent a socially dominant form of masculinity – and men who most strongly agreed with the rules are more likely to have perpetrated violence, hold violence-supportive attitudes and have consumed violent pornography.<sup>42</sup>

Men who choose to use violence are in the minority. However, many men stay silent when they see other men harassing or showing disrespect towards women or displaying aggressive or controlling forms of masculinity. Most men, knowingly and unknowingly, participate in and help maintain the structures, norms and practices that drive gender inequality and men's violence against women. As a result, men can be complicit in the problem through disinterest or inaction in challenging these structures. There is an important opportunity for men who are not violent themselves to contribute to addressing gender inequality, which sets the social context in which violence against women arises.

Men and boys need to be the focus of prevention work, in particular through prevention initiatives that engage men and boys to focus on challenging and shifting dominant norms and ideas of masculinity and the associated attitudes throughout the course of men's lives.

Positive messaging and strength-based approaches can help men and boys to develop healthy masculinities and build more positive, respectful male peer relationships. Despite



the recent shift from engaging men as perpetrators, to engaging men as allies in the prevention of domestic, family, and sexual violence, there are a number of barriers to engagement. These barriers include the perception that domestic, family, and sexual violence is a ‘women’s issue’; men’s lack of knowledge or skills; their support for sexist and violence-supportive attitudes and norms; loyalty to other men; and a perceived lack of opportunity or invitation for men to engage with this work. Challenging these barriers is a critical component in prevention.

Our Watch recommends that the Royal Commission consider informing and framing recommendations relating to focusing on engaging men and boys in primary prevention by aligning with the evidence and guiding principles in the *Men in Focus evidence review* and *practice guide*. For example, this could include:

- Committing to and supporting specific gender transformative initiatives and programs that address harmful male peer relations and cultures of masculinity.
- Developing specific initiatives targeting men and boys that promote positive masculinities and peer relations across priority settings, including male dominated industries, workplaces, education, sport, and online.
- Engaging men and boys in gender equality and violence prevention efforts that are multifaceted and include education-based initiatives; media campaigns; engaging men as fathers; engaging and mobilising communities; and offering alternative models to promote more positive, respectful forms of masculinity.

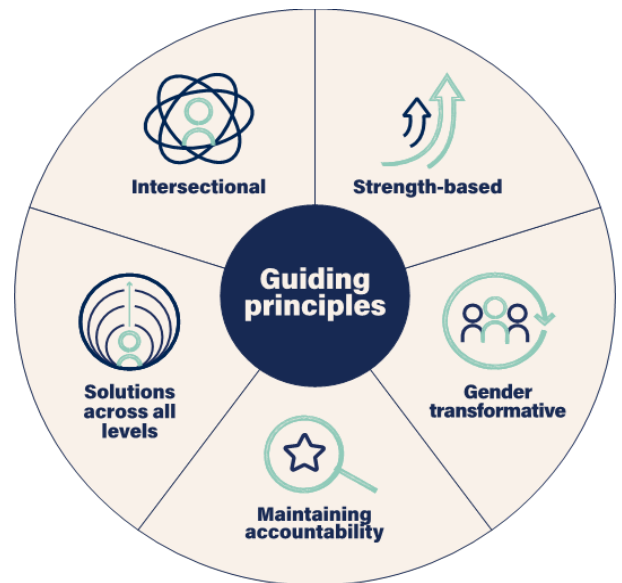


Figure 7: Guiding principles for addressing masculinities and working with men and boys – [See alternative text for Figure 7.](#)

## 2.5. Prioritising the essential foundations to enable primary prevention

Primary prevention requires strong foundations (or ‘infrastructure’), which are the systems and structures that ensure primary prevention is supported, coordinated, and sustained over the long term. These foundations are critical to enabling and sustaining changes to the drivers of violence and ensuring the design, implementation and evaluation of prevention efforts occur in a coordinated way.<sup>43</sup> It includes the establishment of systems, processes, activities, strategies, and leadership that support ongoing, comprehensive, and coordinated primary prevention action.

There are eight key elements that make up this strong foundation to enable coordinated primary prevention:

1. Sustained political leadership
2. Private sector, civil society, and community leadership
3. A well-resourced, independent women’s movement
4. Policy, regulatory and legislative reform

5. Mechanisms for coordination, collaboration, and quality assurance
6. Mechanisms for workforce and sector development
7. Strong evidence base, informed by ongoing research, practice and evaluation
8. National monitoring and reporting mechanisms.<sup>44</sup>

There is a significant opportunity in South Australia to establish key foundations that will ensure primary prevention is coordinated, effective and sustained. These foundations will not only capture and strengthen existing primary prevention efforts but also support the development of new initiatives across all settings where South Australians live, work, learn and play. These eight key elements unlock the potential for every sector, institution, organisation, and community across South Australia to prevent violence against women.

Our Watch strongly encourages the Royal Commission to make recommendations about strengthening and building these foundations. This is discussed in more detail later in this submission.

### ***Workforce development***

The success of South Australia's efforts to prevent violence against women depends in part on the size of the primary prevention workforce and the capacity of this workforce. Evidence indicates this workforce would be strengthened by a multidisciplinary approach and developed in a way that values and reflects diversity, intersectionality and lived experience. Further workforce and sector development is recommended to meet the demand of prevention activities safely and effectively, and to continue to expand the reach and uptake of evidence-based prevention across the state.

The South Australian Royal Commission has a significant opportunity to make recommendations about developing and growing a dedicated prevention workforce with the necessary skills and capabilities to undertake prevention initiatives. Our Watch's evidence review *Growing with change: Developing an expert workforce to prevent violence against women* outlines the five key areas governments can focus on and a number of strategies that can be put in place to expand the prevention workforce and support its growth. Workforce development strategies need to occur across five key areas to build the professionalisation of the prevention workforce. These areas are:

1. Workforce planning
2. Workforce preparation and pathways
3. Sector governance and coordination
4. Working conditions
5. Professional development

Workforce development activities need to consider both specialist and generalist workers who undertake prevention activities. Specialist workers are those whose substantive role and expertise is in primary prevention. Generalist workers are those with expertise and substantive roles in a range of sectors and settings who undertake some prevention activities as part of their role, such as teachers delivering respectful relationships education in classrooms, human resources officers, community development workers, local government officers, diversity and inclusion specialists, journalists, sports administrators,

and marketing and communication specialists. It is important to consider the upskilling, knowledge, and capacity building of both the specialist and generalist prevention workers, and that the primary prevention workforce extends beyond the specialist response sector as they are working with the whole community.

### ***Coordination of policy, legislative and regulatory reform***

Commonwealth, state/territory, and local governments all have a critical role to play in ensuring the health, safety and equality of women as part of their international human rights obligations. Governments in particular have unique access to policy, legislative and regulatory levers to address gender inequalities across Australian society and change the underlying conditions that produce and support violence against women. In using these powerful levers, governments can facilitate long-lasting social, cultural, structural, and systemic change across the population and send a strong signal to the Australian public that gender equality and the prevention of violence against women is a serious and urgent national priority that demands high-level action and leadership.

As a result, there is an opportunity for the Royal Commission to consider the leadership role of the South Australian Government in this area, acknowledging the benefits of a coordinated and a national approach to primary prevention.

At a policy level in South Australia one of the key ways in which this could be done in a strategic way is through the development of a framework for addressing domestic, family, and sexual violence in South Australia, which either includes prevention as a key pillar, or is connected to a specific primary prevention plan. [Committed to Safety: A framework for addressing domestic, family, and sexual violence in South Australia](#), was the South Australian policy framework until 2022, and included prevention as one of the three pillars. It outlined key initiatives, priority settings, including education, and short-, medium- and long-term actions to be undertaken by the Government in support of primary prevention.

Going forward, Our Watch strongly supports the development of a standalone prevention plan to guide coordinated work for prevention activities across South Australia.

To ensure all primary prevention efforts are progressing towards the same goal of ending violence against women, it is critical that state and territory level prevention strategies and plans align, build on and strengthen the significant work and reforms that are underway nationally. This includes aligning to the commitments, focus areas and outcomes of:

- [National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032](#).
- [First National Action Plan, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan and Outcomes Framework](#) under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032.
- [National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality](#).
- [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#).

## 2.6. Working across the life course

Evidence indicates that prevention efforts are most effective if they reach and engage everyone, at every age and stage of life. Importantly, as outlined in *Change the story*, to embed, reinforce and sustain change across the population, prevention efforts must engage people, not just on a one-off basis, but in multiple, mutually reinforcing ways over the course of their life span.<sup>45</sup> Exposure to gendered violence exacerbates gender disadvantage across the life course. The cumulative effects of violence extend beyond the physical health and wellbeing of women. Women who have experienced gendered violence have an increased likelihood of experiencing lifelong structural inequalities such as poverty, housing instability, and a retirement wealth gap.

There are particular stages that are important transition points, or which present specific opportunities. These important life stages include:

- **Early childhood:** where gender roles become embedded and personal identities are forming, and where there are near-universal mechanisms to engage with children through kinder, day care and early childhood services.
- **Primary school years:** where students develop and explore understandings about key concepts relevant to gender equality and prevention (for example, safety, puberty, consent, bodies, gender equality, etc.) and where there are universal mechanisms to engage with children, educators, and parents through the primary school setting.
- **Adolescence:** where intimate/sexual relationships are beginning to be formed, where some people are exposed to pornography, where students in schools explore concepts relevant to gender equality and prevention (for example, media literacy, respectful relationships, consent, gender roles and norms, etc.) and where there are universal mechanisms to engage with adolescents, educators, and parents through the secondary school setting.
- **Young adults:** when independence increases and people transition to post-secondary education or the workforce, opportunities arise for teaching of safe and healthy relationship skills including social-emotional learning and relationship skills as well as settings/sector-based approaches to gender equality and prevention in TAFE, higher education, or workplaces.
- **Pregnancy and the early stages of first parenthood:** where gendered social practices become more entrenched and where parents can revert to more stereotypical gender roles, with negative implications for long-term equality within their relationship. Prevention and gender equality efforts to address social norms, government policy settings, workforce structures and workplace policies and cultures are critical to enable more equitable norms and practices.
- **Adulthood:** a time when messaging about prosocial behaviours needs to be reinforced. People are consolidating their personal, family, and professional lives and can be engaged as positive role models for younger generations. There is also an opportunity to influence adult behaviour to encourage their contribution to systemic, policy, institutional, organisational, and social change.
- **Older age:** Older people may have had limited engagement with gender equality and primary prevention activity due to fact that they are less likely to be engaged in settings where gender equality and prevention activity is becoming common (for example, schools, universities/TAFEs, workplaces, sports clubs, etc.). As part of the life stage

approach, it is important that efforts include a focus on influencing older people's attitudes and behaviours and supporting older women's independence.

## 2.7. Taking a whole-of-setting/sector approach

Preventing violence against women requires changing the social conditions that give rise to violence by addressing the interrelated systems, structures, attitudes, norms, practices, and power imbalances that drive violence against women across all levels of society. This means addressing the drivers of violence at the individual and relationship level, the organisational and community level, the system and institutional level, and the societal level (see Figure 8).<sup>46</sup> A whole-of-setting/-sector approach encompasses a broad range of activities at different levels of society, within organisations and institutions, as well as within communities, families, and relationships. A socioecological model as depicted in Figure 8 below can help guide a whole-of-system approach.

This approach means efforts to address the drivers of violence should:

- Include policy, practice and structural change within the setting and be complemented by the wider policy, regulatory or legislative change that will support and increase the effectiveness of settings-based work.
- Involve all those who engage with the setting, including leadership, staff, volunteers, the audience the setting serves, and those outside the setting who provide it with services or support.
- Consider the levers or mechanisms that can support, enable, and systematise prevention activity across the setting or sector, beyond those that exist in individual organisations.<sup>47</sup>

While one goal of prevention may be to shift harmful and gendered social norms, this cannot be achieved without also paying attention to the structural level, because these norms are produced, reproduced, and reflected in our social, political, and economic systems. Our Watch works across these levels to prevent men's violence against women ([see 2.5](#)).

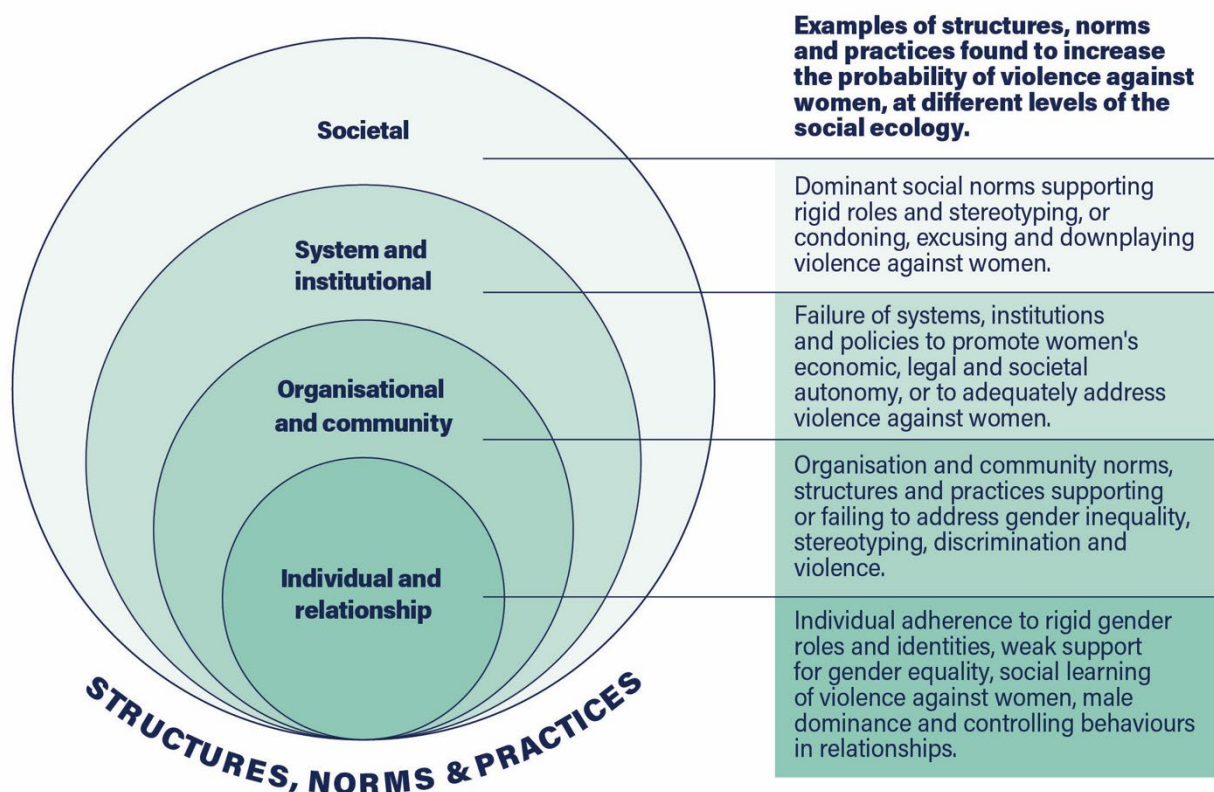


Figure 8: The socio-ecological model of violence against women – [See alternative text for Figure 8.](#)

To reach the largest possible number of people across institutions, organisations and systems, prevention efforts need to engage people across every setting where they live, work, learn, socialise, and play, and involve the people, professionals and communities who are part of these settings.

*Change the story* identifies several priority settings for primary prevention based on their widespread potential for impact and because there is a strong evidence base to draw from in these settings, including a range of existing resources and frameworks. We have provided detail in [Appendix 2](#) of existing frameworks to support whole of system and whole-of-setting approach.

**Case study: Whole-of-system approach for Respectful Relationships Education (RRE)**

As education institutions, workplaces and community hubs, primary and secondary schools are widely recognised as key settings in which to promote respectful relationships, non-violence, and gender equality. With over 9,500 schools, over 4 million students and over 310,000 teachers across Australia,<sup>48</sup> our education system provides near universal reach to children in their formative years and to adolescents developing their first intimate relationships. In conjunction with a comprehensive program of activity across other settings, evidence-based and adequately funded respectful relationships education throughout the national school system has the potential to contribute to the generational change needed to see an Australia free from gender-based violence.

Respectful Relationships Education (RRE) is the holistic approach to school-based primary prevention of gender-based violence. Best-practice RRE policy and program design have

seven core elements to be effective as an initiative to prevent gender-based violence, as described in Figure 9.<sup>49</sup>



Figure 9: Core elements of effective respectful relationships education in schools – [See alternative text for Figure 9.](#)

Evaluations of RRE undertaken in 2020 indicate that best-practice respectful relationships education can shift the gendered drivers of violence against women at individual, school, system, policy, and broader societal levels when integrated effectively into the education system.<sup>50</sup>

In the **short-term**, respectful relationships education can challenge violence-supportive attitudes that some staff and students may hold. It can support more respectful behaviour, counter gender stereotyping among students, and strengthen schools’ commitment to gender equality at the institutional level. In the **longer term**, respectful relationships education has the potential to contribute to reduced rates of gender-based bullying and harassment, shift school cultures towards being more gender equitable and challenge violence-supportive norms. Australian evaluations show that respectful relationships education can effectively address the gendered drivers of violence in schools.<sup>51</sup>

Our Watch resources, including the [Respectful relationships education in schools: Evidence paper](#) and the [Respectful relationships education toolkit](#), provide the evidence, background information, components of a whole-of-school approach, and guidance on implementation of RRE.

## 2.8. Techniques for prevention

Prevention activities should aim to use a multitude of techniques to achieve significant and sustained change, supported by public policy, legislation and regulation, and a skilled workforce as described above. Single techniques employed in a single place may have positive effects, but will likely be limited to those participating, and – especially if they are part of a one-off project – the impact may not be sustained, particularly where community and social norms and practices do not support their message.<sup>52</sup> In other words, prevention activities must be *ongoing* to achieve lasting change.

There are different prevention techniques and methods, some which have proven effective and others are considered promising (their implementation has resulted in significant improvements over the short to medium term against the known drivers of violence against women, however there is a lack of longitudinal evaluations).<sup>53</sup> Techniques that have demonstrated effectiveness or promise (when delivered in line with the evidence and approach outlined in this framework) include:

- direct participation programs
- organisational development
- community mobilisation and strengthening
- communications and social marketing campaigns
- civil society advocacy.

*Change the story* provides guidance on each of these techniques, including examples of effective or promising practice (as well as *less effective* or *harmful* practice to avoid).<sup>54</sup> Our Watch has several evidence-based tools and resources to support these techniques across settings. This is discussed further in [Appendix 2](#).

## 2.9. Focusing on monitoring, evaluation, and reporting

Our Watch's *Counting on change: A guide to prevention monitoring* provides a framework for national monitoring and is a guide for policymakers, researchers, and advocates on measuring population-level progress towards the prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. The *Tracking progress in prevention* report translates this into practice, providing both a baseline report on progress, and an example of how national monitoring could be done on an ongoing basis. In addition, Our Watch recently released a *Report card: Tracking progress in prevention of violence against women*, which provides key data updates on progress towards the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia. These documents provide clear examples of indicators that can be used to measure progress in prevention, accompanied by identification of the appropriate data sets for measurement.

Our Watch has provided advice and feedback to the Commonwealth Government in relation to the [National Plan](#), [National Outcomes Framework](#) and [Performance Measurement Plan](#), as well as to state and territory governments in relation to the importance of and ways to appropriately monitor and report on progress in prevention.



Comprehensive data to understand the impact of primary prevention efforts and women's experiences with gender inequality and violence should include short-, medium-, and long-term indicators across all levels of the socioecological model. Current methods have limitations, especially regarding demographic information on groups facing multiple forms of discrimination. There are opportunities for the Royal Commission to consider and make recommendations about strengthening data collection, use and analysis in South Australia, in a way that aligns with national data improvement priorities and processes.

There are opportunities to further align South Australia's monitoring and reporting frameworks, mechanisms and practice with the [National Plan Outcomes Framework](#) and [Performance Measurement Plan](#) to ensure ongoing visibility and impacts of South Australia's prevention activities on a national level. This alignment with national, and where possible, other state prevention outcomes frameworks and performance measurement plans would facilitate the development of a national prevention database. The development of a South Australian Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy with an associated Outcomes, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework would provide a key vehicle for this work and alignment.

Importantly, the development and implementation of monitoring frameworks to measure population-level progress should take an intersectional approach that ensures the design and process of data collection, analysis, and the communication of the findings are conducted in a way that takes into consideration multiple forms of intersecting discrimination and disadvantage.

Finally, evaluation is crucial for expanding evidence and understanding change. Replicating and adapting successful techniques in different contexts builds the evidence base. Our Watch's National Primary Prevention Hub evaluation report<sup>55</sup> found that long-term investment in evaluation engages stakeholders and prioritises ethical, feminist, participatory, and decolonising methods.

### **3. What existing initiatives are directed at addressing the attitudes and systems that drive domestic, family, and sexual violence? Are they effective?**

#### **3.1. The context for primary prevention in South Australia**

Like the rest of Australia, South Australia is relatively early in on its primary prevention journey. However, there are already a range of important primary prevention activities, programs and initiatives across government, private and community sectors in South Australia.

Notable among existing prevention work in South Australia is education and advocacy work, by the Working Women's Centre South Australia, to improve working conditions and address systemic inequities for all working women in South Australia; the gender equity advocacy by civil society organisations such as the National Council of Women South Australia; work engaging men and boys by Aboriginal Family Violence service Kornar Winmil Yunti (KWY); LGBTQIA+-inclusive sexual health service SHINE SA; and South Australian Government statutory bodies such as Equal Opportunity SA.

There are opportunities to build a consistent understanding of and capability in relation to prevention priorities, practices, and techniques in South Australia. This would both enable development of new strategies and initiatives and support existing work directed at addressing the attitudes and systems that drive domestic, family, and sexual violence and effective prevention principles and practices. For existing prevention initiatives to have long-term impacts, it is important to ensure they are sustainably resourced and evaluated.

Based on Our Watch's existing work in South Australia, we have identified key gaps and opportunities to help address the drivers of violence against women and provide an enabling environment for a prevention state in South Australia. These include, for example:

- South Australian Government to engage closely with the Royal Commission and plan appropriately for implementation of recommendations.
- Commit to the development of an evidence-based, dedicated Primary Prevention Strategy.
- Build infrastructure and foundations for prevention prior to the conclusion of the Royal Commission and development of a Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence strategy and/or dedicated Primary Prevention Strategy.
- Commit to a long-term vision, approach, and funding of evidence-based RRE across South Australia.
- Build the capacity of the existing workforce within the Department of Education to support the implementation of whole-of-school RRE in every South Australian school.
- Focus on preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Appendix Three: Opportunities for prevention of violence against women in South Australia outlines these gaps and opportunities further.

Table 1 below maps some existing prevention activities in South Australia that are evidence-based examples of effective or promising primary prevention practice, across priority settings or providing key foundational elements (or ‘infrastructure’). Table 1 is only an initial overview of primary prevention activities in South Australia; however, there are opportunities to strengthen the coordination of primary prevention efforts in South Australia. Based on Our Watch’s experience mapping prevention efforts in other jurisdictions, there are likely a range of primary prevention related activities occurring across government departments and within the community that would not have been formally captured as primary prevention or sit under domestic, family, and sexual violence or gender equality plans or strategies. It may be useful for the Royal Commission to seek and consolidate evidence in relation to existing primary prevention activities specifically, to provide a clearer basis upon which to make recommendations about building on existing work, strengthening foundations, and identifying new opportunities.

**Table 1: Current prevention activities in South Australia and opportunities to strengthen prevention approaches across settings**

**Foundations for Primary Prevention**

Strong foundations for primary prevention, including government policies and frameworks that address the diversity of actions required for a whole-of-society approach to prevention, are integral. South Australia already has in place the following policies and strategies, which help form the structural foundations for primary prevention:

- [The South Australia’s Women’s Equality Blueprint 2023-2026](#)
- [Women’s Leadership and Economic Security Strategy 2021-2024](#)
- [The SA Youth Action Plan 2024-2027 \(under development\)](#)
- [South Australian Gender Pay Gap Taskforce](#)

There are opportunities to build upon key governance mechanisms in South Australia, such as the [Premier’s Council for Women](#), which provides strategic leadership and advice to ensure that the interests and needs of women are at the forefront of the South Australian Government’s policies and strategies.

The South Australian Government has also articulated a commitment to develop a framework for addressing domestic, family, and sexual violence. Our Watch strongly suggests that South Australia develop a stand-alone prevention plan to establish a coordinated and strategic approach to prevention activities across settings and contribute to their effectiveness.

**Prevention initiatives by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations**

There are a range of prevention initiatives undertaken by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) across South Australia. For example, Our Watch collaborates with [Kornar Winmil Yunti Aboriginal Corporation \(KWY\)](#) to enhance the prevention of family violence within Aboriginal communities in South Australia. KWY plays a role in preventing family violence within Aboriginal communities through a variety of targeted and culturally appropriate primary prevention programs. Their initiatives are designed to address the root causes of violence and support families in crisis and include both specialised men’s and women’s programs.

Other ACCOs dedicated to preventing and addressing family violence within Aboriginal communities in South Australia include [Nunga Mi:Minar](#), [NPY Women’s](#)

Council (through their Cross Border/APY Lands Aboriginal Family Violence Service) and Tiraapendi Wodli Aboriginal Family Violence Service. Our Watch understands that these services provide a range of culturally sensitive support and intervention strategies, including crisis intervention, case management, and therapeutic counselling tailored to the unique needs of Aboriginal families.

Nunkuwarrin Yunti of South Australia Inc provide a range of services including family support, health services, and programs aimed at preventing family violence. The Family Violence Legal Service Aboriginal Corporation SA (FVLSAC) provides legal assistance, case management, and community education programs aimed at preventing family violence and supporting victims.

These ACCOs collectively provide essential support and advocacy, focus on community engagement, and contribute to culturally sensitive and effective interventions for preventing and addressing family violence within Aboriginal communities in South Australia. Through supporting their work, and that of the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Network (SAACCON) and the SA First Nations Voice (Australia's first and only First Nations Voice to Parliament mechanism), South Australia can strengthen Aboriginal representation, self-determination and voices on preventing Aboriginal family violence and other forms of violence against Aboriginal women and children.

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## RRE

South Australia is currently developing a new domestic, family, and sexual violence strategy. The previous strategy, Committed to Safety, highlighted prevention as a key pillar and schools as a key setting. The associated action in the school setting has been the delivery of the state-based 'Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum', which has some content on gender stereotypes; however, it is primarily a child protection focused curriculum that does not align with evidence-based approach to RRE.

There are opportunities for SA to adopt an evidence-based approach to RRE which incorporates all seven core components of RRE (see Section 2.7, case study), including as a priority under any new DFSV Strategy. Curriculum is an important element to support schools, however, is only one part of the story. A whole-of-setting approach to RRE, as outlined in Respectful relationships education in schools: Evidence paper and the Respectful relationships education toolkit, is required be effective in preventing gender-based violence to bring about sustainable and meaningful change.

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## Universities

Our Watch has been engaging with universities in South Australia to support evidence-based implementation of primary prevention, including through delivery of training, Communities of Practice, and partnering events and research projects on the prevention of sexual harassment.

All three South Australian universities attended Our Watch's recent national universities conference "Walking, Talking & Learning Together: Unpacking a whole of university approach to preventing gender-based violence" on 21 June 2024. Our Watch is developing several resources to support universities.

Adelaide University and Flinders University are both engaged through the Educating for Equality Project aimed at embedding primary prevention into universities. Our

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Watch is engaged with Flinders University to deliver implementation training to the steering committee who are driving the implementation of Educating for Equality across the university.

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**TAFE**

TAFE SA is working on the Respect and Equality in TAFE project to integrate primary prevention into their institutions. Using Our Watch's framework, TAFE SA will conduct a self-assessment on gender equality and create an action plan to address gaps and implement primary prevention across the institution. They will also use Our Watch's support to meet the new national code requirements under the Action Plan for Higher Education.

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**Sport**

The SA Government has identified that it has an important part to play in supporting women's participation in sport, and in turn, sport's role in addressing gender inequality and violence against women. Through initiatives such as The Power of Her and the Women in Sport Taskforce, women and girls in South Australia have increased support and access to participation in sport as an important part of Australian community life.

Our Watch has delivered Equality and Respect in Sport training to AFL and AFLW player cohorts at Adelaide Football Club and Port Adelaide Football Club as part of Our Watch's partnership with the AFL.

Other existing initiatives include the Port Adelaide Football Club program Power to End Violence Against Women, which is designed specifically for year 10 students as a primary prevention program and promotes respectful relationships and gender equality, and Raiise' Respectful Club Environment education program.

There are significant opportunities in South Australia to further apply a gender lens to violence prevention activities in sport that are aligned with challenging the gendered drivers of violence against women. A gendered prevention approach in South Australian for community-based sporting organisations can strengthen and complement existing approaches that address condoning of violence in general (Reinforcing factor 1) and alcohol related violence (related to Reinforcing factor 3).

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**Workplaces**

Recent initiatives in South Australia to address gender inequality and violence in the workplace include the implementation of Our Watch's Workplace Equality and Respect framework in organisations such as Helping Hand, and the Best Practice Leadership in Preventing Workplace Sexual Harassment forum, which focused on supporting medium to large workplaces to implement positive duty<sup>v</sup> obligations, delivered by Our Watch in partnership with University of South Australia. A comprehensive workplace strategy that includes promoting the Lead the Change campaign and a focus on using the Workplace Equality and Respect Standards to benchmark policies, workplace culture and practices will help make South Australian workplaces safer, more inclusive, more equal and therefore more productive.

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<sup>v</sup> Positive duty requires employers to eliminate, as far as possible, workplace sexual harassment and discrimination, rather than responding after it occurs.

<b>Local Government</b>	<p>There are 68 councils and local governments across South Australia that have the networks, systems, and structures to reach people in multiple settings where they live, learn, work and play. Activity has occurred through the Local Government Association of South Australia as a member of the national Prevention Network established through the <i>National Workforce Development Project</i>.</p> <p>There are several particularly active councils. For example, <u>Adelaide Hills Council</u> received an honourable mention at the 2024 National Awards for Local Government in the 'Addressing Violence against Women and their Children' category for their commitment and work in implementing the <u>Local Government Toolkit</u>. Adelaide Hills Council has engaged the <u>Our Watch Institute</u> to support their primary prevention initiatives and provide training and expert advice.</p>
<b>Media and reporting</b>	<p>Pilot media advocacy project, <u>Voices for Change SA</u>, supported survivors of domestic and family violence to share their stories and upskilled journalists to take a trauma-informed approach to interviewing survivors and undertake best practice in publishing content about violence against women. Evaluation of this project found positive impacts on victim survivors. Additionally, Our Watch has delivered training to media students on prevention at the University of South Australia as part of broader work in the media setting.</p>
<b>Social marketing campaigns</b>	<p>State governments can help the community recognise and address problematic attitudes and behaviours like coercive control and issues of consent. The South Australian Government's <u>See the Signs of Coercive Control</u> campaign targets young people (15–24) to raise awareness of controlling behaviours, educates on available help services, and supports upcoming initiatives. Stakeholder feedback from the domestic, family, and sexual violence sectors ensured the campaign was engaging and authentic. The campaign, which was rolled out in two phases, effectively adapted to contexts like the FIFA Women's World Cup, enhancing engagement through radio, print, TV, and online channels.</p>
<b>Sexual violence prevention initiatives</b>	<p>Our Watch understands that <u>SHINE SA</u> provides education on healthy relationships, sexual health, and consent and DFSV programs that are LGBTQIA+ inclusive and secular. SHINE SA's work is grounded in a public health approach and has been developed with reference to <u>Change the story</u> and Our Watch's RRE tools and resources. However, there is an opportunity for South Australia to strengthen its sexual violence-focused programs and services, particularly in regional, rural, and remote areas.</p>

**Note: As noted above, this table is not exhaustive and further mapping is suggested.**

### 3.2. Promising examples of prevention across Australia

There are a number of effective and promising prevention activities occurring across Australia. In addition to the below examples, we would welcome the opportunity to share further examples with the Royal Commission on this work.

#### **Primary prevention governance**

There are a range of governance structures and mechanisms relevant to domestic, family, and sexual violence across jurisdictions and under state and territory strategies and plans. At a state government level, for example, the [Queensland DFV Prevention Council](#) is an active and effective mechanism for guiding primary prevention across the state. At a local government level, the governance group established under [Free from Violence Local Government Program 2023-2026](#) in Victoria, which includes representatives from across government departments, is also an effective example. Our Watch welcomes the opportunity to provide further information to the Royal Commission about these.

#### **Evidence-based primary prevention policy frameworks**

Several states and territories have developed evidence-based primary prevention strategies and plans, including Queensland and NSW, over the last 12 months. The Plans in both these jurisdictions will contribute to strategic, coordinated, and effective prevention work across the state; avoid duplication and support effective use of government investment; and provide clear roles and responsibilities for governments, organisations, and the community, because prevention is everyone's business. They also align with, complement and support implementation of other government frameworks, plans and commitments. The NSW Strategy has not yet been publicly released; however, the NSW Government has committed to investing \$38 million to implement its strategy and the Qld Government has committed approximately \$55 million, which includes the roll out of the new prevention plan and the establishment of a peak body for the domestic, family, and sexual violence sector in Queensland.

#### **Aboriginal-led prevention in Alice Springs**

The [Tangentyere Family Violence Prevention Program](#) (TFVPP) operates within Tangentyere Council, the major service delivery agency for the 16 'Town Camp' communities in Alice Springs in the Northern Territory. The TFVPP has developed a '[Grow Model](#)' for primary prevention programs, which uses the metaphor of a tree to allow for primary prevention to be understood and adapted to a specific context:

*Just like how trees find ways to thrive in the harsh conditions of the Central Australian desert, with the help of sun, water, and soil nutrients, so too can primary prevention programs be successful in the context of all the social challenges they face. If the right conditions are created, the tree can grow up strong.<sup>56</sup>*

Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group developed the [Mums Can, Dads Can Project](#), which aimed to influence parents in their modelling of the next generation of parents, and therefore change attitudes and beliefs to stop violence before it begins. The Mums Can Dads Can primary prevention program followed the logic of a 'grow model' organised

around three stages of change: (1) Community Consultation; (2) Program Development; (3) Resource Development and Implementation. Tangentyere Council developed [The Grow Model of family violence primary prevention: Changing attitudes and beliefs to stop violence before it begins](#) resource, which outlines the approach taken to designing, implementing and evaluating The Mums Can Dads Can project aligned with the principles and approach outlined in [Changing the picture](#).

Additionally, The '[Girls Can, Boys Can](#)' Project, developed by Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group in Alice Springs, provides early childhood services and educators with resources, lesson plans and activities that challenge rigid gender stereotypes, promote equal and respectful relationships between girls and boys and demonstrate the strengths of Aboriginal children, families and communities.

### ***Respectful Relationships Education in Victoria***

The Victorian Government is currently implementing a best-practice approach to RRE. The Respectful Relationships initiative in Victoria is strongly aligned with the evidence base and the whole-of-school model, incorporating all seven of the [core elements](#) identified as essential components for effective RRE.<sup>57</sup> The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence identified the critical role played by schools and early childhood education in creating a culture of respect and equality to prevent family violence. In 2016, RRE became a core component of the Victorian Curriculum from Prep to Year 12 and is currently being taught in all government and Catholic Schools and some independent schools as part of a whole-of-school approach. Since 2016-17, the Victorian Government has invested approximately \$120 million to support the implementation of RRE in Victorian schools.

The Respectful Relationships initiative in Victoria aims to embed a culture of respect and gender equality via curriculum, policies, practices, and the whole school environment. [Evaluations](#) of the evidence-based approach to RRE in Victoria to date have been positive with improvements in student social and emotional skills and wellbeing.<sup>58</sup> This speaks to the significant impact RRE can have across the school community when appropriately prioritised and resourced.

The Victorian Government is implementing RRE across schools and early childhood services including:

- a 'lead and partner' schools initiative that provides intensive training and support to over 1,950 government, Catholic and independent schools.
- the 'Resilience, Rights and Respectful relationships' teaching and learning materials for Foundation to Year 12.
- a professional development program for primary and secondary school staff and early childhood educators.
- a regional Respectful Relationships workforce that supports schools and early childhood education settings to implement RRE and strengthen referral and response to family violence.

The supportive policy environment, level of investment, and prioritisation of RRE in Victoria since 2014 has been the most significant enabling factor to the success of RRE implementation in Victoria. Whilst each jurisdiction is at a different level of readiness for



RRE implementation, the learnings from the approach taken in Victoria provide important insights and guidance on an evidence-based approach to RRE.

### ***Workforce development activities across the country***

Comprehensive and multi-faceted workforce development initiatives for the national primary prevention workforce across Australia aim to strengthen the capabilities, connections, infrastructure, and investment in the prevention workforce.

For example, capability frameworks provide a conceptual understanding of the specific types of skills, knowledge and attributes that are required or desired of the growing workforce, across different roles and levels of experience, and in different settings and contexts. Capability frameworks inform a consistent approach for key stakeholders to understand and work towards. These stakeholders include all levels of government, industry groups, education providers, employers, and current and future employees. Such frameworks can support the development of position descriptions and role classifications, education pathways into the sector, and inform individuals' professional development such as through non-accredited training and communities of practice.

In 2017, the Victorian Government released the [Preventing family violence and violence against women capability framework](#) (as well as capability frameworks for responding to family violence). The Victorian capability framework is currently being reviewed and updated. Western Australia's [Path to Safety \(2020-2030\)](#), a whole-of-government and community plan for reducing and responding to family and domestic violence, includes building a specialist and mainstream workforce as a priority action. WA's growing primary prevention infrastructure, including development of the prevention workforce, is also supported by the WA primary prevention framework, [Foundations for Change](#).

### ***Regional partnerships and strategies: Women's Health Services Victoria***

Women's health services have worked in primary prevention of violence against women for many decades. The [Victorian Women's Health Services Network](#) is a collective of 12 state government-funded women's health services. As a self-organised network, the services champion gendered health promotion, primary prevention and gender equity across settings, policy, and practice. The Network leads and coordinates local and state-wide health promotion activities that reach across every region of the state and embed prevention across a range of portfolios. The Network is a crucial conduit between population-level health frameworks and community-level action, supporting all three levels of government to achieve the visions set out in their legislation, policies, and strategies.

The Network leads more than 500 Victorian public, community and private organisations to develop, deliver and evaluate coordinated best practice prevention work through the nine regional violence prevention partnerships and strategies.<sup>59</sup> These partnerships cover every Victorian local government area and deliver high-quality evidence-based training and professional development for the state's violence prevention workforce and contributors.

For example, [The Together For Equality And Respect partnership](#) is a cross-sector collaboration of organisations in Melbourne's east that have worked together to prevent violence against women since 2012. Women's Health East acts as the lead and backbone organisation and employs a manager to coordinate and resource the partnership, support collective action across the region, and build the capacity of partner organisations to deliver

effective primary prevention activities through a health promotion lens. Between 2019 and 2021, the partnership delivered a range of evidence-based health promotion programs and capacity building initiatives to prevent violence against women.<sup>60</sup>

### ***Early years prevention initiatives***

Sydney's Women's and Girls' Emergency Centre's ALL IN program, is a whole-of-service project that engages early childhood educators, leaders, centre directors and families to give them the skills, knowledge and confidence to take action to challenge rigid, harmful gender roles and stereotypes that impact children in their care. Building on early years prevention approaches, ALL IN offers the opportunity to explore how children's play, language, resources, and storytelling can promote positive messages about gender, inclusion, and respectful relationships.

Baby Makes 3 is an evidence-based primary prevention initiative implemented in Victoria. The program provides support to new parents and shapes attitudes and social norms by challenging outdated gender expectations associated with becoming a parent. The program builds understanding, appreciation and mutual respect among first-time parents to foster equal and healthy relationships that optimise collaborative co-parenting of infants and children.

### ***Prevention activities with migrant and refugee communities***

The Australian Migrant Resource Centre (AMRC) has developed a good practice resource called Working with New and Emerging Communities to Prevent Family and Domestic Violence, which documents a model that the AMRC developed to undertake a breadth of violence-prevention initiatives with communities settling throughout South Australia. An example of an initiative run by AMRC is their women's empowerment program which assists and connects women from a range of different ethnic groups to empower themselves with knowledge and skills that would enhance their recognition of rights and their independence.

## Lessons from Victoria's Royal Commission into Family Violence

While no two jurisdictions are the same, Victoria is the only other state or territory that has carried out a Royal Commission into violence against women. The Royal Commission into Family Violence (the Victorian Royal Commission) can provide lessons and examples that can support the South Australian Royal Commission in its work and in developing its recommendations.

The Victorian Royal Commission was established in February 2015 after a number of family violence-related deaths in Victoria - most notably the death of Luke Batty. The Victorian Royal Commission demonstrated the profound impact such processes can have in elevating the conversation around violence against women, reforming and establishing critical policy and legislation, and spotlighting the need for a primary prevention approach to addressing violence against women. The Victorian Government implemented all 227 recommendations of the Victorian Royal Commission and operationalised implementation through its 10-year Plan [Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change](#).

### ***Establishing the essential foundations for primary prevention in Victoria***

Since 2015, Victoria has invested more than \$3.86 billion in relation to domestic, family, and sexual violence. The Victorian Government established significant foundations to enable primary prevention activities across the state. This has included a suite of legislative, regulatory and policy reforms. In addition to [Free From Violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women \(2017\)](#) and subsequent rolling action plans, these foundations include:

- [Safe and Strong: Victorian Gender Equality Strategy \(2016-2021\)](#)
- [Our equal state: Victoria's gender equality strategy and action plan \(2023-2027\)](#)
- The [Gender Equality Act \(2020\)](#) and important policy machinery and associated infrastructure, such as [gender responsive budgeting](#) and [The Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector](#), which supports implementation of the Act.
- Establishment and work of [Respect Victoria](#) as a statutory authority.
- The role and work of the [Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor](#) (which tabled its final report in 2023).
- The [Family Violence Research Agenda \(2021-2024\)](#), specifically the inclusion of primary prevention as a research priority.
- [Building from Strength the 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response](#) and the [Centre for Workforce Excellence](#).

The Victorian Government is currently developing its Third Family Violence Reform Rolling Action Plan 2024-2026 (the Third Rolling Action Plan).

### ***Promoting Aboriginal self-determination***

In implementing the Victorian Royal Commission's recommendations and in recognising the disproportionate rates of violence against Aboriginal women in the state, the Victorian Government has worked closely in partnership with Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal-

controlled organisations to identify the strategic priorities for Aboriginal-led prevention work.<sup>61</sup> This partnership is currently guided by the Dhek Dja Partnership Forum and has led to a series of deliverables in the Free from violence: Second action plan (2022 – 2025) that prioritise and support Aboriginal community-led prevention activities. We suggest that the South Australian Royal Commission be guided by South Australian Aboriginal stakeholders when developing recommendations regarding the design and delivery of prevention activities that are community led and owned.

### ***A phased approach and a focus on the workforce***

In Victoria, family violence stakeholders have pointed towards the challenges of the early implementation period following the Victorian Royal Commission and the lack of a dedicated and specialist workforce to support the design and delivery of implementation of recommendations.<sup>62</sup>

In developing its recommendations, we suggest the South Australian Royal Commission (and the South Australian Government) consider the readiness of South Australia and its workforce and support a phased approach. This would mean prioritising workforce development and capacity building, and ensuring the domestic, family, and sexual violence sector has the resourcing and capabilities to readily deliver on the recommendations. This should be combined with efforts to strengthen government expertise in domestic, family, and sexual violence, project management and implementation planning.

It is important to consider that a focus and necessary resourcing on the domestic, family, and sexual violence sector post-Royal Commission in South Australia may mean a loss of workers in aligned and intersecting sectors, such as the alcohol and other drugs, youth work and homelessness sectors. Carefully building an achievable and sustainable 'roadmap' that accounts for unintended consequences that may hamper the Royal Commission's vision or intent is crucial.

### ***A strong accountability mechanism***

The Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor (FVRIM) was established as a key mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Victorian Royal Commission's recommendations and holding government agencies accountable for change. It delivered a series of annual and topic-based reports to Parliament, reviewing progress across the implementation period. The FVRIM received dedicated resourcing to support the research of and consultation for these reports. The FVRIM was critical to implementing the Royal Commission's recommendations, however, it formally concluded its work in 2023.

Our Watch suggests that the South Australian Royal Commission consider making recommendations about a sustainable and strong accountability mechanism that monitors the long-term implementation of its recommendations to ensure the sustainability and transparency of the South Australian Royal Commission's vision. This is one element of establishing clear governance structures that help delineate responsibilities, support coordination, and uphold accountability in implementing the Royal Commission's recommendations.

### ***Victim-survivors' expertise and knowledge***

The Victorian Royal Commission prioritised the expertise of victim-survivors and family violence specialists. This focus contributed to the formation of the Victim Survivor's Advisory Council, established in July 2016 and consisting of 15 members with lived experience of family violence and who represent various diverse communities that were identified by the Royal Commission. This has contributed to development of victim-survivor advocacy models such as the Experts by Experience framework, which centres survivor-led policy and service development, planning and practice. A key learning is the importance of defining the council's role and operations and engagement protocols to improve the effectiveness of the working relationship with the Victorian Government.<sup>63</sup> The FVRIM also noted that while victim survivors repeatedly highlight the importance of primary prevention, further thinking and development is required to determine how lived experience expertise can be used to inform primary prevention efforts.<sup>64</sup>

For South Australia, the Royal Commission represents an opportunity to expand on these insights from Victoria to embed engagement with people with lived experience to inform the design, delivery and evaluation of violence prevention programs and initiatives. This includes considering the structures and coordination mechanisms to engage with people with lived experience for governments *and* community-based organisations and services.

### **Conclusion**

Like the Victorian Royal Commission, the South Australian Royal Commission has the opportunity to identify a clear and coordinated path forward where all individuals and communities across the state work towards the same goal.

Our Watch welcomes the opportunity to provide further information and reflections in relation to the Victorian Royal Commission, but also encourages the Commission to engage directly with the Victorian Government and Victorian stakeholders.

## Appendix 1: Alternative text for figures

### **Figure 1: The gendered drivers of violence against women and the social context of gender inequality and other forms of oppression**

Infographic listing the four gendered drivers of violence against women.

The four gendered drivers of violence are:

Driver 1: Condoning of violence against women.

Driver 2: Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence.

Driver 3: Rigid gender roles and stereotypes constructions of masculinity and femininity.

Driver 4: Men disrespecting women to bond with other men.

The four gendered drivers are framed by the social context they occur in. This social context is gender equality and other forms of oppression.

### **Figure 2: Violence against women occurs in the context of multiple intersecting forms of oppression, discrimination, power, and privilege**

Infographic showing multiple intersecting forms of oppression and privilege that shape the social context in which violence against women occurs and affect its prevalence and dynamics. The illustrated intersecting forms of oppression and privilege are ableism, ageism, racism and colonialism, class discrimination, sexism and gender inequality, heteronormativity, homophobia and biphobia, and transphobia and cisnormativity.

### **Figure 3: Primary prevention of violence against women as an upstream response**

Infographic showing the different stages of intervention in the problem of violence against women. The different stages of the problem are represented by a river.

Prevention is work that occurs upstream in the river, because it is trying to prevent the problem from happening in the first place. This is represented in the image as people standing on the riverbank, stopping anyone from falling in.

The second stage is early intervention. It is work that tries to help people who have only just fallen into the river. Early intervention is represented in the image by a person throwing life buoys to rescue people who are midstream in the river.

The third stage is crisis response. It occurs downstream when the problem is already advanced. It is represented in the image by an ambulance attempting to rescue people who are in very serious trouble much further downstream in the river.

### **Figure 4: The eight essential actions to prevent violence against women**

Infographic listing eight essential actions to prevent violence against women.

The first row lists the four essential actions to address the gendered drivers of violence against women:

Essential action 1: Challenge condoning of gender-based violence

Essential action 2: Promote women’s independence and decision-making in public life and relationships.

Essential action 3: Foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles.

Essential action 4: Strengthen positive, equal, and respectful relations between and among women and men, boys, and girls.

The second row lists the four essential actions to address the social contexts that give rise to violence against women:

Essential action 5: Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life.

Essential action 6: Address the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination, promote broader social justice.

Essential action 7: Build safe, fair, and equitable organisations and institutions by focusing on policy and systems change.

Essential action 8: Strengthen positive, equal, and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls, and boys, in public and private spheres.

**Figure 5: Essential Actions to address the drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.**

Infographic showing the unique drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and the considerations of intersectionality and colonisation required to address this violence. This is represented by three graphic illustrations situated around a circular figure punctuated by ‘intersectionality’ and ‘colonisation’, and ‘Violence against Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Women’ in the centre.

On the left side, next to an illustration of someone overlooking ships coming to shore is the text: “Address the legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities”.

Above this is a graphic showing a figure with short hair, coded male, next to a figure with longer hair, coded female. Next to this graphic is the text: “Address the gendered drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women”.

The final illustration shows an outline of Australia next to the text: “Address the legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation for non-Indigenous people, and across Australian society”.

**Figure 6: The six essential actions to tackle the underlying ableist drivers of violence against women and girls with disabilities.**

Infographic listing six essential actions to prevent violence against women and girls with disabilities.

Essential action 1: Address the underlying social context that gives rise to violence against women and girls with disabilities.



Essential action 2: Challenge the acceptance and normalisation of violence against women and girls with disabilities.

Essential action 3: Improve attitudes towards women and girls with disabilities by challenging ableist and sexist stereotypes.

Essential action 4: Promote the inclusion of women and girls with disabilities in all aspects of life.

Essential action 5: Promote women and girls with disabilities' independence, agency and participation in leadership and decision-making.

Essential action 6: Engage men and boys to challenge controlling, dominant and aggressive forms of masculinity.

**Figure 7: Guiding principles for addressing masculinities and working with men and boys.**

Infographic showing the guiding principles for addressing masculinities and working with men and boys. These principles are represented as sections of a wheel with accompanying icons for each principle. The principles are:

- Intersectional
- Strength-based
- Gender transformative
- Maintaining accountability
- Solutions across all levels

**Figure 8: The socio-ecological model of violence against women**

Infographic showing the different factors which influence the occurrence of violence against women. The figure represents violence as the outcome of interactions among many factors at four levels. It shows examples of structures, norms and practices found to increase the probability of violence against women, at different levels of the social ecology.

The highest level is the societal level: dominant social norms supporting rigid roles and stereotyping, or condoning, excusing and downplaying violence against women.

The second level is the system and institutional level: failure of systems, institutions, and policies to promote women's economic, legal, and social autonomy, or to adequately address violence against women.

The third level is the organisational and community level: organisation and community norms, structures and practices supporting or failing to address gender inequality, stereotyping, discrimination, and violence.

The fourth and final level is the individual and relationship level: individual adherence to rigid gender roles and identities, weak support for gender equality, social learning of violence against women, male dominance and controlling behaviours in relationships.

**Figure 9: Core elements of effective respectful relationships education in schools**

Infographic showing the core elements of effective respectful relationships education in schools. Each element is represented by a different icon.

The first element is addressing the drivers of gender-based violence. This is visually represented by two stick figures standing side by side.

The second element is taking a whole-of-school approach to change. This is visually represented by an outline of a school building.

The third element is supporting the change by developing a professional learning strategy. This is visually represented by three stick figures gathering around a certificate-like document.

The fourth element is using age-appropriate curriculum that addresses the drivers of gender-based violence. This is visually represented by a simple system graphic.

The fifth element is sustaining and committing to the change by having a long-term vision, approach, and funding. This is visually represented by an eye centred in a mechanism icon.

The sixth element is support through cross-sectoral collaboration and coordination. This is visually represented by a handshake styled in the shape of a heart.

The seventh element is to evaluate for continuous improvement. This is visually represented by a checklist document.

## Appendix 2: Priority Settings for Prevention

To reach the largest possible number of people across institutions, organisations and systems, prevention efforts need to engage people across every setting where they live, work, learn, socialise, and play, and involve the people, professionals and communities who are part of these settings.

*Change the story* identifies a number of priority settings for primary prevention based on their widespread potential for impact and because there is a strong evidence base to draw from in these settings, including a range of existing resources and frameworks. These are the settings in which Our Watch has focused its work, and in which there is most evidence and practice across Australia. However, there is also primary prevention work occurring in other settings, including those new and emerging settings identified in *Change the story*. Our Watch identifies the priority settings and provides a snapshot of current evidence and primary prevention activity in these settings, noting the significant additional work being undertaken across these settings by governments and stakeholders across jurisdictions.

In addition to the below, we provided an example of Respectful Relationships Education a case study of a whole-of-system approach under section 2.7 of this submission.

### **Higher education**

Higher education settings including universities and vocational education organisations represent a key activity area for primary prevention.

Our Watch's *Educating for Equality*, developed in collaboration with Universities Australia, aims to provide universities with a whole-of-university approach that can help guide, support and build upon existing work to promote gender equality and prevent gender-based violence.

In February 2024, driven largely by the advocacy of survivor-advocates, students, activists and experts, and in response to growing evidence of the need for a stronger and more consistent legislative framework, the Commonwealth Government and all state and territory governments committed to a sector-wide Action Plan Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Higher Education. The Action Plan includes the development of a National Code, and the establishment of a Student Ombudsman, and introduces a requirement for higher education providers to embed a whole-of-organisation approach to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. Our Watch CEO, Patty Kinnersly, was invited to act as Expert Advisor to the Working Group developing the Action Plan, and Our Watch currently sits on the Expert Reference Group informing the development of the National Higher Education Code to Respond to and Prevent Gender-Based Violence (which was one of the key recommendations from the Action Plan).

Our Watch also developed the *Respect and Equality in TAFE framework*, which helps build a TAFE environment that promotes gender equality and respect to prevent violence against women. The existing framework was developed between 2019 and 2021 with TAFEs in Victoria, where there are requirements under the Victorian Gender Equality Act 2020 for

TAFEs to promote gender equality in the workplace, including by developing and submitting a Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP).

### ***Workplaces***

Workplaces have significant reach across the South Australian population and can shape and influence individual and organisational views, positions and actions. This includes the workplace's role not only as an employer, but also as a key feature of people's lives and in shaping norms and practices in the community. In addition to complying with legislative and other obligations such as positive duty, workplaces can drive a culture of equality and respect, including through strong leadership and examining and taking action across recruitment practices, leadership structures, gender pay parity, operations, policies, and procedures.

Our Watch's *Workplace Equality and Respect* is an evidence-based approach to guide workplaces to embed gender equality and prevent sexual harassment and violence against women. It is framed around *five standards* (Commitment, Conditions, Culture, Support and Core business) and aligns with positive duty obligations under the *Anti-Discrimination and Human Rights Legislation Amendment (Respect at Work) Act 2022 (Cth)*. Using the Standards to benchmark their policies, workplace culture and practices will help make Australian workplaces safer, more inclusive, more equal and therefore more productive. Our Watch has also developed the *Lead the Change campaign* to encourage employers to make prevention of sexual harassment a priority.

### ***Sports clubs and institutions***

Sport reaches and influences large groups and communities including employees, sponsors, supporters, volunteers, players and their families. Sport has an important part to play in preventing violence against women both at an individual level and more broadly through the influence of sports clubs and institutions as organisations and workplaces. This sector includes local and regional clubs, professional institutions, state and national professional sporting organisations (inclusive of elite leagues, clubs and organisations) and the organisations providing services and facilities to them.

Our Watch's evidence review *A team effort: Preventing violence against women through sport evidence guide* outlines 10 key elements that are needed for promising prevention practice in sports to ensure that design, delivery, implementation and evaluation is evidence-led and underpinned by addressing the gendered drivers of violence against women. Building on this, Our Watch's *Equality and Respect in Sport* outlines five Standards describing what needs to be achieved at an organisational level to embed equality and respect in any sports organisation.

### ***Local government***

As the closest level of government to the community, local governments are uniquely placed to drive social change and prevent violence against women across both council workplaces and local communities. As leaders in their community and large local employers, local councils can be supported to set the standard for equality and respect in their communities. Our Watch, in conjunction with the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) has

produced a series of 12 factsheets for councils and council staff on how to embed the prevention of violence against women and gender equality into all areas of their influence.

There are significant opportunities for South Australian Local Governments and the Local Government Association of South Australia to lead prevention initiatives in their local communities and internally as a workplace. It is essential this is adequately resourced to ensure this work is effective and sustainable. Examples from other states and territories includes funding Primary Prevention Officers in local governments or within the state association, the development of municipal primary prevention or gender equality strategies (or the integration of these areas into the Council Plan or Health Plan) and grants to support Councils to work in partnership with their communities.

### ***Media and reporting***

The media is a powerful driver of social change and can positively influence the culture, behaviours and attitudes that drive violence against women. This setting includes the industries and organisations that deliver media in all its forms – print, television, podcasts, digital and radio – and includes both traditional and new media, and alternative media outlets. A whole-of-setting approach accounts for the role of media and the influence the media has on the prevalence and experience of violence.

Our Watch developed *national media reporting guidelines*, which outline eight tips for reporting on violence against women. Additionally, Our Watch has developed *a range of resources* to support media stakeholders – journalists, newsrooms, students, and the media as organisations and workplaces – to report on violence in ways that do not reinforce the gendered drivers or cause further harm to victim-survivors. This includes Our Watch's *Guide for reporting on violence against transgender and gender diverse communities*, tips for reporting on *sexual harassment* and tips for *sports journalists*. Our Watch has developed a suite of *curriculum materials designed for Australian tertiary institutions* to support teaching of best practice reporting on violence against women. Furthermore, the *Our Watch Fellowship Program*, delivered in partnership with the Walkley Foundation, provides a prestigious leadership opportunity for outstanding journalists and offers Fellows the opportunity to learn best-practice reporting on violence against women, sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace and build on their knowledge on gender inequality.

### ***Settings in which prevention approaches are new or emerging***

While most prevention activity to date has occurred in the settings listed above, there are other settings where it is crucial to develop and implement prevention activity, but which have received less investment and support. Our Watch and others are currently working to develop approaches and resources in the early years' settings (e.g. early childhood education and care); internet, digital and social media settings; and faith-based settings.

## **Appendix 3: Opportunities for prevention of violence against women in South Australia**

**Title: Opportunities for prevention of violence against women in South Australia**

Date: June 2024

# Opportunities for prevention of violence against women in South Australia



Prepared by Our Watch: a national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia

## Violence against women in South Australia

Violence against women and girls is a serious and widespread problem.

- In South Australia an estimated 279,300 women (39%) have experienced violence (physical and/or sexual) since the age of 15, including 21 per cent (151,400) who have experienced sexual violence and 31% who have experienced physical violence (220,000), rates that are in-line with the national average.<sup>1</sup>
- An estimated 202,200 women in South Australia (29%) have experienced violence, emotional abuse, or economic abuse by a cohabiting partners since the age of 15, a rate higher than the national average of 27 per cent.<sup>2</sup>
- Violence against women takes a profound and long-term toll of women's health and wellbeing, on families and communities, and on society as a whole. This epidemic costs Australia \$21.7 billion each year.<sup>3</sup> The 2021 National Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS) found that between 2017 and 2021, South Australians showed significant improvement in their understanding of violence against women and in their rejection of gender inequality, sexual assault and sexual harassment, but there is still room to further improve understanding and attitudes regarding gender inequality and violence against women in South Australia.<sup>4</sup>

## The context in South Australia

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence is currently a key focus of the South Australian Government. In December 2023, the Government established a [Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence](#) (the Royal Commission).

'Committed to Safety: A framework for addressing domestic, family and sexual violence in South Australia' was the South Australian policy framework in relation to preventing domestic, family and sexual violence until June 2022. There is no current strategy for DFSV in South Australia.

The [South Australia's Women Equality Blueprint 2023-2026](#), provides a roadmap of current and future policies and practices to help support and guide women and girls' safety and security, increase women's participation and representation in leadership, promote women's economic wellbeing and increase support for women's health issues.

Other key plans and strategies include the [Women's Leadership and Economic Security Strategy 2021-2024](#) and [The SA Youth Action Plan 2024-2027](#) (under development). In 2022, the Government also established the [South Australian Gender Pay Gap Taskforce](#) to identify the drivers of the pay gap in South Australia.

## Key opportunities for prevention in South Australia

### 1. Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence



The Royal Commission, which commenced on 1 July 2024, presents a significant opportunity for the prevention of violence against women in South Australia. It will focus on prevention; early intervention; South Australia's response; recovery and healing; and how these efforts can be better integrated and coordinated.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) requires the Royal Commission to inquire into changing the underlying social drivers of domestic, family and sexual violence to stop violence before it starts.

The Royal Commission provides a key opportunity to provide recommendations about building the foundations for prevention in South Australia, as well as specific recommendations on how to prevent violence against women in South Australia. There is also an opportunity for the SA Government to engage with the Royal Commission and prepare for meaningful implementation of its recommendations.

- **SA Government to engage with the Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence and plan appropriately for implementation of recommendations.**

## **2. Develop a dedicated primary prevention strategy**

Following the end of *Committed to Safety* in 2022, there is no current strategy for DFSV or primary prevention in South Australia. As a result, and drawing on any recommendations made by the Royal Commission, there is a key opportunity to develop a dedicated primary prevention strategy in addition to a broader domestic, family and sexual violence strategy.

South Australia currently has a range of primary prevention activities underway, however, there is a significant opportunity to build on these existing efforts and establish a coordinated and strategic approach to prevention.

A dedicated primary prevention strategy could build the foundations of prevention, support whole of government coordination and outline a clear set of evidence-based prevention priorities and activities. It would ensure a long-term coordinated effort to achieve the sustained social change required to prevent violence against women in South Australia.

Importantly, the development of the Strategy should be informed by the evidence base, including Change the story, Changing the Picture and Changing the landscape, as well as recommendations made by the Royal Commission.

- **Commit to the development of an evidence based dedicated Primary Prevention Strategy.**

## **3. Build and expand the foundations of primary prevention in SA**

Primary prevention requires strong foundations (or infrastructure), which are the systems and structures that ensure primary prevention is supported, coordinated and sustained over the long term. These foundations are critical to enabling and sustaining changes to the drivers of violence and ensuring the design, implementation and evaluation of prevention efforts occur in a coordinated way.<sup>5</sup>

The Royal Commission will provide an important basis to inform government decision-making in this area moving forward. However, there is an opportunity for the South Australian Government to lay important foundations for prevention in South Australia now, prior to the Royal Commission making its formal recommendations.

This includes actions such as:

- considering mechanisms for governance, coordination and collaboration both within and across government, as well as more broadly
- supporting prevention workforce and sector development to ensure there is a strong workforce in place to support implementation of Royal Commission recommendations
- reviewing, and developing evaluation, monitoring and reporting mechanisms.
  - **Build foundations for prevention prior to the conclusion of the Royal Commission and development of a Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy and/or dedicated Primary Prevention Strategy.**

#### **4. Deliver a phased approach to Respectful Relationships Education**

Evidence-based respectful relationships education (RRE) is a holistic approach to the prevention of gender-based violence in school settings. It is a whole of school model that goes beyond curriculum delivery using the education system as a catalyst for generational and cultural change by engaging schools, as education institutions and workplaces and community hubs, to comprehensively address the drivers of gender-based violence.

The Women's Equality Blueprint includes an action to "Continue delivery of Respectful Relationships education" through a partnership between the South Australian Government and Power Community Limited (Port Adelaide Football Club) for the delivery of primary prevention community programs to year 10 students. While this is welcome, there is a significant opportunity for the South Australian Government to commit to a phased roll out of evidence-based RRE across South Australia. A phased approach to RRE that is implemented in line with the evidence base, and prioritised and recognised as core business of the education system in South Australia will contribute to ending gender-based violence.

There are particular opportunities in relation to RRE in 2024 in light of the work of the National RRE Expert Working Group and Commonwealth funding for state and territory governments in relation to RRE.

- **Commit to a long-term vision, approach and funding of evidence-based RRE across South Australia.**
- **Build the capacity of the existing workforce within the Department of Education to support the implementation of whole-of-school RRE in every South Australian school.**

## 5. Focus on preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience disproportionate rates of violence, and violence that is often more severe and more complex in its impacts. Action to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women needs to take into account not only gender inequality, but also the impacts of colonisation and racism.

The Royal Commission ToR calls for the Commission to have a strong focus on the rates of violence experienced by Aboriginal women and children and the over-representation of Aboriginal people in current service systems, and to take into account the views and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

There are opportunities for the South Australian Government to engage with, consider and prioritise the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations, and communities to ensure self-determination, ownership and control are at the centre of all prevention actions. This work can draw on the SA First Nations Voice to Parliament.

Importantly, in considering the recommendations of the Royal Commission, or developing any future strategies or plans, there are opportunities to align with the dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2027, other frameworks such as the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and ensure appropriate commitment to preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in SA.

## Contacts

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

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## Appendix 4: List of key Our Watch frameworks, projects, and activities

### Our Watch Key Frameworks:

- [Change the Story](#)
- [Changing the Picture Background Paper](#)
- [Changing the Picture framework](#)
- [Changing the Landscape](#)
- [Changing the Landscape Framework for Action](#)
- [Counting on Change](#)
- [Tracking Progress in Prevention](#)
- [Report Card: Tracking Progress in Prevention](#)
- [Growing with Change](#)

### Our Watch key resources and projects:

- [Respectful Relationships Education](#)
- [Media Making Change](#)
- [Respect and Equality in TAFE](#)
- [Educating for Equality](#)
- [Workplace Equality and Respect](#)
- [Equality and Respect in Sport](#)
- [Local Government Toolkit](#)

### Our Watch communications campaigns:

- [Let's change the story](#)

### Our Watch new and emerging projects:

- [Men and masculinities](#)
- [Resistance and backlash in primary prevention of violence against women](#)
- [LGBTQIA+ communities](#)
- [Refugee and migrant communities](#)
- [Digital environments](#)
- [Early Years](#)
- [Faith-based communities](#)

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