

# Opportunities for prevention of violence against women and children in Tasmania



**Our  
Watch**

Preventing violence  
against women

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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 our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples past and present.

# Violence against women is preventable

## Violence against women in Tasmania

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

In Tasmania:

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**43%**

43% of women have experienced violence (physical and/or sexual) since the age of 15<sup>i</sup>.

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**32%**

32% have experienced violence, emotional abuse, or economic abuse by a cohabiting partner since the age of 15<sup>ii</sup>.

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**2017**

Community attitudes towards domestic violence have not significantly improved since 2017<sup>iii</sup>.

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**\$21.7bn**

Violence against women takes a profound and long-term toll on women's health and wellbeing, on families and communities, and on society as a whole. The epidemic costs Australia \$21.7 billion each year<sup>iv</sup>.

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i Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021-22), Personal Safety, Australia, ABS Website, accessed 13 July 2023.

ii Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021-22), Personal Safety, Australia, ABS Website, accessed 13 July 2023.

iii Coumarelos, C., Roberts, N., Weeks, N., Bernstein, S., & Honey, N. (2023). Attitudes matter: The 2021 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS), Findings for Australian states and territories (Research report, 05/2023). ANROWS.

iv KPMG. (2016). The cost of violence against women and their children. Retrieved from: <https://www.dss.gov.au/sites>

## Primary prevention of violence against women

Primary prevention means stopping violence against women from occurring in the first place by addressing its underlying drivers. This 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 it. Primary prevention is a distinct approach – broader than, but complementary to early intervention, response and recovery.

Our Watch's *Change the story* sets out a national, universal, population-level approach to primary prevention of violence against women. This approach goes beyond addressing individual behaviours to consider the broader social, political and economic factors that drive violence. Through a whole-of-society approach, primary prevention addresses the systems, structures, norms, attitudes, practices and power imbalances that drive violence against women.

## The national prevention landscape

Commonwealth and state and territory governments have demonstrated strong leadership through the second *National Plan to End Violence Against Women (2023-2032)* which includes a focus on preventing violence against women, and envisages broad-based cultural and systemic change for Australia. The National Plan provides a foundation for a national approach to prevention. *Change the Story* provides the evidence base to underpin the primary prevention elements of the National Plan.

There is a critical and unique role for governments in preventing violence against women. Commonwealth, state and territory and local governments have unique access to policy, legislative and regulatory levers and these levers are critical to facilitate social, cultural and structural and systemic change. Each jurisdiction in Australia is on their own primary prevention journey. As knowledge of primary prevention increases, significant progress has been made across the country by governments who have aligned their efforts with the evidence-base for a whole-of-population approach to preventing violence against women.

## Policy context in Tasmania

Tasmania's *Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-2027: Survivors at the Centre* provides an important contribution to the overarching framework in Tasmania designed to prevent violence against women. A comprehensive approach to violence against women must involve a range of interdependent and interlinked strategies. The Action Plan reflects the need for priority action across the prevention, early intervention, response and recovery spectrum, including actions designed to support and strengthen the response sector's capacity to meet immediate need and ensure the safety of Tasmanian women experiencing violence. The Action Plan is complemented by Equal Means Equal, Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-2027 which sets a vision where women and girls have equal choice, opportunity, and resources to participate in economic, social, political and community life.

The Tasmanian Government is a member of Our Watch, alongside all Australian states and territories. In addition, the Tasmanian Government and Our Watch have a five-year partnership agreement which provides an opportunity to work collaboratively to build primary prevention infrastructure and capacity across Tasmania.

There is an opportunity to build on this Action Plan and existing work in Tasmania to continue to build strong foundations for prevention work and expand the primary prevention focus and associated prevention activity in Tasmania. There are also opportunities to measure and evaluate the impacts of primary prevention nationally and in Tasmania.

# Key opportunities for primary prevention in Tasmania

There are a number of opportunities to build on the important work already being done to strengthen and advance prevention in Tasmania.

## 1.

### Develop a dedicated primary prevention strategy

A useful commitment by the Tasmanian Government to an increased focus on primary prevention could include the development of a dedicated Primary Prevention Strategy.

While there is some inclusion of primary prevention in existing strategies, plans and policies relevant to women's safety and family and sexual violence, there are opportunities to strengthen this focus. A Prevention Strategy could provide a strong foundation for a coordinated approach to prevention in Tasmania, including building the prevention infrastructure, supporting whole of government coordination and outline a clear set of prevention priorities and activities.

A whole of population approach to violence prevention engages all sectors and reaches across multiple government portfolios. This level of complexity requires strong prevention infrastructure, including a high level of coordination, a primary prevention workforce, governance mechanisms and strong monitoring and evaluation. The development of a dedicated strategy to prevent violence against women, using the evidence and principles of effective prevention outlined in Our Watch's national primary prevention frameworks, would ensure a long-term coordinated effort to achieve the sustained social change required to prevent violence against women in Tasmania.

- Commit to the development and implementation of a dedicated Primary Prevention Strategy for Tasmania, with associated investment.

## 2.

### Deliver a phased approach to best practice 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.

In line with the commitment in Tasmania's Third Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Plan, there is an opportunity for the Tasmanian Government to commit to a phased roll out of evidence-based RRE across Tasmania.

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 Tasmania will reduce gender-based violence in Tasmania.

- Commit to a phased approach to implementation of evidence based respectful relationships education across Tasmania.
- Expand the specialist prevention workforce and build the capacity of the existing workforce within the Department of Education, Children and Young People to support implementation of RRE in every Tasmanian school.

## 3.

### Support primary prevention in local governments across Tasmania

As the closest level of government to the community, local governments are uniquely placed to drive social change and prevent domestic, family, and sexual violence across both council workplaces and local communities. Local governments shape attitudes, culture and norms through employment, service provision, procurement, planning and local initiatives. As leaders in their community, local councils can be supported to set the standard for equality and respect in their communities.

Since 2021, Our Watch has worked collaboratively with the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) to support a range of activity by local governments in Tasmania. This included the implementation of Our Watch's Workplace Equality and Respect Standards. There are opportunities to build on this work, and local government commitment to developing a family and sexual violence framework for local governments across Tasmania.

- Support the Local Government Association of Tasmania and the Tasmanian local government sector to expand initiatives to prevent violence against women, including implement the Workplace Equality and Respect Standards.
- Commit to supporting the development of a family and sexual violence framework for local governments across Tasmania.

## 4.

### Commit to primary prevention activity across multiple settings

Addressing a complex problem like violence against women requires engaging people across multiple settings and sectors where people live, work, learn, socialise and play. There are a number of 'big reach' settings in which there is a strong evidence base and existing prevention activities occurring across jurisdictions, including some in Tasmania. Some of these settings are already the focus of the existing partnership between the Tasmanian Government and Our Watch. The following settings offer potential for targeted primary prevention activities that are likely have a significant impact on social norms, organisational practices and institutional structure:

- Tertiary education including universities, TAFEs and vocational education and training organisations
  - Workplaces, including in key Tasmanian and male-dominated industries such as forestry, mining and resources, fisheries, construction, Antarctic science and advanced manufacturing.
  - Sports clubs and institutions
  - Media.
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- Support the significant scaling up of primary prevention activity in big reach settings in Tasmania.

**If you wish to discuss  
these opportunities with  
Our Watch, please contact:**

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