

Opportunities for prevention of violence against women and children in the Northern Territory



**Our
Watch**

Preventing violence
against women

Acknowledgement of Country

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

As a non-Indigenous organisation, Our Watch understands that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is not an 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander problem.' As highlighted in Our Watch's national resource *Changing the picture*, there is an intersection between racism, sexism and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

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



Violence against women is preventable

The facts: Violence against women in the Northern Territory

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

In the Northern Territory:

46%

Almost one half (46%) of **women in the NT have experienced violence** (physical and/or sexual) since the age of 15.¹

An estimated 22,300 women in the NT (31%) have experienced violence, emotional abuse, or economic abuse by a cohabiting partner since the age of 15, **a rate higher than the national average** of 27 per cent.²

629

629 people per 100,000 were hospitalised due to family and domestic violence in the NT in 2020-21. This was 20 times the rate for Australia overall (31 people per 100,000).³

91%

91% of **women killed in DFV-related homicides** from August 2000 to June 2023 **were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women**.⁴

12

From July 2000 to December 2021, there were an average of 12 (12.4) **domestic and family violence-related assault deaths** identified **per calendar year** in the NT.⁵

\$450m

The estimated **cost of domestic, family and sexual violence to the NT** was over \$450 million in 2020-21.⁶

Our vision:

Safe happy and healthy lives for all women, children and communities in the Northern Territory

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.

Importantly, primary prevention complements early intervention, response and recovery approaches and activities.

Informed by national frameworks, *Change the story*, *Changing the picture* and *Changing the landscape*, primary prevention requires work at all levels of society. It also requires a commitment from governments, practitioners, and the community, at all levels of society, to address these drivers of violence in all settings where people live, learn, work, and socialise.

The role of governments in primary prevention

Governments play an important and unique role in preventing violence against women. With access to policy, legislative and regulatory levers, governments are critical to facilitating social, cultural, and structural and systemic change.

While each jurisdiction is on their own primary prevention journey, Commonwealth and State and Territory governments have demonstrated strong leadership and commitment through the second National Plan to End Violence Against Women 2023-2032. Informed by Our Watch's evidenced-based framework *Change the story*, the National Plan includes a dedicated focus on preventing violence against women and envisages broad-based cultural and systemic change for Australia.

There are opportunities to invest and build upon the important primary prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing work already underway in the NT, including through increased and sustained investment by all levels of government. It is critical for governments to work with the private sector, civil society and community leaders to ensure an effective, holistic approach to prevention.

The Northern Territory Policy Context

The domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) sector, with support from the Territory's broader health and community sector, are providing vital prevention, early intervention, response and recovery services. A comprehensive approach to addressing violence against women involves interdependent and interlinked strategies.

The key plans, frameworks and partnerships that guide the NT's primary prevention work include:

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028 (DFSV Framework) and allied action plans

The DFSV Framework and the allied action plans provide the foundation for addressing and preventing domestic, family, and sexual violence in the NT. They are aimed at ensuring comprehensive coordination and collaboration between government bodies, non-government organisations and community stakeholders.

Outcome 1 of the Framework is focused on preventing violence. It includes a strong focus on children and young people and the specific contexts and places where inequalities and violent behaviours are shaped. A key initiative under this outcome is the Safe, Respected and Free from Violence Prevention Program, which aims to increase the NT's violence prevention capacity by investing in services and programs that seek to prevent violence over time by challenging community attitudes and socio-political structures that enable the use of violence.

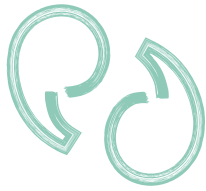
Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework 2020-2028

This Framework sits under and is funded through the DFSV Reduction Framework to specifically address sexual violence through targeted prevention and response measures.

Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Workforce and Sector Development Plan

To support the implementation of both Frameworks, the Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Workforce and Sector Development Plan focuses on enhancing the coordination and capabilities of the specialist DFSV workforce and relevant sectors to address domestic, family and sexual violence. Investment in the NT DFSV Primary Prevention Community of Practice is allocated through the DFSV Framework to implement the Plan.





“It is important to strengthen connection, relationships and partnerships for safe and effective work”

Member reflection, Northern Territory Primary Prevention Community of Practice

Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan

This Plan was developed to support the DFSV Framework and its action plans. It lays out the NT Government's theory of change, how the DFSV Framework and its action plans will be monitored, how the impact of actions will be measured, and mechanisms of transparency with the broader DFSV sector. Short to medium term outcomes relevant to primary prevention centre on workforce capability and connectedness, access to strengths based prevention initiatives for individuals, and Aboriginal-led and designed initiatives.

The Northern Territory Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025

This Plan aims to advance gender equality in the Northern Territory and focuses on empowering communities through education and awareness raising. It includes a range of initiatives focused on engaging communities, enhancing health and wellbeing, improving safety measures, promoting economic stability, nurturing leadership roles, and encouraging inclusive participation. The primary investments allocated under the DFSV Framework to implement the Plan include small grants for LGBTQIA+ and Gender Diversity inclusion and capacity building programs, International Women's Day and gender equality initiatives, and the [Men's Places Policy and Grant Program](#).

Related and supporting initiatives across Government

Other related plans and strategies that support and complement the implementation of DFSV initiatives across the NT include the [NT Disability Strategy 2022-2032](#) and action plan, the [NT Youth Strategy 2023-2033](#) and action plan, the [NT Seniors Policy 2021-2026](#), [Everyone Together Aboriginal Affairs Strategy 2019-2029](#), and the [10 Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families in the Northern Territory](#). Additionally, the commitments outlined in the [NT Closing the Gap Implementation Plan](#) and the [NT Aboriginal Justice Agreement 2021-2027](#) are critical to informing and supporting primary prevention.

Northern Territory Government partnership with Our Watch

Alongside all Australian governments, the Northern Territory Government is a member of Our Watch. The Northern Territory Government and Our Watch also have a partnership agreement that aims to develop primary prevention infrastructure and capacity in the Northern Territory. In addition to activities focused on building primary prevention understanding and knowledge, the partnership has played a crucial role in supporting the development of the primary prevention workforce through the establishment of the [NT DFSV Primary Prevention Community of Practice](#). The current partnership will end in December 2024.

Key opportunities for primary prevention in the Northern Territory

There is significant prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing work already underway in the NT.

There are also opportunities to continue, and build on, the existing primary prevention work in the Northern Territory and to recognise and learn from community-based approaches to addressing violence against women, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and to continue to build strong foundations for primary prevention in the NT.

1.

Deliver on current primary prevention commitments

There are current commitments to primary prevention activities by the Northern Territory Government made in the DFSV Reduction Framework 2018-2028, implemented via Action Plan 1 and Action Plan 2 and measured by the Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan. There are further commitments to prevention in the Gender Equality Action Plan 2022-2025.

These are whole-of-government commitments, with activities, programs, and initiatives extending across multiple settings and sectors where people live, work, learn, socialise, and play. They establish a foundation for increasing awareness and understanding of primary prevention, fostering partnerships and networks essential for effective prevention efforts, and contributing to a specific evidence base for primary prevention in the Northern Territory.

Continuing to support these activities and deliver on existing commitments to primary prevention is an important initial priority. There are also opportunities to build on the foundations that have been established through this investment and that momentum is maintained through ongoing investment and increased commitment to ending violence against women and children in the Northern Territory.

Key opportunity



Deliver on existing primary prevention commitments in NT Government Frameworks and Action Plans.

2.

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 address the intersections between sexism and racism, and between the impacts of gender inequality and the legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation, as they play out for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people.

In the Northern Territory, there is alignment between preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and existing efforts in leadership, truth-telling, healing, supporting Aboriginal knowledge and cultural systems, and addressing discrimination and oppression. Recognising where these goals align with the high-level actions in Changing the Picture, the national resource for preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, will ensure mutually reinforcing work and enhance the transformative impact and sustainability of all initiatives.

It is critical these initiatives are led, informed and controlled by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities and are focused, holistic and guided by principles of cultural safety.

There are opportunities to commit to and build on work to address the gendered drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, including ensuring it addresses the intersections between sexism and racism, and between the impacts of gender inequality and the legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people.

Key opportunities

- ✓ Build on and commit to primary prevention approaches and initiatives that address the gendered drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.
- ✓ Continue to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities to ensure local decision making, ownership and control are at the heart of prevention in the NT.

3. Develop a dedicated primary prevention strategy

Primary prevention is included to some extent in existing strategies such as the DFSV Reduction Framework 2018-2028 and the Northern Territory Gender Equality Action Plan.

However, there is a significant opportunity to strengthen this focus through a dedicated primary prevention strategy. A dedicated strategy developed in consultation with key stakeholders could provide a strong foundation for a coordinated approach to primary prevention in the NT. Development of the strategy could further encourage building and strengthening systems and structures across the whole-of-government and priority areas to ensure primary prevention in the Northern Territory is strategic, coordinated, effective, and sustained.

A primary prevention strategy for violence against women could draw from existing work and expertise across the Northern Territory to establish strengths-based, locally relevant processes to identify priorities and sustainably address the intersecting drivers of violence at both community and structural levels, to help break the cycle of violence in the Northern Territory.

Key opportunity

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

4. Build the foundations for primary prevention

Primary prevention foundations (or prevention infrastructure) refers to the systems and structures that ensure primary prevention is supported, coordinated and sustained over the long term. These foundations are critical to tackling the drivers of violence and ensuring the design, implementation and evaluation of prevention efforts occur in an effective and coordinated way. It unlocks the potential for every sector, institution, organisation, and community across the Northern Territory to prevent violence against women.

The Northern Territory Government has the opportunity to maintain and grow strong foundations for prevention and integrate a prevention focus into existing foundations across various policy platforms, extending beyond those targeting violence against women and domestic, family, and sexual violence.

Key opportunities

- ✓ Establish sustainable, ongoing mechanisms for coordination, collaboration and quality assurance of DFSV prevention and response across government bodies and the NT more broadly.
- ✓ Support and further develop an expert prevention workforce in the NT, including building on the Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence Workforce and Sector Development Plan.
- ✓ Strengthen clear monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms, building on the Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan, as well as identifying opportunities for local data collection, use and improvement.

5.

Deliver a phased approach to best practice Respectful Relationships Education

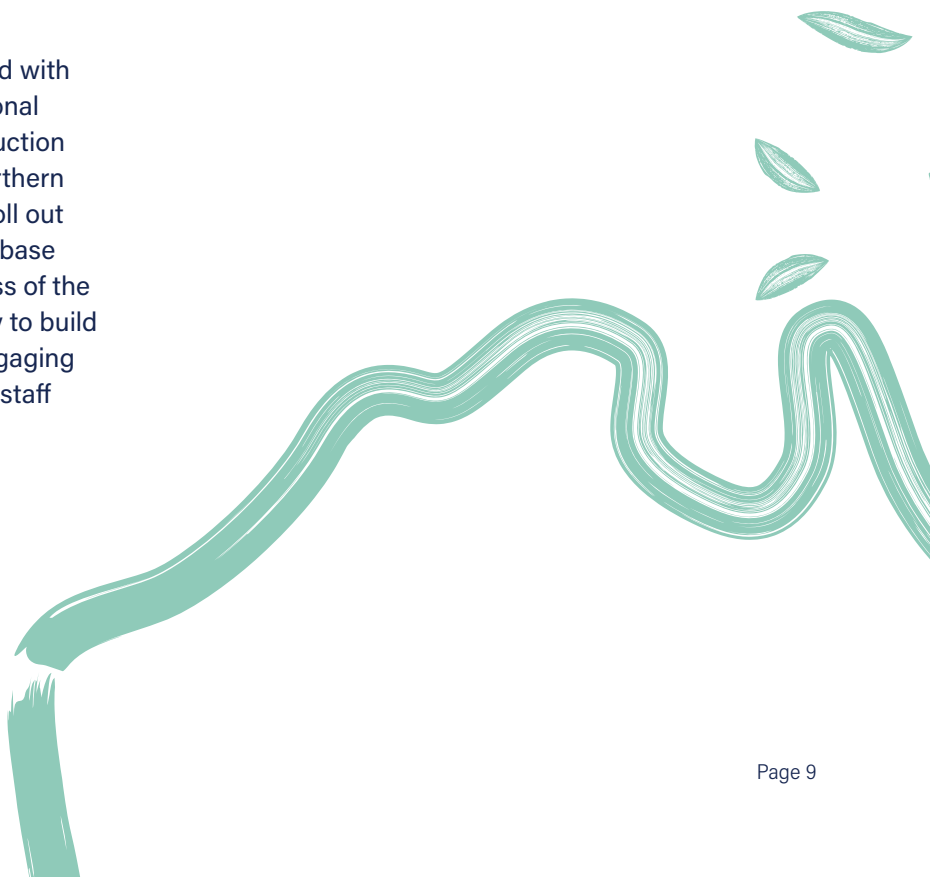
Respectful Relationships Education (RRE) is an evidence-based approach to preventing gender-based violence through schools. It operates as a comprehensive model that extends beyond traditional curriculum delivery. By leveraging the education system, RRE aims to catalyse generational and cultural change by involving schools as educational institutions, workplaces, and community hubs. This approach comprehensively tackles the underlying drivers of gender-based violence.

Good practice RRE considers the needs of the school community and takes an intersectional and culturally safe approach. This work also needs to be coordinated across departments, and include oversight from community, education, prevention and response sectors to ensure it is evidence based and locally relevant.

The NT Government is taking important steps towards evidence based RRE in the NT. Aligned with the commitment to implement RRE in educational settings within Action Plan 2 of the DFSV Reduction Framework, there is an opportunity for the Northern Territory Government to commit to a phased roll out of RRE, implemented in line with the evidence base and prioritised and recognised as core business of the education system. There is also an opportunity to build the evidence base specifically in relation to engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, staff and communities.

Key opportunities

- ✓ Commit to an appropriately resourced, phased approach to the implementation of evidence-based RRE across the Northern Territory.
- ✓ Expand the specialist primary prevention workforce and build the capacity of the existing workforce within the Department of Education to support implementation of RRE in every Northern Territory school.



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

Amanda Alford

Director of Government Relations, Policy and Evidence
amanda.alford@ourwatch.org.au

Conor Flanagan

Manager, Government Relations
Conor.flanagan@ourwatch.org.au

ourwatch.org.au



-
- 1 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2023). Personal Safety Survey: 2021-22, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/latest-release#state-and-territory-statistics>
 - 2 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021-22). Personal Safety, Australia, ABS Website, accessed 20 June 2024.
 - 3 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). (2022). Family and domestic violence hospitalisations. AIHW. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/family-domestic-sexual-violence-data/contents/responses-measures/hospitalisation-rates-for-family-and-domestic-violence>
 - 4 Northern Territory Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Interagency Coordination and Reform Office. (2023). Mapping of current investment and activity to prevent and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory. https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1274038/dfsv-mapping-report.pdf
 - 5 Brown, Chay and Leung, Loksee (2023). Evidence Snapshot: what we know about domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory and what we don't. The Equality Institute.
 - 6 Northern Territory Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Interagency Coordination and Reform Office. (2023). Mapping of current investment and activity to prevent and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence in the Northern Territory. https://tfhc.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1274038/dfsv-mapping-report.pdf