

Opportunities for prevention of violence against women in South Australia

February 2026



OurWatch 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-Aboriginal organisation, Our Watch views violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children an issue for the whole community. As highlighted in Our Watch's national resource *Changing the picture*, the evidence clearly shows the intersection between colonialism, racism, sexism, and ongoing 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 suffer from violence at a significantly higher rate than non-Indigenous women. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations who continue to lead the work of sharing knowledge with non-Indigenous people and advocating relentlessly for an equitable, violence-free future.



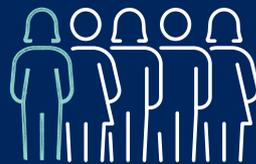
Violence against women and girls — a statewide crisis

In South Australia:



1 in 3 (29%)

South Australian women **have experienced violence, emotional abuse or economic abuse** by a cohabiting partner since the age of 15.¹



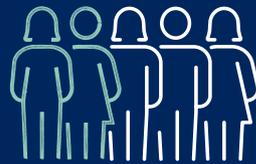
1 in 5 (21%)

South Australian women **have experienced sexual violence** since the age of 15.²



x5 more likely

Aboriginal women are **5 times more likely to be victims of a homicide** than non-Aboriginal women.³



2 in 5 (44%)

Over 44% of all homicides in South Australia in 2023–24 **related to domestic or family violence.**⁴



Of the South Australian women who have experienced partner abuse,

1 in 6 (17%) have experienced **physical or sexual violence,**

1 in 6 (17%) have experienced **economic abuse,** and

1 in 4 (24%) have experienced **emotional abuse.**⁵

Primary prevention in South Australia

South Australia is taking important steps to prevent violence against women. Across government, business and community sectors, primary prevention efforts are already underway. These include government strategies and policy, education programs, gender equity initiatives, programs engaging men and boys through Aboriginal family violence services, and LGBTIQ+ inclusive services. Each of these efforts plays an important role in challenging the drivers of violence against women and building safer communities.

The South Australian Royal Commission's [With Courage Report](#) and the Government's [Building safer futures](#) response signal a clear choice by South Australia and provide an opportunity to change the story of gender-based violence and stop the violence before it starts.

An important part of this opportunity is commitment to establishing the foundations for change, as well as all parts of the system working together across primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery. The development of a South Australian strategy to prevent and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV), a commitment made in response to the Royal Commission, will provide the essential foundations to support and scale up primary prevention action in coordinated and mutually reinforcing ways.⁶

Shifting the drivers of violence against women requires bold action and a long-term commitment to change the systems, structures, norms, attitudes, practices and power imbalances that enable this violence. There are a number of key foundations in place to help drive this change, including the appointment of a Minister for Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence and the establishment of the Office for Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence to sit alongside the existing Office for Women. There are also opportunities to strengthen the foundations, including through establishing governance mechanisms to support coordination and collaboration, and to align work to implement the Royal Commission recommendations with development of the DFSV Strategy.

There is still significant work to do to stop violence against women. Our Watch has identified 3 specific opportunities to build on current work that will enhance existing efforts in South Australia.

Key opportunities for primary prevention in South Australia:

- 1. Prioritise establishing the necessary foundations for primary prevention in South Australia.**
- 2. Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and led prevention strategy to end family, domestic and sexual violence.**
- 3. Implement a phased, evidence-based approach to Respectful Relationships Education in South Australia.**

Every government, sector, institution, organisation, community and individual has a role to play in preventing violence against women.

1. Prioritise establishing the necessary foundations for primary prevention in South Australia

Our Watch welcomes the commitment by the SA Government, in response to the recommendation by the Royal Commission, to develop a DFSV Strategy and indications that it will include a primary prevention pillar.

A Strategy has the potential to provide a clear and consistent framework for work across South Australia, with identified priorities, investment, monitoring and governance mechanisms to support implementation.

The inclusion of primary prevention as a distinct but complementary approach from other work to address violence against women in South Australia will help support evidence-based prevention work across the state, in line with *Change the story*, Australia's national primary prevention framework.

Essential foundations for primary prevention



Primary prevention requires strong foundations (or infrastructure) to ensure primary prevention is supported, coordinated and sustained over the long term. The proposed Strategy can play an important role as part of these foundations, as well as in contributing to the prioritisation and establishment of other key foundations to support implementation of the Strategy.

The Our Watch Brief *Building strong foundations to support primary prevention of violence against women* outlines key actions governments can take to ensure that prevention efforts and activities are mutually reinforcing and sustain momentum in a strong authorising environment.

This includes actions such as strong leadership and commitment; reviewing opportunities for policy, legislative and regulatory reform; an evidence base informed by ongoing research; mechanisms for coordination, collaboration and quality assurance; workforce and sector development; ensuring the women's sector is well-resourced and supported; and strong evaluation, monitoring and reporting mechanisms.⁷

The work underway in South Australia to implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission is important, and alignment between that work and development of a robust DFSV Strategy is crucial.

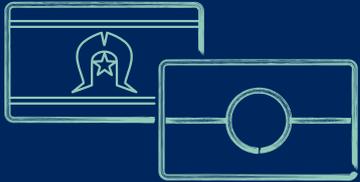
There are particular opportunities in SA at this critical period to establish, invest in and support:

- Mechanisms for coordination and collaboration, both within government across portfolios, and more broadly across the system.
- A skilled primary prevention workforce.
- Monitoring and evaluation, supported by appropriate data, to ensure efforts are evidence-based, effective and impactful. In particular, there is a need for a clear Outcomes, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to articulate how progress and outcomes will be measured and reported on at both a program-level to assess efficacy and build evidence about what works, and at a population-level to track the direction of South Australia progress overall.
- The [Our Watch Counting on change: a guide to prevention monitoring](#) provides a framework outlining the foundation for developing a rigorous approach to monitoring progress in prevention.

KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRIMARY PREVENTION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

2. Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned and led prevention strategy to end family, domestic and sexual violence

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience disproportionate rates of violence; violence that is often more severe and more complex in its impacts.⁸



Our Watch supports development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander DFSV Strategy in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations, and communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, organisations and communities lead work to prevent violence in their communities and development of the Strategy should draw on this extensive experience and deep knowledge to prevent the disproportionate rates of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.⁹

Changing the picture the national resource to support prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children provides a useful basis for demonstrating the actions required, how this prevention work should be undertaken, and by whom. It also presents a set of principles, developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, that should guide this prevention work.¹⁰

The South Australia Government’s establishment of an Aboriginal Partnership Committee under the Implementation Plan (which guides Implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations) highlights the significant opportunities to build on existing strategies and frameworks working to end violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

3. Implement a phased and evidence-based approach to Respectful Relationships Education in South Australia

South Australia has important foundations in place to support children and young people in education settings to develop the skills they need to build healthy, safe and respectful relationships.

The Consent and Respectful Relationships Education measure, under the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032*, aims to strengthen the current delivery of respectful relationships education in South Australia. The Australian Curriculum connection – Respectful Relationships and the delivery of the Keeping Safe: Child Protection Curriculum (KS:CPC) in all Department of Education and Catholic Education sites, and its use by Independent Schools across SA provides an important basis for respectful relationships and child safety education and teaching resources for children and young people from birth to year 12.

As outlined by the Royal Commission, there is an opportunity to build on this work and take an evidence based and best practice approach to Respectful Relationships Education (RRE) that expands the current approaches to ensure it addresses the drivers of gender-based violence.

Evidence-based RRE is a holistic approach to the prevention of gender-based violence in primary and secondary school settings. It is a whole-of-school approach using the education system as a catalyst for change by engaging schools, as education institutions, workplaces, and community hubs, to comprehensively address the drivers of gender-based violence. It challenges gender stereotypes and actively promotes, models, and embeds gender equality across the entire school, not only in the curriculum.¹¹

The Royal Commission's *With Courage Report* highlighted the need for a best practice approach which expands RRE to include the elements outlined in Our Watch's *Respectful relationships education: A blueprint for preventing gender based violence through education systems*.¹² This blueprint provides a practical, evidence based framework for governments on how to successfully implement, coordinate and monitor an evidenced based approach to RRE.

There are opportunities to strengthen and embed existing work across the Department of Education and Catholic and Independent schools in South Australia by prioritising and adequately resourcing the implementation of a phased, evidence-based approach to Respectful Relationships Education as core business of education systems.



Respectful relationships education: A model for system wide integration

2

PHASE 2

Support implementation of a whole-of-school approach to RRE

1

PHASE 1

Build evidence-based foundations for RRE

Establish an authorising environment for RRE



Identify mechanisms for coordination and collaboration



Establish an RRE implementation workforce



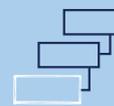
Develop a comprehensive approach to monitoring, evaluation and learning activities



Develop a professional learning strategy



Plan for a phased approach to RRE implementation



Include central elements of respectful relationships education in curriculum development



Sustain RRE to achieve long-term change

PHASE 3

3



Support the roll-out of RRE



Develop a communication strategy



Ensure strong leadership and commitment

Endnotes

- 1 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021-22). *Personal Safety, Australia*. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/2021-22>.
- 2 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021-22). *Personal Safety, Australia*. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/2021-22>.
- 3 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021-22). *Personal Safety, Australia*. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/2021-22>.
- 4 Miles, H. & Bricknell, S. (2025). *Homicide in Australia 2023-24*. Australian Institute of Criminology. pp 6 and 9. <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/sr/sr52>.
- 5 Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021-22). *Personal Safety, Australia*. ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/personal-safety-australia/2021-22>.
- 6 Our Watch. (2024). Building strong foundations to support primary prevention of violence against women.
- 7 Our Watch. (2021). *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia*, Melbourne: Australia, p. 100.
- 8 Our Watch. (2018). *Changing the picture*.
- 9 Our Watch. (2018). *Changing the picture, Background paper: Understanding violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women*, Melbourne: Our Watch.
- 10 Our Watch. (2018). *Changing the picture*.
- 11 Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence. (2025). *With Courage: South Australia's vision beyond violence*. Rec 128. Accessible at [With Courage Report](#).
- 12 Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence. (2025). *With Courage: South Australia's vision beyond violence*. Rec 128. Accessible at [With Courage Report](#).

Further information

There are important opportunities across South Australia to take the next step to stop gender-based violence before it starts.

The South Australian Government is a member of Our Watch and Our Watch welcomes the opportunity to continue to provide advice or assistance in relation to potential opportunities for the primary prevention of violence against women and girls.



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