



**Queensland
Violence against
Women
Prevention Plan**

2016–22

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Premier's message

The Queensland Government has shown its commitment to addressing domestic and family violence by accepting all 140 recommendations of the Queensland Special Taskforce report, *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland*.

Sadly, domestic and family violence is only one of the many forms of violence that women may experience in their lifetime.

The *Queensland Violence against Women Prevention Plan 2016–22* puts us on a path towards ending all forms of violence against women. The plan aims to address the great costs all forms of violence against women have on those who experience it, their families, the community and the economy.

I encourage you to read the plan in conjunction with the *Queensland Women's Strategy 2016–21*, and consider it as the implementation plan for key issues under Priority 3: Safety.

The actions outlined in this plan, together with the *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026*, *Queensland says: not now, not ever*, put Queensland in a prime position to lead long-term, whole-of-community responses to end all forms of violence against women.

The plan will guide positive change in the Queensland community, challenge negative attitudes about women and their experience of violence, and work to strengthen the support and protection women receive.

The plan sends a clear, decisive message that gendered violence in all its forms is not acceptable, and must not be normalised or ignored.



Annastacia Palaszczuk MP
Premier and
Minister for the Arts

Minister's message

I was deeply moved by the experiences, knowledge and expertise shared with me through the community consultation on the *Queensland Women's Strategy 2016–21*. This consultation significantly informed the development of the *Queensland Violence against Women Prevention Plan 2016–22*.

Many contributions were from women who had experienced different forms of gendered violence; women who selflessly shared their very personal experiences to help prevent other women from experiencing violence and to improve responses.

Their voices are featured in the following pages as a reminder of the reality these and many more women face. These voices motivate me, and should motivate you, to ensure Queensland sets a gold standard in its approach to ending violence against women.

Achieving gender equality and eliminating violence against women is possible, but will be a long-term challenge. Together we must make a sustained effort and, in some instances, change long-held beliefs, so we can make meaningful and lasting change.

Now, more than ever, there is an opportunity to make this change. Queensland men, women and children will all benefit from a community without gendered violence.

I ask you to view this plan as the first step in taking a shared community responsibility to ensure Queensland women and their children live without the fear, threat or experience of violence. Join with me and take an active part in making a change.



Shannon Fentiman MP
Minister for Communities,
Women and Youth
Minister for Child Safety
Minister for the Prevention of
Domestic and Family Violence





Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

- (a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation.
- (b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution.
- (c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.¹

Gender-based violence is violence that is ‘directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately’.²



Why we need a plan to prevent violence against women

Violence against women is not a new phenomenon, nor are its consequences to women's physical, mental and reproductive health. What is new is the growing recognition that acts of violence against women are not isolated events but rather form a pattern of behaviour that violates the rights of women and girls, limits their participation in society and damages their health and wellbeing.³

Violence in all its forms is unacceptable. There are significant differences in how men and women experience violence, and the impacts of that violence. Men are more likely to experience violence perpetrated by other men in public places, while women are more likely to experience it in a private setting such as the home, at the hands of their partners or other men they know.

The Queensland Government has already taken action to address some of the types of violence that men are more likely to experience. This action includes a range of legislative and other measures to address alcohol-fuelled violence.

We know that a large proportion of violence against women occurs in an intimate partner or family context. Responses to those forms of violence are set out in the *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026*, Queensland says: *not now, not ever*.

Eliminating domestic and family violence is critical to ensuring the safety of women and girls, but it is not the only priority. Women are more likely than men to be the victims of sexual assault, harassment, stalking, honour crimes, trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced and/or early marriage and technology-facilitated abuse.

Violence against women is more likely to occur, and with more severe impacts, when other forms of inequality and discrimination are present, such as racism, disability, poverty or homophobia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience violence at higher rates than non-Indigenous women.⁴ The deep and enduring trauma experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is a contributing factor to the experience of violence by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women today.⁵

Violence against women represents a huge financial cost to the community as a whole, estimated to be \$21.7 billion per year nationally with victims bearing the primary cost. The current cost to governments has been estimated at \$7.8 billion per year for health, administration and social welfare. This figure is expected to increase.⁶

The *Queensland Violence against Women Prevention Plan 2016–22* bridges a vital gap, bringing together actions that will help us better prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women.

Together, this range of initiatives will contribute to safer Queensland communities for all: women, men and children alike.

Queensland Violence against Women Prevention Plan 2016–22

Vision

Queensland women and girls live without the fear, threat or experience of violence.

Principles

- All individuals have the right to live without the fear, threat or experience of violence.
- Violence against women is a persistent societal challenge that is firmly based in gender inequality, with a number of specific gendered drivers.
- Violence against women is preventable, and requires a long-term sustained effort from individuals, families, communities, institutions and governments.
- Women and children affected by violence must be supported through a comprehensive and integrated service system that is designed to respond to their complex and individual needs.
- Certain groups of women experience a greater incidence of violence and greater barriers to accessing support. Responses to particularly vulnerable women need to be tailored to meet their needs.
- Preventing violence against women and advancing gender equality benefits all Queenslanders.

Priority areas and outcomes

Consultation informed the development of the three priority areas, designed around primary, secondary and tertiary prevention.



Respect

Shifting community attitudes and behaviours that support or excuse violence against women



Safety

Decreasing risk and reducing the impact of violence



Justice

Responding to violence effectively and preventing reoffending

Note: There are crossovers between each level of prevention — activities can span both primary and secondary prevention and secondary to tertiary prevention.

Phased implementation

The *Queensland Violence against Women Prevention Plan 2016–22* is designed to be a ‘living’ document, operating over a six-year period, with actions to be implemented in a phased approach.

This first iteration focuses on laying the foundations in the first two years — building the evidence base about the nature of violence against women in Queensland and assessing our current frameworks for responding. This work will inform proposals for reform in future plans.

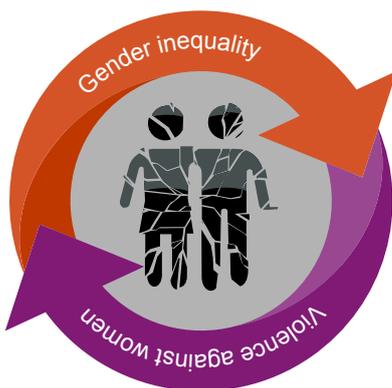
We will report on progress every two years, refreshing and developing new actions as needed in future plans for release in 2018 and 2020. This will take into account what we have learned, and changes in the community, service delivery sector and across government.



Context and scope

The *Queensland Violence against Women Prevention Plan 2016–22* is designed to address the gendered nature of violence against women and represents the final piece of the Queensland policy framework to address violence against women and children in Queensland.

This plan complements the *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026*, *Queensland says: not now, not ever*, and supports both our commitment to the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* and the implementation of the safety priority area of the *Queensland Women’s Strategy 2016–21*.



Violence against women is any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, **physical, sexual or psychological harm** or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, **coercion** or **arbitrary deprivation** of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.¹



Gender equality refers to the **equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities** of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that their responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female.⁷

Gendered drivers of violence against women

systems,
structures
and
processes
that do not take
account of
gender
differences



derogatory
attitudes

women are
physically **weak**,
emotional,
dependent, the
property of
men and should be
submissive



rigid gender
roles and
stereotypes

women as
mothers,
homemakers or
sexual **objects**

criticism of
feminism
as outdated,
irrelevant,
unnecessary
and **‘anti-men’**



normalisation
of **violence**
against women

“He’s wearing a
‘wife-beater’
singlet.”

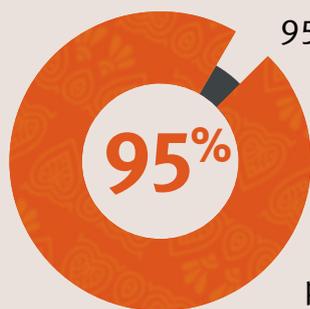
excusing
violence against
women and
victim
blaming

“She was
so drunk, she was
asking
for it!”
or “She shouldn’t
have been walking
on her own at that
time of night!”



What we know about violence against women

Perpetrators are mostly men and violence is gendered



95% of all victims of **violence** (male and female), have experienced violence at the hand of a **male** perpetrator.⁸

4 in **5**

reported **victims** of sexual assault in Queensland are **female**.⁹

Sexual violence and violence-supportive attitudes are prevalent and on the rise

1 in 5 women

(1.7 million) has **experienced sexual violence** since the age of 15.¹⁰



Only **1 in 5** women who experienced sexual assault by a male since the age of 15 **reported their most recent incident** to the police.¹⁰

Only a **small proportion** of reported incidents proceed to **trial**, and even **fewer result in conviction**.¹¹



Reported **sexual assault** victims in Queensland rose for the fourth consecutive year to **4,199 victims** in 2015 (a **3% increase** since 2014).⁹

2 in 5 young people believe that 'rape results from **men not being able to control their sexual urges**'.¹²

Nearly 2 in 5 people believe that 'a lot of times **women** who say they were raped **led the man on and later had regrets**'.¹³

There is a relationship between the **consumption of sexually violent pornography, sexually violent movies, news headlines that endorse rape myths, sex-stereotyping in video games, or exposure to degrading images of women and attitudes that support violence against women**.¹³

Gendered inequality intersects with other forms of disadvantage, putting certain groups of women at greater risk of violence.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience violence **more often**, and at a **younger age**.

In Queensland, **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people** were more than

3X

as likely to be reported as a victim of sexual assault than non-Indigenous people. Women and girls formed 81% of victims.⁹

The most **common age** for reporting **sexual assault** was

10-14
years of age

(compared to 15–19 years for non-Indigenous).⁹

Women with disability are particularly vulnerable.

Women with disability are **more likely to experience multiple incidents** of violence by a **male perpetrator**.¹⁰



of women with **intellectual disabilities** have been **sexually abused**.¹⁴

Sex workers experience **higher rates** of **sexual assault**.¹⁵

In Queensland there are **2X as many** reported **female victims of elder abuse** as male victims. Males are the larger perpetrator group.¹⁶

The majority of **women in prison** have **experienced violence** (domestic and non-domestic violence) and childhood sexual abuse.¹⁷

Forced and servile marriage, female genital mutilation, dowry and bride-related crime and **trafficking for sexual exploitation** are abuses of human rights, and forms of gendered violence as the victims are almost entirely women.^{18,19}

The World Health Organisation has identified that some **women and girls in Australia** are at **risk of female genital mutilation**.¹⁹



Outcome 1

Respect

Shifting community attitudes and behaviours that support or excuse violence against women

A society free from violence against women is one that values, respects and treats women as equals. It is a society that refuses to condone, excuse or trivialise violence against women in all its forms. While attitudes are starting to change, there is more work to be done to change culture, attitudes and behaviours to ensure women and girls can live without the fear, threat or experience of violence.

We want a Queensland where:

- communities reject attitudes and behaviours that contribute to the normalisation of violence against women
- victim blaming does not exist and the assumption that violence against women is inevitable is not accepted
- individuals, particularly men and boys, challenge the factors that contribute to violence against women
- sexism and violence-supportive attitudes are addressed when they happen and individuals engage in respectful relationships with women both online and in person.

What we are already doing

- We are bringing legislation before Parliament to provide that commercial vehicle registration holders who fail to comply with determinations of the Advertising Standards Board will face the prospect of having the registration of offending vehicles cancelled. This legislation will help to ensure that text and images painted on vehicles do not support offensive, sexist or violence-supporting attitudes.
- We have become a member of Our Watch, the national primary prevention of violence organisation established under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*. It delivers The Line, a behavioural-change campaign for young people, which challenges rigid gender roles, gender inequality, and sexism and encourages them to break the cycle of violence.
- We are implementing the White Ribbon Australia workplace accreditation program. This program is part of the Queensland Government's commitment to prevent and respond to violence against women, and create workplace cultures of respect and gender equity.
- We are implementing the *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026, Queensland says: not now, not ever*. This includes specific actions to raise awareness and implement cultural change in the community, schools and workplaces regarding domestic and family violence.

What we will do

Action	Responsibility
Continue building the evidence base about the nature of violence against women in Queensland and what works to prevent it through our partnership with Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety.	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
Continue to support the Queensland Centre for Domestic and Family Violence Research to strengthen the capacity and capability of organisations that deliver sexual assault services funded by the Queensland Government.	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
Engage with communities about the nature of violence against women in Queensland to better understand new and emerging forms and develop tools for improving understanding and prevention.	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
Promote, maintain and annually review the Respectful relationships education program to ensure it reflects current education research and best practice. The Respectful relationships education program challenges youth attitudes about violence and gender construction known to lead to violence while also supporting students to develop pro-social behaviours that lead to equitable and respectful relationships.	Department of Education and Training
Support Our Watch to implement <i>Change the Story. A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia</i> and develop a primary prevention model for violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
Review existing primary prevention resources relating to preventing violence against women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to identify opportunities and gaps.	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
Contribute to primary prevention of violence against women through the work of the Arts Queensland Statutory Bodies, small to medium organisations, initiatives funded through the Queensland Arts Showcase Program, the Individuals Fund, the Regional Arts Development Fund and the Playing Queensland Fund.	Arts Queensland
Through the Third Action Plan under the <i>National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022</i> , work with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions to include actions related to all forms of violence against women.	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

“As long as men get paid more, are on more boards, hold more parliamentary positions, are the bosses in industries even where there are stacks more women — as long as it's the woman who takes five years off work till the kids start school and ... still does the bulk of the housework ... there will be the drip-through pervasive acceptance that men are better than women, more than women ... and therefore can deride, abuse and attack women.”

Female, 35–44 years old



Outcome 2

Safety

Decreasing risk and reducing the impact of violence

Ensuring that women who have experienced violence have access to appropriate and responsive services can reduce the impact of violence, increase the likelihood of the perpetrator being held to account, and improve the future safety of women. Recognising that the impact of violence can be compounded by other forms of discrimination or trauma, services need to understand, and have the capacity to respond to, the diverse needs of Queensland women.

We want a Queensland where:

- services are informed about the unique needs of women who are at heightened risk of experiencing violence
- particularly vulnerable groups of women are better supported with services that meet their needs
- culturally safe services are provided that are tailored to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) women, young women and girls, elderly women, women in the corrections system, women in rural and remote areas, women with disability, mental illness or complex needs, and women in the sex industry and adult entertainment, receive support that recognises their different experiences of violence and particular vulnerabilities
- men and boys at risk of perpetrating violence against women are engaged and helped to change.

“*I was young and there was limited support available in a small rural community.*”

Female, 35–44 years old

What we are already doing

- We have committed \$43.1 million over four years for new or enhanced domestic and family violence services to address service gaps, including counselling services, sexual assault services, ‘step-down’ recovery services and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- We are delivering the Queensland Government’s commitments under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*.
- We are providing the elder abuse helpline to support victims and their family and friends.
- We are providing specialist, women-only services to support victims of domestic, family and sexual violence.
- We are providing housing and support for women at risk of insecure housing, including specialist homelessness services.
- We are delivering women’s health services through hospital and health services and a network of statewide non-government service providers.
- We are delivering targeted initiatives to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and culturally and linguistically diverse women’s health and wellbeing.
- We are implementing the *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026*, *Queensland says: not now, not ever*. This includes specific service reform actions to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and culturally and linguistically diverse women, as well as reviewing the impact of violence on women with disability and prevalence and characteristics of elder abuse.

What we will do

Action	Responsibility
Review <i>The Response to sexual assault – Queensland Government Interagency Guidelines for Responding to People who have Experienced Sexual Assault</i> by an interagency working group led by Victim Assist Queensland.	Department of Justice and Attorney-General Queensland Health Queensland Police Service Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
Release the <i>Sexual Health and Safety Guidelines – mental health, alcohol and other drugs services 2016</i> developed to guide public health sector clinicians in identifying sexual safety risks, responding to allegations of sexual assault and enabling a service culture that promotes sexual safety.	Queensland Health
Enhance reproductive choice through the <i>Queensland Health therapeutic termination of pregnancy guidelines</i> across the public health system.	Queensland Health
Develop reference material to build understanding in the community and with frontline workers about risk factors related to violence against women and appropriate referral pathways, including for particularly vulnerable groups of women.	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
Consider the recommendations of the Youth Sexual Violence and Abuse Steering Committee report due to government at the end of 2016 on the prevalence of youth sexual violence and abuse in Queensland and the appropriateness of responses to address the issue.	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships
Engage with specialist and non-specialist violence, community and health services to ensure services are accessible and appropriate to women with disability and acknowledge additional vulnerability to experiencing violence.	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
Engage with the National Disability Insurance Agency to consider and respond to the risks and experiences of violence for women with disability.	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
Consider outcomes of the review to address the impact of domestic and family violence on people with disability, which addresses Recommendation 10 from the <i>Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland</i> report, to inform service responses to women with disability who have experienced violence outside of an intimate partner, family or informal care relationship.	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
Identify opportunities in the development of the Queensland Government's multicultural policy and action plan to improve government service delivery to women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds .	Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services
Consider opportunities to leverage the work being undertaken to prevent and respond to domestic and family violence to include broader prevention strategies for other forms of violence against women. This work will consider the unique needs of particularly vulnerable groups of women.	Queensland Police Service



Outcome 3

Justice

Responding to violence effectively and preventing reoffending

Providing an effective justice response to violence against women requires the justice system to have the capacity to address the different forms of violence against women in a way that is supportive and sensitive to women's needs. Reporting rates will increase by improving women's confidence that their complaints will be taken seriously, that they will feel safe and supported through the process and that perpetrators will be held to account.

We want a Queensland where:

- the justice system appropriately responds to all forms of violence against women including new and emerging types such as technology-facilitated violence
- justice responses are sensitive and victim-centred
- perpetrators of violence against women are held to account for their actions and helped to change.

“No victim should ever have to give evidence in the same room as the perpetrator. That in itself is very tormenting, the fear, intimidation of them looking at you is terrifying.”

Female, 25–34 years old

What we are already doing

- We are progressing work to introduce a sexual assault counselling privilege to recognise the public interest in encouraging people who have been sexually assaulted to seek therapy to assist in their recovery and reporting the crime to police. This privilege will provide protection from the compulsion to produce and disclose communications between a victim, or alleged victim, of a sexual assault and a counsellor in legal proceedings.
- We are continuing to implement legislative and justice system reforms under the *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026, Queensland says: not now, not ever*, to strengthen protections for victims of domestic and family violence, hold perpetrators accountable and support broader reform of the service system.
- We have a Queensland Police Service Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex Liaison Program that provides a professional, non-discriminatory, accessible policing service to members of LGBTI communities throughout Queensland. It is delivered by police personnel in addition to their regular duties.

What we will do

Action	Responsibility
Amend the Criminal Code through the Serious and Organised Crime Legislation Amendment Bill 2016 in response to the proliferation of child exploitation material over the internet, the increased use of technology to promote and distribute offending material, conceal offending and to address legislative gaps and limitations.	Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Amend the Evidence Act 1977 to give adult victims of a sexual offence who are to give evidence in a criminal proceeding against the accused automatic status as a special witness.	Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Consider findings and recommendations made in reports of the Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board .	Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Consider the recommendations of the Queensland Law Reform Commission on a domestic violence disclosure scheme , to enable police to disclose information about previous violent offending by a person's new or existing partner.	Department of Justice and Attorney-General
Continue to work with other jurisdictions and the Commonwealth to take action to limit technology-facilitated abuse .	Department of Justice and Attorney-General Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services Queensland Police Service
Consider training needs of staff working in the criminal justice system to maintain best-practice responses to violence against women, including for women facing complex forms of disadvantage or risk.	Department of Justice and Attorney-General Queensland Police Service
Develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander justice strategy within a whole-of-government justice framework including consideration of a revictimisation measure and strategies to better support repeat victims of crime and reduce revictimisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships Queensland Treasury Queensland Police Service
Consider methods to improve options for collection of forensic evidence available to victims of sexual violence in rural, remote and isolated communities.	Queensland Police Service Department of Justice and Attorney-General Queensland Health

“Reactions are gendered – violence against women [is] viewed as a women’s problem and downplayed. Men’s violence is considered more serious and the perpetrator held accountable.”

Female, 45–54 years old

Reporting framework

Reporting process

The Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (Office for Women and Domestic Violence Reform) will monitor implementation of the plan, including coordinating a progress report every two years with refreshed and new actions to coincide with reporting on the *Queensland Women's Strategy 2016–21*.

Reporting format

These reports will be published online as part of the Queensland Women's Strategy community implementation plans in 2018 and 2020.

A final report will be published after 2022 when the timeframe for the *Queensland Violence against Women Prevention Plan 2016–22* has ended.

Performance

The annual safety report card produced for the Queensland Women's Strategy is the primary tool to measure the performance of the *Queensland Violence against Women Prevention Plan 2016–22*. The report card provides a summary of key statistics about violence against women.

In addition, the effectiveness of the plan will be assessed using the existing high-level performance measures agreed under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*. Namely, Queensland data on:

- prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault
- proportion of women who feel safe in their communities
- deaths related to domestic violence and sexual assault
- proportion of children exposed to their mother's or carer's experience of domestic violence.

The Queensland Government is continuing to build a strong and lasting evidence base to improve outcomes for women and their children through:

- our commitment to the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*
- funding the Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety to conduct research relating to experience and impacts of violence against women, gender inequality and primary prevention, service and system responses to women, children and perpetrators
- our support and membership of Our Watch and the *Change the Story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*.

This evidence base is key to improving policy and practice in Queensland and our progress in changing the culture, behaviours and attitudes that lead to violence against women and children. The *Queensland Violence against Women Prevention Plan 2016–22* relies on and will respond to this evidence over the duration of the plan's timeframe.

Appendix:

Consultation informing *Queensland Violence against Women Prevention Plan 2016–22*

The *Queensland Violence against Women Prevention Plan 2016–22* was informed by the significant community consultation undertaken in conjunction with the development of the *Queensland Women’s Strategy 2016–21*.

Consultation activities included a Queensland Women’s Strategy survey, a dedicated Violence against Women survey, and public consultation mechanism, the InstaBooth, run in partnership with the Queensland University of Technology. In addition, consultation was undertaken with:

- a Gender Equality and Violence Against Women Reference Group
- a research showcase event held in October 2015 by Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety
- written submissions from the public and representative organisations
- targeted consultation across government.

The feedback gathered during these processes is summarised into the following themes.

Gender equality

It was clear that community members believed there is a need for a gendered approach in the response to violence; and that violence against women is both a driver and consequence of women’s social exclusion and disadvantage in society.

Across consultation sources there was a clear understanding that in order to effectively address rates of violence against women, there must also be simultaneous efforts made to achieve gender equality at a systemic — including legislative — and community level.

Primary prevention opportunities

Consultation participants suggested that preventing violence against women required more focus on primary prevention, that is, stopping violence before it starts. These views support leading research and work in other jurisdictions that suggest addressing root causes and drivers of violence will lay the foundation for slow and steady cultural and behavioural change throughout the community.

Client-centred integrated responses

Consultation participants, especially service providers and those who had experienced violence, noted that there is a need for a client-centred integration of services and responses across systems, disciplines and government agencies. As part of this, there was a call to support vulnerable groups that experience greater incidence and/or more severe impacts from violence and that may find it more difficult to access traditional services.

These groups include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, women with disability, young women and girls, elderly women, women living in rural and remote locations, women identifying as LGBTIQ, women in the corrections system, women with a mental illness and complex needs, and women in the sex industry and adult entertainment.

As part of an improved response, consultation highlighted the need for non-specialist service providers, such as mental health workers, to receive violence-against-women training for early identification and referral pathways. In relation to perpetrator responses, consultation highlighted a consistent, urgent need for effective and accredited perpetrator programs that focus on both violent behaviour and the key drivers of violence.



These programs should be accessible as part of an integrated service response. Rehabilitation as part of these programs would ensure that perpetrators are less likely to reoffend and are held to account, which will in turn heighten the safety of current and potential victims.

Engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

Survey participants reflected that violence against women can be normalised within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and expressed that receiving support from people from their own culture was essential. It was also noted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can find it difficult to access appropriate support services.

Responding to violence experienced by women and girls with multiple or complex needs

A number of survey participants had experienced violence as a child and suggested that more support was needed for children who experience violence. Responses also addressed the need for more services for women living in rural and remote communities; and to increase accessibility to support services, accommodation and information for women with disability. The lack of access to support for individuals whose experience of violence was outside of the majority, that is, men committing violence against women, was considered a barrier for them.

Tertiary measures to respond to violence against women

The need for effective tertiary measures for both victims and perpetrators was also highlighted in the consultation, including a need for appropriate perpetrator punishment and treatment along with support and help for victims. Consultation participants supported increasing awareness around available support services, the need for more and easier access to services and refuges, improved and free legal and counselling support, and financial assistance.

Ensuring an effective and accountable justice system

Legal protection and justice responses were the largest theme to emerge from community consultation. First-hand accounts of police responses were mixed, with some respondents detailing supportive and helpful responses and others expressing dissatisfaction with some justice and police responses.

Many participants called for effective and sensitive victim-centred justice responses to ensure adequate protection and support for women, which includes police education and awareness, perpetrators held to account through increased and harsher punishments, perpetrator rehabilitation opportunities and amendments to court processes.

Consultation also highlighted the need for legal and justice reform, including national offender systems that cross jurisdictional boundaries, and greater funding and more resources for services, including legal services. The responses overwhelmingly called for improvements in the justice system's response to violence against women.

References

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