

YWCA AUSTRALIA SUBMISSION- NATIONAL PLAN TO END VIOLENCE

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we work, live and play and pay our respects to Elders past, present.

We recognise First Nations people as the Custodians of the lands, seas and skies with more than 60,000 years of connection, wisdom and relationship in caring for Country.

We work and live on stolen land and we have a responsibility to acknowledge the harm done and to work towards respect, recognition and self-determination of all First Peoples.

The National Plan so far has not addressed the need for intersectional and gender-responsive analysis and as a result, has failed to support and invest adequately in First Nations self-determination, leadership and communities.

Thank you to the fierce, bold and 'invisible' women and people of marginalised genders that have advocated and participated in activism. **YOU HAVE** created hope for a future of ending violence around the world.



CLIENTS, MEMBERS & STAFF

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'I want to see gender-based violence taken as a serious problem that needs to be addressed in a systematic, whole of community way to eliminate all gendered violence and promote gender equity so all people can live free of fear and in safety.' - YWCA Cyber Feminist (CBF) Member

'Prioritise First Nations women and children. Re-work Change the Story. Bring First Nations and non-indigenous people together to try to find a shared language around the drivers of violence.'- YWCA CBF Member

'Safe and secure affordable housing.'- YWCA Life Member

'Some of the most critical issues include access to safety and safe spaces, freedom from violence, access to counseling and support, economic empowerment and independence, safety for their children and dependents, and having safe options to exit their relationships and keep safe and away from perpetrators.' - YWCA CBF Member

'Overhauling the education system and teaching respect for all people (particularly women) from primary school. Respectful Relationships Education (RRE) should be present through every school year and grow to suit the age group.' - YWCA CBF Member

'While addressing healthy relationships, also addressing community attitudes towards violence against women. ANROWS survey data is showing that understandings and attitudes aren't progressing organically in the younger generation.'- YWCA Staff Member

'More services targeted for perpetrators.'- YWCA Staff Member

'Investing in children and young people's victim-survivor recovery journey.'- YWCA CBF Member

'We can help women as much as possible but until the perpetrators are also helped, it will be a continuing cycle.'- YWCA CBF Member

'Women should be able to obtain safe and reliable accommodation to leave a relationship.'- YWCA CBF Member

Department of Social Security

National Plan to End Violence

Sent by email: nationalplanfeedback@dss.gov.au

“Violence is preventable but we also need to respond to it when it happens. people who have experienced domestic, family or sexual violence deserve appropriate supports”

Bobbie Trower – Senior Manger Advocacy, YWCA Australia

Introduction to YWCA Australia

YWCA Australia (YWCA) is a proud evolving intersectional feminist, secular organisation committed to building a future, where all women and girls in all their diversity are equal, safe and respected. YWCA is a national organisation with over 350 staff across 11 locations throughout the country. YWCA delivers programs and services and undertakes advocacy that develop the leadership and collective power of women and girls; supports individuals, their families and communities at critical times; and promotes gender equality to strengthen our communities across Australia’s diverse social and geographic landscape. YWCA has been providing invaluable community services since the 1880s.

As an organisation, YWCA:

- Provides services for the safety and empowerment of women, young women and girls, including domestic and family violence programs
- Provides community housing and support services for the relief of homelessness
- Promotes and advocates for gender equality including promoting awareness of the causes and effects of sexual, domestic and family violence and amplifying young women and people of marginalised genders experiences and voices
- Works to advance the leadership of women, young women and people of marginalised genders
- Regularly collates and analyses quality improvement data, including demographics, outcomes and service capacity
- Operates for-purposes businesses such as a hotel that generate funds for reinvestment into our core mission
- Assists communities to build resilience through local engagement, education and understanding local social constructs

YWCA has a wide reach in different geographic locations across the country including Darwin (NT), Toowoomba (QLD), Townsville (QLD), Sydney Metro (NSW), Goonellabah (Northern NSW), Nowra (Southern NSW), Campbelltown (Western NSW), Adelaide (South Australia SA), Melbourne (VIC), Geelong, (VIC), Bendigo (VIC), Perth (WA), Broken Hill (NSW). YWCA have considerable experience in FDSV programming over its history including; Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes, Rise Above The Pack Bystander Intervention, respectful relationships education, Healthy Relationships, Domestic Violence Intervention Service, Family Abuse Prevention Service, Safer Pathways, Safety for Housing, women’s specialist housing and homelessness support and previously Women’s Domestic Violence

Court Advocacy Services.

YWCA welcomes the opportunity provided by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social and Policy and Legal Affairs to share our expertise informing the next National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. We commend the government on their commitment to driving positive change on a national epidemic of violence across all communities.

For this submission we will be focussing on **primary prevention, intersectionality and specialist supports and responses** and a **safe homes and housing infrastructure, through investment in social and affordable housing for those experiencing violence**.

Context

YWCA shares the following human rights-based definition of violence against women from the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), and adopted by the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022.

“any act of gender based violence that causes or could cause physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of harm or coercion, in public or in private life”.

This definition includes all forms of violence that women experience, comprising but not limited to physical, sexual, emotional, cultural/spiritual violence and financial abuse. These experiences are all gender-based and acknowledge that the violence is either directed towards women as a direct result of their gender, or that women are disproportionately affected by violence. Violence can be described in many ways, and definitions vary according to the legislation in each Australian state and territory. ⁱ

Australian statistics reveal that across the life course, one in three women will experience some form of family and domestic violence (FSDV) compared to one in 19 menⁱⁱ. Stable rates of partner violence contrast with falling rates of overall violence. The number of people accessing services such as police, hospital, child protection and homelessness services due to FSDV continues to rise,ⁱⁱⁱ and one woman is killed every nine days. For the purposes of this submission, FSDV is considered as gender-based violence and violence against women. Regardless of the type of violence, perpetrator/s are seeking power, dominance and control. YWCA believe everyone should be able to live free from violence and that anyone who experiences FSDV should be supported in their recovery journey.

We acknowledge the significant work and resources that have been coordinated across the previous National Plans. At the same time, across Australia we still see and support growing numbers of women and their children, young women and older women experiencing FSDV. There is a growing evidence base that women, young women and people of marginalised genders who face multiple forms of discrimination are also exposed to an increased risk of violence.

This submission is informed by YWCA’s expertise in gender equality, FSDV, housing and homelessness, consultations with YWCA staff and our national membership base including our Young Women’s Council, and trauma informed practice that recognises that FSDV is an ongoing pattern of coercive control maintained through physical, psychological, sexual and/or economic abuse.

When we refer to ‘Intersectionality’ we are speaking to the ways in which different aspects of a person’s identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. Aspects of identity can include but are not limited to social characteristics such as whether they are

First Nations, a person with disabilities, a refugee or an LGBTIQ+ person with differing asylum status, age, socioeconomic status and ability. Different aspects of identity can intersect to create additional risks, barriers or forms of isolation that influence the way people experience economic insecurity, FDSV and homelessness or housing insecurity.

It is essential that we access long term funding commitments for a holistic national approach to FDSV - Federal and State Governments to provide adequate, long term funding for FDSV primary prevention, early intervention, responding to victim survivors and professionalisation, prioritising specialist women's services practitioners and organisations, First Nations specialist services, migrant and refugee specialist services, disability specialist services, children and youth services, LGBTIQ+ specialist services and men's behaviour change specialist services that are culturally appropriate and adaptable to all levels of education.

First Nations Peoples

First Nations women and people of marginalised genders are more likely to experience compounding risk factors of geographic isolation and some may experience family violence and intimate partner violence within a broader context of state, institutional and financial abuse. First Nations women are also more likely to encounter discrimination in the private rental and housing sector and are more likely to experience Intimate Partner Violence as a result of inadequate or cramped housing situations. First Nations women are approximately 34 times more likely to be hospitalised for injuries arising from FDSV than non-Indigenous women, and 11 times more likely to be killed^{iv}. The disproportionately higher rates are related to intergenerational trauma associated with Australia's ongoing colonial heritage. Colonial violence includes 'the disadvantage, dispossession and attempted destruction of Aboriginal cultures'.

First Nations Peoples are best placed to lead change to end violence against women and children in their communities as well as nationally in all formally recognised places of decision-making. The second National Plan must also prioritise investment into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander response, prevention and legal organisations, including the fourteen FVPLS organisations. FVPLSs work exclusively with victim survivors of family violence and sexual assault, the vast majority being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. YWCA Australia also support the inclusion of recommendations made in the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Report^v.

"Now is the time to re-set and enter a transformative relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and settler Australia, as Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike, in the face of crisis, envisage a stronger, more compassionate and caring nation."

June Oscar AO - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

We have integrated the views and experiences of our frontline services with evidence-informed analysis supported by our membership of peak bodies like Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) and Domestic Violence NSW (DVNSW) and PowerHousing Australia.

YWCA endorse the peaks and advocates [public joint letter](#) to Women's Safety Ministers and support all recommendations in full.

In recent years, we have contributed to a range of initiatives in various states and territories aligning with the National Plan including:

- New South Wales Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016–2021
- Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change

- South Australia's Women's Safety Strategy 2011–2022
- The Northern Territory's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018–2028.

Our position on the next National Plan

As an evolving intersectional feminist organisation working within communities as a women's specialist service, YWCA supports primary prevention as a long-term, coordinated, whole-of-population approach aiming to stop violence against women, children and young people occurring in the first place. We endorse Our Watch's inquiry submission as industry experts focussed on prevention and as authors of *Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women*.^{vi}

YWCA endorse the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan statement, 'prevention is the most effective way to eliminate violence against women'. Investment and focus on primary prevention approaches, however, should not be at the expense of comprehensive support, or investment into secure housing pathways for victim survivors nationally. The next National Plan needs to continue to address FDSV prevention, early intervention and specialist services and supports as well as addressing a housing crisis disproportionately impacting upon those experiencing FDSV.

We have no other option than to reflect upon the compounding factors facing communities across Australia including bushfires, drought, and the unprecedented response and recovery to a global health pandemic. FDSV services across Australia, including our own, have seen overwhelming demand pre COVID-19. In the middle of COVID-19, we face a reality confirmed by recent research by the Australian Institute of Criminology, which shows an "alarming" increase in family violence, including in homes where it had never occurred before, with almost one in 10 women in a relationship saying they experienced domestic violence during the coronavirus crisis. Recently released data shows Google searches related to family violence have increased by 75%⁶. This is some of the most detailed information available in the world currently. We have a responsibility to respond to this data and urgently address an escalating impact, faced overwhelmingly by women. We believe ongoing and genuine reform is possible with long-term strategic prevention approaches, investing in increased secure funding for specialist services, a commitment to research and continuous evaluation, and consistent, integrated FDSV responses.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Primary Prevention

1. Long term funding commitments for a holistic national approach to FDSV
2. Nationally coordinated responses
3. A National Gender Equality strategy and plan
4. Establishment of a National Plan on Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and the centering of Wiyi Yani U Thangani recommendations.
5. Using a gender-transformative, intersectional approach We all have a part in preventing violence by addressing racism, ableism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia and other power inequalities including the ongoing impacts of colonisation. This includes:
 - Increase investment in collaboration on primary prevention between and within sectors, including business, not-for-profit, community, and government
 - Reorganise social care and establish an Inter-Ministerial Taskforce to adequately value care
 - Implement measures to address women's economic inequality, given growing evidence on the gendered drivers of violence including: - Gender Pay Gap - Unpaid Care and women's overrepresentation in underpaid roles - Addressing gender inequity in superannuation
 - Government to encourage and enable workplaces to undertake gender audits that include analysis of workplace policies, practices and culture. This should be followed by concerted efforts to increase diversity and equity and to build women's leadership and workplace responses to violence (e.g. through the Our Watch Workplace Equality Respect standards)
 - Healing-focused, prioritising, and strengthening culture, using strengths-based and community strengthening approaches adapting to different community, demographic and geographic contexts.
 - Non-Indigenous organisations working as allies in culturally safe ways
6. Intersectional and gender-responsive analysis and budgeting
7. Young people co-designing campaigns and initiatives aimed at them
8. The need to address factors that reinforce gendered drivers of violence- including the need to #RaiseTheRate for economic accessibility, access to safe affordable housing and challenging the normalisation of violence as an expression of dominant masculinity as preventative measures.
9. Investment in research and evaluation - including data on the direct and indirect impact of domestic violence on Australian communities, impact on housing pathways and young people and FSDV.
10. Support and investment in women's rights organisations and civil society networks addressing backlash and discrimination – eg. Men's Rights Activists/Transphobia

RECOMMENDATIONS

Specialist Supports and Responses

1. Expansion of professionals and services who support children and young people impacted by FDSV
2. Policy and law reform to end structural inequalities and address perpetrator accountability
3. Increase in medium-to-long-term supported accommodation services for young people, particularly those with complex needs
4. Expand eligibility of crisis services to women on Temporary Visas
5. Support recommendations from the Pathway to Nowhere and Blueprint for reform report.

Safe Homes and Housing Infrastructure

1. Addressing with urgency the inclusion of housing and related investment as part of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and their Children and the national summit for women's safety in September. This includes:- Implementing recommendations of the Nowhere To Go report by Equity Economics, Everybody's Home, YWCA Australia, DVNSW, DVVIC/RC, Women's Housing Company, Homelessness NSW and Victorian Women's Housing Alliance and invest in 16,800 additional social housing units for women, children and young people experiencing FSDV costing \$7.6 billion which would immediately result in economic benefits of \$15.3 billion and the creation of 47,000 new jobs.
2. Social and affordable housing a priority for Federal, State and Local governments
3. Incorporate analysis and recommendations from YWCA's Regional Housing Report^{xxvii}
4. Housing pathways that:
5. Encourage measures to reduce the cost of renting safe accessible housing to women their children and young people;
6. Provide subsidies to reduce the cost of safe options for housing. This subsidy could be delivered through organisations such as CHPs like YWCA Australia.
7. Improve the quality and accessibility of housing that support wellbeing and financial interdependence such as: Energy-efficient housing that are cool in summer, warm in winter, and not expensive to run.
8. Provision of adequate housing through further supports such as a toolkit that builds on the three toolkits already developed in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria to support CHPs across Australia to deliver a quality service response.
9. Further provision of training materials that can be utilised across states and territories to support CHOs strengthens their understanding and practice in providing housing to victim-survivors of FDV as well as FDV perpetrators.

PRIMARY PREVENTION

'We can support the DFV but what about safe housing, over-crowding, financial security, education and training opportunities, job options, health and wellbeing, food security, self-determination? Intergenerational trauma due to colonisation.

Connecting other disadvantages such as racism and stereotyping and normalising violence.' - **YWCA Member**

'I think education, early intervention and prevention work, including engaging with young men, women and others to challenge gender roles, to build respectful relationships, and to learn about active consent and communication are important.'- **YWCA CBF Member**

'All organisations and bodies should be required to have a gender audit.'
- **YWCA Member**

'A lack of equal representation at each decision-making level, especially in an economic, health & environmental crisis, has further subjected women to structural inequalities within a coercive welfare system and inadequate criminal justice system. The result is further economic insecure, increased risk to safety and a widening of gendered gaps in pay, victimisation rates and experiences of homelessness.' - **YWCA Member**

'More needs to be done to get men involved and make them accountable for community norms, the work should be not just about women and survivors doing all the work. There needs to be more active discussion about the effects of toxic masculinity, male entitlement and violence, and structural sexism.'
- **YWCA CBF Member**

'We need educational programs targeting young women and girls, as well as young boys and men, and young people of marginalised genders looking at gender roles, respectful relationships, self-esteem and safety.' **YWCA Member**

"I want to see celebratory initiatives in community support that challenge gender stereotypes and create safe spaces for everyone to be involved. Campaigns focused on how you can address peers, friends, family etc. that perpetuate gender inequality through 'jokes', language and bias.'
- **YWCA Staff Member**

Primary prevention

Recommendations

1. Long term extended funding commitments for primary prevention
2. Nationally coordinated responses.
3. A National Gender Equality strategy and plan.
4. Establishment of a National Plan on Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and centring of Wiyi Yani U Thangani^{vii} recommendations.
5. Using a gender-transformative, intersectional approach We all have a part in preventing violence by addressing racism, ableism, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia and other power inequalities including the ongoing impacts of colonisation. This includes:
 - Increase investment in collaboration on primary prevention between and within sectors, including business, not-for-profit, community, and government
 - Reorganise social care and establish an Inter-Ministerial Taskforce to adequately value care
 - Implement measures to address women's economic inequality, given growing evidence on the gendered drivers of violence including: - Gender Pay Gap - Unpaid Care and women's overrepresentation in underpaid roles - Addressing gender inequity in superannuation
 - Government to encourage and enable workplaces to undertake gender audits that include analysis of workplace policies, practices and culture. This should be followed by concerted efforts to increase diversity and equity and to build women's leadership and workplace responses to violence (e.g. through the Our Watch Workplace Equality Respect standards)
 - Healing-focused, prioritising, and strengthening culture, using strengths-based and community strengthening approaches adapting to different community, demographic and geographic contexts.
 - Non-Indigenous organisations working as allies in culturally safe ways
6. Intersectional and gender-responsive analysis and budgeting
7. Young people co-designing campaigns and initiatives aimed at them
8. The need to address factors that reinforce gendered drivers of violence- including the need to #RaiseTheRate for economic accessibility, access to safe affordable housing and challenging the normalisation of violence as an expression of dominant masculinity as preventative measures.
9. Investment in research and evaluation - including data on the direct and indirect impact of domestic violence on Australian communities, impact on housing pathways and young people and FSDV.
10. Support and investment in women's rights organisations and civil society networks addressing backlash and discrimination – eg. Men's Rights Activists/Transphobia

As an evolving intersectional feminist organisation working within communities as a women's specialist service, we seek intersectional and gender-responsive approaches to solutions that are framed within a model of gender equality. The social determinants that underpin FSDV require gender equality and intersectionality at the centre of our drive for change. This should also be considered as a mainstreamed context across Government, Non-Government and Community responses. YWCA supports primary prevention as a whole-of-

population approach aiming to stop violence against women, children and young people occurring in the first place. We endorse Our Watch's previous inquiry submission as industry experts focussed on prevention and as authors of Change the story^{viii}: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women. YWCA endorse the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan statement, 'prevention is the most effective way to eliminate violence against women'. Investment and focus on primary prevention approaches, however, should not be at the expense of comprehensive support for victim survivors nationally. The next National Plan needs to continue to address FDSV prevention, early intervention and specialist services and supports.

Funding for Our Watch has been crucial and as a member of their Primary Prevention Hub note the importance of this foundational and ongoing support for Our Watch greatly benefits and supports capacity building for the workforce and ultimately helps reduce spending on FDSV interventions and responses in the long-term.

There is a need to significantly expand focus on sexual violence. Responses to sexual violence are not adequate; yet it is experienced by too many across our community, many of them young women - both by known and unknown perpetrators – and must be elevated in the next National Plan. Rates of family and domestic violence including sexual abuse of children are too common and lead to lifelong detrimental impacts to victim-survivors. Although sexual violence was included in the first national plan, the increased reporting rates and knowledge regarding best practice calls for specific, measurable actions to address sexual violence. These actions must be co-designed and catered to be appropriate for marginalised communities including young people and children. This increased focus on sexual violence must be across the spectrum – from prevention to recovery, and across all ages (including young women and older women) and all community settings (including aged care facilities, schools, disability care and support). NCAS findings show that we are not making the progress we need to in be shifting attitudes to sexual violence in intimate partner relationships. This has serious implications for women's and girls' help-seeking behaviours. Primary prevention efforts need to better incorporate the prevention of intimate partner sexual violence.

Investment in whole of setting and whole of community primary prevention initiatives (for example, whole of school sport campaigns and training programs, whole of school respectful relationships, gender equality and well-being initiatives or military and gender equality initiatives) is a key part of the next National plan.

Primary prevention aims to change the structures, norms and practices that drive gender-based violence. Primary prevention more than any other level of intervention, has the potential to have the largest impact on reducing the prevalence of gender-based violence (Australian Government, 2019). Secondary (early intervention) and tertiary prevention – while essential – are unlikely to significantly reduce the rates of gender-based violence on their own. children. In particular, we value the Change the Story and Changing the Picture frameworks for understanding the 'gendered drivers' of violence against women, whilst addressing the legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities, and non-indigenous people^{ix}. To end gender-based violence, these drivers must be addressed, including challenging the condoning of violence, redefining narrow gender roles and stereotypes, increasing women's independence, and promoting respectful relationships.

Primary prevention is firmly a national priority and it must remain so until we change the trajectory of gender-based violence in Australia. In developing a new National Action Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, the following elements to primary prevention work must be included as part of a best-practice, evidence-based approach to preventing violence:

- All primary prevention work contains a gender analysis of power and gender inequality
- There is a strong intersectional lens, and initiatives must include principles of diversity, including consideration of sexual orientation, gender identity, migrant and refugee communities, people living with disabilities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Primary prevention initiatives align with but also evolve Changing the Picture

Significant structural and cultural shifts, propelled by leaders within and outside of government, are required to see a measurable improvement in the impact of gender inequalities. We refer to support for the 'National Gender Equality Plan'^x currently being developed by the Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) which outlines a universal and inclusive approach to consistent and sustainable policy development to promote gender equality. Australia needs a national gender equality strategy and plan to prevent gender-based violence.

Over its history YWCA has delivered a suite of best practice, evidence based primary prevention initiatives across a number of settings, including respectful relationships education in schools like Everygirl, Links to Learning and Girl Almighty programs, bystander intervention workshops and campaigns. YWCA also delivers programs that develop the leadership of women, young women and girls, and advocates for gender equality more broadly. As a national organisation, we understand the need to increase capacity and scale up these types of programs. Primary prevention is particularly effective when aimed at children and young people, and when carried out at a whole of setting level. However, it is critical that responsibility for the prevention of gender-based violence must become a priority for all individuals, organisations and all levels of government. Prevention activities must occur in all settings and be carried out by individuals and communities. In educational settings, respectful relationships education is critical for ensuring that young people experience healthy, safe, respectful and mutually positive relationships. In workplace settings, efforts must include embedding gender equitable policies and practices and culture and building capacity to respond to and prevent violence and disrespect towards women. In community settings, awareness raising campaigns and community-led initiatives can drive cultural change and foster safe and respectful spaces for women, young women and girls, as well as other marginalised communities. The new National Action Plan must include long term and sustainable funding for primary prevention practitioners and gender specialists to carry out whole-of-setting initiatives that includes long term evaluation.

Investment in research

There have been so many advancements particularly by ANROWS in research on FSDV and this must continue. Focus areas for the next National Plan include addressing gaps in the evidence, this includes; children and young people as victim survivors in their own right, sexual violence responses, intersecting factors for diverse communities and men and their use of violence and support pathways.

INTERSECTIONALITY, SPECIALIST SUPPORTS AND RESPONSES

'Having to turn away victim-survivors and their children when our services have no capacity or have run out of funding is soul-destroying for staff and dangerous to victim-survivors.'- YWCA Staff Member

"Women without visas to work and stay in Australia are particularly vulnerable to abuse and being locked into a violent relationship.' - YWCA CBF Member

'Many perpetrators keep breaking AVOs without any consequences, we see it time and time again and every time it creates a danger we can't stop.' - YWCA Staff Member

'Funding for frontline organisations to support victims of family violence is inadequate and it's getting more technologically advanced, and ever more dangerous to have to turn people away or delay in getting them support when they need it the most. We can't improve our response without investing in sustainable funding for specialist support services.'- YWCA Staff Member

'More services targeted for perpetrators.'- YWCA Staff Member

'Investing in children and young people's victim-survivor recovery journey.'
- YWCA CBF Member

'Safe and secure affordable housing.'- YWCA Life Member

'We can help women as much as possible but until the perpetrators are also helped, it will be a continuing cycle.'- YWCA CBF Member

'Women should be able to obtain safe and reliable accommodation to leave a relationship.'- YWCA CBF Member

Intersectionality, Specialist Supports and Responses

Recommendations

1. **Expansion of professionals and services who support children and young people impacted by FDSV**
2. **Policy and law reform to end structural inequalities and address perpetrator accountability**
3. **Increase in medium-to-long-term supported accommodation services for young people, particularly those with complex needs**
4. **Expand eligibility of crisis services to women on Temporary Visas**
5. **Support recommendations from the Pathway to Nowhere and Blueprint for reform report.**

As experts in gender equality, YWCA understands that violence is not experienced the same way by all women. We therefore must consider other forms of discrimination and disadvantage. Integrating intersectional thinking should consider such things First Nations communities and people, culture, race, ethnicity, faith, socio-economic status, ability, sexuality, gender identity, education, age, geographic location and migration status. Some groups of women face increased barriers to safety and safe, affordable and stable housing, including First Nations women, women on low income or temporary visas, young women, older women, LGBTIQ+ young people and women living with disability. In developing and implementing the next National Plan, an intersectional approach should consider best practice language and a flexible and tailored approach to accessible service provision, ensuring that more vulnerable and marginalised groups are reached, supported and respected and that specialist women's organisations are a critical part of specialist supports and responses.

"The YWCA uses a feminist-intersectional, strengths-based approach to case management. This looks at the family unit as a whole and all individuals as a victim survivor in their own right – needing individual care plans and supports. This is particularly important with vulnerable cohorts including First Nations people, gender diverse people, migrant and refugee clients and people living in remote regions."- YWCA Staff member

Increased and longer-term investment in tertiary victim support services

Funding for specialist services remains insufficient despite the increased investment since the beginning of the National Plan. An increased focus on the issue and increase in public salience has led to increased levels of disclosures and need for services. Funding must be sustainable and matched to the level of need to reduce injuries, fatalities, and ongoing harm. Increased short-term COVID funding from the Commonwealth, states and territories should be provided on an ongoing basis at a minimum. This includes better responding to sexual violence.

Federal and State Governments must provide adequate, long term funding for FDSV primary prevention, early intervention, responding to victim survivors and professionalisation, prioritising specialist women's services practitioners and organisations, First Nations specialist services, migrant and refugee specialist services, disability specialist services,

children and youth services, LGBTIQ+ specialist services and men's behaviour change specialist services that are culturally appropriate and adaptable to all levels of education. It will be critical for investment into women's specialist FDV services, including crisis and emergency accommodation, health and legal services, to respond to increased need as restrictions ease. In addition, increased measures for oversight of women living in closed residential settings, and training and advice to community service providers to recognise and respond to violence must be protected both in crisis and recovery. ^{xi}

[there are lots of things we see while working in community]... *"Inept and/or dangerous police, access to resources before you hit rock bottom, workplace stigma and job insecurity leading to and amplifying general financial insecurity, access to support that is suitable for their different identities (e.g. help that caters for those who have traumatic brain injuries or FASD, queer-friendly resources, anti-racist resources, etc)"*

YWCA Staff member

We know one-size does not fit all. It will be key to see specific strategies and services to address gaps in FDV services. This includes:

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- Innovative programs that appropriately support young women experiencing domestic and family violence such as YWCA's newly established Young Women's Trauma Recovery Program.
- Increase in medium-to-long-term supported accommodation services for young people, particularly those with complex needs.
- Expand eligibility of crisis services to women on Temporary Visas.
- Support recommendations from the Path to Nowhere^{xii} and Blueprint for Reform^{xiii} report.
- Men's Behaviour change programming and support.

"Very little is out there for men. You really helped me and my son and daughter in this difficult time"

YWCA Client

Family law

YWCA Australia supports the public joint letter to the Women's Safety Ministers which reaffirms Reform is needed to ensure a safe and effective family law framework that crosses over the family law system and other federal, state and territory systems, including the family violence and child protection systems. The framework will ensure that justice systems respond appropriately to family violence, effective legal help is provided for the most disadvantaged, all professionals in the system have an understanding of family violence, and families have increased access to safe dispute resolution models. ^{xiv}

SAFE HOMES AND HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE

'Thank you helping me and my children to be safe in a house and for everything you did. Very caring compassionate and proactive in helping people with their journey. If not for you I would be stuck with a violent man. Your worker helped change my life and helped me with my new daughter.'

- YWCA Client

'Victim survivors need affordable housing and support to rebuild their lives. This is not a short-term process and the emotional and psychological needs of the carer and children need long-term investments to break the cycle.'

- YWCA Staff Member

'You all helped us be safe and have a safe home to live in for a while until we could get our life back on track. You protected us and helped us feel mentally better. Thank you for allowing us to be happy again.'

- YWCA Tenant

'Overhauling the education system and teaching respect for all people (particularly women) from primary school. RRE should be present through every school year and grow to suit the age group.' - YWCA CBF Member

'Women and their children are being left to suffer violence alone, with no support from their government. If they are lucky, they will not become a statistic, but if they do escape violence, they will suffer housing, financial, emotional and physical hardship. We are creating a violent society and then leaving our citizens to navigate the violence we created with no support and no understanding. Australia needs to change.' - YWCA Member

'Not being able to transition from Safe Houses into community or private rentals due to high rents and/or no available community housing is continuing heartbreaking and frustrating and can make it really hard to build trust when there aren't many options.' - YWCA Staff Member

Safe Homes and Housing Infrastructure

- 1. Addressing with urgency the inclusion of housing and related investment as part of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and their Children and the national summit for women's safety in September. This includes:**
 - Implementing recommendations of the Nowhere To Go report by Equity Economics, Everybody's Home, YWCA Australia, DVNSW, DVVIC/RC, Women's Housing Company, Homelessness NSW and Victorian Women's Housing Alliance and invest in 16,800 additional social housing units for women, children and young people experiencing FSDV costing \$7.6 billion which would immediately result in economic benefits of \$15.3 billion and the creation of 47,000 new jobs. Not only would we see the obvious economic benefits, but we would see a variety of other savings by investing in housing - additional social housing would generate savings of \$122.5 million in a year due to women not returning to a violent partner and a further \$257 million in a year in savings due to women not experiencing homelessness after leaving their homes due to family and domestic violence.
- 2. Social and affordable housing a priority for Federal, State and Local governments**
- 3. Incorporate analysis and recommendations from YWCA's Regional Housing Report**
- 4. Housing pathways that:**
 - Encourage measures to reduce the cost of renting safe accessible housing to women, children and young people;
 - Provide subsidies to reduce the cost of safe options for housing. This subsidy could be delivered through organisations such as CHPs like YWCA Australia.
- 5. Improve the quality and accessibility of housing that support wellbeing and financial interdependence such as: Energy-efficient housing that are cool in summer, warm in winter, and not expensive to run.**
- 6. Provision of adequate housing through further supports such as a toolkit that builds on the three toolkits already developed in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria to support CHPs across Australia to deliver a quality service response.**
- 7. Further provision of training materials that can be utilised across states and territories to support CHOs strengthens their understanding and practice in providing housing to victim-survivors of FDV as well as FDV perpetrators**

In developing the next National Plan, at the National Summit for Women's Safety in September, the department needs to draw from the voices of survivors and sector experts to prioritise primary prevention, early intervention and response's as well as acknowledging there is an urgent need to invest in housing for those experiencing FDV. During a pandemic it couldn't be clearer that a secure, accessible affordable home is a critical element to the impacts of gender-based violence. In line with recommendations from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), social housing must be seen as social infrastructure with a government subsidy to drive equity related asset class products.^{xv}

YWCA is the only national women's housing provider in Australia providing over 150,000 nights of affordable accommodation to women every year. In our commitment to action we believe access to safe, secure and affordable housing as a fundamental factor in ending inequality for women . Almost 70% of the women housed by YWCA National Housing have

experienced family violence. A lack of affordable and available housing further inhibits women's options to leave FSDV while safe and affordable accommodation gives women a secure basis to build their futures.

A commitment to adequate, long term funding is needed to address the critical shortage of accommodation and homelessness services, in particular for specialist services for women and children facing violence is key. Older, single women are increasingly vulnerable to housing stress, insecurity and homelessness.^{xvi} In 2015-16 there was a 17% increase in the number of women over the age of 55 seeking assistance from homelessness services, which was twice the rate of growth for the general homelessness services population. There are a range of factors contributing to this, including the financial disadvantage women face over their lifetime, as well as domestic and family violence. Women retire with on average half the superannuation than men, a reality which many older women are now grappling with. Older women who experience domestic violence are often faced with no financial security and no safety nets, and so enter into the homelessness sector for the first time. 65% of YWCA tenants are over 50, with many being first time users of the welfare system in Australia.

Young people also make up around a quarter of people experiencing homelessness, and the largest number of women experiencing homeless in Australia are women aged between 25-34 years.^{xvii} Domestic and family violence and sexual assault are the main reasons for young women seeking homelessness services and young women aged 15-24 have the highest rate of assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services.^{xviii} It is important to note that while women make up just under half of those experiencing homelessness, young women in particular are often "invisible" and their homelessness is hidden- most are forced to find a safe place to sleep by couch-surfing, staying in crisis or temporary accommodation, exchanging sexual favours in exchange for accommodation or sleeping in their cars.

YWCA's Women's Housing Needs^{xix} report found that Gen Z (born 1995-2009) and Gen Y (born 1980-1994) are the most stressed generation when it comes to housing, finance, wellbeing and safety. Young women are more likely than young men to be primary carers for children, which adds a further burden on women, and can lead to difficulty in obtaining and retaining affordable and safe housing.

YWCA is concerned that women face some of the most critical housing challenges in our community. A gender-responsive approach to housing and homelessness would effectively address the structural disadvantages experienced by women, as well as other marginalised groups of women and gender diverse populations facing housing insecurity and unaffordability^{xx}. A gender-responsive approach would also contribute to the prevention of homelessness due to domestic and family violence, by enabling specialist services to address and respond to the gendered drivers of violence and homelessness. There is a chronic shortage of social and affordable housing which is forcing record levels of homelessness. More and more people are struggling to afford the private rental market and the demand for affordable or social rental properties is outstripping supply.^{xxi} Women's economic disadvantage contributes to instability and unaffordability in housing, due to lower incomes, periods out of the workplace for caring, and longer lifespans.^{xxii} Women are the primary beneficiaries of housing support systems, making up most of the

public housing tenants and Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) recipients.^{xxiii} Women are also more likely to live in low-income or single-parent households and therefore are more likely to experience housing stress. Women disproportionately outnumber men in the receipt of Parenting Payments (93.8% women compared to 6.2% men), Aged Pension (55.9% compared to 44.1%) and Youth Allowance (54.1% compared to 45.9%). Studies show that single women who are recipients of these payments had access to 0% of the rental market based on affordability and appropriateness.^{xxiv}

In approaching economic recovery to COVID-19, the construction of social housing should be considered as economic stimulus. In line with recommendations from the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), social housing must be seen as social infrastructure with a government subsidy to drive equity related asset class products. A January 2020 AHURI Report found that there are few feasible pathways out of social housing and into private rental^{xxv}. Governments must also play a role in creating pathways for people to exit out of social housing and into affordable private rental.

YWCA Australia recently partnered with Everybody's Home, Equity Economics, Homelessness NSW, DVNSW, DVVIC/DVRC, Women's Housing Company, Victorian Women's Housing Alliance on The 'Nowhere To Go' Equity Economics^{xxvi} report analysed the benefits of providing long term social housing to victims of family violence, determining it is the leading reason women and children seek specialist homelessness services, something we see in our services everyday. In approaching economic recovery to COVID-19, the construction of social housing should be considered as economic stimulus. A convening housing and violence crisis is something no one wants to see in their own community. The report is clear, if the Commonwealth Government invested in 16,800 additional social housing units costing \$7.6 billion there would be immediate economic benefits of \$15.3 billion and the creation of 47,000 new jobs. Not only would we see the obvious economic benefits, but we would see a variety of other savings by investing in housing - additional social housing would generate savings of \$122.5 million in a year due to women not returning to a violent partner and a further \$257 million in a year in savings due to women not experiencing homelessness after leaving their homes due to family and domestic violence.

A pay now and save forever model we wholeheartedly support.

FDV is the primary reason women and children seek specialist homelessness services, but only 3.2% are in the long-term housing solutions they need. As indicated in our recent YWCA National Housing report^{xxvii} which outlines key housing needs and challenges for women through national research undertaken across regional Australia. It offers new insights critical to our solutions:

- 63% have some level of housing stress. One quarter are very or extremely stressed. 77% of these women say this stress impacts their mental health and wellbeing and more than half report this stress impacts on their ability to manage their day-to-day, relationships, friendships, and work.
- 1 in 5 women said their current housing was not appropriate or suitable to them.
- 1 in 3 women who live in unsuitable housing do not feel safe at home in their own house
- 1 in 3 women have experienced physical and /or mental health issues that affected their financial and housing situations.

1 in 4 women said their finances and housing had been impacted by domestic violence

Collaboration with gender specialist organisation's like YWCA Australia are key, The Gardenhouse, for example, a collaboration with YWCA, Salvation Army, Housing All Australians and others is one of the first of its kind facilities in Australia. It provides emergency accommodation to women experiencing homelessness in Melbourne and has been fitted out by a group of more than 40 private companies. Investment and prioritisation of these initiative as a result of gender-responsive analysis and budgeting is crucial in the next National Plan.

YWCA advocates for a revitalising of housing support systems with a renewed commitment to innovation and direct Government investment in social and affordable housing. This includes strategic partnerships with the private and not-for-profit sector, as well as investment into innovative housing models. Any similar initiative must also include social housing infrastructure in regional and rural areas, particularly in light of the 2019-2020 bushfires, and the already critical need for affordable housing in those areas.

YWCA supports initiatives that enable women experiencing domestic and family violence to remain safely in their homes if they choose. However, we do caution that comprehensive measures must be taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those women and children remaining in the home, for example providing safety planning, improving home security, support in managing finances, support for children, and help with legal processes. Safe at home programs are not available to everyone that needs it and there are gaps in support, particularly for regional, rural and remote women. From our own experiences as a safe home support provider, we cannot meet increasing demand. Our Keeping Women Safe in their Homes program provides risk assessments, safety planning and security upgrades for women and their children to help them stay in their own homes, or a home of their choice, provided it is safe to do so. Without further significant investment women and their children will remain trapped in dangerous abusive situations.

Conclusion

We look forward to working with the Government on the next National Plan to End Violence Against Women and their children. If you require any further clarity in any of the areas of primary prevention, intersectionality specialist support and response or safe homes please contact Bobbie.Trower@ywca.org.au

ⁱ COAG 2011

ⁱⁱ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2016). Personal safety, Australia, 2016. ABS cat. no. 4906.0. Canberra: ABS. <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0>

ⁱⁱⁱ 3 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story 2019. Cat. no. FDV 3. Canberra: AIHW

^{iv} Braybrook, A (2015), 'Family violence in Aboriginal communities', DVRCV Advocate, No. 2, Spring/Summer 2015

^v <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/wiyi-yani-u-thangani> accessed July 2021

^{vi} <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/change-the-story/>

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- ^{vii} Wiyi Yani U Thangani accessed July 2021 <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/wiyi-yani-u-thangani>
- ^{viii} Our Watch, ANROWS & Vic Health 2015, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Melbourne
- ^{ix} Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) and Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) 2017, Submission to the Productivity Commission Introducing Competition and Informed User Choice into Human Services Draft Report, P.5
- ^x Equality Rights Alliance, National Gender Equality Plan, last viewed 27 July 2020 <http://www.equalityrightsalliance.org.au/projects/ngep/>
- ^{xi} Recommendation 11, Equality Rights Alliance, Submission of Equality Rights Alliance to the Select Committee on COVID-19 inquiry into the Australian Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic 28 May 2020- <http://www.equalityrightsalliance.org.au/wpcontent/uploads/2020/06/Final-ERA-Submission-Select-Committee-on-COVID19-.pdf>
- ^{xii} National Advocacy Group on Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence (2018) Path to Nowhere: Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence and Their Children
- ^{xiii} National Advocacy Group on Women on Temporary Visas Experiencing Violence (2019) Blueprint for Reform: Removing Barriers to Safety for Victims/Survivors of Domestic and Family Violence who are on Temporary Visas
- ^{xiv} Public Joint Letter Women's Safety Ministers 2021
- ^{xv} AHURI 2018, Social Housing as Infrastructure, available from: https://www.ahuri.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/29059/AHURI-FinalReport-306Social-housing-as-infrastructure-an-investment-pathway.pdf
- ^{xvi} 7 https://www.ywcahousing.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2020_WomensHousingNeedsinRegionalAustralia_OlderWomen.pdf
- ^{xvii} Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story 2019. Cat. no. FDV 3. Canberra: AIHW
- ^{xviii} Kaspiew et al, Evaluation of the 2006 Family Law Reforms, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2009
- ^{xix} 7 https://www.ywcahousing.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/2020_WomensHousingNeedsinRegionalAustralia_OlderWomen.pdf
- ^{xx} Our Watch, ANROWS & Vic Health 2015, Change the Story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia, Our Watch, Melbourne
- ^{xxi} Everybodys Home Campaign 2018 <https://everybodyshome.com.au/our-campaign/relief-for-chronic-rental-stress/>
- ^{xxii} Tually, Dr Selina; Beer, Andrew & Faulkner Dr Debbie, Too Big To Ignore – A Report on Future Issues for Australian Women's Housing 2006-2025, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) , 2007
- ^{xxiii} Australian Women Against Violence Alliance (AWAVA) and Equality Rights Alliance (ERA) 2017, Submission to the Productivity Commission Introducing Competition and Informed User Choice into Human Services Draft Report, P.5
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- ^{xxvi} Equity Economics, Nowhere to go; the benefits of providing long term social housing to women that have experienced domestic and family violence
- ^{xxvii} Womens Housing needs in Regional Australia, May 2020 [Women's Housing Needs in Regional Australia - YWCA Housing](http://www.ywcahousing.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Womens-Housing-Needs-in-Regional-Australia-WYCA-Housing.pdf)

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