



Fact Sheet: Violence Against Women

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Violence against women in Australia is being described in our communities as 'a national human rights disaster',¹ an 'epidemic',² and a 'national emergency'.³

- One woman is killed in Australia every week by a current or former partner.⁴
- One in three women in Australia has experienced physical violence, and almost one in five has experienced sexual violence.⁵
- More than 67% of domestic violence incidents go unreported.⁶
- Aboriginal women are 31 times more likely to be hospitalised as a result of family violence-related assault than non-Aboriginal women,⁷ and 10 times more likely to die as a result of violent assault in comparison with non-Aboriginal women.⁸
- Women with disability are 40% more likely to be the victims of domestic violence than women without disability,⁹ and more than 70% of women with disability have been victims of violent sexual encounters at some time in their lives.¹⁰ Compared to their peers, women with disability experience significantly higher levels of all forms of violence and are subjected to such violence by a greater number of perpetrators.¹¹
- Sizeable proportions of Australians believe there are circumstances in which violence against women can be excused.¹²
- 1 in 5 Australians believe that a woman bears some responsibility if she is raped.¹³
- 4 in 10 Australians believe that rape results from men not being able to control their need for sex.¹⁴
- There has been minimal progress over the past 5 years in addressing gender inequality and violence against women in Australia.¹⁵

In Australia, there is no national, coordinated legislation to prevent and address violence against women, including family/domestic violence.¹⁶ The Australian Government's primary response to addressing violence against women is set out in the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the *National Plan*), implemented through a series of four, three-year action plans (Action Plans) - the first of which was launched in 2012, and the second in 2014. The *National Plan* has seen some key achievements to date, including for example, the establishment of Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS),¹⁷ and the Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children.¹⁸ However, despite these positive developments, concerns from civil society continue to include the need to ensure that the *National Plan* is sufficiently and sustainably resourced to ensure its timely implementation and that it is informed by active participation by civil society and independent monitoring and evaluation. In addition, the *National Plan* has significant limitations, in that it focuses only on domestic/family violence and sexual assault and fails to address the many other forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls (including for example forced sterilisation; violence in institutions; sexual and reproductive rights violations; restrictive practices; seclusion and restraint; deprivation of liberty). These forms of violence currently fall 'outside' the scope of the *National Plan*.

Australia is a signatory to seven core international human rights treaties, all of which create obligations to promote gender equality and address violence against women. However, the *National Plan* is only linked to the *Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), and so is primarily focused on meeting human rights obligations in relation to gender discrimination. The *Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (E/C.12/AUS/CO/4) has specifically recommended that the *National Plan* be framed and operationalised in a comprehensive human rights framework.

Proposed Recommendations

That the state, territory and Australian Governments adequately fund the implementation of the *National Plan* and relevant state and territory plans.

That the state, territory and Australian Governments review the effectiveness of existing consultative mechanisms and develop appropriate opportunities for ongoing participation by civil society in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the *National Plan* and associated Action Plans.

That the Australian Government reconsider and implement the recommendations for reform made by the ALRC and New South Wales Law Reform Commission in *Family Violence – A National Legal Response* (2010) and the ALRC in *Family Violence and Commonwealth Laws – Improving Legal Frameworks* (2012).

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- ¹ Phillips, J. (2014) *Domestic violence: Rachelle Yeo's father urges men to address 'national human rights disaster'*. ABC News, 6 May 2014, accessed online at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-05-06/rachelle-yeos-father-pleads-for-change/5427002>; See also: Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse (2004) Amnesty International launches worldwide campaign to stop violence against women. *ADFVC Newsletter*, 18, May 2004.
- ² Domestic Violence NSW (2014) *Tony Abbott: convene a national crisis summit on domestic and family violence – and film an ad denouncing the violence killing our women and children*. Accessed online June 2014 at: https://www.change.org/en-AU/petitions/tony-abbott-there-s-noexcuse-for-domestic-violence-it-s-time-for-leadership-on-this-crisis?recruiter=90503088&utm_campaign=mailto_link&utm_medium=email&utm_source=share_petition
- ³ Jacques, O. (16th Jul 2014) *Wicked Campers to remove 'insensitive slogans'*. The Bulletin. Accessed online July 2014 at: <http://www.themorningbulletin.com.au/news/greens-condemn-wicked-campers-senate/2320323/>
- ⁴ National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children, 2009–2021 (2009) 9 <www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/the_plan.pdf>
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Day, L. (2014) *Domestic violence: Service SHE braces for budget cut fallout*. ABC News, Wed 25 Jun 2014. Accessed online at: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-06-25/domestic-violence3a-service-braces-for-family-budget-cut-fall/5548266>
- ⁷ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Australian Government Productivity Commission, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2011 (2011) <www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/111609/key-indicators-2011-report.pdf>
- ⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Family Violence among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (2006) www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=6442458606
- ⁹ Brownridge, D. (2006) 'Partner violence against women with disabilities: Prevalence, risks and explanations', *Violence against Women*, vol. 12, no. 9, pp. 805–22.
- ¹⁰ Frohmader, C. (2014) '*Gender Blind, Gender Neutral*': *The effectiveness of the National Disability Strategy in improving the lives of women and girls with disabilities*. Prepared for Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA), Hobart, Tasmania. ISBN: 978-0-9585268-2-1.
- ¹¹ Women With Disabilities Australia (WWDA) (2007b) '*Forgotten Sisters - A global review of violence against women with disabilities*'. WWDA Resource Manual on Violence Against Women With Disabilities. Published by WWDA, Tasmania, Australia.
- ¹² National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey (NCAS) (2014) <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Publications/Freedom-from-violence/2013-National-Community-Attitudes-towards-Violence-Against-Women-Survey.aspx>
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Dowse, L., Soldatic, K., Didi, A., Frohmader, C. and van Toorn, G. (2013) *Stop the Violence: Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities in Australia*. Background Paper. Hobart: Women with Disabilities Australia.
- ¹⁷ <http://www.anrows.org.au/>
- ¹⁸ www.ourwatch.org.au