



2024-25  
Commonwealth  
Budget Submission

*Prioritising  
accountability and  
behaviour change*

# Acknowledgement of country

No to Violence acknowledges First Nations Peoples across these lands; the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters. We pay respect to all Elders, past, present and emerging. We acknowledge a deep connection with country which has existed over 60,000 years. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded, and this was and always will be First Nation's land.

## About No to Violence

No to Violence works to bring about the changes our community needs to eliminate men's use of family violence. For 30 years, we have been working directly with men who use family violence to support them to change.

Our expertise in their beliefs, attitudes, behaviour and choices has enabled us to develop standards, programs and training, lead policy development, and fulfil our role as the largest peak body in Australia for organisations and individuals working with men to end family violence.

As a pro-feminist organisation, the safety of women and children is at the centre of everything we do. It is by ending men's violence that families can have happier, safer and more fulfilled lives.

Our members come from a diverse range of professional and community backgrounds and work in a number of settings including the community sector, government and private practice

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# Contents

<i>Acknowledgement of country</i> .....	1
<i>About No to Violence</i> .....	2
<i>Contact</i> .....	2
<i>Funding priorities in 2024-25</i> .....	4
<i>1. Provide sustainable funding for critical intervention services via the National Partnership Agreement</i> .....	5
<i>2. Commence scoping for a comprehensive National Perpetrator Plan</i> .....	7
<i>3. Fund No to Violence’s work as the national peak body for services working with people who use violence</i> .....	10

# Funding priorities in 2024-25

In order to shift the burden and create meaningful progress towards the vision of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and their Children (2022-32), No to Violence is calling on the Commonwealth Government to:

- 1. Provide sustainable funding for critical intervention services via the National Partnership Agreement**
  - 1.1 Prioritise community-led interventions
- 2. Commence scoping for a comprehensive National Perpetrator Plan**
  - 2.1 National Perpetration Study
  - 2.2 National service mapping
  - 2.3 Workforce development strategy
  - 2.4 Monitoring and evaluation framework
- 3. Fund No to Violence's work as the national peak body for services working with people who use violence**
  - 3.1 Expand sector representation
  - 3.2 Provide strategic advice to government
  - 3.3 Build workforce capability via the NTV Practice Hub

# 1. Provide sustainable funding for critical intervention services via the National Partnership Agreement

The sector working with people using violence in Australia continues to experience significant pressures coping with demand for services due to inadequate funding. During our member consultations in the past 12 months, we continued to hear that funding contracts do not reflect the work being undertaken by services. Chronic underfunding of critical intervention services is putting unnecessary pressure on service providers with implications for program waitlists, service provision, and workforce development. Pilot and short-term funding contracts are creating additional barriers for recruitment and retention of qualified staff, placing further pressure on service providers and administrative processes. We also heard that competitive funding arrangements are undermining efforts to create greater collaboration across the sector, and smaller community-led organisations are missing out on contracts due to their limited capacity to engage in tender writing processes.

We are calling on the Commonwealth Government to provide sustainable funding for services that work with people using violence. Funding allocations via the National Partnership Agreement should consider the minimum funding required to cover the following (non-exhaustive) list of expenses:

## Staffing costs

Working with people who have used or are using family violence is a highly specialised skillset. Low salaries have been identified as a driver behind recruitment and retention challenges, with our members reporting they simply cannot attract quality staff to work for the money they have to offer. Increased funding to services would mean services could offer higher salaries and better working conditions, including full-time rather than part-time contracts. This would go a long way to enabling more people to enter and stay in the family violence workforce.

## Clinical supervision

Workforce shortages due to insufficient funding often leads to staff taking on unreasonable caseloads to manage demand for their service. Consequently, many workers have limited time to engage in clinical supervision and other practices to ensure their own wellbeing and safety. When workers are not supported to access regular clinical supervision, this increases the risk unsafe and/or underdeveloped practice, burnout and resignation.

## Family safety contact work

A critical element of best practice when working with people using violence is ensuring affected family members have access to regular support and information. However, family safety contact work is not being factored into funding contracts and many services are having to stretch their (already strained) budgets to ensure this critical practice is occurring.

## Training and professional development

As we continue to learn more about people's pathways into, and out of, using family violence, it is important that frontline workers have access to regular training and professional development opportunities. This includes access to training around culturally safe and trauma informed practice, as well as upskilling in how to respond to emerging forms of abuse (e.g.: technology-facilitated abuse,

economic abuse). Access to regular training and development is critical to ensuring safe practice and will also have benefits in addressing staff burnout and wellbeing concerns.

#### Responding to legislative and policy reforms

Services need to be supported to adapt their practice in response to significant legislative and policy reforms across the family violence sector. Legislative and policy changes (e.g.: criminalisation of coercive control, changes to sexual consent laws) have tangible impacts on services; however, the additional work created through these reforms is not being factored into service funding.

#### Data collection, reporting and information sharing

To continue building our understanding of what works in responding to people using violence, we need to become more sophisticated in how we measure the impact of interventions. This requires an investment in data collection, reporting and information sharing across all intervention providers.

#### Inter-service collaboration

The need to improve referral processes and identify people using violence earlier is one of many reasons that inter-service collaboration is important. However, funding contracts are not supporting our members to build and maintain genuine partnerships. As a result, our members are often coming into contact with people using violence once their behaviour has already escalated. Inadequate funding also impacts our members' ability to connect people using violence with other services to respond to complex and intersecting needs.

#### Administrative costs

Many family violence services experience high staff turnover due to the intensity of the work, job insecurity (due to short-term contracts), and unsatisfactory working conditions (due to insufficient service funding). This puts significant pressure on administrative processes that are seldom factored into funding contracts.

### ***1.1 Prioritise community-led interventions***

As we continue working towards Target 13 of the Closing the Gap agreement: “[Reduce] family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women by at least 50%”, we are calling on the Commonwealth Government to invest in community-led interventions to ending family violence. During our member consultations, we heard that large mainstream organisations have an unfair advantage in competitive tendering processes over smaller community-led services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). We heard that mainstream services are often ill-equipped to respond to First Nations people, and that community-led services have much greater success in engaging with First Nations communities.

## 2. Commence scoping for a comprehensive National Perpetrator Plan

Achieving the Commonwealth Government’s vision of “ending violence against women and children in one generation” requires a national approach to preventing and responding to people using violence.

No to Violence respects and supports the work of organisations such as Our Watch in promoting primary prevention of family violence along with ANROWS and the Australian Institute of Criminology for their leadership and coordination of research efforts. We also respect and support the leadership of No to Violence members in their development of new and innovative models of engagement and therapeutic intervention when working with men. There is little evidence to suggest that the current level of resourcing to the family and domestic violence sector will achieve the Australian Government’s stated objective of ending family violence in a generation.

Furthermore, simply providing ‘more of the same’ will not achieve a different result.

We know that the vast majority of resources in the family and domestic violence sector are dedicated to keeping women and children safe following domestic and family violence. This expenditure is vital and needs to grow further, however, moving and protecting victim/survivors does not address the causes of family violence, that is, the people who choose to use violence.

We know that around 50% of frontline police work involves responding to family and domestic violence. This is vital policing and the cost is not immediately apparent, however we know that state and territory governments spent \$14.1 billion on policing in 2022, while the costs on family violence related court and correctional services will be many billions of dollars more each year (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2022). Despite this large and growing expenditure, police across the nation will say that ‘we cannot police our way out of this’.

To have any hope of significantly reducing and eliminating family and domestic violence Australia needs a comprehensive Perpetrator Plan to sit alongside of The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 (The National Plan) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan (2023-2025).

A National Perpetrator Plan is needed to bring together all elements of work aligned to Action 5 of the National Plan and to hold people who choose to use violence to account.

People using family violence are too often lumped in together as if they are one homogeneous group. We do not believe this to be true or helpful. Likewise, there has been chronic underinvestment in designing, implementing, and evaluating perpetrator interventions. In many jurisdictions, we have something resembling a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach. Again, this is neither meaningful nor effective.

Australia needs a more comprehensive and proven suite of therapeutic and potentially judicial interventions to respond to people using violence.

More importantly, Australia needs effective and timely approaches to diverting and disrupting pathways into perpetration, including therapeutic interventions to break intergenerational patterns of perpetration.

A comprehensive National Preparatory Plan would address the need to:

- Build a shared understanding of people’s pathways into using violence
- Identify service gaps and opportunities for earlier engagement and intervention with people using violence
- Support specialist and non-specialist workforces to identify users of violence and respond effectively
- Coordinate monitoring and evaluation to demonstrate effectiveness of interventions

If we are to interrupt people’s trajectories towards using violence, we need to understand which interventions are working and where new innovations are required to meaningfully engage with different cohorts. Crucially, the work to better understand the problem needs to progress simultaneously with the work to stop it. To achieve this, there needs to be an overarching strategy to coordinate these concurrent workstreams.

We are proposing that the National Perpetration Plan would include the following components:

### ***2.1 National Perpetration Study***

A key component of the National Perpetrator Plan would involve establishing a National Perpetration Study. We note that there is no nationally representative data on the prevalence of family violence, and there is minimal understanding of the patterns and dynamics of perpetration (Flood et al., 2022). As a result, there are significant gaps in data sources for the measurement of the National Plan’s long-term outcome 4: ‘People who choose to use violence are accountable for their actions and stop their violent, coercive and abusive behaviours.’

The need to better understand perpetration is highlighted in the recent Australian National Research Agenda (ANRA), which identifies people who use violence as a research priority. In relation to the ANRA, a National Perpetration Study will help identify pathways into, and out of, perpetration, providing a data source for sub-outcome 4.1: ‘People at risk of using violence are identified early and supported to access programs and services to change their behaviour.’ Thus, as well as generating a more complex understanding of the prevalence and characteristics of perpetration, a National Perpetration Study will improve understandings of what works to stop people using violence and how interventions should be targeted.

The National Perpetration Study would work best as a repeated study that sits alongside the National Community Attitudes Survey (NCAS) and Personal Safety Survey (PSS) to inform how measures of perpetration progress. NTV is well-positioned to help deliver a National Perpetration Study, as the largest national peak body of organisations and individuals working with men who use violence.

### ***2.2 National service mapping***

We note that funding in the 2023-24 Federal Budget has already been allocated to developing a national referral data base, and we believe this initiative will form important parts of the National Perpetration Plan.

For this initiative to have the greatest impact, it will be important to use this mapping to gain a greater understanding of system gaps and where additional supports are needed. The high level of under-reporting of family violence means that only a small percentage of people who use violence engage with the criminal justice system. This is why we need to broaden the frame of accountability beyond a criminal justice lens and build a system-wide approach to identifying and responding to persons using



violence. The National Perpetration Study (2.1) would improve the measurability of accountability by obtaining data at population-based level rather than through select systems. This would allow us to identify service gaps and opportunities for earlier engagement with people using violence.

### ***2.3 Workforce development strategy***

A future-focussed workforce development strategy is an important component of the National Perpetration Plan. We must ensure the sector has the capability to deliver new and innovative interventions, appropriate resourcing to manage waitlists and demand for services, and processes to manage risk and to engage safely with people using violence.

The workforce development strategy could include national guidance on minimum standards for perpetrator interventions, to ensure a consistent approach is being taken across states and territories to identify and respond to family violence.

The workforce development strategy should be responsive to other parts of the National Perpetration Plan, acknowledging that workforce priorities will continue to evolve as we begin to understand more about people using violence, pathways to engagement and behaviour change.

### ***2.4 Monitoring and evaluation framework***

As we continue to build our understanding of people's pathways into using violence, we need to become more sophisticated in how we measure the effectiveness of interventions. Currently, there is no evaluation framework for perpetrator interventions in Australia. The evaluations that do exist are one-off program evaluations that track behaviour change during a specific program. This means their findings are limited in what they can tell us about the broader efficacy of intervention approaches for people using violence.

A fully resourced national evaluation framework would allow us to track in-program and long-term behaviour change of people who have used violence. This framework would have implications for the National Perpetration Study (2.1), national service mapping (2.2) and workforce development strategy (2.3) and provide valuable insights to inform the design of new interventions for people using violence. It would also serve as an accountability mechanism for service providers (both government and non-government), highlighting gaps in service provision and indicating where new funding is most needed.

## 3. Fund No to Violence’s work as the national peak body for services working with people who use violence

No to Violence’s leadership is central to achieving the vision of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children (2022-32). We are calling on the Commonwealth Government to recognise and support No to Violence to continue and expand our role in representing the sector who work with people who use violence.

### ***3.1 Expand sector representation***

We want to ensure that organisations and services working with people using family violence can access support and resources from a national peak body. Funding No to Violence as a national peak body will enable us to grow our national presence and provide greater support to our members across Australia. It will enable us to strengthen coordination, information sharing, evidence and research across the family and domestic violence sector. Further, it will also support our work in helping non-specialist services build early identification and referral pathways for people using (or at risk of using) violence.

No to Violence represents organisations based in all Australian jurisdictions, with a particularly strong membership base in Victoria and New South Wales. However, we understand that in order to lead national change, we need to be working alongside a nationally representative group of stakeholders. Funding No to Violence as a national peak body would support us to continue expanding our reach to ensure all services working with people using violence are represented in policy decision making.

### ***3.2 Provide strategic advice to government***

No to Violence has a strong track record of providing valuable advice and feedback on proposed policy and legislative amendments. In the past 12 months, this has included our involvement in shaping the National Plan through our role on the National Plan Advisory Group; our contributions to the Senate Hearing into current and proposed sexual consent laws; our feedback on the Australian National Research Agenda and the National Principles on Coercive Control.

National peak funding would allow us to continue providing high quality strategic advice on all family violence matters. In line with the benefits outlined above (see 3.1), this funding would enable us to consult more broadly and capture the perspectives of a wider range of stakeholders in the family violence sector.

### ***3.3 Build workforce capability via the NTV Practice Hub***

No to Violence is calling for investment in the NTV Practice Hub- a centralised portal containing high-quality resources, information and support for the sector that works with people using family violence in Australia. This project aims to develop an Australian model for working with people using violence that is responsive to sector needs, bridging the gap between research and practice.

The Practice Hub would serve to operationalise the workforce development strategy (see 2.3) and facilitate greater information sharing, including improved data collection practices for monitoring and evaluation purposes (see 2.4). The Hub would also create opportunities to connect services and support greater inter-sectoral collaboration.