



Phillip Ripper
PO Box 277
Flinders Lane Vic 8007
03 9487 4500
phillipr@ntv.org.au



Wednesday 17 December 2024

Attn: Treasurer, the Hon Jim Chalmers MP

The Treasury
Langton Crescent
PARKES ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Dear Treasurer,

Re: Crucial opportunity to stop violence at the source at the next federal budget (2025-26)

The 2021-2025 National Partnership Agreement is a mandate for action on family violence across Australia. Momentum created by investment in family violence responses is creating a baseline understanding of the types of initiatives operating across prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing. Without sustained investment, this momentum will flatten and dissipate.

No to Violence's formal pre-budget submission is attached, representing the views of members from across the country. In the submission, we outline five key recommendations to strengthen the national approach to people using violence, developed in collaboration with members.

Recommendation 1: Commit to developing a national strategy focused on people using violence

Recommendation 2: Extend and expand the Innovative Perpetrator Response Fund

Recommendation 3: Establish a national knowledge hub for work with people using violence.

Recommendation 4: Rapidly implement a nationally coordinated approach to people at highest risk of causing highest harm

Recommendation 5: Fund the family violence frontline to thrive

No to Violence members want greater investment in holistic, individualised, tailored and whole-of-family interventions – where families are connected to therapeutic and practical supports. These interventions should be prioritised in future.

The next National Partnership Agreement needs to back the Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council calls for a sustained focus on responses to people using violence from prevention to recovery in 2025. It important to go beyond bolstering any one type of intervention for people using violence. To stop violence at the source, we need a strategic, coordinated, collaborative and innovative

approach to people using violence. **We need a national strategy on people using violence to drive this radical change.**

Future iterations of the National Partnership Agreement can strengthen the diverse landscape of responses to domestic and family violence to reduce duplication and respond to unmet need. The Innovative Perpetrator Response Fund has been invaluable for rapidly expanding access to a broader suite of interventions so that people using violence receive the right intervention at the right time. The interventions funded and underway will generate concrete evidence of their impact – giving governments the green light to roll them out across the country. **Realising this vision requires a commitment to extend and expand the Innovative Perpetrator Response Fund for a second round from 2025.**

Knowledge gathered through these evaluations and other research taking place across the country is not reaching the practitioners who need those learnings now. Government can also better utilise the wealth of practice-based knowledge gleaned from identifying and responding to a diverse range of people using violence, including those representing the highest risk to communities. A flurry of work has occurred in 2024, largely without the involvement of the sector working with people using violence. **No to Violence proposes establishing a national knowledge hub to ensure those working to end people's use of violence have access to the developing evidence base and can harness it to further innovate their practice.** Without which the service system leaves victim-survivors unsafe and emboldens people using violence, allowing them to entrench or escalate abuse.

Government and service systems need to be able to work more closely with each other to hold people using violence accountable. Risk-related information needs to be shared quickly for swifter response. Collaboration is necessary to avoid duplicating efforts and leaving chasms in systems that people using violence slip through. It is even more urgent to get responses right when people using violence represent high risk of causing high harm. **We propose developing a taskforce to achieve greater collaboration between those working to hold people using violence accountable.**

Finally, the family violence workforce urgently needs support to thrive. This difficult work should be well remunerated, and workers should have safe and dignified working conditions. It is unacceptable for such a critical workforce to be working to save lives in workplaces where their health and wellbeing is at risk. **No to Violence supports the Fund the Frontline and the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission recommendation to establish a National Workforce Strategy.**

Sincerely,



Phillip Ripper

CEO, No to Violence

Recommendation 1: Commit to developing a national strategy focused on people using violence

We will not end domestic, family and sexual violence without a strong, sustained and strategic focus on people using violence. **No to Violence strongly recommends developing a dedicated national strategy focused on people using violence.**

Identifying people using violence requires specialist family violence knowledge. There is no one ‘type’ of people using violence. People using violence come from all age groups, income brackets, cultural backgrounds, family types and sexualities. Practitioners working with people using violence are experts in identifying those people, assessing the right intervention for them and interrupting their use of violence.

The sector working with people using violence hold people using violence in view of key government and service systems. They work to ensure victim-survivors are safe and have the time and space they need to begin recovery and healing. However, government and service systems operate in disjointed and siloed ways – slowing the flow of time sensitive risk-related information or ‘drop the ball’ and lose view of the person using violence.¹

Without a shared understanding of what it takes to keep people using violence in view, we collectively fail to hold people using violence accountable. In addition, systems that reinforce justifications for using violence embolden the people using this violence. People using violence are often convinced their behaviour is not violent, characterising patterns of abuse as justified reactions to other people’s behaviour – e.g. “look what you made me do” or “I cannot control myself when you do this or that”.² In doing so, efforts to control others’ behaviour, movements and expression are attributed to victims, further stripping away their sense of self and autonomy and increasing impacts of shame. Systems which repeat narratives used by people using violence, in effect, also point the finger at victims, allowing people using violence to continue to shift responsibility for their behaviour.³ This approach deepens and compounds impacts of violence for victim-survivors. People using violence may also escalate abuse to further control victim-survivors and begin using high risk/high harm behaviours – those with strong links to homicide.

A shared responsibility to hold people using violence accountable must be embedded in policy architecture to activate a shared understanding to guide system and service responses. Doing so creates a ‘web of accountability’. The First Action Plan (2023-27) under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children, outlines two key actions for improving responses to people using violence.⁴ These actions (below) lack detail and are not measurable. Measurable and solutions-

¹ Carlson et al. (2024) [What Works? A qualitative exploration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healing programs that respond to family violence](#).

² No to Violence provided evidence to the 2024 Inquiry into Financial Services Regulatory Framework in Relation to Financial Abuse on systems abuse as a member of the Economic Abuse Reference Group.

³ See for example Cook et al. (2024) [Financial Abuse: The weaponisation of child support in Australia](#); Djirra (2024) [submission re National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan](#); Economic Justice Australia (2021) [Debt, Duress and Dob-Ins: Centrelink compliance processes and domestic violence](#); Women’s Legal Service (2018) [“Officer She’s Psychotic and I Need Protection”: Police misidentification of the ‘primary aggressor’ in family violence incidents in Victoria](#).

⁴ Commonwealth of Australia (2023) [First Action Plan 2023-27](#). See also updated [Activities Addendum](#) (2024).

focused outcomes would empower systems and services to take action to identify and respond to people using violence, as well as using a shared understanding of accountability in action.

- Action 5: **Strengthen systems and services** to better hold people who choose to use violence to account and provide opportunities to support people who have used violence, or are at risk of using violence, to change their behaviours, with the aim of protecting the safety and wellbeing of current and potential victim-survivors.
 - Activities towards this goal so far have included:
 - Boosting capacity of two separate existing hotlines connecting with people at risk of or using violence
 - Innovative Perpetrator Response fund, boosting the availability of interventions across the country
 - A dedicated working group to share information on people who use violence **not inclusive of the sector working with people using violence**
- Action 9: **Improve the justice system, including police responses** to better support victim-survivors through the provision of trauma-informed, culturally safe supports that promote safety and wellbeing, and hold people who choose to use violence to account.
 - Activities towards this goal so far have included:
 - Improvements to operational capacity of family courts to address family violence
 - Suite of legislative reforms and victim-survivor-focused justice system improvements

A national strategy focused on people using violence would complement the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children, building on its initial success by providing the context and coordination needed to fundamentally shift services and systems' focus to stopping people's use of violence. Services and systems need to know their role in the 'web of accountability' and be clear on the role of interventions for people using violence.⁵ Time is running out to provide the support needed for the Second Action Plan to realise its objective of ending domestic, family and sexual violence by rapidly improving the identification of and response to people using violence.

Successfully responding to people using violence requires a broader suite of interventions than is currently available. Keeping victim-survivors safe and enabling meaningful behaviour change requires effective, appropriate and targeted responses – reflective of the diversity of this cohort – for people using violence. **We need to provide the right intervention at the right time.** A national strategy focused on people using violence would aid understanding of the interventions already operating across prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing to improve knowledge of the interventions that work best to prevent, interrupt and deter use of violence.

A national strategy focused on people using violence is essential to rapidly advance identification of people using violence across all the places they show up, hold them accountable, and diversify our responses to them. In turn, this comprehensive approach to people using violence would allow for a more sophisticated understanding of who uses violence, where they show up and what works best to stop violence at the source.

⁵ See for example Fitz-Gibbon et al. (2020) [research on the judiciary's understanding of the role of Men's Behaviour Change Programs](#).

Recommendation 2: Extend and expand the Innovative Perpetrator Response Fund

People using violence are not a homogenous group and there is no 'one' way to end their use of violence. Stopping violence at the source requires innovation to build a diverse range of responses. The Innovative Perpetrator Response Fund is key for realising the broader suite of responses needed to stop violence at the source. **The Commonwealth government needs to increase the momentum built by the first round by committing to extending and expanding the Fund in the 2025-26 Federal budget – increasing its size to \$215.92 million over 10 years. Impacts of matched investment expectations on states and territories should be mitigated and funding outcomes made publicly available to maximise transparency.**

The first round of the Innovative Perpetrator Response Fund (2022-2027) has been invaluable for building responses to people using violence. Each jurisdiction has been supported to add up to two more interventions to their existing offerings, building a foundation for responding to a more diverse range of people using violence – across geographical locations, cultural backgrounds and age groups.

In doing so, the Fund has helped to give jurisdictions increased opportunities to better respond to their unique communities – increasing the availability of responses for people using violence across age groups, income brackets, cultural backgrounds, family types and sexualities. The next iteration of this Fund should be informed by jurisdictional need – mapping demand for services that do not yet operate in each area and responding directly to these needs.

The first round of the Innovative Perpetrator Response Fund stipulated interventions needed to draw on existing evidence to support them, including where similar interventions were already operating elsewhere. The second iteration of the Fund must be extended and expanded so practitioners and the sector have the stability they need to collaborate with allied sectors and disseminate key learnings. Organisations should also be encouraged to explore whole-of-family, holistic, tailored and individualised interventions.

Interventions announced so far are listed below, alongside details of where these interventions are operating elsewhere.

- Co-responder model in the Northern Territory for police and domestic, family and sexual violence services.
 - Pilot co-responder models also operate in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland.⁶
- Behaviour change programs in Tasmania and culturally safe behaviour change programs in the Northern Territory and Western Australia.
 - Behaviour change programs operate in every jurisdiction with culturally safe models also operating across the country.
- Trial of an added mentoring component to the KIND (Kinship, Improving relationships, No violence and Developing skills) program in South Australia.
 - The KIND program sans mentoring component is operating in South Australia and Queensland.

⁶ Northern Territory domestic, family and sexual violence advocates are [advocating for this program to be fully funded](#) and rolled out across the NT, as was recommended in a recent coronial inquest into the family violence deaths of multiple Aboriginal women.

- Scoping study on existing practices for Aboriginal men using violence in South Australia.
 - Too often research on First Nations people is not community-led, skewing the evidence base away from First Nations-led solutions. The scoping study is a step in the right direction, contributing important evidence on First Nations men using violence that will correct dangerous misconceptions.
- Online referral platform in South Australia.
 - No to Violence is also establishing a National Referral Directory and runs the national Men’s Referral Service. The online ‘behaviour check’ aspect of the South Australian referral service is unique.
- Case management in Tasmania and Western Australia.
 - Case management is an instrumental part of the intervention landscape in Victoria and New South Wales.
- Hotline and referral service for Aboriginal men in Victoria.
 - Hotline and referral services operate across the country. Culturally specific hotline and referral services are a key gap in the interventions landscape.

As most initiatives were already operating in another jurisdiction, the evaluations of these programs will build the evidence base for each type. This gives governments across Australia a green light to apply these interventions more widely. To further maximise the impact of the Fund on cementing evidence-based practice, practice-based learnings should be fed back into the sector working with people using violence to strengthen practice nationwide.

Each opportunity to broaden the suite of available interventions is a step closer to stopping violence at the source. Victim-survivors cannot wait for action to be taken down the track – they deserve to live safe and dignified lives now. We must rapidly scale up interventions for people using violence to end domestic, family and sexual violence in a generation. **The Innovative Perpetrator Response Fund is a key vehicle for delivering the broader suite of interventions needed to respond to the diverse range of people using violence. Extending and expanding the Fund to \$215.92 million over 10 years is key to continuing this work.**

Recommendation 3: Establish a national knowledge hub for work with people using violence

Alongside 40 years of practitioner wisdom, many states and territories are developing innovative emerging projects, evaluating pilots and growing investment in research to better understand and respond to people using violence.

Despite investment in emerging evidence, there is no national mechanism connecting political and policy decision-makers and practitioners with this developing, but disconnected, evidence base. Without a mechanism like this policy and decision makers miss opportunities to keep victim-survivors safer and, ultimately end domestic, family and sexual violence in a generation - the goal of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children. As misinformation spreads, and violence increases, timely access to established and emerging evidence becomes more and more crucial for achieving these goals.⁷ Doing so requires long-term commitment to innovation, collaboration and cross-jurisdictional co-ordination.

⁷ The Men’s Project (2024) [The Man Box](#); Nicholas et al. (2024) [Antifeminist, Manosphere and Right-Wing Extremist Sentiment Among Men Who Use Domestic and Family Violence](#).

The dedicated practitioners working to facilitate accountability, address violence, and change behaviour have contributed to countless efforts to build the evidence base on working with people using violence. However, evidence generated using their practice insights is not fed back to practitioners most of the time – restricting their capacity to cement best-practice and rapidly innovate.

No to Violence is seeking \$5.06 million over 5 years to establish a national knowledge hub for work with people using violence. The hub would:

- Bring together available evidence and synthesise key learnings for quick and easy dissemination across the people using violence sector and beyond;
- Identify practice gaps and research need over time to direct targeted innovation;
- Disseminate sensitive information to those who need it and keep it out of the hands of people using violence; and
- Provide a strategic home to coordinate the developments needed.

The full spectrum of research on people using violence is not visible in any one place. This restricts decision-makers and service providers' view of emerging and established solutions to reduce violence. For example, the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) Register of Active Research showed just 15 projects on people using violence – 13 of those are funded by ANROWS but do not reflect the full breadth of research on people using violence. For example, other previously announced government funded research on people using violence did not feature on the register.

Evaluations are often available only to government, leaving crucial learnings sitting on shelves instead of invigorating current practice. The Victorian Government spent \$1.56 million on research and evaluations of programs for people using violence in the 2023-24 financial year.⁸ Government investment in further efforts to improve the evidence base include New South Wales' \$5 million commitment for research on interventions for people using violence and a South Australian scoping study on work with First Nations men using violence funded through the Innovative Perpetrator Response Fund.⁹ Sharing key findings as they are available through a national knowledge hub would enable a seismic shift in our responses to people using violence to ensure the safety of victim-survivors and, ultimately, reduce and then end family violence.

Promising efforts to harness practice-based learnings have been established. The Outcomes Practice Evidence Network (OPEN) Expansion project is one example - allocated \$1.68 million over 12 months to establish a knowledge hub across the four Victorian family violence focused peak bodies.¹⁰ Such projects can burn bright, then fizzle out without ongoing investment to actively disseminate best practice, innovation and research to service providers and political and policy decision makers.

There is one important caveat to knowledge sharing - embedding a principle of victim-survivor safety in knowledge translation practices. For example, knowledge on the inner workings of services for people using violence could be weaponised by service users. Establishing a national knowledge hub at a cost of \$5.06 million over 5 years is a relatively simple solution to this complex problem.

⁸ Department for Families, Fairness and Housing (2024) [2023-24 Annual Report](#).

⁹ Ministers for the Department of Social Services, May 2024 announcement '[South Australia leading the way to address violent perpetrators](#)'; New South Wales Government, May 2024 announcement '[\\$230 million to improve NSW domestic violence prevention and support](#)'.

¹⁰ Outcomes, Practice and Evidence Network, [Family Violence Sexual Violence Knowledge Hub](#).

Recommendation 4: Rapidly implement a nationally coordinated approach to people at highest risk of causing highest harm

Renewed focus on people using violence, especially men, causing the highest levels of harm, is welcome news for the sector working with these people. The time is now for meaningful reform to end opportunities for people using violence to avoid accountability and weaponise government systems. Tinkering around the edges of the system is not the answer. Victim-survivors need governments to act now.

The sector working with people using violence, day-in, day-out, are already conducting risk assessments to identify those who are causing the most harm or have potential to do so. For example, there remains much to learn to combat rising technology-facilitated misogynist violence and links to use of family and sexual violence, especially high-risk/high-harm forms.¹¹ Efforts to address online misogynist extremism must involve the sector most likely to engage with men radicalised online who use violence.

Any government initiatives to advance this work needs to centre the knowledge and experience of this sector. Barriers to collaboration across all parts of government systems (including with and between service providers) need to be dismantled so that risk-related information is shared quickly. Siloed approaches to holding people using violence accountable creates a patchwork system which fails to share critical information, slows down responses, duplicates efforts, and ultimately leaves gaping chasms that allow people using violence to escape accountability.¹²

There is urgent need to develop capacity to identify people at risk of using or escalating violence across all the places they show up – across police interactions, healthcare settings, and all other essential services. Trials of family violence focused deterrence models and Domestic Violence Threat Assessment Centres have potential to assist identification of people using violence who may not come into contact with police and share information across jurisdictions for swifter response.

No to Violence recommends establishing a taskforce in collaboration with police and the people using violence sector to rapidly implement a nationally coordinated approach to people using violence to cause high levels of harm. The taskforce would:

- Oversee implementation of key recommendations;
- Identify priority areas for investment;
- Share information with the sector working with people using violence to maximise accountability efforts.

Improving the identification and response to the highest risk people using violence intercepts opportunities to cause the highest levels of harm, improving the effectiveness of key systems in the

¹¹ Nicholas et al. (2024) [Antifeminist, Manosphere and Right-Wing Extremist Sentiment Among Men Who Use Domestic and Family Violence](#).

¹² See for example the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission (2024) [Yearly Report to Parliament](#) findings on negative impacts of siloed systems, including increased risk of misidentifying victim-survivors as people using violence.

process. Breaches of intervention orders represented 28% of family violence related police proceedings in Australia in 2022-23 (involving 24,780 people using violence).¹³ Despite police attention to breaches of intervention orders, too many people using violence flaunt conditions of intervention orders and continue to abuse victim-survivors. For example, a recent coronial inquest found that a person using violence was able to breach a non-contact order 149 times while remanded in custody.¹⁴ A 'set and forget' approach to intervention orders renders them ineffective and emboldens people to continue using violence.¹⁵

An audit of systems-enabled financial abuse across child support, tax and social security is a leap in the right direction. Cutting victim-survivors off from financial resources and saddling them with debts costs everyone. Audits of systems abuse can identify system inefficiencies including duplication, information sharing blockages, and harm to service users that prolong their need for support.¹⁶ It is crucial to go a few steps further and close loopholes that keep victim-survivors isolated from supports and trapped in unsafe situations. **No to Violence strongly recommends expanding the remit of the systems abuse audit to capture key federal systems being weaponised including migration, health and family law.**

Efforts to improve identification and response to people using violence who represent the highest risk must also share information more effectively with service providers working with people using violence. The results of systems abuse audits, and other key efforts to interrupt opportunities for abuse, should be shared with those working to stop the escalation of people's use of violence.

The sector working with people using violence must be at the heart of efforts to move away from 'set and forget' approaches that leave victim-survivors unsafe. Key shifts in approaches to identifying and responding to people using violence who represent the highest risk must include the sector working with them. **Establishing a taskforce to oversee implementation of recommendations arising from recent reviews enables the expertise of the sector working with people using violence to inform work of government, including the criminal justice system.** In doing so, opportunities to close system gaps used for abuse can be identified and addressed, priority reform areas can be flagged and information shared to improve efforts to hold people using violence accountable to stop violence at the source.

Recommendation 5: Fund the family violence frontline to thrive

Building a more diverse range of responses to people using violence is essential to stop violence at the source. This work must happen alongside supports for victim-survivors to facilitate recovery and healing from violence. Victim-survivor safety and dignity requires the workforce who support them and those working with people who use violence against them have safe and dignified working conditions. The National Alliance of Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Services outline key recommendations, gleaned from their work with victim-survivors. Their recommendations are

¹³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2024) [Recorded Crime – Offenders, 2022-23](#).

¹⁴ See ABC News November 2024 coverage of the [South Australian Coronial Inquest - Kobi and Henry Shepherdson](#).

¹⁵ [Initial evidence from the South Australian Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence](#) found that intervention orders are not being used effectively, leaving victim-survivors unsafe.

¹⁶ See Rick Morton for The Saturday Paper November 30 2024, [Exclusive: Welfare payments cancelled unlawfully](#).

necessary for resourcing the frontline response to victim-survivors. We cannot continue to ask victim-survivors to seek support, knowing they will be turned away when demand is unable to be met by overstretched services.

The entire community service sector experiences instability accelerated by the short-term nature of funding contracts and funding levels that do not reflect the real cost of delivering services. Qualification requirements, pay, and supports vary across jurisdictions. Insecure and highly competitive funding arrangements mean that working conditions can be further varied across workplaces, as the broader community services sector are encouraged to hide or cut costs.¹⁷ This approach impacts on the sector's capacity to recruit and retain skilled staff and build capacity in future leaders. Practitioners working with people using violence want to see systemic change in service agreements for holistic and community-led services, reflected across the broader family violence sector.

Despite these conditions, the specialist family violence workforce consists of dedicated and skilled workers living in communities across the country. The family violence sector is a diverse workforce drawing on a wealth of knowledge from formal qualifications, lived experience expertise, cultural knowledge, and practice-based experience. This diverse workforce improves the quality of services for service users, particularly the cultural appropriateness of services.

People deserve good jobs supporting their communities. Higher proportions of lived experience and cultural expertise in this workforce makes their commitment to their community even more pronounced.¹⁸ However, this workforce has described conditions where they are under pressure to deliver more with less despite performing critically important and emotionally taxing work while experiencing job insecurity, high qualifications, low pay and expectations they work unpaid.¹⁹

Without built-in support for impacts of vicarious trauma, workforces are vulnerable to higher levels of burnout. Leaving the critical family violence workforce without the support they need to be safe at work is unacceptable. Working to support victim-survivors to recover and heal from violence benefits the entire community when more of its members can thrive. Likewise, stopping violence at the source keeps communities safer and healthier.

Workplaces are self-funding mechanisms to ensure they are trauma informed and culturally safe – essential factors for high quality family violence service delivery. There is much to learn from those organisations who support their workforces best. Their practices should be assessed so that funding arrangements can cover the full cost of delivering quality services and keeping the workers delivering those services safe at work. National peak bodies, if established across First Nations, victim-survivor and people using violence sectors, would be best places to assess practices and funding investments needed to implement best practice across their respective parts of the family violence sector. The next National Partnership Agreement is a key opportunity to boost funding to the broader family violence sector and establish peak bodies.

¹⁷ Social Ventures Australia and the Centre for Social Impact (2022) [Paying What It Takes: Funding indirect costs to create long-term impact.](#)

¹⁸ Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission and Embolden SA, [November 2024 Sustainable Workforce Roundtable report.](#)

¹⁹ Results from the 2018 National Survey of Workers in the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Sectors as described in the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission (2024) [Yearly Report to Parliament.](#)

No to Violence fundamentally supports the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission's call for a National Workforce Strategy.²⁰ This strategy should make use of learnings from ongoing state-based processes and aim to support a trauma-informed, holistic and culturally safe model across the entire family violence sector.

State-based processes include:

- New South Wales' [10-year domestic and family violence workforce development strategy](#) (under development).
- South Australian establishment of a [social work registration scheme](#). System responses to domestic, family and sexual violence are also being explored currently through a [Royal Commission](#).
- The [Victorian 10-year Industry Plan \(2017-2027\)](#).

No to Violence recommends committing funding to support a National Workforce Strategy in the 2025-26 budget forward estimates, ready to capitalise on survey results from the national specialist workforce (due for completion mid-2026).

²⁰ Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission (2024) [Yearly Report to Parliament](#).