

The last resort should not be the first response: Six problems. Six clear answers.

Why the Second Action Plan needs a genuine early-intervention tier and what No to Violence is recommending government do about it.

Australia has built genuine consensus that violence against women and children must end, backed by a funded prevention infrastructure and national policy framework unmatched by most comparable countries. But government didn't just underfund the response to men's violence; it underestimated its scale, and the gap will not close on its own.

This submission does not stop at describing that gap. Every issue below is paired with specific recommendations that will address it: 21 in total, grounded in extensive consultation and new evidence No to Violence has produced.

WHAT'S NEW

Three original research projects provide evidence-based foundations to No to Violence's recommendations:

NO TO VIOLENCE'S ORIGINAL RESEARCH

The Pathways Project—the largest practitioner-based research project of its kind in Australia. A 12-month, Snow Foundation-funded study surveying and interviewing 150 practitioners nationally, identifying seven principles for expanding responses to men who use violence safely and effectively (NTV, 2026, *From Fragmentation to Framework*).

NTV's Evidence Review: Addressing Young Men's Use of Intimate Partner Violence (July 2026)—undertaken through the Victorian Government-funded OPEN Expansion project, drawing on more than 80 sources of peer-reviewed research, national data and practice evidence to establish that young men's use of violence is less entrenched than adults' (NTV, 2026, [Addressing Young Men's Use of Intimate Partner Violence](#)).

The Meli Young Men's Behaviour Change Group case study—documenting how a relational, hybrid group-and-individual model lifted retention from 12% to over 80% (NTV & Meli, 2026, [Young Men's Behaviour Change Group](#)).

1. THE SCALE

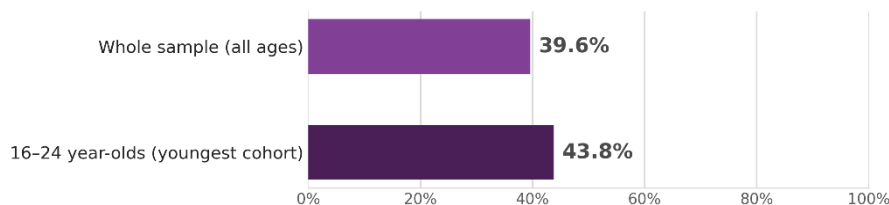
The problem is bigger than we thought and it is growing.

"We didn't underfund this problem. We underestimated it and it's getting worse, not better."

The Australian Child Maltreatment Study—nationally representative, NHMRC-funded and peer-reviewed—found domestic violence exposure across the whole population sits at **39.6%**. Among 16–24-year-olds specifically, that exposure rate climbs to **43.8%**—higher than in any other surveyed generation. That is not a historical inheritance. That is the generation entering adulthood right now.

Domestic violence exposure by generation

Share of each cohort reporting DV exposure as a form of childhood maltreatment



Source: Australian Child Maltreatment Study (Haslam et al. 2023), Medical Journal of Australia.

ANSWER

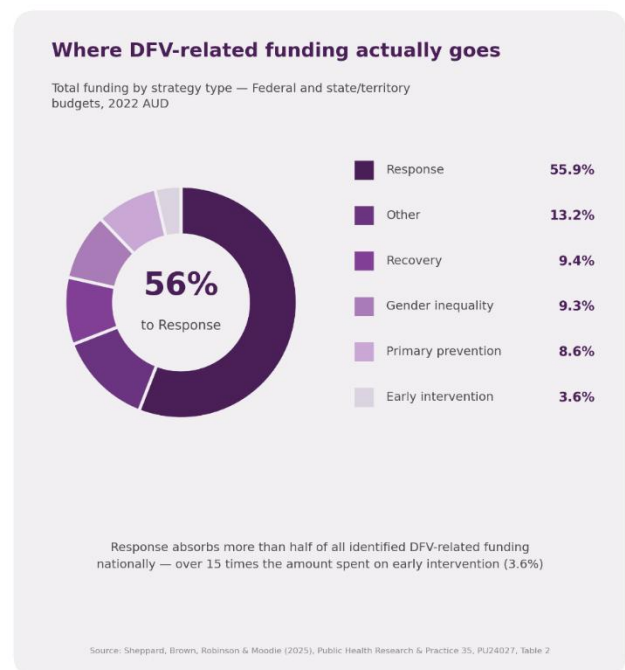
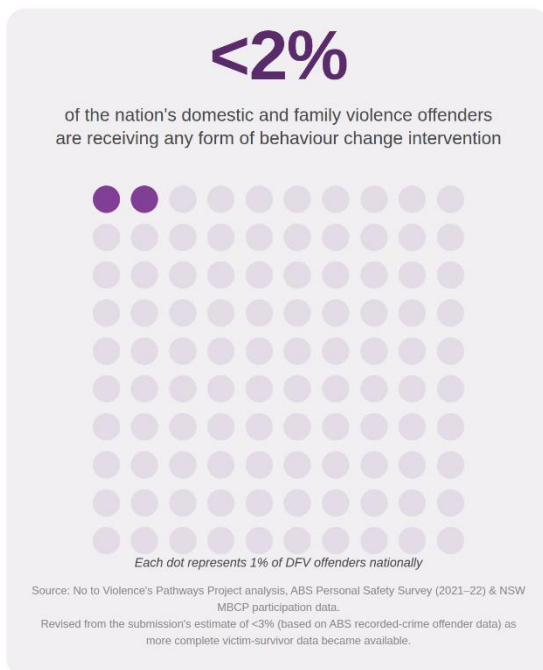
Recommendation 3: Increase investment in earlier intervention, funding a continuum of responses to men using domestic and family violence (DFV) at a scale that matches the size of the problem.

2. THE MISMATCH

Government is funding the crisis response, not stopping it.

“We’re funding the ambulance and leaving the road unfixed.”

Just 3.6% of domestic violence funding nationally goes to early intervention, and fewer than 2 in every 100 people who use this violence get any help to stop. There needs to be a significant increase in funding for early and earlier interventions to build a system that reaches men and supports families before crisis.



Together, these numbers describe the same structural gap: a system funded and staffed for crisis response, with almost nothing built for the much larger population of men who could be reached earlier.

ANSWER

Recommendation 7: Deliver a substantial, specified increase in funding for early intervention programs for people beginning to use, or at risk of escalating, family violence.

Recommendation 8: Target that investment at high-yield critical life junctures: first-time fatherhood, job loss, disaster contexts, permanent injury or cognitive decline.

WHY THE GAP EXISTS

There is no framework for early intervention to work from

The National Plan's Theory of Change names a social-ecological model, but its individual and relationship levels remain populated almost entirely by attitudes and gender inequality. Individual factors—childhood abuse, harmful substance use, trauma, gambling, relationship dynamics—are treated as unfunded “reinforcing factors” rather than pathways requiring their own practice frameworks. Population-level prevention and crisis response both already have frameworks; the space between them does not, and building it is the precondition for everything else in this submission.

ANSWER

Recommendation 1: Repopulate the Theory of Change's individual/relationship level with the fuller set of causal factors — substance use, gambling, childhood trauma, relationship dynamics — as co-equal pathways, not secondary “reinforcing factors.”

Recommendation 2: Test and scale gender-transformative programs for under-served life stages, starting with fathers and parents.

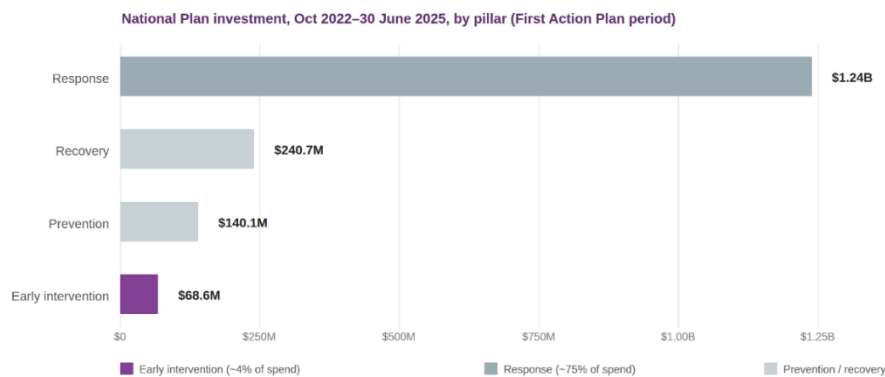
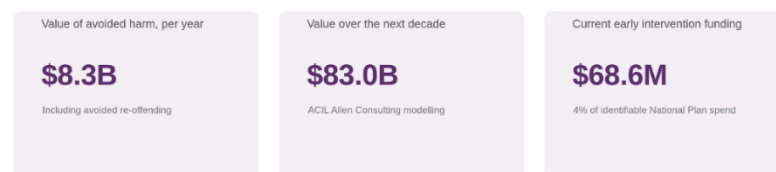
3. THE RETURN

The fiscal case is also the human case.

“This is the rare case where doing the right thing and doing the fiscally smart thing are the same thing.”

New economic modelling commissioned by No to Violence estimates the value of preventing first-time domestic and family violence offences, and the reoffending they cascade into, at approximately **\$8.3 billion a year** in avoided harm. Yet early intervention currently receives only a small fraction of national domestic and family violence investment overall. Acting earlier isn’t only more humane; it is dramatically cheaper than the status quo of late-stage police, courts, corrections and child protection responses.

The economic case for earlier intervention



ANSWER

Recommendation 3: Increase investment in earlier intervention, funding a continuum of responses to men using domestic and family violence (DFV) at a scale that matches the size of the problem.

Recommendation 7: Deliver a substantial, specified increase in funding for early intervention programs for people beginning to use, or at risk of escalating, family violence.

4. THE SPILLOVER

The whole system was sized for a smaller problem.

“Every public service is now a domestic and family violence service, whether we funded it to be one or not.”

Schools, hospitals, aged care services, all public services, are absorbing a problem without the training or resourcing to carry it, through no fault of the people doing that work. The specialist services actually built for this, Men’s Behaviour Change services foremost among them, are completely under-resourced. Yet more evidence the whole system was sized for a much smaller problem than the one we have.

The specialist workforce carrying this load is already overextended — and needs improved, sustained investment.

ANSWER

Recommendation 12: Commit to a National Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Workforce Strategy by the 2027–28 Federal Budget—covering recruitment, retention, formal recognition of specialist practice, and targeted capability building for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, multicultural and regional/rural workforces—implementing from mid-2028.

Recommendation 9: Deliver universal workforce training, paired with embedded specialist capacity, so youth, early-parenting, health, AOD, homelessness and youth-justice workers can recognise and respond to youth intimate partner violence.

WHAT HAS TO REPLACE IT

An ecosystem of responses to men using DFV

This is where **The Pathways Project**—NTV’s national practitioner research—provides a blueprint for a service system for men using domestic and family violence. Practitioners were unambiguous that expansion is needed but were equally clear it carries real safety risks if done badly. Growth must be built as an interconnected continuum governed by seven principles the research identified for expanding safely, not cherry-picked from a list of program types.

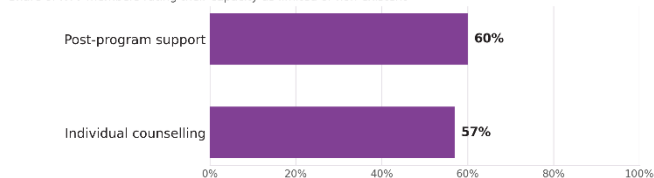
NTV’S ORIGINAL RESEARCH

- 1. Victim-survivor centred** — child and adult victim-survivors are at the centre of all work with men using violence.
- 2. Community-led** — including First Nations responses built on self-determination.
- 3. Relational, non-punitive** — engagement designed to increase meaningful accountability and safety.
- 4. Context-aware** — responses reflect men’s actual lives — family, culture, faith, disability, age.
- 5. Long-term and flexible** — meeting men and their families where they are, over time.
- 6. Trauma- and DFV-informed** — grounded in intersectional feminist principles.
- 7. Collaborative and integrated** — between organisations, sectors and systems, not siloed referrals.

Men need to move between levels of intervention as engagement, risk and behaviour change are non-linear, and victim-survivor safety must never depend on a man’s willingness to participate. NTV’s own member survey confirms how far the current system is from that model:

Where the continuum breaks down

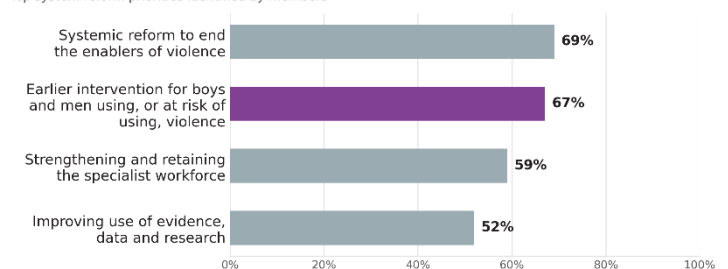
Share of NTV members rating their capacity as limited or non-existent



Source: No to Violence national member survey, 2026 (Appendix A). n=92.

What NTV members say the sector needs most

Top system reform priorities identified by members



Source: No to Violence national member survey, 2026 (Appendix A). n=90.

Asked what the sector needs most, members ranked earlier intervention for boys and men second only to systemic reform — well ahead of any single program response.

ANSWER

Recommendation 4: Adopt a principle-based framework—not a checklist of program types—for commissioning, funding and evaluating men’s behaviour-change responses.

Recommendation 5: Resource an interconnected system, not standalone programs, so men move between levels of intervention and victim-survivor safety never depends on a man’s willingness to engage.

Recommendation 6: Mandate ring-fenced funding for family safety contact and advocacy work in every Commonwealth and state-funded men’s program.

5. YOUNG PEOPLE

The next generation is already inside this system.

“We’re letting patterns entrench before we ever intervene.”

Young people experiencing violence are falling through a system built for adults: one in five youth AOD service users are already victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. Where young people are using violence themselves, they’re often met with a referral to nowhere: not a lack of will to help, but a genuine absence of any age-appropriate service to send them to. Reaching them earlier protects the next victim-survivor.

1 in 5

young people using alcohol and other drug services are already victim-survivors of domestic and family violence

NTV’s own **Evidence Review: [Addressing Young Men’s Use of Intimate Partner Violence](#)** found young men’s use of violence is **less entrenched than adults’, with greater capacity for change** — a genuine window for disruption, not a smaller version of the adult problem. Programs grounded in relational, person-centred practice, treating housing, mental health and trauma as core to the work rather than adjacent to it, produced the strongest outcomes.

NTV and Meli’s joint 2026 case study of the [Meli Young Men’s Behaviour Change Group](#) in Geelong shows what that looks like in practice: a hybrid model of fourteen group sessions paired with ten individual sessions **lifted retention from 12% to over 80%**. The mechanism was relational, not procedural: the same worker who conducted pre-group case management facilitated the group itself—continuity made accountability possible for young men who had rarely had a stable relationship with a trusted adult.

ANSWER

Recommendation 9: Deliver universal workforce training, paired with embedded specialist capacity, so youth, early-parenting, health, AOD, homelessness and youth-justice workers can recognise and respond to youth intimate partner violence.

Recommendation 10: Sustainably fund programs already piloted and proven for young men at risk of using violence — including Caring Dads, Home Base’s Merge and Flo, and Meli’s Young Men’s Behaviour Change Group — instead of intermittent, self-initiated funding.

Recommendation 11: Resource accommodation pathways that enable behaviour-change engagement for young men at risk, not just crisis housing.

6. THE ACCOUNTABILITY ASK

Coordinated and integrated — not fragmented

“You can’t fix what you can’t see.”

No single program or jurisdiction can deliver this. It requires a whole-of-government “web of accountability” spanning at least **18 federal departments and agencies** whose systems already touch this issue, backed by transparent, program-level fiscal reporting—so government can see and adjust what it is funding in real time.

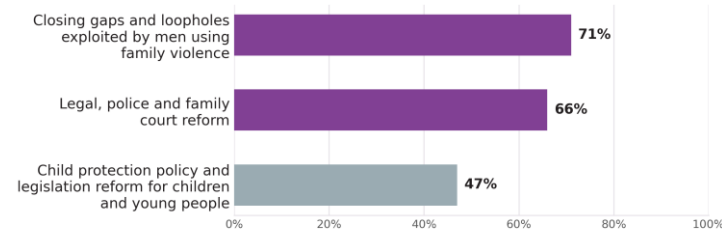
DFV funding is spread across dozens of agencies and three levels of government, with no single published source consolidating it. Even the government’s own reporting can’t yet give a fully reconciled picture: itemised Commonwealth spending accounts for around **\$1.69 billion** of the headline **\$4 billion** figure. That’s not a discrepancy anyone is hiding; it’s what happens when there’s no shared reporting system. Building one lets the government show credibly, that this investment is working. NTV’s members agree on where to start: closing the gaps and loopholes men use to weaponise the system against victim-survivors is their top-rated accountability priority, ahead of legal and family-court reform.

18

federal departments and agencies with a direct stake in this issue

What members say would most improve system accountability

Share of NTV members naming each as most urgent



Source: No to Violence national member survey, 2026 (Appendix A). n=88.

ANSWER

Recommendation 13: Adopt a whole-of-government “web of accountability” model, adapted from Victoria’s Family Violence Reform Rolling Action Plan, with named responsibility across all 18 relevant departments.

Recommendation 14: Develop a program-level fiscal strategy that publicly reports against actual programs, with dedicated funding lines made visible.

Recommendation 15: Introduce DFV-proofing of major policy decisions in housing, social security, immigration, employment and family law.

Recommendation 16: Close the gaps that let systems be weaponised against victim-survivors — real-time intervention order visibility, harmonised legal definitions, and universal misidentification training for police and frontline decision-makers.

DELIVERING ON THE PROMISE

Knowing whether any of it is working

Every recommendation above depends on data government and the sector don’t yet reliably have. NTV’s members are engaged with the evidence that exists, but say it doesn’t reflect the communities they work in:

Engaged with evidence, but not served by it

NTV national member survey, 2026

65%

access research often or always

30%

say available research doesn't reflect the communities or contexts they work in

Source: No to Violence national member survey, 2026 (Appendix A). n=73-80.

ANSWER

Recommendation 17: Fund a National Violence Intervention Learning Collaborative, led by NTV with ANROWS, recognising practitioner- and lived-experience-generated evidence as part of the national evidence base.

Recommendation 18: Fund a dedicated national perpetration prevalence study, analogous to the Personal Safety Survey.

Recommendation 19: Fund the Criminal Justice Data Asset as a priority so it is accessible to researchers and policy analysts in 2026–27.

Recommendation 20: Mandate consistent national protection-order reporting, with AIHW as the national collation body.

Recommendation 21: Commit to publishing all program evaluations and mandate consistent national data standards as a condition of future funding.

The model is new. The commitment isn't.

These 21 recommendations span targeted areas for increased investment, a national workforce strategy, a broadened conceptual framework for ending violence against women and children, whole-of-government accountability and the data infrastructure needed to know what’s working and what needs to be improved. Many build on commitments government has already agreed to in principle through the Rapid Review and National Cabinet — which makes them fast to act on. The model exists, tested through the Pathways Project, NTV’s youth IPV evidence review, and the Meli case study. What’s missing is funding, timetabling and delivery at the scale the evidence demands.

Source: No to Violence (2026), [The last resort should not be the first response: No to Violence’s submission on the Second Action Plan, National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032](#).