

# **Coordination and Targeting of Domestic Violence Funding and Actions**

Department of Social Services

© Commonwealth of Australia 2019

ISSN 1036–7632 (Print)

ISSN 2203–0352 (Online)

ISBN 978-1-76033-466-6 (Print)

ISBN 978-1-76033-467-3 (Online)

Except for the content in this document supplied by third parties, the Australian National Audit Office logo, the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, and any material protected by a trade mark, this document is licensed by the Australian National Audit Office for use under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 3.0 Australia licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/au/>.

You are free to copy and communicate the document in its current form for non-commercial purposes, as long as you attribute the document to the Australian National Audit Office and abide by the other licence terms. You may not alter or adapt the work in any way.

Permission to use material for which the copyright is owned by a third party must be sought from the relevant copyright owner. As far as practicable, such material will be clearly labelled.

For terms of use of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, visit the *It's an Honour* website at <https://www.pmc.gov.au/government/its-honour>.

Requests and inquiries concerning reproduction and rights should be addressed to:

Senior Executive Director  
Corporate Management Group  
Australian National Audit Office  
19 National Circuit  
BARTON ACT 2600

Or via email:

[communication@anao.gov.au](mailto:communication@anao.gov.au).



Canberra ACT  
13 June 2019

Dear Mr President  
Dear Mr Speaker

In accordance with the authority contained in the *Auditor-General Act 1997*, I have undertaken an independent performance audit in the Department of Social Services. The report is titled *Coordination and Targeting of Domestic Violence Funding and Actions*. Pursuant to Senate Standing Order 166 relating to the presentation of documents when the Senate is not sitting, I present the report of this audit to the Parliament.

Following its presentation and receipt, the report will be placed on the Australian National Audit Office's website — <http://www.anao.gov.au>.

Yours sincerely



Grant Hehir  
Auditor-General

The Honourable the President of the Senate  
The Honourable the Speaker of the House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT

## **AUDITING FOR AUSTRALIA**

The Auditor-General is head of the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO). The ANAO assists the Auditor-General to carry out his duties under the *Auditor-General Act 1997* to undertake performance audits, financial statement audits and assurance reviews of Commonwealth public sector bodies and to provide independent reports and advice for the Parliament, the Australian Government and the community. The aim is to improve Commonwealth public sector administration and accountability.

For further information contact:  
**Australian National Audit Office**  
**GPO Box 707**  
**Canberra ACT 2601**

**Phone: (02) 6203 7300**  
**Fax: (02) 6203 7777**  
**Email: [ag1@anao.gov.au](mailto:ag1@anao.gov.au)**

Auditor-General reports and information about the ANAO are available on our website:  
<http://www.anao.gov.au>

### **Audit team**

Tracy Cussen  
Christine Preston  
Michael Fitzgerald  
Hannah Climas  
David Brunoro

# Contents

---

Summary and recommendations.....	7
Background .....	7
Conclusion .....	8
Supporting findings .....	9
Recommendations .....	10
Summary of entity response .....	11
Key messages from this audit for all Australian Government entities .....	11
<b>Audit findings.....</b>	<b>13</b>
1. Background .....	14
Introduction .....	14
Rationale for undertaking the audit .....	20
Audit approach .....	20
2. Governance and engagement arrangements .....	22
Have roles and responsibilities been clearly identified and are they fit-for-purpose? .....	22
Are suitable mechanisms in place to share and coordinate information and promote engagement with formal stakeholders? .....	26
3. Funding and targeting of resources.....	29
Have mechanisms to build a suitable evidence base been established? .....	29
Did the development of the Third Action Plan incorporate past learnings? .....	37
Is funding under the Third Action Plan aligned to the key priorities? .....	42
4. Performance monitoring and evaluation.....	46
Have appropriate metrics been established to assess performance against outcomes? .....	46
Are appropriate arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate the achievement of outcomes? .....	50
Does the Department of Social Services report the extent to which outcomes are being achieved? .....	56
<b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>59</b>
Appendix 1     Entity responses .....	60
Appendix 2     Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, 2017 grants priority areas .....	63
Appendix 3     Research projects <sup>a</sup> funded by the Department of Social Services under the Third Action Plan .....	66
Appendix 4     Data on National Plan indicators of change and measures of success .....	67



# Summary and recommendations

---

## Background

1. The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan) was developed in partnership with all states and territories and endorsed and released by COAG in February 2011. The National Plan is the Australian Government's framework to address two types of violence where women are more likely to be victims: domestic and family violence; and sexual assault.
2. The vision of the National Plan is that 'Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities'.<sup>1</sup> Governments set the target for 'a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children'<sup>2</sup>, over the 12-year plan.
3. The National Plan sets out six National Outcomes for all governments to deliver during the 12 years from 2010–2022. These National Outcomes are:
  - Communities are safe and free from violence.
  - Relationships are respectful.
  - Indigenous communities are strengthened.
  - Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence.
  - Justice responses are effective.
  - Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account.
4. The National Plan identifies that outcomes will be delivered through four three-yearly action plans. Governments agreed that each action plan would identify priority areas for all governments to focus on over the three-year period and practical actions designed to drive national improvements. The Third Action Plan 2016–2019, was launched in October 2016. The Fourth Action Plan is due to be launched in July 2019.
5. The Australian Government has responsibility for delivering financial support and other services through family law, legal assistance and the social security system, including crisis payments. The Commonwealth also funds national support services, primary prevention and evidence building initiatives led by national partners<sup>3</sup> under the National Plan.
6. Total expenditure by the Commonwealth across the life of the National Plan to date, is around \$723 million. This figure includes \$103.9 million announced in 2016 under the Third Action Plan, \$328 million announced in March 2019 in advance of the start of the Fourth Action Plan and the \$101.2 million Women's Safety Package announced in 2015.
7. The Department of Social Services (the department) is the lead Commonwealth entity overseeing implementation of the overall National Plan, three-yearly action plans and key national services. These national services, delivered by National Plan partners are:

---

1 *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2011, p. 10.

2 *ibid.*

3 The National Partners are Medibank Health Solutions, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, Lifeline Australia, Our Watch and White Ribbon Australia.

- 1800RESPECT — a national telephone and online counselling and support service launched in 2010;
- Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS) — provides access to information services, conducts and commissions research and was established in 2013;
- DV-alert — provides free nationally accredited domestic and family violence response training to frontline workers since 2007;
- Our Watch — established in 2013 to focus on primary prevention activities and raise awareness of violence against women; and
- White Ribbon — an international campaign, starting in Australia in 1992, aimed at engaging men and boys to end violence against women.

### **Rationale for undertaking the audit**

8. Domestic violence causes long-term impacts to individuals and families as well as significant costs to the economy. Reducing these impacts involves changing individual behaviour and delivering integrated services across organisational boundaries and at all levels of government. In 2011, all Australian Governments agreed to a long-term plan to reduce violence, with the Commonwealth Government taking a leadership role. As this National Plan is in its ninth year, it is timely to assess whether the Department of Social Services has been effective in administering its responsibilities under the National Plan, including monitoring the plan’s achievements and progress.

### **Audit objective and criteria**

9. The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the Department of Social Services’ role in implementing the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022*.

10. To form a conclusion against the audit objective, the ANAO adopted the following high-level audit criteria:

- Effective governance arrangements are in place.
- Targeting of funding and actions is aligned to the outcomes of the National Plan.
- Monitoring and reporting of performance for key Department of Social Services’ initiatives and the National Plan is effective.

## **Conclusion**

11. The Department of Social Services’ effectiveness in implementing the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022* is reduced by a lack of attention to implementation planning and performance measurement.

12. The department has established effective governance arrangements to support implementation of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*. These arrangements include clear accountabilities, processes for oversight and decision-making, and information sharing arrangements. The department has used a variety of mechanisms to engage formal stakeholders at key points throughout the life of the National Plan.



13. The evidence suggests that the department's funding and actions taken during the Third Action Plan are aligned with the Plan's key priorities and that the department established the two mechanisms required under the National Plan to improve the evidence base. The department cannot demonstrate that the actions taken are prioritised based on available evidence or that they are collectively contributing to the outcomes of the National Plan. Subsequently, there is scope to better target research activities towards projects that identify what works for whom and in what contexts.

14. Performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting is not sufficient to provide assurance that governments are on track to achieve the National Plan's overarching target and outcomes. In order to assess and demonstrate the achievements of the National Plan as a whole, the department will need to develop new measures of success and data sources, plan for evaluations beyond the National Partner initiatives and improve public transparency.

## Supporting findings

15. The roles and responsibilities for the implementation and monitoring of the National Plan are clear and fit-for-purpose for the cross-jurisdictional delivery of the National Plan. The Council of Australian Governments and relevant Commonwealth, state and territory ministers oversee implementation of the Third Action Plan and lead whole-of-government involvement. Implementation Executive Groups (ImpEG), with representatives from several Commonwealth entities and all states and territories, provide strategic and operational policy advice to ministers. The Department of Social Services develops and reports against action plans, oversees key national services and provides secretariat support to the ImpEG.

16. The department has established and implemented suitable arrangements to share and coordinate information and engage formal stakeholders, including government and non-government representatives with expertise in areas relevant to the National Plan. Mechanisms established to interact with these stakeholders include: working groups, engagement with National Plan partners, committees, National Summits and other consultations.

17. Consultations undertaken for the Second Action Plan evaluation and development of the Fourth Action Plan have identified scope to improve links with the community and collaboration with the non-government sector.

18. The National Centre of Excellence committed to in the National Plan has been established and progress made towards operationalising a National Data Collection and Reporting Framework (DCRF). In the absence of a plan identifying the sequence and priority of activities required to ensure that DCRF is operational by its target date of 2022, the department cannot demonstrate that jurisdictions are on track to deliver this outcome.

19. The department has funded research to build the evidence base. This research program as a whole does not provide sufficient focus on program evaluation and research synthesis to inform policy decisions and program improvements that contribute to achieving the National Plan's outcomes.

20. The development of the Third Action Plan incorporated past learnings, drawing on a range of evidence including stakeholder feedback, findings from government inquiries and an evaluation report of the Second Action Plan.

21. Funding provided by the Commonwealth and administered by the department is aligned to the key priorities agreed and endorsed by all governments for the Third Action Plan. An implementation plan for the Third Action Plan was not completed, reducing the transparency around what actions governments have committed to and accountability in meeting those commitments.

22. Some metrics to assess performance against outcomes were established at the outset of the National Plan, except these currently measure limited aspects of each outcome. During development of the Fourth Action Plan and any future National Plan there is opportunity for the department to consider developing short- and medium-term outcomes, new measures of success and more frequent data collection mechanisms. Without such changes the ability for jurisdictions to demonstrate the success of the National Plan will be limited.

23. Appropriate administrative arrangements are in place to monitor progress against the Australian Government's commitments under the National Plan's action plans, including initiatives delivered by National Plan partners. These arrangements include monitoring project status and deliverables agreed in activity work plans.

24. Evaluations or reviews of National Partner initiatives and of the Second and Third Action Plans have been completed or are planned, but do not sufficiently focus on assessing the achievement of outcomes. The Third Action Plan evaluation methodology proposes assessing the contribution of this plan to the National Plan outcomes, but without robust data, is unlikely to achieve this purpose.

25. The quality of data and assessment of the impacts of actions undertaken across jurisdictions need to be improved to support outcome-focused action plan evaluations. Without these improvements, the overall achievements of the National Plan will not be able to be fully assessed.

26. Overall, Annual Progress Reports do not provide a sufficient level of information for public transparency and accountability. The department does not publicly report on the extent to which outcomes of the National Plan are being achieved, with the exception of the draft 2017–18 report (yet to be released). Limited internal reporting of outcomes is undertaken and is focused on disseminating results from the two National Surveys undertaken every four years.

## Recommendations

### Recommendation no. 1

#### Paragraph 3.32

The Department of Social Services specify research and data projects as actions under each of the priority areas agreed by governments for the Fourth Action Plan.

**Department of Social Services response:** *Agreed.*

### Recommendation no. 2

#### Paragraph 3.67

The Department of Social Services, in consultation across governments, develop a National Implementation Plan for the Fourth Action Plan.

**Department of Social Services response:** *Agreed.*

**Recommendation no. 3**  
**Paragraph 4.10** The Department of Social Services identify and develop new measures of success, data sources and specific outcomes for the Fourth Action Plan, and any future National Plan.

**Department of Social Services response:** *Agreed.*

**Recommendation no. 4**  
**Paragraph 4.45** The Department of Social Services work with the states and territories to plan evaluations of individual services and programs funded across jurisdictions under action plans to inform an outcome evaluation of the Fourth Action Plan and overall National Plan.

**Department of Social Services response:** *Agreed.*

**Recommendation no. 5**  
**Paragraph 4.61** That public annual progress reports for the Fourth Action Plan document the status of each action item and the outcomes of the National Plan as a whole.

**Department of Social Services response:** *Agreed.*

## Summary of entity response

27. The proposed report was provided to the Department of Social Services (DSS). An extract was provided to Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. Full responses are provided at Appendix 1. The summary response from DSS is set out below.

The department is committed to building on what the ANAO acknowledges are the effective governance arrangements already in place to support implementation of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan). The report's insights will help strengthen the final development phase and subsequent implementation of the Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan.

## Key messages from this audit for all Australian Government entities

28. Below is a summary of key messages, including instances of good practice, which have been identified in this audit that may be relevant for the operations of other Australian Government entities.

### Policy/program implementation

When delivering large-scale and long-term initiatives it is important to signpost success by developing interim performance expectations backed by practical implementation plans.

It may also be necessary to invest in developing new and improved data sources or more frequent data collections. Identifying what works and why it works helps drive towards ultimate outcomes through better targeting resources to high value add activities.



## **Audit findings**

# 1. Background

---

## Introduction

1.1 In May 2008 the Government established an 11-member National Council<sup>4</sup> to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (the National Council) tasked with the role of drafting a national plan.

1.2 The National Council's report *Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009-2021* was released on 29 April 2009. The report contained 11 recommendations, including that the Government refer the plan to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG); and request that COAG develop an 'integrated, comprehensive response endorsed by all levels of government by early 2010'.<sup>5</sup>

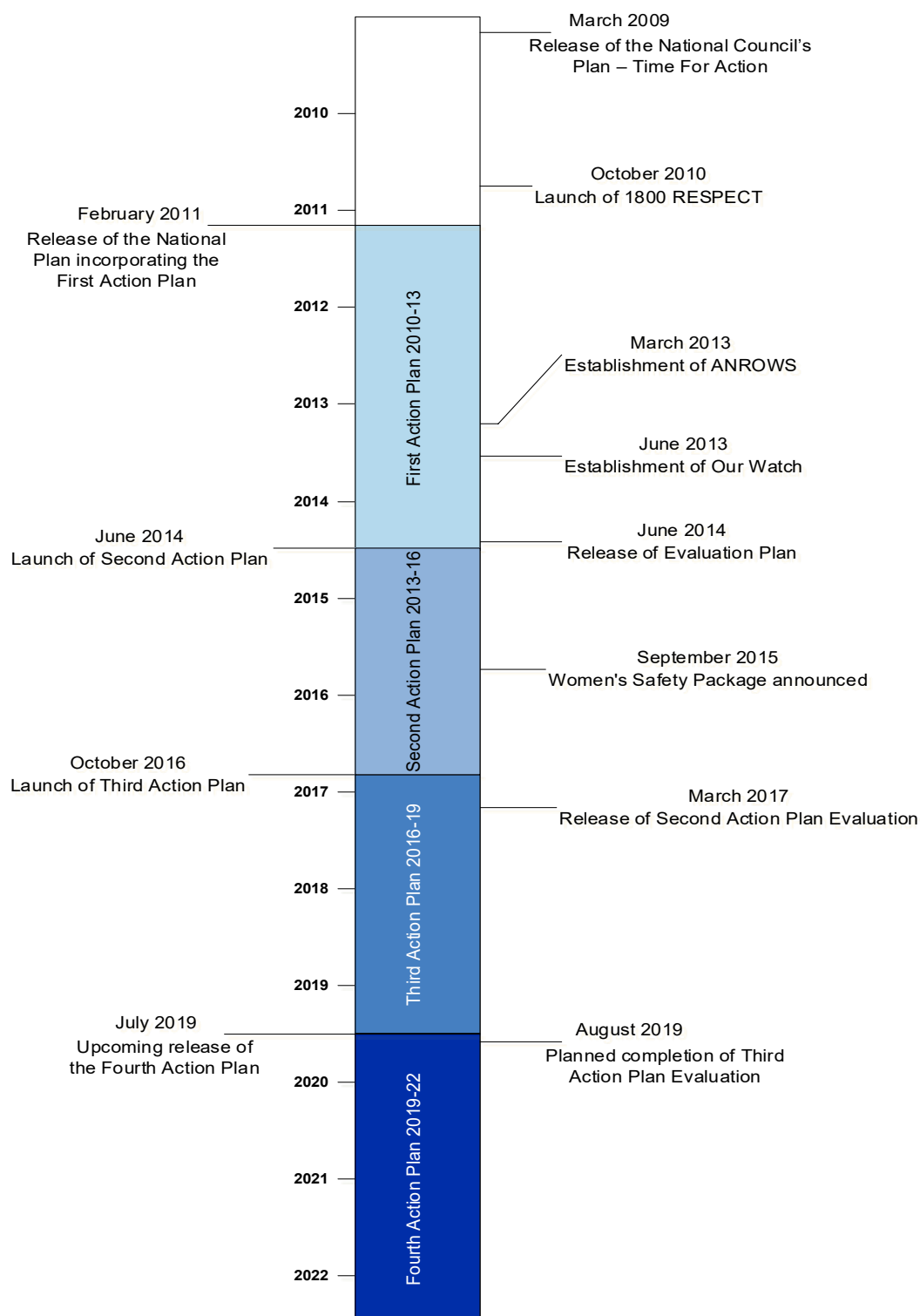
1.3 The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan) was subsequently developed in partnership with all states and territories and endorsed and released by COAG in February 2011. The National Plan sets out a framework to address two types of violence where women are more likely to be victims: domestic and family violence, and sexual assault.<sup>6</sup> A timeline of key events associated with the National Plan is at Figure 1.1.

---

4 The National Council members were selected for their knowledge, expertise and networks in the fields of sexual assault and domestic and family violence and included backgrounds in research, primary prevention, service delivery, advocacy, business and as a survivor of domestic violence.

5 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, p. 26.

6 The *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020* aims to deliver a sustained reduction in levels of child abuse and neglect.

**Figure 1.1: Timeline of key events**

Source: ANAO review of Department of Social Services documentation.

## Objective and outcomes of the National Plan

1.4 The vision of the National Plan is that 'Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities.'<sup>7</sup> Governments set the target for 'a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women and their children'<sup>8</sup>, over the 12-year plan.

1.5 The National Plan sets out six National Outcomes for all governments to deliver during the 12 years from 2010–2022. Each Outcome has an accompanying 'measure of success' that describes the changes expected over time. In addition, governments agreed to four high-level 'indicators of change', to monitor progress across the life of the National Plan and four 'foundations for change' that underpin the capacity of governments to work together (see Table 1.1). Reporting and monitoring against the National Outcomes and indicators of change is discussed in chapter four.

**Table 1.1: National Outcomes, measures of success, indicators of change and foundations for change**

National Outcomes	Measures of success
Communities are safe and free from violence	Increased intolerance of violence against women
Relationships are respectful	Improved knowledge, skills and behaviour by young people
Indigenous communities are strengthened	Reduction in the proportion of Indigenous women who consider family violence, assault and sexual assault are problems for their communities and neighbourhoods
	Increased proportion of Indigenous women who are able to have their say within the community on important issues including violence
Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence	Increased access to and responsiveness of services for victims of domestic/family violence and sexual assault
Justice responses are effective	Increased rates of women reporting domestic violence and sexual assault to police
Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account	A decrease in repeated partner victimisation
<b>Indicators of change</b>	
Reduced prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault	
Increased proportion of women who feel safe in their communities	
Reduced deaths related to domestic violence and sexual assault	
Reduced proportion of children exposed to their mother's or carer's experience of domestic violence	
<b>Foundations for change</b>	
Strengthen the workforce	
Integrate systems and share information	

<sup>7</sup> *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2011, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*



Improve the evidence base
Track performance and report publicly

Source: *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2011.

## Delivering the National Plan

1.6 The National Plan identifies that outcomes will be delivered through four three-yearly action plans. The four action plans were designed as a series to be implemented over the 12 years, each building on the other as described below:

- First Action Plan (2010–13) — Building a Strong Foundation
  - focused on building an evidence base and establishing frameworks to achieve attitudinal and behavioural change.
- Second Action Plan (2013–16) — Moving Ahead
  - focused on consolidating the evidence base and strengthening existing strategies.
- Third Action Plan (2016–19) — Promising Results
  - the current Action Plan, launched on 28 October 2016, is intended to deliver results from the long term initiatives implemented during the first two Action Plans.
- Fourth Action Plan (2019–2022) — Turning the Corner
  - ‘expected to see the delivery of tangible results in terms of reduced prevalence of domestic violence reduced proportions of children witnessing violence, and an increased proportion of women who feel safe in their communities’.<sup>9</sup>

1.7 Governments agreed that each action plan would identify priority areas for all governments to focus on over the three-year period (see Table 1.2) and practical actions designed to drive national improvements.

1.8 Governments anticipated that action plans would be at a high level and implemented in different ways by each jurisdiction. Jurisdictions would therefore indicate which actions they commit to in individual implementation plans as part of the implementation process (see from paragraph 3.63).

**Table 1.2: Action Plan priority areas<sup>a</sup>**

First Action Plan 2010–2013	Second Action Plan 2013–2016	Third Action Plan 2016–2019
Building primary prevention capacity	Driving whole of community action to prevent violence	Prevention and early intervention
Enhancing service delivery	Understanding diverse experiences of violence	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children
Strengthened justice responses	Supporting innovative services and integrated systems	Greater support and choice
Building the evidence base	Improving perpetrator interventions	Sexual violence

<sup>9</sup> *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2011, p. 13.

First Action Plan 2010–2013	Second Action Plan 2013–2016	Third Action Plan 2016–2019
–	Continuing to build the evidence base	Responding to children living with violence
–	–	Keeping perpetrators accountable across all systems

Note a: The Fourth Action Plan is currently being developed.

Source: ANAO presentation of priorities listed in National Action Plans.

1.9 Since the National Council presented its report to the Australian Government in 2009, domestic and family violence has been the subject of a number of reports including:

- NSW Auditor-General’s Report, Responding to domestic and family violence, 2011;
- Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland, 2014;
- Domestic and family violence services audit (Queensland), 2016;
- Royal Commission into Family Violence (Victoria), 2016;
- Commonwealth of Australia Senate Finance and Public Administration Reference Committee: Domestic violence in Australia, 2016; and
- Commonwealth of Australia Senate Finance and Public Administration Reference Committee: Delivery of National Outcome 4 of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2017.

1.10 Several jurisdictions now have their own plans or strategies separate from the National Plan, for example:

- *Safe Homes, Safe Families: Tasmania’s Family Violence Action Plan 2015–2020*;
- *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026* (Queensland);
- *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Blueprint for Reform 2016–2021: Safer Lives for Women, Men and Children*;
- *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy 2017–2021*;
- *NSW Sexual Assault Strategy 2018–2021*;
- *Ending Family Violence: Victoria’s Plan for Change* (2016);
- *Free from Violence: Victoria’s strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women*;
- *Domestic, Family & Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018–2028* (Northern Territory).

1.11 The National Plan is not part of the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations and is therefore not subject to the public accountability and performance reporting framework for National Agreements. Spending and implementation of specific initiatives is determined by individual jurisdictions and may reflect commitments made under the National Plan as well as jurisdictional strategies.

1.12 States and territories hold primary responsibility for delivering services for women who have experienced violence and for the administration of justice and child protection responses. The

Australian Government has responsibility for delivering support and services through family law, including legal assistance and the social security system, including crisis payments. The Commonwealth also funds national support services, primary prevention and evidence building initiatives led by national partners under the National Plan.

1.13 Total expenditure by the Commonwealth across the life of the National Plan to date, is around \$723 million. This figure includes \$103.9 million announced in 2016 under the Third Action Plan, \$328 million announced in March 2019 in advance of the start of the Fourth Action Plan and the \$101.2 million Women's Safety Package announced in 2015. Activities funded under this package support work being undertaken as part of the National Plan and are managed by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

### **Key Commonwealth initiatives and national partners**

1.14 Under the National Plan the Commonwealth has established and/or supported a number of key initiatives. These initiatives are 1800RESPECT, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, DV-alert, Our Watch, and White Ribbon. Collectively the organisations that deliver these initiatives are referred to as National Plan partners.

#### ***1800RESPECT***

1.15 1800RESPECT, the National Sexual Assault Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service, is a national telephone and online counselling and support service which commenced on 1 October 2010. Establishment of this service was a recommendation of the National Council's *Time for Action* plan.<sup>10</sup>

1.16 1800RESPECT is operated by Medibank Health Solutions, with trauma specialist counselling sub-contracted to three not-for-profit organisations.<sup>11</sup>

#### ***Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS)***

1.17 ANROWS was formed under the National Plan in 2013, fulfilling the National Council's *Time for Action* plan recommendation to establish a National Centre of Excellence. It is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments.

1.18 ANROWS's mission is to deliver relevant and translatable research evidence which drives policy and practice leading to a reduction in the levels of violence against women and their children. Further information about ANROWS's contribution towards building this evidence base is in chapter three from paragraph 3.14.

#### ***DV-alert***

1.19 DV-alert is a free nationally accredited training program, operated by Lifeline Australia, which aims to improve the capacity of health, allied health and frontline workers to recognise, respond to and refer clients who are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, domestic violence to relevant support services.

10 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, p. 87.

11 These three organisations are DV Connect (Queensland), SafeSteps (Victoria), and Women's Safety Services (South Australia). They operate with the support for training and professional development from the NSW Blue Knot Foundation.

1.20 Accredited DV-alert training streams include general, Indigenous, multicultural, settlement, disability and tailored workshops, as well offering as an elearning module in the general training stream for frontline workers that are not able to attend face-to-face training. Six new training streams are being developed by Lifeline Australia and will be piloted for frontline workers in 2018–19. Community members can also attend DV-alert non-accredited awareness sessions.

### *Our Watch*

1.21 In June 2013, the Commonwealth and Victorian governments established Our Watch as a key initiative under the National Plan. It was officially launched in September 2014.

1.22 Our Watch has launched a number of primary prevention initiatives, including:

- delivering *The Line*, a behavioural change campaign targeted at 12–20 year olds, that is predominantly delivered online through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and YouTube; and
- publishing a primary prevention framework, *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*.

### *White Ribbon*

1.23 White Ribbon is an international campaign aimed at engaging men and boys to end violence against women. It operates through primary prevention awareness raising initiatives and education programs involving young people, schools, workplaces and the broader community.

1.24 White Ribbon events have been held in Australia since 1992, with the White Ribbon Foundation established as a legal entity for operational purposes in 2007.

## **Rationale for undertaking the audit**

1.25 Domestic violence causes long-term impacts to individuals and families as well as significant costs to the economy. Reducing these impacts involves changing individual behaviour and delivering integrated services across organisational boundaries and at all levels of government. In 2011, all Australian Governments agreed to a long-term plan to reduce violence, with the Commonwealth Government taking a leadership role. As this National Plan is in its ninth year, it is timely to assess whether the Department of Social Services has been effective in administering its responsibilities under the National Plan, including monitoring the plan's achievements and progress.

## **Audit approach**

### **Audit objective, criteria and scope**

1.26 The objective of the audit was to assess the effectiveness of the Department of Social Services' role in implementing the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan).

1.27 To form a conclusion against the audit objective, the ANAO adopted the following high-level audit criteria:

- Effective governance arrangements are in place.
- Targeting of funding and actions is aligned to the outcomes of the National Plan.

- Monitoring and reporting of performance for key Department of Social Services' initiatives and the National Plan is effective.

## **Audit methodology**

1.28 The audit methodology included:

- examining performance reporting, contracts and deliverables for key initiatives and grants funded by the Department of Social Services (the department);
- reviewing departmental policies and plans relevant to the National Plan and outcomes from previous evaluations and progress reports;
- reviewing minutes and Terms of Reference for key stakeholder working groups and/or committees led by the department;
- reviewing departmental reporting to government and other relevant parties; and
- interviews with department personnel and Commonwealth stakeholders.

1.29 The audit scope did not include work undertaken at the state and territory level.

1.30 The audit was conducted in accordance with ANAO Auditing Standards at a cost to the ANAO of about \$509,000. The team members for this audit were Tracy Cussen, Christine Preston, Michael Fitzgerald, Hannah Climas and David Brunoro.

## 2. Governance and engagement arrangements

### Areas examined

This chapter reports on the governance arrangements, including the roles and responsibilities and stakeholder engagement mechanisms, established to support implementation of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*.

### Conclusion

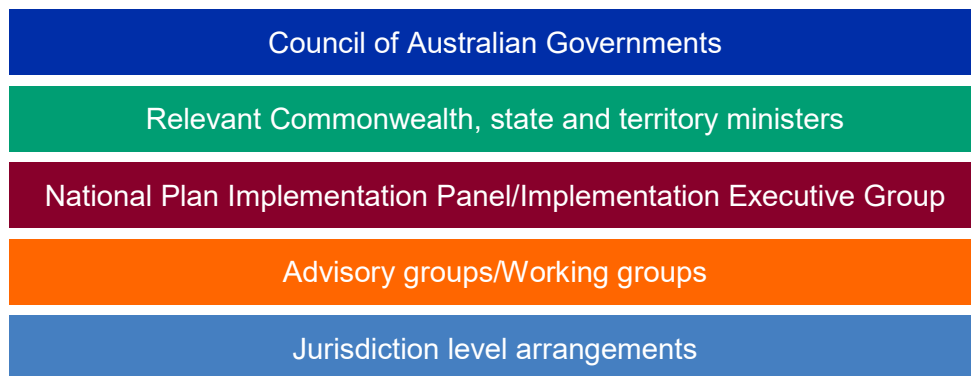
The department has established effective governance arrangements to support implementation of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*. These arrangements include clear accountabilities, processes for oversight and decision-making, and information sharing arrangements. The department has used a variety of mechanisms to engage formal stakeholders at key points throughout the life of the National Plan.

### Have roles and responsibilities been clearly identified and are they fit-for-purpose?

The roles and responsibilities for the implementation and monitoring of the National Plan are clear and fit-for-purpose for the cross-jurisdictional delivery of the National Plan. The Council of Australian Governments and relevant Commonwealth, state and territory ministers oversee implementation of the Third Action Plan and lead whole-of-government involvement. Implementation Executive Groups (ImpEG), with representatives from several Commonwealth entities and all states and territories, provide strategic and operational policy advice to ministers. The Department of Social Services develops and reports against action plans, oversees key national services and provides secretariat support to the ImpEG.

2.1 Delivering the outcomes of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children* (the National Plan) is a shared responsibility of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. Jointly these governments endorsed the National Plan and each subsequent action plan.

2.2 While there have been changes to the governance arrangements over successive action plans, these arrangements have consistently provided for cross-jurisdictional ministerial forums; oversight by senior officials; advisory functions; consultation across the sector; and reporting on the progress of action plans. The key stakeholder groups involved across the action plans are broadly set out in Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1: Overview of governance structure for the National Plan**

Source: ANAO analysis of Department of Social Services documentation.

2.3 The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) oversees the National Plan and has responsibility for linking policy and investment across all levels of government. For example, both the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2021* and *Women's Safety Package* (announced in September 2015) are policy initiatives with links to the National Plan.

2.4 Commonwealth, state and territory Women's Safety Ministers<sup>12</sup> oversee implementation of the Third Action Plan and lead whole-of-government involvement. These ministers advise COAG on matters relating to violence against women, approve significant projects agreed to by COAG<sup>13</sup> and oversee the Women's Safety Package. Women's Safety Ministers meetings are supported by the Office for Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

2.5 The Council of Attorneys-General<sup>14</sup> advises COAG on law enforcement, crime reduction and law reform matters and oversees relevant projects funded under the National Plan. Across 2017 and 2018 the Council: established a family violence working group; agreed to the Commonwealth working with all jurisdictions to commence reporting on National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions (NOSPI); and agreed for jurisdictions to aspire to achieve alignment with the National Risk Assessment Principles for Family and Domestic Violence (NRAP).<sup>15</sup>

2.6 The National Plan Implementation Executive Group (ImpEG) was established in 2014 under the Second Action Plan. The ImpEG comprises a Senior Officials Group (made up of Branch Manager/Executive Director equivalent officials) and, as at 2017, an Operational Group (made up of executive level officers). Both groups are represented by Commonwealth, state and territory government personnel with secretariat support provided by the Department of Social Services (the department).

2.7 Under the ImpEG's Terms of Reference, the role of the Senior Officials Group is to provide strategic policy advice to enhance the development and implementation of the four action plans. The Senior Officials Group reviews items going to COAG such as the *Stop it at the Start* campaign,

12 This function was previously fulfilled by these Ministers as members of the Select Council on Women's Issues (under the former COAG sub-committee structure).

13 For example, the *Stop it at the Start* campaign — aimed at encouraging adults to reflect on their attitudes and have conversations about respect with young people <https://www.respect.gov.au/the-campaign/>.

14 At the start of the Third Action Plan the Law Crime and Community Safety Council (LCCSC) was responsible for providing advice on these matters. The LCCSC was replaced with separate councils for Attorneys-General and Ministers for Police and Emergency Management in June 2017.

15 The department funded the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to undertake the NOSPI work and Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety to undertake the NRAP project.

items going forward to Women's Safety Ministers meetings, Third Action Plan implementation, and monitoring and reporting.

2.8 Under the Terms of Reference, the Operational Group's role is to provide advice on operational-related activities for existing commitments as part of action plans under the National Plan. Operational group meetings have focused on jurisdictional updates on progress against action plan items, working group activity and service delivery information.

2.9 Both groups have met regularly (face-to-face and by teleconference) since they were formed. The frequency of these meetings increases during key periods, such as development of the Third Action Plans. Recent ImpEG activity has focused on planning the Fourth Action Plan, including the roundtable discussions held to inform its development.

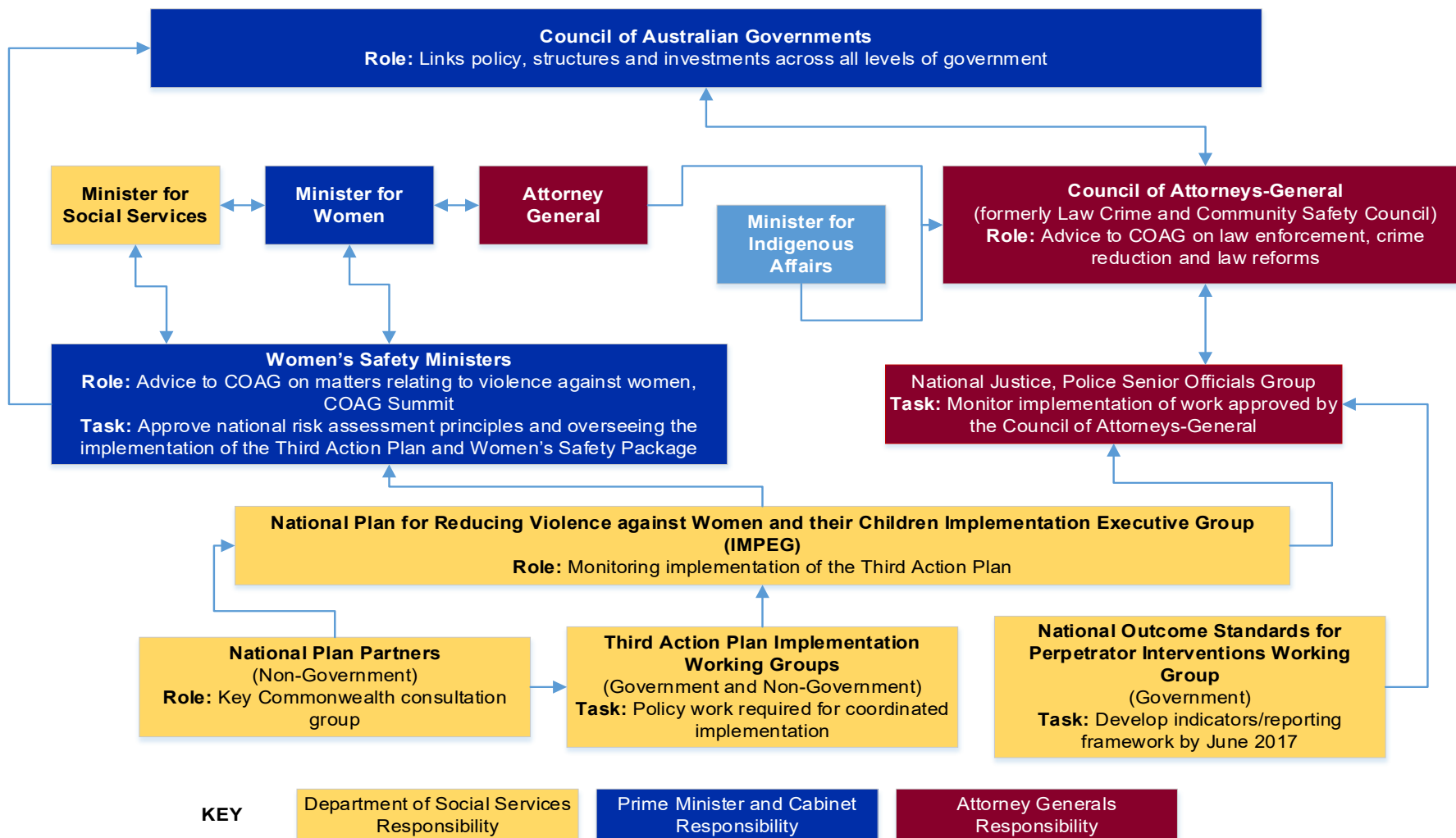
2.10 The role and responsibilities of the ImpEG are similar to those identified under the Terms of Reference for the National Plan Implementation Panel established under the First Action Plan. The key difference between the National Plan Implementation Panel and ImpEG is the absence of representation from the non-government sector on the ImpEG groups.

2.11 Under the First Action Plan, a non-government representative was nominated by each state and territory to participate on the National Plan Implementation Panel, with up to six additional non-government representatives to be nominated by the Commonwealth. Departmental records indicate that, following completion of the First Action Plan, the Government committed to more targeted engagement with a larger group of stakeholders. The mechanisms used to engage with stakeholders are discussed further from paragraph 2.21.

2.12 Senior officials at the ImpEG meeting held on 6 March 2017 endorsed governance arrangements developed to monitor and report on the implementation of actions under the Third Action Plan. The agreed governance structure is depicted in Figure 2.2. The Minister for Social Services and Minister for Women subsequently noted these arrangements.



**Figure 2.2: Governance structure for the Third Action Plan**



Source: Department of Social Services documentation.

2.13 Under this governance structure the department is responsible for chairing ImpEG meetings, providing secretariat support<sup>16</sup> to the ImpEG, liaising with National Plan partners and monitoring the work they undertake that is funded under the National Plan. Monitoring and reporting arrangements are discussed in chapter four.

2.14 Governance arrangements for the Fourth Action Plan are currently under development. The department has established a Fourth Action Plan Board and Commonwealth Senior Executive Service (SES) Steering Group<sup>17</sup> to aid project management and development of the Fourth Action Plan.

### **Are suitable mechanisms in place to share and coordinate information and promote engagement with formal stakeholders?**

The department has established and implemented suitable arrangements to share and coordinate information and engage formal stakeholders, including government and non-government representatives with expertise in areas relevant to the National Plan. Mechanisms established to interact with these stakeholders include: working groups, engagement with National Plan partners, committees, National Summits and other consultations.

Consultations undertaken for the Second Action Plan evaluation and development of the Fourth Action Plan have identified scope to improve links with the community and collaboration with the non-government sector.

### **Third Action Plan working groups**

2.15 Under the Third Action Plan, state and territory-led working groups were to be established to monitor and progress key actions. Groups comprise government officials, academics, experienced managers and practitioners in the family, domestic and sexual violence sectors, and community members. The role of these groups, as defined in the Terms of Reference, is to:

bring the evidence from research, evaluations and other sources to inform the implementation of relevant Actions. They will bring members together regularly to discuss and drive work on:

- policy settings and proposals
- evidence on effective programs or approaches
- implementation, and
- monitoring the progress of implementation.

2.16 The subjects of these working groups were to be: Sexual Violence; Housing and Homelessness; Children and Parenting; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children; and Workforce Strategies. Jurisdictional leads for these working groups were confirmed at

---

16 Secretariat support includes: coordinating and scheduling meetings; developing and circulating agenda papers and action items; and liaising with members on project matters.

17 The Fourth Action Plan Board has representatives from the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC). The Senior Executive Service Steering Committee membership includes representatives from DSS, PMC, Attorney-General's Department, Department of Communication and Arts, Department of Education and Training, Department of Finance, Department of Health, Department of Home Affairs, Department of Human Services, Department of Jobs and Small Business, Department of Veterans' Affairs, Office of the eSafety Commissioner and Treasury.

the June 2016 meeting of the ImpEG. State and territory officials were to chair established working groups and determine the frequency of meetings with the department providing support by facilitating teleconferences, providing suggestions and scoping potential research projects.

2.17 Establishment of the Workforce Strategies working group was deferred to 2018 to allow for the completion of workforce survey projects being undertaken at the state and Commonwealth level. These projects are ongoing as at March 2019.

2.18 The Sexual Violence working group did not progress, as the lead jurisdiction prioritised developing a state-level Sexual Assault Strategy.

2.19 The three established working groups (Housing and Homelessness, Children and Parenting and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children) began meeting in 2017 and provided progress updates at ImpEG meetings.

2.20 The department provided support to these three working groups by providing research and other sources of evidence to inform the implementation of actions. For example, the department set up research databases for each of these working groups from which information relevant to the subject matter of each group was accessible. The department also commissioned discrete research projects on the basis of advice from the groups that the research was required. The following research was funded by the department to support working group projects:

- *National survey on the impact of tenancy laws on women and children escaping violence* (\$108,225), to support the Housing and Homelessness working group;
- *Service system responses to the needs of children to keep them safe from violence and assess the extent to which service interventions further victimise women who are experiencing violence* (\$107,185), to support the Children and Parenting working group;
- *Resources on how to obtain consent when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who have experienced family and domestic violence* (\$84,047), to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children working group; and
- *Building safety in families reunifying after experiencing family and domestic violence* (\$399,950) to jointly support the three working groups.

### **Additional engagement mechanisms**

2.21 The department advised the ANAO that a senior staff member from the Family Safety Branch has responsibility for engaging with sector and state and territory governments in relation to all branch activities including the National Plan. This role includes engagement with the National Plan partners (Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), 1800RESPECT, DV-alert, Our Watch and White Ribbon Australia). The Commonwealth and state and territory senior officials are members of the ANROWS Board and these jurisdictions are principal or ordinary members of the Our Watch Board.

2.22 The department leads several project-level governance groups, established to support the implementation of Commonwealth-funded initiatives under the Third Action Plan, including:

- Engaging Local Governments in Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Prevention Project Reference Committee. The group provides oversight of the local government domestic, family and sexual violence prevention project.

- National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions (NOSPI) Working Group.<sup>18</sup> The group supports the development of the NOSPI and comprises members from women's safety, police, justice and corrections agencies across all jurisdictions. Progress on the NOSPI is reported to COAG through the Council of Attorneys-General.
- The 1800RESPECT Performance and Improvement Committee provides oversight and review of the performance of the 1800RESEPECT service by senior executives from the department, Medibank Health Solutions (MHS) and MHS subcontractors.

2.23 A time-limited<sup>19</sup> COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children was established in 2015 represented by members of the government and non-government sectors. The Panel provided three reports to COAG during its lifetime and was supported by a secretariat in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

2.24 COAG sponsored National Summits on Reducing Violence Against Women and their Children were held in both 2016 and 2018. These summits were attended by community experts, leaders, key stakeholders, Ministers and officials from across Australia. The department has also engaged with key stakeholders, across a range of mechanisms, to develop action plans (see chapter three, from paragraph 3.37).

2.25 The department also informs stakeholders about the National Plan through a dedicated website: [plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au](http://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au). The website includes information about the implementation of the National Plan, including initiatives, resources, latest news and ways to get involved. Summaries of public consultations, evaluations and links to other government websites are also accessible.

2.26 In March 2017 the department released its evaluation of the Second Action Plan. That evaluation found that 'governance, advisory and communication mechanisms were generally considered by stakeholders to be operating effectively'<sup>20</sup>, particularly in relation to gathering advice from a range of stakeholders. These stakeholder consultations also identified scope to improve links with the community and other relevant groups.

2.27 Later consultations, undertaken by the department in 2018 to inform the development of the Fourth Action Plan, also noted a need to improve collaboration and information sharing between the government and non-government sectors, specifically to reduce duplication of effort and improve congruence between state/territory planning and the National Plan.

---

18 The NOSPI working group was established in 2015 and is separate from the working groups established to support actions under the Third Action Plan described in paragraphs 2.15–2.20.

19 The Advisory Panel was announced by the Prime Minister on 28 January 2015 for a period up to 18 months. The Advisory Panel submitted its final report on 1 April 2016.

20 KPMG, *Evaluation of the Second Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, Department of Social Services, 2017, p. 4.

### 3. Funding and targeting of resources

---

#### Areas examined

This chapter reports on the Department of Social Services' actions to establish an evidence base to support the National Plan, develop the Third Action Plan, and fund and implement Commonwealth actions under that Action Plan. The chapter also reflects on actions undertaken to date in developing the Fourth Action Plan.

#### Conclusion

The evidence suggests that the department's funding and actions taken during the Third Action Plan are aligned with the Plan's key priorities and that the department established the two mechanisms required under the National Plan to improve the evidence base. The department cannot demonstrate that the actions taken are prioritised based on available evidence or that they are collectively contributing to the outcomes of the National Plan. Subsequently, there is scope to better target research activities towards projects that identify what works for whom and in what contexts.

#### Areas for improvement

The ANAO made two recommendations aimed at improving the transparency and accountability around government commitments under the National Plan.

The ANAO also suggested that the department develop an implementation plan for the National Data Collection and Reporting Framework and ensure the planned review of ANROWS considers the department's expectations around policy-relevant deliverables and processes for identifying research priorities.

#### Have mechanisms to build a suitable evidence base been established?

The National Centre of Excellence committed to in the National Plan has been established and progress made towards operationalising a National Data Collection and Reporting Framework (DCRF). In the absence of a plan identifying the sequence and priority of activities required to ensure that DCRF is operational by its target date of 2022, the department cannot demonstrate that jurisdictions are on track to deliver this outcome.

The department has funded research to build the evidence base. This research program as a whole does not provide sufficient focus on program evaluation and research synthesis to inform policy decisions and program improvements that contribute to achieving the National Plan's outcomes.

3.1 Improving the evidence base is one of the National Plan's four 'foundations for change' and a key priority of the National Plan. The Second Action Plan identified that improving the evidence base requires ongoing work to:

collect and report national survey data; strengthen jurisdictional administrative data so it can be shared nationally and individual pathways through systems can be followed; and produce, bring

together and disseminate research that is high quality and can usefully inform policy and practice.<sup>21</sup>

3.2 The Commonwealth committed to funding two national surveys — the Personal Safety Survey (PSS) and the National Survey on Community Attitudes Towards Violence Against Women — on four-year cycles (see further discussion of these surveys in chapter four from paragraph 4.3).

3.3 To strengthen administrative data and research evidence, governments committed to develop a national Data Collection and Reporting Framework (DCRF) that will be operational by 2022; and to establish a National Centre of Excellence.

## **Mechanisms to improve data under the National Plan**

### *National Data Collection and Reporting Framework*

3.4 The National Plan and supporting action plans identify that the lack of nationally consistent data presents a significant challenge to measuring the progress of the National Plan. To improve the consistency and reliability of domestic, family and sexual violence data, all jurisdictions agreed to develop a DCRF with the aim of creating nationally consistent data definitions and collection methods.

3.5 Under the First Action Plan, the department funded the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to undertake a series of projects to develop the DCRF which resulted in three publications. The final of the three publications, published in 2014, was *The Foundation for a National Data Collection and Reporting Framework*.

3.6 This foundation report identifies key data items and recording formats required to improve reporting of family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia. It aims to provide a clear structure for data collection activities, guidance for collecting consistent and comparable data, and advice to organisations on the implementation of data storage and reporting practices.

3.7 The ABS identified, in the foundation report, that the next step in developing the statistical evidence base is applying the DCRF to existing administrative datasets and noted that the DCRF could also be used to establish new data collection activities to fill gaps in the evidence base.

3.8 The department has funded a number of projects aimed at improving administrative data sets that have collectively assisted in operationalising the DCRF across the life of the National Plan. Around \$2.7 million has been provided to the ABS, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) and Australian Human Rights Commission for projects across the Third Action Plan. These projects aim to:

- expand the ABS Directory of Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence<sup>22</sup> (providing an update to the 2013 release) (\$186,000);
- assess the nature, quality and coverage of family, domestic and sexual violence data collected and recorded in the legal assistance sector and to recommend improvements (\$300,000);

---

21 *Second Action Plan 2013–2016, of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2014, p. 53.

22 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Directory of Family, Domestic, and Sexual Violence Statistics, 2018*, cat. No. 4533.0, ABS, Canberra, 2018.

- conduct a National Workplace Sexual Harassment Survey (building on the previous survey conducted in 2012) (\$445,000);
- scope the addition of family and domestic violence flags (or indicators) to AIHW datasets, including a nationally comparable approach to adding this information to emergency data across jurisdictions and a proof of concept for service-level data (\$657,521);
- continue to improve family, domestic and sexual violence related data in the ABS collections *Recorded Crime, Victims* and *Recorded Crime, Offenders*<sup>23</sup>, and develop and publish related experimental data in the *Criminal Courts, Australia* and *Corrective Services, Australia* collections (\$1.014 million); and
- identify and recommend improvements to current domestic and family violence death review and data reporting mechanisms, including options for monitoring coronial review recommendations made to government entities (\$110,800).

3.9 The AIHW was also funded by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments to produce two national reports that collate relevant family, domestic and sexual violence datasets. The first of these reports — *Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia* — was released on 28 February 2018. This report brings together information on victims and perpetrators and on the causes, impacts and outcomes of violence from multiple sources. The report highlights data gaps which, if filled, could strengthen the evidence base and support the prevention and reduction of family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia. An update to this report is due for release in June 2019.

3.10 The National Plan commits to the DCRF being operational by 2022; however, governments have not agreed an implementation plan and consequential funding arrangements for the long term development of data assets. An implementation plan was drafted in 2011 but the department was unable to verify whether it was endorsed. That plan proposed a phased approach for the development of the DCRF which aligned with the schedule for the four action plans specified in the National Plan. The first phase would deliver foundation documents and gaps analysis with subsequent phases identifying high priority areas for data development.

3.11 While the department continues to progress the implementation of the DCRF, through projects such as those noted in paragraph 3.8, the absence of a plan identifying the sequence and priority of activities needed for the DCRF to be considered operational in 2022 means the department cannot provide assurance that jurisdictions are on track to achieve this goal.

3.12 The department should work with relevant entities and jurisdictional governments to develop an agreed implementation plan for the DCRF. This plan should identify and prioritise the sequencing of key activities and funding still required to operationalise the DCRF across jurisdictions, the entity responsible for undertaking each activity and the target dates for their implementation.

---

23 A flag has been implemented in the ABS Recorded Crime Victims collection for all eight jurisdictions and in the Recorded Crime Offenders collection across six jurisdictions (with efforts ongoing in the remaining two jurisdictions).

## Research under the National Plan

3.13 In addition to improving the available data, a primary way the National Plan intends to improve the evidence base is through increasing the volume and relevance of research on violence against women. A commitment of governments was to establish a National Centre of Excellence to bring together existing research as well as undertake new research under an agreed national research agenda.<sup>24</sup>

### *National Centre of Excellence*

3.14 The National Centre of Excellence, later renamed Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), was established in 2013. The Commonwealth and state and territory governments jointly fund ANROWS, with the Commonwealth providing half of ANROWS core funding and state and territory governments providing the remainder on a per capita basis. To date, ANROWS's core funding has been provided under two contracts, the first spanning 2013 to 2015–2016 and the current contract which spans from 2016–17 to 2019–20.

3.15 The Commonwealth has committed to provide ANROWS core funding of \$1.7 million per year over four years for the current 2016–20 core funding contract, with a further \$1.7 million per year, from 2020–2022, subject to satisfactory performance. In addition to the core funding, ANROWS has received around \$8 million from the department for a range of research projects. These projects are discussed further from paragraph 3.25.

3.16 In 2014 ANROWS developed and released a National Research Agenda, endorsed by the Commonwealth and state and territory governments. This agenda provides a framework for the ANROWS research program and identifies four strategic research themes. Table 3.1 shows how ANROWS related its four strategic research themes to the six outcomes identified in the National Plan (the National Plan Outcomes are listed in Table 1.1).

**Table 3.1: National Research Agenda Strategic Research Themes mapped against the outcomes in the National Plan**

Strategic Research Theme	National Plan Outcomes
Experience and impacts	Research addressing this Strategic Research Theme is fundamental to the overall delivery of the National Plan and links closely to work in the National Data Collection and Reporting Framework.
Gender inequality and primary prevention	1. Communities are safe and free from violence. 2. Relationships are respectful. 3. Indigenous communities are strengthened.
Service responses and interventions	1. Communities are safe and free from violence. 3. Indigenous communities are strengthened. 4. Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence. 6. Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account.

24 *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2011, p. 36.



Strategic Research Theme	National Plan Outcomes
Systems (including government policy and the criminal justice, child protection and legal systems)	3. Indigenous communities are strengthened. 4. Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence. 5. Justice responses are effective. 6. Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account.

Source: ANROWS National Research Agenda May 2014, p19.

3.17 ANROWS has commissioned research under two grants rounds linked to research priorities developed in consultation with the department and other stakeholders. These grants rounds were held in 2014 and 2017.

3.18 Under its 2014 grants round, ANROWS identified 24 research priorities and funded 22 projects. Three main types of publications were produced:

- Compass publications — which aim to provide concise summaries of key findings of the research;
- Horizons publications — which are technical reports on empirical research produced under ANROWS's research program; and
- Landscapes publications — which draw on published literature and existing research and/or practice and knowledge of a specific area.

3.19 For its 2017 grants round, ANROWS identified 33 research priorities and funded 14 projects. The majority of these 14 projects addressed more than one of the 33 research priorities. Collectively these projects addressed 22 of the 33 priorities, covered each of the four strategic research themes and cost \$2.5 million. All projects funded under this round were required under the grant guidance to include a focus on priority populations.<sup>25</sup> Thirteen of the projects identified at least one of the priority populations as either an explicit topic or focus of the research. A list of the projects funded is at Table 3.2 and a list of the priority areas is at Appendix 2.

**Table 3.2: Research projects funded under the 2017 grants round**

Project title	Funding amount	Priority area/s addressed <sup>a</sup>
The relationship between gambling and domestic violence against women	\$230,848	2,6
Domestic violence, social security law and the couple rule	\$21,004	5,7,12
Crossing the line: Lived experience of sexual violence among trans women from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds in Australia	\$261,820	10
Young people as agents of change in preventing violence against women (R4Respect)	\$173,104	18
The MuSeS project: Multicultural and settlement services supporting women experiencing violence	\$297,874	4,19,22

25 The priority populations identified were: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; Culturally and linguistically diverse women; Older women; Women with disability; Women who are, or have been, incarcerated; Lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex and transgender women; and Women living in rural and remote areas.

Project title	Funding amount	Priority area/s addressed <sup>a</sup>
Sustainability of identification and response to family violence in antenatal care (SUSTAIN study)	\$298,077	19,22
Examining the power of Child-At-Risk electronic medical record (eMR) alerts to share interpersonal violence, abuse and neglect concerns: Do child protection alerts help?	\$50,000	3,22
Preventing gender-based violence in inpatient mental health units	\$123,645	4,5,11,22
Mothers and children with disability using early intervention services: Identifying and sharing promising practice	\$254,076	12,14,17,19,22
Constructions of complex trauma and implications for women's wellbeing and safety from violence	\$179,099	4,9,14,22,26
Transforming legal understandings of intimate partner violence	\$26,216	1,32
Prioritising women's safety in Australian perpetrator interventions: The purpose and practices of partner contact	\$259,731	19,33
Kungas' Trauma experiences and effects on behaviour in Central Australia	\$50,000	23,24
Exploring the impact and effect of self-representation by one or both parties in Family Law proceedings involving allegations of family violence	\$248,879	27

Note a: See Appendix 2 for the numbered list of priority areas.

Source: *ANROWS Research Priorities (2017 grants), Summary May 2018* <https://www.anrows.org.au/core-research/> [accessed 3 April 2019].

3.20 In addition to delivering or commissioning research, ANROWS is required under its contract to disseminate and promote relevant research; conduct a biennial research conference; develop and maintain a knowledge translation and exchange function; and establish a survey of stakeholders to measure the ease of access and satisfaction with the applicability of published research.

3.21 To disseminate and promote relevant research and knowledge ANROWS has produced a range of publications including practice guidelines, fact sheets and occasional papers (covering key findings from ANROWS and non-ANROWS research). It has also organised a number of events for policy makers, service providers and practitioners including two national research conferences<sup>26</sup>.

3.22 Stakeholder feedback<sup>27</sup> from both government and non-government stakeholders, gathered from a departmental review of ANROWS published in May 2016<sup>28</sup> and survey conducted

26 ANROWS advised the first research conference focused on research in progress and emerging issues and the second conference focused on the application of research evidence to policy and practice.

27 For the ANROWS review, stakeholders included representatives from ANROWS, as well as government and non-government representatives. For the ANROWS survey, stakeholders included practitioners, policy developers, researchers and other representatives from education, information services and advocacy sectors.

28 This review was undertaken between November 2015 and February 2016. ANROWS advised that very few projects and related publications had been completed at the time the review was conducted and that stakeholder feedback was necessarily limited.

by ANROWS in 2017, noted overall satisfaction with the research produced and some areas for improvement. These survey respondents noted a need for:

- improved search functionality of the ANROWS website;
- research with a greater emphasis on policy and practice;
- short sharp overviews of each research projects and work that pulls together the outcomes of different pieces of work, integrating the research outcomes;
- a more nuanced understanding of policy developers' needs, taking into account government and other policy developers, and the varying agendas across jurisdictions; and
- research findings to identify: what the research does and does not identify; what policy direction or options could be taken on the basis of the research and what service models should be funded.

3.23 The department's MOU with the states and territories, concerning the operation of ANROWS, notes that a review, managed by the Commonwealth will be conducted after a period of three years, prior to committing additional funding. The terms of reference for the review are to be determined by the Commonwealth and states and territories and are to cover matters such as: the extent to which ANROWS is meeting the objects of the company as outlined in its Constitution; the usefulness of ANROWS outputs for jurisdictional policy and program development; and any other matters that the jurisdictions wish to review.

3.24 In developing the criteria for the review there may be benefit in the department considering:

- its expectations around policy-relevant deliverables and how to best communicate these to ANROWS; and
- whether the process for identifying research priorities is delivering manageable results.

#### *Research targeting specific areas of need identified under the National Plan*

3.25 Two reports<sup>29</sup> used to inform the development of the National Research Agenda and the AIHW's *Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence in Australia 2018* report identified gaps in the evidence base, including in the areas of:

- experiences of specific population groups including children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders, people with disability and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people;
- services and responses that perpetrators receive; and
- the effectiveness of services and support for people that have experienced violence including the evaluation of the implementation of programs and interventions.

3.26 In addition to research funded under the agreed National Research Agenda through core funding provided to ANROWS, the department has commissioned additional projects to support actions under the Third Action Plan and to further address identified gaps. The total funding provided for this additional research under the Third Action Plan to date is around \$30.7 million. This figure includes \$699,407 provided for working group projects described at paragraph 2.20, and

29 These reports are: *The state of research on domestic and family violence and sexual assault in Australia since 2000*, unpublished discussion paper prepared by the Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies, 2013; and Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Bridging the Data Gaps for Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence, Australia*, ABS, 2013.

\$8 million provided to ANROWS (referred to at paragraph 3.15) to: develop a perpetrator intervention research stream and grants round (\$3 million); National Risk Assessment Principles (\$100,000); conduct the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (\$3.1 million); and a range of other projects.

3.27 This funding has also been used for cohort specific studies, capacity building projects, action research activities (designed to support program implementation) and additional survey and data projects. The funded parties include academics, non-government service providers and government entities, including the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. A breakdown of the funded projects is at Appendix 3.

3.28 While the department maintains a list of all funded research and monitors its progress, it has not developed a plan that assists it in allocating priority to funding research, helps to identify gaps in the research evidence base or track whether identified gaps are being filled.

3.29 Overall, the research that has been funded to date has largely focused on gaining a better understanding of the experience of people from particular cohorts or in specific contexts, with limited emphasis on evaluating which services are working, for whom and in what contexts. In the small number of projects focused on reviewing or evaluating a service or service delivery approach, the ANAO found limited evidence of consideration of cost effectiveness.

3.30 With the exception of the perpetrator intervention research stream, there was limited evidence of the department planning research activities that could build on prior learnings. There would be benefit in the department examining approaches to identify short, medium and long term priorities around key topics to allow for sequencing of research activities and to build the evidence base over time.

3.31 There is also scope for the department to consider directing data and research funding towards projects such as meta-evaluations, research synthesis and other studies that draw together findings about which initiatives most effectively address National Plan outcomes. This in turn would provide policy officers across jurisdictions with more guidance on the best areas to focus funding. In order to emphasize the importance of continuing to build the evidence base, data improvement and research projects need to be explicitly reintegrated into the Fourth Action Plan.

### Recommendation no.1

3.32 The Department of Social Services specify research and data projects as actions under each of the priority areas agreed by governments for the Fourth Action Plan.

**Department of Social Services response:** *Agreed.*

3.33 *The Fourth Action Plan is under development. Each of the priority areas will identify research and data projects.*

## Did the development of the Third Action Plan incorporate past learnings?

The development of the Third Action Plan incorporated past learnings, drawing on a range of evidence including stakeholder feedback, findings from inquiries and an evaluation report of the Second Action Plan.

3.34 The National Plan sets out the expectation for the development of four three-yearly action plans, successively building on one another. The differences between the National Priorities set and agreed by governments for the action plans demonstrate a shift in the focus from foundation setting under the First Action Plan to making progress across systems under the Second Action Plan and demonstrating impacts for specific cohorts under Third Action Plan (see Table 3.3)

**Table 3.3: Action Plan priority areas**

First Action Plan: <i>Building a strong foundation</i>	Second Action Plan: <i>Moving ahead</i>	Third Action Plan: <i>Promising results</i>
Building primary prevention capacity	Driving whole of community action to prevent violence	Prevention and early intervention
Enhancing service delivery	Understanding diverse experiences of violence	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children
Strengthening justice responses	Supporting innovative services and integrated systems	Greater support and choice
Building the evidence base	Continuing to build the evidence base	Sexual violence
—	—	Responding to children living with violence
—	—	Keeping perpetrators accountable across all systems

Source: National Plan Action Plans.

3.35 The development of the Third Action Plan was to be based on wide-ranging consultation and collaboration with key stakeholders; the existing evidence base; and the evaluation of the Second Action Plans.

3.36 The Third Action Plan was endorsed by Women's Safety Ministers on 29 September 2016 and launched by the Prime Minister on 28 October 2016.

## Stakeholder engagement

3.37 The department developed an overarching process and timeline for developing the Third Action Plan,<sup>30</sup> including a stakeholder engagement plan. Under this plan the department proposed focusing engagement on refining specific actions and building on, rather than duplicating, the range of public consultation already undertaken by governments.<sup>31</sup>

3.38 Work on the development of the Third Action Plan commenced in late 2015 with consultations between the department and other Commonwealth agencies. Feedback from the Implementation Executive Group (ImpEG) was sought (see from paragraph 2.6 for further discussion on ImpEG) and agreement, between the department and ImpEG, to a two-phased consultation approach was reached in January 2016.

3.39 The phased approach included one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders, including, but not limited to, National Plan partner organisations, and roundtable discussions. Phase one consultations focused on: sexual violence; research and evidence; appropriate responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children; and innovation. This early consultation informed the draft priorities developed in February 2016.

3.40 Phase two consultations were undertaken following the release of the final report of the COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence Against Women and their Children in April 2016. These consultations tested and refined the priorities developed following Phase one and focused on the needs of people in priority groups including: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, people with disability, and those living in rural, remote and regional locations.

3.41 The roundtable discussions included more than 400 participants from the government and non-government sectors (the latter comprised service delivery organisations, academics and business). The discussions documented in a roundtable summary report reflects alignment between the issues and focus areas suggested by stakeholders and priorities identified in the Third Action Plan.

## The evidence base

3.42 The Third Action Plan recognises that its start marked the halfway point of the 12-year National Plan. Work completed during the First and Second Action Plans was used to inform the development of Third Action Plan priorities.<sup>32</sup>

3.43 In addition to the stakeholder consultation described in the previous section the evidence used to inform the development of actions under the priority areas of the Third Action Plan included:

---

30 This process was endorsed at the meeting of Women's Safety Ministers held on 7 August 2015.

31 Government consultations occurring over this timeframe included those undertaken by the COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence Against Women and their Children, the Victorian Royal Commission, the Queensland Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence and the Commonwealth of Australia Senate Inquiry into Domestic Violence.

32 The purposes and expectations listed for the Third Action Plan in the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022: Evaluation Plan*, include: the delivery of solid and continuing progress; the government being able to draw on greater community awareness and support; and long-term initiatives delivering results.

- recommendations of the final report from the COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence Against Women and their Children;
- evidence emerging from recent reviews, including the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland, the Commonwealth of Australia Senate Inquiry into Domestic Violence and the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence;
- interim findings of the evaluation of the Second Action Plan; and
- findings from the review of DV-alert (see description of DV-alert at paragraph 1.19).

3.44 In late 2015 the department prepared a discussion paper for ImpEG to provide a snapshot of current information and efforts to address violence against women and their children. The paper drew out available evidence from National Surveys, ANROWS research and findings from government inquiries against each of the National Plan outcomes.

3.45 In March 2016 ImpEG proposed 32 actions for inclusion in the Third Action Plan. These 32 actions were mapped, as relevant, to the National Plan outcomes, recommendations of the COAG Advisory Panel and Senate Inquiry<sup>33</sup>, selected research reports and prior discussion held at ImpEG meetings. Of the 36 Key Actions agreed for inclusion in the final Third Action Plan, 22 can be directly linked to proposals from ImpEG. The remaining 14 Key Actions (related primarily to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, perpetrator interventions and domestic violence frontline services) are aligned with stakeholder feedback and findings from the evaluation of the Second Action Plan and review of DV-alert.

3.46 The COAG Advisory Panel's *Final Report on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children* (released in April 2016) recommended six areas for action, with 28 associated recommendations. The Third Action Plan priority areas and actions are aligned with the Advisory Panel's areas for action and several of its recommendations. Table 3.4 documents the Advisory Panel's areas of action and examples of Third Action Plan actions.

**Table 3.4: COAG Advisory Panel areas of action and Third Action Plan actions**

Advisory panel areas of action	Examples of Third Action Plan actions <sup>a</sup>
National leadership is needed to challenge gender inequality and transform community attitudes	Drive nationwide change in the culture, behaviours and attitudes that lead to violence against women and their children
Women who experience violence should be empowered to make informed choices	Strengthen safe and appropriate accommodation options and supports for women and their children escaping violence, including specialist women's services
Children and young people should also be recognised as victims of violence against women	Identify and address service gaps and build capacity of specialist and mainstream service providers to recognise and respond to the impacts of violence on children

33 Commonwealth of Australia Senate Finance and Public Administration Reference Committee: Domestic violence in Australia, 2016

Advisory panel areas of action	Examples of Third Action Plan actions <sup>a</sup>
Perpetrators should be held to account for their actions and supported to change	Improve targeted perpetrator interventions, including police, courts, corrections, child protection, legal services and support, behaviour change programs, offender programs and clinical services
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities require trauma-informed responses to violence	Establish community-driven, trauma informed supports that give choice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children who have experienced domestic, family or sexual violence
Integrated responses are needed to keep women and their children safe	Develop and implement national principles for risk assessment for victims and perpetrators of violence, based on evidence, including the risks that are present for children and other family members who experience or are exposed to violence

Note a: The ANAO selected these examples from actions identified in the Third Action Plan, available at <https://www.dss.gov.au/women/programs-services/reducing-violence/third-action-plan> [accessed 28 March 2019].

Source: Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *COAG Advisory Panel on Reducing Violence against Women and their Children — Final Report*, PM&C, 2016; Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Social Services, *Third Action Plan 2016–2019 of the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against women and their Children 2010–2022*, DSS, 2016.

## Evaluation

3.47 The department's evaluation plan for the National Plan notes that the purpose of the three-year implementation cycle for the National Plan is so that the department 'can review the strategies and actions once they are implemented and design future efforts to be as effective as possible.'<sup>34</sup>

3.48 The evaluation of the Second Action Plan was completed in April 2016.<sup>35</sup> That report identified nine areas of focus, where policy could be strengthened and government action could be focused under the Third Action Plan, to achieve greater progress against the outcomes of the National Plan. The department proposed progressing eight<sup>36</sup> of these actions through the Third Action Plan. This proposal was noted by the Minister in August 2016.

3.49 The eight areas of focus identified in the Second Action Plan evaluation and progressed as actions under the Third Action Plan are:

- maintaining the momentum around raised community awareness of the issue of violence against women and children and encouraging community, government, businesses and sporting organisations to continue working together;

34 Health Outcomes International, *Evaluation Plan — National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2014, p. 5.

35 The final report was submitted to the Minister for Social Services in August 2016 due to the intervening caretaker period. In September 2016, ImpEG representatives requested that the report be updated given the amount of time that had passed since it was finalised. The final report was publicly released in March 2017.

36 The department did not progress 'considering the introduction of quality standards to complement the outcomes standards for perpetrator intervention programs' noting in their brief ongoing work to develop and implement relevant performance indicators to measure the National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions.



- ensuring that specialist and/or tailored services are available for women with special needs who experience violence for example Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with a disability, and women from culturally diverse backgrounds;
- promoting greater gender equality through programs that emphasise female leadership and empowerment, particularly in high risk groups such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and culturally and linguistically diverse communities;
- ensuring that the social media engagement strategies for The Line and Our Watch maximise contact with the public, particularly with regard to integrating social media assets;
- continuing to incorporate respectful relationships education into the school curriculum;
- continuing efforts to improve information sharing across sectors in particular between the courts, police and service providers including the national system for domestic and family violence apprehended violence orders;
- considering the future development of policy and programs that focus on addressing the particular needs of women and their children who have been exposed to sexual violence; and
- continuing to refine the evidence base to establish a base line against which success of future Action Plans can be considered.

3.50 Further information about the department's evaluation activities are discussed from paragraph 4.31.

### **Actions taken to inform the development of the Fourth Action Plan**

3.51 The development process for the Fourth Action Plan is similar to the development process for the Third Action Plan, consisting of consultation with key stakeholders; examination of the existing evidence base; and evaluations of previous Action Plans.

3.52 Stakeholder engagement for the development of the Fourth Action Plan includes government and non-government entities. Key themes and findings from these consultations were shared at the COAG Summit in October 2018. A series of short reports summarising the content of these discussions is publicly available on the department's website.<sup>37</sup>

3.53 Evidence drawn on during the development of the Fourth Action Plan is summarised in the Fourth Action Plan (2019–22) Background and Evidence Paper which is publicly available on the department's website.<sup>38</sup> The department advised the ANAO that this paper will continue to be updated as it responds to feedback from the sector.

3.54 The department has engaged a consultant to evaluate the Third Action Plan. This evaluation is due to be completed in August 2019. It is anticipated that preliminary results from this evaluation will inform development of the Fourth Action Plan although the report will not be finalised until after the commencement of the Fourth Action Plan in July 2019.

37 <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/the-national-plan/the-fourth-action-plan-2019-2022/> [accessed 24 January 2019].

38 <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/the-national-plan/the-fourth-action-plan-2019-2022/> [accessed 24 January 2019].

## Is funding under the Third Action Plan aligned to the key priorities?

Funding provided by the Commonwealth and administered by the department is aligned to the key priorities agreed and endorsed by all governments for the Third Action Plan. An implementation plan for the Third Action Plan was not completed, reducing the transparency around what actions governments have committed to and accountability in meeting those commitments.

### Commonwealth funding under the Third Action Plan

3.55 The Commonwealth has committed \$723<sup>39</sup> million over the life of the National Plan to date, including the Women's Safety Package initiative. The breakdown of funding against the years of each Action Plan is:

- \$87.3 million, 2010–13 (First Action Plan);
- \$102.6 million, 2013–16 (Second Action Plan);
- \$103.9 million, 2016–19 (Third Action Plan);
- \$328 million, announced for Fourth Action Plan 5 March 2019; and
- \$101.2 million, Women's Safety Package, announced in 2015.

3.56 A breakdown of the \$103.9 million committed under the Third Action Plan is at Table 3.5 and shows the funding was allocated across four departments with the Department of Social Services allocated \$44.4 million.

**Table 3.5: Responsibility for Commonwealth funding under the Third Action Plan**

Department responsible	Total funding \$m	Funding breakdown
Prevention and early intervention (Department of Social Services)	19.4	<p>\$5.8m to empower women to identify violence and develop a workforce agenda.</p> <p>\$4.6m to develop prevention strategies for diverse communities and local governments.</p> <p>\$3.3m for resources to support bystanders to reinforce positive attitudes where safe to do so.</p> <p>\$5.7m to reach out to men and fathers.</p>
Frontline services (Department of Social Services)	15.3	<p>\$5.8m for 1800RESPECT.</p> <p>\$4.2m for a housing innovation fund to provide safe accommodation for women.</p> <p>\$5.3m to fund new approaches for innovative service delivery for vulnerable women.</p>

39 This figure differs from the figure of \$840 million that accompanied the Government's announcement of the Fourth Action funding. The department advised the ANAO that \$840 million figure is over a different time period and includes some additional activity on women's safety as the Women's Economic Safety Package. See [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/03\\_2019/our-investment-womens-safety-5-march-2019.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/03_2019/our-investment-womens-safety-5-march-2019.pdf) [accessed 2 April 2019].

Department responsible	Total funding \$m	Funding breakdown
Technologically facilitated abuse (Departments of Social Services and Communications)	7.8	\$4.8m to develop an online complaints portal. (Department of Communications). \$3m to respond to the impact of pornography on young people. (Department of Social Services).
Data and research (Department of Social Services)	6.7	\$1.5m to identify gaps and impediments to information collection and sharing. \$5.2m to strengthen research and data collection on diverse forms of violence.
Family Law (Attorney-General's Department)	29.7	\$18.5m to fund frontline family violence services in family law court registries. \$6.3m for Family Relationship Centres to deliver dispute resolution services to vulnerable families. \$4.9m extension of women's safety package legal assistance pilots.
Indigenous (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet)	25.0	\$18.5m to pilot and test innovative services to reduce Indigenous and domestic violence. \$6.5m for Indigenous victim services (increase capacity of family violence prevention legal services).
<b>Total</b>	<b>103.9</b>	

Source: Department of Social Services documentation.

### Allocation of grant funding under the Third Action Plan

3.57 The department administers its funding (which includes Third Action Plan allocations, continuation of commitments made under previous action plans and funding through the Women's Safety Package) through contracts and grants to the National Plan partners and to other recipients including government entities, academic institutions and non-government service providers.

3.58 The department's total expenditure on grants over the life of the National Plan to date is around \$275 million. The majority of this funding (74 per cent) has gone to National Plan partner organisations for core National Plan activities such as, establishing the National Centre of Excellence, operating the Stop it at the Start Campaign and providing additional training to frontline workers through DV-alert.

3.59 Grants funding has also been provided to National Plan partners and other government and non-government organisations for projects specifically aligned to the priorities of the Third Action Plan and Women's Safety Package. The Third Action Plan contains 36 Key Actions under the six Priority Areas, with an additional 70 sub-actions underneath these. As noted in paragraph 1.8, each jurisdiction determines what actions they commit to. The department's funding for projects and initiatives is targeted to 28 of the total 106 key actions and sub-actions identified in the Third Action Plan and covers multiple projects including: revenge pornography; bystander behaviour; engaging men as new parents; and support for people with disabilities.

3.60 The department has provided around \$32.1 million in grants funding (to March 2019) to Third Action Plan projects. A breakdown of the grants funding over the National Plan to date and Third Action Plan is at Table 3.6.

**Table 3.6: Departmental funding to grant recipients<sup>a</sup>**

Grant Recipient	Total Grants funding over National Plan 2009–18	Total grants funding to Third Action Plan projects
Total funding to National Plan partners	\$202.7 million 74% of total grants funding	\$21.5 million 67% of Third Action Plan grants funding
– Medibank Health Solutions (1800RESPECT)	\$95.2m	\$10.6m
– ANROWS	\$27.9m <sup>b</sup>	\$0.88m
– Lifeline (DV-Alert)	\$44.9m	\$1.5m
– Our Watch Limited	\$30.6m	\$7.8m
– White Ribbon Australia	\$4.1m	\$0.73m
Other grant recipients	\$72.6m	\$10.6m
<b>Total departmental funding for National Plan related grants</b>	<b>\$275.3 million</b>	<b>\$32.1 million</b>

Note a: At a high-level this funding includes all National Plan expenditure from 2009, Women's Safety Package expenditure, additional budget measures and funding to National Partners through the Special Account.

Note b: ANROWS receives half of their core funding from the states and territories. The figure provided includes state funding (held in a Special Account). The total also includes additional funding provided for discreet projects.

Source: Department of Social Services documentation.

3.61 Under the Third Action Plan the department has run grant rounds to provide multiple recipients with funding to identify and test approaches across jurisdictions. For example, the department has awarded eight grants under the *Safer Pathways for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Women* initiative. Each of the grant recipients delivers services designed to help CALD women living in regional areas experiencing, or at risk of, family and domestic violence or sexual assault. The funding is intended to enable these existing services to identify ways to work with other services, community organisations and government agencies to meet their clients' needs.

3.62 To improve the evidence base, the department has also provided a grant to ANROWS so that ANROWS can support these services to share and collect information and to draw up the learnings into a report. The results from the projects are published on ANROWS's website.<sup>40</sup>

## Implementation planning

3.63 Under the National Plan, a new national implementation plan was to be developed for each three year action plan to reflect changing and emerging priorities for the National Plan over time.

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.anrows.org.au/research-program/action-research-support-0>

3.64 A National Implementation Plan, developed for the First Action Plan, was released in September 2012. Neither the Second nor Third Action Plan has been supported by a separate national implementation plan.

3.65 The majority of actions in the Third Action Plan do not specify which jurisdiction is responsible for implementing the identified actions. The absence of a supporting implementation plan for the Third Action Plan means that there is a lack of transparency and accountability about which jurisdictions intend to take responsibility for the implementation of each of the 106 actions identified in the plan and when the actions will be delivered.

3.66 A national implementation plan could:

- demonstrate the funding priorities and project commitments of each government;
- provide transparency over links between jurisdictional plans and the National Plan;
- provide a framework for the department to determine what complimentary services to fund through grant rounds; and
- provide a framework for monitoring and reporting against anticipated outcomes.

## Recommendation no.2

3.67 The Department of Social Services, in consultation across governments, develop a National Implementation Plan for the Fourth Action Plan.

**Department of Social Services response:** *Agreed.*

3.68 *The Fourth Action Plan will include a National Plan Implementation Plan. The National Implementation Plan is being developed with consultation across governments.*

## 4. Performance monitoring and evaluation

### Areas examined

This chapter examines the effectiveness of monitoring, evaluation and reporting arrangements established to assess the outcomes and achievements of the National Plan to date. This assessment is focused on whether: appropriate performance metrics are in place; progress is sufficiently tracked and evaluated; and outcomes are being reported.

### Conclusion

Performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting is not sufficient to provide assurance that governments are on track to achieve the National Plan's overarching target and outcomes.

In order to assess and demonstrate the achievements of the National Plan as a whole, the department will need to develop new measures of success and data sources, plan for evaluations beyond the National Partner initiatives and improve public transparency.

### Areas for improvement

The ANAO made three recommendations aimed at improving transparency and accountability around the achievement of the National Plan outcomes.

### Have appropriate metrics been established to assess performance against outcomes?

Some metrics to assess performance against outcomes were established at the outset of the National Plan, except these currently measure limited aspects of each outcome. During development of the Fourth Action Plan and any future National Plan there is opportunity for the department to consider developing short- and medium-term outcomes, new measures of success and more frequent data collection mechanisms. Without such changes the ability for jurisdictions to demonstrate the success of the National Plan will be limited.

### National outcomes, measures of success and data sources

4.1 As noted in chapter one, governments set a vision for the National Plan, that 'Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities'. To measure the success of this vision, Commonwealth, state and territory governments set a target for 'a significant and sustained reduction in violence against women over the 12 years from 2010 to 2022'<sup>41</sup> and agreed to work towards six National Outcomes. The expected outcomes rely on long-term change that may not be fully achieved by the 2022 completion date of the National Plan.

4.2 To assess progress against the achievement of the National Outcomes, governments agreed to seven measures of success (one for each of five outcomes and two for Outcome 3) (see Table 4.1).

<sup>41</sup> *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2011, p. 10.

**Table 4.1: National Outcomes, measures of success and data sources**

Outcomes	Measures of success	Data sources
1. Communities are safe and free from violence	Increased intolerance of violence against women	National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey
2. Relationships are respectful	Improved knowledge, skills and behaviour of respectful relationships by young people	National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey
3. Indigenous communities are strengthened	Reduced proportion of Indigenous women consider family violence, assault and sexual assault are community and neighbourhood problems	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Surveys
	Increased proportions of Indigenous women are able to have their say within community on important issues including violence	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Surveys
4. Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence	Increased access to and responsiveness of services for victims of domestic/family violence and sexual assault	Personal Safety Survey
5. Justice responses are effective	Increased rates of women reporting domestic violence and sexual assault to police	Personal Safety Survey
6. Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account	A decrease in repeated partner victimisation	Personal Safety Survey

Source: National Plan Action Plans.

4.3 The National Plan identified that these measures of success would initially be monitored using three national surveys:

- The Personal Safety Survey (PSS) — collects self-report data from people aged 18 years and older, every four years, about the nature and extent of violence experienced since the age of 15 and within the last 12 months;
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) — collects self-report data from adults and children/young people, every six years, on the socio-economic circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; and
- National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) — collects self-report data, every four years, from people aged 16 years and older about their knowledge and attitudes toward violence against women.

## *Assessment of National Plan measures of success and data sources*

4.4 Each measure of success provides relevant information against the National Outcome it is designed to measure, except this information is limited in scope. For example:

- Outcome 1 is that 'Communities are safe and free from violence', although the single related measure of success is limited to 'increased intolerance of violence' and does not consider actual levels of violence or broader community safety.
- Outcome 2 is that 'Relationships are respectful', although the single measure of success is limited to young people without considering other demographics.

4.5 There is also scope to improve the data sources used to measure current National Outcomes. For example, the measures of success 'Improved knowledge, skills and behaviour of respectful relationships by young people', which relates to Outcome 2, cannot be measured using the current listed data source. The NCAS allows for an assessment of knowledge or awareness of violence against women but cannot assess whether young people are demonstrating improved skills and behaviour. Data from recent Our Watch *The Line* campaign evaluations (which target attitudinal change in young people) could be used to complement the NCAS survey results.

4.6 The data source for the measure of success 'Increased access to and responsiveness of services for victims of domestic/family violence and sexual assault', which relates to Outcome 4 is able to identify whether women have sought advice or support after an incident of sexual or physical assault and the source of that advice (for example, police, refuge, medical practitioner). This data source does not directly measure the access to or responsiveness of those services.

4.7 Stakeholders consulted during the Department of Social Services' (the department) evaluation of the Second Action Plan also identified a need for improvements to the measures of success and data sources. Specifically they noted:

- significant concern around the lack of performance indicators for the National Plan;
- concern about the consistency and completeness of the data used;
- that current indicators do not adequately account for all cohorts of women at risk of violence or adequately account for all forms of violence that women and their children could be exposed to; and
- indicators should measure the reduction in violence against women and their children and the progression against the National Outcomes.

4.8 Under the National Plan it was expected that 'as data collection improves and is more consistent new sources of data [would] become available.'<sup>42</sup> To date, no new measures of success or data sources have been agreed by governments. In addition, no outcomes or measures of success have been established for each three-year action plan that sits under the National Plan. The data sources currently used are surveys run every four or six years. Additional annual administrative data sources are available and could be used to complement these survey results, such as Australian Bureau of Statistics collections on Recorded Crime — Victims and Recorded Crime — Offenders.

---

42 Council of Australian Governments, *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*, p 34.



4.9 Overall, the absence of short- and medium-term outcomes, measures of success and more frequent data collection makes it difficult for jurisdictions to assess the success of each action plan and the contribution each made towards achieving the National Plan Outcomes.

### Recommendation no.3

4.10 The Department of Social Services identify and develop new measures of success, data sources and specific outcomes for the Fourth Action Plan, and any future National Plan.

**Department of Social Services response:** *Agreed.*

4.11 *The development process for the Fourth Action Plan has identified options for measures of success, data sources and specific outcomes. Development of measures, data and outcomes are dependent on the final content of the Fourth Action Plan and will be finalised once parameters of the Action Plan are agreed between governments through the Council of Australian Governments.*

### Annual Performance Statements

4.12 Section 39 of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* requires entities to prepare annual performance statements for inclusion in their annual reports. These performance statements report the extent to which entities have fulfilled their purpose(s) and Outcomes as articulated in their corporate plans and Portfolio Budget Statements. These documents identify that the department delivers the National Plan as part of:

- Outcome 2 — Contribute to stronger and more resilient individuals, families and communities by providing targeted services and initiatives.
- Program 2.1 — Families and Communities — To strengthen relationships, support families, improve wellbeing of children and young people, reduce the cost of family breakdown, strengthen family and community functioning and facilitate the settlement of migrants and humanitarian entrants into the community.

4.13 Since 2016–17 the department has reported the extent of progress in implementing the National Plan as one of several intermediate outcome measures against Outcome 2, as shown in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2: National Plan Performance Statement Reporting**

Intermediate outcome performance measure	2016–2017	2017–2018
Cross program		
Extent of progress in implementing the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022	Result: met	Result: met

Source: Department of Social Services Annual Report 2017–18, p 53.

4.14 The department's Annual Performance Statement also includes output reporting for 1800RESPECT. The output performance measure is the number of contacts answered by 1800RESPECT.

**Table 4.3: 1800RESPECT Performance Statement Reporting <sup>a</sup>**

Output performance measure	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18
Number of contacts answered by 1800RESPECT — the National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service (telephone and online)	59,578	68,772	98,466

Note a: Data from 2016–18 is not comparable with 2015–16 and previous years. The department advised the ANAO that the 1800RESPECT first response triage model was introduced on 16 August 2016. This resulted in new data collection protocols. There is also an increase in the number of telephone and online contacts answered, with an additional number of people able to receive support since the introduction of the first response triage model.

Source: Department of Social Services Annual Report 2017–18, p 60.

4.15 Reporting the extent of progress in implementing the National Plan in annual reports as being ‘met’ is only meaningful with some metric to assess it against (for example, timeframes for specific actions). The department advised the ANAO that ‘met’ indicates that the department has expended the appropriated funding, not that the National Plan is meeting its objective or that progress is being made towards individual outcomes.

### Are appropriate arrangements in place to monitor and evaluate the achievement of outcomes?

Appropriate administrative arrangements are in place to monitor progress against the Australian Government’s commitments under the National Plan’s action plans, including initiatives delivered by National Plan partners. These arrangements include monitoring project status and deliverables agreed in activity work plans.

Evaluations or reviews of National Partner initiatives and of the Second and Third Action Plans have been completed or are planned, but do not sufficiently focus on assessing the achievement of outcomes. The Third Action Plan evaluation methodology proposes assessing the contribution of this plan to the National Plan outcomes, but without robust data, is unlikely to achieve this purpose.

The quality of data and assessment of the impacts of actions undertaken across jurisdictions need to be improved to support outcome-focused action plan evaluations. Without these improvements, the overall achievements of the National Plan will not be able to be fully assessed.

### Monitoring

4.16 The Department of Social Services is the lead Australian Government entity responsible for monitoring implementation of the National Plan. As noted in chapter three (see paragraphs 3.63–3.66), neither an implementation plan for the National Plan as a whole, nor for Commonwealth activities under the Third Action Plan have been developed. This means there is an absence of clear deliverables and timeframes to work towards to assist in achieving the expected outcomes.

4.17 A risk management plan for the delivery of the National Plan as a whole has not been developed. A risk management plan for the Third Action Plan was developed in 2017 and notes

current controls as effective, and therefore no further treatments are required. The department advised the ANAO that an update to this plan is underway.

4.18 In the absence of implementation plan against which progress could be monitored, monitoring focuses on the national initiatives delivered by National Partners and progress of projects funded by the Australian Government under the key actions identified in the Third Action Plan.

4.19 Monitoring activities include the oversight provided by the Implementation Executive Group (ImpEG) and program governance groups/committees described in chapter two (see paragraphs 2.6–2.10 and 2.22) as well as direct oversight of funding agreements entered into by the department.

### *Monitoring of national initiatives*

4.20 As noted in chapters one and two of this report, the Commonwealth has established or supports five national initiatives under the National Plan. These national initiatives are 1800RESPECT, Australia's National Research Organisation of Women's Safety (ANROWS), DV-Alert, Our Watch, and White Ribbon.

4.21 The department has appropriate monitoring arrangements in place to oversee Commonwealth-funded campaigns and projects delivered by these partners. These arrangements include mechanisms embedded in funding agreements and Australian Government membership on two National Partner boards (see paragraph 2.21).

4.22 Arrangements for the delivery of the national initiatives are specified contractually in funding agreements and schedules to those agreements related to specific projects. The terms set out in these agreements include the development of activity work plans (AWPs), reporting requirements and timeframes.

4.23 The information specified in each AWP follows a prescribed template that includes fields to specify:

- the requirements of the activity, which provides a description of the project/activity and any expectations of the department (for example, that an activity engages a particular cohort);
- deliverables (listing the objectives/components of the activity, timeframes and any measures of success);
- risks and related mitigation strategies;
- budget (against each deliverable); and
- stakeholders involved in the project, how they will be engaged and desired outcomes from that engagement.

4.24 The deliverables specified within the AWPs differ depending on the budget, complexity, timeframe and identified project risks. For example, some AWPs reviewed by the ANAO included requirements to submit detailed research reports, strategic approach documents, creative proposals, and implementation plans. Submission of these items is required before a campaign goes 'live' or a project commences. For example, Our Watch was funded to develop an Indigenous-specific resource to sit alongside *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence*. The AWP required a consultation and dissemination strategy to be approved by the

department. Following approval of these strategies and completion of other milestones the *Change the Story (Indigenous Companion Guide)* was launched.<sup>43</sup>

4.25 Funding agreements also specify reporting requirements which vary by project and may include both qualitative and quantitative measures. For example, DV-Alert progress reports highlight performance against factors such as the number of training sessions provided, number of participants and category of training, as well as providing feedback from participants.

4.26 The frequency of reporting reflected the nature of the activities — for example, projects are required to provide progress reports across their duration and a final report at closure. Initiatives that deliver services may be required to report more regularly — for example, 1800RESPECT is required to report on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, and six-monthly basis as it is funded based on the number of calls answered. The frequency of this reporting gives visibility to the department over call volume and response rates.

4.27 The reporting and AWP specifications form the basis on which the department monitors implementation of individual projects. In addition to documentary evidence, including funding agreements, AWP's and performance/progress reports, evidence of oversight by the department included dashboard reporting, providing input into plans and participation in meetings and teleconferences.

#### *Other monitoring activities*

4.28 The department's monitoring arrangements for other projects funded by the Australian Government under the key actions of Third Action Plan are similar to those undertaken with the National Partners, including requirements to develop AWP's.

4.29 All grant recipients are also required to complete a departmental Service Stocktake 6 Month Report. These reports require the main contact for the grant to confirm that the conditions in the agreement have been met, attach the AWP, and identify whether any circumstances have changed that may impact on delivery of the service. The report template also allows respondents to attach information on service delivery successes or challenges.

4.30 The department has developed and maintains a Project Compendium and a Provider Compendium for departmental Senior Executives. These compendiums, updated quarterly, provide details of suppliers and programs funded or managed by the department under the Third Action Plan and projects funded under the Women's Safety Package. Entries include the location of funded programs/suppliers, the current activities undertaken, achievements, performance, timeframes for completion and issues, as relevant.

### **Evaluation**

4.31 The National Plan specifies that an evaluation will be conducted for ministers at the conclusion of each three year action plan and submitted to COAG for information. The National Plan further specifies that, as part of this evaluation:

---

43 This Indigenous Companion Guide is called *Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children*, available from <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/ab55d7a6-8c07-45ac-a80f-dbb9e593cbf6/Changing-the-picture-AA-3.pdf.aspx?ext=.pdf> [accessed 2 January 2019].

generic indicators and measures of success will be analysed, as well as progress against each of the actions ... [and] will also monitor the success of the National Plan in achieving the six specific national outcomes.<sup>44</sup>

4.32 The National Plan also states that ‘at the end of the 12 years there will be a final report which reviews achievements over the life of the National Plan and sets future policy directions as required’.<sup>45</sup>

4.33 An Evaluation Plan was agreed by Commonwealth, state and territory ministers with responsibility for women’s safety and was released in June 2014, coinciding with the release of the Second Action Plan.<sup>46</sup>

4.34 The evaluation plan states the purpose of evaluating the National Plan is to determine its effectiveness as an overarching policy on an ongoing basis, to inform the focus of future directions of the National Plan and remain responsive to emerging priorities.<sup>47</sup> The National Plan also emphasises the important role of evaluation, stating that monitoring and reporting progress against the National Plan is vital to ensure there is real progress towards reducing violence against women and their children.<sup>48</sup>

4.35 The evaluation plan sets out four activities that will be used to measure the effectiveness of the National Plan every three years and at the end of the National Plan’s 12-year lifespan:

- reviews of three-yearly Action Plans — to reflect on the success of the previous Action Plan and inform the development of the next Action Plan (see from paragraph 4.38);
- evaluation of national activities, for example initiatives undertaken by National Plan partners;
- underpinning evaluation activities — including additional analysis of newly available data (data improvement projects are discussed in chapter 3 from paragraph 3.4); and
- annual progress reporting — intended as a key accountability and communication activity under the National Plan (see from paragraph 4.51).<sup>49</sup>

4.36 The evaluation plan also identifies the domains against which progress and effectiveness of the National Plan will be measured. These domains include the measures of success, indicators of change and foundations for change described in Table 1.1 and process in relation to governance depicted in Figure 4.1.

---

44 *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2011, p. 34.

45 *ibid.*

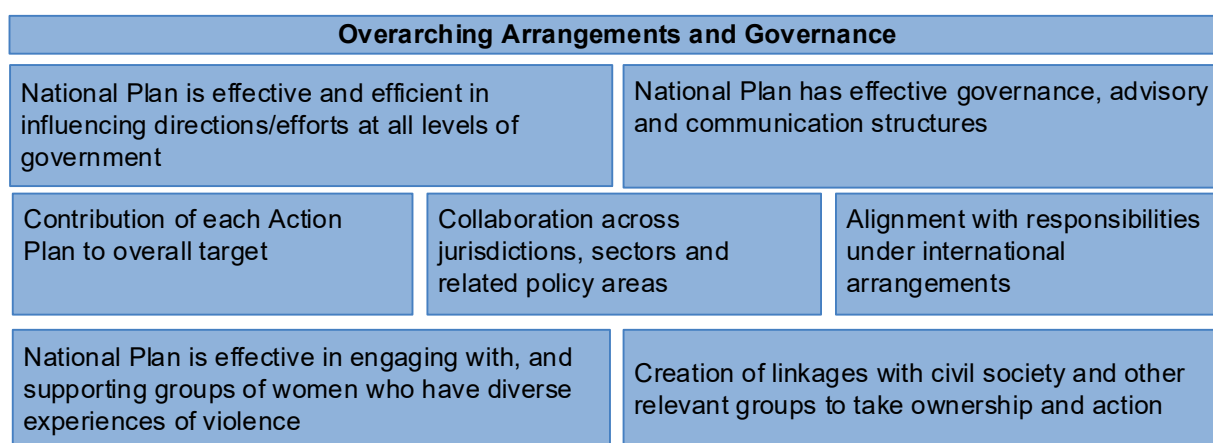
46 Health Outcomes International, *Evaluation Plan — National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2014.

47 Health Outcomes International, *Evaluation Plan — National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2014, p 2.

48 *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children 2010–2022*, 2011, p. 33.

49 Health Outcomes International, *Evaluation Plan — National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2014, p 2.

**Figure 4.1: Evaluation Domain — Governance**



Source: *Health Outcomes International, Evaluation Plan — National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2014, p. 11.

4.37 The evaluation activities undertaken by the department are a mixture of reviews and evaluation, with the terms often used interchangeably. There are many types of evaluation and each type serves a different purpose that is best suited to certain types of enquiry. Broadly evaluation types can be characterised as:

- process — assesses program or policy design, implementation and delivery and looks at how it is working in practice;
- outcome — assesses the extent to which a program or policy is having its intended effect;
- economic — assesses the cost effectiveness or value for money of a program; and
- impact — assesses the extent to which a program has had a longer-term effect.

#### *Evaluations of three-yearly Action Plans*

4.38 An evaluation of the First Action Plan was not conducted. A progress review, analysing progress made by governments to implement the First Action Plan was provided to COAG in May 2014.

4.39 The department engaged KPMG in November 2015 to conduct the evaluation of the Second Action Plan. The final report was published in 2017<sup>50</sup> and is available on the department's website.<sup>51</sup>

4.40 The evaluation methodology involved:

- analysis of the impact or effectiveness of the Second Action Plan priorities and actions based primarily on stakeholder views;
- review of the usefulness and appropriateness of the evidence base; and
- assessment of the contribution of the Second Action Plan to achieving the higher level outcomes in the National Plan.

<sup>50</sup> See footnote 35.

<sup>51</sup> KPMG, *Evaluation of the Second Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2017 <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/resources/research/> [accessed 25 Jan 2019]

4.41 In practice the evaluation was:

largely process based...focusing on progress against the 26 actions outlined in the Second Action Plan. This [was] primarily due to the lack of an evidence base upon which the impact or effectiveness of particular programs or interventions [could] be assessed.<sup>52</sup>

4.42 Overall the evaluation found that most of the priorities and actions had been implemented as intended across jurisdictions and the priority and action areas were considered to be having a positive impact by stakeholders. Areas that could be improved are documented in this report from paragraph 3.49.

4.43 The department commissioned the Australian Institute of Family Studies in December 2018 to conduct the evaluation of the Third Action Plan. The final report is expected to be submitted to the department in August 2019. The statement of work indicates that the objective of the evaluation is to conduct a process evaluation of the implementation of the Third Action Plan, including its priority areas and individual actions. The process evaluation approach adopted by the department may assess program or policy design, implementation and delivery but may not assess the achievement of outcomes.

4.44 The approach to the evaluation also includes assessing the contribution of the Third Action Plan to the National Plan's four 'indicators of change' and seven 'measures of success'. The current lack of available data and evidence about the effectiveness of programs or interventions undertaken means there is likely to be limited information to support an assessment of the Third Action Plan's contribution to the National Plan.

#### Recommendation no.4

4.45 The Department of Social Services work with the states and territories to plan evaluations of individual services and programs funded across jurisdictions under action plans to inform an outcome evaluation of the Fourth Action Plan and overall National Plan.

**Department of Social Services response:** *Agreed.*

4.46 *An outcome evaluation of the National Plan, incorporating the Fourth Action Plan, is a commitment within the Fourth Action Plan. The Department of Social Services will work with states and territories to incorporate funded services and programs in the evaluation.*

#### *Evaluation of national activities*

4.47 Under the Evaluation Plan at least four national or cross-jurisdictional activities were to be evaluated. To date several evaluations have been completed, including:

- White Ribbon workplace accreditation program (May 2014)
- Respectful Relationships Evaluation (22 July 2014)
- White Ribbon Diversity Program (June 2016)
- Our Watch the Line campaign (July 2017)
- DV-alert — stage 1 (January 2018)

<sup>52</sup> KPMG, *Evaluation of the Second Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2017, p. 1.

- DV-alert (August 2018)

4.48 The department finalised reviews of ANROWS in May 2016 and 1800RESPECT in 2013. Reviews are distinct from evaluations as they are generally a shorter sharper enquiry with a narrower scope than evaluation. Regular monitoring of the 1800RESPECT service identified that call volume had increased by an average of 60 per cent per year, with forecast demand continually growing. In 2015 the department contracted KPMG to review the service's operating model. Options were presented in a final report to the department in February 2016 and a new operating model was introduced in October 2016. An evaluation of 1800RESEPECT commenced in September 2018. This evaluation will include an assessment of the new operating model.

## Does the Department of Social Services report the extent to which outcomes are being achieved?

Overall, Annual Progress Reports do not provide a sufficient level of information for public transparency and accountability. The department does not publicly report on the extent to which outcomes of the National Plan are being achieved, with the exception of the draft 2017–18 report (yet to be released). Limited internal reporting of outcomes is undertaken and is focused on disseminating results from the two National Surveys undertaken every four years.

4.49 At the start of the National Plan Governments agreed that overall reporting on the National Plan's effectiveness would be done at the conclusion of the Fourth Action Plan and include analysis of generic indicators and measures of success as well as progress against each of the actions. Until 2022 governments are expected to report progress by:

- monitoring the four high-level indicators of change (see Table 1.1);
- monitoring measures of success for each of the six National Outcomes (see Table 1.1); and
- drawing together each action plan's evaluation in a final report on the National Plan's achievements.<sup>53</sup>

4.50 In successive action plans governments have committed to working together to publicly release annual reports on progress under the action plans. Under the Third Action Plan the department was also expected to release quarterly eNewsletters and a Third Action Plan Implementation Report (TAPIR).

### *Annual Progress Reports*

4.51 Annual Progress Reports are the key mechanism used to communicate progress on the National Plan to the public, and feed into both monitoring and evaluation activities. Progress reports up to 2016–17<sup>54</sup> have been publicly released by the department. The 2016–17 Annual Report was not released until November 2018. The 2017–18 report has been drafted and is pending approval for release.

<sup>53</sup> *National Implementation Plan for the First Action Plan 2010–2013*, 2012, p. 34.

<sup>54</sup> These reports are a 2010–12 report submitted to COAG in 2013, and annual reports for 2014–15 through 2016–17.



4.52 The department has not publicly reported against the measures of success or indicators of change.<sup>55</sup> In the draft 2017–18 report the department provides an assessment of progress against each of the indicators and measures of success. The department's dedicated National Plan webpage<sup>56</sup> also contains links to relevant data and government websites, including survey results, but does not indicate how these data relate to the outcomes expected from the National Plan.

4.53 The department prepared a dashboard report for an ImpEG meeting in 2018 that provided data against each of these indicators. It has also reported results from the Personal Safety Survey and National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey to its Minister. Data on the indicators of change and National Outcomes measures of success are at Appendix 4.

4.54 The Evaluation Plan states that Annual Progress Reports will be 'a key mechanism for governments to share key learnings, discuss barriers to implementation, identify gaps and emerging issues and make necessary amendments to activities as required.'<sup>57</sup> With the exception of the 2010–12 progress report to COAG, annual reports have not included discussion of key learnings or emerging issues.

4.55 The bulk of the content included in the National Plan Annual Progress Reports, including the draft 2017–18 report is descriptions of some of the projects being undertaken across jurisdictions (such as the Workplace Equality and Respect Program in Victoria and Ceduna Building Resilience project in South Australia) and do not include results or outcomes achieved. The projects and initiatives are noted against the priority areas of the Action Plans but are not linked to specific actions from the Action Plan. Each jurisdiction is responsible for preparing and clearing its content.

#### *Other Third Action Plan reporting*

4.56 A quarterly National Plan e-newsletter was in place until 2017, which provided highlights of achievements and actions of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and major partners. The department advised the ANAO that it stopped producing this newsletter, due to low readership and high resource requirements in gathering information across all jurisdictions.

4.57 One of the purposes of the e-newsletter was to raise awareness of upcoming events and activities as part of the National Plan. The department made changes to its website in 2018 to include a section on latest news and links to reports, Action Plans, information about national partners and jurisdictional websites.

4.58 A Third Action Plan Implementation Report (TAPIR) was identified by the department, as the mechanism for all jurisdictions to report on progress against actions during the Third Action Plan. It was intended that the TAPIR would provide transparency and accountability in tracking the progress of work against actions, and enable the sharing of information and knowledge among jurisdictions. The Implementation Executive Group (ImpEG) agreed that TAPIR reporting would be completed

55 The 2016–17 Annual Progress Report contains national and state/territory data from the Personal Safety Survey on the proportion of women who experienced physical, sexual and partner violence, and total violence during the last 12 months. The graphic does not make it clear whether these categories are mutually exclusive, nor whether this measure of incidence is meant to indicate progress against the high-level indicators of change 'reduced prevalence of domestic and sexual violence.'

56 See <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/resources/research/> [accessed 17/01/2019].

57 Health Outcomes International, *Evaluation Plan — National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022*, 2014, p. 18.

every three months by the Commonwealth and every six months by state and territory governments.

4.59 The TAPIR report was produced once for ImpEG in May 2017. The department advised the ANAO that due to high resource requirements in gathering information across all jurisdictions, this report was ceased. During the Third Action Plan the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has produced a High Profile Initiatives report, provided to relevant ministers, which documents the current status, implementation progress, outcomes (where known) and funding for key actions undertaken across jurisdictions.

4.60 Overall, reporting does not provide a sufficient level of information for public transparency and accountability.

### Recommendation no.5

4.61 That public annual progress reports for the Fourth Action Plan document the status of each action item and the outcomes of the National Plan as a whole.

**Department of Social Services response:** *Agreed.*

4.62 *Consistent with the most recent 2017–18 Annual Progress Report, the Department of Social Services will continue to report on the extent to which outcomes are being achieved, and will ensure that future reporting comprehensively covers the status of each action item and the outcomes of the National Plan as a whole.*

---



Grant Hehir  
Auditor-General

Canberra ACT  
13 June 2019

## **Appendices**

## Appendix 1 Entity responses



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Social Services**

**Kathryn Campbell AO CSC**  
**Secretary**

Ref: EC19-001564

Mr Grant Hehir  
Auditor-General of Australia  
Australian National Audit Office  
19 National Circuit  
BARTON ACT 2600

Dear Mr Hehir

**Response to Extract from the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) Proposed Audit Report on coordination and targeting of domestic violence funding and actions**

Thank you for providing the Department of Social Services (the department) with the opportunity to comment on the ANAO proposed report on the coordination and targeting of domestic violence funding and actions.

I agree with the five recommendations. The department's work to implement these recommendations is already underway. The report's insights will help strengthen the final development phase and subsequent implementation of the Fourth Action Plan of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan). Action plans available on the department's website have, and will continue to guide implementation. Continuing to improve performance measurement is a key focus of the governance arrangements for the Fourth Action Plan.

A short response to the report as requested is at **Attachment A**. Also provided is a response to each of the recommendations. If you would like further information on the department's response, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Lisa Foreman, Group Manager, Families, on (02) 6146 5017, or by email at [lisa.foreman@dss.gov.au](mailto:lisa.foreman@dss.gov.au).

Yours sincerely

  
29 May 2019

# ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH  
ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY

*to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children*

Auditor-General, Mr Grant Hehir  
Australian National Audit Office  
GPO Box 707  
Canberra ACT 2601

Dear Mr Hehir

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Australian National Audit Office report with reference to Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Limited (ANROWS: formerly the National Centre of Excellence to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children). I take this opportunity to provide context and to advise of developments since stakeholder feedback was gathered in external and internal reviews conducted in 2015-16 and 2017.

ANROWS's activities in the period 2013-2016 were necessarily focused on producing the National Research Agenda to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, then contracting and managing external research grants to achieve Goal 1 of its Strategic Plan: *Deliver high quality, innovative and relevant research*. In mid-2016, as ANROWS's focus extended to include the translation of evidence to policy and practice, a knowledge translation and exchange (KTE) directorate was established. The KTE directorate provides dedicated skills and capacity to fully implement strategies under Goal 2: *Ensure the effective dissemination and application of research evidence*.

Since October 2014, when its inaugural program of research was launched, ANROWS has delivered 31 research projects responding to all six national outcomes of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*. ANROWS has published a full Research Report from each of these projects, and produced more than 120 additional resources, such as Research to Policy and Practice Papers, practice guides, infographics, webinars and factsheets. ANROWS has constructively impacted policy and practice regarding (for example) trauma-informed systems of care in health settings; collaborative practice between practitioners in specialist community-based domestic and family violence support services and statutory child protection organisations; perpetrator interventions; tertiary responses to respond effectively to the needs of women with disabilities; and place-based strategies owned and managed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In 2019, respondents to the ANROWS Stakeholder Survey (total n=307) reported that ANROWS publications and resources:

- are current and address emerging issues;
- are relevant and applicable to practice;
- address key cohorts (such as culturally and linguistically diverse women and children), and issues (such as sexual assault);

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety Limited  
PO Box Q389, Queen Victoria Building, NSW, 1230  
ABN 67 162 349 171  
Phone +61 2 8374 4000 [anrows.org.au](http://anrows.org.au)

## ANROWS

- are clear and easy to read; and are
- reliable, trusted, credible and authoritative.

Further, 90% (n=284) agreed or strongly agreed that ANROWS research was relevant to their work, and 74% (n=252) said they had applied evidence produced by ANROWS in their violence against women policy or practice work.

The resources available through the KTE directorate have also enabled the redevelopment of the ANROWS website, incorporating a highly functional search facility and streamlined navigation bar. The redevelopment has enabled increased efficiency in accessing specific items from a large volume of material. All reports and resources produced by ANROWS are available for free download.

ANROWS looks forward to discussions with the Department of Social Services regarding the impending review to be conducted after three years of the current grant period, and negotiating further funding agreements that reflect the expectations of the Commonwealth, states and territories.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Heather Nancarrow**  
Chief Executive Officer

6 May 2019

## Appendix 2     Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, 2017 grants priority areas

#	Priority area
1	Improved understanding of the prevalence and impacts of violence against women, especially women from marginalised or small-population communities, based on existing data (i.e. additional analysis of existing data sets).
2	The prevalence and characteristics of violence against older women.
3	Effective service provision in rural, regional and remote areas, including technology assisted support services.
4	The nature of, and best responses to, the interaction between mental illness and women's vulnerability to violence, potentially including the nature of the relationship between symptoms and coping strategies (e.g., self-harm, drug and alcohol use) and exposure to violence.
5	The nature, and distinct characteristics of, violence against women in diverse and/or disadvantaged communities.
6	The nature of the relationship between gambling and domestic violence, including the role of gambling in economic abuse and the use of gambling venues as "safe spaces" for women experiencing violence.
7	The impact of women's reduced material resources (including both housing and economic insecurity) on women's vulnerability to, and experiences of, violence.
8	The relationship between, and impact on, violence against women and their children and child rearing. This might include attention to issues such as child abuse in the context of domestic violence, corporal punishment, impact of violence on the parent-child relationship, parenting by perpetrators, adolescent violence in the home, resilience after violence and the nature of cumulative harm.
9	The relationship between sexual assault and domestic and family violence. This might include intimate partner sexual violence, co-occurrence and/or re-victimisation across the life course.
10	The experiences, effects and impacts of violence experienced by women in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) communities.
11	Women's experiences of sexual assault, including its effects and impacts on women with specific demographic characteristics and/or vulnerabilities.
12	The prevalence and nature of violence experienced by children and adolescents; with a particular focus on female teenagers, very young children and/or post-separation violence including violence that occurs in the context of child contact.
13	Links between violence against women and the effects and impacts of physical and sexual violence in the family (including sibling violence) on children and adolescents; including long term victimisation and perpetration outcomes.
14	The extent and nature of the effects of violence against women on women's physical and psychological well-being.
15	The experiences, effects and impacts of violence experienced by women who are, or who have been, incarcerated.

#	Priority area
16	The effectiveness of initiatives aimed at changing attitudes towards violence against women, including social norms related to the sexual objectification of women, and the early sexualisation of children, which contribute both directly and indirectly to sexualised violence.
17	The effectiveness of prevention and early intervention activities targeted at people with disabilities.
18	Design, evaluation and monitoring of scale-up programs that enable successful prevention programs to transfer from one setting to another and/or use of targeted prevention strategies for new population groups.
19	Effective early intervention initiatives, with a focus on building on existing resources and research and/or groups that may slip through mainstream services (e.g. women who have experienced sexual assault, women assessed as currently in 'low risk' situations, women who are in an ongoing relationship with the perpetrator, or women with disabilities).
20	Service access and effectiveness of interventions for women who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault and are part of lesbian, gay, bisexual transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) communities.
21	Effective service responses to women with disability, with a focus on prevention of domestic violence and/or sexual assault and on victims who do not access mainstream services.
22	Effective interventions to support women and children experiencing violence through non-violence-specific service delivery (e.g. social work services, housing services including private rental, alcohol and other drug services, primary care, maternity services and immigration services).
23	Embedding cultural security and cultural competency into mainstream services.
24	Identification of effective legal processes that allow for full participation of, and access to justice for, individuals with additional communication needs.
25	Identification of criminal justice processes that are sensitive and enable just outcomes for victims of sexual assault and/or domestic and family violence who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex women.
26	Evaluation of best practice policing, with a sensitivity to command structures, specific requirements in rural and remote areas, variation in response between stations/local area commands, and the appropriate protocols for the use of interpreters.
27	The extent, characteristics and impact of perpetrators of domestic and family violence and/or sexual assault self-representing at court and cross-examining their victim. This may include, for example, attention to criminal courts, other courts in state and territory jurisdictions and Family Court.
28	The nature of, and possible responses to, structural, process and attitudinal impediments to access to justice for women with a disability, with a focus on court accessibility and/or psychiatric conditions.
29	The impact of a domestic and family violence perpetrator's professional status, for example as a police officer or lawyer, on the ability for a victim to access criminal justice and legal systems.
30	Analysis of the extent, nature and characteristics of attrition in sexual assault cases; including broad mapping of attrition patterns and/or detailed analysis of case characteristics and legal processes.



#	Priority area
31	Analysis of the complexities of domestic and family violence investigations in remote and rural areas, with a focus on innovative responses.
32	Assessment of the impact of court processes and initiatives that support accurate assessments of the dynamics of domestic and family violence in specific cases and, ultimately, holding perpetrators to account.
33	Effective integrated services, with a focus on medium and long term interventions and the scale up of programs for broader use; for example 'Safe at Home' programs and Victoria's Individual Flexible Packages.

Source: *ANROWS Research Priorities Grants Round — December 2016.*

## Appendix 3 Research projects<sup>a</sup> funded by the Department of Social Services under the Third Action Plan

Type of research	Description	Funding \$m
Surveys	National Surveys: Personal Safety Survey and National Community Attitudes Survey; Additional projects to help increase knowledge of family and domestic violence and sexual assaults through survey data.	16.16
Perpetrator	ANROWS has been funded \$3 million for a perpetrator research stream, 12 research projects have been funded to date. AIHW has been funded to develop indicators and data specifications for the National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions (NOSPI) as well as to report against these indicators for three years. Four projects have been funded under a perpetrator package aimed to identify and address systemic gaps in the delivery of perpetrator services. The aim of this package is to design, trial and evaluate innovative models of perpetrator interventions across community and correctional settings to understand what works in different groups.	4.87
National Risk Assessment principles	ANROWS has been funded to develop National Risk Assessment Principles for services working with people who are victims or perpetrators of family, domestic and sexual violence.	0.10
Specific Population research	Funding for research to better understand the needs of specific population groups including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Culturally, and linguistically diverse women, women with disability and children.	5.13
Action research	ANROWS has been funded to work with community groups and local governments to use action research in their work and to assist these organisations to design, implement and share the findings of their action research projects and to collect information during the life of a project to help to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities and share findings and lessons learned.	1.36
Capacity Building	Capacity building trials have been funded which aim develop resources to support workers providing specialist services including services for children and parents as well as front line staff working with women who have experienced Family and Domestic Violence.	1.88
Other	Other projects such as: an audit of approaches used as part of the Keeping Women Safe at Home measure; a randomised controlled trial that aims to test the feasibility and effectiveness primary care clinicians to enquire about family violence; and research into identifying the circumstances in which it is appropriate to work towards family reunification where there is a history of domestic violence.	1.23
<b>Total</b>		<b>30.73</b>

Note a: This table does not include ANROWS core funding to operate the 2014 and 2016 research grants rounds, data projects funded to operationalise the Data Collection and Reporting Framework or funding provided by the department to evaluate 1800RESPECT and the Third Action Plan.

Source: ANAO analysis of Department of Social Services documentation.

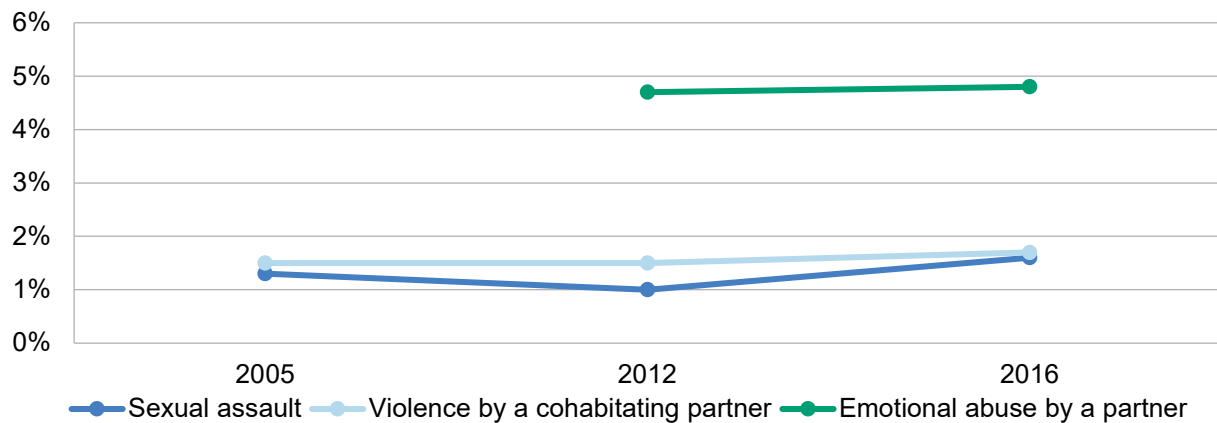
## Appendix 4 Data on National Plan indicators of change and measures of success

1. All data in this Appendix was obtained from publicly available sources. It reflects the most current data available from the source covering the years of the National Plan, including baseline figures where available.

### Indicators of change

*Indicator of change 1: Reduced prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault*

**Figure A.1: Proportion of women who experienced sexual assault, violence by a cohabitating partner and emotional abuse by a partner in the last 12 months, 2005<sup>a</sup>, 2012, 2016**

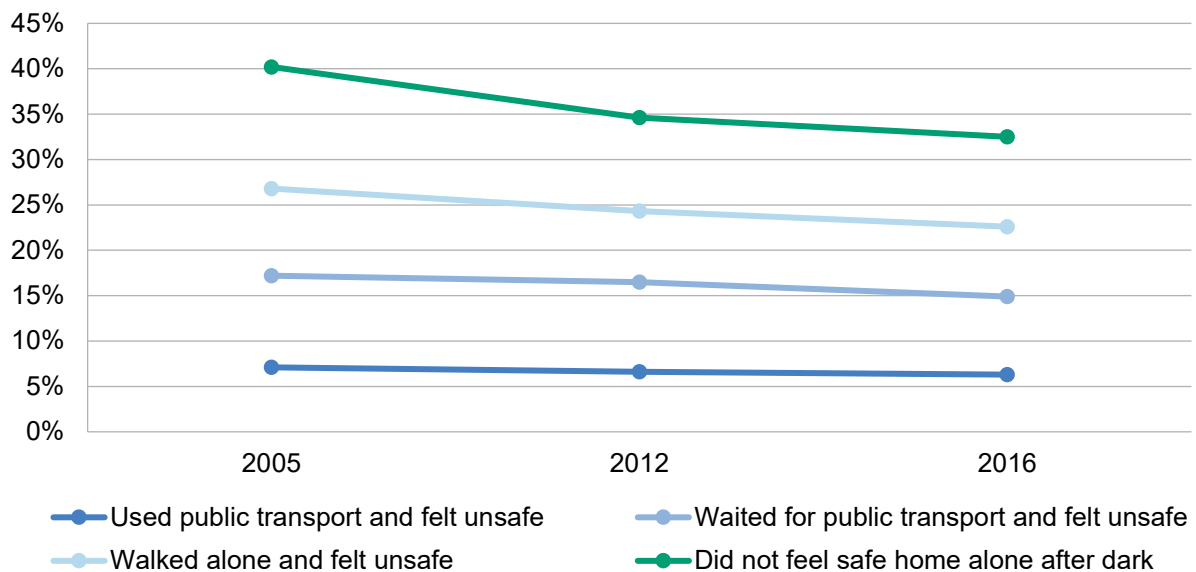


Note a: Data on emotional abuse by a partner was not collected in the 2005 survey.

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Personal Safety Survey 2016*, cat. No. 4906.0, ABS, Canberra, 2017.

*Indicator of change 2: Increased proportion of women who feel safe in their communities*

**Figure A.2: Women's feelings of safety in the last 12 months in selected situations, proportion felt unsafe**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Personal Safety Survey 2016*, cat. No. 4906.0, ABS, Canberra, 2017.

*Indicator of change 3: Reduced deaths related to domestic violence and sexual assault*

2. Data on deaths related to sexual assault is not currently reported.

**Table A.1: Domestic homicides in Australia 2008–09 to 2013–14<sup>a</sup>**

	2008–09 to 2009–10		2010–11 to 2011–12		2012–13 to 2013–14	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Intimate partner	89	33	83	26	99	27
All other domestic	27	42	38	49	39	48
Total domestic homicide	116	75	121	75	138	75

Note a: Domestic homicides include deaths where the victim and offender were in an intimate partner relationship (current or former) and other family relationships such as parent/child, sibling, etc.

Source: Australian Institute of Criminology National Homicide Monitoring Program reports, [www.aic.gov.au](http://www.aic.gov.au) [accessed 4 April 2019].

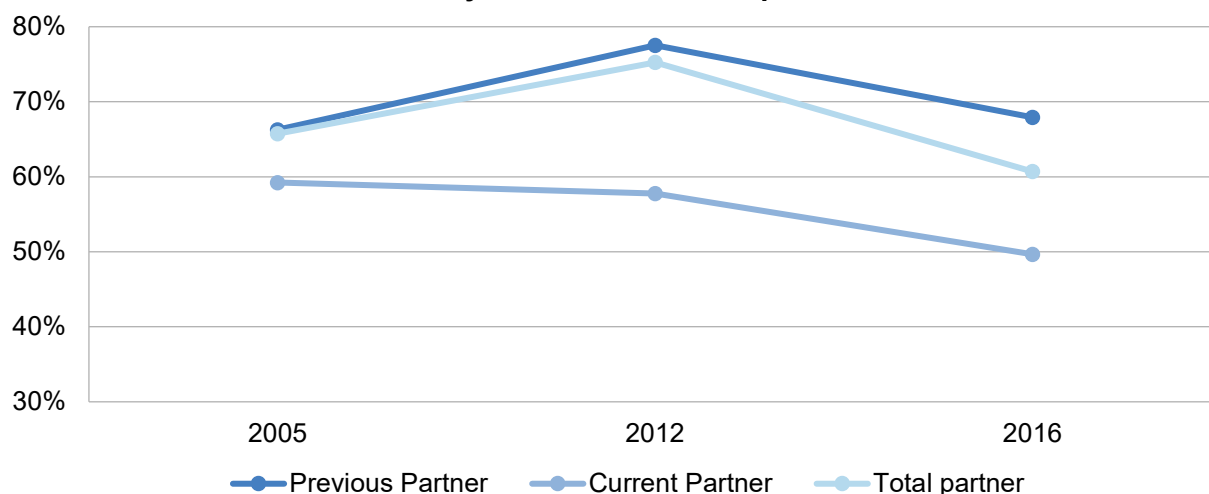
**Table A.2: Victims of family and domestic violence murders 2015–2017**

	2014	2015	2016	2017
Female	59	62	52	43
Male	36	32	43	32
Total victims	95	94	95	75

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Recorded Crime — Victims, cat. No. 4510.0, ABS, Canberra, 2018.

*Indicator of change 4: Reduced proportion of children exposed to their mother's or carer's experience of domestic violence*

**Figure A.3: Proportion of children exposed to their mother's or carer's experience of domestic violence by current and former partners, 2005, 2012, 2016**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Personal Safety Survey 2016*, cat. No. 4906.0, ABS, Canberra, 2017.

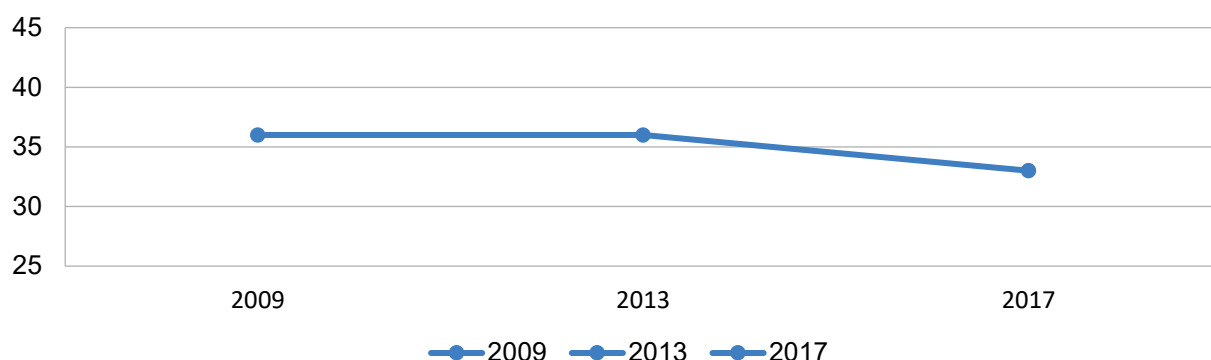
**National Outcome measures of success**

3. No data has been provided for measure of success 2 'Improved knowledge, skills and behaviour of respectful relationships by young people' as only knowledge is currently measured (see also paragraph 4.5). No data has been provided for measure of success 5 'Increased access

to and responsiveness of services for victims of domestic/family violence and sexual assault' as the data source only provides a proxy for this measure (see also paragraph 4.6).

*Measure of success 1: Increased intolerance of violence against women*

**Figure A.4: Changes in attitudinal support for violence against women over time, 2009, 2013, 2017<sup>a</sup>**

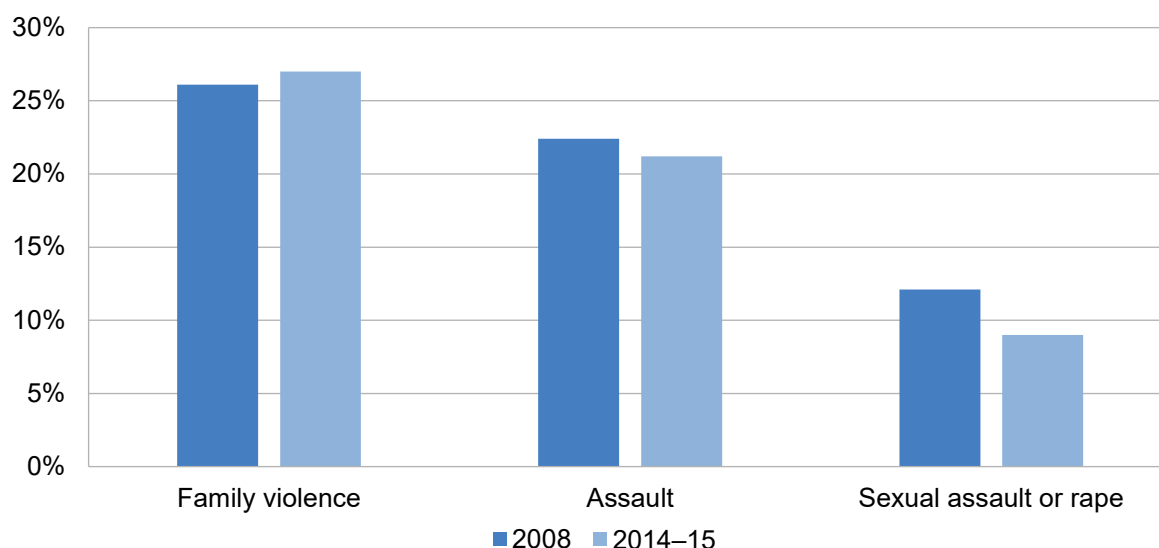


Note a: Change is measured using the Changes in Attitudinal Support for Violence Against Women Score (CASVAWS), a composite measure (drawn for relevant questions in the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey), designed to measure the overall concept of condoning violence against women.

Source: 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety.

*Measure of success 3: Reduction in the proportion of Indigenous women who consider family violence, assault and sexual assault are problems for their communities and neighbourhoods*

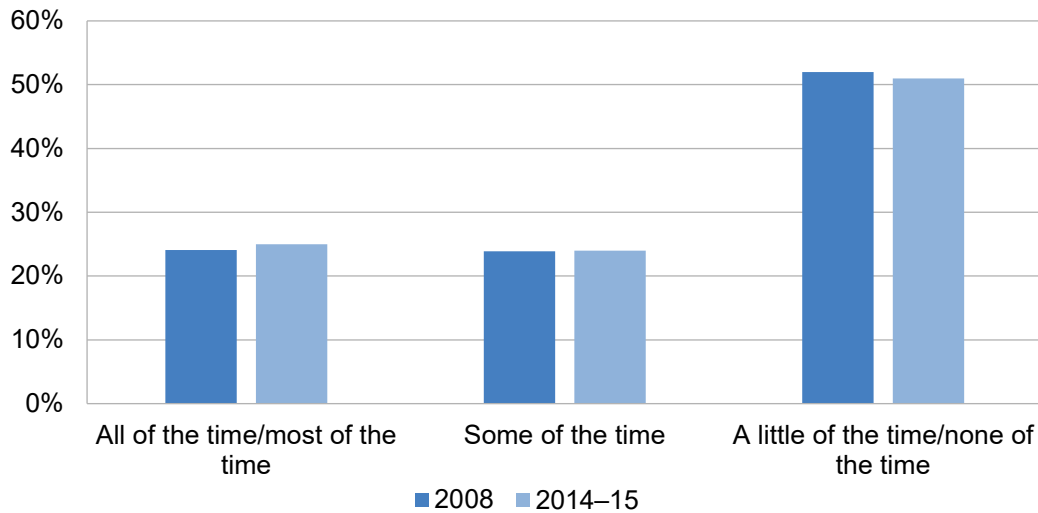
**Figure A.5: Proportion of Indigenous women who consider family violence, assault and sexual assault are community and neighbourhood problems**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2008 and 2014-15, cat. No. 4714.0, ABS, Canberra.

*Measure of success 4: Increased proportion of Indigenous women who are able to have their say within the community on important issues including violence*

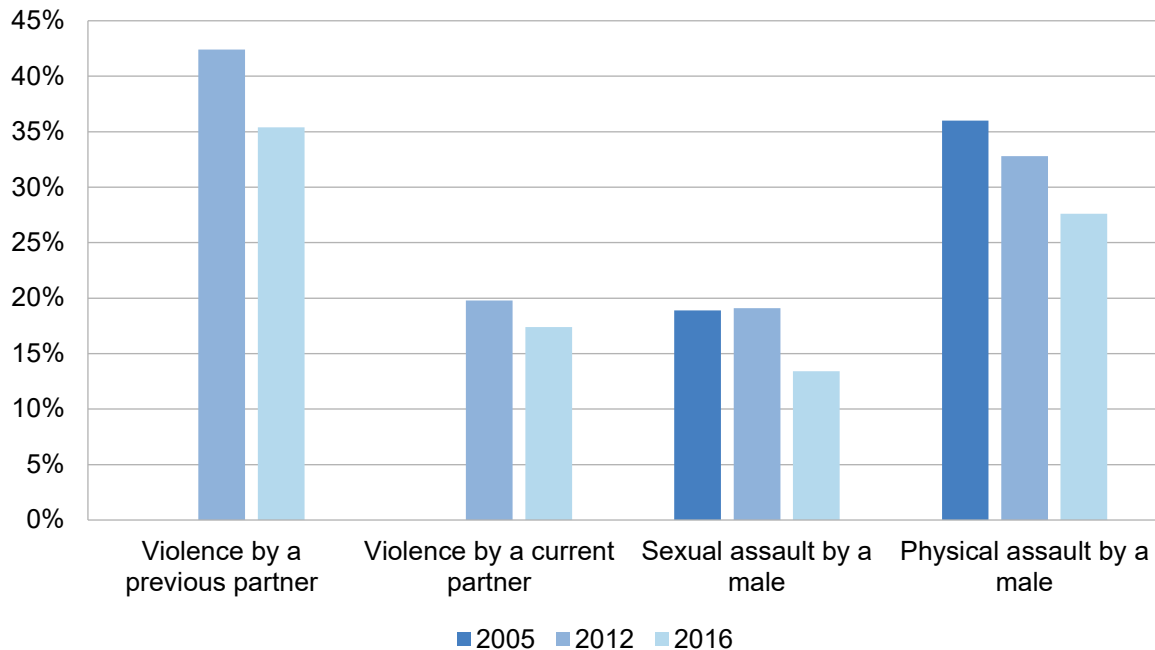
**Figure A.6: Proportion of Indigenous women who are able to have their say within the community on important issues including violence**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2008 and 2014–15, cat. No. 4714.0, ABS, Canberra.

*Measure of success 6: Increased rates of women reporting domestic violence and sexual assault to police*

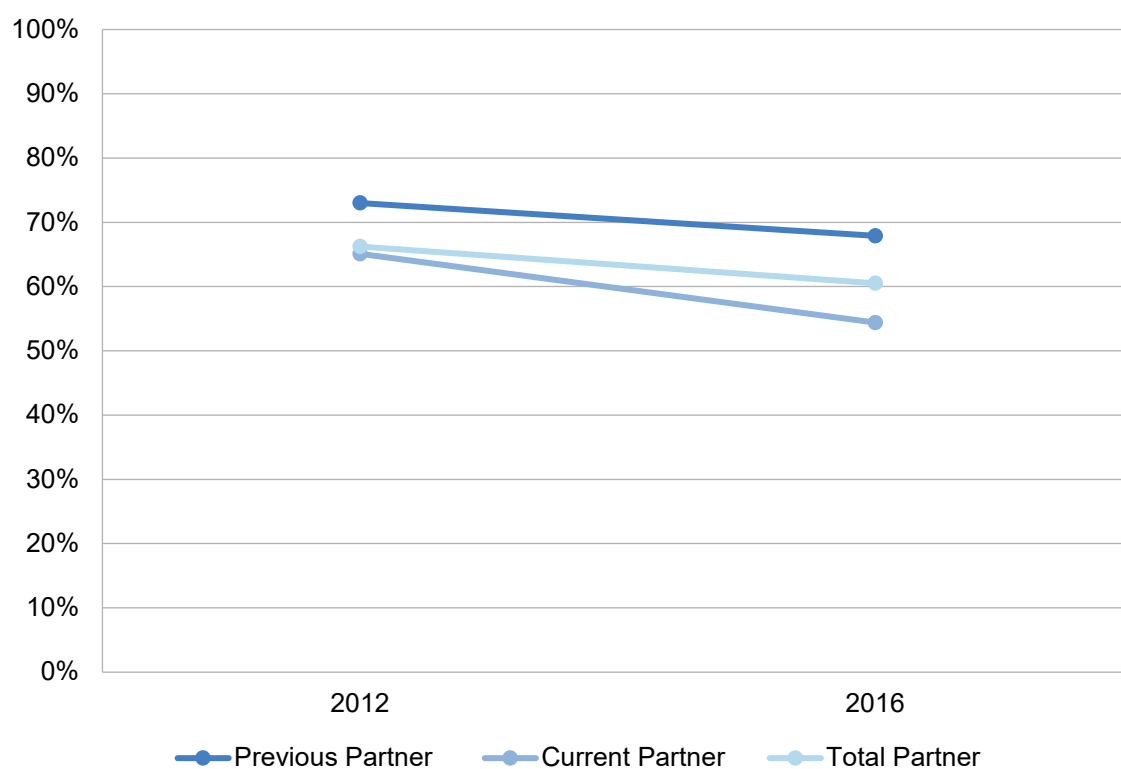
**Figure A.7: Proportion of women who contacted police about violence by a partner and sexual assault, 2005, 2012, 2016**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Personal Safety Survey 2016, cat. No. 4906.0, ABS, Canberra, 2017.

*Measure of success 7: A decrease in repeated partner victimisation*

**Figure A.8: Proportion of women who experienced more than one incident of violence by a current or former partner in the last 12 months, 2012, 2016**



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Personal Safety Survey 2016*, cat. No. 4906.0, ABS, Canberra, 2017.