



IT STOPS HERE

Standing together to end domestic and family violence in NSW
The NSW Government's Domestic and Family Violence Framework for Reform



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Abbreviations

AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
BOCSAR	Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CRP	Central Referral Point
DAGJ	Department of Attorney General and Justice
DFV	Domestic and family violence
DVJS	Domestic Violence Justice Strategy
FACS	Department of Family and Community Services
LCP	Local Coordination Point
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer
PRIT	Police Risk Identification Tool
RIT	Risk Identification Tool
SAM	Safety Action Meeting
TAFE NSW SWSi	TAFE NSW South Western Sydney Institute
WDVCAS	Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service

Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to present *It Stops Here* - the NSW Government's Domestic and Family Violence Framework for Reform. These reforms are about addressing one of the most troubling issues facing our community today: the prevalence of domestic and family violence. Domestic and family violence affects a staggering number of people across NSW every year. It leaves long-lasting negative effects on an individual's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Its estimated cost to the NSW economy alone is \$4.5 billion annually. The costs to the vulnerable individuals experiencing violence are immeasurable.

The 2011 Auditor General's *Report Responding to Domestic and Family Violence* made it clear that we need to change the way we respond to domestic and family violence to ensure that victims can quickly and safely access a range of services and get the support they need to recover. The reforms detailed in the framework do exactly this: they set a new direction for addressing domestic and family violence in NSW.

At the heart of these reforms is the victim's perspective. Through the introduction of new referral pathways, services will swiftly and efficiently wrap around the victim in a coordinated way. Service providers will be able to use new tools specifically designed to assess domestic and family violence risk of harm, and through increased sharing of essential information between services we are able to improve the safety of victims and reduce the stress and trauma of victims having to repeat their story of violence.

However, it is not enough to simply focus on the consequences of violence – we will also implement measures to prevent domestic and family violence from happening in the first place, and to support perpetrators to stop using violence.

All too often, domestic and family violence is labelled as a women's issue. It isn't – it's a whole of community issue that requires a whole of government response. I would like to thank my colleagues in the Domestic and Family Violence Ministerial Group, the Attorney General, the Minister for Police and Emergency Services, the Minister for Health and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs for making this whole of government approach to domestic and family violence possible. These reforms are a testament to the NSW Government's continued commitment to break the cycle of disadvantage.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to all those community organisations and individuals that provided input into the development of these reforms. Through sharing your expertise and experiences we can be sure that these reforms will deliver a better future not only for victims of violence, but for the communities of NSW.

It Stops Here is the NSW Government's commitment to making our communities safe and free from domestic and family violence. I look forward to a better future for everyone affected by the trauma of domestic and family violence.

Pru Goward MP

Minister for Family and Community Services
Minister for Women

Introduction

Every year, too many people in NSW experience violence at the hands of someone they know and trust: a husband, partner, family member or relative. In our cities and in rural areas, domestic and family violence (DFV) is ruining lives. The NSW Government's Domestic and Family Violence Framework for Reform, *It Stops Here*, delivers strategies that put the victim at the centre of the system so they can get the services and support they need.

It Stops Here is our response to the very clear need to ensure the safety of victims and their children is paramount, by strengthening our approach to violence prevention; changing the way we deliver services and support to victims of violence; and delivering programs and services that hold perpetrators accountable and reduce re-offending.

Over a year-long process, we have consulted with hundreds of individuals, groups and agencies across the state through meetings, stakeholder forums and a web-based public consultation process. We have drawn on experts with experience in working with victims and perpetrators of violence, and preventing and responding to domestic and family violence. We have learned from them and examined strategies that have worked in other Australian states and internationally. We have also been informed by inquiries including the NSW Auditor General's report, *Responding to Domestic and Family Violence* (2011), and the *Inquiry into Domestic Violence Trends and Issues in NSW* (2012) conducted by the NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues.

This document is the result of those communications and consultations. It outlines how we aim to deliver on our commitment to reduce domestic and family violence and support victims.

The overall outcomes of the DFV Framework for Reform (the Framework) are that:

1. domestic and family violence is prevented
2. domestic and family violence is identified early
3. victims are safe and supported to recover
4. perpetrators stop using violence
5. a supported, professional and effective sector is developed

These outcomes will be achieved through five priority elements:

Element 1: a strategic approach to prevention and early intervention

Element 2: streamlined referral pathways to secure victims' safety and recovery

Element 3: accessible, flexible, person-centred service responses that make the best use of resources



Element 4: a strong, skilled and capable workforce

Element 5: a strengthened criminal justice system response

Each 'element' is supported by a series of key strategies. This document explains *why* we have chosen these strategies, *what* they aim to achieve, and *how* we will implement them.

While the Framework recognises that the protection of victims and their families is of the utmost importance, it notes that domestic and family violence will not be eliminated unless perpetrators are held accountable and given opportunities to change their behaviour. Initiatives to ensure perpetrators stop using violence will be implemented at both the primary (prevention) levels and tertiary levels via the justice system.

The success of these strategies will be dependent on government working closely with a wide range of service providers, community groups, and agencies. Positive outcomes for victims will best be achieved through an integrated, whole-of-community approach to how we understand and respond to domestic and family violence. For example In an Aboriginal community context for example, positive impacts will be dependent upon the degree to which initiatives can be tailored to the specific needs of the community. Local ownership and leadership will be of paramount importance.

These strategic reforms will be monitored and evaluated over time to ensure their ongoing relevance and effectiveness. This is why it is important that the strategies are considered part of an ongoing conversation about how we prevent domestic and family violence and enable people most at risk to get support.

Figure 1: Overview of the Framework for Reform

Reduced domestic and family violence					
Domestic and family violence is prevented	Domestic and family violence is identified early	Victims are safe and supported to recover	A supported, professional and effective workforce is developed	Perpetrators stop using violence	
<p>NSW 2021 result DFV population results NSW 2021 measures</p> <p>The percentage of domestic and family violence assault incidents recorded by NSW police. The percentage of domestic and family violence assault victims recorded by police in NSW per year who were recorded as victims in another domestic and family violence assault incident in the 24 months to the end of that year</p>					
<p>DFV reform priority elements</p> <p>Element 1: A strategic approach to prevention and early intervention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exemplar projects funded based on evidence Increasing responsiveness of NSW human services to DFV through dissemination of evidence base, practice guidelines and tools Key partnerships developed across government and non-government agencies Men at risk of perpetrating violence report they are receiving effective assistance to change their behaviour through the Men's Telephone Counselling and Referral Service 	<p>Element 2: Streamlined referral pathways to secure victims' safety and support recovery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> State-wide roll-out of a Central Referral Point (CRP), Local Coordination Points (LCP) and Safety Action Meetings (SAM) Victims receive prompt, effective responses from the CRP and LCP Victims at serious threat are referred to SAMs and Safety Action Plans are developed Victims report positive experience of support received Partner agencies report improved service integration and consistency 	<p>Element 3: Accessible, flexible, person-centred service responses that make the best use of resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Credible evidence is available about DFV services and service gaps DFV Practice Guidelines are adopted by specialist and generalist services A process to realign services to meet demand and unmet need 	<p>Element 4: A strong, skilled and capable workforce</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human services workers undertake competency-based training to support the reforms and increase capacity to support DFV victims Services give positive feedback about the usefulness of training and the resources available for workers responding to DFV 	<p>Element 5: A strengthened criminal justice system response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The standards of service outlined in the Domestic Violence Justice Strategy (DVJS) are delivered for victims and perpetrators Areas of reform will be identified and undertaken to ensure effective implementation of DVJS 	
<p>DFV reform implementation priorities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fund DFV prevention research Undertake evidence-based prevention partnerships projects, grounded in social investment approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote adoption of Risk Identification Tool Establish Central Referral Mechanism Establish network of Local Coordination Points Establish Safety Action Meetings Monitor and review new arrangements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote DFV practice standards Establish an evidence base for service demand and unmet need Service realignment undertaken Establish local district DFV partnerships and planning Expand Staying Home Leaving Violence to increase service capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement the DFV Skills Strategy Develop and implement the DFV-related education and training with TAFE and other Registered Training Organisations Establish a shared sector-wide training and website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement the strategies of the DVJS for victims and perpetrators 	
<p>Domestic Violence Justice Strategy (Department of Attorney General and Justice)</p>		<p>Going Home Staying Home (Housing NSW)</p>		<p>Child protection reforms (Community Services)</p>	
				<p>OCHRE: The NSW Government Plan for Aboriginal Affairs</p>	
<p>Complementary Strategies</p>					

Overview of the Framework for Reform

Building common ground

Domestic and family violence includes behaviours that control or dominate a person, causing them to fear for their own (or someone else's) safety. It includes behaviour that controls, intimidates, terrifies or coerces a person. It includes physical, sexual, verbal, psychological, mental, and emotional abuse; stalking; harassment; financial abuse and manipulation; denial of freedom and choice; and control of access to family and friends.

No matter the circumstances, experiencing violence at the hands of a partner, family member or relative can have devastating effects on an individual's physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.

"I don't know if I will ever recover fully...I feel so unwell these days and just remembering that I was not protected is very scary...I have been offered counselling and all sorts [of services] but nothing can take this pain away yet..."
(Domestic and family violence victim)

Statistics show that domestic and family violence is the single greatest cause of death, ill health and disability for women aged under 45.ⁱ In fact, approximately three quarters of female homicides are classified as domestic homicides, involving victims who share a family or domestic relationship with the offender.ⁱⁱ

Children who witness violence in the home experience emotional trauma and they are also more likely to experience or use violence in their own future relationships.

We have a vision that communities in NSW will be safe, and will promote healthy, respectful relationships that are free of domestic and family violence. Our vision is shared by all those who have experienced it as well as those who work to ensure that individuals can live lives free from the fear of violence.

The prevalence of domestic and family violence in NSW

There are far-reaching personal, social and economic costs of domestic and family violence.

- in 2012, there were 29,900 domestic violence-related assaults recorded by the NSW Police Force.
- approximately 125,000 incidents are reported to the NSW Police Force annually, while 300,000 additional incidents are estimated to go unreported each year.
- approximately three quarters of female homicides are classified as domestic homicides, involving victims who share a family or domestic relationship with the offender.
- nearly one third of people seeking assistance from specialist homelessness services in NSW identify domestic and family violence as an issue for them.

- Aboriginal women are six times more likely to be victims of domestic and family violence than non-Aboriginal women.
- the estimated cost of domestic and family violence to the NSW economy is more than \$4.5 billion annually.¹

It Stops Here – guiding principles

To help us refocus the system through our strategies, we have established 10 guiding principles. At all stages of our reform program, when we are designing new approaches, ideas, processes, programs and services, we will refer to these principles to ensure our activities remain focused on victims and their needs.

1. the safety of victims, particularly women and their children, is paramount
2. domestic and family violence is acknowledged as a violation of human rights
3. domestic and family violence is predominately but not exclusively perpetrated by men against women and their children
4. support for victims is empowering and focused on long-term recovery
5. responses to children exposed to violence prioritise the safety and long term wellbeing of children
6. perpetrators of domestic and family violence are held to account
7. victims can choose to remain safely at home, free of violence
8. strong leadership and good governance supports government and non-government organisations to work together in an integrated, multi-agency approach
9. information sharing is consent-based wherever possible
10. services, programs and practice models are evidence-based and continuously improved through evaluation.

The importance of a shared policy definition

“We welcome efforts to establish an agreed policy definition to improve prevention, identification and intervention strategies.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

We worked together with Government Agencies and community organisations to develop a new policy definition for domestic and family violence. This definition acknowledges that women in intimate partner relationships are the group in overwhelming need, but that protection is essential for all victims. This policy definition will sit at the core of our prevention programs, our response and recovery services for victims, and our perpetrator programs.

We needed to reach a definition that was clear and simple yet addressed all the facts as we know them: that domestic and family violence is predominately perpetrated by men against women, but that men too can be victims; that domestic and family violence occurs in same sex relationships and within other family relationships; that the behaviours that constitute domestic and family violence are violations of human rights and some are crimes.

¹ NSW Auditor-General's Report, Performance Audit: Responding to domestic and family violence, November 2011

“Having a consistent definition of domestic violence also ensures that intimidator behaviour and psychological abuse can be addressed before situations become physical. Women too often don’t see their situation as domestic violence unless they have experienced physical injuries.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

It Stops Here – the definition of ‘Domestic and family violence’

Domestic and family violence includes any behaviour, in an intimate or family relationship, which is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling, causing a person to live in fear. It is usually manifested as part of a pattern of controlling or coercive behaviour.

An intimate relationship refers to people who are (or have been) in an intimate partnership whether or not the relationship involves or has involved a sexual relationship, i.e. married or engaged to be married, separated, divorced, de facto partners (whether of the same or different sex), couples promised to each other under cultural or religious tradition, or who are dating.

A family relationship has a broader definition and includes people who are related to one another through blood, marriage or de facto partnerships, adoption and fostering relationships, sibling and extended family relationships. It includes the full range of kinship ties in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) communities, extended family relationships, and constructs of family within lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer (LGBTIQ) communities. People living in the same house, people living in the same residential care facility and people reliant on care may also be considered to be in a domestic relationship if their relationship exhibits dynamics which may foster coercive and abusive behaviours.

The behaviours that may constitute domestic and family violence include:

- physical violence including physical assault or abuse
- sexual assault and other sexually abusive or coercive behaviour
- emotional or psychological abuse including verbal abuse and threats of violence
- economic abuse; for example denying a person reasonable financial autonomy or financial support
- stalking; for example harassment, intimidation or coercion of the other person’s family in order to cause fear or ongoing harassment, including through the use of electronic communication or social media
- kidnapping or deprivation of liberty, as well as unreasonably preventing the other person from making or keeping connections with her or his family or kin, friends, faith or culture
- damage to property irrespective of whether the victim owns the property
- causing injury or death to an animal irrespective of whether the victim owns the animal.

Acknowledging vulnerable groups

We know that some individuals are more vulnerable to domestic and family violence. The Australian Institute for Family Studies (AIFS), as part of the DFV Framework is undertaking a research project targeting communities at risk. The study will provide further insight into how the NSW Government should target strategies to assist these vulnerable groups. A key priority for the Framework is moving from research to undertaking prevention work in the community.

Aboriginal people experience domestic and family violence at significantly higher rates than non-Aboriginal people. Family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is often complicated by a range of factors that contribute to increased rates of violence, including historical trauma experienced by Aboriginal people, which has eroded family and social structures and created a distrust of authority. The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) and Aboriginal Affairs will continue to work with Aboriginal communities, service providers and Aboriginal peak bodies to identify how to further progress strategies that address the high rates of domestic and family violence in Aboriginal communities


Women who have a disability experience domestic and family violence at higher rates, greater severity and over longer periods than other people. Attitudes towards disability, dependence on the perpetrator for personal care, power dynamics, as well as access and opportunity to commit abuse, are all risk factors for people with a disability and impact on the person's ability to escape the violence

Women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, including newly arrived migrants and refugees face specific barriers in accessing services. These include social isolation, language and communication difficulties, financial dependence, the impact of immigration status on service eligibility, fear that they will not be able to remain in Australia if they leave a violent relationship and the influence of family and community attitudes

People who identify as LGBTIQ experience domestic and family violence at similar rates to that of the wider community but are less likely to identify the experience as abuse, report violence to the police, or seek assistance from a domestic and family violence support organisation for fear of prejudice and discrimination. Sometimes, services may not understand the needs of a LGBTIQ person or the nature of their relationship, or support workers may have preconceived ideas about the diversity of sex, sexuality, gender or family

Younger women may be less likely to identify an abusive relationship, report it to the police or approach a domestic and family violence service for support. Older women are at higher risk due to social isolation and dependence on partners and children

Pregnant women and women with children are known to face greater risk of escalating violence where it is already present in a relationship. People living in remote communities face a lack of appropriate support options while experiencing higher rates of domestic and family violence. Women with mental health and/or drug and alcohol issues are more vulnerable and face additional barriers in seeking support



Children living in a family where violence occurs are impacted psychologically and experience behavioural, health and socioeconomic impacts. This experience has a link to the intergenerational transmission of violence, including perpetration and victimisation in their adult relationships.

The DFV Framework will identify and respond to the specific needs of individuals, with an emphasis on building support around those who are particularly vulnerable or have specific or complex needs.

“[We] welcome the acknowledgement in the reforms of the need for targeted prevention and service system responses to particular groups within our community. There is significant evidence that some communities may be more vulnerable because they are less likely to seek help, identify domestic violence in their relationships, or have a perception that their needs might not be met by mainstream services, or dealt with sensitively and in confidence.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

The It Stops Here Framework: a journey of reform

Developing the Framework for Reform

“The proposed reforms have great potential to radically improve the experiences of and outcomes for victims.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

It Stops Here puts the NSW Government on the front foot in responding to violence. It has been informed by many inputs: including existing evidence, agency experience, the wisdom of service providers and, most importantly, the views of the women who have experienced violence.

We have been fortunate to have as an input the findings of two reviews of the domestic and family violence service system in NSW. The reviews were conducted by the NSW Auditor Generalⁱⁱⁱ and the NSW Parliament’s Standing Committee on Social Issues.^{iv} Both reviews made a range of findings including that:

- agencies trying to work together to prevent and respond to domestic and family violence are doing so without a common framework for their activities, and without common goals or objectives
- organisations do not identify or assess risk in a common way – which means that victims of violence can fall through gaps between the agencies
- there are significant barriers to sharing information between agencies which must be addressed if we are to help people stay safe from violence
- there are few programs that seek to change behaviour in perpetrators.

The findings generated significant discussion about the best approaches to more effectively prevent domestic and family violence, the most appropriate responses to perpetrators of violence and the most effective ways to reform the system to improve experiences for victims of violence. We worked closely with stakeholders and non-government partners to develop a strategic program that would link to the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Children 2010-2022* and deliver more positive outcomes for victims of violence.

We worked with representatives from a range of communities and agencies including from CALD and Aboriginal organisations to develop a consultation paper which was released for public consultation in June 2013. The consultation document can be found at www.women.nsw.gov.au.

Listening to feedback

“The proposed reforms should work to ensure the safety of victims of domestic violence in NSW through the implementation of a more integrated, efficient and accountable system. The current response to domestic violence in NSW is not well-integrated and as a consequence is not efficient and allows for some victims to ‘fall through the cracks’.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

Through the public consultation process we received more than 200 responses, which gave us more than 700 pages of feedback on the reform proposals. The responses fell into seven categories:

1. **The DFV Reforms** - the responses to the reforms in general were positive, dependent on how the reforms would be implemented. Responses also raised the need for adequate funding, our consultation approaches, the definition of domestic and family violence, and whether underlying issues were being adequately addressed.
2. **Prevention** - the responses noted the importance of early education, counselling, role models, and the media.
3. **Assisting victims** - the responses flagged the barriers which keep victims in violent situations, including those from diverse backgrounds, and those who are regionally isolated or who face other barriers to seeking support. They also raised the role of policing and justice agencies in assisting victims.
4. **Perpetrators** - the responses noted the need for strong and consistent responses to all perpetrators, including adolescent perpetrators and those who are not deterred effectively under the current system. Some respondents stated that services for perpetrators must not detract or divert resources from services for victims of domestic and family violence.
5. **Children** - the responses stressed that children are extremely vulnerable when witnessing domestic and family violence and its consequences. Responses noted the difficulties and risks for children when the Family Court is considering parental responsibility and time spent with both offending and non-offending parents. Educating children about respectful relationships from an early age was also seen as vital to changing societal values that allow domestic and family violence to occur.
6. **Institutional issues** - the responses noted the areas in which judicial processes and outcomes are inadequate including where some professionals lack empathy for victims.
7. **Workforce education and training** - the responses raised the importance of consistent education and training across the sector to build the skills base of the workforce. Key areas emphasised included the need to train people to work differently to adhere to the reforms, the importance of consistent information, and the need to develop the capacity of the human services workforce to work with vulnerable communities to address domestic and family violence.

Refining the Framework for Reform

The feedback we received was carefully considered. We discussed with stakeholders new ways to address concerns raised and have consequently refined our Framework to reflect suggestions made.

The refined DFV Framework aims to deliver five outcomes:

1. domestic and family violence is prevented
2. domestic and family violence is identified early
3. victims are safe and supported to recover
4. perpetrators stop using violence
5. a supported, professional and effective sector is developed

We have built the DFV Framework on five priority elements;

Element 1: a strategic approach to prevention and early intervention

Element 2: streamlined referral pathways to support victims' safety and support their recovery

Element 3: accessible, flexible, person-centred service responses that make the best use of resources

Element 4: a strong, skilled, and capable workforce

Element 5: a strengthened criminal justice system response

Throughout this document, you will find comments and ideas from the public consultation responses we received. The full consultation report can be found at www.women.nsw.gov.au.

The new framework addresses the concerns raised by the Auditor General and the NSW Parliament's Standing Committee on Social Issues by:

1. providing a framework for reform under which agencies can work together to respond to domestic and family violence
2. establishing a shared policy definition of domestic and family violence and guiding principles applicable to all agencies and services working in the domestic and family violence sector
3. establishing minimum service standards applicable to all services responding to domestic and family violence
4. addressing the privacy issues relating to information sharing to ensure consistent responses to victims and to support early intervention and access to support services
5. investing in strategic approaches to prevention and early intervention through building the evidence base as well as developing and investing in exemplar projects and strategies
6. improving the integration and coordination of services through the establishment of a new referral pathways model

7. establishing Safety Action Meetings across NSW to better protect victims at high risk
8. actively consulting and building on partnerships with the non-government sector throughout the framework's development and implementation phases
9. adopting a cross government governance approach in respect of governance which involves improved coordination across agencies and key non-government organisations.

Implementing the Framework

Implementation of the Framework will occur in three distinct phases.

1. The first is already underway and comprises the Domestic Violence Justice Strategy (DVJS) which is already underway as well as a \$9.8M DFV prevention investment program.
2. The second phase is the launch of new referral pathways, which will occur in a staged rollout starting in the first half of 2014 and then, subject to evaluation findings, will be progressed to the whole of NSW. In addition, a skills strategy will be rolled out in this phase to support the workforce to implement the DFV Framework.
3. The third and final phase involves service realignment and the implementation of evidence-based partnership projects.

Element 1: A strategic approach to prevention and early intervention

Why it is important

“No matter how good a role model is in the home, the children are also affected by the broader world: what they see on television (women being tortured, kidnapped, sexualised), what they learn from friends at school, or work, what they learn from what they endure themselves such as being bullied/abused often by other boys or from being the bully.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

The underlying causes of domestic and family violence are complex. To a large extent, they reflect deeply held views in society about gender, masculinity, power and relationships.

To prevent domestic and family violence, we must challenge and change the disrespectful values, discriminatory attitudes and beliefs that underlie and allow violence to occur. These attitudes are deeply entrenched in our culture and it will take time to change them.

The key social and economic factors that contribute to violence against women include:

- traditional norms and beliefs about rigid gender roles and/or weak support for gender equality; cultures where a masculine sense of entitlement is strong
- economic inequality; male dominance and control of wealth in relationships; social systems where women (or some women) have limited access to secure and well paid employment
- sexist peer and organisational cultures, and institutional and cultural support for, or weak sanctions against gender inequality.

In Aboriginal communities additional contributory factors include:

- inherited grief and trauma
- dispossession of land and loss of traditional language and cultural practices
- economic exclusion and entrenched poverty
- difficulties confronting the issues, for both victims and perpetrators.

Addressing these influences requires us to take action and invest across the intervention spectrum to break the domestic and family violence pattern and inter-generational cycles of abuse. In Aboriginal communities, it requires us to consider alternative approaches that include the healing of individuals, families, and entire communities. We will adopt a broad definition of prevention which encompasses three domains of intervention:

1. primary prevention – works at the whole population level to reduce the likelihood that anyone will become a victim or a perpetrator of domestic and family violence
2. secondary prevention – targets groups deemed to be at a high risk of experiencing or using domestic and family violence
3. tertiary prevention – involves interventions designed to focus on individuals and families who have experienced domestic and family violence, either as victims or perpetrators.

“There are so many successful stories of men and women breaking the inter-generational cycle of violence, we need to value them as constructive members of the society, use them as mentors and promote them as heroes in the communities.” (Family member or friend of a domestic and family violence victim)

How we will do it

The DFV Framework focuses on developing a stronger, more evidence-based approach to prevention that recognises that domestic and family violence is a community problem that requires a community response. Breaking the cycle of violence requires action from individuals, neighbourhoods, community networks and organisations, as well as workplaces, sporting clubs, faith-based groups and all levels of government. In an Aboriginal contexts it requires that communities themselves are empowered to take the lead and find and implement solutions.

In 2012, a \$9.8 million, three-year Domestic and Family Violence Funding Program was announced. This program is making strategic investments to address critical gaps in prevention and early intervention and to build innovative and effective violence prevention practices in NSW that are evidence-based and evidence-building. Over time, the program will be more fully integrated into the strategic reforms.

▀ Understanding the evidence

A priority of the Framework is to see targeted prevention work undertaken in the community. The initial step is to understand the evidence. As a first stage, we have commissioned three studies to examine current approaches to violence prevention in NSW and to consider methods used interstate and overseas. Each study involves a literature review looking at current approaches, measures, strategies and projects against good practice, and will recommend enhanced or new approaches as well as exemplar projects that will guide future good practice. The exemplar projects will be funded from the three-year Domestic and Family Violence Funding Program. These studies which will be completed mid 2014 include:

- the University of Western Sydney is analysing current approaches to preventing violent behaviour in men and boys.
- the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) is analysing approaches to supporting children who witness and experience domestic and family violence, and is looking at efforts to avert inter-generational violence - the studies will help build an evidence base for future prevention work.

- the AIFS is also analysing current approaches to prevent violence in groups and communities that are at higher risk of experiencing domestic and family violence, or who face barriers in accessing existing services.

The second, and more significant stage, is to contribute to the establishment of the National Centre for Excellence in Domestic and Family Violence Research. This Centre is a flagship project under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*, a plan to which NSW is a signatory. Working across Australia with governments, policy makers, funding bodies, service providers and the research community, the National Centre will deliver a strong and lasting evidence base that will support change in all domains.

▲ A social investment approach to prevention activities

It is vital that any findings lead us to tangible outcomes for victims. The three violence prevention studies, taking place over 12 months, will make recommendations for enhanced or new approaches by the NSW Government in the area of violence prevention. Coupled with existing evidence, the NSW Government will work with non-government, private and philanthropic organisations to generate a response underpinned by social investment principles. It is our belief that this is an area where there is significant interest and goodwill.

This approach has many benefits: it stretches government investment further so more women can benefit from responses; it makes available better information on what works to underpin any future investment by philanthropic institutions and it places the response to prevention squarely in the public domain, a position that organisations like White Ribbon have already demonstrated can work very well.


▲ Break the cycle – a focus on perpetrator accountability

“Men and boys should be encouraged and supported to be non-violent through programs aimed at demonstrating respectful and positive relationships.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

This priority will predominantly be delivered through the DVJS however there are new preventative approaches targeting men at risk of becoming perpetrators that are the subject of the reforms.

Some perpetrators who are currently in custody or on a supervised order in the community can access behaviour change programs within the criminal justice system. In addition, programs for perpetrators who may not have had contact with the criminal justice system are offered by a range of non-government organisations within the community.

The Department of Attorney General and Justice (DAGJ) has also developed minimum standards for these men’s behaviour change programs to ensure quality of service and NSW Government agencies will only refer men to programs that meet those standards.



These minimum standards will be complemented by the development of national outcome standards for perpetrator interventions. This work is being undertaken as part of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children* (under outcome 6 – Perpetrators stop using violence and are held to account).

The tertiary response to perpetrators outlined in the DVJS is complemented by prevention and early intervention measures including a state-wide **Men’s Telephone Counselling and Referral Service**. This service provides telephone counselling for men outside the criminal justice system who have committed or are at risk of committing domestic and family violence and who want help to change their behaviour.

Referrals to the service can be made by police and other agencies and men will also be able to self-refer. Victims and perpetrators can be concurrently referred to support services. The service also supports women and family members, as well as neighbours, friends or colleagues who are concerned about the violent behaviour of a male partner, friend or family member.

“The Men’s Referral Service for men who want to change their behaviour will be a welcome part of the reforms.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

Element 2: Streamlined referral pathways to secure victims' safety and support their recovery

Why it is important

Experiencing violence within a relationship is traumatic. It can be difficult to know where to turn for help. Some victims of violence feel shame, as if they deserve what has happened to them. In some cases, particularly where there has not been physical violence, an individual may feel they have no right to seek support – that the behaviours are a normal part of a relationship, or that they cannot be changed.

At a time when they are already vulnerable, under the current system an individual frequently has to work very hard to find the support they need and they have to advocate on their own behalf to get it.

Depending on their individual experiences, a person might seek help directly from a specialist domestic and family violence service; they may talk about what has happened to someone at a mainstream service (such as a GP or housing provider); they might be identified through a routine screening program in the public health system; or they may come into contact with the police or criminal justice system when an incident has occurred. In an Aboriginal context, the experience of victims and perpetrators alike may be different, and individuals, families and communities may respond to violence differently, requiring flexibility in responses to such violence.

Each agency within these service spheres has its own structures, relationships, protocols and procedures for responding to violence. Depending on their point of entry into the system, two individuals both seeking help to leave violence behind may have very different experiences.

It is important that services can operate flexibly as we know that a one-size-fits-all approach does not work. But we strongly believe that wherever they live in NSW, all victims of violence should be able to expect a certain standard response from service providers when they are seeking help.

How we will do it

Under the DFV Framework, a new referral pathway is being established to ensure that all victims receive a consistent and effective response no matter where they live or how they first come into contact with the domestic and family violence system. These strategic reforms work to turn the system around, placing victims at the centre of our responses. Instead of requiring the victim to seek out the services they need, we want

the system to identify the victims at risk and to ensure they have access to support services so they can be safe and well.

“Victims often describe the trauma associated with the need to repeat their stories to multiple services and agencies. The implementation of Central Referral Points for risk assessment and access to support as well as the sharing of information between services (where appropriate) should further ensure victim safety and reduce the need for them to have to re-tell their stories.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

The new referral pathway is central to the DFV Framework. We are seeking to implement more robust and consistent processes. This will enable victims of domestic and family violence to receive the service responses they need from their initial point of contact with the system and not to have to re-tell their story to multiple agencies and services. The new model will enable us to consistently identify victims who are at risk and to more efficiently organise services to secure their safety.

The new referral pathway introduces a Risk Identification Tool to enable us to:

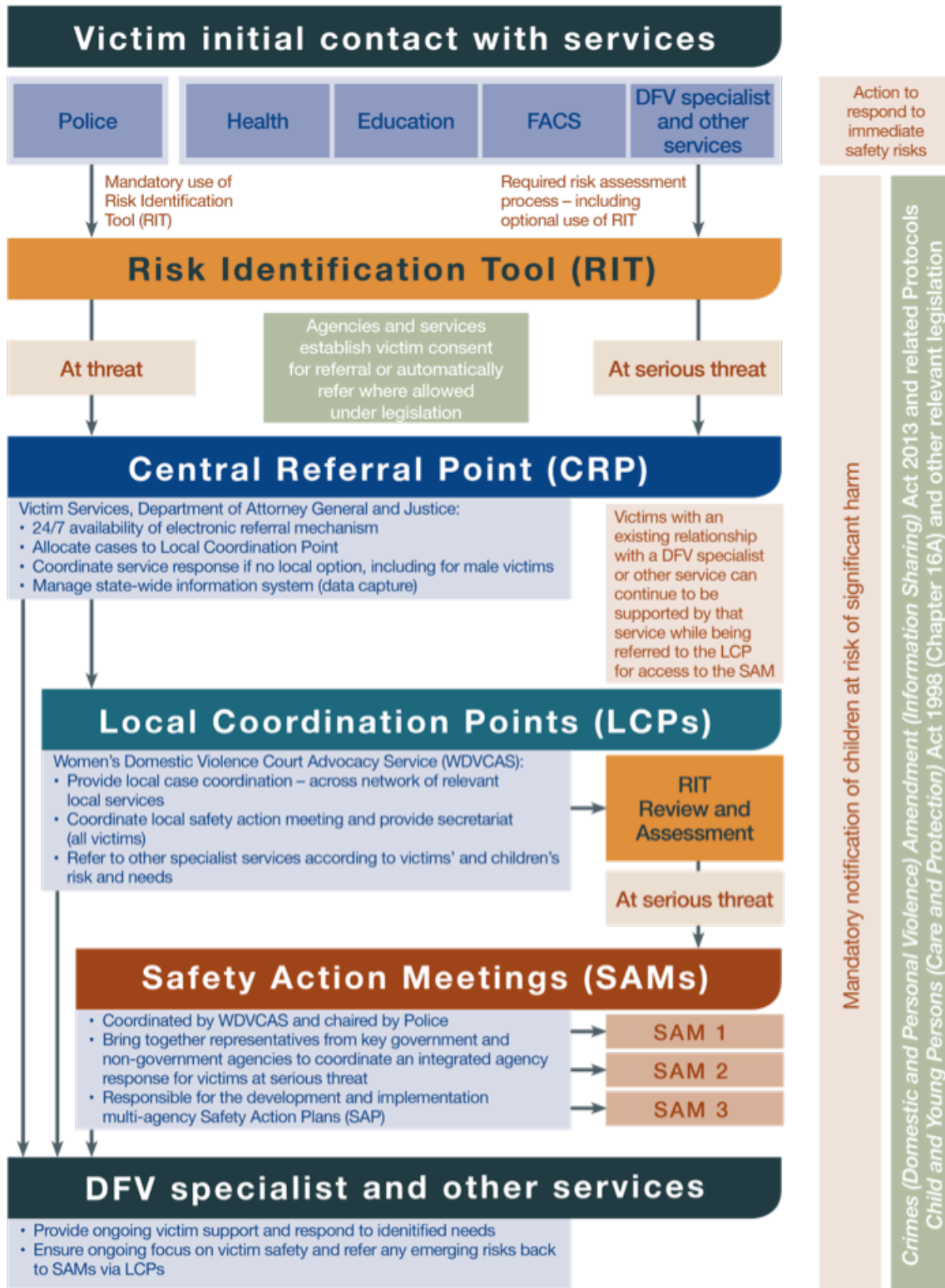
- better identify risk
- electronically manage and monitor referrals through a Central Referral Point;
- facilitate local responses and provide victims with the face-to-face services and support they need through Local Coordination Points
- support victims that are identified as being at serious threat of further harm through Safety Action Meetings

The implementation of the new referral pathways will be rolled out in a staged approach over five years beginning with implementation at two launch sites.

“The proposed reforms have great potential to radically improve the experiences of and outcomes for victims.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

The following Service Delivery Map (Figure 1) outlines the new model demonstrating how services will be configured to assist victims from their first contact with an agency or support service. Further details on each area will be shown in the following section

Figure 2 Service Delivery Map



▲ Risk Identification Tool

Ensuring the consistent early identification of risk for victims is a key element of the DFV Framework. To assist with this a **Risk Identification Tool** (RIT) has been developed using evidence-based criteria (safety risk factors) that can be used by all relevant agencies for adult victims of domestic and family violence.

Use of the RIT will be mandatory for NSW Police Force officers² responding to incidents of intimate partner violence. For all other government and non-government agencies using the RIT will be optional but encouraged.

The RIT provides a score of the seriousness of the threat to a victim. Where a victim is identified as being “at threat” or “at serious threat” of future harm, an automatic referral to the new Central Referral Point will occur. Other agencies will also be able to refer to the Central Referral Point with the victim’s consent.

“Using electronic systems for implementing processes/risk assessments to ensure a quick and standardised follow-through will mean that there will be less falling through the cracks and victims re-entering the violence cycle.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

The RIT will be field tested in two launch sites and may be refined based on feedback received from users to ensure its ongoing validity and reliability.

▲ Central Referral Point

The **Central Referral Point** (CRP) is an electronic referral mechanism that provides real-time data on domestic and family violence referrals and services provided to victims and their children. Operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week it will:

- receive and sort referrals from NSW Police Force and any another organisation and will allocate them to Local Coordination Points
- coordinate a service response where there is no Local Coordination Point available
- electronically monitor the responsiveness of the system to victims’ needs.

Victims Services NSW which is part of the Department of Attorney General and Justice, will take on the role of the CRP.

▲ Local Coordination Points

Local Coordination Points (LCPs) will provide local case coordination for all domestic and family violence victims and will provide a link between the CRP and Safety Action Meetings.

The LCPs will provide:

- a physical point of contact where women and children can find out about the services available to them and the support that agencies can provide them

² NSW Police Force applies a Police Risk Identification Tool (PRIT) which is similar to the RIT described above. Both tools have the same intention however the Police have the discretion to make the final decision on the contents of their PRIT consistent with the needs of the both the Police and the victims.

- case coordination for women and child victims (except where the victim is already being case managed/coordinated by an agency)
- reviews of completed RITs and/or the completion of a comprehensive risk assessment to determine the level of risk to a victim
- local integration with other specialist services for victims and their children (welfare, housing, youth, family support, etc.)
- access to counselling and financial assistance for victims through Victims Services NSW
- a referral point for Safety Action Meetings (SAMs)
- secretariat support for the local SAMs
- a coordinating function for the development and implementation of Safety Action Plans
- a local interface with the CRP including updating information on outcomes of case coordination and SAMs.

“We believe coordination and effective referral pathways remain a significant issue and if the plan achieves its aim of removing obstacles and empowering quick and efficient action for front-line agencies and staff, then real change may be possible.”
(Domestic and family violence worker)

The Women’s Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Service (WDVCASs) will take on the role of LCPs for all women and children victims of domestic and family violence.

Male victims of domestic and family violence will be supported through the CRP provided by Victims Services NSW and will be referred to local support services where available.

▲ Safety Action Meetings

Safety Action Meetings (SAMs) will be established in defined local areas as a multi-agency response to victims who are at serious threat of escalating violence. The principle behind SAMs is that cooperative action and the sharing of information between agencies supports better outcomes for the safety and recovery of victims.

The SAMs will:

- be chaired by a senior representative of the relevant NSW Police Force Local Area Command and will bring together representatives from key government agencies (NSW Health, Family and Community Services, Department of Education and Communities, NSW Corrective Services, Department of Attorney General and Justice) and non-government services that provide assistance to victims experiencing domestic and family violence in the local area
- develop and implement Safety Action Plans for victims at serious threat
- meet fortnightly or monthly, depending on the volume of serious threat cases in that local area.

SAMs are intended to ensure agencies and services take immediate action to reduce the risk to victims identified as at serious threat of further harm. The SAMs seek to reduce the number of victims suffering repeated and escalating violence and the incidence of domestic violence homicides. The victim's perspectives and wishes are vital for the most positive possible outcome to be achieved at a SAM. For this reason, a victim's informed consent for referral to a SAM will be sought wherever possible. Protocols developed for the SAMs will particularly consider the needs of Aboriginal victims and communities.

▲ Information sharing

Legislative change in mid 2013 improved information sharing between agencies in order to better support people experiencing domestic and family violence. Timely and appropriate information sharing enables services to be more effective in how they respond to domestic and family violence while also upholding people's rights to privacy and confidentiality.

To implement the DFV reforms, additional amendments to the information sharing legislation will be sought. In addition, information sharing protocols are being developed outlining when and how information can be shared. These have a strong focus on victims' informed consent, balanced with information sharing to avert serious harm to victims and children. These protocols will allay concerns raised by Aboriginal stakeholders regarding appropriate information sharing at the SAMs.

“Sufficient information needs to be provided to women about the processes that will occur under these new reforms, such as who will have access to information etc. If women feel a mistrust of authority or systems they will be less likely to report domestic violence.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

▲ An integrated approach to child protection and wellbeing

Domestic and family violence can affect children and young people. This can be through a child being injured during incidents of domestic and family violence, or through the fear instilled in a child from witnessing physical or verbal abuse between other family members.

In these cases FACS can work with children, parents and families, as well as funded services to put protective strategies in place. For example there are mandatory reporting guidelines to assist in determining the nature of risk and the appropriate action to take. The DFV Framework will seek to ensure better integration between new domestic and family violence referral pathways and those in the child protection system, including any referral underway to address child wellbeing concerns.

Element 3: Accessible, flexible, person-centred service responses that make the best use of resources

Why it is important

Victims of domestic and family violence need a range of supports to help them recover from violence. They may need assistance with:

- protection from further violence through the criminal justice system
- physical health issues associated with the violence they have experienced
- the emotional and psychological effects of violence
- practical safety and security concerns (eg. replacing locks)
- financial, transport and accommodation support.

The NSW Parliament's Standing Committee on Social Issues report, *Domestic Violence Trends and Issues in NSW*, identified service shortages across a number of areas that compromised victim safety. These included emergency accommodation and longer-term housing, case management for victims of violence, therapeutic services (including counselling), legal services (particularly for groups who face additional challenges in accessing legal support such as Aboriginal people, people with a disability and people living in remote locations) and perpetrator programs.

In NSW domestic and family violence services are delivered through a range of specialist services, mainstream services and legal and statutory agencies. FACS invests significantly in services for domestic and family violence victims and their families that provide housing, case management and family support services among others, totalling nearly \$60 million annually. However, as with many services, DFV funding is often skewed to places of high population. This means that although many locations in regional and remote areas of NSW experience high rates of recorded domestic violence assaults some of them have fewer resources in comparison.

We are committed to improving service efficiencies to make the best possible use of our existing resources. Through the implementation of the reforms we will work with our non-government partners to collaboratively implement strategies that will more effectively meet demand where it is greatest and support planning for future demand.

In the context of Aboriginal communities, alternative approaches may result in better outcomes. The recent Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs reported that for services to be effective in Aboriginal communities, both metropolitan and regional/remote, there needed to be an increased emphasis on:

- localised and flexible place based approaches
- real partnerships with Aboriginal communities
- building on existing strengths and leadership
- long-term commitment with realistic resourcing
- an evaluation of initiatives with the involvement of Aboriginal people.

How we will do it

▲ Expand Staying Home Leaving Violence

Staying Home Leaving Violence is a well-established government program developed in response to evidence that domestic and family violence is the major reason why women and children become homeless. Once they become homeless, women lose access to their support networks, children are forced to change schools, sometimes multiple times and a difficult time becomes almost intolerable.

The Staying Home Leaving Violence program helps women and children escaping domestic violence to remain safely in their homes. Services funded under the program work with the NSW Police Force and courts to remove the violent family member so that if she chooses, the victim and children can stay in the home.

Under the *It Stops Here* Framework, the number of Staying Home Leaving Violence sites will expand from 23 to 27 over five years.³

▲ New minimum practice standards

All victims of domestic and family violence will receive a minimum level of support that offers them assistance in recovering from violence. In consultation with our partners, we have developed minimum practice standards for mainstream agencies and specialist domestic and family violence services (both government and non-government). This means that victims of domestic and family violence will receive a consistent level of response that helps them to recover regardless of the point at which they enter the system. These minimum standards will be trialled in launch sites and will be revised as necessary. When finalised they will be made available as part of the DFV reforms implementation resources.

“This is definitely a step towards the right direction as we are now trying to set standards so service responses can be more uniform across all sectors. I think the proposed reforms will enhance a victim’s experience so it is less confusing, so they can experience easier access to services and a smoother navigation through the system.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

The reforms will also develop minimum practice standards for case management services for victims of domestic and family violence. We will also investigate the development of minimum practice standards for Aboriginal people that provide for the specific needs of Aboriginal victims, perpetrators and communities.

³ Final numbers to be confirmed by FACS

▲ **Integrated online directory of services**

In response to recommendations in the Auditor General's report that an integrated online directory of services be established and maintained, details of mainstream and specialist DFV services have been compiled and made available on HSNet which is a secure site used by government and non-government staff working in the human services and justice sectors. HSNet enables service providers to easily locate services locally and across NSW and includes information about services such as contact details, a description of services, opening hours and costs as well as eligibility criteria and target groups.

In addition, HSNet advise that they are working toward launching a publicly appropriate access point for the community where they can search for DFV service information.

▲ **Data development**

In order to develop a credible evidence base on service location and distribution, we will implement measures to enhance the quality of existing data sources including a standardised process for classifying data and categorising service types across agencies. We will also use data captured from the new referral pathway including measures such as a victim's ability to receive services that meets their needs at a local level.

FACS will distribute the data collected and review projections about expected increases in the demand for services with our partner agencies, service providers and communities.

▲ **Monitor and review services to improve efficiencies**

We will monitor and review domestic and family violence services with a view to improving service delivery and align resources to local need. A FACS-led interagency review of current service investment will ensure funding is distributed equitably and efficiently across NSW to maximise value and return for victims accessing services. Evidence will guide funding decisions by considering sound information about population projections, unmet need and any other risk factors that may have an impact on demand. In some cases consolidation and streamlining of services may be required to improve outcomes for victims through better service coverage and more equitable funding distribution.

In collaboration with service providers, we will also identify the best way to allocate resources in the future so as to better respond to growing need. Where possible we will also ensure the inclusion of community members, community leadership and service users in designing and delivering services. We will engage with Aboriginal and CALD service providers to ensure services and supports are culturally competent and we will work with existing governance structures to support the development of leadership and governance in these communities.

Element 4: A strong, skilled and capable workforce

Why it is important

This reform program includes some of the most significant changes to the domestic and family violence sector in many years. It will require all services, agencies and individuals to work in new ways and to implement new processes. These reforms can only be successful if we equip workers with the knowledge, skills and support they need to make the changes work.

"I believe everyone will require training in these areas if we are to move to a service system response that is consistent and is transparent." (Domestic and family violence worker)

In 2013 the Department of Attorney General and Justice commissioned a report on the challenges of education and training within the victim support sector. The report, Pathways to Qualifications in Victims Support, argued that ongoing changes in the domestic and family violence sector are necessitating new and enhanced skill sets for workers. Key findings of the report are that:

- frontline engagement with victims of domestic and family violence and other violent crimes requires an increasingly complex set of skills
- increased coordination between services would be facilitated by a common standard of training
- top down information delivered to workers is rarely integrated with formal teaching for qualifications.

The success of our reform agenda will depend on how well we equip our workforce with the skills and knowledge they need to implement the DFV Framework. Previous audits of training in the domestic and family violence sector found that:

- most of the training currently provided does little to enhance cross-agency collaboration
- frontline staff currently receive very little training
- minimum standards for staff competence are not in place
- responding to diversity is a gap in most training programs
- accessing appropriate training is an issue for workers in regional and rural areas.
- Given the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people among victims of domestic and family violence, there is a need to ensure a culturally competent workforce to address the needs of Aboriginal people.

How we will do it

“I think a specialised TAFE/university course would be a blessing. I completed my certificate IV in community services work but was disappointed I could not complete training specific to domestic violence.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

▲ The Domestic and Family Violence Skills Strategy

The Domestic and Family Violence Funding program has invested in TAFE NSW - South-Western Sydney Institute (TAFE NSW SWSi), to deliver a *Domestic and Family Violence Skills Strategy*. The Skills Strategy will:

- Provide information and workshops for workers whose roles will change as a result of the DFV Framework. New processes and procedures will require workers to develop new skills and ways of working. This professional development will assist workers to understand and implement some of the key reform initiatives including the RIT and SAMs.
- Increase the capability of the broader human services workforce to respond effectively and appropriately to domestic and family violence, including addressing the need for cultural competency when addressing the needs of Aboriginal and CALD people.
- Improve access to accredited education and training opportunities for frontline domestic and family violence workers in the non-government sector. A particular emphasis will be on building the capacity of the non-government workforce to support groups within the community who have specific needs or who are particularly vulnerable, including people from CALD communities, Aboriginal people, people with a disability and the LGBTIQ community.
- Support the establishment of more collaborative and integrated approaches to service provision within the sector which are consistent with the intent of the reform agenda.
- Give priority to addressing the training needs of workers who have restricted access to training, in particular those in remote and regional areas.

The Skills Strategy funding will be used for competency-based training for non-government sector workers with information and workshops on the reforms to be run jointly with government agencies. Some of the Strategy's elements will benefit everyone, but the main beneficiaries are expected to be those in community-based organisations, as government agencies will run training for their own staff.

The Skills Strategy involves a three-way partnership:

1. The Skills Strategy is established under a Memorandum of Understanding between FACS and TAFE NSW SWSi.
2. TAFE NSW SWSi is designing and delivering both the reforms-focused and the broader skills development elements of the Framework in partnership with key stakeholders - services and experts working in domestic and family violence. The Skills Strategy is industry driven.

3. Other training organisations that are central to domestic and family violence training in NSW have been asked to partner with TAFE NSW SWSi to provide their expertise and potentially take on some elements of the Strategy.

Significant elements of the three-year Strategy include:

- an integrated learning framework to support the needs of workers and employers in the context of the DFV Framework
- the aim is to have workers employed by different types of services engaging with the same messages about the reforms, no matter who delivers their training
- the production of customised learning materials for the domestic and family violence sector
- a shared training calendar and a domestic and family violence reforms skills strategy website
- flexible approaches to deliver innovative training to rural and remote communities
- a strong Recognition of Prior Learning framework so workers can have their existing skills recognised for qualification purposes
- support for 'communities of practice' among those who have participated in skill development or those who want to contribute their expertise
- working with experts in the development of culturally sensitive training material and delivery approaches that meet the needs and address the specific issues for workers in Aboriginal, CALD and high risk communities
- regular reporting to the human services sector and the domestic and family violence reforms governance bodies.

We also anticipate that further funding will be attracted to domestic and family violence-related training from mainstream education and training funding programs.

Element 5: A strengthened criminal justice system response

Why it is important

The NSW criminal justice system enforces laws that stop abusive and violent behaviour and protect victims. It is vital that it provides an efficient, fair and comprehensive response to victims' and perpetrators' needs.

The justice response to domestic violence involves a range of government agencies and contributors, each with different responsibilities in ensuring the progress of a case through the court system. While some people may experience only one incident of violence, it is characteristic of domestic violence that people will suffer ongoing abuse and may come into contact with the Police and the justice system several times. No matter how many times, it is important the response across NSW is consistent and coordinated.


How we will do it

▀ Domestic Violence Justice Strategy

The Domestic Violence Justice Strategy 2013-17 (DVJS) was launched by the Department of Attorney General and Justice in 2012 to strengthen the criminal justice system response to domestic and family violence. The DVJS seeks to achieve secure safety outcomes for victims, ensure the accountability of perpetrators and reduce re-offending through an integrated approach for justice and human services agencies (including the Department of Attorney General and Justice, the NSW Police Force, the Judicial Commission of NSW, Legal Aid NSW, the Office of the Chief Magistrate, and the Department of Family and Community Services). It sets expectations and standards of service to be provided to victims and perpetrators in NSW and seeks to achieve six major outcomes:

1. victims' safety is secured immediately and the risk of further violence is reduced
2. victims have confidence in the justice system and are empowered to participate
3. victims have the support they need
4. the court process for domestic violence matters is efficient, fair and accessible
5. abusive behaviour is stopped and perpetrators are held to account
6. perpetrators change their behaviour and re-offending is reduced or eliminated.

"The implementation of the NSW Domestic Violence Justice Strategy will require NSW Police to refer all female victims of domestic violence ... before the end of their shift." (Domestic and family violence worker)



Reforms to the criminal justice system are linked to broader, whole-of-government actions aimed at reducing domestic and family violence and the broader reforms have been developed in parallel with and to complement the DVJS.

The DVJS is already underway and it includes a range of initiatives to ensure that victims are safe and free from violence, such as the proactive investigation of domestic violence incidents, the consistent collection of evidence, court support and advocacy for victims and accessible counselling and financial assistance for victims.

While the DVJS recognises that the protection of victims and their families must be the paramount concern, it notes that domestic and family violence will not be eliminated unless perpetrators are held accountable and given opportunities to change their behaviour. The DVJS includes initiatives to ensure the monitoring of repeat offenders, perpetrators compliance with court orders and Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders, the proactive investigation of alleged breaches and strategies aimed at providing services to perpetrators such as access to the Domestic Abuse Program or community based services, treatment and programs.

Progress towards achieving the standards is monitored by the DVJS Senior Executive Committee (which also has oversight of the new referral pathways).

The full published version of the Domestic Violence Justice Strategy is attached at Appendix 1 and is also available at <http://www.domesticviolence.lawlink.nsw.gov.au>.

Governance

The governance model for the Framework reflects the partnership approach we have taken and the coordinated effort that will accompany the implementation phases of the reforms. The governance model is represented in Figure 2. It is important to note that this model supports a continuous feedback loop to provide local and regional bodies with the capacity to influence and guide decision making at all levels.

Ministerial oversight

Five Ministers – the Ministers for Women and Family and Community Services, NSW Police Force, Health, Aboriginal Affairs and the Attorney General - provide oversight of all aspects of the reforms implementation. They provide top-level leadership and political drive for delivering innovation and integration in the NSW Government's response to domestic and family violence.

Domestic and Family Violence Council

The Domestic and Family Violence Council, an advisory body with representation from non-government and government organisations is our most important source of independent stakeholder advice on domestic and family violence. The Council provides advice to Ministers on current and emerging domestic and family violence issues and will continue to have a critical role in shaping the reforms as they are implemented.

Cross Government Committees

The Domestic and Family Violence Framework Interdepartmental Steering Committee includes senior representatives of justice and human services departments which through cooperation, deliver a whole-of-government response to domestic and family violence. The Committee provides advice to the Ministers and the Domestic and Family Violence Council and ensures the decisions of these bodies are implemented. Through performance monitoring and evaluation, the Committee ensures continuous improvement of the delivery of the reforms.

The DVJS Senior Executive Committee will have oversight of the Department of Attorney General and Justice led implementation of the new referral and safety coordination elements and the DVJS.

Regional Governance

Effective regional and local governance is critical for the successful implementation of the Strategy. Regional governance will support the integration of services at a regional or local level which is particularly important to secure victims' safety.

The two launch sites will test a regional governance model using the existing regional coordinating mechanism in preventing and addressing DFV – the Regional Domestic Violence Coordinator (RDVC) program.

This approach will bring together representatives from across government from areas as diverse as human services and health, corrections, justice and Aboriginal affairs, with local non-government organisations who are familiar with the services and local issues under the leadership of the NSW Police Force Crime Manager. This regional forum will focus on the successful implementation of the new Safety Action Management approach, providing a platform for troubleshooting making sure all involved are contributing appropriately and reporting on progress. It will also be a forum for progressing other elements of the It Stops Here Framework.

The RDVC’s contribution will be assessed as part of the evaluation process in order to test the effectiveness of this approach and its suitability for further roll out across the State. The evaluation will also examine the links with other regional cross government groups and whether opportunities exist for those to be rationalised in some form

Specific Reference Groups

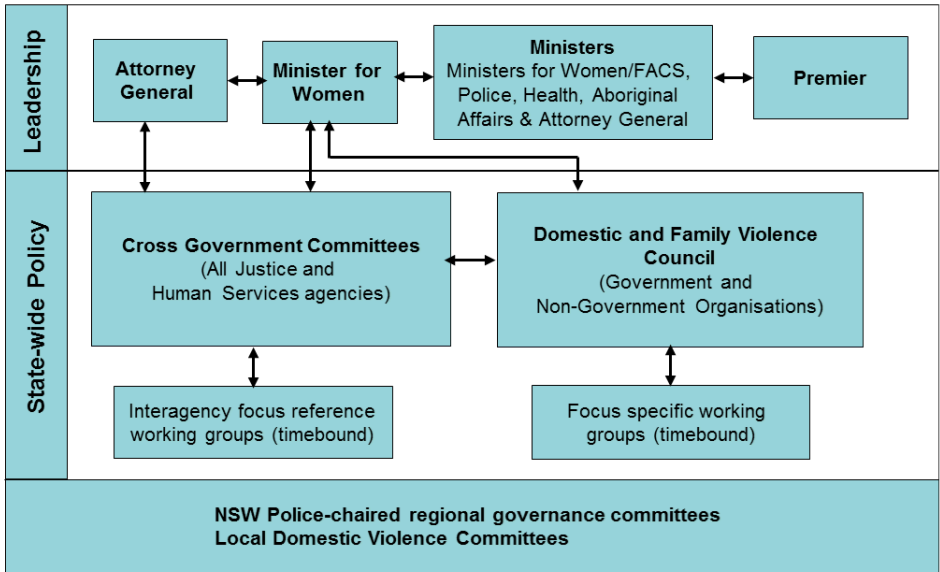
Specific reference groups will be established from time to time. For example, a Domestic and Family Violence Skills Strategy Reference Group is supporting the new approach to strengthening the domestic violence service sector.

Local Domestic and Family Violence Committees

The DFV Reforms acknowledge the important work of existing Local Domestic and Family Violence Committees. The Regional Governance mechanism will support input by Local Committees into the state level governance groups, as well as in planning and monitoring of the Reform operations.

Figure 3

NSW Domestic and Family Violence Strategy Governance Model



Key:
 — Direct Report

Evaluating our Framework for Reform

We are confident that the Framework will move NSW in the right direction, but we need to carefully monitor implementation to ensure the reforms achieve their intended objectives. We also need to ensure that the changes make the best possible use of our resources – both financial and human.

The need for effective monitoring, reporting and evaluation was highlighted as a significant factor in the consultation process.

“We encourage ‘built-in’ mechanisms for evaluation across the range of strategies, including processes for consistent data collection.” (Domestic and family violence worker)

Understandably workers in the human services sector, advocacy groups, service providers and community members are keen to understand how we will monitor and evaluate the success of the Framework.

The evaluation framework therefore needs to be designed for several purposes and audiences. It will be multi-layered and contain a mix of methodologies, since the reforms consist of a suite of strategies, each with their own timeframes and evaluation requirements.

A comprehensive evaluation strategy will be implemented in stages during the rollout of the reforms to:

Test how well this model works on the ground

- assess the effectiveness of the trial of DFV service system coordination initiatives (to be led by DAGJ)
- examine changes to service practice and culture that support early identification and responses to DFV

Test whether the approach is having the impact we want

- explore if victims of DFV have increased confidence in the response system and are therefore more willing to engage with services
- measure the rates of DFV assaults, repeat victimisations and repeat offending
- determine the costs associated with implementation and the potential cost service efficiencies avoided through better DFV responses.

Critical components of the evaluation will be conducted by centres independent of participating agencies. A process evaluation will focus on the effectiveness of the implementation of the Framework initiatives. It will identify what is working well and what needs adjusting to achieve intended outcomes, thereby informing further implementation of the initiative.

An outcome evaluation will analyse a range of data across agencies to assess the degree to which the Framework has achieved its intended outcomes. This will include a cost analysis of the implementation of the new service delivery model and an estimation of the benefit, including the reduced use of government resources.

The Domestic and Family Violence Reform Evaluation Strategy

Population outcomes - the key result areas

The high-level result areas to which the DFV Reforms contribute are:

- domestic and family violence is prevented
- domestic and family violence is identified early
- victims are safe and supported to recover
- perpetrators stop using violence
- a supported, professional and effective sector is developed.

Data collection strategies will be implemented at a state and national level, including new initiatives to provide data for the State Plan, *NSW 2021* and the DVJS providing information on trends in these areas - it is anticipated that these datasets will be sufficient.

Signpost measures where change could be expected in the medium term include:

- an initial rise (in the short to medium-term) and then a fall (in the longer-term) in rates of recorded domestic and family violence-related assaults (given that other jurisdictions have found that domestic and family violence reporting increases following the implementation of effective reforms)
- a fall in the number of domestic and family violence-related deaths
- a fall in the rate of self-reported domestic and family violence victimisation.

Element 1: A strategic approach to early intervention and prevention

The purpose of the prevention and early intervention research is to create an evidence base to inform funding decisions and professional practice in mainstream agencies. It is imperative that the research results in real outcomes at the local level through effective changes to both policy and practice.

The key signpost indicators for this aspect of the reforms relate to how the findings from the research are shared and to what extent the research and exemplar projects influence professional practice in NSW over time.

The Men's Telephone Counselling and Referral Service for violent or potentially violent men is another component of this reform element. The service will have its own monitoring and evaluation strategy the results of which will be shared with stakeholders as part of reporting on the reforms.

Element 2: Streamlined referral pathways to secure victims' safety and support their recovery

The centrepiece of the reforms, the new referral pathway, is aimed at ensuring that all victims receive a consistent and effective response no matter where they live or how they first come into contact with the domestic and family violence system.

Our evaluation needs to tell us whether the intended goals of more consistent, coordinated and effective referral pathways are being attained. This will help us understand whether victims have access to support services that allow them to be safe and well.

There are two separate evaluations for this – the first being process evaluation and the second being outcome evaluation.

The process evaluation will focus on what is working well and what needs adjusting to achieve intended outcomes. These findings will inform the further implementation of the referral pathway model.

The outcomes evaluation will focus on the extent to which intended outcomes directly attributable to the reforms have been achieved – early identification and responses and reduced DFV-related assaults, victimisation and offending. The broader impact of the reforms on individuals, families and communities will also be considered.

An evaluation of the cost-benefit will be undertaken comprising a cost analysis of the implementation of specific initiatives in the launch sites as well as expenditure across a number of government agencies and an estimation of the likely benefit, including the reduced use of government resources.

Element 3: Accessible, flexible, person-centred service responses that make the best use of resources

We will conduct a review to determine how best to support services to effectively meet needs based on evidence and current and future demand.

A second element of this strategy involves establishing and promoting minimum practice standards for the sector. The key evaluation focus here is compliance, asking about the extent to which practitioners and funding bodies are aware of and have adopted the new minimum standards, including their utility in supporting good practice.

Element 4: A strong, skilled and capable workforce

The Domestic and Family Violence Skills Strategy includes specific performance indicators. The monitoring and evaluation for this Strategy has a process focus, looking at what participants experience in the program and how it can be improved.

Output indicators such as the number of people undertaking professional development and broader skills development are embedded in the Skills Strategy. Reporting will occur throughout the life of the Strategy and the broader reform agenda.

Evaluation will also be important to the professional development element where it is intended that the content will evolve as workers' experience with the new system grows.

Element 5: Domestic Violence Justice Strategy

Progress towards achieving the standards of service anticipated under the DVJS will be closely monitored by the DVJS Senior Executive Committee. Agencies have agreed on performance measures for each standard and there are outcome indicators for the DVJS as a whole.

The DVJS standards include timely responses to victims and offenders, such as time standards for court processes for ADVO and charge matters, referrals to support and legal advice and victim contact. The Senior Executive Committee is monitoring progress towards achieving the standards and longer-term objectives as well as identifying areas where further action is needed.

Complementary changes already underway

The Framework has been designed to work in tandem with a range of other strategies and processes that are being undertaken by other government agencies.

▀ Delivering on our national domestic and family violence priorities

The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022* (the National Plan) brings together the efforts of governments across the nation to make a real and sustained reduction in the levels of violence against women.

It is the first plan to coordinate action across jurisdictions and is a significant platform for all Australian Governments to work together to reduce violence against women. The National Plan will be implemented through four three-year plans, with the first action plan, 'Building Strong Foundations for 2010-2013' seeking six national outcomes through the implementation of a wide range of strategies. These include:

- National Outcome 1 – Communities are safe and free from violence
- National Outcome 2 – Relationships are respectful
- National Outcome 3 – Indigenous communities are strengthened
- National Outcome 4 – Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence
- National Outcome 5 – Justice responses are effective
- National Outcome 6 – Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account.

It Stops Here is aligned with the outcomes of National Plan and both documents are underpinned by the belief that involving all governments and the wider community is necessary to reducing violence in the short and longer terms. The NSW requirement for a jurisdictional implementation plan will be met through the Framework.

The National Plan can be found at:

http://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/national_plan.pdf

► Protecting the rights of victims

Victims of crime have a Charter of Victims Rights to protect and promote their rights. The Charter applies to all government agencies, as well as non-government agencies and contractors funded by the state to provide services to victims of crime. The Charter outlines 18 rights for victims of crime in NSW including their right to:

- be treated with courtesy, compassion and respect
- access available welfare, health, counselling and legal assistance
- information about the investigation and prosecution of the offender
- protection from the offender and protection of privacy.

The NSW Code of Practice for the Charter of Victims Rights outlines the minimum levels of service that victims of crime can expect from service providers. The Code was developed in consultation with government, non-government and professional associations as well as other stakeholders. The Code details the obligations of service providers in their response to victims of crime and details complaint procedures if a victim believes that a Charter right has been breached.

The Charter of Victims' Rights can be found at:

http://www.victimsservices.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/vss/vs_victims/vs_victimsrightscharter2.html

► Improving Court processes for victims

In January 2012 the Attorney General facilitated an independent review of current court support services for victims of crime in NSW. The focus of the Better Court Support initiative is to ensure that victims of crime in contact with the criminal justice system are provided with quality, accessible and equitable court support services.

A major component of this initiative was to undertake a review of the current landscape of court support for victims of crime, focusing on identifying current funding sources and governance structures, evaluating the current delivery system to identify gaps and duplication, best practice approaches and minimum standards for court support.

► Addressing Homelessness

Domestic and family violence is a major cause of homelessness. Many victims escaping domestic and family violence seek the assistance of homelessness services to resolve their immediate safety and housing crisis and to be supported to find and maintain stable housing.

The NSW Government has commenced a process of reforming its funded homelessness services. The Going Home Staying Home reform builds on good practice and innovation in the Specialist Homelessness Services sector and the NSW Homelessness Action Plan (2009-14).

The reform program aims to:

- support a person's choice to stay or leave home in escaping violence

- re-orient delivery arrangements to support a greater focus on a person-centred approach
- streamline access and improve intake, assessment and referral arrangements so that people get the right services at the right time
- improve service planning and resource allocation arrangements
- promote and support quality improvement in service provision using contemporary evidence-based approaches to address homelessness
- improve the structure, quality and contracting of services and ensure that the sector has access to a skilled and stable workforce to deliver the types of services required under the reform.

Some of the key reform directions which aim to improve the response to victims of domestic and family violence include: a simpler access to support, a fairer distribution of funds based on need, increased focus on early intervention, service responses to be better tailored to individual needs and building the capacity of the homelessness sector to provide effective interventions.

Further information about the reform can be found at:

<http://www.housing.nsw.gov.au/Help+with+Housing/Homelessness/Going+Home+Staying+Home>

▲ Supporting initiatives in Aboriginal communities

In 2012 the NSW Government initiated a Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs (MTAA) to develop a new Aboriginal strategy for the State. The MTAA undertook extensive consultations across NSW and received a large number of submissions from Aboriginal communities, non-government organisations, businesses and individuals. The outcome of this process is OCHRE – Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility, Empowerment. This plan outlines a number of initiatives designed to address the stark disadvantage faced by many Aboriginal people in NSW.

During the course of community consultations undertaken by the MTAA, Aboriginal people raised repeatedly the need for healing in communities to deal with the impacts of intergenerational trauma and loss which inflicts many Aboriginal people and families. The OCHRE Plan states:

The history of trauma and loss has left many Aboriginal people angry, frustrated and disenfranchised and is often expressed in high levels of disadvantage, depression, substance abuse and anti-social behaviour. Treating these symptoms of trauma alone will not heal communities, yet this has largely been the emphasis of governments to date.

Work on developing a whole-of-government approach to healing in Aboriginal communities is still in its infancy. However it will be a critical element in dealing with the issue of domestic and family violence, particularly with respect to early intervention and prevention.

The link to OCHRE is found at:

<http://www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au/nsw-government-aboriginal-affairs-strategy/>

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