

**D O M E S T I C**  
**V I O L E N C E**  
**N S W**

*The peak body for specialist domestic and family violence services  
in New South Wales.*

Submission to the National Strategy to Prevent  
Child Sexual Abuse Final Development Consultation  
Paper, March 2021

Domestic Violence NSW  
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## About Domestic Violence NSW

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**Domestic Violence NSW is the peak body for specialist domestic and family violence services in NSW.** We have over 80 member organisations across NSW.

We work to improve policy, legislative and program responses to domestic and family violence and to eliminate domestic and family violence through advocacy, partnerships and promotion of good practice.

Our members represent the diversity of specialist services working in NSW to support women, families and communities impacted by domestic and family violence. They are non-government organisations, some entirely government funded, others supported through philanthropic donations or partnerships with industry or the corporate sector.

Our member organisations include: crisis and refuge services, transitional accommodation and community housing providers, family support services, Aboriginal controlled organisations and specialist CALD organisations, specialist homelessness service providers, men's behaviour change programs and networks, community organisations working with high risk communities, specialist women's legal support services, women and children's support services, and Safe at Home programs.

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| <b>Members</b> | Eastlakes Family Support Service Inc<br>Central Tablelands and Blue Mountains Community Legal Centre<br>Hawkesbury Area Women's & Kids Services Collective<br>Highlands Community Centres Incorporated<br>Housing Plus<br>Illawarra Women's Health Centre<br>Immigrant Women's Speakout Assn of NSW<br>Indian (Sub-Cont) Crisis & Support Agency<br>Jenny's Place<br>Kempsey Families Inc<br>Liberty Domestic and Family Violence Specialist Services<br>Linking Communities Network Ltd<br>Lisa Harnum Foundation<br>Lithgow Community Projects<br>Lokahi Foundation<br>Lucy's Project |
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Macarthur Women's DVCAS  
Manly Warringah Womens Resource Centre  
Mary's House  
Mission Australia  
Molongo Support Services/ Louisa Domestic Violence Services  
Mount Druitt Family Violence Service  
Moving Forward DFV Case Management Services Inc  
Muslim Women Association  
No to Violence  
Northern Rivers WDVCS  
Nova for Women  
Open Support (previously Sisters of Charity Outreach)  
Orana Support Service Incorporated  
Parramatta Holroyd Family Support  
Parramatta Mission (SHS Packages)  
Peninsula Lighthouse  
Pop In Inc  
Prosper (Project Australia)  
Rape & Domestic Violence Services Australia  
SAHSSI Inc  
Samaritans  
South East Women & Children's Services Inc (SEWACS)  
South West Sydney Legal Centre  
Staying Home Leaving Violence (Broken Hill)  
Sydney Women's Counselling Centre  
The Deli Women & Children's Centre  
The Equanimity Project (Australia) Ltd  
The Marmalade Foundation t/a Lou's Place  
The Northern Centre  
The Salvation Army  
Third Sector Australia t/a Momentum Collective  
Tumut Regional Family Services  
WAGEC  
Warrina D&FV Specialist Service Co-op Ltd  
West Connect Domestic Violence Services  
Women Up North Housing Inc  
Women's Community Shelters  
YWCA Australia  
Mudgin- Gal

## Consultation questions

### Vision, objective and values

*1. Do the proposed vision and objective reflect what our aim should be and what success should look like under the National Strategy?*

Domestic Violence NSW broadly agrees with the proposed vision and objective, however, the proposed objective should be strengthened with the addition of a commitment to significantly reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse. Otherwise, the National Strategy will not drive change, and become a “tick the box” exercise for governments.

For example, “The National Strategy will **significantly** reduce the risk, extent and impact of child sexual abuse and related harms in Australia.”

*2. Do the proposed values reflect the values that should be guiding our work under the National Strategy?*

Domestic Violence NSW supports Values One through Five. We strongly support ensuring the voices of victims/survivors and children are paramount.

We caution that the National Strategy will be ineffective without the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, so it is our view that Value Four is integral to the success of the Strategy.

We question the addition of Value Six as it suggests the implementation of the National Strategy will focus on children with harmful sexual behaviours and adult offenders. Evidence-based interventions to deter, manage and rehabilitate adult offenders is addressed under Value Five. Value Six should be broader and address the intention to provide supports for all victims and survivors, including children with harmful sexual behaviours.

Value One: Child safety is everyone’s responsibility. Australian governments, non-government organisations and institutions, industry, communities, families and individuals all have a role to play.

Value Two: The **diverse voices of victims and survivors** must and will continue to shape the design and implementation of the National Strategy.

Value Three: **We value children’s voices and experiences and our engagement is age appropriate, child-centred and tailored to children’s diverse needs and circumstances.**

Value Four: **We work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to embed cultural safety and trauma-informed practice in the design and delivery of childsafe initiatives.**

Value Five: All initiatives are evidence-based and use data and research to build understanding of what works to prevent child sexual abuse.

~~Value Six: We focus on providing behavioural change supports to children with harmful sexual behaviours and delivering evidence-based interventions to deter, manage and rehabilitate adult offenders.~~

#### Strategic priority themes

*3. Do these strategic priority themes reflect the areas of focus for Australia over the life of the First National Action Plan and First Commonwealth Action Plan under the National Strategy (i.e. 2021-2025)?*

1. Education and building child safe cultures
2. Supporting and empowering victims and survivors
3. Support services for children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours
4. Offender prevention and intervention
5. Improving the evidence base

Domestic Violence NSW questions why support services for children exhibiting harmful sexual behaviours is not addressed as part of Priority Two: Supporting and empowering victims and survivors.

#### Working in partnership

*4. What are the best ways for Australian, state and territory governments to listen, engage and collaborate with these groups / individuals? Are there any groups you feel are missing?*

Domestic Violence NSW strongly advises that engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians is prioritised.

*5. Are there best practice mechanisms, existing consultation mechanisms or comprehensive co-design approaches that Australian, state and territory governments should use to consult and partner with these groups / individuals?*

Through Domestic Violence NSW, the Commonwealth and NSW Government have the ability to consult and partner with over 80 frontline specialist domestic and family violence services that engage with the child protection system every single day.

<https://www.dvnsw.org.au/about-dvnsw/our-members/>

Domestic Violence NSW has established the **Domestic Violence NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Steering Committee**. We invite the Commonwealth and NSW Governments to engage with the Steering Committee during the design and implementation of the National Strategy. The Steering Committee is comprised of a diverse group of leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with cultural, community and sector expertise in prevention, early intervention and response to domestic, family and sexual violence in their communities.

<https://www.dvnsw.org.au/working-for-change/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-committee/>

*6. Do you belong to or represent one of these groups and wish to be involved in design and implementation of individual actions under the National Strategy once it is launched?*

As the peak body for specialist domestic and family violence services in NSW, Domestic Violence NSW wishes to be involved in the design and implementation of individual actions once the National Strategy is launched.

*a. If yes, please identify which priority themes appear most relevant to you, noting you will have the opportunity to confirm your involvement in individual actions once the National Strategy is launched (and your answer here will not prevent you from being invited to be involved in actions outside any priority themes you have identified).*

Most relevant to Domestic Violence NSW (and the over 80 member organisations we represent) are the priority themes of:

1. Education and building child safe cultures, and
2. Supporting and empowering victims and survivors.

## Further comments and suggestions

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community

Domestic Violence NSW advocates for all Australian jurisdictions to work closely with the breadth of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, and key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, on developing a National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse that is culturally appropriate and includes the priorities and recommendations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The role of the specialist domestic and family violence sector

The specialist domestic and family violence sector understands child protection, however, child protection organisations often do not always understand domestic and family violence.

Specialist domestic and family violence services:

- Recognise children as clients in their own right.
- Provide positive support relationships with women and families so that children's safety is discussed in a supportive way.
- At a minimum, have organisational policies, procedures and practices that adopt a Child Safe approach as articulated by the Office of the Children's Guardian.
- Work with children as victim-survivors in their own right wherever possible, including individual case, risk and safety planning, support for children and young people's trauma and trained, specialist workers to support children.
- Have links with other agencies that can support the wellbeing and continued development of the child/ren if the service is unable to provide this support while working with the parent/guardian/carer.
- Have a comprehensive understanding of the way domestic and family violence affects and impacts children, and is able to present this information clearly to the parent and child if appropriate.

Therefore, specialist domestic and family violence services need to be a part of the consultation process on the *National Strategy to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse* as they are often frontline responders.