



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Communities**



# 10 Year Strategy for Reducing Family and Domestic Violence

 Consultation Paper



## Minister's Message

As Western Australia's first Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence I recognise the need to strengthen our work in this area and the importance of consolidating our efforts into a clear, long term, State-wide strategy.

The 10 Year Strategy to Reduce Family and Domestic Violence (the Strategy) will outline a collaborative, whole-of-community approach to achieving safety for adult and child victims, accountability for perpetrators and supporting earlier intervention and prevention.

To inform development of the Strategy we want to hear from all Western Australians including the community sector and government partners, specialist family and domestic violence services, legislators, academics, people with lived experience and community leaders.

We will also continue to engage with a broad range of people, including representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disability, and LGBTQ+ people to ensure that the Strategy addresses the diverse needs of all Western Australians.

I am grateful to the many people working tirelessly to reduce the prevalence and impact of family and domestic violence and am determined to set an ambitious vision and plan to reduce family and domestic violence over the next ten years.

We cannot do this alone, but together we can create and drive the solutions for a Western Australia free from family and domestic violence.

Hon Simone McGurk MLA  
Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence



If you would like information, support or assistance about family and domestic violence, please contact the:

**Women's Domestic Violence Helpline – 1800 007 339**, or the

**Men's Domestic Violence Helpline – 1800 000 599**

These services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If you are in danger or need immediate assistance, please call the police on 000.



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## Introduction

The Western Australian State Government is committed to tackling family and domestic violence by building on the [Stopping Family and Domestic Violence](#) policy and working across government, with the community services sector, private industry, people with lived experience and the broader community to develop a strategy for reducing family and domestic over 10 years.

To inform development of the Strategy, the Department of Communities is undertaking State-wide consultation including through an online [survey](#), written submissions, service provider forums and service user focus groups.

The consultation will engage the whole community in a discussion about how we collectively take action to improve the safety and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities affected by family and domestic violence.

This consultation paper provides background information and consultation questions to inform written submissions.

For information about other ways to have your say and get involved go to:

[www.communities.wa.gov.au/fdv](http://www.communities.wa.gov.au/fdv)

**The closing date for written submissions is Thursday 30 May 2019**

Please email submissions to [FDVStrategy@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:FDVStrategy@communities.wa.gov.au) or mail to -  
Att: Manager Family and Domestic Violence Unit  
Department of Communities  
99 Plain Street East Perth, 6004

If you have any questions please contact Nicole Leggett, Manager Family and Domestic Violence Unit on (08) 6552 8037 or [FDVStrategy@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:FDVStrategy@communities.wa.gov.au)

Please note that the responses received to this consultation paper may be made public, or may be quoted verbatim in reports documenting outcomes of the consultation. If you do not wish for your submission to be made public, please let us know in your response.



## Family and domestic violence in Western Australia

Family and domestic violence can occur in many different kinds of intimate or family relationships including from one partner towards another, from a parent to a child, from an adult to an elderly relative, and from an adolescent towards a parent. Most frequently however, family and domestic violence is perpetrated by men against their female intimate partners and children (ABS 2017).

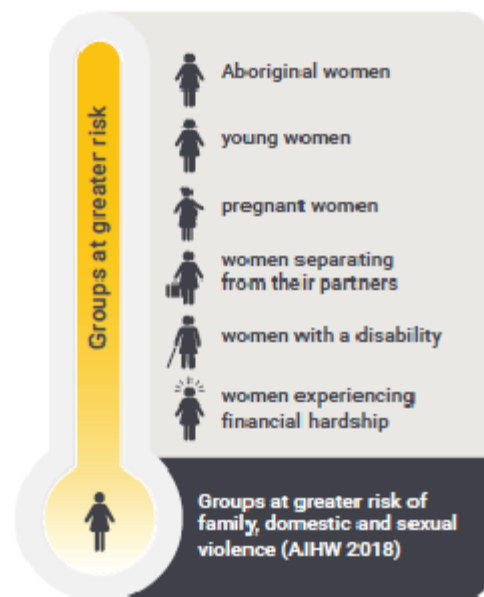
Forms of violence are wide ranging and can include any kind of behaviour that provokes fear or seeks to compel or control another person's behaviour.

As many as one in three Australian women have experienced family and domestic violence (ABS 2017; Mouzos & Makkai, 2004). For Aboriginal women the number is much higher with as many as one in two experiencing violence and abuse in an intimate or family relationship (ABS 2008; AIHW 2006).

The 2012 and 2016 Personal Safety Surveys (ABS 2012; 2017) both found that in the preceding 12 months, Western Australia had the second highest rate of reported physical and sexual violence against women, second only to the Northern Territory.

In 2016/17 Western Australia Police responded to an episode of family and domestic violence every 10 minutes, over 54,000 incidents. The rate of reporting has steadily increased over the last eight years, up 50 per cent from 2009-10 (Western Australia Police Force 2018).

It is likely that reporting will continue to increase as awareness about family and domestic violence is raised across the Western Australian community. The Personal Safety Survey (2017) estimates that as few as 20 per cent of victims of family and domestic violence currently contact the police for assistance.





## Why do we need a new approach?

Over the last decade there have been significant positive changes to the communities' awareness of, and attitudes about family and domestic violence. There have also been significant reforms across government and the community services sector to improve the capability and effectiveness of service responses. Yet it is a work in progress.

### **Rates of family and domestic violence have not changed**

- The Personal Safety Survey demonstrates that rates of intimate partner violence, and estimations of under-reporting, have not changed over time (ABS 2005; 2012; 2016).
- The highest rates of reported sexual harassment, emotional abuse, and physical and sexual violence are reported by women aged 18-24, indicating a new generation of women are being subjected to coercion, control, violence and abuse in their relationships and workplaces (ABS 2016).
- Data from Western Australia Police indicates high rates of perpetrator recidivism including multiple episodes of offending within a single intimate or familial relationship; and also offending against successive intimate partners (Sherman, Bland, House & Strang 2016).

### **The service system is complex and difficult to navigate**

- The service system is too difficult to navigate, and ultimately offers too little support and protection for women and children (MACCP 2016).
- The complexity of service responses, and a lack of meaningful coordination and collaboration, has resulted in duplicative and inefficient processes, information silos, and ineffective service delivery (LRC WA 2014).
- Perpetrators are largely 'hidden from view' and receive limited violence focused intervention. This enables them to continue to use violence without consequence (Centre for Innovative Justice 2015; Hope 2012; Ombudsman 2014; 2017).
- Current mainstream service responses are not consistently accessible and inclusive for Aboriginal people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with a disability or people who identify as LGBTQ+<sup>1</sup> (Chung; Chugani & Marchant 2016; Ombudsman 2014).

### **Community attitudes condone violence against women**

- Violence supportive attitudes in the community have only marginally reduced in 18 years, as indicated by the National Community Attitudes Survey (1995; 2009; 2013; 2018). The 2018 results demonstrate that sizeable portions of the community continue to believe that there are circumstances that excuse violence and that women should bear some of the responsibility for men's violence and abuse (Vic Health 2009; 2013; 2018).

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<sup>1</sup> LGBTQ+ is an inclusive term representing Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans(gender) and Queer. It also includes other groups relating to sexual orientation, gender identity including Asexual, Non-Binary, Questioning, Intersex and others.



## The 10 Year Strategy

The 10 Year Strategy for Reducing Family and Domestic Violence (the Strategy) will set out a whole of government and community plan for preventing and responding to family and domestic violence. It will build on existing evidence and the experiences of service providers and people with lived experience.

The Strategy will include a dedicated approach to Aboriginal family safety, and will prioritise access and inclusion for people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTQ+ people and people in regional and remote Western Australia

### What are we trying to achieve?

A future where all Western Australians live free from family and domestic violence, and where women and children are safe, respected, valued and treated as equals in private and public life.

### Goals and priority areas

Four broad goals for the strategy are proposed related to the areas of: primary prevention, victim safety, perpetrator accountability and behaviour change, and a safe, accountable and collaborative service system. The goals and related priority areas are highlighted below.

The proposed **over-arching goals** for the Strategy are to:

1. Identify, challenge and change the structural, social and cultural conditions that support family and domestic violence, including family violence as it impacts Aboriginal people, families, communities and culture.
2. Ensure women and children at risk of, or experiencing family and domestic violence are identified early, offered supports and protection, and are assisted to recover and thrive.
3. Ensure perpetrators are held to account and supported to change their behaviour.
4. Create an inclusive and responsive service system that prioritises safety, is risk informed and collaborative.

To achieve these goals, the supporting **priority areas** are:

1. Community leaders take action to challenge and change the social and cultural conditions that promote gender inequality and violence supportive attitudes.
2. Aboriginal people, families and communities have access to culturally informed and Aboriginal led service responses, and culturally secure mainstream service delivery.
3. Women and their children are offered supports and protection through an accessible, inclusive, and responsive service system.
4. Interventions for men at risk of, or perpetrating family and domestic violence are available, accessible and effective.
5. Legal and justice systems are accessible and risk informed.
6. Service delivery is coordinated and collaborative and organised around the shared principle of safety first.
7. All workers, the services that employ them, and the structures, frameworks and policies that train and guide them, are family and domestic violence informed.



## **Have your say!**

We want your input on key approaches and actions to support the vision of ‘a future where all Western Australians live free from family and domestic violence, and where women and children are safe, respected, valued and treated as equals in private and public life’.

### **A solutions focus**

Considerable evidence exists about family and domestic violence, including feedback from service providers and service users. This paper sets out key consultation questions related to each of the four proposed goals of the Strategy, followed by a brief summary of ‘what we know’ and ‘work already underway’.

You do not need to respond to every question.

### **Feedback on the policy framework**

The draft policy framework for the Strategy including vision, scope, principles, definition, goals and priority areas, is included at Appendix One. If you would like to provide comment or feedback on the policy framework you can include it in your written response to this consultation paper, or you can complete the survey online.

### **Other ways to get involved**

For information and updates about other ways to get involved and have your say go to the website [www.communities.wa.gov.au/fdv](http://www.communities.wa.gov.au/fdv)





## Preventing family and domestic violence

**Goal 1. Identify, challenge and change the structural, social and cultural conditions that support family and domestic violence, including family violence as it impacts Aboriginal people, families, communities and culture.**

This goal is about primary prevention. It includes the work required to prevent family and domestic violence in the future by changing the conditions that enable it to occur, including gender inequality and intersecting discrimination and disadvantage.

It includes addressing violence supportive attitudes, rigid gender roles, and addressing inter-generational trauma and the ongoing effects and consequences of colonisation for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

This goal links with priority area 1: Community leaders take-action to challenge and change the social and cultural conditions that promote gender inequality and violence supportive attitudes.



The majority of Australians say they would **act or like to act** when witnessing abuse or disrespect towards women

(NCAS, 2018)

### **Tell us what you think about preventing family and domestic violence**

1. What are the best ways to identify, challenge and change victim blaming and violence supportive attitudes in the community?
2. What are the best ways to approach prevention in Aboriginal families and communities?
3. Anything else you want to tell us?



## **Preventing family and domestic violence**

### **What we know**

Preventing and reducing family and domestic violence requires dedicated attention to primary prevention. The best available evidence informing this work is the literature concerning violence against women of which family and domestic violence is one form.

Our Watch, the national foundation for the primary prevention of violence against women, has created two evidence-based frameworks to guide the primary prevention of violence against women:

1. *Change the Story: A Shared Framework for the Primary Prevention of Violence against Women (Change the Story)*; and
2. *Changing the Picture: A National Resource to Support the Prevention of Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and their Children (Changing the Picture)*.

*Change the Story* (2015) states that gender inequality is the social context enabling violence against women to occur. This includes:

- attitudes that condone violence against women;
- men's control of decision making and limits to women's independence;
- stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity;
- disrespect towards women; and
- male peer relations that emphasise aggression.

In addition, there are a range of reinforcing factors that do not on their own cause violence against women, but when coupled with gender inequality and gendered drivers, can increase the frequency and severity of violence and abuse. The reinforcing factors are:

- condoning violence in general;
- experiences of, and exposure to, violence;
- socio-economic inequality and discrimination; and
- backlash factors (increases in violence when male dominance, power or status is challenged) weakening of pro-social behaviour, especially harmful use of alcohol (Our Watch 2015).

*Changing the Picture* (2018) builds on this understanding and adds that for Aboriginal women and children, additional drivers are the ongoing impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people. For Aboriginal people, this includes inter-generational trauma, structural disadvantage, the destruction of culture, and loss of cultural identity. For non-Aboriginal people the ongoing impacts of colonisation include the pervasion of racism and normalisation of the systemic disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people.

Significantly:

- Violence supportive attitudes in the community have only marginally reduced in 18 years, as indicated by the National Community Attitudes Survey (1995, 2009, 2013). The 2013 results demonstrate that there remains to be sizeable proportions of the population who believe that there are circumstances in which violence can be excused



and that women should bear some of the responsibility for men's violence and abuse (VicHealth 2009; 2013).

- Although gender equality is improving in Australia, there is a significant gender pay gap; under representation of women in politics and on boards of ASX listed companies; and over-representation of women in unpaid work including unpaid carers for children, people with a disability and the elderly (Workplace Gender Equality Agency 2018).

Themes arising from consultation with service providers include:

- primary prevention requires a whole of government, whole of community approach;
- family and domestic violence services champion primary prevention, and do what they can in their communities to raise awareness, but they are not resourced to do the work;
- concerted effort to raise awareness about family and domestic violence will likely result in an increased demand on services;
- misconceptions about family and domestic violence, including victim blaming, and minimising or externalising perpetrator responsibility, are perpetuated in the media; and
- primary prevention is critical for successful service response, as the families and communities of women and children, and perpetrators, can significantly influence (reinforce or undermine) the effectiveness of service delivery and supports (DCPFS 2015; Safe Systems Coalition 2018).

## **Work underway**

Some of the work underway by Government to prevent family and domestic violence includes:

- development of a [10 Year Women's Strategy](#) including a focus on gender equality;
- joining [Our Watch](#) and partnering with them on a range of initiatives and campaigns;
- introducing a teacher support program for respectful relationships education;
- awareness raising including workplace accreditation; and
- partnering with the Commonwealth, States and Territories to fund and develop the '[Stop it at the Start](#)' campaign, and to develop national gender equality principles.

Community sector and private industry activities to prevent family and domestic violence include awareness raising, respectful relationships education, and dedicated initiatives focused on reducing the gender pay gap and appointing more women to senior positions and boards.



## Victim safety

### Goal 2. Ensure women and children at risk of, or experiencing family and domestic violence are identified early, offered supports and protection and are supported to recover and thrive

This goal focuses on the provision of quality and accessible services for women and children that are person centred, flexible and responsive to client need.

This goal links with priority areas:

2. Aboriginal people, families and communities have access to culturally informed and Aboriginal led service responses, and culturally secure mainstream service delivery.
3. Women and their children are offered supports and protection through an accessible, inclusive, and responsive service system.
5. Legal and justice systems are fair and just.

1 in 3 Australians believe that if a woman does not leave her abusive partner then **she is responsible** for the violence continuing

(NCAS, 2018)



### Tell us what you think about victim safety

1. What can be done to support service providers to better identify people at risk, and take early action to help prevent family and domestic violence?
2. What can be done to make it easier for people in crisis to identify, access and understand the service system?
3. What supports or protections should be considered, to assist with the safety and recovery of women and children?
4. Anything else you want to tell us?



## **Victim safety**

### **What we know**

Family and domestic violence has significant and long-lasting consequences for the health, safety and wellbeing of women and children. For women it is the leading cause of:

- homelessness;
- mental health issues including anxiety and depressive disorders;
- substance misuse;
- reproductive ill-health including early pregnancy loss;
- injury, illness, suicide and self-inflicted injuries, and homicide; and
- poverty and economic disadvantage (Ayre et al. 2016; AIHW 2017; Cortis 2017).

For children and young people, exposure to family and domestic violence:

- undermines attachment to the primary care-giver;
- causes negative health, social and educational outcomes;
- causes significant emotional harm and increases the risk of neglect and physical abuse. It is also a key reason that children are brought into out of home care;
- is the leading cause of homelessness; and
- increases the risk that the child or young person will experience or perpetrate family and domestic violence in their peer and intimate relationships in later life (AIHW 2017; Kaspiew et al. 2017).

Some community members experience family and domestic violence at higher rates, are more likely to suffer severe injuries, and find it harder to access safe and suitable services. This includes Aboriginal women and children, people with disability, LGBTQ+ people, women and children in regional and remote communities and women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) backgrounds (Mitra-Kahn, Newbiggin & Hardefeldt 2016).

To create safety for women and children and support them to recover and thrive the service system must have the capability to: identify women and children at risk and refer them to appropriate support; provide a continuum of care from point of identification to post-crisis recovery; provide services that are person centred, risk informed and responsive to client need; identify and effectively respond to perpetrators; and provide coordinated responses between agencies and organisations (Breckenridge et al. 2016; Putt 2017; Wendt et al. 2015).

Reviews, inquiries and service provider consultations have shown that the current service system offers a range of high quality supports and services for women and children, but that these services may not have sufficient resourcing or capacity to meet demand. As a result, services can be crisis driven with limited capacity for earlier identification and engagement or long term support (Chung, Chugani & Marchant 2016; DCPFS 2017).

In addition, service delivery models are mainly geared toward supporting separation, or working with women and children escaping the perpetrator. There are limited examples of safe whole of family interventions for women, children and men that are reunifying or remaining in a relationship together (Humphreys & Campo 2017).



These findings are reinforced by women, who say that:

- it isn't always easy to find out where or how to get help;
- specialist services are invaluable for assisting victims with a range of support needs, and navigating the service system;
- communal crisis accommodation isn't suitable for everyone;
- information silos mean that they often have to repeat their story; and
- support and assistance post-crisis is important (Butorac 2018; MACCP 2016).

### **Work underway**

Some of the work underway by Government to support the safety and recovery of women and children includes:

- establishing two new women's refuges;
- making it easier and less traumatic to obtain a family violence restraining order;
- expanding sexual assault counselling and outreach services in the metropolitan area;
- expanding family and domestic violence counselling services in the Peel region;
- providing additional funding for financial counselling services;
- working with the RSPCA, Local Government Authorities and animal havens to establish a program for victim's pets to be safely housed away from the perpetrator;
- strengthening legislation to protect the [rights of victims in rental accommodation](#);
- increasing training for health professionals to identify family and domestic violence;
- improving the cultural competence and accessibility of family and domestic violence services for Aboriginal people and people from CaLD backgrounds; and
- introducing [paid family and domestic violence leave](#) for public sector employees.

Community sector services are also continually innovating to improve services for women and children. This includes building cross-sector partnerships and changing and improving service models to reflect contemporary best practice. A few of the many examples of this in Western Australia include: the refuge emergency response in the metropolitan area; the tailored and wrap around supports for women and children at Wooreemiya Women's Refuge and Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre; and the roll out of Safe at Home.



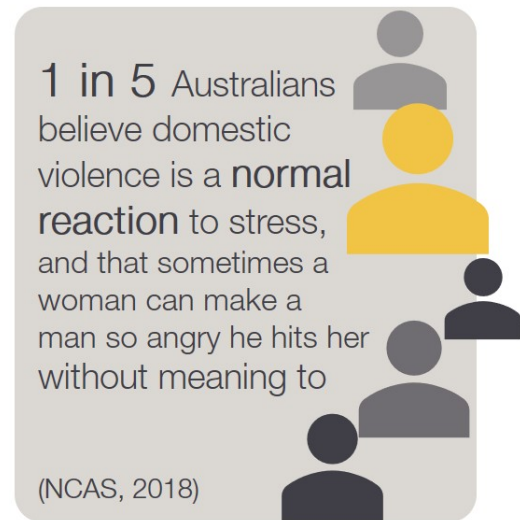
## Perpetrator accountability and behaviour change

### Goal 3. Ensure perpetrators are held to account and supported to change their behaviour

This goal encompasses the engagement of perpetrators across the service system to promote accountability and support behaviour change. It includes monitoring, perpetrator pattern-based risk assessment, pro-active engagement, consistent messages that violence won't be tolerated, support to engage in intervention programs, and consistent use of consequences or sanctions to respond to known episodes of violence and abuse.

This goal links with priority areas:

4. Behaviour change interventions for men at risk of, or perpetrating family and domestic violence are available, accessible and effective.
5. Legal and justice systems are fair and just.
6. Service delivery is coordinated and collaborative, and organised around the shared principle of safety first.



### Tell us what you think about perpetrator accountability and behaviour change

1. How can the service system be changed to improve earlier identification, and the assessment, management and monitoring of perpetrators?
2. What supports or sanctions could be considered to assist with promoting perpetrator accountability and/or behaviour change?
3. What can families, peers and communities do to promote accountability and support behaviour change?
4. Anything else you want to tell us?



## **Perpetrator accountability and behaviour change**

### **What we know**

Women and children cannot be safe, or effectively supported to heal and recover, if they live in fear and are continually subjected to threats, stalking and violence. The perpetrator must be supported to change, or the service system take action to reduce or contain the risk they pose (Centre for Innovative Justice 2015).

Perpetrators use violent and abusive tactics to coerce, control and create fear. The behaviour is deliberate and systematic, and escalates when the perpetrators control is threatened, particularly during service intervention or following relationship breakdown (Costa et al 2015). Given that many service responses are predicated on separation, it means that services are often asking or supporting women and children to put themselves in more danger, in an effort to find safety.

This is complicated by the actions of many perpetrators to resist change, avoid services, deny responsibility and use service systems to further abuse (Mackay et al 2015).

As few perpetrators are internally motivated to change their behaviour, the community and service system must provide the external motivations for change and/or create capacity to take action and contain risk in circumstances where behaviour change is not an option or is ineffective (Centre for Innovative Justice 2015; Day & Bowen 2015). Both components, accountability and support to change behaviour, are important.

The SAFER project referred to this as creating a 'web of accountability' (Smith, Humphreys & Laming 2013). For it to work, there must be a high degree of collaboration between services and agencies, routine exchange of risk relevant information and mechanisms to identify episodes of family and domestic violence and enact consequences for the perpetrator and pathways to suitable interventions. Where this occurs, it creates external motivation to change, and reinforces that violence will not be tolerated.

In Western Australia, many components of an effective 'web of accountability' already exist including men's behaviour change programs in the metropolitan area and regional centres, and a range of sanctions that can be enacted by the service system. These include:

- that the WA Police Force can issue police orders of up to 72 hours that can exclude perpetrators from a residence and prohibit contact with an adult or child victim;
- that the WA Police Force and Communities child protection workers can seek family violence restraining orders on behalf of adult and child victims respectively;
- criminal proceedings are pursued by Western Australia Police and the Director of Public Prosecutions, they do not require a statement from the adult victim, so long as there is sufficient available evidence for a prima facie case; and
- mandated conditions on behaviour including participation in rehabilitation programs through civil and criminal justice interventions.

However, service providers, reviews and inquiries have highlighted that the collective capacity of the service system to create accountability and effect behaviour change is consistently undermined by the following factors:





- lack of understanding about family and domestic violence among the judiciary, police and service providers. This can result in inappropriate responses to women and children, and collusion with perpetrators including victim blaming and minimising or externalising responsibility;
- the availability of voluntary and mandated men's behaviour change programs including capability to tailor interventions according to risk and need;
- the suitability of men's behaviour change programs for men with complex needs, limited literacy skills, cognitive deficits, or where English is a second (or third) language;
- the resourcing and capability of men's behaviour change programs to deliver high quality, safety focused engagement with the child and adult victim, or other affected family members;
- low levels of knowledge, skill and confidence about perpetrator engagement and intervention in mainstream services including child protection, mental health, family support and legal sectors;
- sector silos which limit the ability of services that more routinely engage with men, such as alcohol and other drug and mental health, to identify perpetrators and safely engage them around their use of violence and abuse; and that
- provisions for containing risk or supporting behaviour change are mainly located within the civil and criminal justice systems. This can limit opportunity for earlier intervention and can be undermined by inconsistent decisions or (what can be perceived as) 'unjust' or lenient sentences (DCPFS 2015; LRC WA 2014; Ombudsman 2014, 2017; Community Development and Justice Standing Committee 2015).

### **Work underway**

Some of the work underway by Government to support perpetrator accountability and behaviour change includes:

- establishing a new [Communicare Breathing Space](#);
- strengthening legislation by addressing the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission report [Enhancing Family and Domestic Violence Laws: Final Report](#); and
- introducing an electronic monitoring trial for violent offenders.

Innovative work underway in the community services sector includes trials for integrated family and domestic violence and alcohol and other drug intervention programs and closer coordination between men's behaviour change program providers.



## Safe, accountable and collaborative service system

### Goal 4. Create an inclusive and responsive service system that prioritises safety, is risk informed and collaborative

This goal encompasses the collective efforts of the service system to promote the safety and recovery of women and children, and the accountability and behaviour change of perpetrators. It focuses on access, cultural competence, seamless pathways through the service system; responses informed by risk and client need; wrap around support; and whole of family responses that attend to safety, behaviour change and accountability.

This goal links with priority areas:

6. Service delivery is coordinated and collaborative and organised around the shared principle that 'victim safety is paramount'.
7. All workers, the services that employ them, and the structures, frameworks and policies that train and guide them, are domestic violence informed.



### Tell us what you think about a safe, accountable and collaborative service system

1. What could be done to support the routine exchange of risk relevant information?
2. What are the priorities for developing and supporting a family and domestic violence informed workforce?
3. What models or examples of collaboration could enhance service delivery in Western Australia, including in remote and regional areas?
4. Anything else you want to tell us?



## **Safe, accountable and collaborative service system**

### **What we know**

The prevalence of family and domestic violence, the pervasiveness of its effects on the health and wellbeing of women and children, and the complexity of interventions focused on stopping or changing perpetrators behaviour, means that responses involve multiple services including child protection, police, courts, corrections, housing and specialist crisis accommodation, advocacy, outreach and counselling (Breckenridge et al. 2016).

The involvement of different services can lead to robust, wrap-around support focused on keeping victims safe and holding perpetrators to account (Breckenridge et al. 2016). Coordinated and collaborative responses (CCR) are recognised nationally and internationally as best practice (Breckenridge et al. 2016).

In this context, CCR refers to government agencies and community sector services working together to provide holistic, safe and accountable responses to victims and perpetrators; streamlined pathways through the service system; and coordinated service delivery between agencies.

The important functions of CCR include: identifying victims and perpetrators; assessing risk and client need; safety planning with women and children; engaging men about their violence; managing and monitoring risk; supporting behaviour change; providing options for the containment of violence and risk; and supporting post-crisis recovery. These functions are supported by environments that formalise information exchange, case coordination, common understanding and language about family and domestic violence, shared principles and goals, transparency and service accountability and monitoring.

Where collaboration is formalised through deliberate design and procurement, it is most likely to endure and be successful (MacVean et al 2015). This is demonstrated in research and is evident in a range of successful integrated models operating in Western Australia such as the George Jones Advocacy Centre, Child First and the Family Support Networks.

Where collaboration is less formal, and not embedded within core business processes, it can become a practice that is the exception, rather than the rule. This is demonstrated through Western Australian inquiries and homicide reviews which have found that the service system overall is highly fragmented, resulting in:

- women and children navigating complex service systems and repeating their story;
- women and children receiving services driven by the agency remit, as opposed to their unique needs, resulting in interventions that do not improve their safety;
- services engaging women and children around strategies to keep themselves safe in isolation of a response to the perpetrator;
- inconsistent responses between services and in legal and justice systems;
- services being provided without a full understanding of the risk, or of the actions being taken by other services, leading to duplication or counter-productive responses;
- inadvertent collusion with perpetrators deflections, minimisations or victim blaming;
- limited capacity to identify and respond to perpetrators of family and domestic violence presenting in non-violence related fields e.g., substance misuse, mental health; and



- limited capacity to respond to perpetrators with complex or diverse needs such as substance misuse or mental health issues, disability or English as a second language (LRC WA 2014; Ombudsman 2017; Pence, Mitchell & Aoina 2007; Walsh et al. 2012).

Factors limiting the degree and effectiveness of CCR include:

- capacity and resources;
- organisational cultures and processes that limit or prohibit information exchange in spite of permissive legislation and agency agreements;
- siloed specialities and procurement processes;
- inconsistent understanding about family and domestic violence across the workforce;
- circular referral and exclusion practices that result in clients with multiple presenting needs being 'bounced' between services;
- that collaboration is not always part of usual business processes; and
- oppositional practice approaches for example that child protection requires women to 'protect' their children from the perpetrator, where family court can require women to 'facilitate access' (Humphreys et al. 2017; LRC WA 2014; Ombudsman 2017).

It is important to note that CCR on its own is not a solution for stopping family and domestic violence. Although it is the important foundation for safe, streamlined and effective interventions, it is only as effective as the 'sum of its parts'. CCR in areas where there are no specialist services for victims and perpetrators is less effective than CCR operating in locations where these services are available (Humphreys et al. 2017).

## **Work underway**

Some of the work underway by Government to promote joined-up services includes:

- establishing two one-stop hubs to streamline service access;
- establishing a women's refuge that provides an integrated therapeutic program for women experiencing family and domestic violence who have complex co-occurring mental health issues or substance misuse;
- [regional services reform](#);
- [procurement reform](#).

In the community services sector there are numerous examples of collaboration at the local level including formal and informal working relationships between key services.



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## Appendix one: Draft policy framework

Outlined below is the draft policy framework for the new Family and Domestic Violence Strategy. The policy framework was developed by the Department of Communities in consultation with partner agencies across government and community sector services.

The draft policy framework includes:

- **a conceptual framework** for family and domestic violence and the **language** to be used in the Strategy;
- a **vision statement** which provides a short summary of what we are trying to achieve;
- **principles** that guide and inform all aspects of the Strategy;
- summary of the **scope** which sets out what will be included in the Strategy, and what will not be included; and
- **goals and priority areas** and the rationale for why they are important.





## Conceptual framework

It is proposed that the Strategy will include a conceptual framework for family and domestic violence including a definition, a brief summary of the context in which it occurs, and an explanation of key terms. The draft conceptual framework is outlined below.

### Definition

Family and domestic violence is characterised by a pattern of coercive control that one person exercises over another to dominate and get their way. It is behaviour that can physically harm, create and instil fear, denigrate and deny access to basic needs and rights, prevent a person from doing what they want, or compel them to behave in ways they do not freely choose. The use of coercive controlling behaviour is deliberate, systematic and often occurs over a long period of time.

Family and domestic violence can occur in different types of intimate or family relationships including, but not limited to, from one partner towards another, from a parent to a child, from an adult to an elderly relative, from a carer to a person with a disability, and from a child or adolescent towards a parent. Most frequently however, family and domestic violence is perpetrated by men against their female intimate partners and their children.

Forms of violence are wide ranging and can include any kind of behaviour that provokes fear or seeks to compel or control another person's behaviour. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- physical violence - any behaviour that is intended to cause harm or injury such as pushing, slapping, punching, choking and kicking;
- sexualised violence – any behaviour that forces or coerces sexualised contact. “Forced” in this context refers to individuals who are physically coerced to participate or who are not in a position to say no as a result of fear, threats or intimidation;
- emotional and psychological violence – any behaviour that demeans, hurts or degrades another person including threats, put-downs, insults, shouting, mind games, manipulation, humiliation, and making the person feel worthless or no good;
- social control and abuse – any behaviour that seeks to isolate someone from their friends and family, disrupt their social relationships, or control their participation in the community;
- financial control and abuse – any behaviour that takes away a person's control of, and decision making capacity related to, their money and finances including outright stealing. Includes denying access to basic needs;
- cultural or spiritual violence – any behaviour that controls or disrupts a person's participation in cultural or spiritual practices such as keeping someone away from country, stopping them from speaking their first language, limiting access to places of worship or forcing them to participate practices that they do not want to be involved with; and
- technology facilitated violence – using technology to facilitate any of the types of violence described above such as tracking a person's movements, or who they are in contact with, or disseminating intimate images to demean and humiliate them.



## **The context in which family and domestic violence occurs**

There are a range of factors that create the social and cultural conditions for family and domestic violence to occur, including for perpetrators of violence to choose to use violence, for women and children to feel there are limited options for safety and escape, and for communities to normalise and tolerate perpetrator behaviour. These factors are summarised below.

### **Gender inequality**

Family and domestic violence is a gendered crime enabled by inequalities and imbalances of power between women and men. Research has demonstrated that communities and cultures with higher rates of violence against women, have gender inequality embedded in their social and economic structures, social and cultural norms, and organisational, family and community practices. Of particular issue are community attitudes that condone violence against women; structures and practices that enable and reinforce men's control of decision making and limit women's independence; rigid gender roles and stereotypes; and male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect of women.

### **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality refers to types of discrimination or disadvantage that compound on each other and are inseparable. An intersectional approach enables an understanding of how gender inequality, and other forms of discrimination and disadvantage, can compound one another to result in higher rates of family and domestic violence in certain population groups. For example, there is evidence that family and domestic violence is experienced at disproportionately high rates by Aboriginal women and children, women and children in regional and remote areas, women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with disability, and people who identify as LGBTQ+.

The compound vulnerability, disadvantage and discrimination experienced by these groups affect not only the prevalence of family and domestic violence, but also the accessibility, suitability and effectiveness of available supports and interventions.

### **Colonisation, dispossession and cultural dislocation**

For Aboriginal people, the experiences and perpetration of family violence must be understood in the context of colonisation, dispossession, cultural dislocation, systemic racism and forced removal of children. This context and the ongoing effects of these policies and practices are significant factors contributing to trauma, disadvantage, violence and the use of alcohol and other drugs, which are significant contributing factors to the over-representation of Aboriginal women and children as victims of family violence.

### **Alcohol and other drugs**

Alcohol and other drugs do not cause family and domestic violence. Coercion and control are usually present whether or not the perpetrator is affected by substances. However, when the perpetrator is substance affected, the violence and abuse they inflict is often more severe, and more frequent. Alcohol and other drugs are therefore important 'reinforcing factors' contributing to the prevalence and severity of family and domestic violence in the Western Australian community.



### **Language**

'Women and children' are referred to as the primary victims of family and domestic violence. This representation does not diminish or deny other experiences of family and domestic violence, but is aimed at raising awareness about the gendered nature and the role that gender inequality plays in creating and reinforcing social and cultural conditions that enable and condone violence against women.

'Perpetrator' is used to refer to the person using violent and abusive behaviours in their intimate and/or family relationships.

'Service system' is used to reflect the array of programs, services, legal and justice systems that respond to family and domestic violence in the Western Australian community. This includes specialist family and domestic violence services, police, health, education, child protection, courts, corrections, legal services, and family support services.

The term Aboriginal is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Indigenous' has been retained in the names of programs and initiatives and, unless noted otherwise, is inclusive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Family violence is the term preferred by Aboriginal people and is used in this document to reflect family violence in Aboriginal families and communities. Family in this context can refer to any family member including a relative defined through Aboriginal tradition, culture or contemporary practice.

The language used is intended to provide clarity and transparency about the issue of family and domestic violence, and the work needed to address this issue in our community. The Strategy will be written in a way to promote accountability, both of the perpetrators using violence and abuse, and the responsibility of people, communities, agencies and services, to challenge and change violence supportive attitudes and provide a responsive and effective service response. The Strategy will not contain passive references to 'violence' or language that mutualises responsibility such as 'a violent relationship'. Where possible, family and domestic violence is represented as a unilateral act, where a perpetrator uses violent and abusive tactics to coerce and control their current or former partner, or other family members.



## Vision

The purpose of a vision statement is to provide a long-term goal, of what we are trying to achieve. It is proposed that the vision statement for the Family and Domestic Violence Strategy should be:

A future where all Western Australians live free from family and domestic violence, and where women and children are safe, respected, valued and treated as equals in private and public life.

## Principles

Outlined below are the draft principles to guide the Strategy.

1. All Western Australians are entitled to be equally valued and respected regardless of age, gender identity, culture, religion, education, ability, or health.
2. All Western Australians have the right to live in respectful, supportive and safe relationships and to feel safe and secure in their homes.
3. Family and domestic violence is everyone's concern, and ending it is everyone's responsibility.
4. Women's and children's safety and wellbeing is paramount, and prioritised in all areas of legislation, service delivery, service and system design, and social policy development.
5. Perpetrators of family and domestic violence are responsible for their choices to use violence and abuse.
6. Solutions are place based, person centred and culturally safe, informed by understandings about trauma, culture and other available evidence.
7. Systemic racism and inequality is identified, challenged and eliminated.
8. The service system has no wrong door. Regardless of funding stream or remit, services are accessible and responsive to the diverse needs of people impacted by family and domestic violence.
9. Remote and regional service delivery is flexible and responsive to person and family need.



## Scope

The aim of the scope statement is to briefly describe what will be included (or responded to) within the Strategy, and what will not be included. The draft scope statement is outlined below.

Please note that in addition to the family and domestic violence Strategy, the government is also working towards new plans and strategies targeting: homelessness, women, elder abuse and youth. In addition, there are existing plans and strategic frameworks focused on child protection (National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children) and the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people (Close the Gap). The draft scope aims to outline the unique focus area for the Strategy.

The 10 Year Strategy for Reducing Family and Domestic Violence sets out a whole of government and community plan for preventing and responding to family and domestic violence. The Strategy includes:

- prevention and earlier intervention;
- a safety-first approach to all family and domestic violence responses;
- supporting women and children to recover and thrive post violence;
- engaging and responding to perpetrators to change their behaviour;
- introducing provisions across the service system to enable and promote perpetrator accountability including direct measures to reduce or contain their use of violence and abuse; and
- an efficient and effective service system characterised by an informed workforce and joined up service delivery.

The Strategy includes a focus on access and inclusion for Aboriginal people, people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people who identify as LGBTQ+ and people in regional and remote Western Australia.

Although the abuse of children (non-family and domestic violence related) and older people are types of violence that often occur within families, they are subject to their own policy development processes and are not included in the scope of this strategy.



## Goals and priority areas

In the Strategy 'goals and priority areas are the things that we need to do, to achieve the vision "a future where all Western Australians live free from family and domestic violence, and where women and children are safe, respected, valued and treated as equals in private and public life".

Four broad goals and seven priority areas are proposed. An explanation of why these goals were selected, and a description of the priority areas is provided in attachment two.

The **over-arching goals** of the Strategy are to:

1. Identify, challenge and change the structural, social and cultural conditions that support family and domestic violence, including family violence as it impacts Aboriginal people, families, communities and culture.
2. Ensure women and children at risk of, or experiencing family and domestic violence are identified early, offered supports and protection, and are assisted to recover and thrive.
3. Ensure perpetrators are held to account and supported to change their behaviour.
4. Create an inclusive and responsive service system that prioritises safety, is risk informed and collaborative.

To achieve these goals, the supporting **priority areas** are:

1. Community leaders take action to challenge and change the social and cultural conditions that promote gender inequality and violence supportive attitudes.
2. Aboriginal people, families and communities have access to culturally informed and Aboriginal led service responses, and culturally secure mainstream service delivery.
3. Women and their children are offered supports and protection through an accessible, inclusive, and responsive service system.
4. Interventions for men at risk of, or perpetrating family and domestic violence are available, accessible and effective.
5. Legal and justice systems are accessible and risk informed.
6. Service delivery is coordinated and collaborative, and organised around the shared principle of safety first.
7. All workers, the services that employ them, and the structures, frameworks and policies that train and guide them, are family and domestic violence informed.



**The closing date for written submissions is Thursday 30 May 2019**

Please email submissions to [FDVStrategy@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:FDVStrategy@communities.wa.gov.au) or mail to -  
Att: Manager Family and Domestic Violence Unit  
Department of Communities  
99 Plain Street East Perth, 6004

If you have any questions please contact Nicole Leggett, Manager Family and Domestic Violence Unit on (08) 6552 8037 or [FDVStrategy@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:FDVStrategy@communities.wa.gov.au)

Please note that the responses received to this consultation paper may be made public, or may be quoted verbatim in reports documenting outcomes of the consultation. If you do not wish for your submission to be made public, please note this in the response.

For information about other ways to have your say and get involved go to:  
[www.communities.wa.gov.au/fdv](http://www.communities.wa.gov.au/fdv)