



GENDER

EQUITY

VICTORIA

Endorsement of the National Family Violence
Prevention Legal Services Submission to Australian
Government Department of Social Services

Development of the Fourth Action Plan (2019-2022) under the
*National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their
Children 2010-2022*

1. About Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC)

Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC) is the peak body for gender equity, women's health and the prevention of violence against women in Victoria. Our vision is for equality, wellbeing and freedom from violence for every woman and girl, in every community of Victoria. We exist to advocate, influence and collaborate to improve outcomes in gender equity, women's health and in the prevention of violence against women.

GEN VIC represents organisations across Victoria who advance gender equity and hold values that align with feminist principles. Our current membership reaches every region and community in Victoria, and includes nine regional women's health services and five state-wide services, being, Women's Health Victoria, Multicultural Centre for Women's Health, Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE), The Royal Women's Hospital and Positive Women. GEN VIC is the only peak body in Victoria representing women and women's organisation with a focus on gender equality, women's health and the prevention of violence against women.

GEN VIC recognises gender as a key determinant of one's position or status in society, and therefore one of the most powerful drivers of health inequities. By addressing the role of gender inequality in women's health, GEN VIC aims to ensure the health, equality and freedom from violence for every woman and girl, in every community of Victoria.

GEN VIC performs a number of key functions that ensure that:

- women's voices are integral to policy, legislation and services
- deliver and support coordinated and evidence-informed women's health promotion activities
- facilitate collaboration and partnerships.

2. Letter of Endorsement

Fourth Action Plan Team
Department of Social Services
Commonwealth Government
By email: FourthActionPlan@dss.gov.au

18 October 2018

Re: Fourth Action Plan

Gender Equity Victoria (GEN VIC) is writing to endorse the *National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services* (NPVPLS) Submission to the Fourth Action Plan. The Fourth Action Plan, 'Turning the Corner', the final Action Plan under the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children 2010-2022* (National Plan), is critical to reducing the rates of violence against women and their children. Through collaboration with all Australian jurisdictions, the National Plan will help embed a gendered analysis across all levels of government. It is of particular importance that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are given voice, representation and leadership in the implementation of the National Plan at all levels of government. For this reason, we strongly endorse the NPVPLS submission.

The Warawarni-gu Guma statement that was made at the ANROWS second National Research Conference on Violence Against Women and their Children (ANROWS, 2018) made it clear that family, domestic and sexual violence are not part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim/survivors of family violence – predominantly women and their children - live with intergenerational trauma, removal of children, family violence-driven homelessness, racism and discrimination, poverty, mental health issues, disability, lower levels of literacy and numeracy, as well as a range of other cultural, legal and non-legal issues.

The multiple, intersecting forms of disadvantage compound and impact life outcomes and need to be addressed holistically by culturally safe and accessible services prevention services. Prevention is key to a reduction of violence against women. GEN VIC endorses the key recommendations of Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) and emphasises the following prevention recommendations are critical to the success of the National Plan:

- Prevention initiatives should be implemented through an authentic co-design process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The National Plan should include a formal mechanism to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and co-design.
- FVPLSs are best placed to provide prevention services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, as unique, experienced and specialist culturally safe service providers with expertise in designing and delivering early intervention and prevention programs.
- Increase investment in housing and homelessness services for Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence and implementation of strategies to improve housing affordability more generally.
- Distinguish funding for actions that are prevention, early intervention and response.

- Invest in long-term, continuing employment contracts. Due to limited funding longevity, many specialist workers' contracts come to end without any certainty of an extension and crucial skills are lost.
- Invest in the workforce's capability to address gaps in knowledge and skills to work with specific groups (e.g. culturally and linguistically diverse, aged, women with disability, diverse sex, sexuality and gender, Indigenous).

In addition, GEN VIC recommends taking a critical, culturally informed, public health approach to violence. Such an approach would mean a commitment of at least 10% of funding for response services be allocated for prevention. It is long term, recurrent and culturally sensitive funding that will, over time, lower the rates of violence against all women and children. In addition, systemic gender inequality can only be addressed by embedding gender equity in schools, building respectful relationships programs and changing the norms and practices that help violence against women.

The National Plan is commendable and will begin to redress the inequalities faced by women and in particular, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The National Plan requires a sustained bipartisan commitment both at Commonwealth and state level. As part of this, a gender equality lens should be applied to policy and programs at a federal government level in order to drive change (e.g. through board representation and procurement).

We commend the National Plan and any steps taken to reduce the rates of violence against women and children.

For any further queries, please contact GEN VIC: genvic@genvic.org.au

Kind Regards,

GEN VIC

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