



WESNET WEBINAR SERIES



THE UNIQUE ROLE OF SPECIALIST WOMEN'S SERVICES IN ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

18 NOVEMBER 2019 • COST: FREE
BY ZOOM WEBINAR

Presented by

Dr Merrindahl Andrew

12:00PM VIC/NSW/TAS

11:30AM SA

11:00AM QLD

10:30AM NT

09:00AM WA

Housekeeping

1

There is a chat box below the screen where you can chat amongst yourselves. Use the chat box if you need any assistance with sound or seeing the presentation

2

We'll have 10 minutes at the end of the webinar for questions. You can ask questions in the questions box.

3

Your chats will appear to the whole group. Questions will only appear after they are answered.

4

Your poll responses will be anonymous



Chat



Raise Hand



Q&A

The Role of Specialist Women's Services in preventing and responding to violence against women

Dr Merrindahl Andrew
Australian Women Against Violence Alliance

About AWAVA

- One of the six National Women's Alliances
- AWAVA's role is to ensure that women's voices and particularly marginalised women's voices are heard by Government, and to amplify the work of its member organisations and Friends and Supporters.
- 23 organisations in the Advisory group
- 365 individual and organisational members



<https://awava.org.au/>

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Our priority areas of work 2017-2020

1. Strategic engagement and representation
 - especially re the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children
2. Access to justice and accountability
3. Effective responses to improve women's safety and recovery
 - including the role of specialist women's services
4. Primary prevention and institutional change; and
5. International engagement

What are specialist women's services?

Services (usually community-based NGOs) focused specifically on supporting women who are victims/survivors of gender-based violence and their children, and stopping this violence:

- specialist domestic and family violence services
- women's refuges/shelters
- crisis support
- early intervention, prevention and community education
- services supporting survivors of sexual violence
- rape crisis centres
- outreach services
- counselling services and hotlines
- facilitated self-help and mutual support groups

Working alongside...

Men's behaviour change programs and perpetrator intervention programs

+

Gender-, sexuality-, culturally- and/or disability-specific services/groups that often deal with issues of gender-based violence in their work:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's services and groups
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services
- disability advocacy organisations
- women's legal services
- women's health centres
- women's referral and information services
- women's housing programs
- migrant and refugee women's centres and groups
- settlement services
- neighbourhood centres
- family support centres
- working women's centres

Tier 1: Specialist family violence and sexual assault practitioners

Statewide family violence crisis and specialist services
 Support and Safety Hubs
 Family violence outreach services
 Women’s refuges
 Centres Against Sexual Assault
 Perpetrator intervention services

Men’s family violence telephone/online services
 Crisis family violence and sexual assault telephone/online services
 Specialist family violence or sexual assault professionals operating in in Tier 2 or 3 services
 Specialist family violence or sexual assault services for Aboriginal or culturally and linguistically diverse women and children or women and children with a disability

Tier 2: Workers in core support services or intervention agencies

Courts and court services¹⁴
 Legal and paralegal agencies and services
 Corrections
 Police
 Family dispute resolution services

Forensic physicians and medical staff providing sexual assault crisis care
 Child Protection
 Child and Family Services
 Family and relationship services
 Homelessness services

Tier 3: Workers in mainstream services and non-family violence specific agencies

Health care services
 Drug and alcohol services
 Housing services
 Mental health services
 Centrelink
 Individuals providing therapeutic services
 Emergency services

Maternal and Child Health Services
 Youth services
 Disability services
 Culturally and linguistically diverse services
 Aboriginal services
 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse and intersex services
 Aged care services

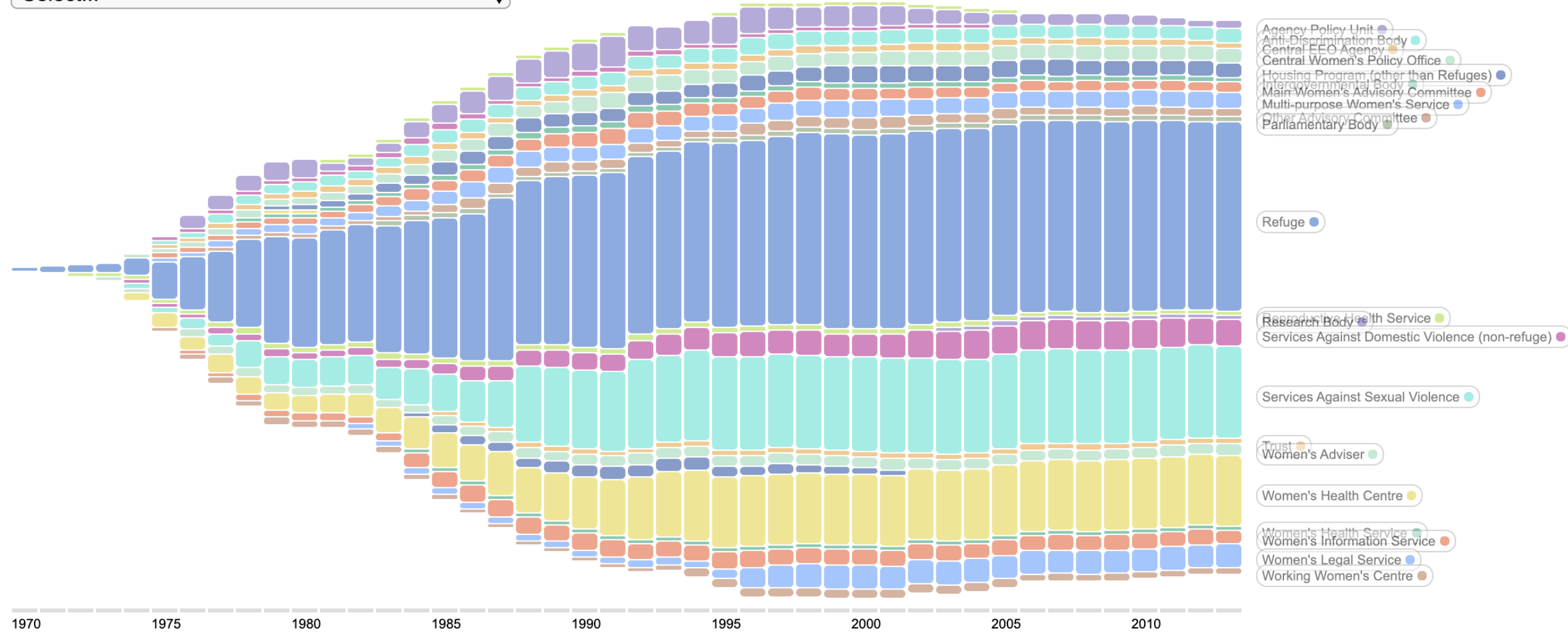
Tier 4: Workers in universal services and organisations

Includes workplaces, education services, early childhood services, sport and recreation organisations and faith based institutions.

Source: Vic Responding to Family Violence Capability Framework (2017)

Showing **All Organisations** Focus on:
Select...

Display by Location Sector Type



1970 1975 1980 1985 1990 1995 2000 2005 2010

A rights-based approach

A client-centred approach

Perpetrator accountability

Women's and children's safety is central

Accessible culturally-appropriate & competent services

Advancing gender equality and women's power collectively

Principles for good practice

A rights-based approach

- Gender-based violence recognised as a fundamental violation of human rights
- Systemic & both a cause and consequence of gender inequality
- Acknowledges and responds to underpinning forms of oppression and discrimination
- Governments have an obligation to promote, protect and fulfil women's and children's rights
- Services develop capacity of women as "rights holders", with active role in accessing and benefiting from rights to which they are entitled.

Examples in practice:

- Experiences validated; never experiencing pressure or blame from the service.
- Clients made aware they have a right to accept or refuse a service offered without a judgement or consequences.
- Support workers transparent in communicating their role and limitation of what they can do.
- Feedback about experiences with a service sought and accepted.
- Clients feel their voice being heard and central to decision making about what they need.

A client-centred approach

- Specific attention applied to individual women and children and their unique situations
- Specialist staff trained to understand trauma
- Address multiple and complex needs of victims/survivors
- Assist clients to navigate complex systems
- Non-victim-blaming – redress shame and self-blaming, putting responsibility back onto perpetrator of violence

Examples in practice:

- Practices in place to minimise the need for clients to retell experiences of violence.
- Support workers understand the complexity of domestic and family violence, the impacts of trauma and barriers to achieving safety.
- Support workers understand additional barriers due to identities and/or circumstances.
- Service respecting personal boundaries, views and wishes.
- Service using strength-based and empowering approaches to assist clients and to advocate on their behalf.

Perpetrator accountability

- Services contribute to holding individual perpetrators to account – across systems
- Contribute to broader social acceptance of perpetrator responsibility for violence, against victim-blaming
- Validating clients' experiences of violence
- Supporting victims/survivors' interactions with the justice and legal system
- Systemic advocacy towards burden of seeking justice to be borne by state, not by victim/survivor

Examples in practice:

- Services provided to clients validate their experiences of violence and reinforced perpetrator accountability.
- Services help clients to navigate multiple systems and interactions, giving them the chance to exercise my own agency
- Services help to prevent chances of system abuse by perpetrator
- Violence not condoned, tolerated, excused, minimised or perpetuated in any way by the service.

Women's and children's safety is central

- Physical and psychosocial safety of victims/survivors is paramount and foundational standard
- Services recognise women face many risks to immediate and ongoing safety which change over time and may shift suddenly
- Continuous process of ongoing risk assessment, safety planning and risk management
- Best practice requires coordinated approaches across sectors
- Services addressing accommodation and housing needs prioritise safety and confidentiality of women and children as well as being trauma-informed

Examples in practice:

- The safety of adult victims/survivors as well as safety of their children and pets (if applicable) a central consideration for the service.
- Service identifying potential risks and assess client's safety needs, including for their children if applicable.
- Service working with client to develop a thorough safety plan.
- Client's safety plan reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure it was what the client needed at that time.

Accessible culturally-appropriate & competent services

- Specialist services must take into account and appropriately respond to the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by victims/survivors
- Properly accessible system would include fully competent and inclusive 'mainstream' women's services + specialist services devoted to specific experiences and identities
- This does not exist yet =>
- Work internally – training, accountability, capacity-building
- Work externally – sector development; advocacy for resources and systemic change

Examples in practice:

- Services providing gender-responsive, Service workers using culturally appropriate language, and open-ended questions to identify gender and pronoun usage.
- Service being accessible for and tailored to the needs of a client with disabilities.
- Clients being provided with an interpreter free of charge.
- Clients feeling and being safe to disclose identity or circumstances to the service, and not having this disclosed without consent
- Service having a thorough understanding of a client's culture and have built trust with their community.
- Service workers were trained on issues of cultural competency, accessibility and inclusivity.

Advancing gender equality and women's power collectively

- With individual clients - put into practice gender-informed understanding of violence, redress disempowerment
- Systemically - work to address underlying inequalities and power imbalances
- not just in relation to gender but also Aboriginality, culture, religion, disability, sexuality.
- Empowerment not just an individual process but collective effort towards social change

Examples in practice:

- Clients feel in control of decisions being made about their situations and have a choice about what services to use.
- Service workers demonstrate understanding of the gendered dynamics of violence and the power imbalances that affect clients
- Services participate in and inform primary prevention efforts
- Policy advocacy for systemic change to shift underlying inequalities
- Participation in feminist movements
- Community education and campaigns about violence against women, gender equality and social justice

Evidence for effectiveness

- Specialist advocacy increases safety and reduces violence (Bates et al 2018 – UK)
 - *both for adult victims/survivors and their children*
- More intensive specialist support leads to greater reduction in violence reduction (Howarth et al 2008)
- Specialist sexual violence and domestic violence support services improve criminal justice outcomes for victims/survivors (Lilley-Walker et al 2018)
 - *- including both progression of criminal cases, and victims/survivors' perceptions of just outcomes of well-being and recovery*
- Specialist support increases client access to support from other agencies, and multi-agency working reduces risks to victim/survivor (Donovan et al 2010)

- Women would often not have sought support for themselves and their children if services had been mainstream, as compared to specialist women's services (WRC 2007)
- Ill-equipped services lacking well-trained staff
 - *discourage help-seeking*
 - *prevent disclosure of abuse*
 - *inadvertently increase risks for victims/survivors*
 - *may lead them to stay in/return to violent situations*(Zweig and Burt 2007)

“Every time I received a response like that it made me stay silent for another few years...Specialist family violence services don't inflict such damage on family violence survivors. These services...offer a space where a survivor/victim does not need to 'convince' the worker of their very difficult situation.” (Christine Craik 2016)

Negative
outcomes from
lack of specialist
service
response

International obligations

Failure of the state to provide access to immediate protection violates the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women – a case where a victim/survivor in Hungary could not access a shelter and had no legal or other avenues to create safety – under Gen Rec 19

Efforts to eliminate violence must include support services that empower victims and survivors - Agreed Conclusions of the 57th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (2013)

“[S]pecialist crisis services responding to victims/survivors of violence against women should be run by independent and experienced women’s non-governmental organizations providing gender-specific, empowering and comprehensive support to women survivors of violence, based on feminist principles.” UN Women Handbook for National Action Plans on Violence Against Women 2012

International bodies' guidance to Aus

Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women (SRVAW)
Recommendations of report on Aus (2019) para 94(e)
Provide sustainable and separate funding for women's shelters and housing and consider adopting a national plan on housing for victims of GBVAW.

SRVAW para 100 Recognize the key work carried out by both specialist women's services and women's legal services, including aboriginal ones, not only in responding to violence against women but also in preventing it.

SRVAW Para 101
Provide the necessary funding to match the current needs of women for advice and assistance. Particular attention should be given to increasing funding for the culturally appropriate Legal Services which have experienced decreases. Reinstate funding for advocacy work.

Committee on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (CEDAW)
Concluding observations on Australia (2018) – recommendation:
28 (d) Allocate adequate resources for the implementation of Outcome 4 of the National Action Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children and enhance efforts to ensure the availability of women-only and women-led support services for victims of gender-based violence (Outcome 4: "Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence")

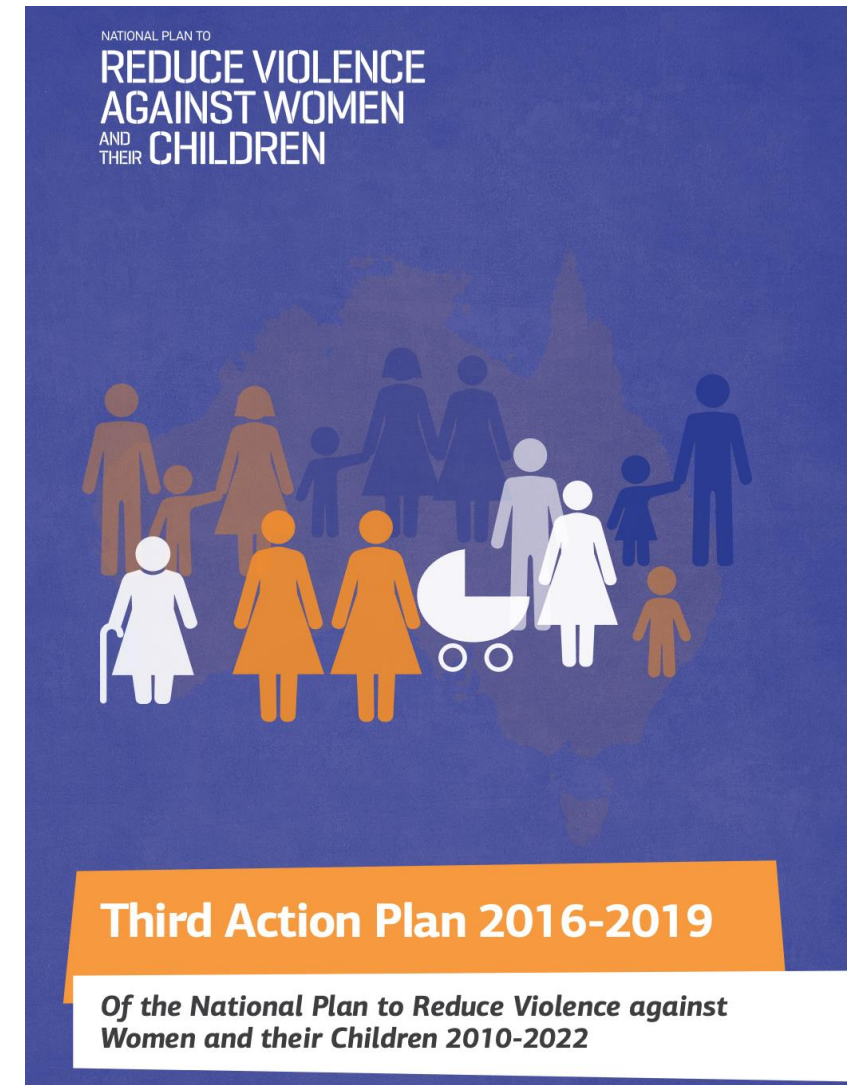
Specialist women's services in Aus policy

- National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children (2010-2022)
- Includes Outcome 4: Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence
- National Plan established 1800RESPECT National Sexual Assault, Domestic and Family Violence Hotline (as well as other flagship initiatives Our Watch, ANROWS, DV Alert)
- But specialist women's services remain under-resourced and without solid frameworks to recognise central role in responses
- Often falling between Commonwealth and State/Terr funding responsibilities



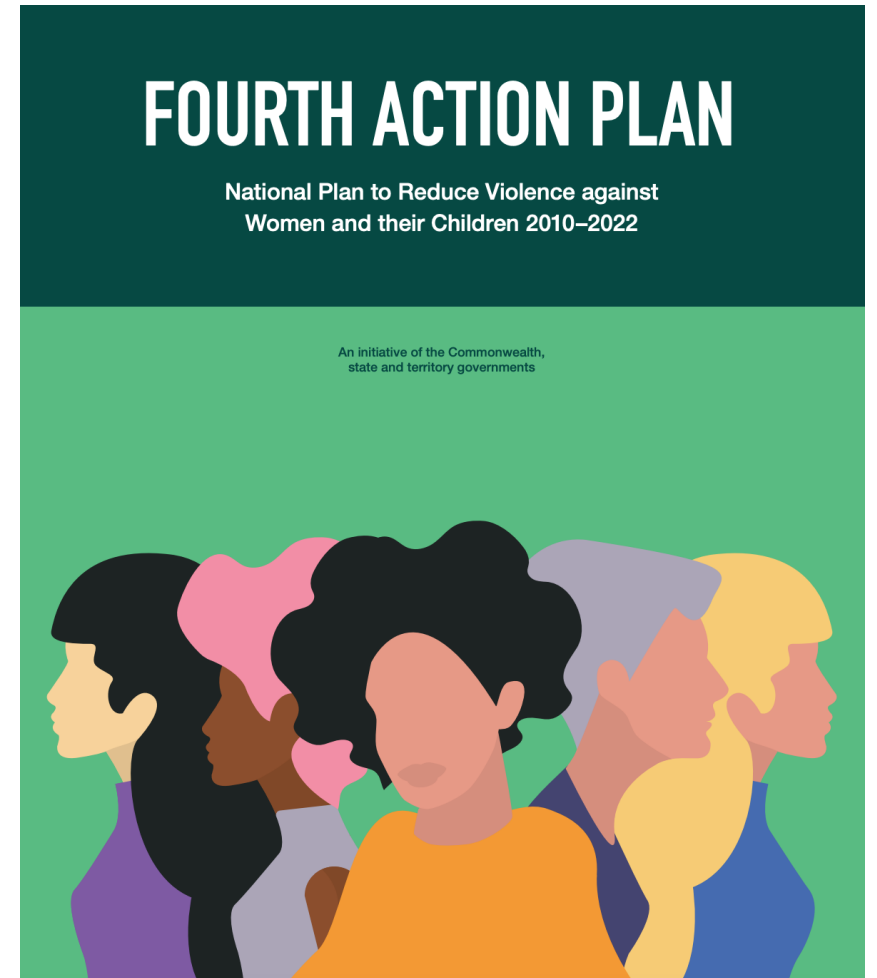
Third Action Plan

- Acknowledged expertise of specialist women's services: "Mainstream services can learn from the service delivery models of specialist women's services which provide crisis and post-crisis support, advocate for and with victims and survivors, and support them to navigate complex systems."
- Committed to "Strengthen safe and appropriate accommodation options and supports for women and their children escaping violence, including specialist women's services."
- Continued funding to National Plan Partners (Our Watch, 1800RESPECT, ANROWS, DV Alert)



Fourth Action Plan

- No reference to specialist women’s services, but says “Responsibility for the prevention of violence against women must move from being the focus of a small but dedicated specialist sector, to become a core priority for all industries and areas of government.”
- \$60mil for capital works under the Safe Places Grants Program
- Draft grant guidelines include requirement for applicant to be (or partner with) a specialist domestic and family violence service, or an Aboriginal-specific or culturally-specific service with a specialisation in D&FV.



Questions?

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Karen Bentley

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