



Australian Government



Services
Australia

Family and Domestic Violence Strategic Commitment

December 2024



Acknowledgement of Country and Traditional Owners

Services Australia recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first peoples of this land and their ongoing connection to the lands, seas and waterways. We pay respect to all Elders, past and present, of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations.

We recognise the enduring strength and resilience of the world's oldest continuous living cultures and value the rich diversity Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritages contribute.

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A message from the Chief Executive Officer



At Services Australia, we touch the lives of almost every Australian. Our payments, services and referrals are critical for people experiencing hardship.

Providing access to inclusive, responsive, and accessible services is particularly important when supporting those affected by family and domestic violence.

As an agency, we support people of all genders affected by family and domestic violence. We also recognise that some people are at greater risk of violence and face challenges accessing support, due to their personal experiences, cultural or social identity.

It's our collective responsibility to safely connect our customers to the payments, services and referrals they need.

The National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–32 (National Plan) provides a framework for our ongoing efforts. The agency will continue to create an environment where customers and staff feel comfortable reaching out for support. We'll adopt systems and processes which are simple and safe for customers to use. We'll also work in partnership with the community, peak bodies and government to drive change and help keep our customers safe.

We'll never lose sight of the important role we play in supporting people affected by family and domestic violence. Together, we can make a difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "David Hazlehurst". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name and title of the Chief Executive Officer.

David Hazlehurst
Chief Executive Officer
Services Australia

Our journey

Services Australia is committed to supporting the privacy and safety of customers and staff, while providing a service to the community that is inclusive, responsive, and accessible. We have zero tolerance for abuse of any kind.

Our agency plays a crucial role in supporting all people living with and experiencing family and domestic violence. We are often the first point of contact for people experiencing family and domestic violence. Our payments, services and referrals are critical in supporting people through these difficult times. Our staff are on the frontline of service delivery every day, working side by side with other workers in the community to better support people impacted by family and domestic violence.

We have had a longstanding commitment to helping people experiencing family and domestic violence and finding ways we can help address it through our range of payments and services. Our strategies, policies and partnerships have informed our approach, underpinned by the government's broader national frameworks.

We have continually refined and strengthened our approach over time, with family and domestic violence supports now strongly embedded into our agency's operating principles:



SIMPLE

The support and information we provide to people experiencing family and domestic violence is **simple** by being accessible, clear, and easy to understand.



HELPFUL

We know people experiencing family and domestic violence need our support, so we are **helpful** to ensure we safely connect to payments and services when this is needed.



RESPECTFUL

Our interactions are **respectful** and acknowledge the diverse and complex lived experiences of the Australian community.



TRANSPARENT

The support we provide, and the way in which we provide it is **transparent**, so everyone understands their options and responsibilities.

Our agency has had a Family and Domestic Violence Strategic Commitment in place since 2013 and were the first Commonwealth agency to develop a blueprint that informed our ongoing effort to support customers and staff affected by family and domestic violence.

We have come a long way, but together, we can do more.

Our future

We each have a role to play and must work together to end all violence.

All areas of government have aligned efforts to release the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–32* (National Plan). This guides how we uphold and define our role as a key agency to support Australians and end violence against women and children.

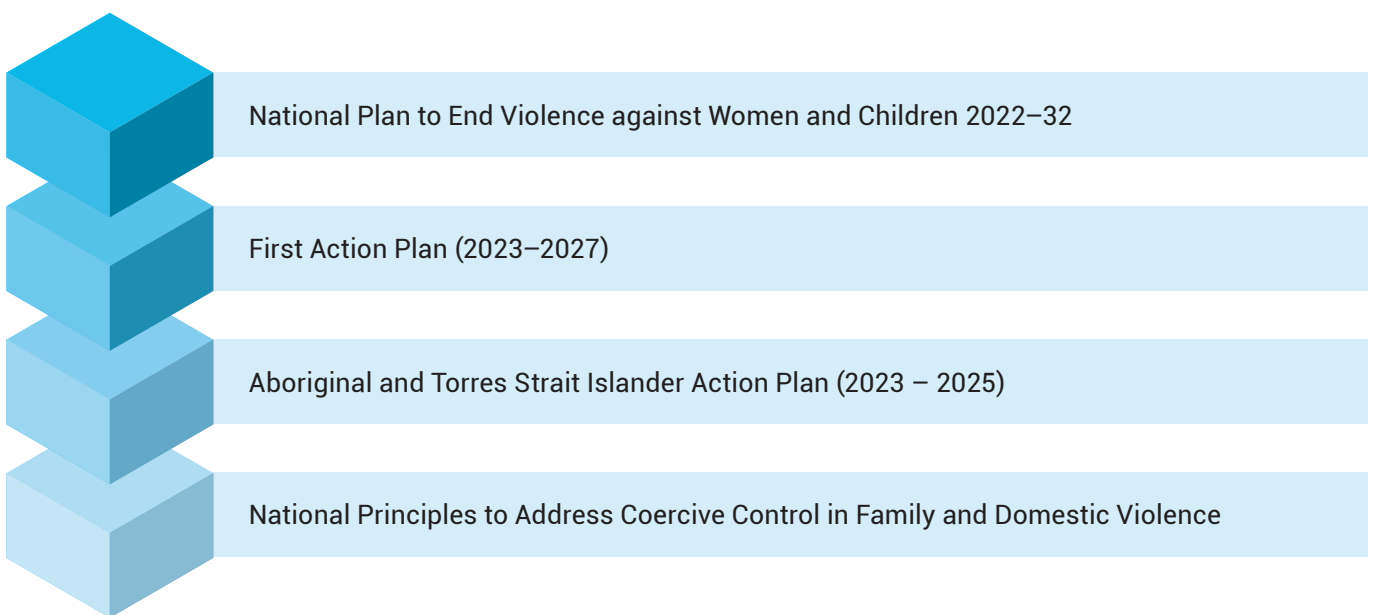
The National Plan provides the framework for our way forward to end violence against women and children in the next decade, emphasising that everyone in the community and all levels of a society must work together to end family and domestic gender-based violence.

At Services Australia, we are formally aligning our strategic commitment to the National Plan, supporting all people who experience family and domestic violence. The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan (2023 – 2025)* and the *First Action Plan (2023–2027)* outline how we will make the commitments a reality. They were developed in consultation with people with lived experience of family and domestic violence. They set out the initial scope of activities, areas for action and responsibility with respect to outcomes.

Over the next 5 years, we will use the plans to guide our actions, initiatives, responses, and partnerships when supporting people experiencing family and domestic violence.

We also acknowledge that anyone, of any gender, in any relationship, including those involving carers, relatives or guardians, kinship groups, and other family groups recognised by various cultures and communities, can experience family and domestic violence. Additionally, we acknowledge that different aspects of a person's life and identity can expose them to overlapping forms of marginalisation and discrimination that could increase the risk of severity and frequency of experiencing different types of violence.

We also know that coercive control underpins almost all forms of family and domestic violence. The *National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence* have been developed and endorsed by all Australian governments. These principles will continue to shape and strengthen our support for all people experiencing family and domestic violence.



Our commitment

As a service provider and government agency

We connect community to the payments and services they need, working in partnership with the community and government sectors to drive cultural change.

We support our community by:



ensuring at-risk customers are identified, connected safely and quickly to appropriate support within the agency, as well as external supports if needed



protecting the privacy of our customers affected by family and domestic violence



minimising the ability for the agency to be used as a means of financial coercive control



partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, so their cultural expertise is part of our co-design approach to preventing and responding to family and domestic violence



co-designing family and domestic violence initiatives with and for those who have lived experiences, acknowledging that family and domestic violence expertise rests within the community



working in partnership with our policy agencies, customers, staff, peak bodies, and community groups to continue embedding the principles of the National Plans into everything we do



contributing service delivery expertise and the voice of the customer as part of our engagement with our policy partners



collaborating with influence across government to continually embed customer and staff safety into initiatives, strategies, frameworks, design tools, resources, and processes.

As an employer

As the largest service delivery agency in government, our staff represent the diversity of the Australian community. We are everyday people providing essential support to our communities, and our staff are our greatest asset in achieving this.

We will support our workforce by:



providing a safe and supportive workplace for staff, taking a trauma-informed approach, and having a safe service focus



ensuring staff affected by family and domestic violence are provided with a safe environment, are encouraged to speak out, and are connected sensitively with the right support, if needed



ensuring staff are trained and aware of family and domestic violence



continually strengthening the capability of our staff by aligning our family and domestic violence training with community best practice, so that our staff feel supported to safely provide customer service outcomes and better outcomes for their colleagues.

Reporting on our progress

As we move through the next 5 years, we will report our progress and achievements through the existing mechanisms established under the National Plan.

We will also continue to collaborate with people with lived experience to strengthen our efforts and improve service responses.

This is so that we are at the forefront of the national effort to end family and domestic violence.

Together, we can make a difference.



Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) definition:

Family and domestic violence is any behaviour that is violent, threatening, coercive or controlling, or causes a person to be fearful. It includes:

- exposing a child to any of these behaviours (child abuse)
- act of violence or mistreatment that causes harm or distress to an older person (elder abuse), carer or care receiver (carer neglect or abuse).

