Anglicare Australia
in every Community

Submission to the Second Action Plan (National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032)

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About Anglicare Australia

Anglicare Australia is a network of independent local, state, national and international organisations that are linked to the Anglican Church and are joined by values of service, innovation, leadership and the Christian faith that every individual has intrinsic value. Our services are delivered in partnership with people, the communities in which they live, and other like-minded organisations in those areas. With a combined income of $3.1 billion, a workforce of over 23,000 staff and 8,000 volunteers, the Network delivers more than 37 service areas in the Australian community.

As part of its mission the Anglicare Australia Network partners with people, families and communities to provide services and advocacy and build resilience, inclusion and justice. Our first strategic goal charges us with reaching this by influencing social and economic policy across Australia with a strong prophetic voice; informed by research and the practical experience of the Network.

Contact:
Kasy Chambers
Executive Director

Anglicare Australia
PO Box 4093
Ainslie ACT 2602
T: 02 6230 1775
anglicare@anglicare.asn.au

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Introduction

Anglicare Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Department of Social Services on the Second Action Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032 (the National Plan).

The Anglicare Australia Network supported over 86,00 Australians through family and relationship services across all states and territories in the 2024-25 financial year. With the support of more than 1,000 staff and 34 volunteers, these services deliver a broad range of programs to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, including counselling, men's behaviour change programs and parenting support.

In addition, Network members support people affected by violence through emergency relief, housing and homelessness services, financial counselling and community based mental-health programs. This experience has given us unique insight into into the challenges women and children experiencing violence face every day, and the supports they need to achieve safety and long-term recovery.

Being able to live safely and free from harm is the foundation for personal wellbeing, and stable and thriving communities. However, for many women and children, home is not a safe place. One in four Australian women have experienced violence from an intimate partner,[i] while almost 40 per cent of participants in the Australian Child Maltreatment Study reported exposure to domestic violence during childhood.[ii] The impacts are profound and enduring, contributing to physical injury, disability, poor mental health, trauma, homelessness, disrupted education and employment, financial insecurity, and social isolation.

These outcomes are neither inevitable nor unavoidable. While governments have made significant investments under the First Action Plan, we have not seen commensurate progress towards ending violence against women and children. In the past month alone, four women have allegedly been killed by men known to them, while reports of sexual violence have reached unprecedented levels.[iii]

The challenge is not identifying solutions but implementing them effectively and consistently. As the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV) Commission's Yearly Report 2025 highlighted, the effectiveness of the First Action Plan was constrained by inadequate systems, processes and accountability mechanisms to implement comprehensive and sustainable solutions. The Second Action Plan provides an opportunity to avoid past mistakes. To deliver meaningful and lasting change, it must include clear targets, coordinated and measurable actions, robust accountability mechanisms, and sustained investment to ensure commitments translate into improved outcomes for women and children.

Strengthen accountability through measurable targets and outcomes

The National Plan sets out a well-considered long-term vision for measuring Australia's progress in eliminating gender-based violence and emphasises addressing its systemic drivers. However, it does not identify clear actions to achieve its intended outcomes or include measurable indicators for each outcome. Four years into implementation, data sources have not been established for 68 percent of the measures in the Performance Measurement Plan.[iv] While developing robust, nationally consistent measures takes time, Phase Three of the National Plan's Outcomes Framework does not include a timeline for completing this work.

Meaningful change in attitudes and behaviours will not happen overnight but requires sustained effort over years. However, many of the headline measures linked to the six national targets are reported only every four years. This limits government's ability to identify what is working, scale effective initiatives, respond to emerging evidence, and address unintended consequences. It also reduces opportunities to use evaluation findings to inform future Action Plans.

The DFSV Commission highlighted these concerns in its 2025 Annual Report. The Commission noted that "strengthening this framework – with clear measures, integration with evaluation and more transparent reporting – will help ensure substantial government investments translate into meaningful change for women, children and families." It also recommended establishing a Commonwealth implementation and delivery mechanism to coordinate action across governments, introducing quarterly Cabinet reporting dashboards, and ensuring domestic, family and sexual violence remains a standing priority for the Secretaries' Board.

Anglicare Australia considers these recommendations essential to the National Plan's success. The Second Action Plan should adopt the DFSV Commission's recommendations, establish clear implementation timelines, and embed specific targets and measurable outcomes to improve accountability and drive continuous improvement.

Recommendation

Anglicare Australia recommends the Second Action Plan include specific targets and measurable outcomes, regular reporting and coordinated delivery mechanisms as recommended by the DFSV Commission.

Ensuring a coordinated systems response

The National Plan recognises that coordinated communication and collaboration across the systems that support women and children experiencing, or at risk of DFSV, are essential to delivering a person-centred service system. It also acknowledges the role of interconnected sectors, including community services, in preventing and responding to violence through shared responsibility and coordinated delivery.

Anglicare Australia supports the National Plan's whole-of-society approach, which embeds the prevention of, and response to, gender-based violence across all settings. We also support a 'no wrong door' approach, whereby people can access appropriate support regardless of where they first seek help. We believe that a coordinated and integrated service system provides a stronger safety net, enables timely, tailored and accessible support, and reduces the need for victim-survivors to repeatedly recount their experiences, minimising the risk of re-traumatisation.

However, current mechanisms do not adequately ensure that interconnected sectors contribute to preventing and responding to DFSV. Stronger accountability and coordination across all sectors are needed to support early intervention and prevent violence from escalating. This includes strengthening inter-governmental work, establishing shared referral pathways, supporting collaboration between services, and clarifying the respective roles of specialist and mainstream providers.

The need for greater coordination and accountability across systems is particularly relevant to the Department of Social Services' new Children and Family Support (CaFS) Program, which will commence in July 2027. The CaFS Program aims to create a more coordinated, flexible and coherent service system that helps children and families to be safe, strong and able to reach their full potential. A key objective is to invest earlier to reduce the need for more intensive interventions, including statutory child protection.

Anglicare Australia is concerned that the new program will not provide services for adults without dependent children.[v] This creates a significant gap in the prevention and early intervention system and is inconsistent with the National Plan's whole-of-society approach. Restricting eligibility to families with dependent children overlooks opportunities to prevent violence between partners, among prospective parents, and to respond to elder abuse. This limitation within the current program design will therefore mean CaFs is a wrong door for these cohorts, requiring them to access support through another entry point.

Given the prevalence of elder abuse, greater entry points to supports and coordination of services is critical for older Australians experiencing this form of harm, particularly when perpetrated by family members. The Australian Institute of Family Studies' National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study found that adult children are the most common perpetrators of elder abuse, responsible for 18 per cent of cases.[vi] Elder abuse by adult children was 1.55 times more common than abuse perpetrated by the next most common group, friends, highlighting the importance of prevention and early intervention work across the broader family system.[vii]

Similarly, greater access to services for couples is central to a whole-of-society approach to preventing DFSV. By providing couples with timely, prevention-focused support, we can prevent violence before it occurs and reduce the likelihood that any future children will be exposed to DFSV. Research by ANROWS found that young people who had both experienced targeted abuse and witnessed FDV were 9.2 times more likely to use violence in the home compared to those who had not.[viii] Failing to provide prospective parents and couples with access to relationship support and other early intervention programs misses an opportunity to prevent violence in the present and stem future trajectories of harm.

While Anglicare Australia welcomes the 2025 reforms to the National Plan's governance arrangements, including enhanced National Cabinet oversight of whole-of-government policy coordination, effective governance requires regular coordination and review. Governments and relevant agencies should meet regularly to monitor and map progress against the National Plan's outcomes, identify gaps in policy and service delivery, and ensure timely action to strengthen the prevention of and response to DFSV.

Recommendations

Anglicare Australia recommends the Second Action Plan should include governance arrangements that require regular meetings between governments and relevant agencies, alongside timely ongoing monitoring and mapping of progress against the National Plan's outcomes to identify gaps and support timely action.

Strengthen the community services workforce

Many people experiencing or using DFSV do not initially seek support from specialist services. Fear of child protection involvement, limited awareness of available services, concerns about confidentiality, shame, and not recognising abusive behaviours can all prevent people from seeking help. As a result, many victim-survivors and people who use violence first come into contact with mainstream community services.

Mainstream services, including housing and homelessness services, financial counselling, emergency relief, childcare and health services, are often well placed to identify and respond to DFSV. For example, more than 9.3 percent of clients receiving emergency relief from Anglicare Victoria had been directly impacted by DFSV.[ix] These services provide important opportunities to identify violence early, respond safely, and connect people with specialist support before harm escalates.

Because mainstream services may be the only point of contact for victim-survivors or perpetrators of gender-based violence, the Second Action Plan should recognise and strengthen their role in identifying and responding to DFSV. Delivering a genuine "no wrong door" approach requires the Government to invest in the broader community services workforce so workers can recognise the signs of violence, respond safely, and connect people with specialist DFSV and other appropriate support services.

Building workforce capability requires more than one-off training. The Second Action Plan should provide ongoing investment in workforce development, trauma-informed practice, clear referral pathways, and the infrastructure needed to support warm referrals and coordinated service delivery. Strengthening the capacity of mainstream services will improve early intervention, reduce the risk of re-traumatising victim-survivors, and ensure fewer people fall through gaps between services.

Recommendation

Anglicare Australia recommends that the Federal Government invest in and extend DFSV training to all workers in mainstream community services, as well as all frontline professionals, including healthcare workers and police.

Address the systemic drivers of violence

While the drivers of DFSV are complex and multifaceted, poverty and financial insecurity increase women's risk of experiencing violence and limit their ability to leave abusive relationships. Improving women's economic security through adequate incomes, secure employment and fair wages is an essential part of preventing violence and supporting women to live free from abuse.

Women who rely on government support payments are particularly vulnerable to becoming trapped in abusive relationships because payment rates leave them in poverty. Payments commonly received by women – including the Parenting Payment, JobSeeker Payment, Disability Support Payment and Carer Payment – remain below the poverty line. Anglicare Sydney's 2026 Cost of Leaving report highlights the significant financial burden faced by women trying to leave violent relationships, finding that at least $7,017 is needed to cover the upfront costs of leaving — well above the $5,000 available through the Leaving Violence Program package.[x]

The shortfall does not include the additional expenses associated with rebuilding a safe home, which often requires replacing household items, making security upgrades, covering legal expenses and paying for counselling or therapy. As a result, women may have no safe alternative but to remain in, or return to, abusive relationships. Almost two in five single mothers have returned to a violent partner because they lacked financial support or had nowhere else to go.[xi] Raising the rate of income support payments above the poverty line would reduce this financial barrier and enable more women to leave violent relationships.

Women's economic insecurity extends beyond the income support system. Despite achieving higher levels of educational attainment than men on average[xii], women are more likely to be working part-time and in precarious employment.[xiii] This reflects, in part, the disproportionate share of unpaid caring responsibilities women continue to undertake, including caring for children, older people and people with disability. Combined with the persistent gender pay gap[xiv] and the historic undervaluation of female-dominated industries, this limits women's lifetime earnings, reduces retirement savings and increases the risk of financial insecurity across the life course.

The Second Action Plan should recognise women's economic security as a key component of violence prevention and response. Alongside raising income support payments above the poverty line, the Government should continue investing in measures to close the gender pay gap and build women's financial security, including more affordable childcare and aged care services, more flexible parental leave and better pay, security and conditions for female dominated industries like the care sector.

Recommendations

Anglicare Australia recommends:

- immediately lifting the rate of income supports payments over the poverty line.
- measures to close the gender pay gap and build women's financial security, including more affordable childcare and aged care services, more flexible parental leave and better pay, security and conditions for female dominated industries like the care sector.

Build more social and affordable housing

Access to affordable, safe and secure housing is fundamental to the safety and recovery of women and children experiencing DFSV. However, Australia's housing crisis means many women cannot leave violent relationships because they have no safe or affordable alternative. Others who do leave face homelessness or prolonged reliance on overburdened crisis accommodation and specialist homelessness services.

Ideally women experiencing DFSV should be able to remain in their homes while perpetrators are removed. However the reality is that many women are forced to flee their homes to find safety, only to face a private rental market with few affordable and suitable housing options. Anglicare Australia's annual Rental Affordability Snapshot has consistently shown that for people on low incomes, there are simply no dwellings available. This year, just 21 rentals were affordable for single parents on the Parenting Payment Single, while not a single rental was affordable for a single person receiving the JobSeeker Payment. The growing shortfall in social housing has further limited pathways into safe, secure and affordable housing.

This has resulted in a crisis where up to 7,700 women a year are forced to return to violent partners, while 9,120 women fleeing violent homes are forced into homelessness because there is not enough affordable housing.[xv] Family violence remains the leading reason people seek assistance from specialist homelessness services. Expanding the supply of social and affordable housing is therefore essential to ensuring women and children can leave violence safely, maintain long-term housing stability, and rebuild their lives.

Recommendation

Anglicare Australia recommends a long-term social housing construction program to deliver at least 25,000 new social and affordable homes each year for the next two decades, to ensure women and children can access safe, secure and affordable housing.

Give children a voice

Even when children are not directly subjected to DFSV, witnessing violence can have profound and lasting impacts. Children who witness DFSV are at greater risk of poor physical and mental health, developmental regression, and engaging in risk-taking behaviours. More concerningly, exposure to violence can normalise abusive behaviour and increase the likelihood that children will experience or use violence in their own relationships later in life.[xvi] For example, Australians who witnessed violence against their mother during childhood are 2.5 times more likely to experience intimate partner violence from the age of 15 than those who were not exposed to domestic violence.[xvii]

Despite widespread evidence, children and young people are not always recognised as victim-survivors in their own right and often do not receive the tailored support they require to recover from trauma. While the Second Action Plan consultation paper identifies strengthening child and young person-centred responses as a priority, recognition alone is not enough. The Australian Government must back this commitment with sustained investment in evidence-based, age-appropriate services that support young people to disclose violence, seek assistance, and heal.

Recommendation
Anglicare Australia recommends the Second Action plan recognise children as victims in their own right, and promote a system that values and centres the voices of children.

Invest in primary prevention

Australia's approach to DFSV has historically focused on responding after violence occurs or intervening once the risk of violence becomes evident. While crisis responses are essential to protect women and children from further harm and hold perpetrators accountable, a predominantly reactive approach alone will not prevent violence. Achieving the national goal of ending violence against women and children within a generation requires a substantial increase in investment in evidence-informed primary prevention initiatives that address the underlying drivers of DFSV.

Gender inequality is a well-established driver of violence against women. Harmful gender stereotypes, unequal power relations, and social norms that excuse, minimise or justify men's violence against women create the conditions in which violence is normalised and perpetuated. These include attitudes such as "boys will be boys" and victim-blaming. Addressing these underlying drivers through evidence-based prevention initiatives is crucial to reducing the long-term social, health and economic impacts of DFSV.

Local and international evidence demonstrates what can be achieved through sustained investment in evidence-informed primary prevention. Evaluation of the *Resilience, Rights and Respectful Relationships* program in Australian secondary schools, found that the proportion of students who reported bullying others decreased from 11.8 per cent to 10.3 per cent.[xviii] Similarly, the *Stepping Stones and Creating Futures* program in South Africa led to a gradual shift away from harmful masculinities towards models that emphasised economic provision and household stability.[xix]

The Government has increasingly recognised the importance of primary prevention to address the harmful attitudes and behaviours that drive gender-based violence, and have funded initiatives such as *Stop it at the Start* and *Teach Us Consent*. However, investment remains heavily weighted towards crises responses. The 2025 Joint Investment Report to the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032 identified $140.1 million allocated to new Commonwealth prevention activities, compared with $1.24 billion for response measures.[xx] This falls well below the 9.5–12 percent investment in primary prevention that PricewaterhouseCoopers estimates is optimal, based on other public health prevention campaigns such as smoking cessation, skin cancer prevention and road safety.[xxi] The Second Action Plan should increase investment in evidence-informed primary prevention to ensure Australia's response addresses the causes of violence as well as its consequences.

Recommendations

Anglicare Australia recommends the Second Action Plan lift expenditure on primary prevention activities to 9.5 to 12 percent of the total DFSV budget. Funding should prioritise scaling evidence-informed programs with demonstrated effectiveness, while requiring ongoing evaluation of all prevention initiatives to ensure they are effective.

Keep men accountable for their behaviour

Men's behaviour change programs work with people who use violence to address the attitudes and behaviours that drive abuse, reduce the risk of reoffending, and increase accountability. Even though the Government has increasingly recognised the importance of perpetrator interventions, investment remains disproportionately weighted towards crisis responses.

This imbalance in funding limits the system's ability to reduce violence over the long term. In the 2024–25 Budget, the Australian Government allocated $38.3 million to early intervention initiatives focused on promoting healthy and respectful relationships and supporting those at heightened risk of using violence, compared with $925.2 million for financial support packages to assist people leaving violent relationships.[xxii] While support for victim-survivors remains essential until DFSV is eradicated, reducing violence also requires investment in programs that address the behaviours and attitudes that cause harm.

Demand for men's behaviour change programs continues to exceed available capacity. In New South Wales alone, an estimated 480 men are currently waiting to access behaviour change programs, demonstrating a significant gap in service availability[xxiii]. The Second Action Plan should provide sustained investment to so that the community services sector have the capacity to respond to demand.

Behaviour change is also complex and non-linear, shaped by social and cultural norms as well as individual life circumstances. Without ongoing support, positive changes achieved through behaviour change programs can be difficult to sustain. Funding should therefore extend beyond program delivery to include post-program follow-up and longer-term support, while allowing services to respond to factors that affect engagement, including housing instability, alcohol and other drug use, financial stress and access to appropriate referral pathways.[xxiv]

At the same time, significant gaps remain in national data on the drivers of DFSV, unmet demand, and the effectiveness of different responses. While the Federal Government has taken steps to strengthen learning and evidence through commissioned research and data initiatives these efforts require sustained investment to support longitudinal data collection and evidence-informed policy design.[xxv]

Recommendation

Anglicare Australia recommends the National Plan provide long-term funding for delivery and evaluation of men's behaviour change and other perpetrator intervention programs. Funding arrangements should support sustained engagement with participants, including post-program follow-up, longer-term support, and referral to other necessary services.

Respond to emerging forms of coercive control

Although coercive control is not a new form of abuse, community understanding of its nature, warning signs, and how to respond is limited. Research by the Australian National University found that only 55 per cent of Australians surveyed understood the term "coercive control".[xxvi] This limited understanding also extends to frontline responders. Police are often the first point of contact for victim-survivors of DFSV, yet they do not always recognise coercive control or identify it accurately. As a result, officers misidentify women as the primary aggressors because they misinterpret acts of self-defence, are influenced by perpetrators' manipulation, or rely on biases. Analysis of Women's Legal Service Victoria duty lawyer intake forms between January 2018 and May 2023 found that police incorrectly identified women as the primary aggressor in 58 per cent of cases.[xxvii]

The consequences of failing to recognise coercive control can be life-altering. Coercive control was a factor in most DFSV-related homicides in many Australian jurisdictions[xxviii] [xxix]. These findings highlight the need for sustained national action to improve community awareness, strengthen workforce capability, and ensure consistent implementation of coercive control reforms across Australia.

Whilst the Federal Government has established a shared understanding of the common features of coercive control through the National Principles to Address Coercive Control, responsibility for responding to coercive control rests with state and territory governments. As jurisdictions progress at different stages in developing and implementing coercive control laws, there is a risk of inconsistent legal frameworks and responses across Australia.

DFSV does not recognise state borders. People move interstate for many reasons, including to escape violent partners or to evade law enforcement. A nationally consistent approach towards addressing coercive control would help reduce confusion and barriers to accessing legal protection and help for victim-survivors, especially those living in cross-border communities.

Perpetrators also exploit legal and government systems intended to protect rights and provide support to extend coercive control. Common tactics include counter-allegations, firing lawyers and hiring new ones to extend the litigation, requesting multiple adjournments[xxx], making false child protection allegations, applying for unwarranted intervention orders[xxxi] and weaponising child support payments[xxxii]. Not only are these actions disruptive, intimidating and traumatic to women, but they can also cause women to lose their jobs, fall into poverty and become homeless.

Some of the systems targeted through this form of abuse, including Centrelink, fall within the remit of the Australian Government. However, strategies to address systems abuse were notably absent from the First Action Plan. The Second Action Plan should address this gap by establishing measures to identify and prevent the misuse of government systems, ensuring that government services do not inadvertently enable further harm to victim-survivors.

Technology is creating new and evolving opportunities for perpetrators to exercise coercive control. Perpetrators may use digital tools to monitor locations, track communications, restrict financial independence, access personal information, or create and distribute harmful or false content. Some

victim survivors may be unaware that technology is being used against them, while others may recognise the abuse but face significant barriers to seeking support or safely leaving.

Anglicare Australia notes that the increasing use of location-tracking applications, digital access to essential services such as Centrelink and medical services, online billing systems and electronic payments has created new opportunities for perpetrators to monitor and control victim-survivors.

However, as technology keeps rapidly evolving, many community service organisations lack the knowledge and capacity to help women identify and remove spyware and tracking devices. Telecommunications carriers are not always helpful, or pathways for notifying them and seeking assistance are unclear.

In the Second Action Plan, the Federal Government should commit to building the capacity of community service and family violence workers to identify and respond to such threats.

Recommendations:
Anglicare Australia recommends:
- Introducing a nationally consistent approach towards addressing coercive control.
- Establishing measures to identify and prevent systems-abuse.
- Committing to build the capacity of community service and family violence workers to identify and respond to technology-facilitated abuse.

Better support for culturally diverse communities

While gender-based violence impacts all women, language barriers, lack of access to information and knowledge about rights, cultural norms that legitimatise male authority, and visa restrictions that force dependency increase migrant and refugee women's risk of experiencing DFSV.[xxxiii]

Some migrant and refugee women may be unaware that DFSV is illegal in Australia. Women from countries or communities where DFSV is treated as a private family matter and legal intervention is uncommon may not know that they can seek help.[xxxiv] For other women, financial dependence on a partner can further limit their ability to leave abusive relationships. This is particularly acute for asylum seekers and women on temporary visas, who may have limited or no work rights and be ineligible for government supports such as social housing, Medicare and income support.

Research conducted by Anglicare North Coast found that perpetrators commonly used threats of deportation and threats of separation from children as tactics to maintain control over migrant and refugee women.[xxxv] Women on temporary visas may have limited access to accurate information about their rights due to language barriers, restricted access to information, and uncertainty about migration requirements. These factors can discourage women from disclosing violence or seeking support due to fears about their visa status and ability to keep their families together. Migration information programs that provide clear, accessible information about Australian laws, rights and available support services for people experiencing DFSV would help ensure migrant and refugee women can make informed decisions, access support and seek safety without fear or uncertainty.

Anglicare North Coast's research also identified trust as a critical factor influencing whether women disclose violence and seek support.[xxxvi] Some women identified community leaders as trusted individuals. The next Action Plan should support community-led approaches that empowers community leaders to promote respectful relationships and support women with experiences of DFSV. However, these approaches must recognise the complex power and cultural dynamics that can exist within communities, as not all women will feel safe or comfortable disclosing abuse to leaders within their own communities. Anglicare Australia recommends that the Government consult with different communities to develop an appropriate and suitable disclosure channels and resources, and that ongoing consultation be conducted to refine strategies and resources. Communities should also be educated about how their attitudes can enable controlling behaviours and reduce perpetrators' ability to recognise harmful behaviour.

Recommendations:
Anglicare Australia recommends that the Second Action Plan ensure all women can access essential government programs, regardless of their visa status. The Second Action Plan should also work with diverse communities to develop culturally appropriate resources that raise awareness of DFSV, promote respectful relationships, and equip community leaders to support women experiencing DFSV.

Equal access for women and children in regional and rural areas

Access to DFSV support services should not depend on where a person lives. However, for many women in regional, rural and remote Australia, accessing help is significantly more difficult, resulting in poorer outcomes and more severe consequences. In 2023-24, people living in very remote areas were 41 times more likely to be hospitalised for DFSV-related injuries compared with people living in major cities.[xxxvii]

Geographic isolation is a major barrier to accessing support. Low population densities and large service catchments often require victim-survivors to travel long distances to receive help. For example, Bourke, which recorded 99 reported DFSV-related assaults in 2019-2020, is located 375 kilometres from Dubbo, the nearest regional centre where most support services are located.[xxxviii]

Limited public transport, housing shortages, staff shortages and inadequate service funding further restrict access to support. Delivering services across regional and remote areas is more complex and costly, yet funding often fails to reflect these additional demands. As a result, services frequently do not have the capacity to meet demand. A recent survey of 14 regional and remote DFSV services in New South Wales found that DFSV services operated at almost 300 per cent of their funded capacity in 2024–25.[xxxix]

Additionally, many regional and remote communities are small and closely connected, which can make it more difficult for victim-survivors to seek help. Victim-survivors may fear they will not be believed, that the person receiving their disclosure may have a relationship with the perpetrator or will support the them, or that they face judgement or backlash from the community.

Anglicare Australia's In Every Community Report identifies the challenges and opportunities of providing community services in regional, rural and remote Australia, and highlights reforms that the Second Action Plan could adopt to improve outcomes for DFSV victim-survivors living in regional, rural and remote Australia. These include adopting a dedicated rural and remote workforce strategy, investing in housing, adjusting funding formulas to reflect the higher costs of service delivery, embedding a needs-based funding model so communities experiencing higher levels of DFSV receive proportionate resources, and redesigning competitive grant processes to better recognise place-based expertise and community trust.[xl]

Recommendations:

Anglicare Australia recommends the Second Action Plan identify strategies for improving access to DFSV support in regional, rural and remote Australia. These could include:

- Developing and adopting a regional, rural and remote DFSV workforce strategy.
- Investing in housing and infrastructure.
- Reforming funding models to reflect the true cost of service delivery in regional, rural and remote areas.
- Embedding a needs-based funding model for community services, so that areas with higher levels of disadvantage and demand, receive proportionate resources, rather than being limited by population share.
- Redesigning competitive grant processes to value established local organisations, for example through weighted criteria that recognise place-based expertise and community trust.

Conclusion

Anglicare Australia appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Second Action Plan.

The Second Action Plan is an important opportunity to improve efforts across all sectors to eliminate violence against women and children, strengthen implementation and ensure national resources are directed towards areas where they can achieve the greatest impact. Throughout this submission, Anglicare Australia calls on the Federal Government to strengthen its focus on primary prevention and early intervention, while improving coordination across all relevant sectors. A more connected and effective response system is essential to ensure that no person seeking support for DFSV falls through the gaps and we progress towards the national goal of achieving a society free from DFSV.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our recommendations or provide further information about the work of the Anglicare Australia Network to keep women and children safe.

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[xxxix] Domestic Violence NSW (2025) Ending violence in regional and remote NSW.
[xl] Anglicare Australia (2025) In Every Community .