



PRIORITY AREA

ESTABLISH HIGH LEVEL, CROSS-GOVERNMENTAL LEADERSHIP

A coalition of organisations is calling on the next Western Australian Government to commit to improving the systems that are meant to keep victims of domestic and family violence safe and hold perpetrators to account for their violence.

Inadequate systemic responses increase risk to women and children. It is imperative that in Western Australia we do not make assurances that the system will provide the safety net that women and children need and then fail to deliver because resources are spread so thin. Strong leadership and political will is instrumental to improving the system for victims of violence, holding perpetrators accountable and, in time, preventing violence from occurring.

We call on all political parties to demonstrate accountability and leadership in preventing violence against women and their children by putting domestic and family violence at the top of the agenda and committing to establishing high level, cross-governmental leadership.

Key asks:

- Appoint a designated Minister for the Prevention of Violence Against Women.
- Widen the remit of the Family and Domestic Violence Unit to become the Office for the Prevention of Violence Against Women located in the Department of Premier and Cabinet to demonstrate that it is a priority.
- Establish a Committee of Cabinet on the Prevention of Violence Against Women.
- Establish a high level, adequately resourced advisory group to the Government, comprised of representatives from all relevant sectors.
- Create an Assistant Commissioner of Police with a designated portfolio on the prevention of violence against women.
- Establish an independent, consumer advisory group specifically for women who have experienced domestic and family violence. The Victims/Survivor Advisory Group would be auspiced to meet regularly to identify priority

issues and/or contribute to legislative reform and policy and service responses relevant to women and children with a lived experience of domestic and family violence.

Key issues:

Establishing a Cabinet Committee on Domestic and Family Violence emphasises that a whole of government approach will be taken – sharing the responsibility for championing the issues both inside and outside the Parliament, developing and leading public policy across government, facilitating interdepartmental cooperation and collaboration at all levels and working with the community to address domestic and family violence.

Currently, accountability across government departments is splintered and it is very difficult with limited funding to proactively respond to increasing reporting and disclosures of domestic and family violence. Departments have different definitions, jurisdictions and ways of working with women, children and communities affected by domestic and family violence - Health, Education, Family and Community Services, Police, Attorney- General's Dept responses must be better coordinated and share good practice to prevent and respond effectively to domestic and family violence. Thorough, coordinated and sustained investment is required across the State.

There are multiple government initiatives and reforms in various stages of implementation aimed at reducing prevalence, and provide tailored, client-centred approaches to domestic and family violence, but these have largely been developed in isolation and with varying degrees of input from the non-government sector. Reforms to child protection, justice and policing, the specialist homelessness service sector and victim support must be aligned if we are to close substantial gaps between government and non-government responses.

Whilst the spirit of many of the reforms are welcomed, they do not do enough to address significant gaps and deficits in resourcing, service provision, prevention and early identification. Women still have to navigate heavily silo-ed parts of the system and access services across various agencies and may encounter services with limited understanding of complex trauma, appropriate responses to diversity and the lived impacts of domestic and family violence.

To make a change in Western Australia, domestic and family violence requires the leadership of the Premier. A cross departmental approach must be driven by our State's newly elected leader and implemented by a dedicated Minister to drive the whole of government approach that is so urgently required. Moving the domestic and family violence portfolio to the Department of Premier and Cabinet would facilitate a more coordinated government approach to the issue; and

provide greater oversight, review and performance measures that at all levels holds greater accountability and for which performance will be continually reviewed and managed.

To facilitate effective leadership in preventing violence against women and children it will be necessary to establish an independent, consumer advisory group specifically for women who have experienced domestic and family violence. The Victims/Survivor Advisory Group would be auspiced to meet regularly to identify priority issues and/or contribute to legislative reform and policy and service responses relevant to women and children with a lived experience of domestic and family violence, so that we can ensure that policies and programs meet the needs of the people they are designed to help in both theory and practice.
