



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
**FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY**

Mrs Giulia Jones MLA (Chair), Ms Bec Cody MLA (Deputy Chair), Ms Elizabeth Lee MLA,  
Mr Chris Steel MLA

**Inquiry into Domestic and Family Violence—Policy approaches and responses**

**Submission No. 23**  
**Our Watch**

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26 September 2017

Dr Andréa Cullen  
Secretary, Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety  
ACT Legislative Assembly  
GPO Box 1020  
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Dear Dr Cullen

Thank you for your invitation to Our Watch to provide a submission to the Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety's Inquiry into Domestic and Family Violence – Policy approaches and responses.

Our Watch is an independent, not for profit organisation established by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments in 2013. All States and Territories have been invited to join, and since establishment the South Australian, Northern Territory, Tasmanian, Queensland, Australian Capital Territory and Western Australian Governments have become members.

Our Watch works to drive nation-wide change in the social norms, structures, attitudes and practices that underpin and support violence against women and their children.

In 2015 Our Watch launched [\*Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women\*](#). Developed in partnership with Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, the framework draws on a significant review of the international evidence on what drives violence against women, as well as comprehensive national consultations with stakeholders. *Change the story* outlines a national approach to prevention, involving diverse stakeholders, and in particular it points to the significant role that state and territory governments must play as part of this shared national effort. In line with this, this submission draws strongly on *Change the story*, and to a large extent reflects the approach outlined there.

Since its launch, many Australian governments have endorsed *Change the story* and are now working to embed it in jurisdictional policy structures and processes. Our Watch strongly encourages the ACT Government to follow this approach, and this submission provides further detail about how this can best be achieved, by applying the framework to the context of this inquiry.

I congratulate the ACT Government for initiating this important inquiry. This intent aligns strongly with Our Watch's mandate, and we look forward to continuing to work with the ACT Government in the years to come to prevent violence against women and their children before it starts.

Yours sincerely

Mary Barry  
Chief Executive Officer



**Our  
WATCH**

End violence against  
Women And Their Children

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## OUR WATCH

# SUBMISSION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY: INQUIRY INTO DOMESTIC AND FAMILY VIOLENCE – POLICY APPROACHES AND RESPONSES

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## About Our Watch

Our Watch is an independent, not for profit organisation established by the the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments in 2013. All States and Territories have been invited to join, and since establishment the South Australian, Northern Territory, Tasmanian, Queensland, Australian Capital Territory and Western Australian Governments have become members.

Our vision is shared with the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan), namely an Australian community free from violence against women and their children.

The specific mandate of Our Watch is to focus on the *prevention* of violence against women and their children. We aim to provide leadership at national, state, regional and local levels to drive change in the social norms, structures, attitudes and practices that underpin and support violence against women and their children. Our Watch has four key areas of work:

1. Design and deliver public campaigns that engage and educate individuals and the community
2. Promote a sustained and constructive public conversation
3. Enable organisations, networks and communities to effect change
4. Influence public policy, systems and institutions.

## About this submission

As an organisation focused on *prevention*, this submission draws in particular on [Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women](#), developed by Our Watch in partnership with Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and VicHealth, and launched in November 2015.<sup>1</sup>

*Change the story* was developed following a significant review of the international evidence on what drives and contributes to the current prevalence of violence against women. It was also informed by an extensive, national consultation process, involving over 400 diverse stakeholders from across civil society and all levels of government, enabling the framework to draw on existing practice-based knowledge and expertise as well as available research. Based on this evidence, the framework presents an explanatory model of violence against women, and a coherent conceptual approach to its prevention – one that prescribes actions that are explicitly aligned with, and designed to address the underlying causes and drivers of violence.

Full references to this literature, research and other evidence can be found in the framework itself, and the two accompanying 'Framework Foundations' papers, all of which are available on the Our Watch website: [http://www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do-\(1\)/National-Primary-Prevention-Framework](http://www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do-(1)/National-Primary-Prevention-Framework).

## Best practice policy approaches to prevent domestic and family violence

### Gender inequality as the underlying driver of violence against women

With respect to best practice policy approaches to prevention, Our Watch's organisational position, informed by the international evidence on this issue, is that gender inequality is the fundamental and underlying driver of violence against women.

More specifically, as *Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women* demonstrates, there are particular expressions or manifestations of gender inequality that are most consistently associated with higher levels of violence against women. These are referred to in *Change the story* as the 'gendered drivers' of violence against women. A range of international evidence finds that these gendered drivers arise from unequal and discriminatory institutional, social and economic structures, social and cultural norms, and organisational, community, family and relationship practices. Together, these structures, norms and practices create environments in which women and men are not considered equal, and violence against women is tolerated and even condoned. The gendered drivers of violence against women outlined in the framework are as follows:

- 1) Condoning of violence against women
- 2) Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in public life and relationships
- 3) Rigid gender roles and identities
- 4) Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women

International evidence points very strongly to a clear association between gender inequality and the prevalence of violence against women. This evidence was reviewed in 2015 as part of the extensive work Our Watch undertook to inform the development of *Change the story*. The findings of this review provided the foundation for the explanatory model of violence that is contained in the framework, one that comprises a detailed analysis of the role of gender inequality and gender stereotypes in contributing to the prevalence of violence against women. What follows is an edited summary of that explanatory model, which can be found in full in Element 1 of *Change the story*.

### Gendered patterns in violence perpetration and victimisation

Violence can be perpetrated or experienced by anyone, and regardless of gender, it is unacceptable. However, at the population level, interpersonal violence is a highly gendered phenomenon. For example:

- Women are far more likely than men to experience sexual violence and violence from an intimate partner, and with more severe impacts.<sup>2</sup>
- Women are more likely than men to be afraid of, hospitalised by, or killed by an intimate partner.<sup>3</sup>
- 95% of all victims of violence – whether women or men – report experiencing violence from a male perpetrator.<sup>4</sup>

It follows that any explanation of violence must account for these gendered patterns, and must understand and analyse violence against women within the broader social context of gender inequality in which it occurs.

### **Clear association between gender inequality and violence against women**

There is a strong and consistent association between gender inequality and levels of violence against women. A 2015 study in medical journal *The Lancet* found that particular factors relating to gender inequality consistently predict the population prevalence of intimate partner violence across 44 countries. This study also found that the strong negative association between current partner violence and gross domestic product per person becomes non-significant when compared with these factors relating to gender norms.<sup>5</sup> A United Nations review also found significantly and consistently higher rates of violence against women in countries where women's economic, social and political rights are poorly protected, and where power and resources are unequally distributed between men and women.<sup>6</sup>

### **Gender inequality as the social context for violence against women**

Gender inequality sets the necessary social context in which violence against women occurs. There is now consensus in the international research that examining the way in which gender relations are structured is key to understanding violence against women.

Gender inequality is a social condition characterised by unequal value afforded to men and women and an unequal distribution of power, resources and opportunity between them. It often results from, or has historical roots in, laws or policies formally constraining the rights and opportunities of women, and is maintained and perpetuated today through structures that continue to organise and reinforce an unequal distribution of economic, social and political power and resources between women and men.

Gender inequality is also reinforced and maintained through more informal mechanisms, many of which are strongly characterized by their reliance on gender stereotypes. These include, for example, social norms such as the belief that women are best suited to care for children, practices such as differences in childrearing practices for boys and girls, and structures such as pay differences between men and women.<sup>7</sup>

Such norms, practices and structures encourage women and men, girls and boys to adopt distinct gender identities and stereotyped gender roles, within a gender hierarchy that positions men as superior to women, and masculine roles and identities as superior to feminine ones. In Australia, the pervasiveness of these ideas is illustrated for example, by a recent survey showing more than a quarter of Australians think men make better political leaders, and one in five think men should take control in relationships and be the head of the household.<sup>8</sup>

One useful way of understanding both the operation of gender inequality and its impact on individual behaviour, including violence against women, is to map it across the social ecology, as shown in Figure 1 below:

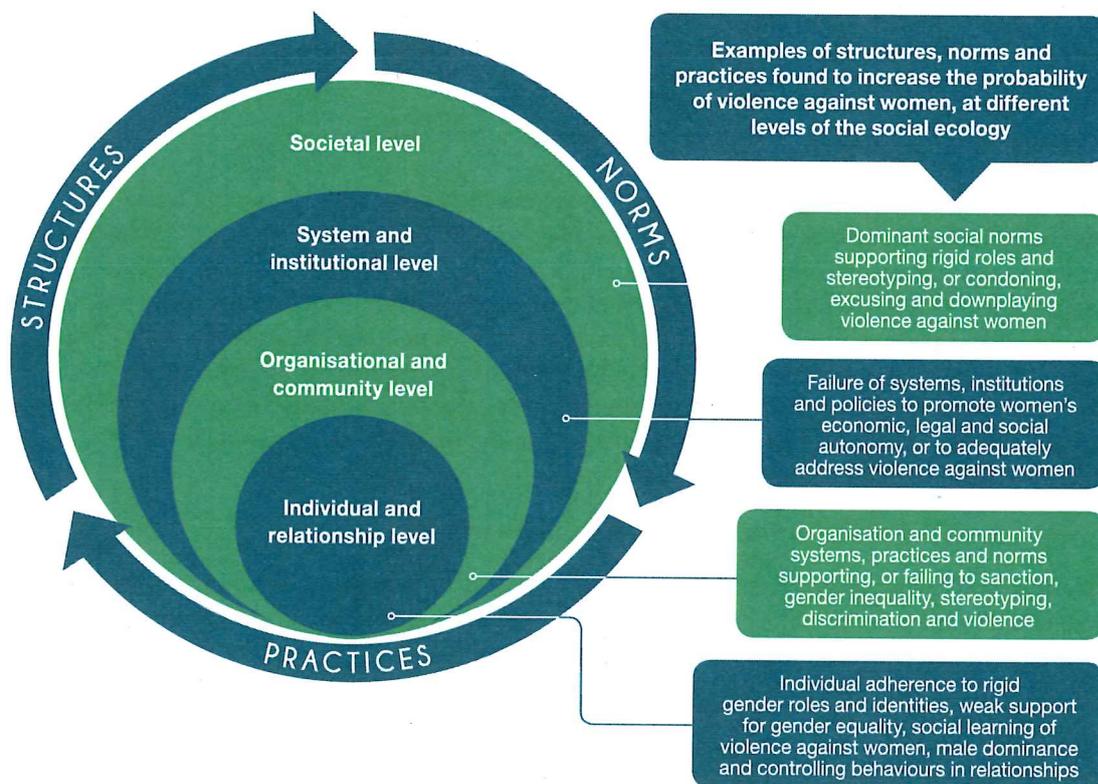


Figure 1. A socio-ecological model of violence against women.

Source: Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) and Vic Health (2015) *Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children.*

As this diagram illustrates, the norms, structures and practices that reproduce gender inequality operate at multiple levels, from the societal to the system or institutional level, in organisations and communities, and in individuals' everyday lives and interpersonal relationships. This mutually reinforcing relationship between the many different dimensions of gender inequality helps explain both why it is so entrenched, and how it creates a social context in which individual acts of violence against women are not only common, but often normalised or excused.

Furthermore, as the examples on this diagram show, gender stereotypes, and rigid ideas about gender roles and identities clearly underpin the kinds of structures, norms and practices that increase the probability of violence against women, at every level of the social ecology.

### Gender inequality intersects with other forms of inequality and discrimination

While gender inequality is always influential as a driver of violence against women, it cannot be considered in isolation, nor is it experienced in the same way by every woman. Other forms of systemic social, political and economic inequality, discrimination and disadvantage influence and intersect with gender inequality in complex ways, and at all levels of the social ecology. In some

cases they can increase the frequency, severity and prevalence of violence against women. This means that while gender inequality is a significant factor, it needs to be considered and addressed alongside and together with a range of other significant factors, such as racism, colonisation or discrimination against women with disabilities, for example.

### **The gendered drivers of violence against women**

Research has found that a particular series of factors associated with gender inequality are the most consistent predictors of violence against women, and explain its gendered patterns.<sup>9</sup> These can be understood as the 'gendered drivers' of violence against women. They arise from within the broader social context of gender inequality described above, comprising an interrelated and mutually reinforcing series of gender discriminatory institutional, social and economic structures, social and cultural norms, and organisational, community, family and relationship practices that together create environments in which women and men are not considered equal, and violence against women is tolerated and even condoned. Within this context, the following expressions of gender inequality have been shown in the international evidence<sup>10</sup> to be most consistently associated with higher levels of violence against women:

1. Condoning of violence against women
2. Men's control of decision-making and limits to women's independence in both public life and relationships
3. Rigid gender roles and stereotyped constructions of masculinity and femininity
4. Male peer relations that emphasise aggression and disrespect towards women.

Gender stereotypes strongly underpin each of these drivers, and, because they are so often taken for granted, and uncritically reproduced in many contexts both public and private, they play a significant role in keeping these drivers entrenched in society.

## Policy challenges arising from the national funding and agenda/policy setting regime/framework

With respect to the issues and policy challenges for the ACT arising from the national funding and agenda/policy setting regime/framework, it is worth noting that the last decade has seen greatly increased awareness of the issue of domestic violence and other forms of violence against women, and the development of widespread community support, and expectation, for action. The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan) provides a supportive, bipartisan and cross-jurisdictional policy that goes beyond electoral cycles to establish a long-term and transformative vision of an Australia where all women and their children live free from violence, in safe communities. The National Plan's First, Second and Third Action Plans have built evidence on what works to prevent violence, including through multi-million dollar grants programs for Community Action and Respectful Relationships Education.

The current challenge – and opportunity – for governments at all levels, is to scale up and systematise proven and promising, yet still small-scale, programs to the population level – enabling them to reach and impact far greater numbers of people, and create the potential for the kind of whole-of-population change that is needed. Such an effort will also enable a return on prior investment in pilot programs that could save the economy billions. For example, if comprehensively supported Respectful Relationships Education programs were undertaken across government schools alone in Australia, an estimated 7000 - 12,000 future experiences of violence against women could be avoided (based on evaluations of similar American programs). This amounts to savings of up to \$3.6 billion in avoided costs.<sup>11</sup>

Recognising that more research and consultation was needed to determine how the lessons learned from previous work could be scaled up to the national level, the Second Action Plan supported the development of *Change the story*. As our shared national framework, *Change the story* should now guide the future commitments of all Australian governments and their civil society and private sector partners and help us deliver results to turn the corner on this complex – but preventable – social issue.

The role of gender inequality in driving violence against women has been outlined earlier in this submission. It also stresses that gender inequality must always be considered in the context of other forms of discrimination and disadvantage, and that a range of factors can reinforce such inequality to exacerbate violence against women in some cases. *Change the story* outlines a range of essential and supporting actions that governments and other stakeholders should take in order to address the complexity of these factors.

***The implication for how governments should implement these actions, and prioritise action and investment, is outlined below.***

i. How governments should prioritise action and investment

*Change the story* outlined five essential and five supporting actions to address the factors that drive and reinforce violence against women – to be undertaken across the nation by a diverse range of stakeholders. Experience from other areas of social change, such as efforts to reduce smoking and road accidents, shows that by taking this kind of shared, consistent and coordinated national approach we can measurably lower the probability of violence against women and decrease future occurrences.

Addressing the specific and gendered drivers of violence against women must be the priority if we are to reduce levels of violence against women in a significant and sustained way. Essential actions 1- 4 should comprise the bulk of investment and activity of governments and key partners in implementing *Change the story*, and in the Third Action Plan.

To be truly inclusive and reach everyone across the diversity of the Australian populations, *all* such activity should take into account the range of ways differently positioned groups experience gender inequality, discrimination and violence; and actively seek to involve people from all cultural backgrounds, abilities, socio-economic groups, genders, sexualities and ages in design, implementation and evaluation.

**Essential actions to address the gendered drivers of violence against women**

- 1 Challenge condoning of violence against women
- 2 Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships
- 3 Foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles
- 4 Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys
- 5 Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life.

**Supporting actions to address the reinforcing factors**

- 6 Challenge the normalisation of violence as an expression of masculinity or male dominance
- 7 Prevent exposure to violence and support those affected to reduce its consequences
- 8 Address the intersections between social norms relating to alcohol and gender
- 9 Reduce backlash by engaging men and boys in gender equality, building relationship skills and social connections
- 10 Promote broader social equality and address structural discrimination and disadvantage.

Addressing the reinforcing factors entails a new way of working that brings together specialist violence prevention and gender equality expertise with those working across other areas of social policy, advocacy and practice (such as child protection, or alcohol harm minimisation). Investing in ways to support these sectors to collaborate better, learn from each other, and jointly develop (and finance) shared programs of work, will be more effective than 'siloed' investment in isolated initiatives.

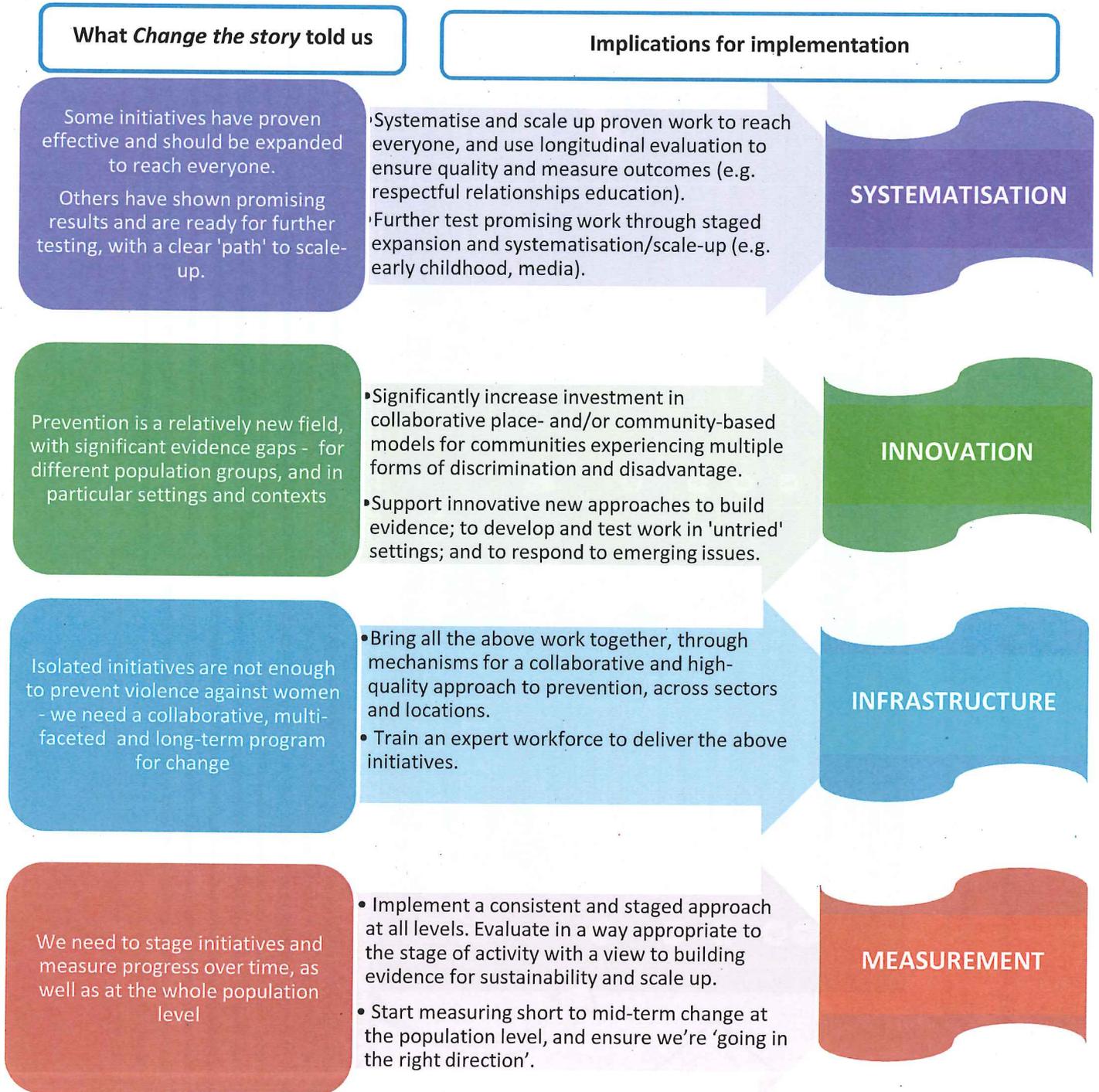
**Lower probability of violence against women**

The full implementation of essential action 5 – 'promote and normalize gender equality in public and private life' – will have numerous social, health and economic benefits in addition to preventing violence against women. For this reason, and because of the significant scope and range of activity it implies, separate policy and investment frameworks at National, State/Territory and Local levels should be envisaged to measurably address *all forms* of structural, normative and practice-based gender inequality. In other words, specific strategies to prevent violence against women should be adopted in addition to (and aligned with) broader or more general gender equality strategies.

Supporting action 10 – like essential action 5 – is broad in scope and outcomes, while being crucial to prevent violence against *all* women. Again, separate policy and investment frameworks will be necessary at all levels to fully implement this action. Further, because of the intersectional nature of the drivers and reinforcing factors, collaborative approaches with those experienced in working on different forms of discrimination and disadvantage, and with particular population groups and communities, are critical. These collaborations should guide the co-design of specific and tailored activities for particular groups, supporting a greater intensity of joined-up effort and investment to address the complex combinations of factors contributing to violence for women in particular groups and communities.

ii. **How governments should frame implementation for the greatest impact**

*Change the story* reviewed the international evidence on what works for greatest impact in the implementation of prevention activity internationally. This evidence points to the need for implementation across four main 'streams' of work.



### a. Systematisation

Some prevention initiatives have proven effectiveness and have a clear path to scale-up. A number of initiatives internationally have now been subject to rigorous and long-term evaluations and have proven effectiveness in reducing future perpetration and victimisation.<sup>12</sup> Governments have a clear role to play in systematising and scaling up such proven work to reach everyone, and in applying longitudinal evaluation to ensure quality and measure outcomes. In addition to building system support (such as policies, training and human resources), particular attention may also be required to tailor material and approaches to ensure 'hard to reach' groups receive the benefit of initiatives.

Government departments in areas such as social and community services, education and early childhood, health, sports and recreation, are all critical to a comprehensive approach to violence prevention through system and policy development.

Such initiatives might include curriculum development, teacher training and regional support for respectful relationships education in schools; or integrating positive and equal parenting programs into early childhood or community services statewide. Effort must be undertaken on a whole of government basis built on a shared understanding of the purpose of prevention, and with joint responsibility and accountability for delivering government commitments.

Examples of prevention work ready for systematisation or scale-up include respectful relationships education in primary and secondary schools, and media engagement. Work that requires more testing but has a system-based 'path' to scale up includes integrating prevention into early childhood education and care, and working with parents.

#### **Example of systematisation in the ACT**

A primary prevention approach to address gender-based violence through education systems has been embedded at the policy level in the ACT. The ACT Education Directorate's 2016 *Safe and Supportive Schools procedures* include the following commitment:

All Directorate staff will develop an awareness that a primary prevention approach including building students' skills to develop respectful relationships can have far reaching effects. For example, promoting gender equality and respect can assist to prevent gender based violence.

The ACT Education Directorate is a member of the National Respectful Relationships Education Expert Group, convened by Our Watch. The Group brings together governments, education stakeholders, non-government organisations and organisations working with and for young people, to share knowledge and work towards the vision of every Australian child receiving best practice respectful relationships education.

**Our Watch encourages the ACT Government to ensure that the ACT respectful relationships program comprehensively addresses and incorporates the evidence base for this work, including all seven core elements for respectful relationships education:**

1. Address drivers of gender-based violence;
2. Have a long term vision, approach and funding;
3. Take a whole school approach;
4. Establish mechanisms for collaboration and coordinated effort;
5. Ensure integrated evaluation and continual improvement;
6. Provide resources and support for teachers; and
7. Use age-appropriate, interactive and participatory curriculum.<sup>13</sup>

## **b. Innovation**

Governments at all levels have a role to play in system strengthening and reform, not only for scaling up and embedding proven practice, but also to support emerging practice. Many initiatives have shown promise on a small-scale or in local contexts, but more work is needed to develop and test models to see if they are appropriate for scale-up to the national level, and if so how. Areas where there are significant evidence gaps on what is effective include prevention work:

- in some settings – such as faith groups, film and television, or advertising – where a solid rationale for prevention exists, but little evaluated practice has so far been undertaken in Australia;
- for particular population groups or communities – such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and some culturally and linguistically diverse communities – who may be experiencing multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage, and therefore would benefit from more holistic and strengths-based community models for prevention, in collaboration with those working towards related goals/reinforcing factors; and
- in different geographical settings and contexts – especially rural/regional and remote areas – where the relative influence of local communities on norms, structures and practices (compared to that of more formal structures) may be higher, and therefore require a different approach to prevention than one relying on ‘reach through settings’.

To maintain relevance and reach across a diverse and rapidly evolving Australian society, governments also need to be able to identify and respond to emerging issues as they arise. A mechanism is required to fund the development, implementation and evaluation (through action research methodologies) of:

- transferable practice models in settings where promising evidence and practice already exists, prior to full scale up;
- innovative new approaches to build evidence for primary prevention in settings such as film, TV and advertising, public transport, or faith-based organisations;
- collaborative place- and community-based models for prevention in rural/regional and remote communities, and/or with particular population groups; and
- approaches to respond to emerging issues and a changing environment.

Significant funding for evaluation (around 20 percent of project budgets) should be a feature of investment in the innovation stream, where the emphasis is on building evidence through participatory methodologies. Program design and development should draw on all available evidence, prioritising formal evaluations, but also incorporating lessons from research, practice and consultation and advice from those with relevant expertise.

Examples of work that would benefit from piloting through a national innovation program might include: place-based action research pilots with communities experiencing multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage; working with disability services and institutions to prevent violence against women; or working with advertising, film and television industries to challenge gender stereotypes.

## **c. Infrastructure**

We cannot prevent violence against women ‘project by project’. While isolated initiatives have demonstrated impact for participants, they are not enough to create lasting change. A stand-alone schools-based program, for instance, may well change participating students’ attitudes and behaviours around gender and violence, but if they receive sexist and/or violence-supportive messaging from the media, broader peer groups or in their home environments, that change is less likely to ‘hold’ over time.

On the other hand, the effectiveness of a prevention initiative is *reinforced* and strengthened when it is carried out in concert with initiatives occurring in other settings (e.g. where a schools-based program is accompanied by a social marketing campaign, community initiative, and/or sports-based program). This effect is known as ‘mutually-reinforcing.’

Broad and sustainable change can only be achieved where prevention efforts are planned and implemented to go ‘wide and deep’ – across the numerous settings where people interact and that influence them, such as schools, local communities, the media, workplaces, residential care settings, sporting clubs and faith institutions – and in a coordinated way.<sup>14</sup> This coordination of effort also allows us to reach a much larger number of people than a stand-alone initiative, and so begin the process of population-level change. But it requires collaborative planning, implementation and monitoring.

*Change the story* explains how a collaborative national approach in turn requires a strong ‘prevention infrastructure’ to drive broad, deep and sustainable social change, including:

- mechanisms for coordination and quality assurance
- an expert workforce
- political, sector-specific and civil society leadership
- policy and legislative reform
- shared monitoring, reporting and evaluation frameworks.

Such an infrastructure is the key that unlocks the potential for every sector, institution, organisation and community to play their role in preventing violence against women through a collaborative effort. It also allows us to ensure that prevention activity at all levels - from national, through to the state/territory, the regional and the local – can benefit from evidence-based support. As such, a good infrastructure is not just ‘nice to have’ but a crucial driver of all other prevention activity.

Governments have a clear role to play in building and/or supporting a prevention infrastructure that should include:

- A National Primary Prevention Steering Group
- A National Workforce Development Strategy
- A mechanism and process for engaging leaders across different sectors and communities
- A gender equality strategy shared across jurisdictions and linked to the National Plan, with actions aiming to ‘close the gender gap’ (e.g. against the ABS’ gender indicators), and an emphasis on promoting women’s independence and decision-making in public life and relationships.
- Civil society-led mechanisms for increased collaboration and collective impact on ‘common causes’ and/or shared goals, for example to:
  - Challenge the normalisation of violence
  - Building pathways to positive futures for children, young people and adults who have experienced or been exposed to violence
  - Address the intersections between social norms related to alcohol, gender and violence
  - Work towards shared social equality goals in a collective way.

#### **d. Measurement**

While many primary prevention of violence against women initiatives have taken place in Australia over the last decade, most have not been comprehensively evaluated, and guidance is lacking on what sorts of evaluations, measuring what sorts of change, are most appropriate in different contexts and a different

'stages' of prevention practice. Our Watch has developed a Handbook called *Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to Change the story*, that informs staging of practice and evaluation, but its uptake nationwide will require the development of systems and workforce capacity across sectors (see 'infrastructure' above).

Evaluation methods should be designed and funded in such a way as to be appropriate to the stage of the initiative being evaluated. For example:

- An innovative new approach should be evaluated at around 20 percent of total budget, using participatory and action-research methodologies to measure shifts in the underlying drivers and reinforcing factors, but also the strengths and weaknesses of processes.
- Where initiatives have demonstrated initial success, their first stage of scale-up should also be evaluated, this time for the appropriateness of the approach to new sites or environments, and to develop and refine a transferable model for the next stage.
- Once such transferrable models have been developed, tested and refined, they are ready for full scale-up or systematisation. For this stage, longitudinal and – in some cases – randomised control trials – would enable testing of future impact on levels of violence.

In Australia, while shorter-term evaluations for many initiatives have shown a positive impact on participants in relation to the drivers of violence (e.g. in the attitudes, practices or power differentials known to contribute to violence),<sup>15</sup> and produced tested models for scale up (e.g. in Respectful Relationships Education), no initiative has yet been subject to robust longitudinal evaluation. Evaluations typically report on the immediate impacts on student attitudes and school cultures. While such measures are important, further research is necessary to categorically demonstrate the effectiveness of shifting gender inequality and stereotypes and subsequent changes to future rates of perpetration and victimisation.

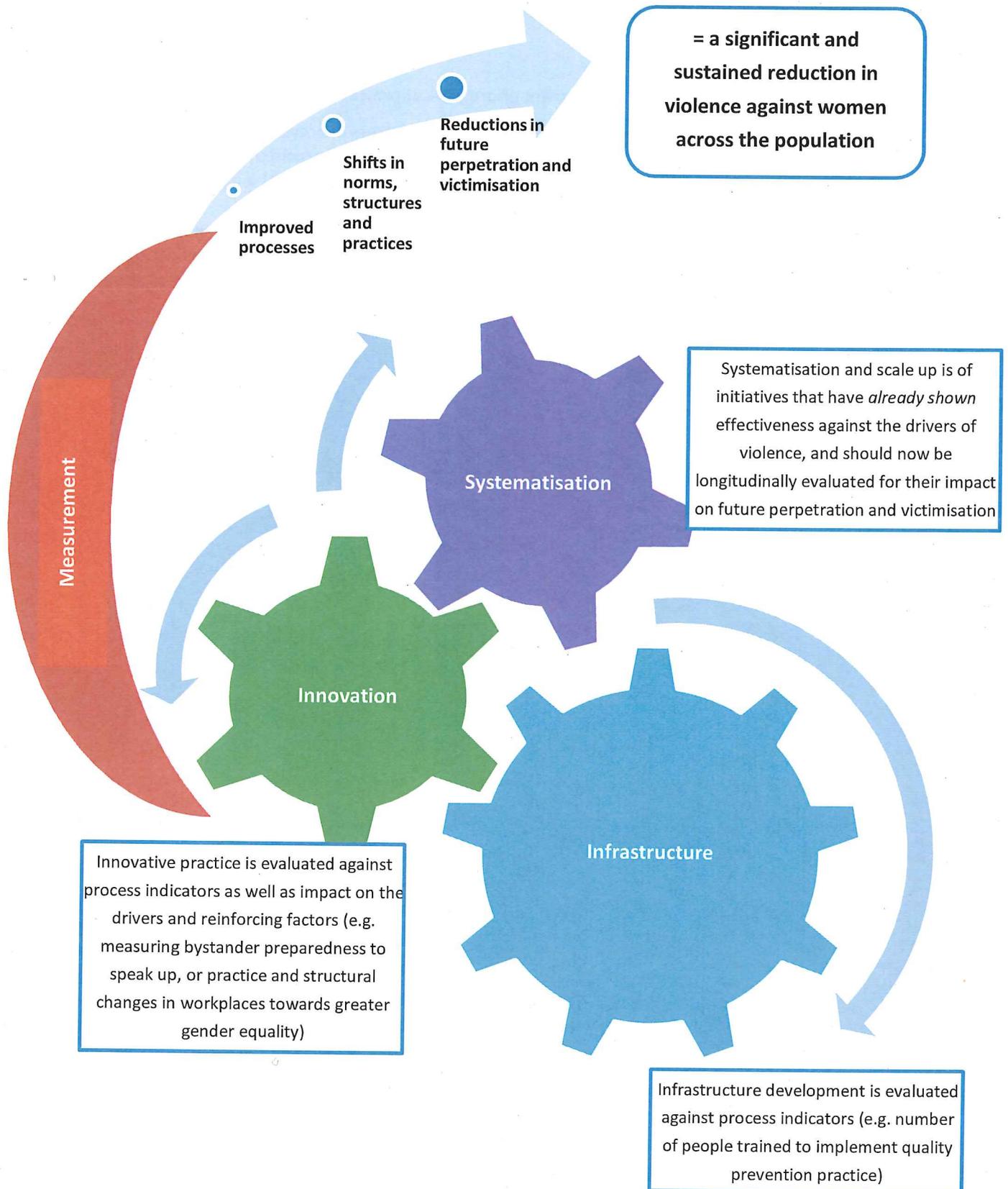
Another 'measurement issue' is that of whole-of-population change. While we measure prevalence of violence against women at the population level through the Personal Safety Survey,<sup>16</sup> and attitudes towards gender and violence through the National Community Attitudes Survey,<sup>17</sup> we know that primary prevention is a long-term endeavour, and we would not expect to see significant changes against such indicators until a comprehensive (and national) primary prevention program has been delivered for at least a five to ten year period.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore we do not yet have a consistent approach to the measurement of short to mid-term change at the population level – against the drivers and reinforcing factors of violence – to know if we are 'going in the right direction'. Our Watch is working on a guide to prevention monitoring that will inform this effort, but again its uptake will require training and system support at the national level, and likely further adaptation at the State/Territory level.

Achieving a measurable decrease in violence against women at the population level is arguably the culmination of numerous smaller changes at the practice level, but it also requires agreed population-level indicators, and a process for data collection, analysis and reporting. The current challenge, then, is to determine what short to mid-term indicators can help us assess our progress at the state (and ideally regional and local) level, and to ensure that our data collection methods are robust enough to provide meaningful learnings. This might entail identifying and measuring reductions in the drivers of violence against women against high-level indicators such as measures of structural gender equality in economic, social and political terms, as well as 'normative' measures that might include shifts in attitudes towards women and violence, levels of street and workplace harassment, representations of women and violence in popular culture, and so forth.

Initial actions required to improve measurement of progress at project and population levels include:

- Developing a national baseline of data against which progress in prevention over the course of the National Plan can be measured. This should include detailed and precise measures across the structures, norms and practices that drive and reinforce violence against women, as identified in *Change the story*.
- Developing 2018 and 2022 'Progress in Prevention Data Reports', demonstrating progress against the baseline indicators during and at the end of the National Plan implementation period.
- Releasing annual qualitative Thematic Reports on issues such as what the data tells us about socio-economic disadvantage and violence against women in the Australian context.

### iii. The four interlocking parts of implementation



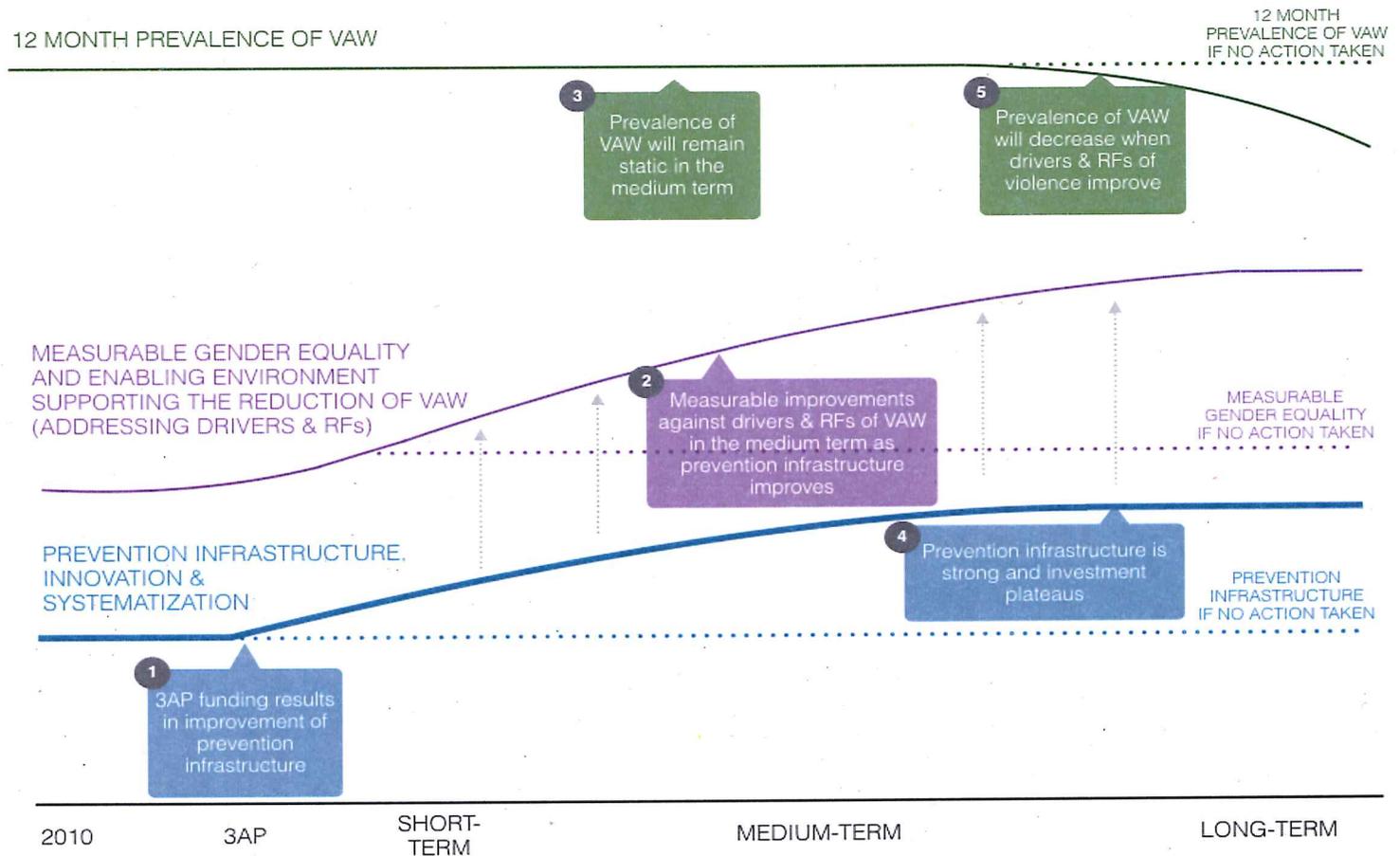
iv. What change looks like over time

Full implementation of *Change the story* will, towards the end of the current National Plan in 2022, begin to show significant and measurable gains. Continued bipartisan support and investment from all levels of government – working in partnership with civil society and the private sector – will be crucial to ensure prevention activity is embedded into systems, institutions, organisations and communities across sectors and across the country. Such a collaborative national approach will take Australia to the next stage of significant and population-level reductions in violence against women and their children.

This graphic envisages the evolution in population-level indicators of progress in prevention of violence against women.

Reading from the bottom upwards:

- 1) Increased investment in prevention systematisation, innovation and infrastructure through the Third Action Plan (3AP),
- 2) Leads to short to mid-term increases in indicators of gender equality and improvements against the drivers and reinforcing factors (RFs) of violence against women
- 3) Which, over the mid to long-term leads to a decrease in 12-mth prevalence measured by the Personal Safety Survey



Source: The Equality Institute 2016

## Other matters

### **Taking an intersectional approach to prevention**

Adopting an intersectional approach to the prevention of violence against women is necessary to adequately address and reach all population groups.

Gender inequality is not experienced the same way by all women, nor expressed the same way in all contexts. Embedding primary prevention initiatives across the range of settings discussed above not only reaches significant portions of the community but also enables the engagement of people across different cultures, socio-economic backgrounds, ages, abilities, genders and sexualities, and in urban, rural and remote locations.

While an approach to prevention must be taken that engages the whole community, this does not imply a 'one size fits all' approach. People have different experiences and understandings of gender, inequality, discrimination and violence, and thus it will be necessary to work in multifaceted ways in response, and to address any additional drivers and reinforcing factors that are relevant to a particular audience or community.

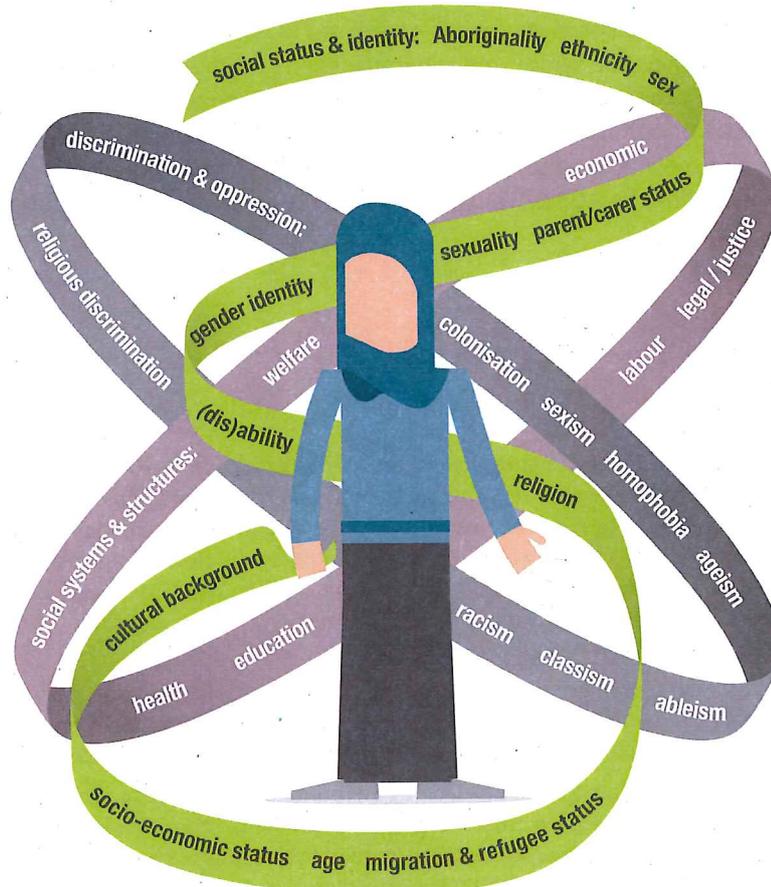
An intersectional approach requires us to consider how people experience multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage. It is therefore critical when considering how to address the prevention of violence at a whole of population level. An intersectional understanding of violence against women acknowledges that while gender inequality is a necessary condition for violence against women, it is not the only or necessarily the most prominent factor in every context. An intersectional understanding also acknowledges that violence against women is often experienced in combination with other forms of structural inequality and discrimination. Examining how other forms of structural inequality and discrimination intersect with gender inequality to exacerbates violence helps to effectively address the root causes of violence against all women, across the diversity of the Australian population.

Applying an intersectional approach to prevention means looking at where extra work needs to be done on addressing particular norms, practices and structural forms of discrimination. It is not focusing on the characteristics of the group, but on the social structures and social and cultural norms that discrimination and disadvantage the group. While the focus on violence against women, and family violence in particular, is an essential component of violence prevention, addressing the gaps that remain requires additional and a concerted effort.

An intersectional approach to violence prevention provides a framework within which the multiple ways in which certain population groups experience violence can be identified and understood, and perhaps it is only when policy development focuses on, and treats as central the needs and experiences of those who experience multiple and compounding forms of discrimination and oppression, that we can truly prevent all forms of violence.

The image below is used to illustrate how systems and structures of oppression and discrimination affect people differently. This often results in simultaneous and compounding experiences of discrimination and disadvantage for particular groups and communities, including women.

The green ribbon represents the variety of factors that make up a person's social status and/or identity. The purple ribbon represents the social systems and structures which can impact people positively or negatively. The grey ribbon represents forms of oppression and discrimination.



For further guidance on examples of intersectional approaches to prevention refer to [Putting the prevention of violence against women into practice: How to Change the story and Reflections from the 2016 Prevalent and Preventable Conference](#).

## Conclusion

The ultimate purpose of primary prevention activities and strategies is to prevent violence against women *before it occurs*, hence the focus must be on targeted and coordinated actions that seek to transform attitudes and behaviours by targeting the key social determinants of violence at the individual, relationship, community and societal levels. In a recent review of primary prevention in the public health context, VicHealth concluded that “a combination of strategies across legislation, bi-partisan policy, direct participation, social marketing, research and organisational change will

be essential, as well as the institutional arrangements and coordinating mechanisms to ensure prevention is a visible and sustained approach".<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the transformative change required to prevent violence against women and their children is significant. It will not be achieved in the short term, but rather requires long term commitment and sustained effort over generations. Violence against women cannot be prevented if it is addressed in isolation from the social context, nor if our responses focus only on the symptoms and impacts. Preventing this violence – that is, stopping it before it starts – requires a broad and significant challenge to its underlying *drivers*, involving work at every level – with individuals, communities, and organisations, and changes to the systems, structures and social and cultural norms of Australian society as a whole. State and territory governments, including the ACT Government, can make a significant contribution to this whole of society effort.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Our Watch, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety and VicHealth, *Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia*, Our Watch, Melbourne Australia. The framework turn draws on substantial background research undertaken in 2015, including a detailed literature review exploring the evidence for what drives violence against women, and a series of specially commissioned 'think pieces'. *Change the story*, and the two 'Framework Foundations' papers that contain this background research can all be found on the Our Watch website: [http://www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do-\(1\)/National-Primary-Prevention-Framework](http://www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do-(1)/National-Primary-Prevention-Framework).
- <sup>2</sup> See Cox, P. (2015) Violence against women: Additional analysis of the Australian Bureau of Statistics' Personal Safety Survey (2012), Horizons Research Report, Issue 1, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, Sydney, <http://anrows.org.au/publications/horizons/PSS>.
- <sup>3</sup> Women are three times more likely than men to be killed by an intimate partner, according to Cussen, T. and Bryant, W. (2015) Research in Practice No. 38: Domestic/family violence homicide in Australia, Australian Institute of Criminology, [http://www.aic.gov.au/media\\_library/publications/rip/rip38/rip38.pdf](http://www.aic.gov.au/media_library/publications/rip/rip38/rip38.pdf). Also Statistics Canada (2003), Statistics Canada (2003) Family violence in Canada: A statistical profile 2003, Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Ministry of Justice, Canada, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-224-x/85-224-x2003000-eng.pdf>.
- <sup>4</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013) Personal Safety, Australia 2012, Cat. No. 4906.0, <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0>. Survey extrapolated to population figures on the basis of 3.8% of all women surveyed reporting having experienced physical or sexual violence from a non-partner in the past 12 months (and approximately 9 million women over the age of 18 in Australia). This includes physical or sexual assault, or threats.
- <sup>5</sup> Heise, L. and Kotsadam, A. (2015) Cross-national and multi-level correlates of partner violence: An analysis of data from population-based surveys, *Lancet Global Health*, 3, pp. 332–340, see 'The gendered drivers of violence against women' in this section; Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth (2015) Framework Foundations 2: Think pieces, stakeholder consultations, issues, implications and approach. .
- <sup>6</sup> United Nations Women (2011) In pursuit of justice: Progress of the world's women, <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/%20library/publications/2011/p rogressoftheworldswomen-2011-en.pdf>.
- <sup>7</sup> Our Watch, ANROWS VicHealth (2015) Framework foundations 1: A review of the evidence on correlations of violence against women and what works to prevent it, citing Flood, M. (2009) Bent straights: Diversity

and flux among heterosexual men, *Intimate citizenships: Gender, sexualities, politics*, E.H. Oleksy (ed), Routledge, London, pp. 223–240.

- <sup>8</sup> Webster, K., Pennay, P., Bricknall, R., Diemer, K., Flood, M., Powell, A., Politoff, V. and Ward, A. (2014) Australians' attitudes to violence against women: Full technical report, Findings from the 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/2013-national-community-attitudes-towards-violence-against-women-survey>.
- <sup>9</sup> Including literature reviews undertaken for *Change the story* (see note 2), and for VicHealth (2007) *Preventing violence before it occurs: A framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria*, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne, Australia; World Health Organization and London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (2010) *Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women: Taking action and generating evidence*, World Health Organization, Geneva, <http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/9789241564007/en/>. European Commission (2010) *Factors at play in the perpetration of violence against women, violence against children and sexual orientation violence: A multi-level interactive model*, [http://ec.europa.eu/justice/funding/daphne3/multi-level\\_interactive\\_model/understanding\\_perpetration\\_start\\_unix.html](http://ec.europa.eu/justice/funding/daphne3/multi-level_interactive_model/understanding_perpetration_start_unix.html); Heise, L. (2011) *What works to prevent partner violence – An evidence overview*, STRIVE, <http://strive.lshtm.ac.uk/system/files/attachments/What%20works%20to%20prevent%20partner%20violence.pdf>; Ellsberg, M., Arango, D.J., Morton, M., Gennari, F., Kiplesund, S., Contreras, M. and Watts, C. (2014) *Prevention of violence against women and girls: What does the evidence say?*, *The Lancet*, [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(14\)61703-7/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(14)61703-7/fulltext); Michau, L., Horn, J., Bank, A., Dutt, M. and Zimmerman, C. (2014) *Prevention of violence against women and girls: lessons from practice*, *The Lancet*, 385(9978), pp. 1672–1684.
- <sup>10</sup> For a review of this evidence, see Our Watch, ANROWS VicHealth (2015) (see note 10) for Our Watch, ANROWS and VicHealth, *Change the story: a shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia*, Our Watch, Melbourne Australia, [http://www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do-\(1\)/National-Primary-Prevention-Framework](http://www.ourwatch.org.au/What-We-Do-(1)/National-Primary-Prevention-Framework).
- <sup>11</sup> PwC, Our Watch and VicHealth (2015) *A High Price to Pay: The economic case for prevention violence against women*.
- <sup>12</sup> For example, a longitudinal evaluation of a school-based program aiming to prevent dating violence in the United States (called 'SafeDates') found the program significantly reduced psychological, moderate physical and sexual dating violence perpetration at four follow-up evaluations (one immediately after the program, then at one, three and six years later). Foshee, VA et al. (1996) *The Safe Dates Project: theoretical basis, evaluation design, and selected baseline findings*, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 12 (5): 39 – 47; Foshee, VA et al. (1998) *An evaluation of Safe Dates, an adolescent dating violence prevention program*, *American Journal of Public Health*, 88(1):45–50; Foshee, VA et al. (2000) *'The Safe Dates program: 1-year follow-up results'*, *American Journal of Public Health*, 90 (10):1619 –1622; Foshee, VA et al. (2004) *'Assessing the long-term effects of the Safe Dates program and a booster in preventing and reducing adolescent dating violence victimization and perpetration'*, *American Journal of Public Health*, 94(4):619–624; and Foshee, VA et al. (2005) *'Assessing the effects of the dating violence prevention program "Safe Dates" using random coefficient regression modelling'*, *Prevention Science*, 6: 245–258.
- <sup>13</sup> Our Watch, *Evidence paper: Respectful relationships education in schools (2015)*, <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/4a61e08b-c958-40bc-8e02-30fde5f66a25/Evidence-paper-respectful-relationships-education-AA-updated.pdf.aspx>
- <sup>14</sup> UN Women in cooperation with ESCAP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO (2012) *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls*, Bangkok, Thailand, 17-20 September

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2012,

<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2012/11/Report-of-the-EGM-on-Prevention-of-Violence-against-Women-and-Girls.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, VicHealth (2011), Sharing the Evidence Reports, outlining evaluation results for five initiatives funded through the VicHealth Respect, Responsibility and Equality program, <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/sharing-the-evidence>.

<sup>16</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012).

<sup>17</sup> Commonwealth of Australia and VicHealth (2009) National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey, <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/national-community-attitudes-towards-violence-against-women-survey-2009>.

<sup>18</sup> Possibly longer. We have no precedent for population-level change to prevent violence against women, and can only estimate these time spans based on experiences in other areas of primary prevention (such as smoking reduction).

<sup>19</sup> Keleher, Helen, 2017, *A review of prevention and public health strategies to inform the primary prevention of family violence and violence against women*, Melbourne: VicHealth and State Government of Victoria, p. 3.