

# CHANGE THE STORY

# TEN ACTIONS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



CURRENT STATE



Violence against women is serious, prevalent and driven by **GENDER INEQUALITY**

## GENDERED DRIVERS of violence against women:

CONDONING of violence against women

MEN'S CONTROL of decision-making and limits to women's independence

STEREOTYPED constructions of masculinity and femininity

DISRESPECT towards women and male peer relations that emphasise aggression

Gender inequality sets the **NECESSARY SOCIAL CONTEXT**

**657**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MATTERS ARE DEALT WITH EVERY DAY BY AUSTRALIAN POLICE



Every week one **WOMAN IS MURDERED** by her current or former partner



DESIRED FUTURE



Violence against women **IS PREVENTABLE** if we all work together



## ACTIONS

that will prevent violence against women:

CHALLENGE condoning of violence against women

PROMOTE women's independence & decision-making

CHALLENGE gender stereotypes and roles

STRENGTHEN positive, equal and respectful relationships

Promote and normalise **GENDER EQUALITY** in public and private life



MUTUALLY REINFORCING ACTIONS ARE NEEDED THROUGH LEGISLATION, INSTITUTIONAL, POLICY AND PROGRAM RESPONSES:

- by governments, organisations and individuals
- in settings where people live, work, learn and socialise
- tailored to the context and needs of different groups.



This is an edited extract from *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia*. The evidence highlights four gendered drivers of violence against women and five reinforcing factors.



The following five essential and five supporting actions together address these drivers and reinforcing factors.

## Essential actions to reduce the gendered drivers of violence against women

The five essential actions address the gendered drivers of violence against women described in Element 1 in the Framework. They are essential because, without all these actions, violence against women cannot be sustainably reduced or prevented.

To be effective, these actions require both specialised policy support and mainstream implementation in the diverse settings where people live, work, learn and play.

For each action, prevention activities that address norms, structures and practices at all levels need to be considered. For example, work addressing attitudes towards violence and gender at the community or organisational level needs to be accompanied by legislative, institutional and policy support that promotes gender equality and accountability for violence and discrimination. Activity under each action should also be designed, implemented and monitored to take into account the diversity of women's experiences and identities and ensure equality in outcomes for all women, as discussed in Element 3 in the Framework.

### 1 Challenge condoning of violence against women

- Shift social support for attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, systems and practices that justify, excuse, trivialise or downplay violence against women and their children, or shift blame from the perpetrator to the victim.

### 2 Promote women's independence and decision-making in public life and relationships

- Equalise access to power and resources between women

and men, including by strengthening women's economic security, independence and social, political and economic participation and decision-making in public life.

- Challenge men's use of controlling behaviours in relationships and the subtle normalisation of male dominance in relationships.
- Promote social and cultural networks and connections between women to provide sources of peer support.
- Support women's collective advocacy and social movement activism to prevent violence and promote gender equality.

### 3 Foster positive personal identities and challenge gender stereotypes and roles

- Encourage and support children, young people and adults to reject rigid gender roles and develop positive personal identities that are not constrained by gender stereotypes.
- Challenge aggressive, entitled and dominant constructions of masculinity and subordinate or sexualised constructions of femininity.
- Promote and support gender-equitable domestic and parenting practices, including through workplace initiatives.

### 4 Strengthen positive, equal and respectful relations between and among women and men, girls and boys

- Challenge peer relations between men that involve hostility or disrespect towards women, and attitudes that relationships between men and women are oppositional, or inevitably based on conflict.
- Promote positive, equal and respectful relationships between women and men, girls and boys, in all contexts.
- Work with children and young people to counter the early development of negative peer relationships and to promote respect and gender equality.

### 5 Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life

- Increase social and structural support for gender equality, in principle and in practice, in both public life (supporting women's social, economic, cultural and political participation, particularly in decision-making) and in private life (supporting equality in relationships).
- Establish and maintain processes to assess all public policy for its impact on women. Include an analysis of any differential impact on different groups of women to achieve a truly inclusive gender equality.

## Supporting actions to address reinforcing factors

The five supporting actions address the reinforcing factors shown in the image above – those that can contribute to or exacerbate violence against women in the context of the gendered drivers. Specialist violence prevention and gender equality expertise will be essential to inform these supporting actions. However, the supporting actions should also engage those working across other areas of social policy, advocacy and practice, such as child protection, alcohol and drug harm minimisation, and those addressing socio-economic disadvantage. The prevention of violence against women has common cause with these other areas of work, and establishing or strengthening partnerships for cross-learning and capacity building will lead to shared or complementary outcomes.

Actions to address these reinforcing factors will not prevent violence against women in a sustainable way if undertaken in isolation from the broader prevention agenda outlined here. However, if implemented in gender-sensitive ways, and in conjunction with the essential actions that address the gendered drivers of violence described above, these supporting actions can make a significant contribution to overall prevention efforts.

### 6 Challenge the normalisation of violence as an expression of masculinity or male dominance

- Counter the construction of masculinity as violent and the learning of violence in gendered ways.
- Challenge the normalisation, valorisation and glorification of male violence through strategies that focus on the socialisation of boys and young men, and that challenge the construction and expression of masculinity as violent, both in public and private life, and through media and popular culture.

### 7 Prevent exposure to violence and support those affected to reduce its consequences

- Strengthen efforts to promote non-violent parenting and prevent child abuse, and all other forms of violence (such as race-based, community, public or lateral violence), especially through the provision of expertise on the gendered dynamics of these broader forms of violence.
- Support and advocate for healing strategies and other efforts

to mediate the impacts of past occurrences of violence, such as child abuse, racially motivated and colonial violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, war-related trauma and torture experienced by refugees, or violence occurring in prisons or detention centres.

### 8 Address the intersections between social norms relating to alcohol and gender

- Challenge drinking cultures that emphasise male conquest and aggression, and social norms and attitudes that position men's drinking as an excuse for violence, or women's drinking as a form of victim-blaming.
- Improve the regulation of alcohol by considering violence against women in policy debates about the promotion and physical and economic availability of alcohol.

### 9 Reduce backlash by engaging men and boys in gender equality, building relationship skills and social connections

- Consider backlash, or resistance to personal and social change, as a normal and expected part of the change process.
- Challenge excuses for violence, including those driven by a backlash to change, and maintain the need for individual accountability for violence.
- Develop positive ways to engage men and boys in the change process, encouraging them to challenge restrictive and rigid gender roles and identities for both men and women.
- Work to build relationship skills and social connections in communities experiencing rapid social and economic change, especially when this change challenges existing gender norms and hierarchies. This includes when women's increasing social and economic independence and participation and/or men's unemployment places them in roles that differ from gendered expectations.

### 10 Promote broader social equality and address structural discrimination and disadvantage

- Address intersecting forms of inequality, recognising that gender inequality cannot be separated from other forms of inequality.
- Ensure all prevention work has an inclusive and intersectional focus in order to prevent violence against all women.
- Form partnerships and coalitions that build collective challenges to gender inequality, racism, ableism, ageism, classism, homophobia and transphobia; address the legacies of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; challenge other forms of social and structural discrimination and disadvantage; and promote social and economic justice.