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# CHANGE the STORY

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A shared framework for the primary  
prevention of violence against women  
and their children in Australia

**Our  
WATCH**  
End violence against  
Women And Their Children



ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH  
ORGANISATION OF WOMEN'S SAFETY  
1800 088 828 | [www.anrows.org.au](http://www.anrows.org.au)

The framework  
at a glance:  
executive summary



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
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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




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
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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.



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## Introduction: an urgent need for collective action

Violence against women and their children is a prevalent, serious and preventable human rights abuse. One woman a week is murdered by a current or former partner and thousands more are injured or made to live in fear. The social, health and economic costs of violence against women are enormous. Preventing such violence is a matter of national urgency, and can only be achieved if we all work together.

*Change the story* draws on robust international evidence to identify the core elements required to create a strategic, collaborative and consistent national approach to preventing violence against women and their children.

## Purpose of the framework

*Change the story* harnesses the momentum and will across Australia to end violence against women and their children.

It reinforces the direction outlined in the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, and seeks to consolidate and strengthen the action already occurring around the country to address the issue.

It draws upon the latest evidence from around the world and is the result of consultations with hundreds of stakeholders across Australia.

*Change the story* details a national approach to preventing violence against women and their children through:

- identifying what drives and contributes to violence against women
- providing evidence-based guidance to government, the private sector, civil society and communities on how to strategically and effectively lead, coordinate, resource and support prevention effort across Australia
- informing and supporting the development of policy and legislation, prevention strategies, programming and advocacy that targets and seeks to reduce the drivers of violence against women.

# What drives violence against women?

**Element 1: An explanatory model of violence** clarifies what constitutes violence against women and explores the gendered nature of this violence. It identifies the drivers of violence, together with a number of reinforcing factors, as summarised in the graphic below.

Element 1 demonstrates how gender inequality sets the necessary social context in which violence against women occurs. Despite concerted effort and gains to improve the position of women in Australia, we have not yet achieved true gender equality. In 2014, Australia was ranked 24 out of the 142 countries included in the Global Gender Gap Index.<sup>4</sup> We are currently below similar countries such as New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and also behind developing countries such as the Philippines, Nicaragua and Burundi.

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 results from, or has historical roots in, laws or policies formally constraining the rights and opportunities of women. Gender inequality 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; limiting social norms that prescribe the type of conduct, roles, interests and contributions expected from women and men; and the practices, behaviours and choices made on a daily basis that reinforce these gendered structures and norms.

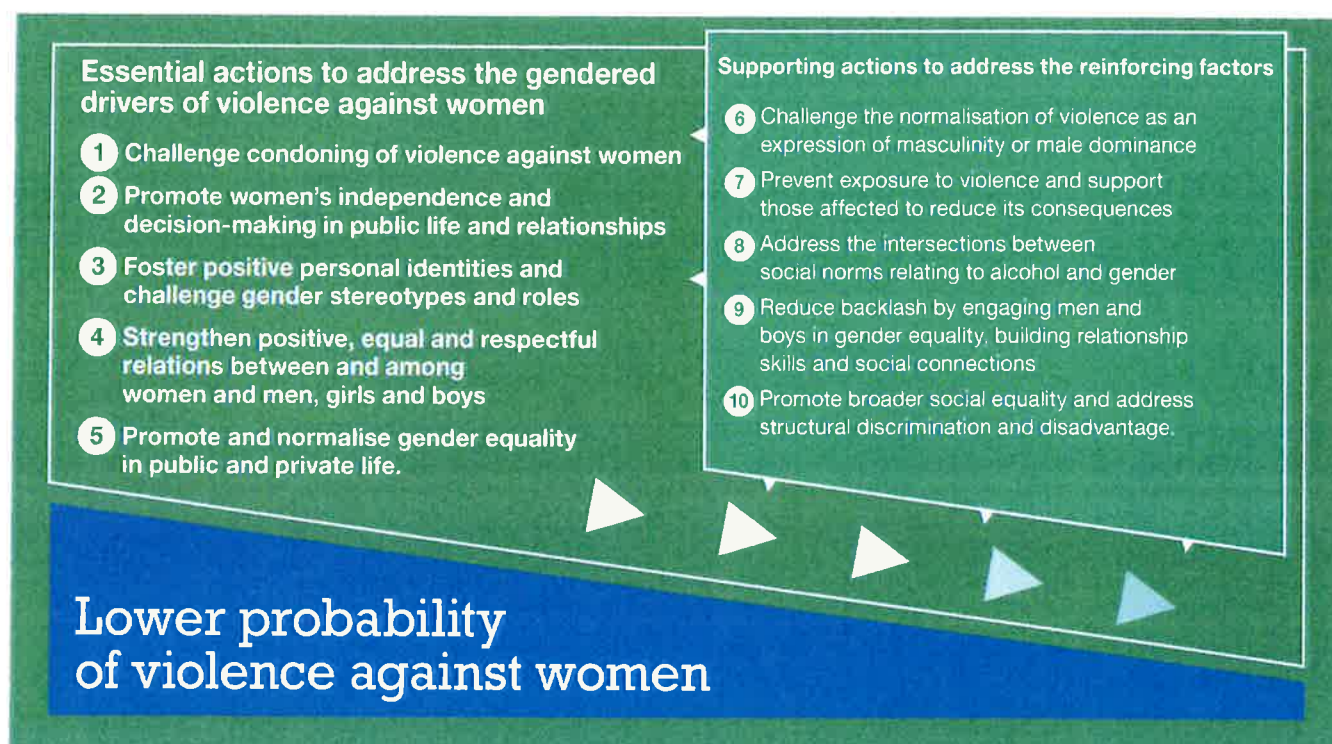
Gender inequality is influenced by other forms of systemic social, political and economic disadvantage and discrimination. Other factors interact with or reinforce gender inequality to contribute to increased frequency and severity of violence against women, but do not drive violence in and of themselves.



## What can we do?

**Element 2: Key actions to prevent violence** outlines the range of actions needed through legislative, institutional and policy responses; implemented in settings such as workplaces, schools, community organisations, sports clubs, media and popular culture; and tailored to the context and needs of different groups.

It identifies five essential and five supporting actions to address the factors that drive and reinforce violence against women. These actions need to be undertaken across the nation by a diverse range of stakeholders.



## How should we do it?

**Element 3: Approach, settings and techniques for prevention** identifies specific, practical strategies that the research suggests should be drawn upon when engaging in prevention work. Drawing upon national and international research and evaluation findings, it identifies approaches to ensure different communities are reached and engaged, and that prevention initiatives span the life course and are tailored to the diverse contexts of people's lives. It notes the greater intensity of effort and resources required for communities or groups affected by multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage, or experiencing the cumulative impact of many negative factors.

Element 3 also looks at how the different environments in which people live, work, learn, socialise and play can be key settings for prevention activity including:

- education and care settings for children and young people

- universities, TAFEs and other tertiary education institutions
- workplaces, corporations and employee organisations
- sports, recreation, social and leisure spaces
- art and cultural spaces
- health, family and community services
- faith-based contexts
- media
- popular culture, advertising and entertainment
- public spaces, transport, infrastructure and facilities
- legal, justice and corrections contexts.

Finally, it explores the techniques and strategies that have proven effective or promising in reducing violence against women and its drivers. It highlights the shared principles for effectiveness across techniques and settings, and these are covered in more detail in Appendix 1.

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## What supports are needed?

**Element 4: Prevention infrastructure** explains how a collaborative national approach requires strong infrastructure to support quality cross-sectoral practice, enable policy and legislative reform and provide the leadership and coordination necessary to drive broad, deep and sustainable social change.

This holistic approach should integrate the promotion of gender equality and non-violence into the work of established agencies, organisations and networks; and use existing infrastructure at the national, state, regional and local levels, supported by coordination and quality assurance mechanisms and an expert workforce.

## Who needs to be involved?

**Element 5: Stakeholder roles and responsibilities** acknowledges that every sector, institution, organisation, community and individual has a role to play in preventing violence against women. But different stakeholders have different responsibilities, expertise and capacities, as well as varying spheres of influence and opportunities to take action.

Prevention efforts will be most effective if stakeholders both take advantage of their own specific opportunities, and also work in collaboration or partnership with each other to ensure different prevention efforts are consistent and mutually reinforcing. Element 5 outlines these roles and emphasises that an effective national approach to the prevention of violence against women must coordinate and systematise the efforts of multiple stakeholders.

## What changes can we expect to see and when?

**Element 6: Stages of action and expected outcomes** notes that the goal of an Australia free of violence against women and their children is a long-term, intergenerational one. We need to sequence our actions in order to sustain progress over time.

Element 6 identifies short, medium and long-term phasing of collaborative activity, and the expected outcomes or signposts of success that signal what Australia will see with an increase in support for, investment and action in preventing violence against women.

It also indicates directions for measuring the changes expected across the population as a systematic, evidence-based, well-resourced approach to prevention is progressed. This will require evaluating not only what is done at a program or initiative level, but also at the broader community, state and territory and national level, against the drivers of violence against women.

## Conclusion

An Australia where women and their children live free from violence is an achievable long-term goal. It can only be realised by addressing the drivers of this violence, which are deeply entrenched in our culture, society, communities and daily lives.

This means that no one individual, community, organisation or government can prevent violence against women alone. However, through a shared, consistent and mutually reinforcing approach, we can all contribute to creating a safer Australia built upon respect and equality.

The framework offers a path towards this ultimate goal of social transformation. It provides the necessary evidence, rationale and guidance required to lead and support a significant and sustained nationwide effort to prevent violence against women and their children.