



RESEARCH

National Research Agenda to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children

May 2014

ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH
ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY

to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children

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Foreword

All Australian governments – at a federal and state level – are working together to implement the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*, a long-term agenda to improve the safety of all Australian women and their children.

All Australian governments are strongly committed to taking further steps to reduce violence against women and their children. Such violence is utterly unacceptable – in Australia and across the world – and must not be secreted away behind closed doors. Violence against women must be acknowledged; violence against women must be addressed; and violence against women must be eliminated. This is our obligation as global citizens and we must all work together in order to achieve this goal.

The National Research Agenda to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (the National Research Agenda) is a major step forward in building an evidence base of knowledge that can be used to improve policy and practice in this area. It will be central to building a shared understanding of research priorities between practitioners, research organisations and policy makers across Australia. It will help to drive expansion of research and information and it will help to identify how we are progressing in our mission to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, violence against women and their children.

We would like to thank Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety for developing this leading agenda and to acknowledge its extensive engagement and consultation with practitioners, researchers, governments and others across the Australian community.

All Australian governments have endorsed the National Research Agenda and look forward to the valuable research that will be undertaken and its significant contribution to the lives of all Australians.

The Hon Kevin Andrews MP, Minister for Social Services, Commonwealth

Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash, Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Commonwealth

Ms Joy Burch MLA, Minister for Women, Australian Capital Territory

The Hon Pru Goward MP, Minister for Women, New South Wales

The Hon Bess Price MLA, Minister for Women's Policy, Northern Territory

The Hon Tracy Davis MP, Minister for Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services, Queensland

The Hon Gail Gago MLC, Minister for the Status of Women, South Australia

The Hon Jacquie Petrusma MP, Minister for Women, Tasmania

The Hon Mary Wooldridge MP, Minister for Community Services, Victoria

The Hon Helen Morton MLC, Minister for Child Protection, Western Australia

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List of abbreviations

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AHURI	Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
ANROWS	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
CALD	Culturally and linguistically diverse
CVS	Crime Victimisation Survey
Data framework	National Data Collection and Reporting Framework
Foundation	Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children
GLBTIQ	Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer
NAHA	National Affordable Housing Agreement
National Council	National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children
National Plan	<i>National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022</i>
NATSISS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey
NCAS	National Survey of Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women
NCE	National Centre of Excellence to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children
PSS	Personal Safety Survey
SRT	Strategic Research Theme
VicHealth	Victorian Health Promotion Foundation

Executive summary

The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan) was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments and released in February 2011. It sets out a framework to coordinate actions across the Commonwealth, state and territory governments of Australia to reduce violence against women and their children.

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), formerly the National Centre of Excellence to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (NCE), is one of the key commitments of the National Plan. The first major task of ANROWS was to produce the National Research Agenda on behalf of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments of Australia. The purpose of the National Research Agenda is to develop a cohesive and comprehensive national evidence base that is relevant to policy and practice and actively contributes to the National Plan outcomes. It will do this by providing strategic direction and identifying research opportunities and priorities that are nationally applicable.

The National Research Agenda will inform the development of the ANROWS Research Program as well as provide a framework for, and guidance on, priority areas of research and research themes for academics, researchers, organisations and governments across Australia.

ANROWS designed a multi-stage process to produce the National Research Agenda that included:

- Reviewing the National Plan and related policy documents.
- Commissioning two gap analyses of Australian research on violence against women, the first on national statistical collections and the second on research since 2000.
- National stakeholder consultation and engagement which included 127 written submissions and six stakeholder roundtables involving over 75 participants.

As illustrated in the summary on the following two pages, the National Research Agenda organises identified research priorities for policy and practice within a framework of four Strategic Research Themes (SRTs), which relate to all of the National Plan's six national outcomes:

1. Communities are safe and free from violence.
2. Relationships are respectful.
3. Indigenous communities are strengthened.
4. Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence.
5. Justice responses are effective.
6. Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account for their actions.

National Research Agenda to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children summary (May 2014)

Strategic Research Theme	Area of research	Topics (brief summary)*
SRT 1 Experience and impacts (All National Plan outcomes)	1.1 Prevalence and incidence of violence against women	Prevalence and incidence of violence against women in various sub-populations.
	1.2 Disclosure and reporting	Factors that facilitate and impede disclosure; barriers to reporting to social networks, health and social services; partial and indirect disclosure; disclosure in sub-populations.
	1.3 Intersections: context, vulnerability and risk	Use of technology; intersections such as alcohol consumption and abuse, drug use, trauma, post-traumatic stress, health issues, and natural disasters; sub-populations.
	1.4 Building bridges: co-occurrence and re-victimisation	Meta-analysis of national and international studies; prevalence and incidence of co-occurrence.
	1.5 Experiences, effects and impacts	Rural and remote women, Indigenous women, and women with disability; longitudinal analyses; economic participation; intergenerational impacts; women compared to men; economic costs; disease burden.
SRT 2 Gender inequality and primary prevention (National Plan outcomes 1,2,3)	2.1 Gendered nature of violence against women	Links with gender inequality; gender roles, stereotype and myths; objectification of women and girls; pornography; gender-neutral approaches; continuum of violence; comparisons between forms of violence.
	2.2 Social determinants of violence against women	Intersection with social inequality; poverty; unequal access to resources; discrimination; culture - including impact on perpetration, vulnerability and risk.
	2.3 Design, evaluation and monitoring of primary prevention programs	Meta-analysis of national and international programs; efficacy and outcomes of primary prevention including longitudinal studies; links between community attitudes and behaviours; sub-populations.

* Common across all SRTs is the need to focus research effort on “what works” and on marginalised groups and under-researched populations. Although specific initiatives for sub-populations are identified in each SRT, research effort should target the following sub-populations across all four SRTs: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; rural and remote women; women with disability; younger women (18-24 year age group especially); older women; culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) women; gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (GLBTIQ) women; immigrant women; women without children; and children.

SRT 3 Service responses and interventions (National Plan outcomes 1,3,4,6)	3.1 Service responses to women and their children	Effectiveness of current service delivery models including longitudinal studies; cultural appropriateness; sub-populations; specialist compared to mainstream services.
	3.2 Characteristics of men who use violence	Identifying characteristics of those at risk of perpetrating; typologies of perpetrators; sub-populations; undetected men who use violence; adolescent violence.
	3.3 Interventions targeting men who use violence	Standardised treatment models and efficacy of programs across jurisdictions; sub-populations; court-mandated programs; programs removing men from the home; unintended outcomes.
SRT 4 Systems (National Plan outcomes 3,4,5,6)	4.1 Criminal justice and legal systems	Law reform and legal responses to domestic and family violence across jurisdictions; Family Law; restorative justice in Indigenous communities; interactions with police; intersections between legal, police and child protection systems; co-occurrence of forms of violence.
	4.2 Pathways, intersections and integrated responses	Integrated service models and collaborative approaches, especially in child protection, health and legal/justice systems; first-responder agencies; screening and risk assessment tools; pathways between mainstream and specialist agencies; sub-populations including innovative service responses.
	4.3 Government policy	Violence against women policy; community education campaigns; economic analyses of policy and programs; intersection with broader government policy.

National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children

The *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan) was endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments and released in February 2011.

The National Plan sets out a framework for action to reduce violence against women and their children over 12 years. The vision of the National Plan is that: “Australian women and their children live free from violence in safe communities” (p.10).

The National Plan focuses on two main types of violence: domestic and family violence and sexual assault. It recognises that these forms of violence are gendered, with the majority of such violence being perpetrated by men against women. These are also the most pervasive forms of violence experienced by women in Australia.

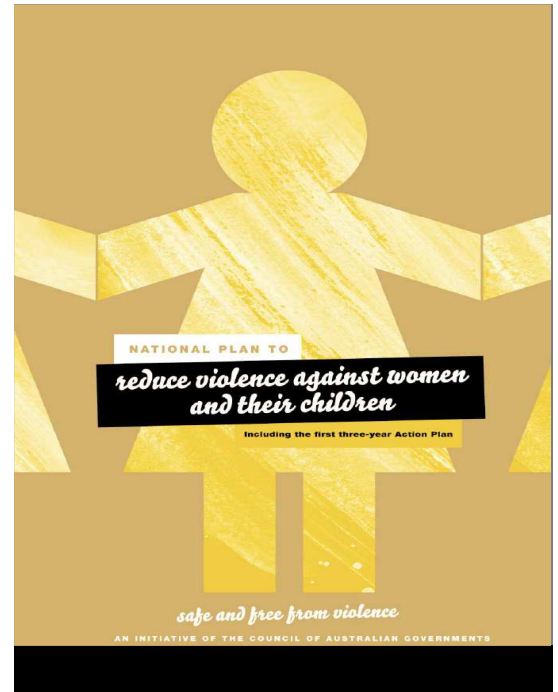
The National Plan focuses on prevention (including primary prevention) as well as intervention (in all its forms) and recognises that gender equality is a critical condition for preventing violence against women. Improving women’s economic security, safety and status - across society as well as within individual relationships - can have a significant impact on reducing violence against women. It also seeks to prevent violence by raising awareness and building respectful relationships in the next generation.

The National Plan promotes interventions that hold perpetrators accountable and encourages behaviour change. It also promotes joined-up service responses by mainstream and specialist service providers to support women who have experienced violence.

The National Plan recognises that some groups of women who experience violence, such as women with disability, women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) groups, refugees and Indigenous women, have limited access to services or have specific needs that may not be addressed by generalised strategies.

The National Plan sets out the following six national outcomes for all governments to deliver:

1. Communities are safe and free from violence.
2. Relationships are respectful.
3. Indigenous communities are strengthened.
4. Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence.
5. Justice responses are effective.
6. Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account.



These outcomes are to be measured by four high level national indicators of change:

1. Reduced prevalence of domestic violence and sexual assault.
2. Increased proportion of women who feel safe in their communities.
3. Reduced deaths related to family and domestic violence and sexual assault.
4. Reduced proportion of children exposed to their mother's or carer's experience of domestic violence.

The National Plan is being implemented through a series of four three-year Action Plans. Each Action Plan is to address the national outcomes listed above, while allowing states and territories to act in locally relevant and responsive ways. Each Action Plan is also to help build the skills, systems and data for governments to improve policy making and service delivery supported by the following 'foundations for change':

- strengthen the workforce;
- integrate systems and share information;
- improve the evidence base; and
- track performance.

Background to the National Plan

The National Plan was preceded by the National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (the National Council) established by the Commonwealth Government in May 2008. The National Council was tasked with developing an evidence-based plan for reducing violence against women and their children based on extensive community consultation, assessing existing Australian and international research, investigating the effectiveness of legal systems and commissioning research on the economic costs of violence. In preparing their report, the National Council engaged with over 2,000 community stakeholders via interviews, community meetings and online surveys in all state and territory capital cities and some regional and remote centres. They also reviewed 370 public submissions and convened six expert roundtable forums. *Time for Action - The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2009-2021 (Time for Action)*, along with four companion documents, were released in April 2009.

The Commonwealth's 2009 response, *Immediate Government Actions*, supported the direction and focus of *Time for Action* and laid the groundwork for the development of the National Plan. The Violence Against Women Advisory Group was then appointed for a two-year period, from September 2009 to September 2011, to provide independent and expert advice to governments in developing the National Plan.

Further information about the National Plan can be found at:

www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/women/programs-services/reducing-violence/the-national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children/national-plan-to-reduce-violence-against-women-and-their-children

Definitions of violence against women

The National Plan adopts the following definitions, which are also used for the National Research Agenda:

Definitions

Violence against women can be described in many different ways, and laws in each state and territory have their own definitions.

'The term violence against women means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.'

United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women

Domestic violence refers to acts of violence that occur between people who have, or have had, an intimate relationship. While there is no single definition, the central element of domestic violence is an ongoing pattern of behaviour aimed at controlling a partner through fear, for example by using behaviour which is violent and threatening. In most cases, the violent behaviour is part of a range of tactics to exercise power and control over women and their children, and can be both criminal and non-criminal.

Domestic violence includes physical, sexual, emotional and psychological abuse.

Physical violence can include slaps, shoves, hits, punches, pushes, being thrown down stairs or across the room, kicking, twisting of arms, choking, and being burnt or stabbed.

Sexual assault or sexual violence can include rape, sexual assault with implements, being forced to watch or engage in pornography, enforced prostitution, and being made to have sex with friends of the perpetrator.

Psychological and emotional abuse can include a range of controlling behaviours such as control of finances, isolation from family and friends, continual humiliation, threats against children or being threatened with injury or death.

Family violence is a broader term that refers to violence between family members, as well as violence between intimate partners. It involves the same sorts of behaviours as described for domestic violence. As with domestic violence, the *National Plan* recognises that although only some aspects of family violence are criminal offences, any behaviour that causes the victim to live in fear is unacceptable. The term, 'family violence' is the most widely used term to identify the experiences of Indigenous people, because it includes the broad range of marital and kinship relationships in which violence may occur.

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety

Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), formerly the National Centre of Excellence to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children (NCE), is one of the key commitments of the National Plan.

The National Plan identifies the establishment of a national centre of excellence as a critical component in building a strong and lasting evidence base. It states this organisation is to bring together existing research, as well as develop an agreed National Research Agenda, to inform new research. The National Plan notes that, through pursuing research in a cohesive national way, there will be greater opportunities to support research that is more responsive to policy-makers' and service providers' needs. National research will fill gaps in knowledge and help increase the understanding of issues across different sectors, such as health, justice, family and community services, education and housing.



ANROWS was set up by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments of Australia with the purpose of establishing a national level approach to systematically address violence against women and their children, following consultations with key stakeholders, including academics within universities and other research bodies, government policy-makers, and on-the-ground service providers.

ANROWS is based in Sydney and began its establishment work in early 2013.

ANROWS's key functions include to:

- Lead national efforts to enhance the evidence base in the areas of domestic violence and sexual assault across research, education and service delivery organisations to support the National Plan.
- Focus on translating evidence into information to support ongoing improvements in the work of practitioners.
- Inform policy development and service delivery responses.
- Influence the broader national research agenda across affiliated areas of study, such as homelessness and child protection.

Specific key tasks for ANROWS include to:

- Compile and disseminate research to inform policy and practice.
- Develop a National Research Agenda.
- Undertake a program of new research guided by the National Research Agenda.
- Leverage existing activities to build upon and improve national data collections, such as the Personal Safety Survey (PSS).
- Provide opportunities for policy-makers, practitioners and researchers to create joint responses to violence that are informed by the evidence base.

- Provide a meeting point for strategic partnerships with a wide range of organisations, academic researchers and government and non-government stakeholders.
- Support research collaboration, value the ‘voice’ of women experiencing violence and encourage a range of research methods and approaches, and the use of different types of evidence.
- Implement a dedicated perpetrator interventions research stream with funding provided by the Commonwealth Government.

ANROWS has a close relationship with other organisations that have been established, or are doing work under, the National Plan. These organisations include the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children (the Foundation). While ANROWS is focused on building a strong and lasting evidence base to inform and enhance policy and service responses, the Foundation’s role is to drive cultural and attitudinal change to prevent violence against women through community-based activities.

For more information on the Foundation, go to www.preventviolence.org.au

Development of the National Research Agenda

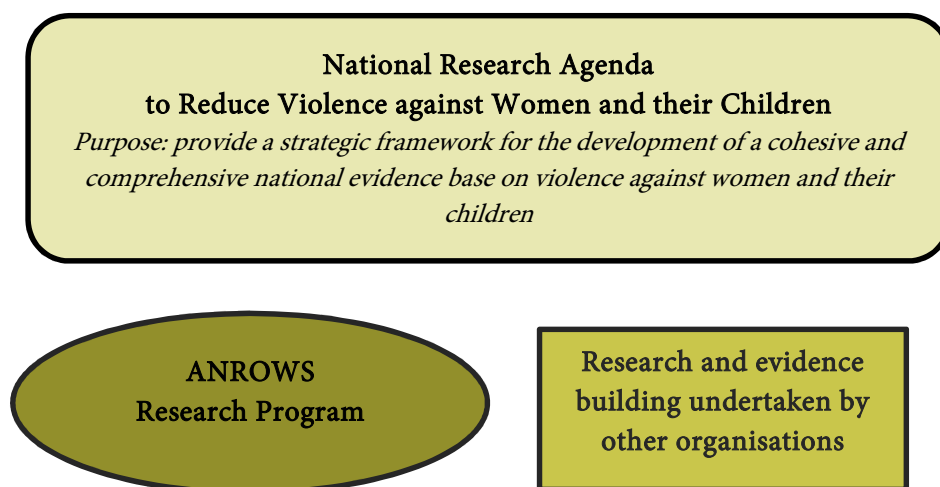
The first major task of ANROWS was to produce an overarching National Research Agenda to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children on behalf of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments of Australia.

Purpose

The purpose of the National Research Agenda is to set a strategic framework for the development of a cohesive and comprehensive national evidence base that is relevant to policy and practice and actively contributes to the National Plan's outcomes. It will set this framework by providing strategic direction and identifying research opportunities and priorities that are nationally applicable. It is envisioned that this will lead to greater shared understandings between policy-makers and practitioners and more effective programs, services and practice.

The National Research Agenda will inform the development of the ANROWS Research Program as well as provide a framework for, and guidance on, priority areas of research and research themes for academics, researchers, organisations and governments across Australia.

Diagram 1. National Research Agenda



Process

ANROWS designed a multi-stage process to produce the National Research Agenda:

- ❖ Review of the National Plan and related policy documents.
- ❖ Commissioning two critical reviews of the Australian research on violence against women and their children with a focus on:
 1. National statistical data collections, particularly those generated by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), and the strengths and limitations of these collections. This includes nine priority research questions identified as critical to supporting a strong evidence-base and endorsed by the National Plan Implementation Panel. This review was prepared by the ABS.
 2. The state of research on domestic and family violence and sexual assault in Australia since 2000 through the examination of 824 relevant publications.¹ This was prepared jointly by the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault and the Centre for Gender Related Violence Studies, host of the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Clearinghouse.
- ❖ National engagement and consultation with stakeholders, including:
 1. An open invitation for written submissions managed by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) on behalf of ANROWS. This elicited 127 responses completed by government and non-government organisations, research academics, practitioners, peak bodies and other stakeholders.
 2. Six stakeholder roundtables facilitated jointly by AHURI and Liz Forsyth, Lead Partner Social Policy, KPMG. These involved over 75 participants including representatives from peak bodies, government, research organisations, researchers, sexual assault practitioners, domestic and family violence practitioners, and service providers working with Indigenous people.
 3. AHURI developed a draft framework for the National Research Agenda from the stakeholder engagement and consultation process. This proposes an organising concept of Strategic Research Issues² that provide a medium-term vision and common reference point for the main issues warranting sustained research effort.

¹ This included reviewed publications since 2000, grey literature (e.g. informally published reports), category one funding outcomes in the last 5 years, and an online survey of violence against women researchers.

² These were later amended to Strategic Research Themes (SRTs) in the development of the National Research Agenda.

What we know

The current evidence base for the National Plan

There are two key national surveys already in place that report on violence against women and contribute to monitoring the progress of the National Plan.

The National Survey of Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women (NCAS) is a telephone survey of around 17,500 randomly selected Australians on their attitudes toward, and awareness of, violence against women. It is based on a questionnaire and survey methodology conducted nationally in 1995 and 2009 (and in 2006 in Victoria). It will be conducted every four years, with the next NCAS to be released in 2014.

The NCAS is conducted by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) in collaboration with the Social Research Centre and University of Melbourne. It aims to:

- gauge attitudes toward, and awareness of, violence against women in the general community as well as among specific groups;
- monitor changes over time; and
- help ensure policies and programs to prevent violence against women are directed to where they are needed most and are tailored to the needs of specific groups.

The 2009 NCAS reports significant positive shifts in the general community attitudes and beliefs concerning violence against women. However, these were tempered by the endurance of myths about violence against women and some evidence of beliefs shifting counter to the evidence.

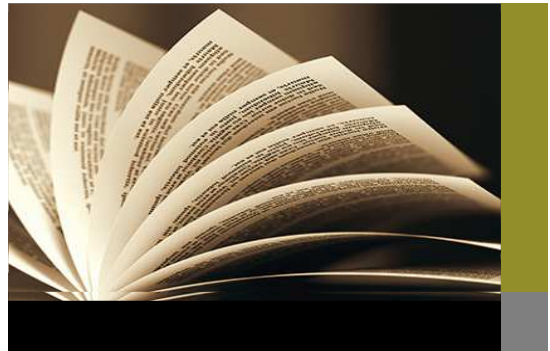
The Personal Safety Survey (PSS) conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) monitors experiences of interpersonal violence. The survey uses face to face private interviews. Results of the 2012 survey were released in December 2013. The PSS is scheduled to be repeated in 2016 and 2020. The 2012 PSS found that, since the age of 15, one in four and one in six Australian women had experienced emotional and physical abuse respectively by a partner, and one in five Australian women had experienced sexual violence. The PSS also indicates that women are much more likely than men to be victims of partner violence and sexual assault and that these types of violence are overwhelmingly perpetrated by men.

In addition to these ongoing surveys, which serve as crucial monitoring mechanisms, a National Data Collection and Reporting Framework (data framework) is being developed and expected to be operational by 2022. The ABS is working with the Commonwealth, state and territory governments of Australia on the first phase of this data framework to form the foundation of an evidence base. On 7 February 2013, ABS released *Defining the data challenge for family, domestic and sexual violence*. This provides a conceptual framework for data needs analysis across family and domestic violence and sexual assault using six elements (context; risk; incidence or experience; response; impacts and outcomes; and research, programs and evaluations) and aims to put these into a statistically measurable context. On 25 November 2013, the ABS released *Bridging the data gaps for family, domestic and sexual violence*. This provides an inventory of the current issues for data collection and dissemination in the field of family, domestic and sexual violence

The state of research in Australia since 2000

International and national research studies have conclusively established that domestic and family violence and sexual assault are significant problems for a substantial number of Australian women, and that men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators of this violence.

Certain population groups are identified from this research as being particularly vulnerable to violence against women including:



- Indigenous women, women with disability, older women, and women who have experienced childhood abuse (vulnerable to both domestic and family violence and sexual assault);
- culturally and linguistically diverse women and rural and remote women (vulnerable to domestic and family violence); and
- young/adolescent women, women in correctional settings, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer women (vulnerable to sexual assault).

The empirical evidence comprehensively demonstrates a clear range of impacts and effects of violence on the immediate and long-term safety and wellbeing of women and their children, as well as substantial social and economic costs. The diversity of negative effects and impacts identified covers: health and wellbeing; employment and financial security; housing; negative effects on children - including the correlation between violence against women and child abuse; homicide; the economy; and systems, such as the legal system and government and social services.

For violence against women, including both domestic and family violence and sexual assault, research strength is demonstrated by the considerable proportion of publications and research projects on the following topics:

- intervention and service responses;
- victims/survivors' experiences; and
- perpetration (predominantly based on clinical or prison population samples).

Further, for sexual assault, research on the justice system is a particular strength. For domestic and family violence, there is also some research emphasis on risk of violence, although this is secondary to the focus on intervention.

The research literature reveals a range of intersections between domestic and family violence and sexual assault, demonstrating the value of conceptualising these within an overall approach of reducing violence against women. These include:

- the context of the violence;
- men are the overwhelming majority of perpetrators of both forms of violence;
- repeat victimisation and co-occurrence of forms of violence;
- barriers to disclosure;

- significant adverse consequences on wellbeing; and
- victim-blaming.

Nevertheless, research effort has typically been fragmented and sector-specific. This may in part be the result of differences between the phenomena, for example the different types of relationships in which each type of violence occurs and differing institutional, service and professional responses. It may also be due to disciplinary differences in theorising domestic and family violence and sexual assault. Sexual assault research has historically been located predominantly within the disciplines of criminology and law. Domestic and family violence research has historically been located predominantly within the disciplines of sociology, psychology and gender studies. These differences have shaped how the issues have been approached theoretically and empirically.

Despite these divergences, the intersections of domestic and family violence and sexual assault and their common research activities, interests and strengths suggest that there is a need to generate a coherent national violence against women knowledge base. The National Research Agenda offers an important opportunity to bridge the separation as well as achieve a cohesive and comprehensive framework and cross-disciplinary national evidence base.

National Research Agenda to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children

The National Research Agenda organises the identified research priorities for policy and practice within a framework of four Strategic Research Themes (SRTs). Emerging from the multi-stage process to produce the National Research Agenda, including the national stakeholder engagement and consultations, these SRTs provide a conceptual framework for the pursuit of research enquiry to deliver the outcomes of the National Plan as outlined below:

Strategic Research Theme (SRT)	National Plan outcomes the SRT corresponds to
SRT 1 Experience and impacts	Research addressing this SRT is fundamental to the overall delivery of the National Plan and links closely to work in the National Data Collection and Reporting Framework.
SRT 2 Gender inequality and primary prevention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communities are safe and free from violence. 2. Relationships are respectful. 3. Indigenous communities are strengthened.
SRT 3 Service responses and interventions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Communities are safe and free from violence. 3. Indigenous communities are strengthened. 4. Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence. 6. Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account.
SRT 4 Systems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Indigenous communities are strengthened. 4. Services meet the needs of women and their children experiencing violence. 5. Justice responses are effective. 6. Perpetrators stop their violence and are held to account.

A key focus for the research effort conducted across all four SRTs is the need to provide evidence of effective interventions and practical approaches, i.e. to answer the question: ‘What works?’.

Another common feature across all SRTs is the need for the research effort to focus on marginalised groups and under-researched populations. This is especially important for women and their children with particular vulnerabilities to violence and/or particular cultural or other requirements. Although specific initiatives for different sub-populations are identified in each SRT, where appropriate, the research effort should target the following sub-populations across all four SRTs:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women;
- rural and remote women;
- women with disability;
- younger women (18-24 year age group especially);
- older women;
- CALD women;
- GLBTIQ women;
- immigrant women (especially refugees);
- women without children; and
- children in the context of both domestic and family violence and adult sexual assault.

SRT 1 - Experience and impacts

We need to understand the experience and impacts of violence against women from both a quantitative and qualitative perspective. This theme addresses the ‘what’ of violence against women including the scope of the problem and its effects. It provides an important foundation upon which we can develop and understand prevention, service responses, interventions and other efforts to reduce violence against women and their children.

1.1 Prevalence and incidence of violence against women

Continued research effort toward collecting and analysing empirical quantitative data on prevalence and incidence³ is important for understanding the scope of violence against women. This is particularly relevant for high level indicators of change in the National Plan and for providing base line data and measuring change over time. While the large ABS household surveys, such as the PSS and Crime Victimization Survey (CVS), will continue to provide valuable information in this regard, they are designed to capture the experience of the general population and do not produce accurate data on sub-populations. Further, the ABS’s National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) collects limited information about experiences of violence. Research is therefore needed on the prevalence and incidence of violence against women in sub-populations, particularly: Aboriginal people; Torres Strait Islanders; rural and remote women; older women; CALD; immigrant and refugee communities (including newly-arrived, well-established communities, women in precarious employment and visible minority groups); GLBTIQ women; young women; women with disability; female sex workers; and women post-separation, especially those involved in the Family Law system.

1.2 Disclosure and reporting

Research is required on factors that facilitate and impede disclosure of violence against women that reflects an understanding of disclosure as a process rather than as an isolated event. It should explore disclosure and reporting beyond that to police; in particular barriers to disclosure to broader social networks and health and social services. These barriers may include, but are not limited to, the role of shame; past experiences of disclosure, guilt, fear of reprisal and post-separation issues, such as the involvement of Family Law and child contact. Research is also needed to explore partial or indirect disclosures and the role and skill of practitioners in identifying and responding to violence against women. Research on disclosure and reporting in the following sub-populations has been identified as being of particular value:

- Indigenous women - engagement with police; pathways or triggers to reporting; interaction with child protection systems; impact of historical removal of children (Stolen Generations); and impact of connection to country, community and culture.
- Immigrant women – barriers in receiving legal assistance; visa issues; language barriers; forced isolation; effects of past trauma; and differing cultural paradigms and experiences with authorities.
- Female sex workers – the apparent normalisation of sexual assault in the sex industry; experiences of survival sex;⁴ and trafficking of women and girls.
- Older women - barriers to reporting and seeking assistance, including the impact of community attitudes.

³ Prevalence refers to the proportion of people who have experienced violence against women, while incidence refers to number of new cases or incidents of violence against women.

⁴ Where sex is traded for basic needs such as shelter or food, or is traded for drugs.

1.3 Intersections: context, vulnerability and risk

The role and interrelationship between the context in which violence against women occurs, vulnerability and risk is an important area of research enquiry. Emerging research in the use of technology, including social and electronic media, in violence against women (e.g. grooming, stalking, distribution of sexual images, and cyber sexual assault) needs to be expanded. The interrelationship between violence against women and various issues for the victim and/or perpetrator, which may impact on the severity, vulnerability to, and/or risk of violence, would also be valuable. This includes alcohol consumption and abuse, drug use, trauma, post-traumatic stress, service in the defence forces, health issues (including mental health), natural disasters, other forms of violence and discrimination against minority groups. Of particular interest across this research area is to document effective interventions and practical approaches that work to respond to these intersections, including with males who use violence. Gaps in research in this area have been identified in sub-populations in the following areas:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people - socio-economic disadvantage; colonisation and dispossession; cultural context, including different experiences of Torres Strait Islander to Aboriginal people; culture as a potential protective factor; and effective interventions and practical approaches that work, including with males who use violence.
- Women with disability - lack of safety from staff and other residents in institutional settings including psychiatric and residential services; relationships of dependence due to daily living needs, such as with partners, family members, or personal carers; and discrimination.
- Children - sibling sexual abuse; and the effect of Family Law and its application upon children experiencing domestic and family violence.
- Immigrant women - effects of past torture and trauma; precarious visas and immigration detention; forced and early marriage; and harmful cultural practices, such as female genital mutilation.

1.4 Building bridges: co-occurrence and re-victimisation

Research on co-occurrence and re-victimisation, including overlaps between domestic and family violence and sexual assault and domestic violence in families where there are child protection concerns, would help overcome fragmentation in the study of violence against women and their children. A meta-analysis of current national and international studies exploring co-occurrence of domestic and family violence and sexual assault would be valuable in establishing a point of reference for subsequent empirical research. Better understanding is needed on: prevalence and incidence of co-occurrence; repeat and/or chronic re-victimisation; co-occurrence and re-victimisation for different sub-populations; child abuse, including sibling sexual abuse, within families experiencing domestic and family violence; adult childhood sexual assault survivors' experiences of subsequent victimisation and/or parenting capacity; and other intersections with violence and sexual victimisation that may not fit strictly within a violence against women framework (e.g. child sexual and physical assault).

1.5 Experiences, effects and impacts

Although effects of violence against women are well documented, further research is needed on: experiences of rural and remote women, Indigenous women and women with disability; longitudinal analyses of long-term impacts of violence, including involvement with multiple social service systems; the impact of violence on economic participation and productivity; intergenerational impacts; and the qualitative difference between women's and men's experiences of violence. Research that extends beyond individual experience and explores broader social impacts of violence would also add value to the evidence base. This includes: economic costs of violence to society and direct financial costs to government; and large-scale disease burden studies that demonstrate population-based health impacts of violence against women.

SRT 2 - Gender inequality and primary prevention

We need to examine efforts to prevent violence against women before it occurs through actions that address social conditions that can lead to violence. Primary prevention is increasingly acknowledged as fundamental to any strategy to reduce violence against women and, although a substantial emerging area of practice, currently receives little research attention. There are two main types of primary prevention strategies. The first respond to structural, cultural and society contexts in which violence occurs, particularly the relationship between gender inequality and violence. The second are prevention programs focused on the development of safe, respectful and healthy relationships.

2.1 Gendered nature of violence against women

The research evidence to date underscores the significant relationship between violence against women and gender inequality. It also shows that key prevention actions include the promotion of gender equality and development of respectful attitudes within organisations and communities. Understanding the nature and impact of gender inequality and its relationship to violence against women is therefore fundamental to the development and design of effective primary prevention initiatives. Further research is required to more clearly demonstrate and understand this relationship at different levels including individual, household, community and society. This includes exploring the connection between men's use of violence against women and:

- prevailing gendered roles, social norms and the mechanisms through which attitudes, stereotypes and myths at a societal level impact on communities, families, relationships and individuals;
- the objectification of women and girls; and
- media representations, including in social media and popular culture, and pornography.

The impact and implications of gender-neutral approaches to domestic and family violence also need to be considered, in particular the (mis-)characterisation of family violence as mutual violence and the portrayal of intimate partner violence as common couple conflict.

Greater insight into the relationship between gender inequality and domestic and family violence and sexual assault is likely from research exploring two different, but related, perspectives. First is the concept of domestic and family violence and sexual assault being part of a continuum of violence against women and the connections between perpetrator behaviour, causes and impacts. Second is comparative research on the differing relationship contexts, settings and dynamics of domestic and family violence compared to sexual assault, as well as adult compared to child sexual assault.

2.2 Social determinants of violence against women

Although the primacy of the relationship between gender inequality and violence against women is identified in the research, the intersection with a range of other social determinants and issues including other social inequalities, poverty, unequal access to resources, discrimination (against people with a disability for example), and culture is also important. Further research is needed on the relationship and intersection of the various social determinants and their impact on perpetration, vulnerability and risk of violence against women. This research should include consideration of the interactions between gendered and other forms of violence, such as homophobic violence. Related research is also needed on how the management of these social determinants translates into behavioural change in the context of violence against women.

2.3 Design, evaluation and monitoring of primary prevention programs

Primary prevention programs are designed to either change community attitudes and social determinants, including prevailing gender inequalities and social norms, or to bring about behavioural changes that reduce

violence against women. Although primary prevention is widely acknowledged as important, there is a paucity of research and lack of shared definitions or understandings. A meta-analysis of the success of such programs nationally and internationally, as well as leadership on definitions and understandings of primary prevention, is therefore a necessary precursor to program-level evaluations.

From this foundation, research is needed to monitor and investigate the efficacy and outcomes of primary prevention programs at national and local levels, including respectful relationship programs in schools and other settings and bystander approaches. Notwithstanding the methodological difficulties of assessing such programs, this research should include longitudinal studies to test their effectiveness over time. Research should also test the links between community attitudes, such as those measured by the NCAS, and behaviour change, including identifying the particular conditions to best facilitate the translation of attitudes into behaviour. Further, research on primary prevention needs to be tailored to sub-populations including women with disability, in same-sex relationships and from migrant or refugee communities. A particular priority in exploring sub-populations should be identifying primary prevention best practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the importance of culture, law and cultural authority in preventing violence and reinforcing positive behavioural patterns. This includes acknowledging similarities and divergences between Indigenous communities.

SRT 3 - Service responses and interventions

We need research that provides clear guidance about the effectiveness of the wide range of service responses and interventions in reducing the impact and incidence of violence against women. Although research in this area has the most comprehensive evidence base, developing good practice principles in responses and interventions should continue to be prioritised since it is an ongoing requirement of professional practice and is a primary concern for policy-makers. This context suggests, however, the need for meta-analyses of national and international research and knowledge translation and dissemination strategies that provide clear and concise information to bridge gaps between research knowledge and practice.

3.1 Service responses to women and their children

Research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of current service delivery models for sexual assault and domestic and family violence. This includes comparisons between jurisdictions, attention to medium-term (in addition to crisis) support, longitudinal studies of the impact of interventions over time and needs and gap analyses. These evaluations should consider the cultural appropriateness of services for women and children from different sub-populations, with particular attention to Indigenous communities and the effectiveness of mainstream versus locally driven and owned interventions. Other sub-populations of focus should be CALD and refugee women and women with disability. The nature and effectiveness of services for children who have experienced domestic and family violence, is also a priority. Another area warranting further enquiry is comparative research on specialist and mainstream service responses including: the role of specialisation in delivering appropriate and effective responses; interactions within and between specialist service sectors and with mainstream services; and the capacity, economic value and sustainability of mainstream and specialist services in terms of government policy, funding and workforce skills and development.

3.2 Characteristics of men who use violence

Research on characteristics, attitudes and behaviour of men who use violence is necessary to inform interventions with these men. This includes identifying characteristics of those at risk of perpetrating violence and the development of typologies of perpetrators of domestic and family violence and sexual assault, taking into account men from different backgrounds. In particular, research is needed into the behaviour of men who use violence who are undetected, i.e. outside clinical or prison populations. Research on adolescent violence in the home is also needed, including: prevalence; gender; patterns; relationship to domestic and family violence; violence against mothers; and graduation to violence in adulthood. Another example would be research on men's use of violence against women following service in the defence forces, particularly those deployed in overseas areas of conflict.

3.3 Interventions targeting men who use violence

Research into interventions with men who use violence is well-represented in the literature. More rigorous evaluations are, however, required into treatment models and the efficacy of programs and techniques across jurisdictions. This should include exploring: recidivism; what assists men to cease violence long-term; and interventions with sub-populations, especially men from rural and remote communities, CALD backgrounds and Indigenous communities. Programs removing the perpetrator of domestic and family violence from the family home and mandated or court-referred programs are of particular current interest to policy and practice. Further research is also needed to investigate unintended outcomes of interventions with men, especially on victim safety.

SRT 4 - Systems

We need a better understanding of responses to violence against women within different systems and the impact of the intersection of these systems on the experiences of individuals, families and communities.

4.1 Criminal justice and legal systems

Research on the impact of law reform and legal responses to domestic and family violence would complement the substantial body of evidence that already exists in the area of sexual assault. Family Law is a particularly important area of enquiry with research needed on shared parenting and family violence reforms, such as the *Family Law Legislation Amendment (Family Violence and Other Measures) Act 2011*. More broadly for violence against women, research is needed on the effectiveness of different law reform measures, including comparative analyses across jurisdictions. Such research should be grounded in work already undertaken in this area by Law Reform Commissions across jurisdictions. The efficacy of current restorative and alternative justice approaches in Indigenous communities should also be explored. Beyond the legal system, research is needed on the experiences of victims and perpetrators with police agencies. Of particular interest is the nature and impact of police action when a court order is breached and the influence of police culture, attitudes and responses to domestic and family violence, particularly for Indigenous communities. Research is also needed on policy and practice at the intersection between legal, police and child protection systems, particularly for: women and children experiencing domestic and family violence; children subjected to child sexual assault; and co-occurring child sexual, physical and/or psychological abuse and neglect with domestic and family violence.

4.2 Pathways, intersections and integrated responses

There is a need for research to develop an understanding of the overall nature of system intersections from the perspective of women and their children's experiences. This includes a focus on integrated service models and the effectiveness of service collaborations, including, but not limited to, specialist services dealing with violence against women and child protection, health and legal/justice systems. In particular, research should identify service system barriers and facilitators to women disclosing violence and accessing appropriate services. Such research could include the role of first-responder agencies, such as schools, police or hospitals and the efficacy of collaborative efforts and systems interventions, such as information-sharing across agencies and screening and risk assessment tools, in reducing the impact and risk of violence and linking women and their children to specialist agencies. Research into women and their children's pathways to mainstream and specialist services following violence, would provide insights for policy and practice. This includes examining: the nature of interactions with, and interfaces between, multiple services; points of system failure; unintended negative consequences of current structures and systems; gaps in service delivery and support; the nature, benefits and disadvantages of joined-up, co-ordinated and integrated responses; and how financial management services can help build economic security for women and provide safeguards against economic abuse. The experiences of Indigenous, rural and remote communities would be of particular note for this research area, especially exploring the effectiveness of innovative models of service provision, collaboration, co-ordination and integration in those communities.

4.3 Government policy

Three main areas of research into government policy responses to violence against women are needed. First, there is a need for research on the impact and success of public policy approaches and governments' community education campaigns on violence against women, the latter of which is related to the primary prevention research explored in SRT 2. In particular, Australian research, including localised surveys, is needed to evaluate how government policies and community education campaigns can shape community attitudes and behaviour concerning violence against women. Second, there is the need for economic analyses

of policy and program choices, including the service responses and interventions delineated in SRT 3. Such research is important in guiding government decision-making with data and other evidence about the economic costs of implementing and not implementing particular policies, programs and services. Third, there is a need to explore the impact of government policies on a range of issues that lie outside specific responses to violence against women, but which may impact on social determinants that cause this violence. This might include the intersection between violence against women and policies relating to child care, family tax, parental leave, workplace discrimination, and women's political and civic participation, for example.

Considerations for researchers, funders, policy-makers and practitioners

The following issues should be considered by researchers, funders, policy-makers and practitioners in the conduct of research contributing to the National Research Agenda.

Research collaboration and active co-production of research

Ongoing and sustainable partnerships are needed, despite constraints of time-limited funding arrangements. In particular, research projects should ideally consist of partnerships and collaboration between researchers and policy and service delivery practice communities, organisations and professionals and, where possible, women and children themselves. Practitioners should be actively involved in constructing knowledge and designing interventions, since they are usually attuned to emerging issues and the translation of research into practice. Partnerships and collaborations are also needed across academic disciplines, such as law, health, criminology, social work, psychology, political science, sociology and science, as well as between the domestic and family violence and sexual assault sectors. Such collaborations concerning research into violence against women are vital to the development of a cohesive and diverse community of researchers and the development of shared conceptual frameworks.

Research acknowledges the 'voice' of women and their children

An important feature of much research about violence against women and their children is the prominence of the 'voice' of women themselves, and their articulation of their experience of violence, their needs and the needs of their children. This, in part, reflects the influence of the women's movement in responding to domestic and family violence and sexual assault. Women's 'voices' must continue to be acknowledged, respected and actively involved in the production of research. Women from a variety of cohorts and previously under-researched groups must also be engaged to collaborate and participate in research.

Research is conducted in an ethical manner and in culturally appropriate ways

Researchers must be aware of, and responsive to, a range of particular sensitivities, challenges and vulnerabilities of conducting research into violence against women. Maintaining safety must be the primary consideration in any endeavour responding to violence against women. Researchers must ensure that appropriate support is provided to women and children participating in research and that they are informed of the findings of the research. Respect for the dignity and wellbeing of participants must also take precedence over any expected benefits to knowledge. Further, researchers should show sensitivity to issues of shame and past negative experiences of disclosure and seek to lessen stigma associated with membership of marginalised groups, when appropriate.

Researchers need to conduct research with Indigenous communities in a manner that is culturally appropriate, informed and controlled by the community. Researchers should be sensitive to 'research fatigue' in many Indigenous communities and take care to avoid duplication. Researchers should acknowledge the history, experience and circumstances of Indigenous communities including the effects of colonisation, trans-generational trauma, the importance of Indigenous cultures and law, social norms, and locality. Indigenous theoretical frameworks and discourses should guide research practice and there should be regular consultation and collaboration with research partners and participants to ensure research is culturally appropriate and mutually beneficial. Similar considerations and practices should also be adopted for research with other population groups, including immigrant, refugee and CALD women with specific cultural characteristics and experiences of marginalisation.

Methodological priorities

A range of methodologies is necessary to build a comprehensive evidence base on violence against women. A wide range of methods was identified through consultations as being useful research tools in this area. These included qualitative (e.g. in-depth interviews, focus groups, case studies, ethnographic research and life-course analysis), quantitative (e.g. official statistical data collections, surveys and randomised control studies), desk-based (e.g. literature reviews, content analysis, policy analysis) and mixed method approaches. The National Research Agenda should not privilege one particular type of evidence over another. However, some methodologies were identified as having particular value in addressing existing gaps in knowledge, or to inform certain questions of policy or practice, and/or due to their cultural appropriateness for Indigenous communities. These included:

- Action research/practice-informed research.
- Evaluation research, including formative and long-term impact evaluations.
- Ethnographic research.
- Language and story-telling based research including yarning within Indigenous populations, oral histories and discourse analysis.
- Longitudinal research.
- Pathways analysis.
- Econometric analysis, which may include, but are not limited to, cost benefit analysis, meta-synthesis, meta-evaluations and other analyses of existing research.

Comparative research, such as case studies on law, policy or integrated service responses across jurisdictions and internationally.

Statistical analysis, including data mining, data linkage, and/or further analyses of national data sets and administrative by-product data collected across human service systems, such as the criminal justice or health systems.

Translating and exchanging evidence to inform practice and policy

The value of research conducted as part of the National Research Agenda will rely on the generation, translation and exchange of evidence to inform service delivery, policy and practice. This necessarily entails the active involvement of the practitioner community in developing the evidence base and ensuring knowledge exchange as outlined above. Research through the National Research Agenda must be positioned within a knowledge translation and exchange framework that optimises influence on practice, which includes attention to:

- Knowledge production - designing, undertaking new research.
- Knowledge concentration - collecting, curating, analysing and synthesising existing evidence.
- Knowledge dissemination and translation - tailoring products and resources to audience needs and translating research findings into actionable messages.
- Knowledge exchange - interaction between researchers and knowledge users for mutual learning.
- Knowledge application - sound and ethical implementation of knowledge in practice.

This also means that the National Research Agenda must embrace a diverse sources of literature in research. This includes valuing grey literature such as commissioned, practice-based research reports and evaluations that have formed an important part of the violence against women research evidence base to date.

Next steps: ANROWS Research Program

There are three main next steps for ANROWS in implementing the National Research Agenda.

The first is ANROWS's leadership role in promoting the National Research Agenda and exploring formal and informal partnerships with researchers, research bodies and funding sources to ensure maximum value from the investment in research. ANROWS will also explore opportunities to promote the National Research Agenda and influence the development of research evidence through national policy initiatives that may impact on violence against women. This includes the work of the Foundation to Prevent Violence against Women and their Children, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA) and Closing the Gap for Indigenous Australians.



As part of this leadership role, ANROWS will also broker linkages and partnerships between service providers, practitioners and researchers to support the research activities of the National Research Agenda. This would include encouraging the coordination of national, state and territory data collections - including existing surveys, and administrative by-product data sets - to improve coverage and comparability and reduce duplication. ANROWS will also explore opportunities to develop national data holdings and research infrastructure to ensure the future sustainability and accessibility of the research evidence.

The second step is the development of a program of research that ANROWS will fund. Priorities for inclusion of topics from the National Research Agenda in this research program will be identified with consideration of: current activities in the National Plan, including the National Data Collection and Reporting Framework and National Plan Evaluation; value in supporting the implementation of the National Plan; the coherence of research endeavours as a whole program; and whether the research is of national benefit. ANROWS has also received additional funding from the Commonwealth Government to establish a dedicated perpetrator intervention research stream. This research will be reflected in the ANROWS Research Program.

The third step relates to ANROWS's role to compile, monitor and disseminate research on violence against women to inform policy and practice. This role will be undertaken with attention to the National Research Agenda and the National Plan.

