



Partnerships for Local Action &
Community Empowerment

PLACE submission: Second Action Plan under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children

31 July 2026



About PLACE

Partnerships for Local Action and Community Empowerment (PLACE) is a national organisation that champions and supports community-led approaches to social and economic challenges. Our work is underpinned by a belief that communities know best what matters to them, and that long-term change starts with shared decision-making and strong local leadership.

We exist because top-down, one-size-fits-all approaches have consistently failed to meet the needs of diverse communities. Despite decades of effort, persistent disadvantage remains entrenched in many parts of Australia. Meanwhile, communities across the country are leading place-based initiatives that demonstrate different approaches built on genuine partnership and local ownership.

What's missing is the infrastructure to connect this work, elevate it in policy discussions, and remove the structural barriers that constrain it.

Acknowledgement of Country

PLACE acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to lands, skies, waters and communities. We pay our deepest respects to Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Thank you to our partners

PLACE thanks Respect Victoria, ThirdStory, Substance Misuse Limestone Coast, Bondi Beach Cottage, The Deli Women and Children's Centre and the Lokahi Foundation for rich discussions about the value of place-based work in addressing family violence and for allowing their work to feature as case studies in this submission.

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Recommendations

1. **Increase the focus on place-based initiatives across family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) policy** by:
 - a. **articulating the importance of place-based responses in the Second Action Plan**, including identifying place-based ways of working as a mechanism to adapt universal policy to local context and target priority or relevant social drivers of violence that exist at a community level
 - b. **embedding place-based ways of working in the design and delivery of FDSV policy** and programs, where appropriate.
2. **Increase funding to FDSV prevention, including supporting and sustaining existing prevention infrastructure.** Existing specialist expertise, and the evolving evidence base for FDSV prevention, is critical to helping ensure community-led and place-based work is evidence-informed and effective. Continued investment in existing infrastructure is critical for maintaining sector capability and enabling robust impact measurement that captures the story of how and why prevention is working
3. **Increase investment in place-based approaches to FDSV prevention and response**, enabled by:
 - a. implementing and **maturing a commissioning approach that supports place-based work.** Commissioning approaches should include relational contracting and increase the sustainability of initiatives already underway.
 - b. developing a method that draws on **quantitative data, community engagement and voice, and provider data to understand place-based trends in violence.** Trend data should inform local service commissioning and investment in local solutions. Data should also be transparent, and readily available to communities and service providers, and used alongside prevention evidence to identify opportunities for action.
 - c. **mapping Commonwealth, state and territory investment into regions** across FDSV policy. To enable the identification of gaps in investment and opportunities for collaboration, mapping should include adjacent sectors that address factors that exacerbate violence, details on service performance and fundings periods. Mapping should be available to communities and providers alongside data on local trends.
4. **Partner with state and territory governments to co-fund intensive and long-term place-based initiatives**, including in:
 - a. **geographies and priority communities that require special conditions.** This includes communities with high or increasing rates of FDSV. A special conditions model could focus across all domains of FDSV, with community-led prevention activity working alongside crisis interventions.
 - b. **communities mobilised to act on violence**, or in communities that are currently working with governments in a place-based way.
5. **Establish national impact networks** where place-based FDSV initiatives can share learnings, develop a minimum dataset and co-contribute to the evidence base. As this collaboration sits beyond normal business, participation should be resourced.
6. **Embed FDSV prevention and response in adjacent place-based reforms across the Australian Government**, including the Children and Family Support Program and employment services reform.

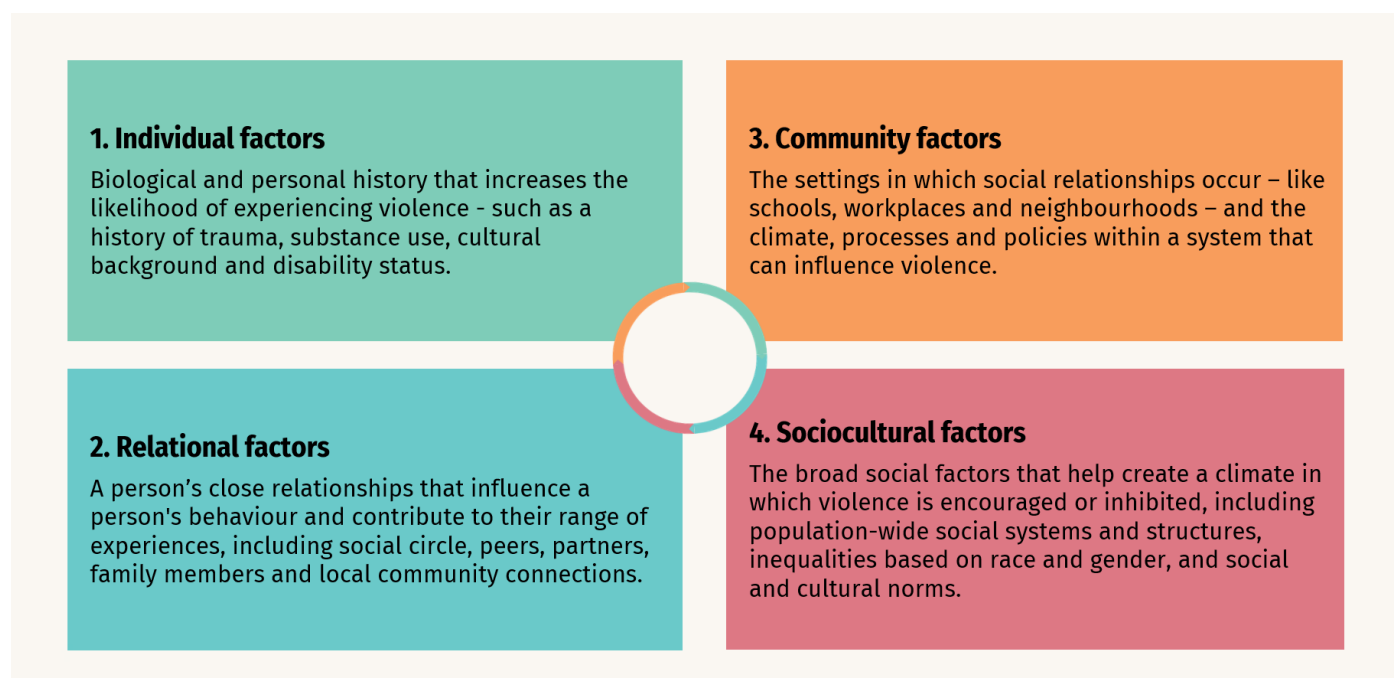
1 Introduction

Section 1 explores how experiences of violence vary by place and argues that place-based approaches create an opportunity for step change.

1.1 Experiences of violence vary by place

A socioecological model of family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) shows violence is multilayered and influenced by individual, relational, community and sociocultural factors (Figure 1).¹ Factors are not mutually exclusive, but interconnected and reinforcing.

Figure 1: Factors within a socioecological model of FDSV



Our Watch identifies 4 drivers of violence that play out across all factors within the socioecological model:²

- **condoning of violence** against women
- men's **control of decision-making and limits to women's independence** in public and private life
- **rigid gender stereotyping** and dominant forms of masculinity
- male peer relations and **cultures of masculinity that emphasis aggression**, dominance and control.

¹BG Ogolsky, JL Hardesty and ML Carter, '[The social-ecological framework for understanding intimate partner violence](#)', Current Opinion in Psychology, 2026, 68:102256.

²Our Watch, '[Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia](#)', 2nd edn, 2021, Our Watch, p 36.

Differences in how the drivers of violence interplay with factors within the socioecological model can contribute to differences in the experience, and risk, of violence across population cohorts. For instance, women living with a disability are more likely to have experienced emotional abuse by a partner (7.0%) than women without a disability (4.6%)³, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are hospitalised for assault-related injuries at a rate 32 times higher than non-Indigenous women.⁴

FDSV policy often considers, and responds to, differences in experiences of violence by age, socioeconomic status and cultural background. However, the clear role of relational and community factors in violence – like local attitudes, gender norms, and histories of colonisation or abuse – means that differences in experiences of violence by postcode should also be considered.

Across Australia, data suggests the rate, severity and type of FDSV varies significantly by location. For instance, national homicide and hospitalisation data show substantial geographic variation in the most severe outcomes of family and domestic violence. While the 2 measures cover different reporting periods and should not be directly compared, together they provide complementary evidence of fatal and serious non-fatal harm.

A note on data

Section 1.1 draws on publicly available data to demonstrate very real differences in the rates and experiences of FDSV by communities. However, limited data availability means this section centres on rates of domestic assault and other experiences of violence reported to police. As many experiences of violence are not reported and experiences of FDSV extend beyond assault – for example, financial abuse, coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse – the data included here is a small part of the story. A nuanced understanding of trends and experiences of violence within a community requires consideration of quantitative data, service provider data and local knowledge.

Looking at these measures across jurisdictions, a clear trend emerges: Queensland and Western Australia recorded rates above, or close to, the national average, while New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania were below the national average on both measures (Figure 2). Analysis of nationally consistent datasets also indicate that the profile of violence differs between jurisdictions. For instance:

- **Offence profile:** The proportion of police-recorded FDSV offences classified as assault and sexual assault differs across jurisdictions. For example, Western Australia and the Northern Territory recorded a higher proportion of assault offences, while Tasmania recorded a comparatively higher proportion of sexual assault offences.
- **Relationship profile:** Intimate partner violence is the predominant relationship category across all reporting jurisdictions, but the proportion varies considerably. Tasmania recorded a substantially higher proportion of assaults involving intimate partners (80.5%) than South Australia (60.6%), Queensland (53.7%) and New South Wales (51.4%), suggesting different relationship contexts in which violence occurs.⁵
- **Setting of violence:** Across most jurisdictions, more than 80% of recorded FDSV assaults occurred in residential settings. The Northern Territory differed markedly, with only 47.0% occurring in residential settings and 33.5% occurring in community settings. While offender relationship data is unavailable for the Northern Territory, this distinctive setting profile suggests the context in which violence occurs may warrant further investigation.

³Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Partner violence](#) [reference period: 2021–22], ABS, November 2023.

⁴H Blackmore and F McLachlan, [Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network data report: Filicides in a domestic and family violence context 2010–2018](#), 1st edn, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety, 2024.

⁵Relationship data were not available for Victoria, Western Australia and the Northern Territory.

Figure 2: Variation in domestic homicide rate and FDV hospitalisation rate by jurisdiction

Experiences of violence differ by postcode: Substantial variation across Australia

 DOMESTIC HOMICIDE RATE

per 100,000 population (2024–25)

Northern Territory	4.19
Western Australia	0.47
Queensland	0.39
Australia (national rate)	0.33
New South Wales	0.27
Victoria	0.21
South Australia	0.21
Tasmania	0.17
ACT	0.0



Rates are per 100,000 population.
Source: AIHW National Homicide Monitoring Program;
National Hospital Morbidity Database

 FDV HOSPITALISATION RATE

per 100,000 population (2023–24)

Northern Territory	708.5
Western Australia	55
Australia (national rate)	43.5
Queensland	40.1
South Australia	35.9
ACT	23.6
Victoria	18.8
New South Wales	14.6
Tasmania	13.9

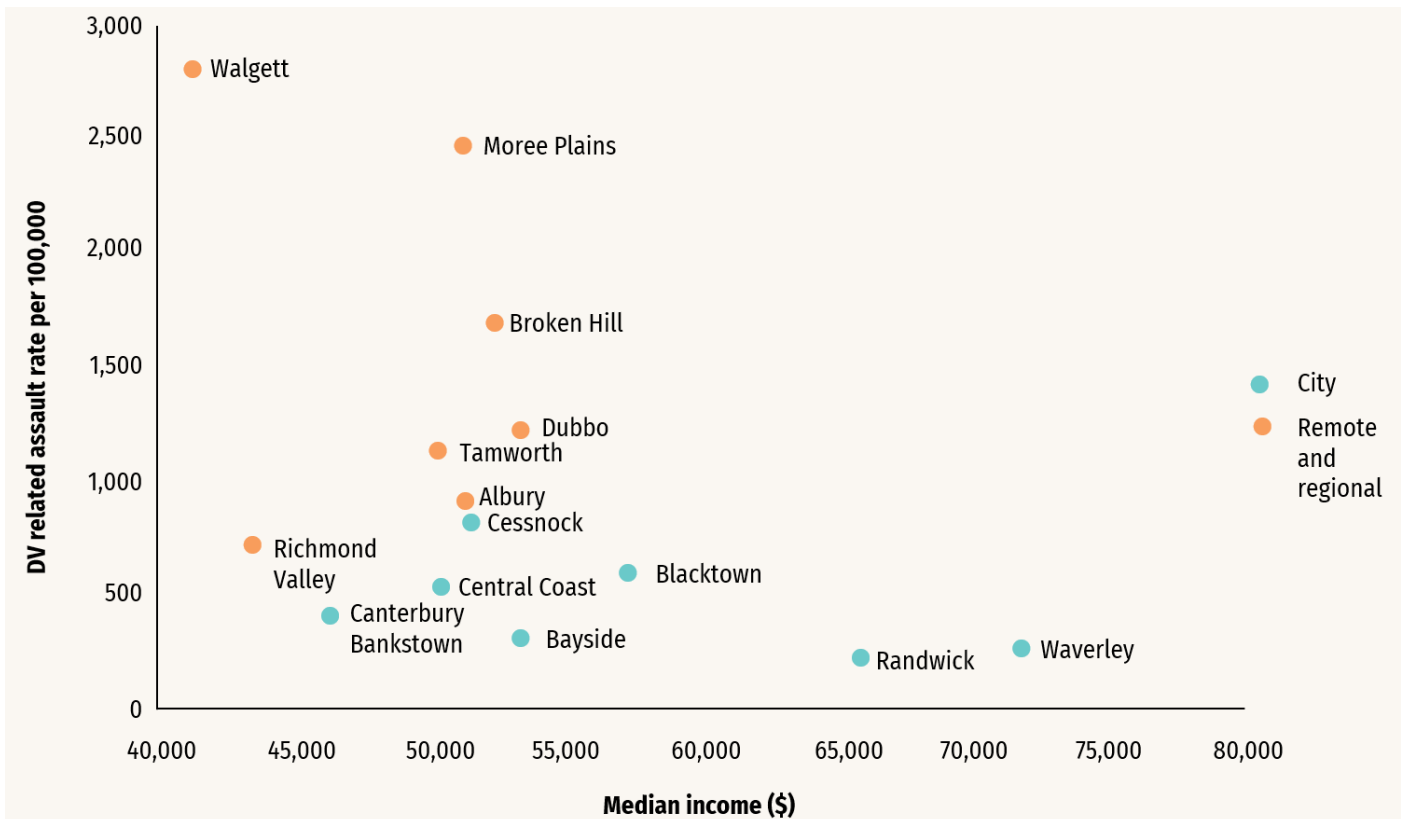
- 1 Across Australia, experiences of violence differ by postcode. When looking at national datasets – between jurisdictions – this variation is clear.
- 2 National homicide and hospitalisation data show substantial geographic variation in the most severe outcomes of family and domestic violence. While the 2 measures cover different reporting periods – and should not be directly compared – together they provide complementary evidence of fatal and serious non-fatal harm.
- 3 The NT and WA recorded rates above the national average for both domestic homicide and FDV hospitalisation. QLD was above average for domestic homicide only, while NSW, VIC and TAS remained below the national average on both measures.
- 4 The NT is a clear outlier. Its domestic homicide rate is more than 12 times the national rate, while its FDV hospitalisation rate was more than 16 times the national rate. The consistency across the 2 separate datasets indicates a substantially greater burden of severe harm.



Differences by postcode reflect different experiences of violence, relationship contexts and settings across Australia.
Understanding these differences is essential for targeted prevention and tailored responses.

Differences in violence become more nuanced within a jurisdiction. Looking at 14 local government areas within New South Wales – Albury, Bayside, Blacktown, Broken Hill, Canterbury Bankstown, Central Coast, Cessnock, Dubbo, Moree Plains, Randwick, Richmond Valley, Tamworth, Walgett and Waverley – it is clear patterns of violence differ across community contexts. Remote communities included in the analysis consistently recorded the highest rates of domestic violence, sexual assault and coercive control, while more affluent metropolitan communities recorded lower rates across all 3 offence types (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Rate of domestic violence–related assault incidents, by location and median income, for selected NSW local government areas, April 2025 to March 2026



Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR), Domestic violence, BOCSAR website, n.d., accessed 30 July 2026; Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022), Income and work: Census [reference period: 2021], ABS, accessed 30 July 2026;

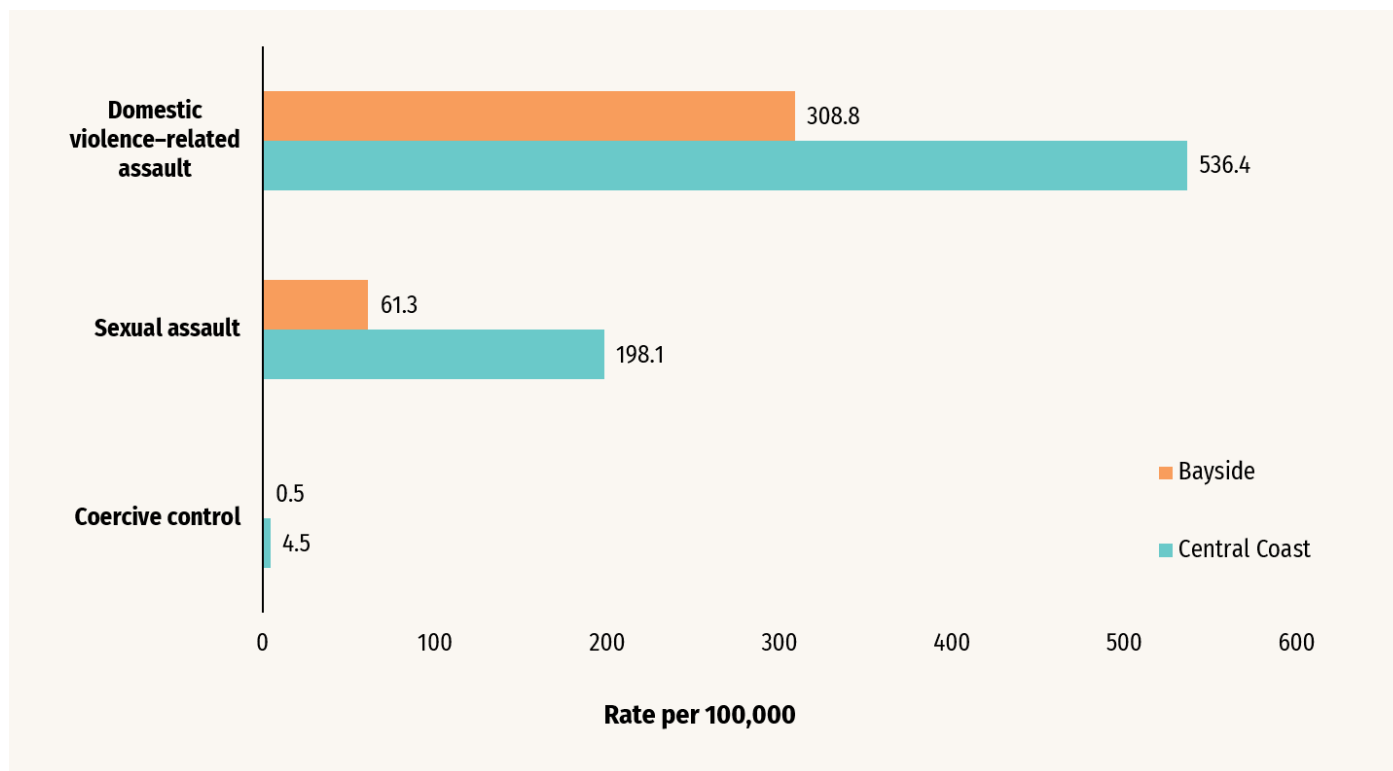
However, broad community characteristics do not fully explain local patterns. Some communities with similar broad characteristics recorded very different rates of violence. For example, both Bayside and the Central Coast are classified as major cities and have a similar socioeconomic profile (SEIFA decile 7 for relative socioeconomic disadvantage),⁶ yet the Central Coast recorded substantially higher rates of domestic violence, sexual assault and coercive control (Figure 4).

Alone, broad indicators such as remoteness and socioeconomic position do not explain rates and experiences of violence. The unique profile of violence within a place is impacted by local context – like gender norms, attitudes and trauma histories – that enable the 4 drivers of violence and local factors – like an oversupply of alcohol, high rates of unemployment or a lack of mental health care – that can exacerbate violence.

This analysis isn't to say violence doesn't happen in certain communities – violence occurs everywhere and any incidence of violence is too much. Rather, it is to suggest that understanding where people experience violence, who is most likely to experience violence in that place, what that experience of violence is most likely to be, and what key drivers are playing out locally can help enrich, and tailor, efforts to build an effective prevention, response and recovery system.

⁶Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), [Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas \(SEIFA\), Australia](#) [reference period: 2021], ABS, April 2023, Table 1: Local government area (LGA) SEIFA summary, 2021.

Figure 4: Domestic violence, sexual assault and coercive control incident rates, Bayside and Central Coast local government areas, April 2025 to March 2026



Source: NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research (BOCSAR), Domestic violence, BOCSAR website, n.d., accessed 30 July 2026.

1.2 Place-based approaches create an opportunity for a step change

To date, FDSV policy responses have been largely universal – focused on service provision and addressing national systemic enablers of violence. For instance, actions like funding refuge services or mental health supports work to address individual need; updating the university codes or introducing FDSV leave works to create environments less conducive to violence; and large primary prevention campaigns work to change the national gender norms.

This work is critical and should continue. But, in parallel, there is scope to increase focus on addressing the relational factors of violence and hyperlocal manifestations of community and sociocultural factors.

The approach to addressing FDSV to date makes sense – governments directly hold systemic levers for change and policy frameworks prioritise national consistency. However, inaction on hyperlocal factors does not have a net neutral impact. A community's context, including trauma history, service availability and social norms, impact the effectiveness of the national policy agenda and can undermine national efforts. For instance, social norm research suggests familial and community norms have greater impact on an individual's behaviour than national or even individual attitudes. This means changing national attitudes helps set broad societal expectations but has limited impact on behaviour if not done alongside hyperlocal action.

⁷GA van Kleef, F Wanders, AEM van Vianen, RL Dunham, X Du and AC Homan, '[Rebels with a cause? How norm violations shape dominance, prestige, and influence granting](#)', PLoS ONE, 2023, 18(11): e0294019; P Passafaro, S Livi and A Kasic, '[Local norms and the theory of planned behavior: Understanding the effects of spatial proximity on recycling intentions and self-reported behavior](#)', Frontiers in Psychology, 2019, 10:744.

Snapshot: Respect Ballarat

In April 2024, people in Ballarat flooded the streets in a powerful protest for change following the devastating deaths of Samantha Murphy, Rebecca Young and Hannah McGuire. Their deaths sent shock waves through the whole community and galvanised the city to call for action on gendered violence. People marched together to express grief, outrage and disbelief, and many held the grief of other historic tragedies and injustices as they marched, including child sexual abuse within local institutions. Not long after, the Victorian Government funded the first 4 years of a community saturation model to prevent gendered violence. This model is the first of its kind in Australia.

Respect Ballarat, led by Respect Victoria together with the local community, works to create a Ballarat where everyone is respected, safe, and free from violence. By supporting concentrated and coordinated primary prevention and targeted early intervention work, Respect Ballarat is working to change the conditions that allow gendered violence to happen and reduce the rates of gendered violence over a 10-year period. Building on the strength of existing work, Respect Ballarat takes a community-wide approach to ending violence – reaching schools, sporting clubs, early-years settings, employers and faith groups. This approach includes:

- **funding for tailored and mutually reinforcing work** to challenge the gendered drivers of violence
- **partnerships across local and state-based organisations** working to prevent gendered violence
- **community mobilisation and capacity building** to strengthen support for and uptake of prevention efforts
- **backbone support** from Respect Victoria to connect and coordinate prevention actions, share learning, and continue building evidence on what works.

Critically, the initiative has strong community governance – including a local advisory group and local impact group – with clear pathways for community engagement and voice.

The impact

Program impact will be measured using a robust monitoring and evaluation approach, built with the Ballarat community and centred on measuring change in key attitudes and behaviours. Evaluation will capture how work is being done, as well as what is being done to help build the evidence base for place-based ways of working.

While not yet captured in formal evaluation processes, early change is visible in the relational threads that weave the community together. Community members report that leaders are showing an increased interest in, and commitment to, ending violence and that cross-sector relationships are building as collaboration increases. Noting the arc of change within place-based work, it is important to recognise that these changes are not the precursors to impact – they are impact.

‘It has been amazing to see so much support and encouragement from Ballarat’s multicultural community for the work we have done so far. I feel so proud of what our team has already achieved, and the impact we will continue to make to create a safer Ballarat for everyone.’ — Respect Ballarat partner and participant

Next steps

Following an intensive community co-design phase, Respect Ballarat is distributing funding and supporting initiatives to get up and running. Grants align with the Respect Ballarat priorities and focus on building community capacity and addressing the root causes of violence. Adopting a test, learn and adapt approach means that as initiatives roll out, the program will grow in response to what is working and community voice. For instance, a new men’s engagement advisory group is being established to better engage men in shaping efforts to reduce violence.

Research and evaluation findings will enable the development of a blueprint to support sustainability of the model and potential testing in other sites, providing a guide to effective place-based prevention practice and mutually reinforcing impact.

2 Place-based approaches in addressing family, domestic and sexual violence

Section 2 discusses place-based ways of working and argues that place-based approaches support a locally responsive service system, fill a prevention gap, and can address community factors that exacerbate violence.

2.1 Understanding place-based ways of working

Place-based change refers to coordinated efforts to improve outcomes by aligning investment, decision-making and service delivery to the specific needs, strengths and aspirations of communities. It starts from a simple premise: disadvantage is shaped by structural forces but is experienced locally and therefore requires responses rooted in place.

Snapshot: Substance Misuse Limestone Coast

In response to the community's concern about the use of crystal methamphetamine, or ICE, alcohol and other drug (AOD) professionals in the Limestone Coast in South Australia came together to form Substance Misuse Limestone Coast (SMLC). SMLC's in-depth understanding of community need, built through local connections and surveys, enables it to implement local solutions that are underpinned by national and international best practice.

Working alongside community groups and service providers, SMLC uses health promotion and education to increase local capability around responding to substance misuse and preventing harm. For instance, during the COVID pandemic, recognising the link between alcohol use and the severity of family violence, SMLC organised online training for over 50 local AOD providers that focused on increasing local capability around assessing for and responding to FDSV. This was the first time training of this kind was delivered into the Limestone Coast.

Since then, alongside core business of delivering AOD harm reduction programs and building capability of local providers, SMLC has joined the Mount Gambier FDSV action group, plays a part in the 16 Days of Activism campaign, and discusses the link between alcohol consumption and the severity of violence in its health promotion work, including with community organisations like the local football club.

Place-based approaches leverage community knowledge and expert input to shape locally relevant solutions. By bringing together relevant stakeholders, place-based approaches can:

- increase **collaboration, coordination and community activation**. Increased collaboration and coordination help ensure communities and services are working towards shared goals and can increase the 'reach' of effort. Coordinated effort means interventions can be either delivered or reinforced by community members and organisations beyond the immediate intervention landscape – including the service system and community networks.
- increase **service integration and holistic supports**. The interconnected nature of violence means service integration is critical. For instance, a child may be experiencing violence in the home and using violence against their peers. Integrated services respond to the child holistically, addressing factors driving the behaviour and preventing future violence from occurring. Integration does not mean services are offered by one provider. Rather, local services have the connections to support participants to access the right support, and have the funding flexibility to respond to local need.

- enable **better targeting** to local context, ensuring deeper and lasting impact. Responding to the demographic, social, geographic and economic make-up of a community, including different challenges, priorities, capabilities and ways of working, brings critical information to program design that can help target investment and intervention to those actions relevant within local context. Targeting responses to local context is critical in violence prevention and when working to address local factors that exacerbate violence.

Across Australia, while the governance and accountability structures of place-based work differ depending on local context, all place-based initiatives share 3 principles:

- **Subsidiarity** – Decisions are made as locally as possible, shifting authority closer to community so local knowledge shapes services and systems.
- **Partnership** – Governments, providers, funders, FDSV experts and communities work together across silos, grounded in trust, reciprocity and shared purpose.
- **Accountability** – Community voice and oversight are embedded in governance, transparency and shared responsibility for outcomes.

Work in place exists along a spectrum. Place-focused models are community-centric but have expert or external players making decisions or designing solutions. Community-led place-based approaches sit further along the spectrum, with local community identifying issues and solutions. The difference is in the extent to which communities hold decision-making power.

Place-based work is already happening across the FDSV prevention and response sector, including in women's refuges, women's legal and community legal services, and prevention efforts, and around factors that exacerbate violence. For example, the Hume Riverina Community Legal Service developed a place-based targeted family violence outreach program – the Outreach, Networking and Empowerment (ONE) Program – focused on delivering dedicated legal assistance services to women at risk of or experiencing domestic and family violence. The program was created because, while data published by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research showed very high, and increasing, rates of crime related to domestic violence and safety, there was not a corresponding increase in demand for legal assistance services. This suggested that women were not accessing legal assistance. Evaluation found that the program effectively reduced barriers to access to justice for women and their children, and that the place-based way of working was critical to program success.⁸

A note on community-led approaches in addressing FDSV

Community-led approaches are those led not by an organisation or outsider but by a collective, community process.⁹ Implementing this way of working in FDSV policy can offer benefits – such as combating power imbalances between traditional 'authorities' and communities, and increasing community ownership – but requires consideration and mitigation of additional risks.

If done poorly, community-led approaches can create conflicts of interest (with perpetrators and victim-survivors engaging in the same program), threaten client anonymity or create perceptions of being observed, worsen power inequities between victim-survivors and perpetrators, and reinforce harmful attitudes, myths and misconceptions about violence or entrench the underlying drivers of FDSV.

These risks can be mitigated through collaboration with experts and formal organisations, embedding work in evidence, and anonymous reporting pathways. They also require shared decision-making structures that recognise where decisions should sit outside community and governance structures that share power across groups – rather than concentrating power in a subset of individuals.

Where these risks cannot be appropriately mitigated, adopting a community-led approach may not be appropriate. In these instances, there is still significant scope to adopt and benefit from other ways of working on the place-based spectrum.

⁸Orange Compass, [Outreach-Networking-Empowerment: A targeted domestic violence program 2022–2025: Impact evaluation report](#), Hume Riverina Community Legal Service, July 2025.

⁹MG Wessells, [A guide for supporting community-led child protection processes](#), Child Resilience Alliance, 2018.

While place-based approaches are showing to be effective, the intensive place-based components of the work – including deep community connection and coordination – are often unfunded or underfunded.¹⁰ Where investment exists, it is usually time-limited grants that do not reflect the length of time needed to show impact, and that risk funding being withdrawn before the way of working can be embedded.¹¹ At the same time, base funding does not have the flexibility needed to respond to emerging local needs.

2.2 Place-focused approaches support a locally responsive service system

Building a local service system that responds to the types of violence and experiences of violence within a location is critical to ensuring people can access the right support at the right time. A place-focused service system is one with a deep understanding of local need and demand, of service availability and gaps, and of service performance. Critically, there also needs to be a coordinated effort to respond to these factors. For instance, if the majority of FDSV presentations within a region are related to coercive control, local police should develop deep expertise in collecting evidence for such cases.

A place-responsive system requires coordination at both government and community levels and looks beyond FDSV to adjacent systems and supports – such as housing accessibility, alcohol and other drugs programs, employment, and mental health support. This coordination can achieve mutually reinforcing impact. Opportunities for information sharing between local coordination layers and cross-government coordination is critical – with local coordination mechanisms identifying local barriers and opportunities that are key to cross-government discussions. Community engagement is central to developing a place-responsive system, with community voice increasing understanding of what is working and where the gaps are.

Increasing the service system's responsiveness to local context does not necessarily mean new services. Rather, it is about ensuring trusted services are supported with adequate funding to meet demand, and flexibility in funding to be responsive to local context and need.

2.2.1 An opportunity to commission differently

Adopting a place-based, or even place-focused, approach to FDSV will require intentional change to current funding and contracting mechanisms. To be effective, commissioning approaches should centre community voice and be directly responsive to local context. The complexity of delivering positive FDSV outcomes means any commissioning approach should be underpinned by a commitment to relational contracting. Relational contracting is an approach to managing Commonwealth grant funding that prioritises long term partnerships and shared outcomes over short term compliance. It provides a flexible, adaptive framework that supports collaboration, responds to emerging evidence and reflects local contexts. Embedding requirements for place-based commissioning within the Federation Funding Agreements framework would encourage states and territories to prioritise place-based approaches (where appropriate) and ensure increased financial sustainability of place-based approaches already underway.

As reflected in Respect Victoria's forthcoming policy brief on effective funding models for FDSV prevention, a mature approach to place-based commissioning should also enable cross-government co-investment into a geography and coordinate funding to respond to local needs, potentially through shared investment or intermediary commissioning.

2.2.2 Increased cross-government collaboration and action

A step change in FDSV outcomes requires coordinated action across multiple service systems. Acting as a system steward, there is scope for the Department of Social Services (DSS) to coordinate action and investment across governments to address systemic barriers to violence and address local bottlenecks.

¹⁰Respect Victoria, [Maintain the momentum: Three yearly report to parliament on the progress of prevention 2022–2024](#), Respect Victoria, November 2025.

¹¹Respect Victoria, [Maintain the momentum](#).

In parallel, there is opportunity for DSS to look across the government's reform agenda for opportunities that can be used to amplify efforts to address FDSV, including:

- **Children and Family Support Program** – Leverage the current program reforms, including relational contracting approaches, to support close collaboration between specialist FDSV services, other child and parent supports, and communities. In communities where FDSV is identified as a priority need, relational contracting can be used to amplify accountability to community and ensure providers are collaborating and responding appropriately to local needs.
- **Employment services reform** – Coordinate with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to ensure that employment services reform considers the needs of victim-survivors across all service streams. People accessing employment services supports, whether online or through direct contact with a provider, should be able to safely disclose experiences of violence and have that disclosure inform both their assessment for service supports and their mutual obligation requirements. Employment services providers, particularly within Stream 3 services¹², should have the capability to connect participants with FDSV support and ensure this support is recognised in their employment goal plan. As FDSV disclosures require trust between participants and providers, reforms should prioritise providers that are locally trusted, and continuity between participants and providers.

Through Closing the Gap Target 13,¹³ governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and community-controlled organisations have been working to address the disproportionate rates of family violence experienced by First Nations women and children. This work has consistently identified many of the same systemic issues now emerging through broader FDSV consultations, including the need for community-led solutions, greater investment in prevention and early intervention, improved service integration, culturally safe responses, stronger local decision-making, and action on the underlying drivers of violence. There is already a significant body of evidence emerging through Closing the Gap that can inform broader FDSV reform efforts. Rather than creating parallel approaches, there is an opportunity to learn from this existing work.

2.2.3 Data, evidence and measuring success

Effective cross-government investment, and place-based commissioning, requires a deep understanding of local context. Despite several limitations within FDSV datasets, governments have access to several datasets that – when viewed collectively – could be used to understand violence within a geography. This includes:

- the National Homicide Monitoring Program
- the Child Protection National Minimum Data Set
- state-based crime statistics and policing data
- the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Personal Safety Survey and Recorded Crime – Offenders and Recorded Crime – Victims datasets
- 1800RESPECT data, which can be broken down by caller location as a proxy for demand.

Governments also receive a significant quantity of service data. Establishing a minimum dataset across providers would enable a deeper understanding of local experiences. Community engagement is critical to building a nuanced picture of local circumstance, an understanding of how services are accessed (or not), and where the gaps are.

A different approach to data is also needed when assessing success. Place-based approaches are complex and non-linear. While traditional evaluation relies on measuring program outputs and population-level shifts, place-based impact sees relational and structural shifts occur before service changes or population outcomes are observed. Crucially, early relational and structural shifts are not precursors to impact – they are impact. Failing to recognise and measure early impact risks defunding initiatives as the foundation for change is being laid.

¹²Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), [Shaping the future of employment services: Discussion paper](#), DEWR, May 2026.

¹³Closing the Gap, [Closing the Gap targets and outcomes](#), Closing the Gap website, n.d., accessed 30 July 2026.

Snapshot: Eastern Suburbs Domestic and Family Abuse Collective

The Eastern Suburbs Domestic and Family Abuse Collective (the Collective) is a joint initiative of The Deli Women and Children's Centre, Bondi Beach Cottage and the Lokahi Foundation that is working to improve family, domestic and sexual violence outcomes within their community. It can be difficult to see the story of abuse in the Eastern Suburbs. Specialist services consistently see high, and increasing, rates of complex violence; but these patterns aren't reflected in statewide datasets, which rely on reported incidents and on physical violence. A misleading picture emerges – violence is less prevalent in the Eastern Suburbs. This picture undermines efforts to secure adequate funding, influences community sentiment and enables violence to stay hidden.

For instance, funding from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice's Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Services Program supports approximately 260 women and children across the Collective's member organisations each year. However, these services regularly overdeliver on their contracted rates by 2 to 3 times. While some people in the Eastern Suburbs access support through other programs, like Staying Home Leaving Violence or Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services, the Collective support the lion's share of complex, multi-year case management clients who experience ongoing post-separation abuse. It is common to see cases where the person using violence weaponises affluence to fund drawn-out legal battles over financial settlements, child custody and child support payments. Considering this, the Collective is working to:

- **advocate for funding and systems change** – Recognising the urgency of adequate funding and the need for systems change the Collective use a unified voice to advocate for investment and action across all levels of government.
- **grow philanthropic investment** – The Collective is working to grow local investment by developing an Eastern Suburbs Funders Network. Key to this is educating funders on the complexity of need and the value of the holistic and place-based approaches, as well as designing and implementing programs to respond to local needs.
- **build a local evidence base** – By bringing together NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research data, member service data and local knowledge, the Collective is building a strong evidence base that tells a nuanced story of domestic abuse in the Eastern Suburbs. Evidence will be captured in an annual Eastern Suburbs domestic and family violence (DFV) impact report.
- **correct the story** – As a named body, the Collective engages media and local storytellers to share the real story of family and domestic abuse in the Eastern Suburbs, including a complex picture about diversity of need and significant funding gaps.

The impact

The work of the Collective is gaining traction. Provider data is clarifying the profile of domestic abuse within the community and building a compelling story for place-based investment. At the same time, as relationships strengthen, collaboration between providers is increasing and driving local solutions that leverage existing strengths and directly target local service gaps.

Next steps

In Australia, 80% of adolescent boys who used aggression have themselves been victimised.¹⁴ Despite need, with hundreds of children moving through the Collective's services each year, across the Eastern Suburbs there is a gap in services responding to children experiencing domestic abuse, and there is no funding to support young people at the early stages of using violence. In response, the Collective is designing an early intervention pilot and seeking funding to provide a coordinated and family-centred recovery pathway for families. The pilot recognises children and young people as victim-survivors in their own right. If funding applications are successful, this program would deliver the first standalone, specialist DFV-led, community-based therapeutic and case management pathway for children and young people in the Eastern Suburbs.

¹⁴The Men's Project, [The Adolescent Man Box: Findings from a survey with Australian adolescents aged 14–18 years](#), Jesuit Social Services, 2025

2.3 Place-based approaches fill a prevention gap and can address community factors that exacerbate violence

Place-based prevention focuses on building local momentum for change by mobilising community action, changing the relational factors that impact violence (like local behavioural norms) and assessing how community factors (like local trauma histories or the availability of alcohol) may facilitate or exacerbate violence. Place-based prevention approaches can occur alongside work to build a locally responsive service system.

Critically, place-based prevention is a collaboration between experts – who understand the practice agenda – and communities – who understand local context. Co-collaboration is most effective when supported by shared decision-making, a model where communities have a genuine say in what happens. This way of working requires transparent, inclusive governance structures that formalise how partners interact. It is also important to build a shared understanding of what decisions are on the table and where authorising environments or risk profiles mean decisions are held elsewhere.

Place-based prevention can exist as a saturation model, with coordinated and concentrated prevention activities across all the settings where people lead their lives. Place-based prevention can also focus on targeting particular settings, such as locations with a high concentration of people at risk of using violence (such as local male-dominated industries) or moments where there is opportunity to directly impact relational circumstances (for instance, early parenting programs). Critically, interventions that combine multiple strategies or settings have a mutually reinforcing effect that magnifies impact.¹⁵ This targeted way of working can stimulate action in traditionally hard-to-reach cohorts and achieve impact through ‘organised diffusion’ – where messages about equality and non-violence are mutually reinforced across circumstances and begin circulating through the population.¹⁶

Highly effective place-based prevention approaches require good prevention infrastructure – including a trained workforce, coordination mechanisms, a supportive legal and policy environment, and adequate resourcing – adherence to quality design, and effective partnerships with response services.¹⁷ These conditions might exist from the get-go, but may require concerted effort to build readiness across local stakeholder groups.

This is Manly, a primary prevention initiative in Western Australia, has found that how the work is done also matters. Adopting a try, test, learn and adapt model, the program found¹⁸:

- **Multiple entry points strengthen prevention without diluting the message.** Men struggle to see themselves in prevention messaging but recognise themselves as community members. Framing discussions around influence and responsibility provides a lower barrier to entry into conversations about gender, respect and violence prevention.
- **Identity is the gateway to engagement.** Primary prevention approaches are more successful when they are positioned to help men become a better version of an identity they already value.
- **Reflection is a mechanism for change.** Personal reflection, particularly on past behaviours, appears to increase self-awareness and openness to change. Programs must create opportunities to reflect on participants’ own lives, goals, relationships and values.
- **Men are more likely to engage through conversation.** Peer influence is a powerful driver for change. The most powerful part of programs is often men’s conversations with each other – reflecting, connecting, being honest and identifying their motivation to change.
- **Awareness is only the beginning; men need clear pathways into action.** Men consistently report wanting practical tools, and opportunities to contribute. Building capability may be as important as raising awareness. People act when they have confidence, resources and a clear role to play.

¹⁵ L Fergus, [Evidence review: Reducing and preventing violence against women: Factors affecting impact, with a focus on multi-component, place-based approaches](#), Respect Victoria, June 2024.

¹⁶ L Fergus, [Evidence review](#).

¹⁷ L Fergus, [Evidence review](#).

¹⁸ Personal correspondence.



- **We should facilitate, not replace, local influence.** Influence is highly local and men are influenced most by people they already trust. Effective local leaders are people who have community trust and hold strong local relationships before the initiative begins. Working with the grain of existing local influence, rather than trying to replace it, can fast-track change. The task is to identify, support and strengthen existing networks, and connect disparate efforts into an aligned movement.
- **Important prevention conversations happen outside prevention settings.** Young people learn about masculinity in homes, workplaces, sporting clubs, schools and friendship groups. As such, prevention efforts also need to focus as much on strengthening everyday environments.



Snapshot: This is Manly

This is Manly, a primary prevention initiative by ThirdStory, engages men and boys in conversations and actions that promote respect and equality, and prevent violence. Recognising the importance of relational connections in the shaping of behaviours and social norms, This is Manly is grounded in a simple but powerful belief: **every man influences someone.**

Initially a positive masculinity campaign co-designed with young people, This is Manly has grown to build practical tools and opportunities for action, including:

- **a campaign** – broad prevention messaging that challenges harmful gender stereotypes, makes positive role models visible, and encourages conversations about masculinity and influence
- **practical resources** – tools such as the Accidental Role Model Playbook that help men build confidence, reflect on their influence and take practical action
- **the Manly Movement** – leveraging the impact of peer relationships, the Manly Movement supports community-led initiatives, peer learning and ongoing participation to support men to consider their role as an influence and build better behaviours.

These streams support the preconditions for change: motivation, capability and opportunity. The campaigns build motivation, the resources build capability and the community networks create opportunities for action.

The impact

This is Manly is demonstrating strong reach and is gaining traction across Western Australia. The program's social media channels have achieved an almost gender-equal audience, a significant result given primary prevention content is typically followed more closely by women and non-binary people. While program statistics are impressive, the quiet stories of relational change highlight the biggest potential for influence. For instance, the Manly Movement pilot engaged with a local gym owner who wanted to run 'Pre-Season' – an after-gym program to foster stronger conversations, healthier habits and peer accountability. Participants engaged in discussions they would not otherwise have, with mutual support driving ongoing participation. Many also reported deeper conversations at home and deeper, and more regular, check-ins with peers.

'There were examples of blokes taking this stuff home. They came back the next week and spoke about having conversations with their partners about finance, time management, family dynamics and their relationships.' — This is Manly participant

Next steps

This is Manly is moving towards a model that prioritises primary prevention in place. The Early Years Partnership (EYP) – a partnership between the WA Government, Minderoo Foundation and 4 WA communities – is a community-led place-based partnership that aims to improve the wellbeing and school readiness of children from conception to the age of 4. In doing so, partners are learning what it takes to create change for children across Western Australia. The EYP has been established in the Central Great Southern region in Western Australia for over 8 years.

Having identified a need for primary prevention, the local working group has invited ThirdStory to apply This is Manly to the Central Great Southern region, which includes the shires of Katanning, Kojonup, Gnowangerup and Broomehill-Tambellup and surrounding towns in Western Australia.

Grounded in local knowledge and responsive to local need, this project will be rolled out over 6 phases: discover and connect, activate local role models, embed prevention where men already are, make positive masculinity visible, grow community-led action, and learn, adapt, scale and transition.

In parallel, Stopping Family Violence will work with victim-survivors and perpetrators in Western Australia to address gaps, barriers and bottlenecks in the crisis system. By working across primary prevention and response, the Katanning community is fostering an ecosystem for change.

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