FREEDOM FROM FEAR
Working towards the elimination of family and domestic violence in Western Australia

Action Plan 2015
Minister’s foreword

Family and domestic violence is a scourge on our community, permeating all cultures and classes at rates beyond our comprehension. Sadly, it is mostly women and children who continue to experience violence at the hands of people they love and within their own homes.

There is no simple solution to what is a complex and social problem that has lasting and devastating effects on individuals, children, families and communities across Western Australia.

A comprehensive, committed and shared response across all state and Commonwealth government departments, community sector organisations and the wider community is required if the incidence of family and domestic violence in our state is to be reduced.

The action plan Freedom from Fear: Working towards the elimination of family and domestic violence in Western Australia 2015 reaffirms the state government’s commitment to tackling this insidious problem, through a framework of action to strengthen a whole of government and community sector response. It builds on work already undertaken through Western Australia’s Family and Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy to 2022 and aims to increase safety for the many women and children who are at risk of, or experiencing family and domestic violence by supporting and strengthening integrated, accountable and effective interventions targeting perpetrators of violence and abuse.

In Western Australia, we are leading the way with best practice examples of integrated responses to family and domestic violence. Let’s continue this great work and strive for a safer community, free from all forms of violence.

Helen Morton MLC
MINISTER FOR CHILD PROTECTION
Contents

Family and domestic violence – key statistics ................................................................. 2
Responding to family and domestic violence is a priority ........................................... 3
What are we trying to achieve? .................................................................................... 4
What have we done so far? ........................................................................................ 5
Freedom from fear: action plan .................................................................................. 7
Monitoring and evaluation ......................................................................................... 15
References .................................................................................................................. 16
Family and domestic violence – key statistics

Western Australia has the second highest rate of reported physical and sexual violence perpetrated against women in Australia, second only to the Northern Territory. The largest cohort of women who report experiencing violence are between 18 and 24 years of age. In more than 60% of cases the perpetrator of violence was known to the woman.

_**Personal Safety Survey 2012, Australian Bureau of Statistics**_

In 2013-2014 Western Australia Police responded to over 40,000 calls for assistance in cases of family and domestic violence. In over 65% of these cases children were present or known to reside with the victim or perpetrator. The number of people seeking assistance from police for family and domestic violence has increased by more than 40% in five years.

_**Western Australia Police, 2014**_

Less than 20% of women who experience violence from an intimate partner, report it to the police.

_**Personal Safety Survey 2012, Australian Bureau of Statistics**_

The majority of family and domestic violence perpetrators known to police have been responsible for multiple acts of violence or abuse. In many cases they have been responsible for violence perpetrated against more than one victim.

_**Western Australia Police, 2014**_

Access Economics has estimated that family and domestic violence costs the Australian economy 13.6 billion dollars per year. The costs are associated with loss of productivity in the workplace and increased demands on health, welfare, housing, crisis and legal/statutory services.

_**National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, 2009**_
Responding to family and domestic violence is a priority

The greatest danger to the safety and wellbeing of women and children in Western Australia is from people they know, within their homes and families. Family and domestic violence is a serious and pervasive issue that affects between one in three and one in five women (ABS, 2012; Mouzos & Makkai, 2004) and one in four children (Indermaur, 2001). The impacts of this experience on the physical and emotional wellbeing, and overall quality of life, for adult and child victims can be devastating, with many experiencing a lifetime of fear, threatened and actual abuse and violence. For example, in Australia family and domestic violence is the leading cause of: perceived and actual threats to safety for women and children (ABS, 2005; 2012); non-accidental injury and death for women aged between 15 and 44 (VicHealth, 2004); homelessness for women and children (Tually, Faulkner, Cutler & Slatter, 2008); mental health diagnoses and substance misuse for women (Golding, 1999; Keys & Young, 1998); and physical and emotional harm (or risk of) for children (Humphreys, 2007).

In order to create safety for current victims and prevent family and domestic violence in the future, the perpetrators of this violence must be stopped. It is known that perpetrators of family and domestic violence are deliberate and calculated. They use violence and abuse to intimidate, harm, coerce and control; evade detection; and undermine services and authorities seeking to aid in the safety and wellbeing of adult and child victims. When it comes to their choices to use violence, perpetrators are not entitled, justified, ‘lost in the moment’, or too intoxicated to know better. They are solely responsible for the violence they use and the harm they cause.

This action plan seeks to re-affirm the state government’s commitment to the elimination of family and domestic violence and establish a clear focus on holding those responsible for this abhorrent crime accountable for their violence and abuse. Included in this plan is a clear framework of action that aims to build on the work already undertaken in Western Australia and further strengthen a whole of government and community sector response that is risk informed, integrated and accountable.
What are we trying to achieve?

In 2012 the Western Australian government endorsed and launched *Western Australia’s Family and Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy to 2022* which sets out a long term, across government framework for responding to family and domestic violence. The Prevention Strategy builds on the former *Strategic Plan for Family and Domestic Violence 2009-2013* and identifies phases of progressive reform. The critical foundations for this reform are strong integrated responses to family and domestic violence; a clear evidence base for change; and increased quality, consistency and effectiveness in engaging and responding to perpetrators of violence. The objectives of this reform work are highlighted by the following vision statements.

**WOMEN, CHILDREN AND MEN ARE SAFE AND LIVE IN COMMUNITIES FREE OF VIOLENCE:** Family and domestic violence is eliminated from Western Australian homes, families and communities. Women, children and men are safe and live free from the threat or risk of violence and abuse. ‘Safety’ in this context, is a relative term that is inclusive of individuals’ physical, emotional and social wellbeing and economic security over the short and long term.

**PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE ARE HELD ACCOUNTABLE:** Individuals, communities, service providers and service systems recognise that perpetrators of family and domestic violence are solely responsible for their choices to use violent and abusive behaviours and therefore are responsible for the pervasive and destructive harms experienced by adult and child victims. They are held accountable through: the use of direct, specific and behaviour focused language; community attitudes, beliefs and values that do not excuse or tolerate violence; service responses that proactively identify and engage perpetrators; assessments that identify risk; quality and effective responses that support behaviour change; and legal and statutory interventions that respond to the violence and protect victims.

**RESPONSES TO FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ARE INTEGRATED:** Government agencies and community sector services work in a coordinated and collaborative approach to provide holistic, safe and accountable responses to victims and perpetrators of family and domestic violence. The collaborative approach is characterised by: a shared responsibility for responding to family and domestic violence; no wrong door to a family and domestic violence service response; clear and seamless pathways for clients through the service system; common understanding and language about family and domestic violence and risk; collaborative case management to secure safety and manage risk; and collaborative interventions to aid adult and child victims in healing and recovery.

**RESPONSES ARE ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE SAFETY OF ADULT AND CHILD VICTIMS:** Service providers, government agencies, community sector services and service systems are accountable to and for the safety of adult and child victims. Their policies, procedures and practices consider and privilege safety as the paramount consideration guiding all intervention.

**RESPONSES ARE INFORMED BY ASSESSMENTS OF RISK:** All service responses to victims or perpetrators of family and domestic violence are informed by ongoing assessment of risk.
What have we done so far?

Strategies implemented to support work towards victim safety and perpetrator accountability in an integrated and accountable service response have included the initiatives outlined below. The list is not exhaustive and provides only a brief snapshot of key state wide initiatives such as changes to legislation, formal interagency partnerships, operational policy and research, and data collection.

These initiatives build on a strong foundation of commitment and partnership between government agencies and the community services sector, and innovation from community sector services to meet the needs of clients and community through community development, primary prevention, advocacy and local partnerships.

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Initiative</th>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Establishment of an across government Family and Domestic Violence Senior Officers’ Group to develop, implement and monitor initiatives to support integrated responses.</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Following evaluation of a specialist Family Violence Court in Joondalup, which commenced operation as a pilot in 2002, a further five Family Violence Courts were implemented in the metropolitan area. An Aboriginal specific Family Violence Court was also established in Geraldton. The Family Violence Court model included victim support, diversionary sentencing, mandated treatment programs and coordinated multi-agency case management of offenders.</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Release of the Memorandum of Understanding: Information Sharing between Agencies with Responsibilities for Preventing and Responding to Family and Domestic Violence in Western Australia. Implementation of formal processes for multi-agency assessment and management of high risk cases of family and domestic violence (formerly known as Case Management and Coordination Services).</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Implementation of Safe at Home and Domestic Violence Outreach services which are a partnership between the WA Police and non-government domestic violence services.</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>Implementation of Western Australia’s Family and Domestic Violence Common Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework. WA Police introduce domestic violence risk assessment for front line officers to complete when they attend call outs for family and domestic violence.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Establishment of a family and domestic violence fatality review process with the Ombudsman.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Introduction of significant reforms to the child protection system to enhance the identification, assessment and response to family and domestic violence. These reforms emphasise risk assessment, perpetrator accountability and collaborative working relationships.</td>
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<td>Legislative change to increase access to and effectiveness of police orders including introduction of a ‘presumption of imprisonment’ following three breaches of a restraining order (<em>Restraining Orders Act 1997</em>).</td>
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<td>Commitment of recurrent funding to Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS).</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Reform within the family law system to formally recognise exposing a child to family and domestic violence as a form of child abuse. Reforms included amendment to the WA <em>Family Court Act 1997</em>.</td>
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<td>Release of new practice guidelines for women’s and children’s family and domestic violence counselling and support programs.</td>
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<td>Introduction of Family and Domestic Violence Response Teams (FDVRT) in seventeen locations across WA. The FDVRT are a partnership between WA Police, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support and non-government family and domestic violence services. Operation of the FDVRT is supported by an integrated data base.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Introduction of new guidelines for multi-agency case management of high risk family and domestic violence cases.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Release of a Memorandum of Understanding and protocols for the collaborative case management of serious domestic violence offenders incarcerated or in the community. The Department for Child Protection and Family Support, WA Police and Department of Corrective Services are signatories to the agreement.</td>
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<td>Collation of five years of family and domestic violence data from police, hospitals and the courts to inform state planning. The data was released in the <em>Achievements Report to 2013</em>.</td>
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<td>2014</td>
<td>Western Australia’s Law Reform Commission concluded a review of laws concerning family and domestic violence and made 73 recommendations for change.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Release of media guidelines for reporting family and domestic violence.</td>
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AIM: The Freedom from Fear Action Plan (the Action Plan) aims to increase the safety of women and children who are at risk of, or experiencing family and domestic violence by supporting and strengthening integrated, accountable and effective interventions targeting perpetrators of violence and abuse.

TARGET AUDIENCE: The Action Plan has been endorsed by Cabinet and includes actions that are relevant for government agencies and community sector services that have a role in providing services for family and domestic violence, health, mental health, alcohol and other drug, family support, child protection, justice, legal (civil, criminal, family), housing, financial assistance and crisis or emergency services. The broad reach of the Action Plan is for two reasons:

1. Adult and child victims and perpetrators of family and domestic violence seek and receive services from a range of agencies and organisations, whether or not violence is disclosed. It is important that all of these agencies understand the role that they play in contributing to an effective, integrated and accountable systems response to family and domestic violence.

2. Knowledge about and attitudes towards family and domestic violence is an important factor contributing to perpetrators level of insight and preparedness to change. All agencies and organisations have a role in promoting a zero tolerance culture towards family and domestic violence in the Western Australian community.

GOVERNANCE: Implementation of the Action Plan will be overseen by the Family and Domestic Violence Senior Officers’ Group (Senior Officers’ Group) which is comprised of representatives from the following agencies:

- Department for Child Protection and Family Support (Convenor)
- Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- Department of Corrective Services
- Department of Education
- Department of Health
- Department of Housing
- Department of Human Services (Commonwealth)
- Department of Local Government and Communities
- Department of Social Services (Commonwealth)
- Department of the Attorney General
- Disability Services Commission
- Drug and Alcohol Office
- Legal Aid
- Mental Health Commission
- Western Australia Police
- Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services
The Senior Officers’ Group will receive information and advice from the Family and Domestic Violence Community Sector Roundtable which includes representatives from:

- Aboriginal Alcohol and Drug Service
- Aboriginal Family Law Service
- Anglicare WA
- Centrecare
- Communicare
- Djinda Services
- Lucy Saw Centre
- Mission Australia
- Patricia Giles Centre
- Relationships Australia
- Ruah Community Services
- Salvation Army
- Starick Services
- Women’s Community Health Network
- Women’s Health and Family Services
- Women with Disabilities WA
- Women’s Law Centre
- Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services

In addition, issues focused roundtables will be held with stakeholders from the Senior Officers’ Group, Family and Domestic Violence Community Sector Roundtable and other relevant government agencies, community sector services, academics and/or representatives from private industry.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES: The Action Plan is underpinned by the principles outlined in Western Australia’s Family and Domestic Violence Prevention Strategy to 2022. In addition, the Action Plan is informed by the following critical understandings about the nature and perpetuation of family and domestic violence in our community.

1. Perpetrators of family and domestic violence will continue to use violence and abuse against former, current and future partners and their children if they are not held responsible for their behaviour and challenged by the community and service system.

2. Victims of family and domestic violence (adult and child) are unlikely to ever truly be safe if the perpetrators use of violence has not changed and/or been contained through legal and statutory responses.

3. The most effective responses to perpetrators of family and domestic violence involve coordinated and collaborative responses across government. These responses privilege adult and child victim safety as the primary consideration for all action/intervention.

4. Creating a future free of violence against women and children requires changes to the values, attitudes and beliefs in our community that are supportive of violence and gender inequality.

ACTIONS: The actions set out in this plan are grouped under five priority areas that reflect a continuum from primary prevention through to tertiary intervention.
Priority 1: Promote understanding and awareness about family and domestic violence

Action 1: Develop and implement a community education campaign (Freedom from Fear)
The aim of community education is to raise awareness about family and domestic violence, challenge violence supportive attitudes and provide information about how individuals, colleagues, family members, bystanders and other members of the community can promote safety and accountability.

Action 2: Implement media guidelines for reporting family and domestic violence
Guidelines to support accurate and responsible reporting of family and domestic violence were released in November 2014. Implementation of these guidelines is a key strategy for influencing community understanding and awareness about family and domestic violence.

Action 3: Support workplaces to raise awareness about family and domestic violence and promote safety
This includes workplace policies for responding to employees who are victims or perpetrators of family and domestic violence, raising awareness about family and domestic violence and promoting gender equity including the representation of women in senior management positions.
Priority 2: Target communities and populations at greatest risk

Action 4: Re-develop and release the Youth Say No campaign
Youth Say No is an awareness campaign developed in consultation with, and for, young people. It includes information and resources about dating violence, family and domestic violence and supporting a mate. New additions to the campaign will include lesson plans for teachers, an interactive website and linkages to other social media platforms.

Action 5: Promote respectful relationships education in primary and secondary schools
Advocate for the introduction of respectful relationships education to the standard/mainstream curriculum of primary and secondary schools.

Action 6: Provide information and training about children and adolescents using violence
Support government agencies and community sector services to provide safe and effective responses to children and adolescents who are using violence towards a parent/s.

Action 7: Develop and implement a plan for the Kimberley region
In comparison to other regional and metropolitan locations in Western Australia the Kimberley region has the highest rates, per head of population, of reported family and domestic violence and hospitalisations for domestic assault. The findings of case reviews, stakeholder consultation and data analysis undertaken in 2014, will be used to develop and implement a regional plan for responding to family and domestic violence.
Priority 3:  
Trial and evaluate innovative approaches to perpetrator intervention

Action 8:  
*Trial an integrated approach to substance misuse and family and domestic violence*

This includes developing, piloting and evaluating an integrated intervention program for male perpetrators of family and domestic violence who are misusing substances and strengthening referral pathways, information exchange, knowledge (expertise) transfer and case collaboration between the family and domestic violence and alcohol and other drug sectors.

Action 9:  
*Implement an intervention program for perpetrators of family and domestic violence in the Kimberley*

Develop, implement and evaluate a men’s domestic violence service that uses a combination of community education, one to one counselling, case management and group programs to support behaviour change.
Priority 4: 
**Promote consistent quality practice in engaging and responding to men who use violence**

**Action 10:** 
*Develop and implement minimum standards for men’s domestic violence behaviour change programs*

Minimum practice standards for men’s domestic violence behaviour change programs will establish baseline quality practice and support consistency of program governance and approach between service providers, including across the mandated and voluntary sectors.

**Action 11:** 
*Implement the national outcome standards for perpetrator intervention*

Adopt and implement the National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Intervention.\(^1\)

**Action 12:** 
*Explore opportunities to develop a professional network for providers of men’s domestic violence behaviour change programs*

This network will support implementation of the minimum standards and national outcome standards referred to in actions 10 and 11 respectively and promote quality and effective interventions for perpetrators of family and domestic violence.

\(^1\) The National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Intervention are being developed by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services. They are due for release in the second half of 2015.
Priority 5: 
**Increase the capacity and authority of the service system to stop perpetrators of family and domestic violence when they are identified**

**Action 13:**
*Improve access to, and the effectiveness of, the Western Australian legal system for victims of family and domestic violence*

As a matter of priority, consider and (where relevant and appropriate) progress the recommendations arising from the Law Reform Commissions final report *Enhancing Laws Concerning Family and Domestic Violence* (2014) and the Gender Bias Report (2014).

**Action 14:**
*Introduce new restraining orders specifically for family and domestic violence*

Work towards the introduction of specific Family Violence Restraining Orders in Western Australia as announced by the Attorney General and Minister for Police on 8 March 2015.

**Action 15:**
*Introduce the new ‘Family Violence Support List’ model in the Magistrate’s Court*

From 1 July 2015 onwards, new ‘Family Violence Support Lists’ will be implemented in the Magistrate’s Court, which will initially involve rearranging case listings so that family violence restraining order breaches and serious assault matters will be heard on one designated day a week. These arrangements will ensure that victim support and other specialists are available to provide integrated support to victims and risk-relevant information to the court, and will prioritise victim safety and perpetrator accountability.

**Action 16:**
*Consider opportunities to increase the use of Global Positioning System (GPS) tracking to monitor high risk perpetrators of family and domestic violence*

GPS tracking can be an important tool for promoting the safety and protection of women and children at high risk of harm, particularly those seeking to remain safely in their homes. Given the Government has already announced the introduction of legislation to allow post-sentence supervision including GPS tracking of serious family violence offenders, opportunities to increase access to, and use of this technology will be further explored.
Action 17: 
*Introduce family and domestic violence amendments to the Children and Community Services Act 2004*

Amendments to include identifying family and domestic violence as a form of child abuse and introducing new information sharing provisions to support collaborative responses to family and domestic across government and funded non-government services\(^2\). These provisions are for families with or without children.

**Action 18:**
*Increase capacity of, and improved access to Women's Refuges in the metropolitan area*

This includes supporting reform in the refuge sector to improve emergency access to crisis accommodation for women and children at extreme risk and establishing a new family and domestic violence accommodation service in Ellenbrook.

**Action 19:**
*Release a second edition of the Family and Domestic Violence Common Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework*

The second edition will include new practice requirements related to risk assessment, risk management, information sharing and referral. The focus of the amendments is to provide clearer practice guidance about engaging and responding to perpetrators of family and domestic violence.

**Action 20:**
*Strengthen the Family and Domestic Violence Response Teams*

Add new partner agencies to the Family and Domestic Violence Response Teams including the Department of Corrective Services.

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\(^2\) Please refer to the Children and Community Services Act 2004 for the definition of ‘non-government service’.
Monitoring and evaluation

**DATA:** The state data working group which includes representatives from government agencies and community sector services will be reconvened to develop new family and domestic violence data items and performance indicators. The new items will build on the existing seven performance indicators and include refinements related to gender, age and cultural background and additions in the areas of child protection, sexual assault and legal outcomes.

**CASE REVIEWS:** In addition to the collation of data, a multi-agency case review process will be implemented. The case review process will use appreciative inquiry to engage government agencies and community sector services in regular reviews of family and domestic violence cases. The focus of the reviews will be to reflect on the practice and interventions that worked well, what didn’t work well and why, and what would need to happen to enhance the capability of agencies and the service system to work towards victim safety, perpetrator accountability and integrated responses.

**EVALUATION:** An evaluation framework for assessing the effectiveness of family and domestic violence strategies, initiatives and interventions will be developed. The evaluation framework will include guiding principles, considerations about, and measures for what is, a ‘success’ in family and domestic violence responses/interventions.
References

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FREEDOM FROM FEAR

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