



Government
of South Australia

Office for Women



Committed to Safety

A framework for addressing
domestic, family and sexual
violence in South Australia.

Progress Report September 2020





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Table of contents

Minister's Message	5
COVID-19 and our sector	6
Case study: Leigh Garrett, OARS	7
Case study: Women's Safety Service	8
CTS framework release (March 2019)	10
Three pillars for response	10
Two enablers	10
Data framework	12
Progress of actions	14
Long term actions	15
Successes	16

Acknowledgment of Country

Aboriginal people have made and continue to make a unique and irreplaceable contribution to the State of South Australia.

The South Australian Government acknowledges and respects Aboriginal people as the state's first people and nations and recognises Aboriginal people as traditional owners and occupants of South Australian land and waters.

The South Australian Government acknowledges that the spiritual, social, cultural and economic practices of Aboriginal people come from their traditional lands and waters, and that Aboriginal people maintain cultural and heritage beliefs, languages and laws that are of ongoing importance today.



Government of South Australia
Office for Women



Minister's Message

The Marshall Liberal Government is committed to improving the safety of women and their children in collaboration with our dedicated non-government partners.

Upon coming to Government, we moved swiftly to deliver our election commitments to address domestic and family violence including legislative change, improved responses to perpetrators, the establishment of new safety hubs and a new personal protection app.

Following consultation with the domestic and family violence sector and roundtables across the state, in March 2019 the Government released a roadmap for further steps towards a safer community in *Committed to Safety: A framework for addressing domestic, family and sexual violence in South Australia* (the Framework).

Since the Framework's release, we have achieved tangible outcomes for South Australian families. These include legislative changes related to non-fatal strangulation, playing a key role in the national *Stop It At The Start* campaign and many other primary prevention activities, many targeted at perpetrator responses.

In 2020 our domestic and family violence sector has faced the challenge of COVID-19.

While the risk to women's safety escalated due to factors including isolation and increased household stress, the sector quickly adapted the ways they provided services.

While the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed and deferred some progress on actions in the Framework, it has also led to a higher level of collaboration and innovation within the sector, laying stronger foundations for future steps.

In particular, it has presented us an incredible opportunity to trial and implement new models via a funding boost from the National Partnership on COVID-19 Domestic and Family Violence Responses. By identifying key priorities and needs early on, we were able to work with the sector to swiftly implement responses to ensure women's safety during the height of the pandemic, and as we emerge.

With our Framework designed to be adaptive and flexible as new challenges and opportunities arise, this report provides updates on the work of the South Australian domestic and family violence sector.

The State Government is proud of the work completed and continues to work every day towards better outcomes for South Australian families in need.

Michelle Lensink MLC
Minister for Human Services

Carolyn Power MP
Assistant Minister for Domestic and Family Violence Prevention



COVID-19 and our sector

South Australia's domestic and family violence sector has been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although we have been tested, the sector's ability to be nimble and proactive has been a silver lining.

The advent of COVID-19 saw swift action from the government and non-government domestic and family violence sector to ensure services could respond to the needs of women and their children.

Federal and State health and police guidelines and restrictions aimed at keeping the community safe also placed particular strain on the family violence sector:

- avenues for information and support (friends, workplaces) were restricted
- the ability of perpetrators to monitor women increased
- new tactics to prevent women from leaving relationships and leaving home were used by perpetrators.

"The phones have gone quiet," as one sector worker put it, noting concern that women and others suffering family violence were suddenly unable to call for crisis support.

Services responded by actively contacting clients via SMS and over the phone, enabling virtual support for clients to be provided and maintaining face to face contact safely.

In responding to the challenges, the Department for Human Services commenced a weekly NGO Sector Intelligence Group in March, creating a forum to understand and together solve issues as they emerged. These forums were vital in forming the State Government's early COVID-19 response.

Virtual Roundtables were also attended by domestic and family violence services, and the women's and community groups that were involved in the development of responses. Fortnightly meetings were held with all key services to enable quick responses to challenges as they emerged.

"Most importantly though, we are delighted to have been tasked with delivering Individual Safety and Support Packages (ISSPs) which have allowed us to support women and children in ways that are responsive to their unique needs.

Susie Smith
Manager, Limestone Coast Domestic Violence Service

Swift action by the Commonwealth Government saw investment of \$150 million to respond to the impact of COVID-19 on women's safety. To date \$4.8 million has been invested in South Australia enabling:

- support and safety packages for women and their children
- 24/7 support for perpetrators
- fast tracking of new safety hubs
- \$200,000 Break the Cycle multi-platform campaign, aimed at educating, increasing awareness, and creating a one-stop shop for domestic violence information www.breakthecycle.sa.gov.au. The website has serviced more than 3700 visitors since its July 1 launch.
- OARS Community Transitions to develop a solid early intervention response called Don't Become That Man.

Recognising the need to respond to new challenges as the pandemic progresses, the remaining \$4.8 million for South Australia is the subject of further consultation and research to ensure we get the best outcomes for all South Australians.

Both Government and services have recognised this additional funding as a silver lining.

Depriving your partner of financial independence is domestic abuse.

BREAK THE CYCLE
OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

Case Studies

Leigh Garrett, OARS

“The Committed to Safety framework has improved safety for women and their children through its clear focus to provide treatment and support for male perpetrators as another part of women’s safety in South Australia.

Funding through the COVID-19 response has allowed OARS Community Transitions to develop an early intervention response called Don’t Become That Man (DBTM), which is working with men to prevent violence before it begins.

The DBTM service is gaining momentum as it builds a profile within the South Australian community and among service providers.

“The perpetrators’ accommodation service which provides nine crisis beds, operated as part of the DBTM service, has already directly referred four men, with two accommodated immediately. If not relocated to this accommodation, women and children would have been forced to flee from their family home.

“The perpetrator accommodation program has been a successful response for many years for male perpetrators who have already used violence, and is expected to be as valuable for men who are yet to resort to violence as part of DBTM in the future.

“The phone counselling/ website chat service and the accommodation service are both combined with a structured safety framework to protect women and children from harm as men go through this program. This not only complements existing Family Safety Framework measures, but also presents an opportunity to increase perpetrator engagement, accountability and line of sight.

Foundations have been built for a successful ongoing program that will underpin perpetrator intervention and support in South Australia for years to come.

Women's Safety Service SA

Miriam* (not her name) was assisted by the Women’s Safety Service (WSS) after a series of life events led her to homelessness.

The WSS was able to assist her into sustainable housing, and provide financial assistance grants, including one to upgrade her car.

Miriam said “this wouldn’t have happened without” the support of WSS.

“I last had a rental in 2012... during the years of homelessness and domestic violence I hoped and prayed for a car and a licence every day and it was my only plan at the time to get mobile again,” she said.

“When you have nowhere to go a car can be the perfect home and shelter and this was mostly why I wanted to get back on the road.

Miriam said, before her domestic violence experience, she had never not owned her own car.

“I had never been without my own vehicle (I love driving!) which gave me the means to get away from anything and go anywhere.

“While I was experiencing domestic violence... things changed... the ability to renew my licence and my licence being taken away.

“Through loss of points then the perpetrator forcing me into selling my vehicle to force me to rely on them completely.

“You aren’t free to leave the perpetrator’s side and if I had my licence and car in those times I truly believe I would have been able to get away and have somewhere to sleep.”


Miriam said the help provided by WSS to clear the fines the perpetrator had amassed in her name so she could regain her licence was “amazing”.


“I feel independent again, I feel free again, and obviously the best part is being able to travel to see my boys in (location withheld) when I can,” she said.


“I wanted you to know how I feel and why I feel this way. So thank you again and again.”

CTS framework release

Three pillars for response

 **Primary Prevention:** Changing the social conditions, such as gender inequality, that excuse, justify or even promote violence against women and their children.

 **Service and Support:** coherent, family focused, integrated, supportive service system that addresses the complex needs of those experiencing or using violence.


 **Justice:** legislative, statutory and community changes to ensure an ongoing focus on domestic, family and sexual violence.


Together, the three pillars are intended to contribute to an overall, safety focused response to domestic, family and sexual violence in South Australia.

Each pillar contains actions, and a focus on key population groups – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally and linguistically diverse people, women with disabilities, children and young women/people, older women, and people living in regional and remote South Australia - where relevant.

It is important to acknowledge the complex intersections between gender inequality and other forms of inequality, discrimination and disadvantage - including the impact of colonisation, racism, ableism, sexism, transphobia and homophobia that exist in our institutions and structures - and the role these play in driving violence against particular groups of women. These intersections are commonly referred to as 'intersectionality'.

Two enablers

 **Data and evidence base**




 **Evaluation and monitoring our impact**

The two enablers—data and evidence-base and monitoring our impact and oversight – are key to the three pillars that make up the Framework.

Our vision

A safe and supportive community, where domestic, family and sexual violence is not tolerated in any form

Three pillars of response

	 Primary Prevention	 Services & Support	 Justice
Short term actions (within 1 year)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reframed Violence Against Women Collaborations Employment and Leadership Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support women to remain in their home safely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reducing re-offending Awareness raising campaign
Medium term actions (within 1-2 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a primary prevention toolkit for local government Expand Women's Information Service children's centre program Ensure government funding supports respectful representations of women and domestic violence policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early intervention in community settings Perpetrator referral pathway into the Family Safety Framework and responses to children and young people Risk assessment tool Safety Hubs Interest free loans 24/7 Domestic Violence Crisis Line Crisis accommodation Perpetrator interventions Safety first responses Domestic violence packages National tenancy research Child protection and domestic violence interface 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Court and risk assessment guidelines Mandated perpetrator programs and accommodation expansion Review of systemic responses to domestic, family and sexual violence
Long term actions (within 3-4 years)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data Affordable housing pathways Improved system pathways Awareness raising for health and education professionals in recognising domestic and family violence Sexual harassment in licensed industries Workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower risk threshold for the Family Safety Framework



Enabler: data and evidence base



Enabler: monitoring our impact and evaluation

Data framework

The Committed to Safety Chief Executives Group has approved a data monitoring framework, designed to help track overall progress in relation to violence against women in South Australia.

Progress will be measured against the three pillars, using State Government data, the National Community Attitudes Survey, AIHW Homelessness data and the Personal Safety Survey (PSS).

As South Australian data becomes available from the Commonwealth and other sources, the Office for Women (OFW) will begin comparison work to determine changes against the three pillars by utilising specific key performance indicators (KPIs).

These KPIs include the level of reporting of domestic and sexual violence (Justice pillar), the responsiveness of perpetrator services (Service and Support pillar), and community awareness of gender inequality (Primary Prevention pillar).

Further work will occur as data becomes available and OFW are able to compare new data sets to previous iterations.

For example, the Personal Safety Survey is likely to be released in 2021, and will allow comparisons of key findings from the previous Personal Safety Survey released in 2017.

Overarching Goal: Woman and their Children are Safer

Data Sources: Prevalence and Reporting Rates (SAPOL, PSS)



Primary Prevention KPIs:

- a) that the community is not supportive of violence, including sexual violence; and
- b) that the community understands and rejects gender inequality.

Data Sources: National Community Attitudes Survey



Services & Support KPIs:

- a) services can intervene earlier;
- b) services can meet demand; and
- c) perpetrator services are responsive and engaged.

Data Sources: AIHW Homelessness data



Justice KPIs:

- a) the number of Intervention Orders increase; and
- b) there is an increase in the reporting of domestic and sexual violence, including strangulation.

Data Sources: CAA and SAPOL

Drivers

Committed to Safety Actions

The Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan

Progress of actions

Short term actions (within 1 year)		
Action	Action title	Progress
1.1	Reframed Violence Against Women (VAW) collaborations	● Delayed
1.2	Employment and Leadership Strategy	● Underway
2.1	Collaboration with REISA re Pets	● Underway
2.2	Real estate agent training	● Delayed
2.3	Work with providers to support women and their children with pets to access safe accommodation	● Underway
3.1	Reducing reoffending	● Ongoing
COVID-19 National Partnership initiative		
	Individual Support and Safety Packages for victims	● Underway
	Targeted Support and Safety Packages for Aboriginal Women, culturally and linguistically diverse women, women with a disability and LGBTIQ+ people	● Underway
	24/7 Perpetrator Supports including Don't Become that Man	● Underway
	Break the Cycle Communications Campaign	● Underway
	Workforce support and development	● Underway
Medium term actions (within 1-2 years)		
1.3	Primary prevention toolkit for Councils	● Underway
1.4	Women's Information Service expansion	● Underway
1.5	Supporting respectful representations	● Underway
2.4	Early intervention in community settings	● Delayed
2.5 & 2.6	Perpetrator referral pathways	● Underway
2.7	Family Safety Framework responses to children and young people	● Complete

Medium term actions (within 1-2 years)		
2.8	Cohort-specific risk assessment changes	● Complete
2.9	Safety hubs	● Underway
2.10	Interest-free loans	● Underway
2.11	Crisis line	● Ongoing
2.12	Crisis accommodation	● Complete
2.13 & 3.4	Perpetrator-focused crisis accommodation	● Complete
2.14 & 2.15	Perpetrator-focused interventions	● Underway
2.16	Safety-first responses	● Underway
2.17	Domestic Violence packages review	● Underway
2.18	National tenancy research	● Underway
2.19	Child protection sector interface	● Underway
3.3	Family Court risk assessment guidelines	● Complete
3.5	Whole-of-system perpetrator-focused response	● Underway
3.6, 3.7, 3.8 & 3.9	Improvements to systemic responses to Domestic Violence, Family Violence and Sexual Violence	● Underway

Long term actions

The Committed to Safety framework places a particular focus on the short and medium-term actions.

Long term actions (3-4 years) - not reported in this document: 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 2.20, 2.21, 2.22, 2.23, 2.24, 2.25, 3.10.

The State Government is proud the foundations of long-term actions are being laid, many in partnership with key women's services, and we are on track to deliver these commitments.

Successes

Embolden (Capacity Building)

The State Government believes partnership is key to South Australia achieving its goals in the family violence sector.

For the first time in South Australia, the Marshall Liberal Government is proud to have provided peak body funding - more than \$640,000 over four years - to fund Embolden: Alliance for Women's Freedom, Respect and Equality.

Embolden has been funded as a peak body since July 2019 and advocates for women's rights to respect, safety and self determination.

It also seeks to:

- Represent providers of specialist services in the domestic, family and sexual violence and related sectors, including services that work with men who use violence against women and Aboriginal specialist services
- Consult and collaborate with Government and non-Government on issues relating to gendered violence and women's safety
- Provide policy advice and submissions
- Coordinate events and community action promoting women's rights to freedom, equity and respect

Susie Smith, Co-Chair of Embolden said the funding certainty had allowed Embolden to operate fully as a peak body.

“We have been able to take on the Voices for Change project, which assists women with lived experience of violence to share their stories with the media and other organisations.

“We have also been able to take a leadership role under the Key Partner Network established under Committed to Safety, which has improved communication between a range of important stakeholders and allowed us to hear a range of views, building on the Roundtables which have been held.

Susie Smith
Co-Chair, Embolden

Workplace Equality and Respect Project (WER) (Primary Prevention)

As a core partner in the fight against family, domestic and sexual violence, the State Government has a key role to play in raising awareness across business communities.

The State Government has provided \$750,000 over three years for the South Australian Workplace Equality and Respect (WER) Project.

The WER Project uses the Our Watch Workplace Equality and Respect Standards and aims to ensure that participating South Australian Public Sector agencies are equipped with the tools, knowledge and capacity to be sector leaders and set important examples to the broader business community.

The project has been led since November 2017 by the Equal Opportunity Commission.

The three-year, whole-of-government initiative aims to strengthen gender equality and promote safe and respectful workplaces for all. It does this by ensuring that participating SA Public Sector agencies are able to apply best practice approaches to workplace gender equality and respect in the prevention of violence against women.

The project is funded by participating South Australian Government departments and agencies. The 24 agencies participating in the WER project are in the process of finalising their 12-month Gender Equality and Respect Action Plans that align with Our Watch's Workplace Equality and Respect Standards.

The Office for Women is also leading the development of a Women's Leadership and Economic Security Framework (WLESF), with consultation currently underway with senior business leaders and regional leaders.

Successes

DV Disclosure Scheme (Early Intervention)

A key election commitment of the Marshall Government, was the Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS) trial, a key tool to raise community awareness and improve safety for South Australians at risk of domestic violence.

Latest statistics show that there have been 532 applications to the DVDS since the scheme began in October 2018 until July 2020, with 375 eligible for further consideration, and 22 applicants assessed as at imminent risk.

More than 150 disclosure meetings have been completed or approved to occur.

In June 2020, the State Government provided almost \$600,000 to extend the scheme as part of its COVID-19 response.

More than one third (38 per cent) of applications came from someone concerned about another person while almost two thirds (62 per cent) from people at risk of domestic and family violence.

More than a half (58 per cent) of applications involved children, and more than a third (39 per cent) were from regional areas.

61 per cent of applicants had not previously received support from a domestic violence service, presenting a unique opportunity to engage with more at-risk women and provide an early intervention response.

Strangulation Law Reform (Law Reform)

As part of its suite of measures to tackle domestic and family violence, the Marshall Government has implemented important law reforms through the South Australian Parliament, including the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 (CLCA) – Strangulation offence*.

The new legislative provisions recognise the seriousness of the physical act of strangulation and, by creating a separate offence, courts have greater discretion to treat this as a more serious offence.

This also allows police to arrest domestic violence offenders under the stand-alone strangulation offence and pursue appropriate punishment through the criminal justice system.

In the 12 months from January 2019 to January 2020, 483 persons were charged with an offence under this provision. 97% were men and 95% of victims were women.

Safety Hubs (Community Responses)

The State Government committed to nine safety hubs across South Australia following consultation with women's and community service groups. Berri and The Haven in Murray Bridge have been delivered; Port Augusta, Mount Barker and Gawler, Limestone Coast and Whyalla are underway. Port Lincoln and the Fleurieu/Kangaroo Island are next. Feedback also highlighted the need for hubs in Port Pirie and the APY lands which will be progressed in 2021.

The Haven at Murray Bridge is an information and referral service located within the local community centre. It is staffed by trained volunteers and provides women targeted information and referrals to local services.

This includes access to specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services, as well as assistance with housing and legal matters. The volunteers are often local community members trained by the Women's Information Service to provide information and referrals with a specific focus on working with people experiencing domestic and family violence.

Despite a period of closure due to COVID-19, between its launch in August 2019 and June 2020, The Haven has had 776 client contacts, 659 of which were self-reports.

40 Crisis Beds (Capital Investment)

The State Government has provided funding for 40 crisis accommodation beds as a housing-first approach to domestic and family violence.

Nine of the 40 new crisis accommodation beds were targeted to perpetrators, while 17 beds were delivered in regional areas. There are eight beds in Northern Adelaide and six in Southern Adelaide.

The beds for perpetrators are being used to increase the number of women who are able to remain in their homes and provide a trial of a perpetrator contact service that works alongside women's services.

This spending was based on the outcomes of three workshops held to seek feedback on safety first initiatives in order to maximise capital investment and best align the system to support women to remain in their homes.

These consultations included an Aboriginal specific seminar held in Adelaide and one each in Port Augusta and Adelaide.

Successes

Family Safety Framework (Working Together)

As part of its partnership approach, the State Government has made significant improvements to Family Safety Framework (FSF) policies to achieve better cross-agency and cross-sector collaboration.

The State Government is developing a new online portal to be operational next year, which will enable:

- more timely information sharing and responding to those at high risk of domestic violence
- virtual meetings to be held thus reducing the time and travel needed, especially in country regions
- improved data collection and oversight of agreed actions.

The risk assessment tool is being expanded to include cohort specific questions for consideration when doing a risk assessment. The tool will form part of the FSF Online Portal for risk assessments and referrals. Young people's specific risks are included in the expanded risk assessment tool.

Perpetrator referrals to the FSF are being considered in consultation with SAPOL as part of the refresh, and other policy initiatives are also underway, including additional support for children in Family Safety Meetings.

In 2019-20, there were 595 new referrals (victim/survivor cases) and 391 Family Safety Meetings across the 17 regions.

As the Chair and Co-Chair of the State's Premier's Council for Women (PCW), both Maria Hagias and myself commend the Committed to Safety Progress Report (September 2020). The focus on key population groups is essential, as is the Framework's scope – covering actions and responses ranging from primary prevention to justice and legislative responses. We are looking forward to the upcoming Economic Strategy, which will cover a range of issues for which PCW has advocated. Women's financial security is a key way of helping women experiencing violence, or at risk of violence.

Perhaps most importantly, Committed to Safety encourages and facilitates a holistic approach to addressing violence against women, making it clear that every Department, every organisation and every individual can work together to end the violence.

Miriam Silva

Chair, Premier's Council for Women



