



Supporting recovery and healing for women, children and gender-diverse people who have experienced or are experiencing domestic, family and sexual violence.

Media Statement

The Australian Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Recovery Alliance welcomes the National Plan and calls for systemic change to ensure long-term benefit to women and children.

Upon its launch in May 2022, the Australian Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Recovery Alliance called for all Australian women and children who had experienced violence and abuse to have access to trauma recover services, whenever they need them, for as long as they need them, anywhere in Australia.

The Alliance welcomes the strong focus on recovery and healing in the National Plan announced today and thanks Minister Amanda Rishworth and State Ministers for recognising that recovery from family, domestic and sexual violence doesn't end when the crisis, or abusive relationship does.

The Alliance also welcomes the clear recognition of children as victims in their own right, including that children witnessing acts of domestic, family and sexual violence is in itself abuse. The Alliance calls on this to be recognised throughout the justice system, especially in family law. When perpetrators are allowed access to children they have victimised, by exposing them to violence and abuse, this increases the harm and prevents recovery and healing for those children.

The Alliance also welcomes the focus on systemic change throughout the National Plan, recognising that until there is reform in the justice system – both in criminal and family law – victims of domestic, family and sexual violence will continue to be re-traumatised as the current system creates significant space for harm via perpetrators engaging in systems abuse, intimidation and coercive control.

The Alliance was established to ensure that State and Federal Government policy and funding priorities will appropriately address the need for long term support for victim-survivors who are experiencing or recovering from domestic, family and sexual violence. It will work to consolidate and strengthen national advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the long-term impact of domestic, family and sexual violence and abuse, and the urgent need for accessible and appropriate services for victim/survivors to support their recovery.

The Alliance looks forward to contributing to the first Action Plan, as we know this how the shared vision of the National Plan will be made practical. We call on Federal and State Governments to ensure the service system is funded to ensure culturally responsive, trauma-informed and intersectional practice at all levels – including primary prevention, early intervention, crisis and

recovery and healing – to truly meet the goal of no women or children in Australia being exposed to domestic, family or sexual violence within a generation. The research evidence is clear that services need to cater to the individual and cultural needs of survivors (Satyen et al., 2020; 2021).

We also recognise that a commitment to long-term trauma recovery will require significant funding to ensure that everyone who needs trauma recovery support can access it, wherever they are, whenever they need it, for as long as they need to. We look forward to working with Federal and State Governments to ensure this funding is a priority, and is targeted towards evidence-based, trauma-informed, culturally responsive and intersectional services and care.

The Alliance affirms the National Plan's focus on financial abuse and will work with Federal and State Governments to ensure recovery from financial abuse is also recognised as a post-crisis aspect of recovery and healing that requires funding towards trauma-informed specialist domestic and family violence financial counselors.

The Alliance also reiterates the commitment to enhance the research evidence base to develop and implement effective community prevention models and improved perpetrator intervention programs. Trauma-informed, evidence-based, and culturally informed services are necessary at all stages of recovery.

In early 2023, the Alliance will host Australia's first national conference on recovery and healing from domestic, family and sexual violence with a focus on practical steps that must be taken in the first Action Plan to ensure the vision of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children becomes a reality.

Quotes attributable

“As a First Nations woman, I know the stats too well. I know Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 35+ times more likely to be hospitalised because of family violence, I've seen that, I've lived it. What I don't know is why there is so little funding for culturally appropriate, long term healing for our women and children through community controlled organisations and culturally appropriate services - beyond crisis. The focus on healing needs to start now. Too many generations have suffered already for this to be delayed.” **Sammy Cooper, Queensland Alliance Member**

“The recognition of Recovery and Healing in the National Plan is a critical step forward in the elimination of violence against women and children. When we established Beyond DV in 2017, there were very limited services available to victims of domestic and family violence to access long-term, holistic recovery support. Clients reported that, once out of the crisis stage, they were left to rebuild their lives by themselves, which impacted heavily on their physical and mental health, as well as their capacity to rebuild financially. In many cases, this significantly increased the time needed for recovery and often led to victims returning to their abuser.

With the significant addition of Recovery and Healing as a pillar in the new National Plan, we now look forward to seeing further detail in the First Action Plan. The Alliance believes that there needs to be a strong emphasis in this pillar on long-term, holistic recovery support, which recognises and addresses the unique journey that each DV victim/survivor will take to rebuild their lives. Significant new investment which is targeted specifically at recovery and healing from domestic and family violence will be required to address this new pillar effectively” **Carolyn Robinson, Founder, Beyond DV, Queensland**

“The recognition and elevation of recovery and healing as a key pillar in the National Plan demonstrates an important development in the national understanding of the impact of men’s violence on women and children. The Recovery Alliance was formed early this year to advocate for long term investment in recovery and healing services and to bring greater awareness to the multiple and complex structural systems and individual issues and barriers women face when recovering from violence. We look forward to working with Federal and State Governments to ensure recovery stays at the forefront of Government action and investment” **Sally Stevenson, General Manager, Illawarra Women’s Health Service**

“Children are not witnesses to violence, abuse or coercive control, they are victims in their own right. It must be understood that early intervention and active responses in abuse recovery is critical as lack of support can lead to re-victimisation or perpetration in adult life.

All responses to family, domestic and sexual violence must be active, competent, victim-centred, trauma informed and adequately resourced.

Proactive support and absence of victim-blaming in all levels of society, particularly justice and law systems during post-separation and/or reparation, are essential to support victims in their recovery and healing.

Victims, including children, need ongoing access to professional support and healing in full confidentiality. The first step in this healing is acknowledgement and validation of what happened to them, with the ability to have honest and safe conversations about the violence or abuse they suffered.” **Teresa (pseudonym), victim survivor**

“Zahra Foundation Australia alongside the National Recovery Alliance welcomes the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children. Although it feels impossible to end domestic, family and sexual violence in all its forms, tackling the drivers of this violence and addressing the gender inequality that is the root cause is within our reach. We recognise that advancing the economic empowerment of women and girls is one of the critical elements in not only breaking the cycle of violence and abuse, but also to preventing it from happening in the first place.

It is not good enough that in 2022 women are forced to choose between their safety – and that of their children – or their financial and housing security. True recovery and healing from domestic, family and sexual violence must include financial independence and economic empowerment.” **Kelly-ann Tansley, CEO, Zahra Foundation Australia**

“There is limited research evidence about what works in the effective support and recovery of adult and child victim-survivors. The sector needs to advance the national curriculum to train psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses and others in the health sector to be informed of trauma-focused prevention and intervention programs and services. We further need to develop the research evidence to promote survivor-informed, culturally appropriate recovery approaches to ensure survivors are supported in effective ways.” **(Dr. Lata Satyen, Psychologist and Senior Lecturer in Psychology, Deakin University).**

“The recovery pillar of the National Plan provides the framework and the opportunity to rewrite the future for women and children who have experienced gender based violence. This vision of change in a generation is bold and achievable – and it will require sustained, commensurate

investment and commitment from all levels of government and across the whole community. We look forward to this being supported through the forthcoming federal budget and the action plans.”

Tanya Elson

General Manager - Family and Domestic Violence, RUAH

Website: www.dfsvrecovery.com.au

National Media requests:

admin@dfsvrecovery.com.au

Available for interview

- QLD Carolyn Robinson, Founder/Managing Director, carolyn.robinson@beyonddv.org.au
- VIC Lula Dembele – Survivor Advocate, ldembele@whise.org.au
- NSW Sally Stevenson AM – General Manager, sallys@womenshealthcentre.com.au
- NT Dr Chay Brown - Research & Partnerships Manager, chay@equalityinstitute.org
- TAS Tess Moodie – Project Coordinator, Advocates for Change at Engender Equality (LGBTIQ+ and disability), tessm@wwda.org.au
- SA Kelly-ann Tansley – CEO, kelly-ann@zahrafoundation.org.au
- WA Tanya Elson - General Manager - Family and Domestic Violence, tanya.elson@ruah.org.au
- VIC Dr. Lata Satyen – Senior Lecturer, Deakin University, lata@deakin.edu.au

