

**Legislative Council**  
**Hansard**  
**Tuesday 29 October 2024**

*[excerpt...]*

**Motion**

**Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission Report – Consideration and Noting**

[5.17 a.m.]

**Ms WEBB** (Nelson) – Mr President, I welcome the opportunity to contribute to this important debate today. I thank the honourable member for Mersey for providing the Chamber with an opportunity to focus on and assess the progress of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022 to 2032. I note that the member for Murchison has provided the appropriate numbers and support contact details for people who may be listening or may be engaging with this debate at a later date, so I do not feel the need to repeat those and thank the member for Murchison for doing that.

Specifically, this motion asks us to consider the Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Commission's yearly report reviewing the National Plan's progress, which is an incredibly valuable thing to do. I appreciate the member for Mersey's thorough contribution on his motion and agreed with many of the areas that he covered in the sentiments he expressed. So my contribution will be relatively brief. I support the material that is already been contributed.

It is been acknowledged nationally and locally that Australia faces a domestic and family violence epidemic. This is a hard truth for any community to have to face. It requires an honest, self-scrutinising gaze in our collective mirror. In this context, the opening statement in the yearly report for Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner, Micaela Cronin, provides a steadying force by which to guide our response to this social epidemic and I quote:

What gives me hope is that some of our biggest challenges and greatest opportunities for improvement are completely within our control to change.

Those opportunities to change is what I wish to focus on during this contribution. First, it is important to acknowledge and note this inaugural report to the federal parliament by the National Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission on the progress of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children, 'The National Plan'. Fundamentally, it is an independent report card on how we are all going in implementing the National Plan. In undertaking this inaugural yearly report, the commission evaluated whether and how the National Plan has changed the landscape for those involved in its implementation, those with lived experience and the broader community.

It examines policy, implementation and service delivery that present opportunities to accelerate, to amplify and drive impact towards the immediate and

long-term objectives of the National Plan. Significantly, the Commission's inaugural report card has also identified key areas of focus for consideration of the national, state and territory governments to act upon.

In general, the key findings of the inaugural report can be summarised as these: the need for an ongoing evaluation of the governance of the National Plan's implementation and efforts to assess and measure progress and eventual reporting mechanisms once established. While the governments have recognised the critical role of lived experience in policy making, more needs to be done to embed lived-experience engagement across all aspects of policy design, implementation, and evaluation, prioritising a codesign approach.

Governments have invested significant public funds to address domestic, family and sexual violence, yet despite this, services and systems are overwhelmed by the need that is there in the community.

Men must have a part in every aspect of ending violence. Governments must support efforts to redefine masculinity and engage men effectively. More intervention options for men using, or at risk of using, violence are needed. They need to take a trauma-informed approach, improve information sharing, risk assessment and management. Workforce capability development needs national leadership prioritising the specialist domestic, family and sexual violence workforce. Since addressing domestic, family and sexual violence is a key element of work across many sectors, capability development and integration with these workforces is also an opportunity to improve our service system response.

The national report card notes as a positive development against the National Plan's Actions List, Tasmania's two established Arch Centres, as well as the funding for the third in the north. However, it also identifies that Tasmania is the sub-jurisdictional outlier when it comes to having an established domestic and family violence death review mechanism. Such mechanisms are important to identify systemic gaps in service responses to domestic and family violence and develop evidence-based strategies to prevent future deaths.

On page 103 of the report card, it is noted that, to strengthen Australia's death review mechanisms, Tasmania needs to establish a domestic and family violence death review mechanism with the latest specific reiteration on page 105, allocating responsibility for this reform at the feet of the Attorney-General. I hope to hear the government's response today provide an update on when and how the Tasmanian Attorney-General is planning to act on this recommendation.

The National Alliance of DFV Specialist Services stated in response to the release of the commission's yearly report, the following:

As the report notes, existing specialist domestic and family violence services need an immediate uplift of funding to meet demand for services. Despite the horrific number of women and children murdered this year, despite national outrage and rallies across the country, despite the declaration of a national emergency, calls for increased frontline funding haven't yet been heard, and services are forced to turn people away. Until all frontline specialist domestic and family violence services are adequately and

sustainably funded, we will not see meaningful progress against the National Plan or a future without gender-based violence. Given that the states and territories are required to do much of the heavy lifting in implementing the National Plan, improved structures to ensure flow through of resources is required.

These are very salient observations. Further, the commission's yearly report also highlights the need for drastic improvements in funding to improve outcomes for women and children, noting that the experience and outcomes of involvement in family law processes is also influenced by a person's access to legal representation. This has resulted in calls for increased funding to the community legal sector.

This report also speaks of the need for more targeted education regarding family violence for legal practitioners and frontline workers to assist in identifying and responding to family violence in their spheres.

Tasmania must be prepared to do its share of heavy lifting across all of these areas. Looking forward, there is a concrete opportunity by which Tasmania can build into its own women and gender equity policies and plans a formal response to the commission's yearly report, this report card, as it were.

For example, the now established annual Tasmanian Gender Budget Statement could and should include indicators and benchmarks derived from the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022 to 2032, and which also address feedback provided by the National Commission's evaluation report card, such as in this inaugural report. Doing so would make the Gender Budget Statement more robust and comprehensive as it details whether and how identified necessary policy and delivery apparatus such as resourcing community legal centres and implementing the state domestic and family violence death review mechanism is being funded and delivered to the Tasmanian community.

Similarly, the commission's yearly report cites the National Plan's identified outcomes and targets against which it measures the delivery efforts of our national and sub-national governments.

These identified national plan goals include the following:

- Systems and institutions effectively support and protect people impacted by gender-based violence.
- Services and prevention programs are effective, culturally responsive, intersectional and accessible.
- Community attitudes and beliefs embrace gender equality and condemn all forms of gendered violence without exception.
- People who choose to use violence are accountable for their actions and stop their violent, coercive, and abusive behaviours.
- Children and young people are safe in all settings and are effectively supported by systems and services.
- Women are safe and respected in all settings and experience economic, social, political, and cultural equality.

They set targets here, and the targets are:

- 25 per cent reduction per year in female victims of intimate partner homicide.
- A two-point increase in community understanding of the behaviours that constitute FDSP every four years.
- A two-point increase in community attitudes that condemn violence against women every four years.
- A two-point increase in community attitudes that reject gender inequality every four years.
- A two-point increase in community attitudes that reject sexual violence every four years.
- By 2031 the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced by at least by 50 per cent, has progressed towards zero.

Just articulating those national targets for improvement of our social safety brings home how horrific the current reality is and how valuable, in turn, the commission's independent evaluation of the delivery of these goals and targets is.

Significantly, it also provides a template of how Tasmania's policy apparatus could also monitor and report upon our own goals and targets against similar state-based data. It is very hard to track progress if you do not measure definite targets. I hope that is something that the state government will look at closely and see whether we can incorporate similar data collection, analysis and reporting as part of our gender equity policy development and implementation strategies.

To conclude, I wish to also highlight an important point made by the commission in the yearly report, and that is the importance and significance of language, not just our daily language, but also that in the development of our public policy. For example, the yearly report notes the National Plan uses the terminology violence against women and children to acknowledge the high prevalence of men's violence against women and children. Further, the commission uses the term gender-based violence, stating that such language recognises gendered violence is primarily perpetrated by men against women, while also recognising higher rates of domestic, family and sexual violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ communities and other cohorts underpinned by patriarchal norms. Similarly, at a local level we have seen the more nuanced language applied to policy tools such as the now Gender Budget Statement rather than Women's Budget statement. All this emphasises the complexity of this systemic problem of violence, which our society must tackle in as comprehensive a manner as possible.

It highlights the degree to which family and domestic violence should not be diminished as an apparent women's problem, but is something we all have a responsibility to address. Similarly, gender-based bigotry is all our shared responsibility to tackle without losing sight of the very real fact that women and girls are far and above overrepresented in the victim/survivor datasets. This is indeed a whole-of-community challenge to which we must all rise and, as such, we require an integrated whole-of-government response and commitment.

It will be interesting to watch and evaluate further yearly reports issued by the National Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner. The success in that independent evaluation mechanism in keeping the National Plan accountable and on track will be interesting to continue to observe. Again, this work at the national level may provide valuable insights on how we can also effectively monitor and evaluate our statewide policy implementation in a rigorous and accountable manner. Again, I thank the member for Mersey for raising this matter in this chamber today. I note the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission's Yearly Report on the progress of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032, and I support this motion.