

Our Watch Submission to Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan

February 2023

About Our Watch

Our Watch is the national leader in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children in Australia. We are an independent, not for profit organisation established by the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments in 2013. All Australian governments are members of Our Watch, including the Tasmanian Government.

Our vision is an Australia where women and their children live free from all forms of violence. We aim to drive nation-wide change in the culture, behaviours, attitudes and social structures that drive violence against women. Guided by our ground-breaking national framework, *Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia*, we work at all levels of our society to address the deeply entrenched, underlying drivers of violence against women, and change the social context of gender inequality that gives rise to this violence. We work with governments, practitioners and the community, at all levels of Australian society, to prevent this violence in all settings where people live, learn, work and socialise.

Our Watch and the Tasmanian Government

Our Watch values our relationship with the Tasmanian Government both as a member of Our Watch, and in light of our specific ongoing partnership, which includes engagement of an embedded Senior Advisor in the Tasmanian Government. We appreciate the opportunities this partnership has provided for Our Watch to continue to support the development of primary prevention work across Tasmania, including through a range of settings.

About this Submission

Our Watch recognises the Tasmanian Government's strong commitment to violence prevention and gender equality through the [Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022 - 2027](#) (Action Plan) and [Equal Means Equal, Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-2027](#) (Women's Strategy) as well as its partnership with Our Watch.

The Third Action Plan, released in November 2022, provides an important foundation for further work to address family, domestic and sexual violence in Tasmania. We welcome the Tasmanian Government's commitment to ongoing review of the Plan, which provides scope to build on and strengthen actions over time.

We provide this submission to inform the ongoing review and of the Third Action Plan and look forward to working collaboratively with the Tasmanian Government to further strengthen prevention in Tasmania, including under the Action Plan.

Tasmania's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-2027

The Third Action Plan provides an important contribution to the overarching framework in Tasmania designed to prevent violence against women in Tasmania. Our Watch welcomes the vision and key principles articulated in the Action Plan and the commitment to centring diverse voices and the voices of victim-survivors. We also welcome the clear commitment to continuing the Tasmanian Government's partnership with Our Watch as a key prevention action.

A comprehensive and holistic approach to violence against women must involve a continuum of interdependent and interlinked strategies, with efforts across the spectrum including prevention, early intervention, response and recovery. The Action Plan reflects this need for priority action across the spectrum and Our Watch supports this approach, including actions designed to continue to support and strengthen the response sector's capacity to meet immediate need and ensure the safety of Tasmanian women experiencing violence.

Given Our Watch's focus on primary prevention we also welcome the inclusion of a number of new and continuing prevention Actions, including commitments to:

- **effectively embed Respectful Relationships and Consent Education in Tasmanian schools, including through establishment of a dedicated position in the Department for Education, Children and Young People to work with Tasmanian Government schools** – this is a positive first step towards developing a longer-term commitment to implementing a best practice approach to RRE in Tasmania. We welcome the opportunity to support this work in Tasmania building on our expertise and resources in RRE.
- **embed Our Watch's Workplace Equality and Respect Standards (WER) across Tasmanian Government Agencies** – as the leading employer in Tasmania this models best practice for workplace gender equality and violence prevention to other employers.
- **investigate the establishment of a Tasmanian family and sexual violence peak body** – this has the potential to improve collaboration and mutually reinforcing approaches across primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery and in the long term to serve as critical infrastructure to help build the primary prevention capacity of the sector in Tasmania.

The Action Plan also includes a number of important commitments that will strengthen the prevention-related infrastructure in Tasmania, including the expansion of the scope of the Safe Families Coordination Unit to undertake whole of Government data coordination and integration for family and sexual violence. This is in line with data improvement initiatives identified as part of work under the new National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032.

Further opportunities for prevention in Tasmania

There are a number of opportunities to build on the prevention work and infrastructure in Tasmania and identified actions in the Third Action Plan. These include, for example, more clearly identifying the relationship between gender inequality and violence against women and linkages between the

Third Action Plan and Women's Strategy. There are also key opportunities to strengthen the Tasmanian Government's primary prevention efforts by progressing gender equality work that addresses the social context that gives rise to violence against women, without the need for significant additional funding.

Gender inequality and relationship between Third Action Plan and Women's Strategy

In outlining a national, universal, population-level approach to primary prevention, Our Watch's [*Change the story: A shared framework for the primary prevention of violence against women in Australia*](#) (*Change the story*) emphasises that tackling gender inequality and advancing and normalising gender equality at every level in society is essential for the long-term reduction of gendered violence. *Change the story* outlines evidence-based actions that address the gendered drivers of violence against women and the social context of gender inequality in which this violence arises. While significant and sustained changes to the prevalence of violence against women will only be achieved through a specific focus on the gendered drivers of violence – that is, through specific primary prevention initiatives and strategies – broader gender equality activity is a necessary component of, and foundation for this work.

This relationship between gender equality and violence prevention is acknowledged in the Tasmanian Government's Women's Strategy through the identification of gender inequality as a 'key driver of family and sexual violence' and through its links to initiatives in the Action Plan which seek to support primary prevention. Importantly, many initiatives of the Women's Strategy align with the *Change the story* framework's essential actions and will contribute to the prevention of violence against women. For example:

Existing Commitments in the Women's Strategy	<i>Change the story</i> Essential Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women in Leadership Scholarship Program • Implementation of the Leadership and Participation for Women Action Plan 2021-23 • Women on Boards Strategy 2020-2025 • Investment to supporting women's workforce participation in non-traditional occupations • Women and Girls in Sport Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action 2 – Promote women's independence and decision making in public life and relationships • Action 3 – Build new norms that foster personal identities not constrained by rigid gender stereotypes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tasmanian Gender Impact Assessment process • Gender Budget Statement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action 5 – Promote and normalise gender equality in public and private life • Action 6 – Address the intersections between gender inequality and other forms of systemic and structural oppression and discrimination, and promote broader social justice

Our Watch suggests that there is an opportunity to more clearly identify the relationship and linkages between the Women's Strategy and the Action Plan and the role that many of the institutional mechanisms designed to embed a gender lens in policy making and budgeting can play in creating foundations for government action to achieve gender equality and prevent violence against women.

Acknowledging the Government's gender equality initiatives that address the gendered drivers of violence would make a clearer and stronger link between gender equality and the prevention of violence against women in the Action Plan.

In addition, there is also an opportunity for the Action Plan to recognise some of the ongoing work of the Tasmanian Government in workplaces, vocational education and sport as primary prevention work.

Recommendation

- The Action Plan acknowledge the relationship between gender inequality and violence against women, including by framing action that addresses the social context of gender inequality as contributing to the prevention of violence against women. This could be outlined in the Prevention and Early Intervention section of the Action Plan.

Embedding Workplace Equality and Respect across the local government sector in Tasmania

In October 2021, Our Watch supported the formation of an informal community of practice with representatives from across 13 councils (including Mayors, Councillors, General Managers, Directors and Community Development Officers) to identify what councils were doing with regards to prevention, to share insights, discuss challenges and develop a collaborative approach for how local government in Tasmania could effectively address the drivers of violence against women.

Since then, Our Watch has supported Local Government Tasmania (LGAT) and a number of councils in Tasmania as part of our national workforce development project to implement [Workplace Equality and Respect](#) in Local Governments. The pilot program was trialled and successfully evaluated in two Tasmanian local councils in 2021-22. Our Watch understands there is significant support for this approach to be funded and implemented across all Tasmanian local councils.

In addition, in March 2022 with the support of Our Watch, a motion was successfully passed at the LGAT General Meeting that LGAT Members support the development of a family and sexual violence framework for local governments across the state. Our Watch is willing to continue to work collaboratively with LGAT to identify ways to support the development of a framework of this type. Our Watch suggests that the inclusion of these two areas as actions under the Third Action Plan would provide an opportunity to build on the existing work already undertaken and work under the Our Watch partnership.

Recommendation

- The Action Plan include commitments to:
 - Support Local Government Tasmania and the Tasmanian local government sector to implement the Workplace Equality and Respect Standards.
 - Support the development of a family and sexual violence framework for local governments across Tasmania.

Primary prevention across multiple settings

Addressing a complex problem like violence against women requires engaging people across multiple settings and sectors where people live, work, learn, socialise and play.

Change the story identifies a number of ‘big reach’ settings in which there is a strong evidence base and existing prevention activities are occurring across jurisdictions. These big reach settings are also the ones in which Our Watch has significant expertise and capacity to support Tasmanian Government action.

Our Watch suggests that the following settings offer potential for targeted primary prevention activities that are likely have a significant impact on social norms, organisational practices and institutional structure:

- Tertiary education including universities, TAFEs and vocational education and training organisations
- Workplaces, including in key Tasmanian and male-dominated industries such as forestry, mining and resources, fisheries, construction, Antarctic science and advanced manufacturing
- Sports clubs and institutions
- Media.

There is existing prevention work underway in Tasmania in some of these settings, including for example through Our Watch’s partnership with Football Tasmania and our project with TasTAFE. Our Watch would welcome the opportunity to work with the Tasmanian Government to further develop or explore the development of primary prevention activities in these settings, drawing on our key evidence-based frameworks, existing work and relationships with key stakeholders in Tasmania.

Recommendation

- The Action Plan include a commitment to considering and supporting primary prevention activities across ‘big reach’ settings. This could include a phased approach to settings based work building on existing work underway across tertiary education, workplaces, sports and media.

Prevention monitoring and evaluation

The Third Action Plan includes an important articulation of the Tasmanian Government’s approach to measurement and evaluation of the Action Plan, including committing to a program of measurement, evaluation and learning which will be formalised into an Outcomes Framework. The Women’s Strategy also outlines plans to develop an evaluation framework with indicators that measure outcomes for women and girls. Our Watch also understands that the Tasmanian Government’s planned Wellbeing Framework is likely to establish a set of wellbeing indicators and that the Government’s election commitment to develop a Sustainability Strategy may involve establishing indicators aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goal of Gender Equality.

Measuring progress towards shared outcomes under each of these Frameworks and Plans will help to provide key insights into the effectiveness of primary prevention and gender equality initiatives in Tasmania. [Counting on change](#) and [Tracking progress in prevention, key resources development by Our Watch](#) provide a framework for measuring and monitoring population-level progress towards the prevention of violence against women in Australia. These resources provide clear examples of indicators that can be used to measure progress in prevention and gender equality more broadly, accompanied by the identification of the appropriate data sets for measurement. They provide a useful evidence base which could be used by the Tasmanian Government to inform the development of the outcomes and evaluation frameworks outlined above.

In addition, there is an opportunity for the Tasmanian Government to design its multiple outcomes and evaluation frameworks to assess the impacts of multiple, mutually reinforcing gender equality and violence prevention activities as part of a coordinated strategy. The Victorian Government's [Gender Equality Outcomes Framework](#) is an example of an approach that aligns multiple frameworks and strategic plans, including their Free From Violence Outcomes Framework and Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Outcomes Framework.

Finally, as noted above, there is a welcome commitment in the Action Plan to expand the scope of the Safe Families Coordination Unit to undertake whole of Government data coordination and integration. There are opportunities to connect to the proposed data improvement plan and work underway in relation to data at a national level. Our Watch would welcome the opportunity to provide support and advice in relation to this work.

Recommendation

The Action Plan Outcomes Framework and the Women's Strategy Evaluation Framework:

- draw on key relevant frameworks, including *Counting on change* and *Tracking progress in prevention*, to derive indicators that provide a distinct and visible focus on prevention related outcomes, and indicators that measure changes to the gendered drivers of violence against women and the social context of gender inequality.
- are designed to align with multiple intersecting frameworks including the planned Wellbeing Framework, Sustainability Strategy and other relevant frameworks.

Conclusion

Our Watch welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission and ways we can continue to support implementation of the Third Action Plan and work in this area as part of our ongoing relationship with the Tasmanian Government.

Please contact Amanda Alford, Director Government Relations, Policy and Evidence at amanda.alford@ourwatch.org.au or Kristen Carroll, Senior Advisor Tasmania at Kristen.carroll@ourwatch.org.au to discuss this submission or work in more detail.