

# Safe Homes, Families and Communities: Tasmania's Third Action Plan for Family and Sexual Violence.

Full Stop Australia's submission to the Tasmanian Government, May 2022.



Full Stop Australia acknowledges the traditional owners of country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and to elders both past and present.

## Introduction

1. Full Stop Australia (FSA) is an accredited, nationally focused, not-for-profit organisation which has been working in the field of sexual, domestic and family violence (SDFV) since 1971. We offer expert and confidential telephone, online and face-to-face counselling to people of all genders who have experienced sexual, domestic or family violence, and specialist help for their supporters and those experiencing vicarious trauma. We also provide best practice training and professional services to support frontline workers, government, the corporate and not-for-profit sector. Finally, FSA advocates with governments, the media and the community to prevent and put a full stop to sexual, domestic and family violence.
2. FSA, as a national service, aims through its advocacy work to support our colleagues in each State and Territory who are working tirelessly on the ground to improve the lives of victim-survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence. We aim to use our experience of law reform in different jurisdictions to advocate for consistent approaches to sexual violence nationally.
3. In regards to this submission, FSA has consulted with Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) and Engender Equality. FSA is also very grateful to have had the benefit of reviewing Engender Equality's submission to the Third Action Plan.<sup>1</sup> FSA fully supports Engender Equality's 6 key recommendations.
4. FSA also recommends that the Third Action Plan:
  - a) Provides specialist sexual violence services with an immediate and urgent increase in long-term core funding to meet increased demand.
  - b) Commits to developing and funding a workforce development strategy for the sexual violence services sector.
  - c) Increases investment in the pilot multi-disciplinary centres in subsequent budgets to ensure that the centres are sustainable in the long-term and meeting the goals they set out to achieve.
  - d) Commits to a significant investment in trauma recovery services for victim-survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence.
  - e) Drastically increases its commitment to funding and supporting existing primary prevention and early intervention initiatives and investigates further opportunities for investment.

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<sup>1</sup> Engender Equality, Submission to the third Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan (May 2022).

- f) Works holistically with other plans and frameworks including the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032.
  - g) Commits to further law reforms to improve court outcomes for survivors of sexual violence.
5. We thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. This submission was prepared by Laura Henschke, Taran Buckby and Joanna Griffiths. We would be very happy to provide any further feedback on any aspect of this submission. You can contact us at any time if you have any further questions at [info@fullstop.org.au](mailto:info@fullstop.org.au).

## Further investment required in sexual, domestic and family violence services in the Third Action Plan

### 2022-2023 Budget Commitments for Sexual, Domestic and Family Violence

6. We note that the Second Action Plan committed \$26 million over three years under three priority areas:
- a) Primary Prevention and Early Intervention: \$3.3m
  - b) Response and Recovery \$14.8m
  - c) Strengthening the Service System \$7.9m
7. The 2022-2023 Budget commits to investing **\$12.5 million** for the first year of the Third Action Plan<sup>2</sup>. We note that this is a 40 per cent increase on investment on the previous plan.
8. The 2022-2023 Budget also commits to investing:
- a) \$4.9m for Our Safe at Home Family Violence Service System.
  - b) \$36.4 million over four years to help keep children safe and to implement all 20 recommendations from the Independent Inquiry into the Department of Education's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.
  - c) \$2 million to Out of Home Care Accreditation and a Carer's Register to improve standards and monitor progress against the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Sexual Abuse.
  - d) An additional \$2.2 million towards the whole-of-government coordinated response to the Commission of Inquiry.

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Ferguson, '2022-23 Tasmanian State Budget' (Speech, Tasmanian Times, 26 May 2022) <[2022-23 Tasmanian State Budget - Tasmanian Times](#); [Budget 2022 - Premier of Tasmania](#)>.

- e) \$950,000 for Family Violence Rapid Rehousing.
  - f) \$277,000 for the Hobart Women's Shelter Emergency Response.
  - g) \$3.7 million to deliver increased forensic science capability that will provide increased storage of evidence, including sexual evidence kits.
9. FSA warmly welcomes the Tasmanian Government's recent announcement of three new multidisciplinary centres for survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence.<sup>3</sup> These multidisciplinary centres are an integral support service for victim-survivors. By providing a wrap-around, multi-agency response hub, these service centres will offer a trauma-informed and effective option for victim-survivors seeking support in a safe place.<sup>4</sup> Whilst FSA warmly welcomes the \$15.1 million package as a substantial and much-needed funding injection into the sector (particularly considering the total level of investment in the Second Action Plan), we would strongly encourage the Tasmanian Government to consider **further increasing its investment in subsequent budgets to ensure that the Centres are sustainable in the long-term and meeting the goals they set out to achieve**. In addition, we encourage the Tasmanian Government to continue consulting with local support services and victim-survivors in the development and rollout of the Centres.
10. FSA also warmly welcomes the Government's announcement that it will commit to increased recurrent core funding for Tasmania's nine specialist family and sexual violence services with five-year contracts, to provide greater certainty and increased operational capacity to respond to demand over the longer term. It is unclear from this announcement whether the amount of core funding will also increase.
11. Finally, we are also very supportive of the Government's inclusion of a gender budget statement in this year's budget and the Government's announcement of an investment of \$800,000 into the next Tasmanian Women's Strategy. We also warmly welcome the Government's stated commitment to implementing all the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into Tasmanian Government Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings (**Commission of Inquiry**).

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<sup>3</sup> Minister Jacquie Petrusma, 'Multidisciplinary Centres to provide victim-survivors with immediate, integrated support' (Media Release, 1 March 2022), <[Premier of Tasmania - Multidisciplinary Centres to provide victim-survivors with immediate, integrated support](#)>.

<sup>4</sup> Minister Jacquie Petrusma, '\$15.1 million for new multidisciplinary centres to provide victim-survivors with immediate support' (Media Release, 29 April 2022), <[https://www.premier.tas.gov.au/site\\_resources\\_2015/additional\\_releases/\\$15.1\\_million\\_for\\_new\\_multidisciplinary\\_centres\\_to\\_provide\\_victim-survivors\\_with\\_immediate\\_support](https://www.premier.tas.gov.au/site_resources_2015/additional_releases/$15.1_million_for_new_multidisciplinary_centres_to_provide_victim-survivors_with_immediate_support)>.

12. While FSA warmly welcomes each of the above announcements as a much-needed investment into sexual, domestic and family violence in Tasmania, we strongly recommend that further investment is required by the Tasmanian Government in the Third Action Plan to ensure that sexual, domestic and family violence is properly addressed. We will now set out what we see are key funding gaps that need to be addressed in the Third Action Plan. We note in this regard, that the specifics of the \$12.5m allocated in the budget for the Third Action plan are yet to have been announced.
13. The current budget has made no specific commitment for any further investment in:
- a) Increasing the level of core funding for statewide sexual assault services beyond an increase in contract length to 5 years; and
  - b) Investment in long-term trauma recovery services for adult survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence beyond the crisis stage<sup>5</sup>. The multidisciplinary centres (while much needed) have a focus on crisis response.

### Further investment required in sexual violence service

14. FSA is aware that sexual violence services in Tasmania are underfunded. During consultation, SASS informed us that they have seen a 162% increase in referrals over the last 6 years, with no real and sustained increase in core funding (beyond small injections of funds).
15. Prior to the Budget Announcement, the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence announced that through the National Partnership Agreement, Tasmania will receive \$5.65 million over two years (2021-22 and 2022-23)<sup>6</sup> for sexual, domestic and family violence. While this funding announcement is warmly welcomed, we are concerned that none of this first tranche of money appears to have been allocated to sexual violence services specifically. FSA argues that it is absolutely critical that the next tranche of funding include a component for sexual violence services, as statistics show that incidences of sexual violence are increasing at alarming rates across the country. ABS statistics show that sexual violence is the fastest growing crime nationwide. Whilst there was a decrease in personal crimes such as homicide, theft, and kidnapping in the past 25 years, **sexual assault has increased by 110%.**

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<sup>5</sup> We note that \$24m that has been invested in education to support students recovering from trauma).

<sup>6</sup> Minister Jacquie Petrusma, *Further funding for Tasmania's Family and Sexual Violence Services* (2022), <[https://www.premier.tas.gov.au/site\\_resources\\_2015/additional\\_releases/further\\_funding\\_for\\_tasmanias\\_family\\_and\\_sexual\\_violence\\_services](https://www.premier.tas.gov.au/site_resources_2015/additional_releases/further_funding_for_tasmanias_family_and_sexual_violence_services)>.

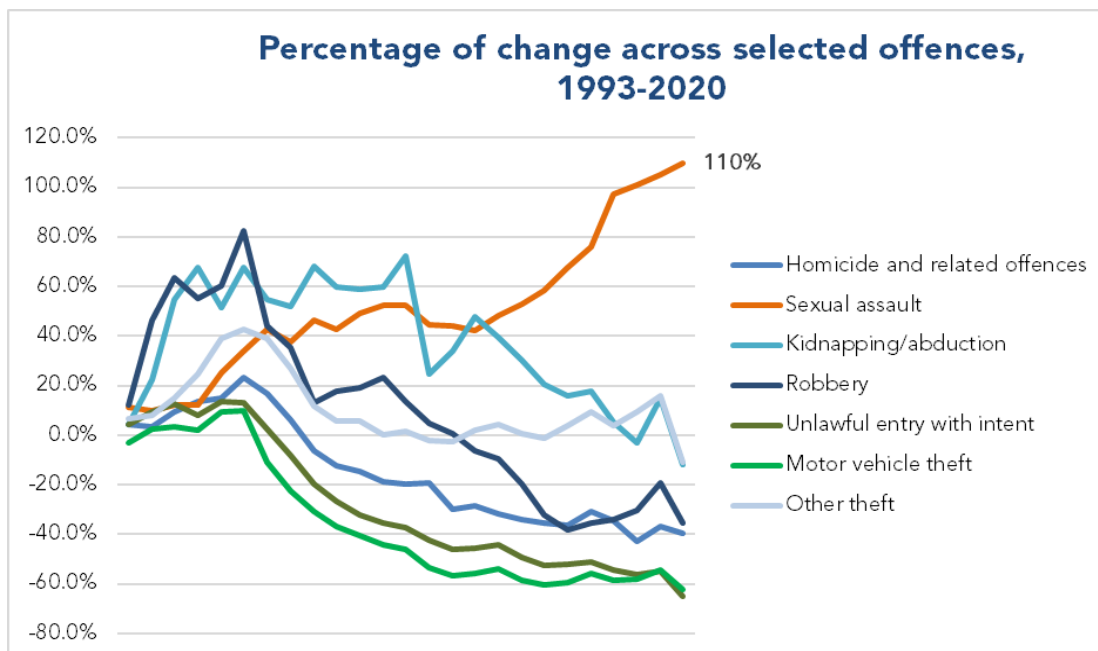


Figure 1.0: Percentage of change across rates of victimisation regarding personal crime.

16. Furthermore, FSA notes with real concern that recently released DPFEM statistics show that in 2020-2021 sexual assault reporting rates increased by 100%. We note that this sharp increase occurred after a steady period of declining rates since the 2013-2014 reporting period. While the statistics acknowledges that rates of sexual violence can vary significantly from year to year, we note that the clearance rate also dropped over 30%, perhaps due in part to the large increase in cases and the percentage of reports that occurred more than a year before they were reported. However, we also note that the clearance rate only measures police action against a particular report - it does not measure convictions if matters go to trial. The authors were unable to find data on prosecution and conviction rates in Tasmania. We consider that if this data does exist, it should be made readily available or if it does not exist, then provision should be made in the Third Action Plan for this data to be collected and made readily accessible.
17. FSA urges the Tasmanian Government to commit to adequately resourcing services that support people who are impacted by sexual violence. In particular, FSA supports Engender Equality's call for Tasmanian Government investment in place-based, community responses which cater to Tasmania's diverse communities. Through increasing core funding, services can meet increases in demand, but can also recruit, train and develop qualified staff that are trained to work in culturally appropriate ways. Given the inherently specialised work of sexual assault services, the retention of trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, and properly trained staff is crucial. We would also

warmly encourage the Tasmanian Government to commit in the Third Action Plan to **developing and funding a workforce development strategy for the sexual violence services sector** (in particular, in relation to developing the capability of staff who work with marginalised populations).

18. FSA understands that not only are sexual violence services underfunded, but they are not always easily accessed in rural and remote areas. We understand from our colleagues in the sector that delivery of sexual violence services in remote locations can be more difficult and subject to staffing and demand for services.
19. FSA strongly recommends that **specialist sexual violence services are provided with an immediate and urgent increase in long-term core funding to meeting increase demand.**
20. We also know that sexual violence is severely under-reported, ABS statistics show that only 13% of victims report a sexual violence incident to police.<sup>7</sup> The most common reasons why women do not report the incident to police include that they did not regard the incident as a serious offence (34%) and they felt ashamed or embarrassed (26%).<sup>8</sup>
21. Given the majority of victim-survivors do not report their experience of violence, we agree with our colleagues that Tasmania's Third Action Plan needs to bolster funding for community-based services to support victim-survivors regardless of whether they decide to report to police or not. Further, this prevalence of underreporting also highlights the importance of community awareness measures which improve community understanding of sexual violence (please see our discussion on primary prevention below). In this regard, we anticipate that the Commission of Inquiry will result in another sharp increase in reports of sexual violence, in particular, of historical child sexual abuse. While we know that Governments are often supportive of increasing police resources to deal with increased rates of crime reporting, we are also aware that Australian Governments are failing to invest in therapeutic and community responses to sexual violence.<sup>9</sup>
22. FSA supports Engender Equality's call to the Tasmanian Government to better fund community-based services (such as our colleagues at Engender Equality, SASS and Laurel House) to broaden the suite of responses to sexual, domestic and family violence beyond

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<sup>7</sup> ABS, *Sexual Violence - Victimisation* (2021), <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/sexual-violence-victimisation#key-statistics>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example [Australia's 'black spots' in sexual assault support | news.com.au — Australia's leading news site](https://www.news.com.au/australia/black-spots-in-sexual-assault-support/news-story/20210421)

policing. As many victim-survivors do not choose to engage with police, the Tasmanian Government must consider other avenues of support, in particular to support the trauma recovery needs of survivors.

### Further investment required in trauma recovery

23. The impacts of sexual violence are far-reaching for the individual and the community. Impacts for individuals include relationship breakdown, financial and housing insecurity, mental and physical injuries and ill health, substance abuse issues, complex trauma, and disrupted social and economic engagement.<sup>10</sup> For children, the impacts of being exposed to sexual violence are magnified. Some common trauma impacts include the development of mental health issues, sleep disturbances, learning difficulties and behavioural problems. There is also evidence that living with sexual, domestic and family violence makes children more vulnerable to other forms of child abuse and neglect, including being sexually assaulted and/or using problematic and sexually harmful behaviours against other children.<sup>11</sup>
24. More broadly, sexual, domestic and family violence also impacts upon the wider community, placing greater strain on families, workplaces, social, health and justice service systems. Intimate partner violence is estimated to cost the Australia economy over 22 billion each year.<sup>12</sup>
25. Of critical importance, FSA notes that there are significant funding gaps for long-term trauma specialist counselling and care navigation services for people who have suffered from sexual, domestic and family violence but are no longer at crisis stage. The evidence shows that survivors need support beyond crisis intervention to ensure that the physical, psychological and emotional impacts of trauma are managed throughout their life course. The Commission of Inquiry has already highlighted multiple harrowing examples of systemic problems within Government departments which not only allowed child sexual abuse to occur, but also sought to minimise or deny the experiences of victim-survivors and their families. It is becoming clear that because of this, victim-survivors and their

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<sup>10</sup> AIHW, *Family, domestic and sexual violence*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, (16 September 2021), < <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence>>.

<sup>11</sup> AIHW, *Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia: continuing the national story 2019*, Canberra, Australia: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, <<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/b0037b2d-a651-4abf-9f7b-00a85e3de528/aihw-fdv3-FDSV-in-Australia-2019.pdf.aspx?inline=true>>.

<sup>12</sup> KPMG, *The cost of violence against women and children in Australia* (Report, 2016), p.4.



families will require substantial investment in trauma recovery services to help ameliorate the trauma impacts.

26. FSA urges the Tasmania Government to exercise leadership and **commit to a significant investment in trauma recovery services for victim-survivors of sexual, domestic and family violence in Tasmania**. FSA urges the Tasmanian Government to appropriately consider and respond in the Third Action plan to:
- a) The longer-term therapeutic intervention needs for survivors of sexual violence and to ensure that sexual assault services are adequately equipped and resourced to provide these therapeutic services to survivors.
  - b) The diverse needs of different survivors including adult survivors of child sexual abuse, child victims of sexual abuse, children displaying problematic sexualised behaviours, intimate partner sexual violence, victims of inter-generational abuse within families, institutional sexual abuse (including in religious contexts), sexual abuse of people with a disability in group homes or in other institutions and sexual harassment in the workplace.

## Further investment required in Primary Prevention and Early Intervention

27. FSA considers that the previous \$3m allocated for Primary Prevention and Early Intervention is inadequate to make meaningful reductions in rates of sexual, domestic and family violence.
28. As the current Action Plan allocates the least amount of funding to primary prevention and early intervention, FSA recommends the Tasmania Government **drastically increase its commitment to funding and supporting existing primary prevention and early intervention initiatives and investigates further opportunities for investment**.
29. In this regard, a Tasmanian forum organised by Our Watch in 2021 for the purpose of collecting feedback for the Third Action Plan confirmed that participants expressed the need for further funding for primary prevention in Tasmania.<sup>13</sup> We consider that primary prevention efforts could be broadened and engage a much wider audience in all community settings including business, sport, the arts and media. In addition, we consider that awareness campaigns should complement existing primary prevention efforts in particular in relation to issues of consent and respectful relationships. It is crucial

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<sup>13</sup> Our Watch (2021). [Forum Outcomes for Primary Prevention in Tasmania](#).

that young adults are provided up to date information on consent and the “continuum of sexual violence”.<sup>14</sup> In this regard, we draw Tasmania’s attention to the recently released #Makenodoubt consent campaign in NSW which has received widespread support from the sector in NSW.<sup>15</sup> In addition, we encourage the Tasmanian Government to commit adequate funding and resourcing in the Third Action Plan to support the commitment of the outgoing Federal Government to embed respectful relationships education into the National Curriculum and support teachers to deliver this curriculum.

30. Finally, we strongly encourage the Tasmanian Government to incorporate feedback points from that forum into the Third Action Plan, in particular that:
- a) There is an opportunity for further context-specific research in Tasmania about groups and individuals who experience intersecting forms of discrimination, inequality and violence. The Third Action Plan must commit dedicated funding for this purpose.
  - b) A number of Tasmanian organisations are already providing strong and effective primary prevention programs in Tasmania, such as the SASS and the South-East Tasmania Aboriginal Corporation (SETAC). The Third Action Plan must provide a commitment from the Tasmanian government to resource, strengthen and expand these programs where possible.
  - c) Gender equality and the prevention of violence against women must be embedded in policies and procedures across all settings such as government, business, sport, the arts and media. The Third Action Plan (in combination with Tasmania’s Women’s Strategy) must contain concrete and measurable actions which work towards embedding these.

### **Third Action Plan must work holistically with other plans and frameworks**

31. FSA also recommends that the third Action Plan work together with the *National Plan to End Violence and Against Women and Children 2022-2032* (the “National Plan”). FSA recommends that the Third Action Plan make separate funding commitments against

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<sup>14</sup> Replicated in part from Gartner R.E., and Sterzing, P.R. (2016). Gender Microaggressions as a Gateway to Sexual Harassment and Sexual Assault: Expanding the Conceptualisation of Youth Sexual Violence. *Journal of Women and Social Work*. 31(4)

<sup>15</sup> Lucy Cocoran, ‘We finally have a consent campaign that \*gets\* it’, *Elle Australia* (Online, May 2022) < [The NSW Sexual Consent Campaign Finally Gets It | ELLE Australia](#)>.

each of the four pillars: Prevention, Early Intervention, Response and Recovery.<sup>16</sup> In this regard we note that the previous Action Plan sought to make one commitment for more than one pillar, such as for Primary Prevention and Early Intervention, and Response and Recovery. FSA is of the view that the structure of the National Plan offers a consistent and coordinated national approach to addressing gender-based violence.

32. With that in mind, FSA agrees with our colleagues at Engender Equality and urges the Tasmanian Government to consider the contextual background of gendered violence to holistically address the root causes of gender-based violence but also to address intersecting experiences of violence, inequality and disadvantage.

33. This is especially important as we note that Tasmania has:

- a) The highest proportion of the population living rurally;
- b) The highest proportion of people with a disability;
- c) The highest proportion of population over the age of 50.
- d) The highest unemployment rate and the lowest weekly earnings;
- e) The lowest levels of literacy and educational attainment;
- f) The lowest rates of internet access;
- g) The highest level of gun ownership; and
- h) Higher than average rates of mental illness and suicide.<sup>17</sup>

### **Third Action Plan should be fully integrated into other plans and frameworks, particularly the next Tasmanian Women's Strategy**

34. Given Tasmania's population experiences a higher than average incidence of many of the social determinants of gendered violence, in our view it is imperative that the third Action Plan address the broader social and economic conditions which contribute to gender based violence such as poverty, inequity, mental health and social disadvantage.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, FSA supports Engender Equality's recommendation that all actions and commitments in Tasmania's third Action Plan should be fully integrated into existing and

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<sup>16</sup>Draft *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022 - 2032*, <<https://engage.dss.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Draft-National-Plan-to-End-Violence-against-Women-and-Children-2022-32.pdf>>.

<sup>17</sup> Engender Equality. Submission to the third Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan (2022), 5.

<sup>18</sup> Engender Equality. Submission to the third Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan (2022), 2.

projected Tasmanian Government plans and frameworks, aimed at both vulnerable and diverse groups and structural issues such as housing and healthcare.

35. We also consider it essential that the Third Action Plan work together with Tasmania's next Women's Strategy to implement concrete and meaningful policies which work towards achieving gender equality such as affordable childcare, investing in women's leadership and addressing the gender pay gap.
36. Further, given sexual, domestic and family violence emerges from a complex set of socioeconomic circumstances, we agree with Engender Equality that place-based, community-run programs are best suited to supporting victim-survivors who experience multiple barriers in accessing help such as women with a disability, women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities and First Nations women. As such, FSA supports Engender Equality's call to prioritise initiatives physically and contextually in Tasmanian communities. Countless example of successful, place-based initiatives in other States include:
- a) Mudgin-Gal Aboriginal Corporation – an Aboriginal service that is completely staffed and managed by Aboriginal women. Mudgin-Gal's strength comes from its brand, its positioning in the local community services market, its culturally appropriate programs and its location near the Block, Redfern.
  - b) Immigrant Women's Support Service, a specialist service response for immigrant and refugee women from non-English speaking background and their children who have experienced domestic and/or sexual violence in Queensland. IWSS pioneered a hybrid model of service in Queensland which seeks to wholistically support survivors of sexual violence *and* domestic and family violence.
  - c) Muslim Women Australia operates the Linking Hearts program which brings a range of expert service providers together to deliver holistic support options focusing on prevention and early intervention, safe and supported crisis and transitional accommodation, rapid rehousing and intensive support for clients with complex needs.

## Further recommendations

37. During its consultation, SASS also informed FSA that whilst sexual violence does and can occur within domestic and family violence, 66% of their referrals do not occur in the context of domestic and family violence. As a result, the SASS have found current risk assessment and evaluation tools (which focus on domestic and family violence) inadequate to evaluate risk in a large number of their cases of sexual violence. FSA supports SASS' call for the Third Action Plan **to commit to developing specific risk**

assessment tools for sexual violence outside the context of sexual, domestic and family violence.

38. FSA warmly welcomes the Tasmanian Government's actions on law reform which occurred during the period of the Second Action Plan including the *Family Violence Reforms Bill 2022* and the *Criminal Code Amendment Bill 2022*.

39. FSA considers that **the Third Action Plan now constitutes an opportunity for the Tasmanian government to commit to further law reforms to improve court outcomes for survivors of sexual violence** including (but not limited to)<sup>19</sup>:

- a) Review of legislative maxima for sexual assault offences to ensure they are aligned with current practice in other Australian jurisdictions.
- b) For certain identified serious sexual offences, a rebuttable presumption be introduced that a custodial sentence should be imposed unless exceptional circumstances apply.
- c) Introduce a legislative presumption that Intensive Correction Orders and suspended sentences not be imposed for serious sexual offences.
- d) Evidence of family violence should be made relevant and admissible in sexual assault cases provided that the evidence is not prejudicial to the defendant.
- e) Consider the introduction of legislative reforms to introduce a rebuttable presumption in sentencing for sexual offences that the offending caused certain harms for the victim survivor.
- f) Consider the introduction of "ground rules hearings" as occurs in Victoria (and has been proposed in the Commonwealth jurisdiction) as a means by which parties can quickly, cheaply and effectively discuss the complex and diverse needs of each complainant at the outset of a criminal trial and the Court can make directions with regards to all aspects of the trial including the modes of giving evidence, video-recording, questioning, evidence etc.
- g) Funding an empirical study into complainants' experiences of the criminal justice system modelled on the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research study to determine what further measures could be taken to improve complainants' experiences of the justice system.
- h) The development of a Sexual Assault Trials Handbook modelled on the handbook currently in operation in NSW.
- i) A range of jury directions be introduced to counter rape myths surrounding sexual assault trials (such as those introduced in NSW) including directions as to:

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<sup>19</sup> Recommendations (a) to (e) are based on the recommendations of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Steering Committee (ACT), *Listen. Take action to prevent, believe and heal* (Report, December 2021).

- i. Circumstances in which non-consensual sexual activity occurs;
    - ii. Responses to non-consensual sexual activity;
    - iii. Lack of physical injury, violence or threats;
    - iv. Behaviour and appearance of complainant; and
    - v. Sexual assault in the context of coercive control and domestic and family violence.
  - j) A regime should be introduced for all evidence in criminal trials for sexual offences (of whatever age) be recorded and such evidence be able to be used in any subsequent trial or re-trial.
  - k) A presumption for sexual assault complainants should be introduced that operates in the same way as the current presumption in s.8(2A) of the *Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses Act) 2001* for survivors of domestic and family violence.
40. In addition, we support our colleagues at SASS in calling for an independent reportable conduct scheme to be introduced to safeguard children, similar to the scheme operating in Victoria.
41. Lastly, we would also like to emphasise the importance of ensuring that every actor in the criminal justice system (whether it be police, prosecutors or the judiciary) have the appropriate skills, experience and attributes to properly identify and respond to sexual violence. Proper investment into recruitment, training and professional development is crucial to ensuring that survivors aren't falling through the cracks and that the system is responding appropriately.