

**The Hon Jodie Harrison MP**

Minister for Women

Minister for Seniors

Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault



Ref: SGM24/9373

Magistrate Teresa O'Sullivan  
NSW State Coroner  
Coroners Court  
1A Main Avenue  
LIDCOMBE NSW 2141

By email: [REDACTED]

Dear Magistrate O'Sullivan,

**Domestic Violence Death Review Team Report 2019-2021**

I refer to the Domestic Violence Death Review Team (**DVDRT**) Report 2019-2021 tabled in NSW Parliament on 19 December 2022.

This report was unique in its focus because it did not include any new recommendations. Instead, the Report included a retrospective analysis of the recommendations made by the DVDRT since its establishment.

In my first letter to you about the Report dated 7 July 2023, I outlined that the complex themes and issues raised by its findings were priorities for the NSW Government. I now write to update you on our progress towards addressing these priorities, work which is critical in keeping victim-survivors safe and changing the story.

To achieve these priorities, the NSW Government is investing in important initiatives, services and law reform and is taking action to strengthen oversight of domestic and family violence (**DFV**) reform.

**Investment in critical supports for victim-survivors and their families**

In the 2024/25 budget, the NSW Government has committed \$245.6 million over four years for a coordinated, multi-pronged response that seeks to disrupt the cycle of DFV early and permanently, while optimising crisis response services to support victim-survivors.

This funding also supports NSW's commitments made at National Cabinet on 1 May 2024, where First Ministers committed to sustained focus on stopping homicides and achieving our shared goal of ending violence against women and children in a generation.

It is anticipated that this funding will deliver:

- implementation of NSW's first dedicated Primary Prevention Strategy,
- expansion of the Staying Home Leaving Violence program state-wide,
- expansion of the Integrated Domestic and Family Violence Service,
- support for the DVDRT to produce robust research around risk factors and other trends,
- additional early intervention support for children who have experienced DFV, recognising them as victims in their own right,
- further support for improved risk assessment and planning,
- research into perpetrators and effective interventions and further support for the delivery of Men's Behaviour Change Programs,
- further support for education about healthy relationships for young children through the 'All in' project,
- support for improved bail laws and justice system responses to DFV,
- expansion of the Women's Domestic Violence and Court Advocacy Service's hearing support and Police co-location pilot programs, and
- uplift and support for specialist DFV workers.

In addition, the NSW Government has prioritised the safety and security of victim-survivors escaping DFV by:

- investing \$6.6 billion in social housing and homelessness services, and
- prioritising at least half of the new homes built for victim-survivors of DFV.

### **Utilising the evidence to create long-term systemic change**

The NSW Cabinet Office has established a time-limited Taskforce to enhance cross-agency coordination of DFV responses in NSW. This will include overseeing key components of the above funding package, progressing National Cabinet commitments and considering existing DFV strategies and frameworks.

The Taskforce is co-chaired by the Secretaries of the Department of Communities and Justice and The Cabinet Office. The Secretary of NSW Health, the Secretary of Education and the Commissioner of the NSW Police Force complete its membership, alongside several standing attendees including the NSW Women's Safety Commissioner.

As part of its remit, the Taskforce will analyse current system gaps with the purpose of informing future funding and policy decisions.

To complement this analysis, the Office of the Women's Safety Commissioner will undertake a longer-term review of:

- previous DVDRT recommendations with a focus on their intent and implementation in the current systems context, and
- the process for monitoring and reporting on DVDRT recommendations.

This review will be conducted in collaboration with the DVDRT and will include consideration of the recommendations of the Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches to End Gender-Based Violence (**the Rapid Review**).

**The Rapid Review Report – *Unlocking the Prevention Potential: accelerating action to end domestic, family and sexual violence***

This important report was tabled on Friday 23 August 2024 and is an outcome of the May 2024 National Cabinet taskings on gender-based violence.

The Rapid Review highlighted several areas of priority including:

- responding to children and young people’s experiences of domestic, family and sexual violence,
- engaging with men and boys in violence prevention, and
- better understanding pathways into perpetration to improve targeting of early intervention initiatives, with the aim of preventing violence from occurring.

The Rapid Review also included a specific recommendation on death review processes, which called for work on:

- establishing and uplifting death review panels across all jurisdictions, including with an emphasis on First Nations support units and protocols,
- strengthening national coordination and consistency of DFSV death review processes, and
- an urgent inquiry into the relationship between suicide and experiences of DFSV victimisation.

At the National Cabinet meeting on 6 September 2024, Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments agreed to progressively respond to the Rapid Review Report, with the collective response overseen by the Women and Women’s Safety Ministerial Council over time. The Women and Women’s Safety Ministerial Council will report back to National Cabinet on progress of this response by the end of 2025.

The NSW Government will consult closely with the DVDRT and other key stakeholders to consider the implementation of this recommendation for NSW.

**Legislative reform is critical in our efforts to address DFV homicides**

Strengthening bail processes

The NSW Parliament recently passed legislation introduced by the Government which will provide for strengthened processes around bail applications from people charged with serious domestic violence offences. Most of these changes commenced on 1 July 2024.

These reforms will help to improve victim-survivors’ safety. In particular:

- People accused of serious domestic violence offences against intimate partners will now have to 'show cause' why their detention is not justified.
- If released on bail, people charged with serious domestic violence offences will be electronically monitored unless it is not in the interests of justice to do so.
- For all domestic violence related offences, bail decision-makers will be required to consider domestic abuse risk factors and the views of victims and their family members in matters involving intimate partners.
- The categories of offences for which bail decisions can be 'stayed' will be expanded, meaning that the accused person will remain in custody for up to three business days while prosecutors challenge their release in the Supreme Court, to include serious domestic violence offences against intimate partners, the new coercive control offence, and serious sexual assault offences.
- It will be easier to prosecute perpetrators who use tracking devices in a DFV context.
- All bail decisions will be made by magistrates or judges, rather than registrars (not just bail decisions related to DFV). This change is yet to commence.

#### Strengthening protections for victim-survivors

The NSW Government is continuing work to increase protections for victim-survivors of DFV, with a suite of significant legislative reforms passed by Parliament on 24 September 2024.

These reforms recognise the seriousness of repeated and serious breaches of Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders (**ADVOs**) and the importance of empowering police and prosecutors to take action to protect victim-survivors of domestic abuse by:

- strengthening penalties for repeated and serious breaches of an ADVO,
- introducing serious domestic abuse prevention orders,
- amending the definition of stalking so that it explicitly covers technology facilitated tracking or monitoring, and
- simplifying the process to change their child's name, where the sole parent has a Family Court order authorising them to do so.

#### **Ongoing commitment from the NSW Government**

The NSW Government recognises that we must continue our efforts to strengthen responses to DFV and remove the barriers that can obstruct pathways to safety for victim-survivors and accountability for perpetrators.

The DVDRT's work continues to be critical to our efforts. I look forward to hearing about the outcomes of the First Nations project to be conducted over the next reporting period through a partnership between the DVDRT, UNSW and the Office of the Women's Safety Commissioner. This co-led, co-designed project will provide an opportunity to examine the DVDRT's processes more deeply, including consideration of cultural safety and data sovereignty, to strengthen its approach to homicides involving First Nations peoples.

I look forward to our continued joint efforts to change the story and keep our communities safe from violence.

Sincerely,



**Jodie Harrison MP**

Minister for Women

Minister for Seniors

Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

15/10/2024

