



Joint meeting of Community Services Ministers and Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council

COMMUNIQUE 20 FEBRUARY 2026

On Friday 20 February 2026, the Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council and Community Services Ministers came together in a joint meeting for the first time. Ministers met to discuss accelerating urgent work to reduce the number of children experiencing family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) and change the trajectory of the rates of children and young people at risk of entering out-of-home care (OOHC) around the country. Ministers also discussed the importance of gender and economic equality for advancing women and children's safety.

Ministers agreed that every government has a responsibility for keeping children safe and agreed to continue to work together to improve the safety and wellbeing of children. Ministers also reaffirmed their commitment to achieving Targets 12 and 13 under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Ministers welcomed the release of *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026-2036* (Our Ways) and noted the Commonwealth's \$218.3 million investment for ACCOs to deliver community-led specialist support services that help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and families who are experiencing family, domestic, and sexual violence.

Ministers agreed that to change the current trajectory of increasing rates of children in OOHC, we need to connect work across child wellbeing, child protection and family safety, to better support children and young people who have experienced trauma and to keep children safe. This includes addressing risk and protective factors across systems to drive shared outcomes of safety and wellbeing for children and their families. This strategic and coordinated approach to the experiences of children and young people is a key part of responding to Recommendation 5 of the Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches.

Ministers agreed that the following four areas represent shared priorities for collective focus in alignment with both National and state and territory frameworks: common risk assessment processes for children, workforce and sector capability, investment in Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and system integration. Ministers agreed for Community Services Ministers and Women's Safety Ministers to come together by the end of 2026 to report on progress made across these shared priorities.

Ministers also agreed to explore specific actions for each jurisdiction to strengthen and model successful programs and enhance collaboration between all governments. These actions will accelerate progress on Targets 12 and 13 in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. These agreed practical actions will be delivered in partnership between jurisdictions, to advance our shared commitments and respond to local contexts.



Practical actions include:

- The Commonwealth, together with states and territories, are working to strengthen the sector to support the delivery of dedicated specialist services for families, women and children, with a strong focus on prevention and early intervention. As part of this effort, the Commonwealth is increasing investment in Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), with funding to be delivered through a new component of the Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Federation Funding Agreement.
- The Commonwealth will work to streamline access to Commonwealth supports for carers and care-leavers by building on the work underway through *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031*.
- The Commonwealth will progress ACCO capacity uplift with states and territories, partnering with New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia to align our approaches to commissioning.
- The Commonwealth to progress support for sector and ACCO workforce development, including exploring micro-credentials (in partnership with South Australia and Queensland).
- The Commonwealth will partner with New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland to leverage shared objectives in supporting the implementation of common risk assessment frameworks. This will support readiness and refinement work on the NSW Common Approach to Risk Assessment and Safety (CARAS), redevelopment and implementation of Western Australia's Common Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework and Queensland's expanded Domestic and Family Violence Common Risk and Safety Framework (CRASF), and support relevant Commonwealth agencies and funded services to adopt best practice risk assessment and management approaches as set out in the National Risk Assessment Framework.
- The Commonwealth will deliver a proof-of-concept project with New South Wales to assess the impact of Commonwealth programs for children and their families residing in the state, and data linkages with South Australia to better understand the impact of certain programs on reducing rates of out-of-home-care interactions (and/or associated risk factors).

Ministers also noted the Commonwealth's update on investments to support women's economic equality, and discussed the importance of women's economic equality for improving safety. Ministers acknowledged the need to work across portfolios and jurisdictions on this issue.

Ministers also discussed the importance of both Ministerial Councils progressing their priorities and practical actions within individual Council work programs.



For Women and Women's Safety Ministers:

- Ministers agreed to have a dedicated focus on economic equality at a future meeting.
- Ministers reaffirmed their commitment to ongoing national efforts to progress work across the four domains of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 (National Plan): prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery and healing.
- Ministers agreed to progress engagement to develop the National Plan Second Action Plan and *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036* (Our Ways) Action Plan by early 2027 and establish a joint working group of senior officials across both Ministerial Councils to support this work, focusing on the following priority areas of effort:
 - Continuing efforts for victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence;
 - Supporting children and young people, including boys, to heal and recover from domestic, family and sexual violence;
 - Engaging with men to seek help early so they can build safe, respectful relationships and heal from harm when needed;
 - Continuing efforts to hold people who use violence to account.
- The Commonwealth, states and territories will work collaboratively on the focus areas identified in *Our Ways* to steer progress towards the meeting of Target 13 under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.
- Ministers endorsed the Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council's 2025 Annual Report to National Cabinet and 2026 workplan, which includes the National Plan Second Action Plan and gender equality, including women's economic equality, as key priorities.

For Community Services Ministers:

- The Commonwealth will work with states and territories and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group to develop the *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* Second Action Plans by 2027 – building on best practice and sharing what works from innovative programs. This will include an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Second Action Plan to steer progress towards meeting Target 12 under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.