



Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council

COMMUNIQUE 1 MARCH 2024

The Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council (Council) was convened virtually today, attended by:

- The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP (Commonwealth)
- The Hon Justine Elliot MP (Commonwealth)
- Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher (Commonwealth)
- Ms Yvette Berry MLA (Australian Capital Territory)
- The Hon Jodie Harrison MP (New South Wales)
- The Hon Ngaree Ah Kit MLA (Northern Territory)
- The Hon Katrine Hildyard MP (South Australia)
- Ms Vicki Ward MP (Victoria)
- The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP (Victoria)
- The Hon Sabine Winton MLA (Western Australia)
- The Hon Sue Ellery MLC (Western Australia)

The Hon Kate Worden MLA (Northern Territory), the Hon Shannon Fentiman (Queensland) and the Hon Yvette D'Ath MP (Queensland) gave their apologies.

The Hon Jo Palmer MLC (Tasmania) was unable to attend due to the Tasmanian Government's caretaker conventions. Minister Palmer was represented by an official.

The Commonwealth Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner, Ms. Micaela Cronin, also attended as an ex-officio member, along with Victoria's Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner, Dr Niki Vincent, who presented to the Council on Victoria's Gender Equality Legislation and landscape.

Minister Gallagher provided the Council with an update on the finalisation of the Commonwealth's strategy to achieve gender equality, due to be released in coming weeks, and thanked jurisdictions for their support in the development of the strategy. The Commonwealth Strategy will clearly set out the Commonwealth Government's priorities, and provide guidance for the broader community on what they can do to help achieve gender equality.

The Commonwealth Treasury shared a high-level update with the Council on the work underway in the Women's Economic Outcomes Senior Officials Working Group (WEO-SOWG). Of particular interest to the Council is WEO SOWG's work on workforce gender segregation, which identifies underlying drivers of workforce gender segregation in Australia and aims to promote a more gender balanced workforce. WEO-SOWG is a subcommittee supporting the Council on Federal Financial Relations (CFFR) to progress key issues relating to women's economic participation and economic security.

Performance Measurement Plan of the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 (National Plan)*

Minister Rishworth advised the Council that she is seeking out of session endorsement on the Performance Measurement Plan of the National Plan. The Performance Measurement Plan will be a critical mechanism through which Governments will track, monitor and report progress under the National Plan. Further work will be undertaken to increase the availability and sharing of critical data to measure outcomes. Ministers also noted that the joint activity under Action 2 in the *First Action Plan 2023-2027 (Action Plan)* commits

the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to working together to consider and agree further numerical targets across each of the four domains of the National Plan over the life of the Action Plan.

Developing our performance measurement data will be vital to achieving the intended outcomes of the National Plan. It is an important part of how we demonstrate accountability to each other and communities across Australia.

First Nations National Plan

Minister Rishworth informed the Council that she appointed the 24 member First Nations National Plan Steering Committee (Steering Committee) on 15 January 2024. Minister Rishworth also informed the Council that SNAICC – National Voice for our Children has been contracted to be the Secretariat for the First Nations National Plan Steering Committee.

Ministers acknowledged that broad consultations with, and led by First Nations peoples, will begin in April 2024. Ministers noted that the development of the First Nations National Plan is being aligned with other Government First Nations family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) priorities.

Reducing intimate partner homicides

Minister Rishworth facilitated a meaningful discussion between members on challenges, initiatives currently underway and opportunities for learning and more coordinated action across jurisdictions towards reducing intimate partner homicide.

The Council reflected on the tragic loss of life due to intimate partner homicides and acknowledged the ongoing and widely-felt impact across communities and the nation. Ministers asserted that preventing deaths from occurring in the first place is the foremost priority. They also recognised the growing concern of Governments, community and the sector that these tragedies continue to occur.

Ministers acknowledged that measuring data on intimate partner homicides in a more timely manner is crucial, reaffirming that robust data and evidence is critical to informing policies that aim to prevent and respond to intimate partner homicide.

The discussion drew on recent research from Australia's National Research Organisation on Women's Safety (ANROWS) exploring pathways to intimate partner homicide.

Ministers shared insights from jurisdictional reviews into intimate partner homicides and committed to ongoing sharing of findings, including of innovative pilots, through the National Plan architecture.

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commissioner spoke to Council about the importance of sharing data and evidence, and adapting ongoing efforts based on research and evidence, including lived experience and expertise of victim-survivors and the sector.

Ministers reiterated the joint commitment across governments under the National Plan, the underpinning Action Plans, and Outcomes Framework, which have a target of 25 per cent reduction per year in female victims of intimate partner homicide. Achieving this target will require an adaptive, evidenced-based approach that addresses shared challenges and continues to explore where coordinated action across jurisdictions could accelerate progress.

Public sector gender equality legislation and landscape

Minister Hutchins, Victoria's Minister for Women, presented the Council on Victoria's gender equality legislation and landscape, including the *Gender Equality Act 2020* (the Act).



The first of its kind in Australia, the Act is recognised globally as leading workplace gender equality legislation, and targets the drivers of gender inequalities in the Victorian public sector, including the gender pay gap, gendered workplace segregation, under-representation in leadership roles, lack of workplace flexibility and sexual harassment.

The Council heard insights from Minister Hutchins and Victoria's Public Sector Gender Equality Commissioner, Dr Niki Vincent, on the development, application and early impacts of the Act. Minister Hutchins also presented on how the Act provides a legislative mechanism to elevate and prioritise state-wide gender equality strategies, including *Our equal state: Victoria's gender equality strategy and action plan* that was released in August 2023.

Ministers commented on the importance of ensuring compliance with gender equality requirements and reporting, noting the recent data released by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency which reveals the gender pay gaps of employers with 100 or more employees across Australia.