

The First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence submission on the NT Governments Draft Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Roadmap



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Acknowledgement of Country

First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence (FNAAFV) acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the traditional custodians of all lands and waters across Australia. We wish to pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and to the youth, for the future. We extend this acknowledgement to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples reading this Submission.

About the First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence

The First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence (FNAAFV) is the only National Peak Body Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) that supports Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services (FVPLS) around Australia who provide specialised domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) supports through culturally safe, holistic services to First Nations – predominantly women and their children. FNAAFV provides expert national advice in areas of policy, planning and law reform, sector capacity building, supporting innovation and best practice, and advocating for safety and justice for First Nations peoples affected by family violence. We collaborate across all sectors, both ACCO and mainstream with the aim of delivering safety and supporting self-determination for our First Nations peoples in line with [*United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*](#).

FNAAFV represents 16 FVPLSs, with 14 FVPLSs who are members of FNAAFV. The FVPLSs span more than 30 office locations across all jurisdictions. FVPLSs provide culturally safe and specialist legal and non-legal family and domestic violence assistance to more than 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. FNAAFV members include:

- Aboriginal Family Legal Services Western Australia (Perth Head Office, Broome, Carnarvon, Kununurra, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Port Hedland)
- Aboriginal Family Legal Services Queensland (Toowoomba Head Office, Roma, Murgon and Gympie)
- Binaal Billa Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (Forbes)
- Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit Aboriginal Corporation (Alice Springs Head Office, Tennant Creek)

- Djirra (statewide service with head office in Melbourne and 8 regional offices in Bairnsdale, Warrnambool, Bendigo, Echuca, Shepparton, Morwell, Melton & Mildura)
- Family Violence Legal Service Aboriginal Corporation (Port Augusta Head Office, Ceduna, Pt Lincoln)
- Many Rivers Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (Kempsey Head Office, Grafton)
- Marninwarnitkura Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (Fitzroy Crossing)
- Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council Domestic and Family Violence Service (Alice Springs, NPY Tri-state Region)
- Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service (Cairns Head Office, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Mount Isa, Bamaga, Thursday Island and Brisbane)
- Thiyama-li Family Violence Service Inc. NSW (Moree Head Office, Bourke, Walgett)
- Warra-Warra Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service (Broken Hill)
- North Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Service (Darwin Head Office, Katherine)
- SiSTAS (Hobart Head Office, Tasmania)

FNAAFV works with its members, communities, governments, and other partners to raise awareness about family violence affecting First Nations people, and it also advocates for culturally safe legal and holistic responses to this issue. FNAAFV provides a unified voice for its FVPLS members in areas of national policy, planning and law reform, and representation as a member of the national Coalition of Peaks. FNAAFV's work is informed by evidence, and we aim to ensure that all strategic planning and policy positions link to the Closing the Gap Agreement and Priority Reforms; National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children and associated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025.



First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence Submission

Response to the Draft Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Roadmap 2025-2028

The First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence (FNAAFV) welcomes the NT Government's development of a Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Roadmap 2025-2028 (the Roadmap) that will drive transformational change in the domestic, family and sexual violence (FDSV) sector. We note that the FDSV sector in the Northern Territory has historically been chronically underfunded with stretched resources and workforce challenges, therefore we commend the NT Government for the commitment to invest \$36 million annually to build a more holistic, integrated system.

FNAAFV, as the Peak body for Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services (FVPLS) with members located within the Northern Territory, requests that the NT Government partners with our NT member services of Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit (CAAFLU), North Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Service (NAAFLS) and Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council Domestic and Family Violence Service (NPYWC) to ensure that priority actions to implement the Roadmap are community-led, culturally appropriate and build on the existing knowledge systems and programs that work.

The Roadmap includes a focus on early intervention and accountability and a strengthened response system, which aligns with the expertise of the NT FVPLS sector. Our members have the solutions and the trust of the communities that they serve, so they are well placed to participate in the planning and design of any new initiatives or to provide advice on adapting / bolstering existing programs.



First Nations DFSV expertise

CAAFLU, NAAFLS and NPYWC have delivered place-based DFSV assistance and preventive programs collectively across the NT for over 25 years, supporting safety, wellness and justice for First Nations peoples. They operate in contexts of significant complexity, providing trauma-informed frontline legal and non-legal assistance to clients experiencing or at risk of DFSV. The workforce includes lawyers, caseworkers, community engagement workers, counsellors, cultural advisors, legal educators and service managers, many of whom bring deep cultural knowledge and lived experience to their roles. These services have the experience, knowledge, community respect and organisational capacity to lead innovative programs that will deliver the aims of the Roadmap.

Many of the newly proposed initiatives within the Roadmap can be designed and delivered in partnership with the Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector (ACCO), which will see improved uptake and outcomes for First Nations peoples; and which requires a commitment from the NT Government to resourcing the ACCO sector appropriately.

As an example, our NT members are keen to work closely with the NT Government on the transition of remote Women's Safe Houses, to ensure that the unique cultural sensitivities and needs of the communities are built into the design and implementation. We understand the barriers that exist in accessing existing Safe Houses, including community concerns around reporting violence to authorities and potential child removal. Our members have the legal and non-legal expertise to support women to safely escape violence and can provide key insights into various Safe House options (for men and women).

There is a real opportunity here for the NT Government to tap into our members expertise in the development of practice standards, new initiatives and the establishment of the DFSV prevention

coordination mechanism. True collaboration and partnership with our members will ensure that a cultural lens is applied to developing evidence-based DFSV policy, ACCO-led service delivery and initiatives and system-wide reforms.

NT Government commitment to Closing the Gap

Partnering with the ACCO sector, particularly CAAFLU, NAAFLS and NPYWC demonstrates the NT Governments commitment to delivering on key national frameworks including the National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap and the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children (2023–2027).

A truly collaborative partnership is consistent with Priority Reforms One and Two of the National Agreement for Closing the Gap, which are:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are empowered to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress on Closing the Gap.
- Building the community-controlled sector: There is a strong and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector delivering high-quality services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country.

An effective partnership with our NT FVPLS members would span multiple themes, including representation on key Advisory bodies such as NT Aboriginal Advisory Board; community engagement and co-design on new initiatives; and a commitment to ensuring that the sector is sufficiently funded to provide sustainable, community-led, culturally safe solutions and interventions.

We are all committed to the elimination DFSV however for the Commonwealth and NT Governments to achieve the Closing the Gap targets, this relies on true partnership and an ongoing investment in self-determined solutions, designed with First Nations communities, FVPLSs and other ACCOs.

NT Coronial Inquest

The NT Coronial Inquest into the domestic violence murders of Kumarn Rubuntja, Kumanjayi Haywood, Ngeygo Ragurk and Miss Yunupingu provides a pivotal moment for the NT Government to implement system reforms that will ensure the future ongoing protection of First Nations women and children. Of the 35 recommendations within the report, the recommendation to establish an NT peak body is a critical action that would ensure jurisdictional representation, advocacy, collaboration and accountability for the sector. FNAAFV and our NT members support the adoption of this initiative and implore the NT Government to reconsider it's position not to implement this recommendation.

Our asks

1. We strongly urge the NT Government to invite the management from our NT FVPLS members – CAAFLU, NAAFLS and NPYWC, to be a part of the NT Aboriginal Advisory Board. This would enhance the Boards skills mix through the inclusion of legal DFSV expertise.
2. We encourage the NT Government to meaningfully engage with CAAFLU, NAAFLS and NPYWC on the draft Roadmap and proposed initiatives. Now is the ideal time to leverage their expertise and work in true partnership to progress the Closing the Gap Targets 10 - 13.

3. We implore the NT Government to reconsider its position regarding the establishment of an NT DFSV Peak Body. A state based DFSV Peak would increase oversight and accountability and demonstrates the government's commitment to addressing the DFSV crisis.
4. We strongly recommend that the NT Government partner with the ACCO sector to ensure that each of the supported Coronial Inquest Recommendations will be community-led, culturally appropriate and implemented effectively.

End notes

For any further information, please contact FNAAFV at info@fnaafv.org.au.