

VICTIM SURVIVOR LETTER FOR NATIONAL ACTION PLAN

Monday 30 August 2021

This letter is written by an Australia-wide collective of domestic, family and sexual violence abuse and violence (DFSV) victim-survivors and survivor advocates. We have differing individual backgrounds, experiences of DFSV and childhood abuse, and perspectives on reform. Collectively, we are united in our conviction that the next national action plan and Women's Safety Summit would benefit from direct and substantive engagement with DFSV victim-survivors. It is our diversity of experience that provides nuance and insights to inform policies and decisions with depth and meaning for the actual impacts of government planning and realisation of its aims.

We ask that all the contributing governments support:

1. The establishment of a Victim Survivors Expert Advisory Panel for the next national plan to guide its development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and
2. Embedding victim-survivor lived experience expertise through the principles of co-design and co-production in all DFSV policy, program design and service delivery, funded by or contributing to the national action plan, across primary prevention, early intervention, crisis response, and recovery.

At the date of drafting, victim-survivors have not been engaged as a valued stakeholder group, respected for the depth of knowledge and insights that only victim-survivors can offer about our own needs and how to reduce DFSV.

Victim-survivors are, in effect, a primary user/consumer of DFSV reforms and strategic plans. We note that to maximise utility, the target group would be instrumental in any other consultation for a change initiative or product design. For example, consumer involvement would include the end-user experience and input at all lifecycle stages (from idea generation/initiation, through to development, and deployment, and post implementation review).

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Much of the DFSV sectors' knowledge base on perpetration, experience, and requirements for effective responses has been informed by victim-survivor advocacy and research. While we are aware that professionals and experts have been sought out and consulted, they are not substitute for our own expertise and do not speak for us.

Substantive consultation with a broad range of victim-survivors, in their capacity as lived-experience experts, will identify opportunities, gaps and unintended adverse outcomes that only those with lived-experience can identify. Absent these victim-survivor consultations and input throughout its lifecycle, it is certain that the next national action plan's potential for real impact will be limited, and in some cases initiatives may harm DFSV victim-survivors and imperil their welfare.

We urge the governments to learn from the lessons of Closing the Gap. Making decisions for us (victim-survivors) without ascertaining if they will work for us, limits effect and may make us more unsafe.

Violence is a problem for victims, but it's not a victim's problem. Victim-survivors are more than the result of the abuse perpetrated against us. We are resourceful, smart resilient, and capable. Victim-survivors have a vested interest in making sure the next national action plan drives the change we need to see. We are part of the solution.

We ask that governments treat victim-survivors with dignity and respect by supporting the above requests, choosing to work with us as valued stakeholders in the decisions affecting our lives, our children's lives, and for future generations.

For parties who would like to work with and benefit from victim-survivor expertise, or for media enquiries, please contact:

Mishka at PoliceDV@protonmail.com and/or
Lula at lula.dembele@yahoo.com.au; [@DLulabele](https://www.instagram.com/DLulabele)

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TO:

Senator the Hon Anne Ruston Minister for Women's Safety (Cth)
Senator the Hon Marisse Payne Minister for Women (Cth)
Hon Yvette Berry MLA Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence (ACT)
Hon Mark Speakman MP Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (NSW)
Hon Kate Worden MLA Minister for Territory Families (NT)
Hon Shannon Fentiman MP Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence (Qld)
Hon Michelle Lensink MLC Minister for Human Services (SA)
Hon Jacquie Petrusma MP Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence (Tas)
Hon Gabrielle Williams MP Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence (Vic)
Hon Simone McGurk MLA Minister for the Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence (WA)

CC:

Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Shadow Minister for Women (Cth)
Hon Linda Burney MP, Shadow Minister for Family and Social Services (Cth)
Elizabeth Kikkert MLA, Shadow Minister for Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence (ACT)
Jodie Harrison MP, Shadow Minister for Women, and Shadow Minister for Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (NSW)
Katie Washington, Shadow Minister for Family and Community Services (NSW)
Ms Mari-Clare Boothby, Shadow Minister for Women (NT)
Mr Joshua Burgoyne, Shadow Minister for Families and Urban Housing (NT)
Ms Amanda Camm MP, Shadow Minister for Child Protection, Shadow Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, Shadow Minister for Women's Economic Security (Qld)
Ms Rosslyn Bates MP, Shadow Minister for Women (Qld)
Katrine Hildyard MP, Shadow Minister for Women & the Prevention of Domestic & Family Violence (SA)
Michelle O'Bryne MP, Shadow Minister for Women and Shadow Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence
Ms Emma Kealy MP, Shadow Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, and Shadow Minister for Women (Vic)
Senator Larissa Waters (Cth)
Senator Jenny McAllister (Cth)