

FAIR AGENDA

Embargoed: 4AM Thursday 2nd September

Experts lay out solutions blueprint, demand action at Women's Safety Summit

Ahead of the commencement of the national Women's Safety Summit today, safety experts from around the country have united behind 12 joint actions they say must form the foundation of the next National Plan, and the Morrison Government's commitments at the Summit.

"Experts across Australia have laid out a blueprint for a safer future. These are clear foundations that the Government should be locking in for the next National Plan immediately. Too many women's lives have been stolen from them. Our communities need action that matches the scale of this problem, and the Summit is a pivotal opportunity for governments across the country to act." Jacqui Watt, CEO, No To Violence.

Key safety services have laid out 12 actions in a joint Open Letter, including calling for governments to: increase the focus on preventing and responding to sexual violence, expand pathways for accountability so that survivor wellbeing isn't contingent on the completion of years-long criminal processes, step up efforts to stop violence before it starts, and to shift the burden to perpetrators to prevent harm.

The Open Letter has been signed by over 190 organisations and thousands of individuals:

"There is immense support for these changes; people want to secure safety for themselves, their families and the next generation. A hundred thousand people turned out to march for justice earlier this year; and now experts have laid out the foundations needed for a safer future. Governments now need to act on them." - Renee Carr, Executive Director of Fair Agenda.

The letter has been sent to all members of the National Women's Safety Taskforce, including Ministers Ruston and Payne, who are set to deliver the closing address at the Summit. Advocates say that closing addresses must include a commitment to these areas for action.

"Every day our member services are trying to work within a system that isn't fully designed to keep women, children and gender diverse people safe. We need transformative change. Experts from around the country already know what's necessary, and we've come together to lay out what every single sexual, domestic and family violence service peak across the country agrees is needed as the foundation. Now we need governments to make it happen." Delia Donovan, CEO of Domestic Violence NSW.

"Ministers Ruston and Payne are set to deliver the closing address at the Summit. That should include a commitment to lock in these actions as the framework for the next National Plan, and

the materials needed to start building the safer future we need.” - Bonney Corbin, Chairperson, Australian Women’s Health Network.

“First Nations women are the experts of our own lives, safety and the safety of our communities and children. That is why it is so crucial that any national plan includes the voices, experiences and expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander women. For any National Plan to truly realise safety for our women, it must recognise the way the current system is failing First Nations women, it must resource and empower community-led solutions and it must invest in the basic building blocks we all need to live safe and healthy lives: housing, economic security and support for our families.” Wynetta Dewis, Co-Chair National FVPLS Forum

“Sexual violence plagues our workplaces, schools, institutions, homes and public spaces. We need deep, systemic change that deals with sexual violence everywhere it occurs - and that starts with greater government investment in sexual violence prevention and services.” said Joanne Sheehan-Paterson, Chairperson of National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence.

“To prevent violence before it starts, we need to address the underlying causes of gendered violence - including a pervasive, troubling culture of gender inequity in government, the corporate sector and the workplace, which is contributing to economic insecurity for Australian women and a high risk of poverty across the life course. The Commonwealth alone has the levers to change this at the Summit.” Tanja Kovac, GEN VIC.

“We have waited a long time for this moment. Delegates should be able to leave this Summit assured that the Australian Government is committed to doing what it takes to create a safer future - including a commitment that these 12 jointly backed actions will form the foundation for the next National Plan, and resources are in place to lay those foundations - so we can build from them, and have a full and effective national framework for action over the next 12 years.” Tania Farha, CEO, Domestic Violence Victoria and the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria.

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Available spokespeople:

- DV NSW - Delia Donovan, Domestic Violence NSW
- DV Vic/DVRCV - Tania Farha, CEO
- No To Violence - Jacqui Watt, Chief Executive Officer
- Joanne Sheehan-Paterson, Chairperson of National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence.
- Wynetta Dewis, Co-Chair National FVPLS Forum

The Women's Safety Summit is commencing Thursday 2nd September with roundtable discussions, keynotes and panels begin next week. The Summit was rescheduled from July.

The 12 actions called for in the joint open letter are:

- Build stronger foundations in our community to prevent violence before it starts.
- Prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community led initiatives.
- Increase capacity across our communities to recognise and respond to early signs of abuse.
- Increase and extend investment in specialist support services.
- Increase and expand the focus on sexual violence.
- Shift the burden to the person who uses violence.
- Recognise children and young people as victims in their own right.
- Expand research to build evidence-based services.
- Reform the Family Law system.
- Tailor initiatives and responses to community needs.
- Expand victim-survivor choice and control through expanded pathways for support and accountability beyond police and criminal courts.
- Invest in programmes with long-term funding, to give them enough time to work.

Members of the public, and supportive organisations are invited to add their support to the call for these changes ahead of the Summit at safetysummit.org.au