



Strengthening the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Sector

**Workforce Development
Strategy 2025–2035**

Acknowledgement of Country

The New South Wales (NSW) Government acknowledges and pays respects to all Aboriginal peoples across NSW. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Nations of Australia, whose lands we live and work upon, and whose winds and waters we all share. We acknowledge the diversity and richness of Aboriginal Nations and languages across NSW. We pay our respects to Aboriginal Elders past and present. We value Aboriginal history, culture, and knowledge and the many ways it enriches the life of our nation and communities.

We recognise that Aboriginal peoples — through the ongoing impacts of colonisation and systemic racism — have experienced high levels of violence and institutional abuse. The result is an enduring legacy of intergenerational trauma, devastating impacts to social determinants of health and barriers to care. Responsiveness to these factors is crucial to closing the gap between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginal people.

In this context, all work carried out under this strategy must:

- ▶ respect the specific experiences of Aboriginal peoples
- ▶ work towards ensuring activities and reforms are culturally appropriate and safe
- ▶ nurture the spirit, resilience and cultural identity of Aboriginal peoples, families, and communities.

We acknowledge the Aboriginal women and men in the domestic and family violence workforce who work in and out of community every day to provide support to those impacted by this epidemic. We recognise that Aboriginal peoples, organisations and communities have shared their wisdom, knowledge, experiences and expertise in contributing to the development of this strategy and the ongoing partnership that will be required in implementing this work.

The NSW Government is committed to transforming the way in which we work with Aboriginal peoples to achieve better outcomes for those impacted by domestic and family violence. We are committed to supporting the ongoing efforts of Aboriginal peoples to reduce the effects of individual and collective trauma and violence. We respect the rights of Aboriginal peoples to self-determination and agency.



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The artwork in this report was developed by Mumbulla Creative. It depicts the traditional Indigenous practice of weaving. Weaving involves the coming together of many threads to create something strong and resilient. In this artwork, the fibres represent the many parts of the Strengthening the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Sector Workforce Development Strategy which contribute to the development of a strong and supported domestic and family violence workforce.



Message from the Minister

In Australia, one in four women will experience violence by an intimate partner or family member by the age of 15.

Domestic and family violence impacts everyone, however, some members of our community are at a higher risk of experiencing it – this includes Aboriginal women, women living with disability, women from multicultural backgrounds including migrants and refugees, older women, women living in regional areas and people of diverse sexualities and gender identities. These are not just statistics, they are lives lost, families shattered and communities grieving.

As the Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, I see firsthand the tireless work of the domestic and family violence specialist workforce.

This workforce is fundamental to the ongoing delivery of support to women and children experiencing domestic and family violence in our community. Specialist domestic and family violence workers in New South Wales are highly skilled, passionate and resilient. I acknowledge the work they have been leading since the first refuge, Elsie, opened in New South Wales in 1974. I also recognise the leadership of Aboriginal women and communities in responding to domestic and family violence.

I understand the pressures this sector faces. In the previous year alone, the DFV workforce responded to over 38,000 incidents of domestic violence-related assaults in NSW.

This volume highlights the need for a strategic response for the sector and its workforce.

Strengthening the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Sector: Workforce Development Strategy (2025–2035) is the NSW Government's 10-year commitment to build a stronger and more sustainable workforce.

I am proud that we are doing this work to support this workforce – that help our most vulnerable when they need it most.

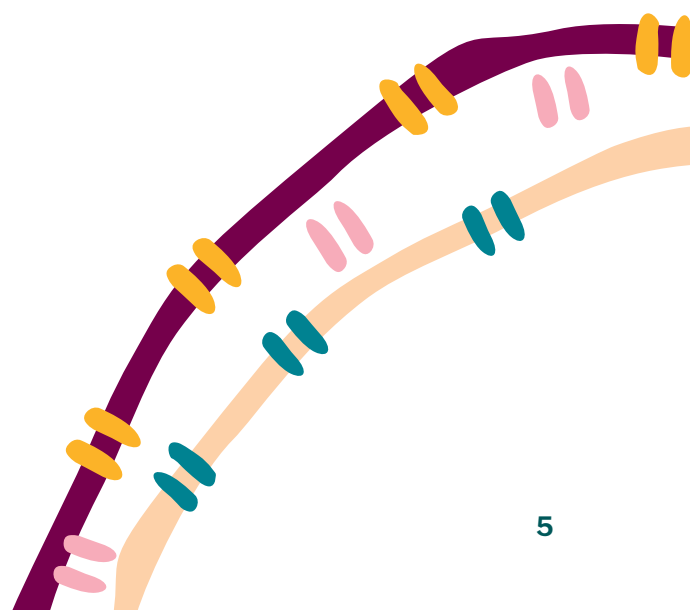
What makes this strategy powerful is the voices that helped to shape it. Their message was clear – the workforce needs better support, targeted training and resources to continue to do what they do in a demanding and evolving space.

This strategy's focus is the retention and recruitment of highly skilled professionals who are required to deliver critical services to victim-survivors and perpetrators of domestic and family violence. Importantly, it will address the wellbeing of the workforce itself – because those who care for others must be cared for too.

To everyone who contributed to this strategy, thank you. Your insights will shape the future of domestic and family violence services in New South Wales.

Together, we will build a safer, more supportive system for the workforce, for survivors and for our state.

The Hon. Jodie Elizabeth HARRISON, MP
Minister for Women, Minister for Seniors, and
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence
and Sexual Assault



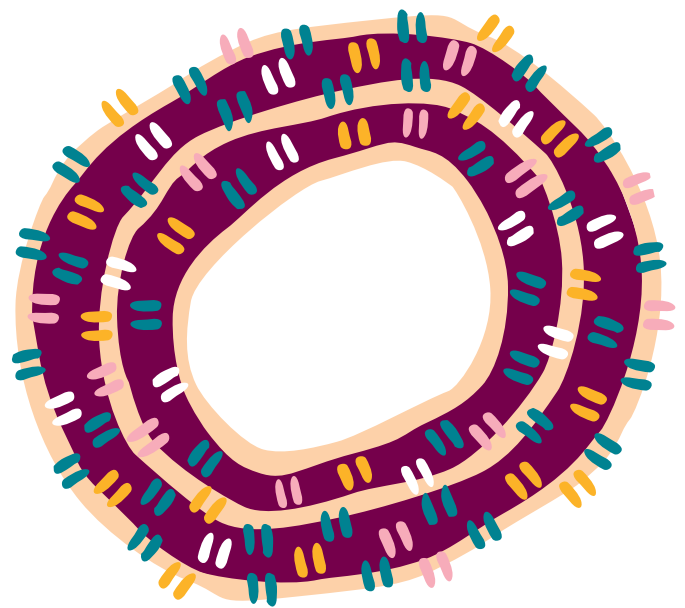
The language of this strategy

Our aim is to use inclusive language in this strategy without the intention of causing harm.

While acknowledging that most domestic and family violence is perpetrated by cisgender, heterosexual men against women, we also recognise the impact of gender-based violence on individuals with diverse sexualities and gender identities. The terminology used in this strategy reflects that of key NSW and national frameworks, including the *NSW Domestic and Sexual Violence Plans 2022-2027* and the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*.

This strategy uses the Diversity Council of Australia's definitions of diversity and intersectionality:

- ▶ The term **diversity** refers to 'the mix of people in an organisation', encompassing the full range of differences between people, including how they identify in regard to their social identity (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background, age, culture, sexuality and gender) and professional identity (e.g. education, organisational level and geographical location). All these characteristics 'come together in a unique way for each individual' and 'shape the way they view and perceive their world and workplace'.¹
- ▶ The term **intersectionality** refers to 'the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation'.²
- ▶ Importantly, these definitions are **identity-based** and acknowledge that 'the starting point should be how each of us identifies ourselves rather than how others categorise or label us. It also allows for **multiple intersecting diversity dimensions**: for each person, 'these different dimensions come together or 'intersect' to form their particular identity'. For example, an individual may not just identify as a trans person, but also someone with a disability who comes from an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background.³



The following terms are used in this strategy:

- ▶ **First Nations people** is a collective name for the original people of Australia and their descendants. It is used to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first peoples of Australia and to emphasise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lived on this continent prior to European invasion. While this document uses the terms 'First Nations', 'Aboriginal' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' peoples interchangeably, in NSW 'Aboriginal' is often used in preference to 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of NSW.
- ▶ **LGBTIQ+** is used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, sistergirls and brotherboys, asexual people, or people otherwise diverse in gender, sexual orientation and/or innate variations of sex characteristics.
- ▶ The term **lived experience** refers to people with 'expertise gained from having a specific life experience and knowledge'⁴ of domestic and family violence. We recognise the value of the emerging term **lived expertise** but use the term **lived experience** in the context of this strategy as it is more widely recognised and understood.

- ▶ **Victim-survivor** refers to adults, primarily women, children and young people, who have or are experiencing domestic and family violence.
- ▶ **Perpetrator** refers to adults, primarily men, who perpetrate domestic and family violence.

We acknowledge that some people and communities may prefer to use the term 'people who experience violence' rather than victim-survivor and 'people who use violence' rather than perpetrator.

We also note that some organisations prefer the term 'men who use violence' to recognise the gendered nature of domestic and family violence.

- ▶ The term **domestic and family violence workforce** is used to describe the workforce delivering service responses to victim-survivors and perpetrators of domestic and family violence.
- ▶ The term **domestic and family violence** – rather than the abbreviation DFV – is used where the issue of domestic and family violence is discussed. This is in recognition of the seriousness of the problem and the severity of its impacts on individuals and communities.
- ▶ The term **Men's Behaviour Change Program** is used to describe group programs designed to support men to recognise their violent behaviours and to stop using violence. After the first occurrence, it is abbreviated to MBCP.
- ▶ The term **participant** is used to refer to those who were involved in the consultations for this project, unless stated otherwise.
- ▶ The term **colonial load** is used to refer to the frequently invisible additional workload imposed, both knowingly and unknowingly, on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by settlers and institutions as a result of colonisation.⁵

- ▶ The term **cultural humility** 'emphasises self-reflection, individual and institutional accountability, and the mitigation of systemic power imbalances'.⁶ It requires a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique to support individuals to understand their own cultural assumptions, biases and values, to increase their understanding of cultural differences and improve the treatment of members of vulnerable groups.
- ▶ A **taxonomy** is a classification system that organises things according to groups or types.

Thanks to contributors

The Department of Communities and Justice would like to thank members of the sector, including from the organisations listed below, for their contributions and collaboration, which greatly contributed to the development of this strategy

We would also like to thank the victim-survivors who willingly gave their voices and time to help shape this strategy from the perspectives of people who use these vital services. The Department would also like to extend its gratitude to RMIT's Workforce Innovation and Development Institute for the work supporting development of the strategy, and to Cultural Perspectives and BlackBirds Culture for support in facilitating consultations.

54 Reasons	Birrang	Department of Premier and Cabinet	Kempsey Families
Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT	Bondi Beach Cottage	Domestic Violence NSW	Legal Aid NSW Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Program
Aboriginal Medical Service	Carrie's Place	Domestic Violence NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee	Liberty Services
Aboriginal Women's Advisory Network	CatholicCare	Domestic Violence NSW Lived Expertise Policy Advisory Group	Linking Communities Network
ACON	City of Parramatta, Prevention and Inclusion	Domestic Violence NSW Migrant and Refugee Advisory Committee	Luke Addinsall Counselling and Consultancy
ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Office	Coast Shelter	Domestic Violence Service Management	Maayu Mali Rehabilitation Services
Adira: NSW Multicultural Centre for Women's and Family Safety	Community Legal Centres NSW	DV West	Men & Family Centre
Advocate for Children and Young People	Corrective Services NSW	Equips DFV, Corrective Services NSW	Mission Australia
Ageing and Disability Commission	Department of Communities and Justice Homelessness, Disability and Seniors	EveryMan	Miyay Birray Youth Services
Anglicare	Department of Communities and Justice Multicultural Policy and Engagement	FAMS	Moree Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service
ANROWS	Department of Communities and Justice Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes	Fullstop Australia	Mount Druitt Family Violence Services
Association of Children's Welfare Agencies	Department of Education	HealthShare NSW	Moving Forward
Australian Childhood Foundation	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Victoria	Housing Plus	Muslim Women Australia
Australian Services Union	Department of Justice and Attorney-General Queensland	Hunter DFV Consortium	National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
Australian Services Union Women's Services Sub-Division		Immigrant Women's SpeakOut Association	Network of Alcohol and other Drugs Agencies
Baptist Care		Jannawi Family Centre	No to Violence
		Jenny's Place	
		Just Reinvest NSW	
		Justice Support Centre	



North East MBC	Relationships Australia	Warringa Baiya
Northern CPPYJ	Salvation Army	Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre
NOVA for Women and Children	Sapphire Neighbourhood Services Bega	Women and Girl's Emergency Centre
NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation	Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors	Women's Community Shelters
NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence	Settlement Services International	Women's Counselling Centre
NSW Health PARVAN	Speak Out Advocacy	Women's Health Centres
NSW Health PARVAN First Nations team	Sydney West Multicultural Services	Women's Legal Services NSW
NSW Industrial Relations	Sydney Women's Counselling Centre	WorkUP Queensland
NSW Ministry of Health	TAFE NSW	Yfoundations
NSW Ombudsman	Talmunde Youth Services	Youth Justice NSW
NSW Police	The Deli Women & Children's Centre	Youth off the streets
NSW Treasury	Thiyamali Family Violence Service Indigenous Corporation	
Office of the Women's Safety Commissioner	Uniting Care	
Older Women's Network NSW	Upper Hunter Homeless Support	
People with Disability Australia	Unions NSW	
Pius X Aboriginal Corporation	Waminda	
Port Stephens Family and Neighbourhood Services	Warrina DFVSS	
Public Service Association	Western Sydney Local Health District	
Regional NSW		



Overview of the strategy

A highly skilled domestic and family violence workforce is critical to supporting the safety and wellbeing of our communities.

The *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* identifies violence against women and children as ‘a problem of epidemic proportions’.⁷ It commits to ‘ending violence against women and children in Australia in one generation’.⁸

To contribute to this national responsibility, NSW needs an evidence-based and strategic approach to the workforce delivering domestic and family violence specialist services. This responsibility is underpinned by the *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Plan 2022–2027*, which articulates a vision where ‘[a]ll people and communities in NSW are free from domestic, family and sexual violence’.⁹ Importantly, it highlights the need for a ‘supported and competent workforce’ to achieve this vision.

Recent national reports also recognise a need to focus on workforce. A central theme of the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission’s *2024 Yearly Report to Parliament* included ‘Building workforce capacity’, with the report calling for both a national approach to workforce development and prioritisation in this area.¹⁰ Further, the *Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches* found there was an urgent need to build the specialist workforce, as well as the need to uplift and expand workforce capability of all services that engage with victim-survivors and perpetrators.¹¹



Vision

The NSW Government has a vision of continuing to grow and develop a skilled and diverse workforce that provides essential specialist domestic and family violence services to communities across the state.

This vision will build upon the existing wealth of knowledge and expertise within the sector to deliver evidence-based, trauma-informed, effective and collaborative responses to domestic and family violence that meet community demand.



Purpose

Strengthening the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Sector: Workforce Development Strategy 2025–2035 has been developed to inform government policy and investment in order to grow a sustainable sector that can attract, retain and support a diverse workforce capable of meeting increasing service demand.

The strategy seeks to boost the sector’s capacity to provide timely and accessible response services that prioritise the safety of victim-survivors.

How we will deliver on this purpose

Strengthening the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Sector: Workforce Development Strategy 2025–2035 is NSW’s first strategy that supports the non-government specialist domestic and family violence response workforce. It offers a clear vision for strengthening the workforce across NSW and identifies seven key areas for action.

The non-government specialist domestic and family violence response workforce in NSW is diverse and is not clearly defined. This workforce is found in specialist domestic and family violence case management services, crisis and refuge specialist homelessness services, Aboriginal controlled organisations, migrant and refugee specialist organisations, community housing, women’s legal and women’s court advocacy services, Men’s Behaviour Change Programs, women’s health centres, and general community, women and children’s support programs. Outside of specialist services, there are also many specialist practitioners who work within non-specialist organisations.

The strategy prioritises actions that support the non-government specialist domestic and family violence response workforce due to the urgent need to better support these workers and organisations. The strategy acknowledges this workforce sits within a broader domestic and family violence service system that includes specialist government workforces that also work with victim-survivors and/or perpetrators. A diagram depicting the broader domestic and family violence service system is below at Figure 1., this diagram is an overview and not exhaustive.

Although the strategy prioritises actions that support the non-government specialist domestic and family violence response workforce, select actions will also support the broader workforce and service system, particularly activity aimed at improving collaboration and integration. The strategy has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders and draws on international research and policy and practice evidence at national and state levels. It is informed by the results of the 2023 Baseline Survey of the Domestic and Family Violence Workforce (the Baseline Survey) which provided first-of-its-kind data on the experiences of the specialist workforce in NSW.

It sets out areas of action, with the intention that rolling action plans will be developed and a continuous improvement framework applied. It will ensure a robust approach to monitoring and evaluating the identified areas of action. Implementation of the actions will be guided by the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework, which sets out a vision for achieving First Nations gender justice and equality in Australia. It is acknowledged that Aboriginal women and children are more impacted by domestic and family violence and are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence and six times more likely to die as a result. It is also acknowledged that Aboriginal women have the knowledge and solutions for addressing domestic and family violence in their communities.

Workforce development

Government and community awareness of the prevalence of domestic and family violence has increased, along with an understanding of the challenges of recruiting, retaining and sustaining a workforce that delivers services that prioritise safety, respond to the needs of victim-survivors, and hold perpetrators responsible for changing their behaviour.

As awareness has grown, the demand on the service system has increased in volume and complexity. This has been exacerbated by recent natural disasters in NSW and the COVID-19 pandemic. Contemporary understandings of workforce development favour systems-based approaches that support ongoing adaptation to continually changing workforce environments¹², enhance the sustainability of workforces¹³, and improve client outcomes.¹⁴ Effective workforce development emphasises strengthening existing workforce policies and outcomes at all system levels – individual, organisational and societal – and ensures agile and adaptable future workforces.¹⁵

In the context of this strategy, workforce development is defined as the coordination of a broad range of legislation, policies and practices to build and enhance the capability of individual workers, the capacity of organisations and the effectiveness of the service system to respond to domestic and family violence.

Background

Domestic and family violence is one of Australia's most pervasive and profound social problems. It is prevalent across the Australian community, with one in four women experiencing violence by an intimate partner or family member since the age of 15.¹⁶

Domestic and family violence is the product of complex and deeply entrenched social, cultural, political and economic factors and is widely understood as a gendered issue.¹⁷ While domestic and family violence can happen to anyone and every experience of family violence is unique, we know that women are at far greater risk of experiencing such violence than men.¹⁸ We also know that people of diverse sexualities and gender identities are impacted by gender-based violence in complex ways, and that violence against people of all genders is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men.¹⁹

Those at the highest risk of experiencing domestic and family violence are those in regional areas, young people, members of First Nations communities, people living with disability, people from multicultural backgrounds including migrant, refugee and multilingual backgrounds and members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

- ▶ Domestic violence occurs at higher rates per capita in remote and regional areas in NSW.²⁰
- ▶ In NSW, 1 in 10 victims of domestic assault are young people.²¹
- ▶ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience violence at more than three times the rate of violence against non-Indigenous women.²²
- ▶ Women with disabilities in Australia are around two times more likely than women without disabilities to experience intimate partner violence.²³
- ▶ More than 6 in 10 LGBTIQ+ people have experienced intimate partner violence.²⁴
- ▶ One in three migrant women in Australia have experienced domestic violence.²⁵

The high incidence of domestic and family violence and its wide-ranging social and economic impacts have been identified by a range of national, state and territory investigations, inquiries, reports and royal commissions. The impact of domestic and family violence upon individuals, families and communities is substantial and enduring. It can cause significant physical and psychological harm, sometimes resulting in death. It intersects with other social issues – such as alcohol and other drug use or misuse, mental health conditions, homelessness and poverty – in complex and challenging ways.

An estimated 2.7 million Australian women and 1.1 million Australian men have experienced intimate partner or family member violence since the age of 15.²⁶

Over the past decade, national awareness of domestic and family violence has increased significantly. High-profile cases reported by the media have shone a spotlight on the urgent need for more coordinated and effective domestic and family violence prevention and response systems. They have also raised the profile of the issue within the Australian community, promoting widespread support for stronger responses from political leaders.

The Commonwealth shares responsibility with the states and territories for the laws and systems in place to address this serious, prevalent and preventable community safety and justice issue.²⁷

Every 10 days, on average, a woman is killed because of intimate partner violence.²⁸

In the 12 months to March 2025, a total of 38,108 incidents of domestic violence-related assaults were recorded in NSW alone.²⁹



Figure 1. NSW Domestic and Family Violence Service System

Research findings underpinning the strategy

This strategy is underpinned by significant research. A research and evidence review of policy and practice for effective domestic and family violence workforce development was commissioned.

It reviewed relevant academic literature and conducted an environmental scan of domestic and family violence workforce development across four key jurisdictions (national, NSW, Victoria, and Queensland). This research was further informed by the results of the Baseline Survey and in-depth consultation with the specialist sector, government agencies and broader intersecting workforces, which included 92 organisations and over 230 attendees.

The research underpinning this strategy identified key insights:

1 Not enough is known about the domestic and family violence workforce.

Robust data collection and regular surveys are required to understand the workforce. A clearer understanding of the range of current and emerging job roles is needed.

2 Prioritising health, safety and wellbeing is essential to the sustainability of the workforce.

Widespread short staffing and high workloads across the domestic and family violence sector increase the chance of burnout and fatigue for workers. This is compounded by the personal impacts of crisis work and the associated risk of vicarious trauma. Domestic and family violence practitioners often lack time for and/or access to regular, high-quality clinical supervision. Strong adherence to work, health and safety obligations is necessary to improve psychosocial outcomes for workers. Supportive organisational cultures can also have a positive impact on staff retention.

3 Workplace safety and workforce health and wellbeing initiatives require an organisational and sectoral approach.

Sole responsibility should not rest with individual employees. Instead, trauma-informed organisations and systems are needed to minimise stress, burnout and vicarious trauma in the workplace. Sector-wide initiatives that promote health and wellbeing can help to support safe and sustainable workplaces.

4 Funding structures, including project-based and time-limited funding, have a direct impact on the ability of services to attract, retain, support and develop staff.

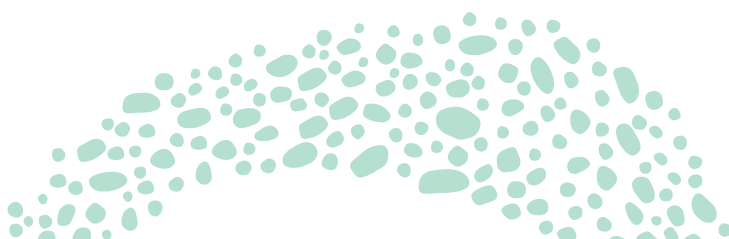
Short-term contracts and lack of job security negatively impact staff wellbeing and retention, and the overall sustainability of the domestic and family violence workforce. Equally, high workloads, constant backfilling and employee stress and burnout all adversely affect the quality of service delivery.

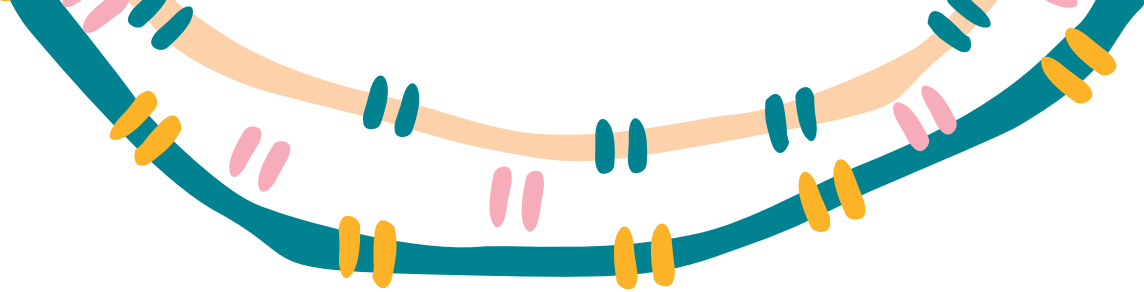
5 A lack of visible entry points into the workforce hinders attraction and retention of new staff.

Additionally, the pool of available graduates may experience 'placement poverty' and need to earn an income while studying. New models and supported pathways can help to attract workers from diverse backgrounds.

6 Recruitment processes need to be more inclusive and accessible.

Traditional recruitment methods pose a barrier to employment for many. Alternative recruitment methods that include supportive assessment and selection practices and diverse recruitment panels are crucial to diversifying the workforce.





7 The workforce does not reflect the communities it serves.

An intersectional lens is required to create a positive and supportive work environment for domestic and family violence practitioners and provide high-quality domestic and family violence service responses. Workforce diversity improves outcomes for service users and increases the job satisfaction and health and wellbeing of workers.

8 Cultural responsiveness needs to be embedded at the system level.

Working in organisations that are culturally unsafe and carrying high colonial loads can have significant impacts on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practitioners. Understanding First Nations people's ways of working and recognising the value of lived experience and cultural knowledge fosters a supportive environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander domestic and family violence workforce development. It also promotes inclusivity and respect for multicultural backgrounds within the broader organisational framework.

9 Domestic and family violence response work cannot be siloed.

Sharing fundamental knowledge across victim-survivor and perpetrator workforces would promote continuity of services and shared purpose. Domestic and family violence intersects with multiple other workforces and services. Respectful recognition of the similarities across service delivery and greater coordination and collaboration between domestic and family violence organisations and broader intersecting workforces are critical for effective domestic and family violence service system responses.

10 Regional, rural and remote areas require a tailored approach to workforce development.

Funding models do not adequately reflect local workforce challenges, access issues and the complexity and cost of service responses in these areas. Acute workforce shortages, coupled with housing shortages, are causing significant strain on the domestic and family violence service system in many of these areas.

11 New entrants frequently lack foundational training and the necessary knowledge, skills and capabilities to work in the domestic and family violence sector.

This can expose both new practitioners and their clients to unacceptable levels of risk. Additionally, induction programs are inconsistent, and some new workers are not supported with appropriate onboarding, induction and supervision.

12 Ongoing training is essential for practitioners to keep pace with new knowledge and changes in the field.

Workforce development needs to address the capability of staff to recognise and respond to the demands of domestic and family violence case complexity to ensure the system's capacity to respond effectively. Challenges to accessing ongoing training must be addressed, acknowledging this is particularly challenging for workers in remote and rural areas.

13 Career pathways within the sector are poorly defined.

This can limit career opportunities and negatively impact on workforce attraction and retention. Career pathways need to be better understood, clearly defined and accessible to a diverse workforce.

Workforce profile



An understanding of workforce profile is key to designing a workforce strategy that is fit for purpose.

To improve this understanding, first of its kind data on the profile of the NSW domestic and family violence workforce was generated through the following projects:

- ▶ An analysis of the NSW domestic and family violence workforce to estimate the size of the specialist workforce in NSW.
- ▶ The Baseline Survey of the NSW Domestic and Family Violence Workforce in 2023. NSW Health and NSW Police did not participate in the Baseline Survey.

Existing data on the national domestic and family violence workforce, drawn from the National Survey of Workers in Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Sectors (2018), enhances this understanding through providing a picture of the national workforce.

Government agencies will continue to work together to improve our understanding of the experiences, roles and needs of the workforce.



NSW domestic and family violence workforce size³⁰

The preliminary estimate of specialist domestic and family violence workers was approximately **3,300** workers in NSW in 2022.

The preliminary estimate of the broader workforce that intersects with domestic and family violence was approximately **260,000** workers in NSW in 2022.



Key **NSW** domestic and family violence workforce demographics³¹

- ▶ **88%** identify as a woman or female.
- ▶ **53%** are aged 35–54.
- ▶ **14%** identify as belonging to one or more LGBTIQA+ communities.
- ▶ **9%** identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- ▶ **9%** identify as having a disability.
- ▶ In terms of intersectional demographic groups³², **37%** identified with one demographic group, **5%** with two demographic groups, and **57%** did not identify with any intersectional demographic groups.
- ▶ **12%** speak a language(s) other than English at home.
- ▶ **7%** speak a language(s) other than English at home and at work, including with clients.
- ▶ The **5** most common languages spoken at home and/or work were Arabic (**14%**), Spanish (**11%**), Hindi (**9%**), Greek (**8%**) and Mandarin (**5%**).
- ▶ The most common qualification is a bachelor's degree (**36%**), with approximately one-third holding a non-degree qualification (**34%**), and the remainder holding a higher degree (**31%**).
- ▶ Two-thirds (**66%**) reported that they were employed in ongoing full-time roles while another **18%** held ongoing part-time positions.
- ▶ **56%** work for a community organisation, NGO, not-for-profit organisation or charity; **40%** work for the NSW Government.



Key **national** domestic, family and sexual violence workforce demographics³³

- ▶ **83.4%** identify as a woman or female.
- ▶ **49.8%** are aged 35–55.
- ▶ **8%** identify as belonging to one or more LGBTIQA+ communities.
- ▶ **4.9%** identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.
- ▶ **3.7%** identify as having a disability.
- ▶ **7.5%** speak a language(s) other than English at home.
- ▶ The most common qualification was a bachelor's degree (**36.3%**), followed by holding a postgraduate qualification (**30.5%**), then diploma-level qualifications (**23.5%**), and those with certificate-level or secondary school qualifications (**9.7%**).
- ▶ Almost two-thirds (**61.2%**) reported that they were employed in ongoing full-time roles while another **34.8%** held ongoing part-time positions.

Related NSW strategies and plans

Several related areas of work are underway in NSW that the strategy will align with:

- ▶ *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Plan 2022-2027*
- ▶ *NSW Sexual Violence Plan 2022-2027*
- ▶ *Working together to address domestic, family and sexual violence: NSW Women's Safety Commissioner Strategic Plan 2024-2027*
- ▶ *Pathways to Prevention: NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence 2024-2028*
- ▶ *NSW Health Strategy for Preventing and Responding to Domestic and Family Violence 2021-2026*
- ▶ *NSW Women's Strategy 2023-2026*
- ▶ *NSW Government's Secure Jobs and Funding Certainty for Community Services commitment*
- ▶ *NSW Disability Inclusion Plan 2021-2025*
- ▶ *SafeWork NSW Respect at Work Strategy: preventing sexual harassment (October 2023–October 2027)*
- ▶ *NSW Women's Health Framework*
- ▶ *2022-2024 NSW Implementation Plan for Closing the Gap*
- ▶ *Children First: 2022-2031, supported by Safety in Action 2022-2024 and Talking About It*
- ▶ *NSW Health's 2019 Integrated Prevention and Response to Violence, Abuse and Neglect Framework*

Strategic directions for workforce development

Seven strategic themes were identified through the literature review and environmental scans and consultations with the NSW specialist domestic and family violence sector and broader intersecting workforces.

Initial consultations with stakeholders sought input on the key challenges facing the domestic and family violence workforce. Ideas were sought to inform a 10-year vision for improvement that would build on the plans already identified in NSW and other jurisdictions.

Seven themes identified during the early consultations were tested, refined and endorsed by participants in later consultations. These themes are the focus areas for the 10-year strategy. Each of these themes set out areas for action.

Each action area has recommended steps to achieve the objectives. These are non-exhaustive and will be addressed through rolling action plans over the life of the strategy. Although the strategy prioritises actions that support the non-government specialist domestic and family violence response workforce, select actions will also support the broader workforce and service system, particularly activity aimed at improving collaboration and integration.

The strategy includes several First Nations community-led actions in recognition of the principle of self-determination. Noting the essential community-led element of these actions, the NSW Government does not presume what steps will be needed to achieve their objectives. Rather, these are initial suggestions based on existing research and evidence.

7 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1



Understanding the workforce

2



Prioritising workplace safety, health and wellbeing

3



Expanding the workforce pool

4



Driving workforce diversity

5



Improving service system collaboration

6



Supporting capability and competency development

7



Promoting consistency of job roles, pay and conditions

Action areas

1

Understanding the workforce



- 1.1** Map, describe and categorise the range and purpose of jobs across the NSW domestic and family violence response sector to create a domestic and family violence jobs family taxonomy.
- 1.2** Collect, analyse and compare data about the demographics of, and pathways through, the domestic and family violence workforce to inform recruitment and retention planning.

2

Prioritising workplace safety, health and wellbeing



- 2.1** Develop and implement service quality standards for organisations delivering domestic and family violence services in NSW.
- 2.2** Create a culturally responsive clinical supervision guide to promote access to regular, high-quality supervision for all frontline domestic and family violence specialists.
- 2.3** Develop a domestic and family violence workforce safety, health and wellbeing framework in collaboration with sector peak bodies.
- 2.4** Develop a First Nations community-led domestic and family violence Aboriginal worker safety, health and wellbeing framework.

3

Expanding the workforce pool



- 3.1** Examine the feasibility of models for student placements, traineeships, apprenticeships and internships to promote early recruitment to the sector.
- 3.2** Develop a series of journey maps about the supply, attraction and retention of the workforce in NSW, in accordance with the major qualifications used.
- 3.3** Examine options for alternative recruitment practices that are more inclusive and accessible.
- 3.4** Explore the feasibility of a central jobs hub to showcase job roles and support recruitment.
- 3.5** Develop First Nations community-led strategies to strengthen the pipeline of Aboriginal people into the domestic and family violence workforce.

4

Driving workforce diversity



- 4.1** Recognise and embed the value of lived experience in the workforce.
- 4.2** Develop a First Nations community-led workforce sustainability plan for Aboriginal people in NSW.
- 4.3** Partner with vocational and higher education bodies to diversify the student uptake and completion of domestic and family violence-related courses, ensure that coursework aligns with knowledge, skills and capabilities required to work in the sector, and encourage entry into the workforce.

5

Improving service system collaboration



- 5.1** Establish a common approach to risk assessment and safety framework for responding to victim-survivors, in consultation with the domestic and family violence sector.
- 5.2** Explore resourcing options to establish a peak body for perpetrator intervention programs in NSW.
- 5.3** Explore potential mechanisms for regional coordination.
- 5.4** Explore the feasibility of a statewide information hub to enable timely and effective sharing of information about domestic and family violence agencies and their programs, services, roles and responsibilities.
- 5.5** Support the establishment of communities of practice.

7

Promoting consistency of job roles, pay and conditions



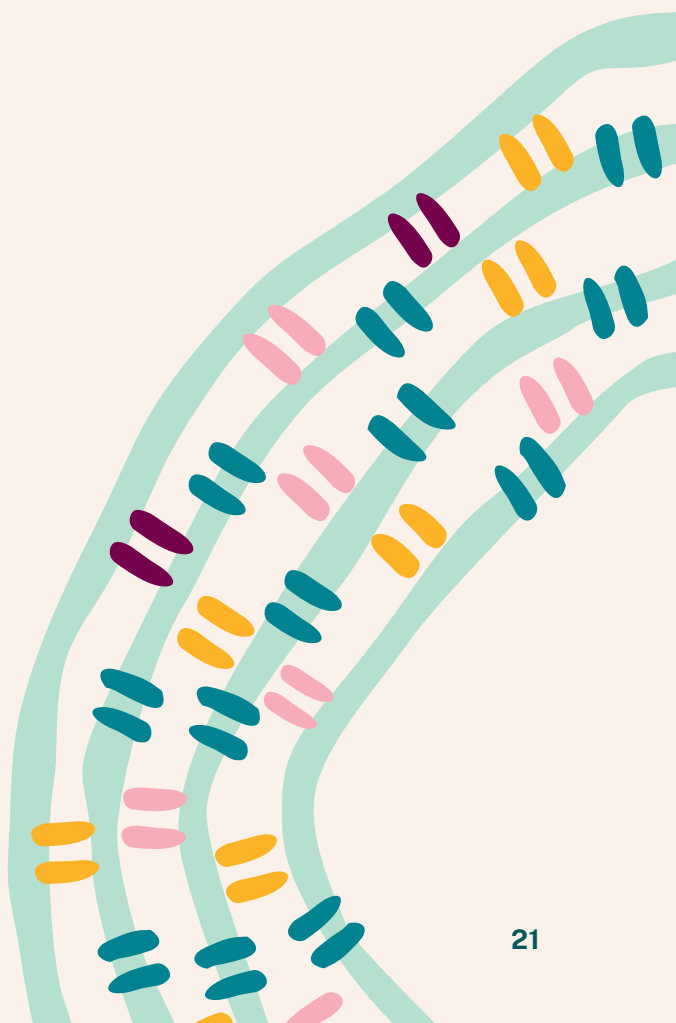
- 7.1** Apply the domestic and family violence jobs family taxonomy to develop a core functions framework that can be used for job role profiles and to support greater consistency in approaches to recruitment.
- 7.2** Explore the use of the Domestic and Family Violence Core Functions Framework to make career pathways more visible, inform industrial standards activities, and assist workforce planning, recruitment and retention for the domestic and family violence sector in NSW.

6

Supporting capability and competency development



- 6.1** Develop and deliver training on coercive control and the new criminal offence.
- 6.2** Undertake an audit of domestic and family violence professional development and training available in NSW. Assess the training needed to address identified gaps in the training service system, including uplifting capability to work with clients from diverse communities.
- 6.3** Develop an approach to support centralised statewide induction.
- 6.4** Prioritise career and leadership development programs for the domestic and family violence workforce.



Strategy and areas of action

1

Understanding the workforce



Although awareness of the prevalence of domestic and family violence has increased in Australia in recent years, the workforce that responds remains ‘largely invisible’.³⁴ Even less is known about the workforce within Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations responding to domestic and family violence, as evidenced by the lack of research in this area.

The lack of comprehensive information persists due to limited data and analysis on the composition of the workforce; the diverse nature of roles across victim-survivor, family and perpetrator services; and the varied organisational contexts in which they operate.

Increasing our knowledge through reliable data about the size and characteristics of the specialist domestic and family violence workforce is critical for strategic workforce planning that will drive change and improvements to meet current and future challenges.³⁵

To cultivate a resilient and sustainable workforce, it is important to more clearly understand the variety of domestic and family violence job roles. A specialist domestic and family violence worker is distinguished by their particular focus, knowledge and skills, and the functions they perform in their role.

The creation of a job family taxonomy maps specialist domestic and family violence job families and aggregates jobs that involve similar work and require common training, skills, knowledge and expertise. This can help to provide a clearer understanding of current jobs and untangle the complexity of roles that have emerged across NSW.

The job roles include responsibilities ranging from initial engagement and assessment to safety planning, advocacy and referral to support and/or Men’s Behaviour Change Programs. The workforce is expected to be trauma

informed and alert to non-collusive practice with individuals, families and groups. Administrative, practice and team leadership functions also support the workforce. These functions build capability, provide operational management and contribute to upholding best practice.

Action Area 1.1

Map, describe and categorise the range and purpose of jobs across the NSW domestic and family violence response sector to create a domestic and family violence jobs family taxonomy.

- ▶ Complete desktop review and mapping of roles across metropolitan, rural and remote areas to increase consistency and understanding of the purpose and key features of domestic and family violence jobs in NSW.
- ▶ Develop a domestic and family violence jobs family taxonomy that provides high-level clustering of roles with similar functions.
- ▶ Determine the applicability of the domestic and family violence jobs family taxonomy to the domestic and family violence workforce in consultation with organisations including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, migrant and refugee services and youth services.

Action Area 1.2

Collect, analyse and compare data about the demographics of and pathways through the domestic and family violence workforce to inform recruitment and retention planning.

- ▶ Consider application of existing evidence bases to build knowledge about workforce demographics (including parenting and caring responsibilities), role requirements, employment conditions, supervision, organisational characteristics, training and confidence, health and wellbeing, satisfaction and career pathways. Consider use of workforce surveys, public data sources and linked data sets.
- ▶ Explore feasibility of establishing systematic monitoring and providing support for organisational uptake of workforce development systems and practices in organisations offering domestic and family violence services.
- ▶ Explore feasibility of refining and conducting workforce surveys at regular intervals.
- ▶ Produce more information and evidence on the experiences and needs of workers where there is limited existing data, including workers with a disability, LGBTIQ+ workers and male workers (including Aboriginal male workers, male workers from multicultural backgrounds including migrant, refugee and multilingual backgrounds, male workers that identify as being part of the LGBTIQ+ community and male workers with a disability) to inform future development work. This may include targeted consultation.



There is evidence that working with clients affected by domestic and family violence can take a significant toll on practitioners.

Domestic and family violence response work is complex, often crisis driven, and commonly delivered in workplace environments characterised by high demand and limited resourcing. The health and wellbeing implications for the workforce delivering victim-survivor services are widely accepted, with the stressful nature of the work linked to a range of negative health and wellbeing outcomes including workplace stress³⁶, vicarious trauma³⁷, burnout³⁸ and compassion fatigue.³⁹

Working with perpetrators is difficult and complex work that requires adequate practitioner supports to safeguard against burnout and other health and wellbeing issues.⁴⁰

Additionally, individual health and wellbeing issues incur significant costs at organisational and system levels, including reduced productivity, increased absenteeism, and challenges with workforce retention.⁴¹

Establishing a workplace environment that values and responds to the health and wellbeing of staff members is crucial to addressing risks and avoiding potential impacts on workers, organisations and consequently service users.

Safety, health and wellbeing need to be prioritised and a trauma-informed framework applied to support the workforce. This is in addition to the provisions already set out under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (NSW)*.⁴² Organisational initiatives that promote health and wellbeing can help support workplaces to be both safe and sustainable.⁴³

Action Area 2.1

Develop and implement service quality standards for organisations delivering domestic and family violence services in NSW.

- ▶ Consult with the sector to articulate the scope and objectives of the quality standards and an implementation system that allows for continuous quality improvement.
- ▶ Define specialist domestic and family violence work through the establishment of foundational concepts and principles.
- ▶ Ensure that standards address intersectional workforce development and cultural security within and across organisations.
- ▶ Embed cultural responsiveness within practice, focusing on effectively meeting the needs of all communities.

Action Area 2.2

Create a culturally responsive clinical supervision guide to promote access to regular, high-quality supervision for all frontline domestic and family violence specialists.

- ▶ Develop an intersectional approach to supervision that is delivered according to knowledge, skills and experience in the delivery of trauma-informed domestic and family violence services.
- ▶ Support flexible delivery formats, considering accessibility barriers, particularly for regional, rural and remote workers.
- ▶ Explore the feasibility of resourcing clinical supervision training modules to increase the number of accessible and appropriate supervisors.
- ▶ Explore supporting delivery of cultural safety training for supervisors to ensure they work in a culturally responsive manner.

Action Area 2.3

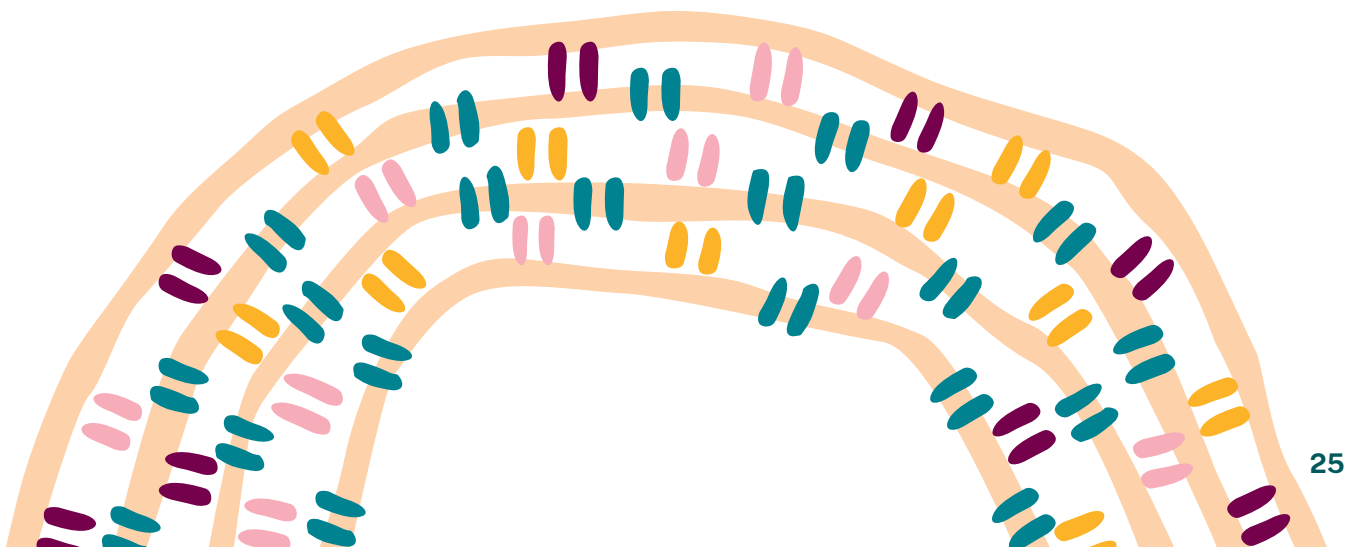
Develop a domestic and family violence workforce safety, health and wellbeing framework in collaboration with sector peak bodies.

- ▶ Draw on the work undertaken in other jurisdictions.
- ▶ Ensure that the framework addresses individual, organisational and system-wide conditions and responsibilities.
- ▶ Ensure that the framework addresses how to support employee wellbeing when faced with discrimination, including racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia and ageism.
- ▶ Ensure that the framework addresses workforce safety, health and wellbeing when working remotely, on site, in the office and in hybrid setups.
- ▶ Consider gender dynamics and gender specific risks, particularly in roles working with perpetrators.
- ▶ Explore the feasibility of developing an online hub of resources addressing workforce safety, health and wellbeing issues (e.g. vicarious trauma, burnout and occupational stress).

Action Area 2.4

Develop a First Nations community-led domestic and family violence Aboriginal worker safety, health and wellbeing framework.

- ▶ Use the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework to guide development.
- ▶ Ensure that the framework is based on Aboriginal concepts of health and wellbeing and models of care.
- ▶ Ensure that the framework addresses individual, organisational and system-wide conditions and responsibilities in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and mainstream organisations.
- ▶ Consider gender dynamics and gender specific risks, particularly in roles working with perpetrators.
- ▶ Address the needs of Aboriginal workers with lived experience and working in community.
- ▶ Explore the feasibility of developing an online hub of culturally appropriate resources addressing workforce safety, health and wellbeing issues (e.g. racism, vicarious trauma, burnout and occupational stress).





The domestic and family violence workforce sits within the broad category of the healthcare and social assistance sector. The Australian Bureau of Statistics describes the sector as the largest and fastest growing of all Australian industries.⁴⁴

Between 2012 and 2022, this sector has grown by 65% to 663,000 workers.⁴⁵ National Skills Commission employment projections suggest this rapid growth will continue up to November 2025, with the number of jobs in the industry anticipated to grow by 14.2%.⁴⁶ The current pace of development is placing considerable strain on workforce supply across the social services sector, which has significant implications for the growth and sustainability of the domestic and family violence workforce.

The range of careers available in the domestic and family violence sector needs to be promoted, highlighting the purposeful, values-driven and rewarding nature of the work, and the sense of shared professional identity for domestic and family violence workers. This will make the sector more attractive to prospective workers.

In addition to the undersupply of workers for roles focused on victim-survivors, there is a chronic supply shortage of workers within the perpetrator workforce. This is compounded by limited opportunities for individuals interested in joining the field to provisionally 'try out' the work as a means of understanding job roles and responsibilities and exploring their suitability for working in the sector. New approaches are needed to generate wider public interest in the work and expand the pool of potential applicants.⁴⁷

The expansion of the specialist domestic and family violence workforce relies on improving workforce recruitment and renewal, including introducing strategies to encourage and support new workers to join the sector.

The range of educational pathways into the domestic and family violence workforce need to be expanded, including pathways for people with lived experience and cultural knowledge and skills. This, in addition to addressing the uncertainty around pay, secure pathways and entitlements, is key to retaining workers.

Action Area 3.1

Examine the feasibility of models for student placements, traineeships, apprenticeships and internships to promote early recruitment to the sector.

- ▶ Partner with educational bodies, peaks and unions to examine the feasibility of these models. Take into consideration accessibility for regional, rural and remote students.
- ▶ Partner with industry and educational bodies to pilot feasible models.
- ▶ Collect data on participant experiences.
- ▶ Explore the potential for fee-free accredited training and certificates in domestic and family violence.
- ▶ Consider how to engage male workers through these pathways.

Action Area 3.2

Develop a series of journey maps about the supply, attraction and retention of the workforce in NSW, in accordance with the major qualifications used.

- ▶ Draw on the work undertaken in other jurisdictions and across sectors at a national level.

Action Area 3.3

Examine options for alternative recruitment practices that are more inclusive and accessible.

- ▶ Identify supportive assessment and selection practices that help to address barriers to recruitment for members of diverse groups, and those from regional, rural and remote areas.
- ▶ Explore inclusive and flexible approaches to assessing the job readiness of candidates who do not meet the specified criteria but have lived experience or cultural knowledge.
- ▶ Consider more innovative approaches to support sector-wide culturally inclusive recruitment processes.
- ▶ Develop a dedicated workforce plan to recognise and increase the bilingual and bicultural domestic and family violence workforce, with a particular focus on supporting migrant and refugee communities.

Action Area 3.4

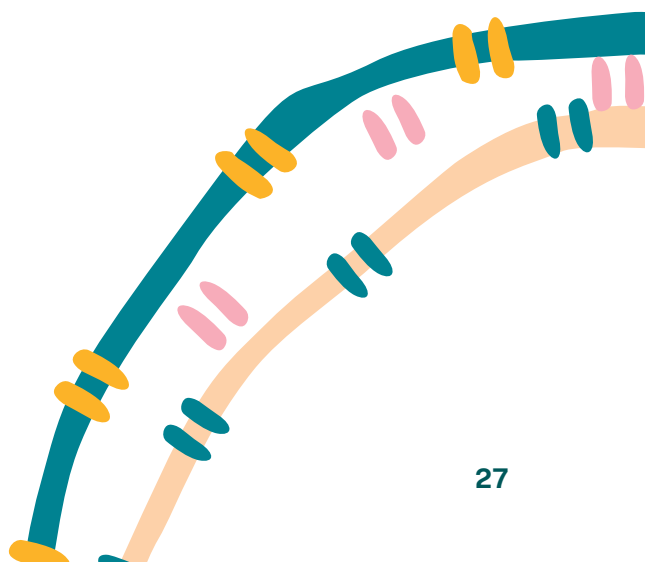
Explore the feasibility of a central jobs hub to showcase job roles and support recruitment.

- ▶ Scope the development of a NSW Government domestic and family violence jobs portal that provides:
 - resources to support organisations undertaking recruitment campaigns
 - the nature of jobs in the sector for potential applicants
 - capacity for job seekers to respond online to advertisements.
- ▶ Examine avenues to promote careers in the sector and highlight the breadth of available job roles, ensuring accessibility and appeal to different communities.

Action Area 3.5

Deliver First Nations community-led strategies to strengthen the pipeline of Aboriginal people into the domestic and family violence workforce.

- ▶ Provide safe, accessible pathways into work for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and mainstream services.
- ▶ Explore the development of a job readiness program that is accessible and emphasises the value of cultural knowledge and lived experience. For those with the desired attributes but without the required qualifications, provide support to acquire the qualifications. The program will prepare participants for government and non-government roles.
- ▶ Consider targeted actions to better promote the domestic and family violence workforce to Aboriginal people.
- ▶ Consider the evidence base on colonial load and cultural humility and how this interacts with recruitment.
- ▶ Explore the potential of funding an agency specialised in recruiting Aboriginal domestic and family violence workers.





While domestic and family violence is prevalent across the Australian community, different social groups have differing needs from a service response.

It is widely understood that certain individuals and groups experience overlapping or intersecting forms of inequality, marginalisation and discrimination. This increases their risk of violence and imposes barriers to accessing timely and effective support services. While the results of the Baseline Survey show that the NSW specialist workforce is relatively diverse, this is not in line with the disproportionate impact domestic and family violence has on different communities. The further growth and development of a diverse workforce may help to address the needs of all cohorts more effectively.

Applying an intersectional lens to domestic and family violence recognises the uniqueness of every individual's experience of domestic and family violence, understanding that experiences 'can differ based on cultural, individual, historical, environmental, or structural factors such as race, age, geographic location, sexual orientation, ability or class'.⁴⁸

Victim-survivors and perpetrators of domestic and family violence are diverse. The workforce that offers specialist responses should reflect this diversity, and domestic and family violence organisations must promote culturally responsive practice in their policies and systems to support the workforce. Organisations should seek to promote the accessibility of roles to groups most at risk of experiencing domestic and family violence. This includes people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people from multicultural backgrounds including migrant, refugee and multilingual backgrounds, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, people with a disability and older women.

A growing evidence base supports the value of involving people with lived experience in designing domestic and family violence policies and programs⁴⁹, but much work remains to be done across all jurisdictions to ensure that approaches to workforce development for people with lived experience are safe, inclusive and supportive.

Action Area 4.1

Recognise and embed the value of lived experience in the workforce.

- ▶ Destigmatise lived experience in the workforce by increasing its visibility and recognising its value.
- ▶ Seek formal advice on workforce development for lived experience workers from lived experts, including through the NSW Lived Experience Advisory Group.
- ▶ Improve support for members of the workforce with lived experience.

Action Area 4.2

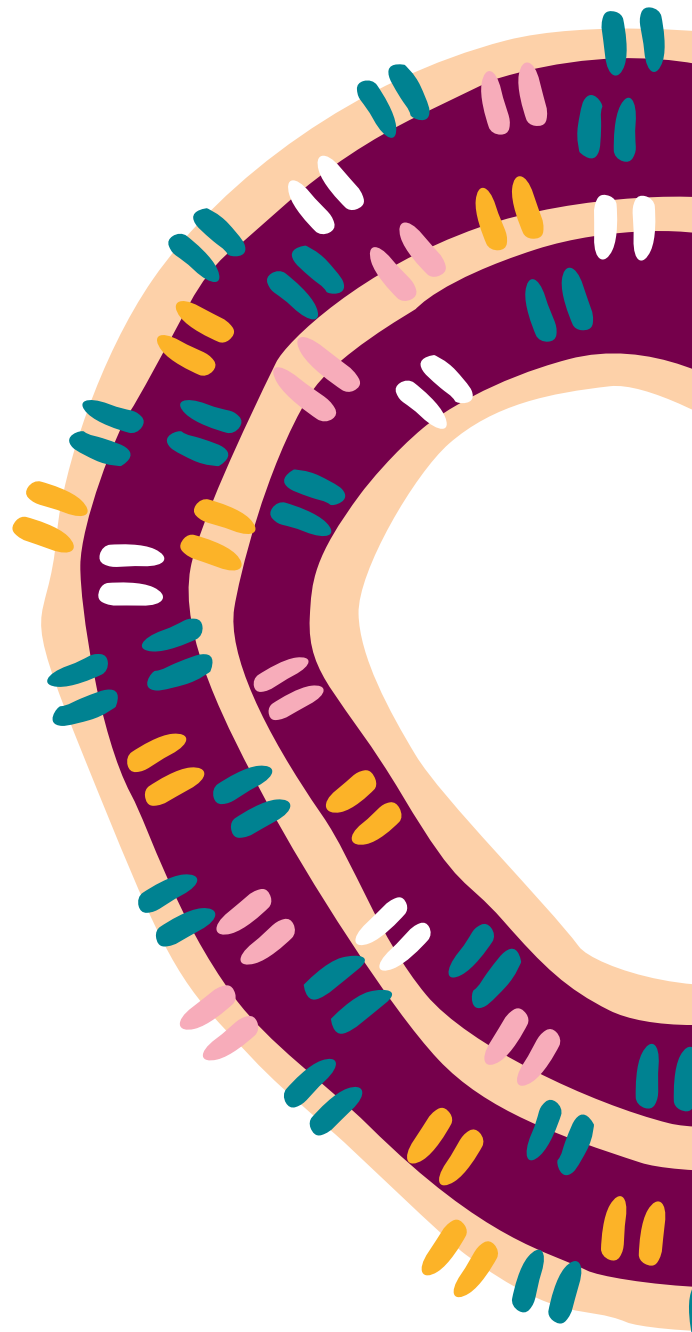
Develop a First Nations community-led workforce sustainability plan for Aboriginal people in NSW.

- ▶ Consider the evidence base on colonial load, cultural humility, lived experience and burnout.
- ▶ Build worker leadership capacity and identify and address barriers in organisations to promote Aboriginal workers into leadership roles.
- ▶ Draw on the work undertaken in other jurisdictions and organisations.
- ▶ Consider whether place-based approaches are preferable and feasible.

Action Area 4.3

Partner with vocational and higher education bodies to:

- diversify student uptake and completion of domestic and family violence-related courses
- ensure that coursework aligns with knowledge, skills and capabilities required to work in the sector
- encourage entry into the workforce.
- ▶ Identify opportunities to increase the diversity of students and provide them with necessary support into and during their education that is relevant to domestic and family violence.
- ▶ Consider how to engage male workers through these pathways.
- ▶ Explore the feasibility of offering scholarships for people from diverse backgrounds.
- ▶ Engage educational bodies in regional and rural locations to support local students.
- ▶ Prepare students for entry into the workforce by ensuring the coursework is adequate and sufficient.





Developing a skilled and sustainable workforce to deliver effective and timely responses to victim-survivors and perpetrators of domestic and family violence is a major undertaking. It is too complex and resource intensive for individual organisations to address in isolation and requires government support to facilitate increased collaboration across the service system.

Collaboration is critical for a coordinated service system response. People present across a range of different service system entry points that need to recognise risk and offer an effective response or referral, at a minimum.

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the complexity of service responses required to hold perpetrators accountable and ensure the immediate safety and long-term recovery of victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. This has led to an increase in collaborative responses that span multiple service systems, sectors and workforces. These approaches are commonly referred to as 'integrated responses' or 'multidisciplinary responses'. They offer a range of potential benefits including simplified coordinated responses to multiple needs, minimisation of secondary victimisation, and multiple entry points for intervention. The benefits may include cost-effectiveness due to minimising service duplication, formalised information sharing between services, potential upskilling of workers, and enhanced transparency and accountability.

Maximising collaboration, coordination and continuity of care across the specialist domestic and family violence and broader intersecting workforces requires a multi-pronged approach. This may include articulating roles and functions of the specialist and broader intersecting workforces responding to domestic and

family violence, widening the responsibility for recognising risk, and exploring innovative approaches to statewide attraction, recruitment and orientation or induction pathways.

Action Area 5.1

Establish a common approach to risk assessment and safety framework for responding to victim-survivors, in consultation with the domestic and family violence sector.

- ▶ Develop an evidence-based framework that delivers consistent and collaborative approaches to risk assessment and management responsibilities across the universal, statutory and specialist service system.
- ▶ Outline a shared understanding and language of domestic and family violence and risk.
- ▶ Build on the work undertaken in other jurisdictions.

Action Area 5.2

Explore resourcing options to establish a peak body for perpetrator intervention programs in NSW.

- ▶ Explore options to extend the sector development role to enable the application of quality and practice standards.

Action Area 5.3

Explore potential mechanisms for regional coordination.

- ▶ Consider current models of regional collaboration and case management in NSW and other jurisdictions. Ensure this consideration includes looking at existing and alternative collaborative models that exist in Aboriginal communities and multicultural communities.
- ▶ Promote and test opportunities for cross-sector collaboration.

Action Area 5.5

Support the establishment of communities of practice.

- ▶ Support the establishment of communities of practice to improve peer support, collaboration and knowledge sharing.
- ▶ Prioritise communities of practices for workers more likely to be isolated in their work.

Action Area 5.4

Explore the feasibility of a statewide information hub to enable timely and effective sharing of information about domestic and family violence agencies and their programs, services, roles and responsibilities.

- ▶ Provide domestic and family violence organisations with centralised information that maps domestic and family violence agencies and their programs, services, roles and responsibilities.
- ▶ Ensure diverse communities can access information. Resources should be written in plain language, accessible to people with a disability.





Domestic and family violence response work frequently occurs in highly complex and challenging environments. Practitioners require the knowledge, skills and agility to adapt to rapidly evolving policies, legislation, job roles and expectations, and to stay abreast of emerging research and evidence around best practice.

Over the past decade, there has been increasing recognition of the highly specialised nature of intervention and response work, and the urgent need for workforce development. Ongoing professional development plays a crucial role in ensuring practitioners have the competencies required to meet the demands of their role.

Regular domestic and family violence professional development also plays a key role in equipping practitioners from broader intersecting workforces to successfully identify domestic and family violence perpetrators, assess their level of risk to others, and offer relevant referral pathways and supports. The domestic and family violence workforce is defined by specialised focus, skills and capabilities that are essential. Proficiency in foundational domestic and family violence concepts is integral to ensuring comprehensive and integrated service delivery.

Through the results of the Baseline Survey and during consultations for this strategy, we identified that further training was desired to better understand how domestic and family violence impacts several communities. Specifically, these communities are women and children with disability, older women, women in or exiting correctional centres, women on visas, women at risk of or experiencing modern slavery and/or human trafficking, women at risk of or experiencing forced marriage, women from migrant and refugee communities, LGBTIQ+ community members, children and young people, and members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

During consultations, we often heard of the impact isolation and limited peer support can have on workers' wellbeing and professional development. Particularly, this was felt by bilingual and bicultural workers and Aboriginal workers in mainstream organisations where there were no other First Nations workers. Mentoring can help to address this isolation and improve workplace cultures.

Action Area 6.1

Develop and deliver training on coercive control and the new criminal offence.

- ▶ Clarify the scope of training and resources and oversee the development and delivery of the training with an accredited and experienced provider.
- ▶ Ensure that training explores how coercive control may be experienced differently by different communities.
- ▶ Ensure the voice of victim-survivors is embedded in professional development and training design.

Action Area 6.2

Undertake an audit of domestic and family violence professional development and training available in NSW. Assess the training needed to address any identified gaps in the training service system, including uplifting capability to work with clients from diverse communities.

- ▶ Audit domestic and family violence professional development and training available in NSW and map any gaps in existing content. Consider the strengths, limitations and barriers to accessing existing training.
- ▶ Assess the training needed to address any identified gaps in the training service system, including uplifting capability to work with clients from diverse communities.

- 
- ▶ Consider the training needed to strengthen workforce capability to understand the unique types and drivers of violence experienced by:
 - women and children with disability
 - older women
 - women in or exiting correctional centres
 - women on visas
 - women at risk of or experiencing modern slavery and/or human trafficking
 - women at risk of or experiencing forced marriage
 - women from migrant and refugee communities
 - LGBTIQA+ community members
 - children and young people
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
 - ▶ Explore the feasibility of mandatory minimum foundational training for all domestic and family violence specialist practitioners.
 - ▶ Explore the development and offering of a foundational Certificate IV in Domestic and Family Violence for the victim-survivor workforce.
 - ▶ Explore the development and offering of a foundational Certificate IV in Men's Behaviour Change Program Facilitation.
 - ▶ Ensure foundational courses are adaptive and can be reviewed and updated when emerging evidence arises.
 - ▶ Ensure foundational courses are available and accessible in regional and rural areas.
 - ▶ Explore accredited training options for ongoing professional development.

Action Area 6.3

Develop an approach to support centralised statewide induction for domestic and family violence workers.

- ▶ Articulate the scope, objectives and responsibility for delivering statewide induction for entry-level workers to complement individual organisational onboarding.

Action Area 6.4

Prioritise career and leadership development programs for the domestic and family violence workforce.

- ▶ Identify a mentoring, supervision and coaching framework and responsibility guide for supporting the workforce across all levels of experience, from entry to leadership.
- ▶ Encourage engagement in a program of mentors and coaches from diverse and intersecting communities.
- ▶ Recognise the historical work and insight of Aboriginal women and how their deep knowledge can be used to support workers' careers and development.
- ▶ Support coaches and mentors to incorporate cultural responsiveness into their work.
- ▶ Explore ongoing career development to support existing experienced workers.
- ▶ Expand practice and team lead roles across the service system to build practitioner capability in working with specific cohorts and implement intersectional feminist-informed practice.



Specialist domestic and family violence response work has long been undervalued, with more than one-third (37.7%) of participants in the recent *National Survey of Workers in the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Sectors* reporting feeling insufficiently remunerated.⁵⁰

The survey revealed ongoing concern within the sector about inadequate resources. Participants reported that short-term funding contracts were exacerbating recruitment and retention challenges, impacting job security and the continuity of client care, and ‘undermining the viability of working in domestic and family violence services’.⁵¹ This view was supported by consultations with representatives of the NSW domestic and family violence sector and broader intersecting workforces.

Bilingual and bicultural workers, who often experience inconsistency in role descriptions and functions, face additional pressure. It is particularly difficult for organisations with bicultural workers to establish clear roles and responsibilities. Workers face additional barriers in accessing appropriate pathways for training, accreditation and professional development, leading to challenges in advancing their careers. They may find themselves unable to move beyond more junior roles due to an organisational need to use their language skills in particular areas. This can be aggravated by a lack of adequate peer and intra-professional support and collaboration.

ANROWS explored workforce perspectives on how to best transform responses to domestic, family and sexual violence. It found that ‘issues of insecure, inflexible and insufficient funding’ were responsible for existing service system gaps and were also impeding workforce capability and sustainability.⁵²

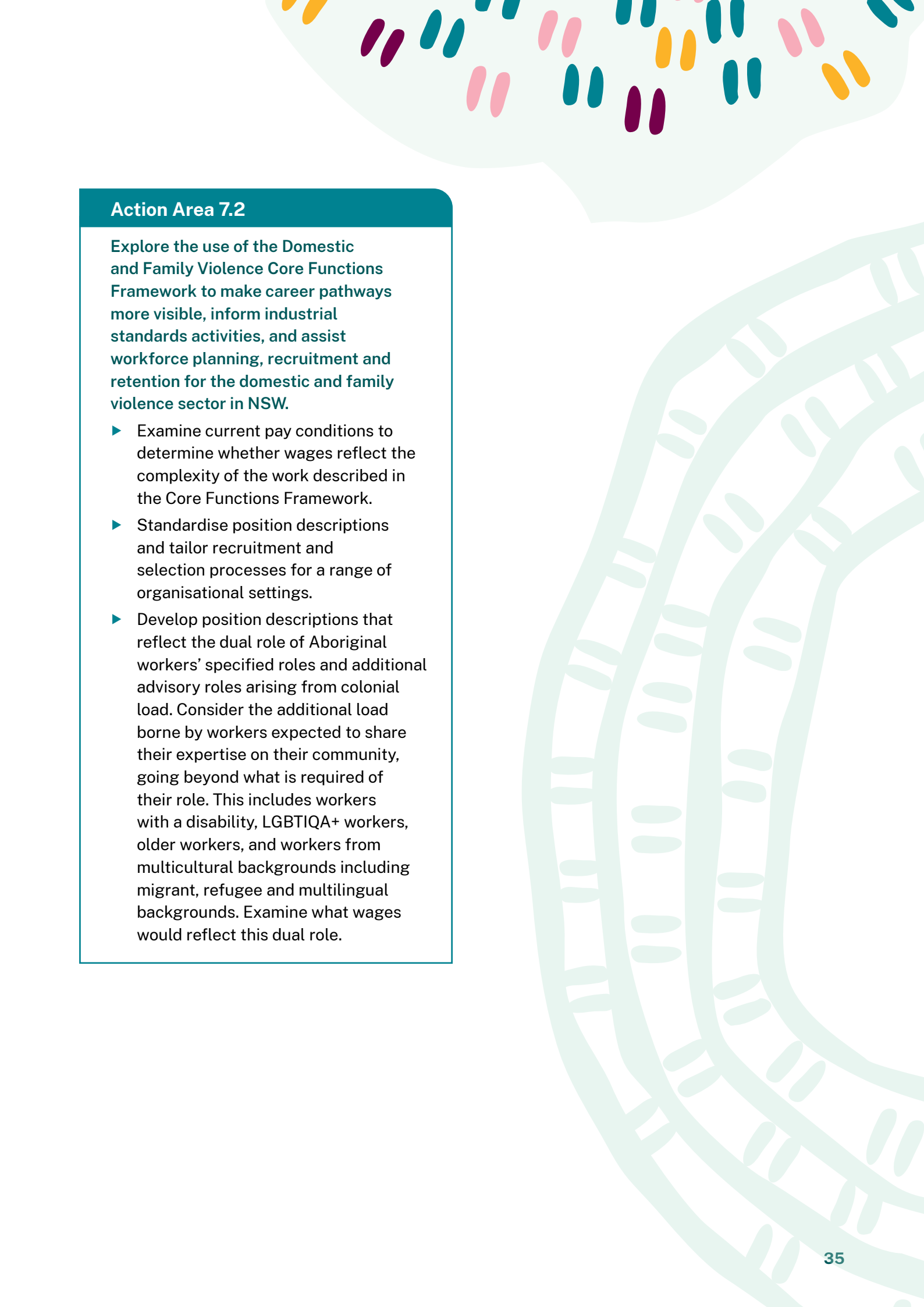
Investment in improving the design of the NSW service system responding to domestic and family violence continues. An effective system

requires a competent and well supported workforce to deliver essential services to victim-survivors and perpetrators.

Action Area 7.1

Apply the domestic and family violence jobs family taxonomy to develop a Core Functions Framework that can be used for job role profiles and to support greater consistency in approaches to recruitment.

- ▶ Conduct an environmental scan of work undertaken in other jurisdictions and determine how the key characteristics, classifications, core knowledge and skills, and necessary experience and qualifications relate to the specific purpose of jobs.
- ▶ Undertake consultation with the NSW domestic and family violence sector and relevant unions to seek their responses to the domestic and family violence jobs family taxonomy.
- ▶ Develop a Domestic and Family Violence Core Functions Framework, in collaboration with the sector, unions and government.
- ▶ Consider how to clarify role requirements for bilingual and bicultural workers through the framework.
- ▶ Work with training organisations around practical advice for implementation of the framework.



Action Area 7.2

Explore the use of the Domestic and Family Violence Core Functions Framework to make career pathways more visible, inform industrial standards activities, and assist workforce planning, recruitment and retention for the domestic and family violence sector in NSW.

- ▶ Examine current pay conditions to determine whether wages reflect the complexity of the work described in the Core Functions Framework.
- ▶ Standardise position descriptions and tailor recruitment and selection processes for a range of organisational settings.
- ▶ Develop position descriptions that reflect the dual role of Aboriginal workers' specified roles and additional advisory roles arising from colonial load. Consider the additional load borne by workers expected to share their expertise on their community, going beyond what is required of their role. This includes workers with a disability, LGBTIQ+ workers, older workers, and workers from multicultural backgrounds including migrant, refugee and multilingual backgrounds. Examine what wages would reflect this dual role.

End notes

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