

Tuesday 7 May 2024



Media Statement

Outcomes from emergency roundtable into murdered and missing women

Today the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission convened crisis talks into the alarming rates of murdered and missing women in Australia this year, bringing together experts from across the country to tackle the crisis.

Too many women have been murdered. Since I announced these crisis talks only two weeks ago another 4 more women have been allegedly murdered - Molly, Emma, Eric and Joan.

We are at a crisis point in addressing domestic, family and sexual violence. There has been significant investment and change, we have a *National Plan* to end violence against women and children that all Governments are committed to. However, the rates of violence that women are experiencing in this country are still far too high.

Today, I convened an emergency roundtable with almost 70 domestic, family and sexual violence experts from across the country to inform the advice I give to governments on actions that need to be urgently prioritised to prevent women's deaths.

The key themes that participants highlighted were:

- Recognising the vital nature of the domestic, family and sexual violence sector through greater support and resourcing;
- Accessible crisis and transitional accommodation to respond to demand and increasing complexity;
- Information sharing and consistent risk assessment frameworks to ensure coordinated responses across systems;
- A more trauma-informed and responsive justice system to better support survivors and hold men accountable;
- Strengthen and expand domestic violence death review processes to ensure we are learning from the failures of the system and ensuring we are able to do better.

We discussed the key intervention points across the system for preventing murders against women. As we have seen in the horrifying murders that have occurred recently, a significant number of the men who allegedly perpetrated these murders were already known to police and services. We heard a clear call for the need for an escalated response for those at high-risk of committing and experiencing harm. I will be meeting with Attorney's General and Police Commissioners across the country to raise the ideas shared today – such as the critical role of information sharing on high risk and serial offenders, and the importance of implementing Death Review recommendations across the country.

Participants highlighted the disproportionate and devastating rates in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are murdered or go missing - that these are often silent deaths in our community, with limited or no coverage or investigation. Participants were clear that the impact of colonisation and

marginalisation are significant and ongoing. Institutional and systemic racism continues to affect responses to and prevention of family violence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission will continue to work with Indigenous leaders and community-controlled organisations to amplify the voices of First Nations communities to ensure that their concerns are addressed.

We interrogated what is known about current and potential perpetrators of homicide and where there are gaps in our knowledge. Men seeking to change the trajectory of their behaviour have very limited options. Whilst a great deal of work has gone into building the evidence-base, there is still a lot that we do not know about who perpetrates violence and the triggers for this. Research to better understand perpetrators will be critical to ensure our interventions can be effectively tailored.

Participants considered the critical areas of risk we need to address and areas of priority. As we have heard in multiple forums, housing is critical to ensuring women's safety and enabling ongoing recovery. The need for greater investment to support families experiencing violence, including therapeutic support for children and young people at higher risk of both experiencing and using violence, was a key theme. We heard that we need to urgently discuss what role governments can play in regulating and responding to factors, such as alcohol and other drug use, gambling and pornography.

I want to acknowledge all the incredible people who attended today. Everyone in the room brought personal and professional experience, wisdom, and passion. I also acknowledge the significant number of people who expressed interest in attending but who we were not able to accommodate. Thank you all for your commitment and effort to ending gender-based violence.

This roundtable is a critical step in the Commission's work to provide national leadership in preventing women being killed as a result of domestic, family, and sexual violence. We will continue to work collaboratively to keep this matter on the national agenda and inform concrete and effective actions.

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If you or someone you know is impacted by sexual or family violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or visit www.1800RESPECT.org.au

Feeling worried or no good? No shame, no judgement, safe place to yarn. Speak to a 13YARN Crisis Supporter, call 13 92 76. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you are concerned about your behaviour or use of violence, you can contact the Men's Referral Service on 1300 766 491 or visit www.ntv.org.au.