



Monday 16 September 2024

DFSV Commission to hold a series of workshops in relation to sexual violence

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission (the Commission) will hold a range of consultations to further the national conversation on sexual violence for both adults and children.

In August, the Commission's first Yearly Report to Parliament on progress of the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2023*, identified combatting sexual violence as an area that is lagging and requiring targeted efforts.

Last year there was an 11 per cent increase in reported sexual violence in Australia, increasing for the 12th year in a row, and the highest rate of sexual assault recorded in the Australian Bureau of Statistics 31-year dataset.

"We have seen increasing reported sexual violence over recent years and, in particular, high levels of sexual violence perpetrated against young women. This highlights a need for urgent attention and action," Commissioner Cronin said.

This was supported by Karen Iles: Dharug Aboriginal woman, sexual assault survivor, and founder and principal solicitor of Violet Co Legal & Consulting.

"We know that this type of violence, disproportionately targeting girls and women, is shrouded in (unfair and untrue) stigma for victims and has lifelong mental health impacts," said Ms Iles.

The ABS' Personal Safety Survey found that prevalence in Australia is high, with 22 per cent of women and 6.1 per cent of men report having experienced sexual violence since the age of 15. More than one in five Australians have admitted to inflicting acts of sexual violence since the age of 18 (Australian Institute of Criminology).

"Sexual violence often occurs as part of domestic and family violence, and we need our service system to respond effectively when it does. At the same time, we know that sexual violence occurs outside of family and intimate partner relationships and must continue to be specifically addressed," Commissioner Cronin said.

"Our community must face into the crimes of rape and sexual assault against girls and women - just like we have to domestic and family violence," Ms Iles said.

Nicole Lambert, Chairperson of the National Association of Service Against Sexual Violence, echoed these sentiments.

"We are encouraged by the Commission's understanding of the nuances of the sexual violence sector and how this differs from the domestic and family violence sector and look forward to working closely with the Commission to support much needed policy and systems reform tailored to the specific needs of victim-survivors of sexual violence," said Ms Lambert.

The Commission will draw on the expertise of lived experience advocates, community organisations and their frontline staff (including from Aboriginal community-controlled organisations), researchers and peak bodies to inform their work.

The Commission will hold a series of online and in-person roundtables, briefings, and targeted workshops on

the challenges facing us across the country in preventing and appropriately responding to sexual violence. These consultations will consider both sexual violence perpetrated and experienced by adults as well as child sexual abuse.

“The first workshop will be held in the coming months and will set the agenda for future consultations into 2025.

“We will work with the Lived Experience Advisory Council and peak bodies in the sector to determine who needs to be part of these conversations and what the focus of the discussion will be.

“I look forward to working with experts – from lived experience, frontline, and academic backgrounds – in order to advise governments how to better support those who have experienced sexual violence and stop it from occurring in the future,” said Commissioner Cronin.

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If you or someone you know is experiencing, or at risk of experiencing, domestic, family or sexual violence, call 1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732, chat online via www.1800RESPECT.org.au, or text 0458 737 732.

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